

Zeitschrift: Museum Helveticum : schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft = Revue suisse pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique = Rivista svizzera di filologia classica

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Vereinigung für Altertumswissenschaft

Band: 51 (1994)

Heft: 3

Artikel: Propertius 4.8.77f.

Autor: Kershaw, Allan

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-39790>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 04.04.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

All we can say with confidence is that the Greek game *πόλεις* may have been the same as, or very like, *LL*⁴⁶.

46 I must here express my thanks to Professor Heinz Hofmann, who invited me to read an earlier version of this paper at a celebration on 25th April 1992 in Groningen to mark the retirement of our friend, Dr. H. Schoonhoven; to Professor Margarethe Billerbeck, who secured me photocopies of obscure publications; to the Director of the Beethoven-Gymnasium in Bonn, who provided me with a copy of a paper by A. Schmitt, “Spiele wie die Römer spielten”, *Jahresbericht des Beethoven-Gymnasiums* (1977-78) 17-33, which constructs modern games with the information we have on Roman games; and to drs. J. P. Jongejan, who sent me a photograph of a *tabula* for *LL* at Rome. I am obliged to the editors’ referees for some useful criticisms and alternative ideas. They suggested I refer readers also to J. Väterlein, *Roma ludens. Kinder und Erwachsene beim Spiel im antiken Rom*, *Heuremata* 5 (Amsterdam 1976) and the review by H. Herter in *Gnomon* 50 (1978) 675-678.

Propertius 4.8.77f.

By Allan Kershaw, Pennsylvania State University

Cynthia lays down the law:

*colla cave inflectas ad summum obliqua theatrum,
aut lectica tuae sudet aperta morae.*

Sudet has been most recently, and roundly, condemned by W. S. Watt (*Mus-Helv* 49, 1992, 238): “Editors who defend *sudet* are wasting their effort; it is quite certainly corrupt.” Two problems, it seems to me, remain: one concerns the text, the other interpretation.

First, the variant *operta* (*V²Vo*) has in modern times been disregarded. This neglect might be the result of Lachmann’s comment, “*Operta* scribas an *aperta* nihil interest. Puellae vehebantur in *operta* lectica, quae aperitur, cum deposita est ad colloquendum.” I suggest that the choice of word here is of great importance to the understanding of this couplet. As part of her *formula legis* (4.8.74) Cynthia forbids Propertius to look for other girls under any circumstances; whether they are on *open* view in the theatre (77), or, quite the contrary, they are concealed from view in a *closed* carriage.

This contrast between what is readily visible and what is not appears elsewhere in Propertius (2.15.5f.):

*nam modo nudatis mecumst luctata papillis,
interdum tunica duxit operta moram.*

A passage not only of interest for the diction, but one which also points to the meaning of *mora* in our present passage. At Propertius 2.15.6 (above), the love-making is real enough, but even if sexual activity is only anticipated the erotic nuance of *mora* is not necessarily precluded; cf. (e.g.) Ovid (*Ars* 3.473f.):

*postque brevem rescribe moram: mora semper amantes
incitat, exiguum si modo tempus habet.*

Mora in our passage should be understood as a period during which sexual expectations are heightened; it is not so much Propertius' tardiness but the reason for it that bothers Cynthia.

If this interpretation of *mora* is correct, Gruter's *se det* for *sudet* fits nicely, since *dare*, as is well known, also has an erotic sense. Read

aut lectica tuae se det operta morae.

Morae I take to be 'dative of the object for which', with *tuae* replacing the more usual *tibi*. The real import of the line being "don't let a closed litter offer itself to you as a sexually exciting interlude". This sense is very close to that offered by Professor Watt's (tentative) *spem det* (loc. cit. above). *Spem*, however, would take away from the double-entendre; as it is, both *se det* and *morae* are deliberately, and suggestively, open.