

PROPERTIUS, HERCULES, AND THE DYNAMICS OF ROMAN MYTHIC SPACE IN *ELEGY* 4.9

DIANA SPENCER

Propercius *Elegy* 4.9 embodies a paradox. This version of Hercules' adventure on the site of the future Rome emphasises the impossibility of constructing fixed levels of cultural significance within the mythic and historicised Roman past, yet in the rewriting of this myth, poet, reader, and text are implicated in the process of configuring the past that the poem seeks to subvert.¹ Propertius involves his audience in a discourse that uses Augustan mythic aetiologies to demonstrate how a burgeoning "industry" of cultural mythmaking can not only destabilise how the Romans interpret their past and present, but may even undermine their experience of the physical city through which they walk and in which they worship. *Elegy* 4.9 plays a central role in the poet's construction of multiple levels of aetiological referentiality throughout Book 4 and opens up another space within which the poet's self-proclaimed stance as the Roman Callimachus (4.1.64) can be acted out with engaging degrees of irony and engrossing cultural intertextuality.² Building on Micaela Janan's study (1998), I suggest that, by

1 The text of Propertius cited is *Elegiarum Libri IV*, ed. Rudolf Hanslik (Leipzig 1979). I would like to thank Martha Malamud and *Arethusa's* anonymous reader for their perceptive comments and constructive criticism. Welcome improvements to earlier drafts were suggested by John Henderson, Alison Sharrock, Trevor Fear, and Gideon Nisbet.

2 In the wake of Anderson 1964, this poem has attracted many interpretations focusing on Hercules the *exclusus amator* and his burlesque characterisation, but they frequently fail to look beyond these primary poetic signs for the deeper cultural and political implications embedded in the structure and narration of the story. Recent readings by Cairns 1992, Staples 1998.24–31, Lindheim 1998, and Janan 1998 have begun to tease out some of the more sophisticated nuances. Unfortunately, Micaela Janan's *The Politics of Desire*:

examining the intersections between Propertius's subversion of literature, gender, and "Augustan" religious and cultural poetics, we can gain a more engaged sense of how a variety of socio-cultural ideologies were intertwining—or perceived to be intertwining—in the Augustan era. By evoking a range of genres and mythic stories in a narrative firmly grounded in the topography of Rome past and (Augustan) present, Propertius simultaneously colludes in the rewriting or "refoundation" of Roman history and undermines the viability of all attempts to impose a monolithic version of the Roman experience.³

In *Elegy* 4.9, Propertius destabilises all programmatic models of Romanness through the creation of a poetic space in which literary, historical, mythic, political, and gendered cultural icons can be deconstructed (and potentially reconstructed) at will, and this destabilisation has implications for our reading of Propertius as an "Augustan" poet. A retreat from readings that enforce a semiotic closure for *Elegy* 4.9 makes it available for our attempts to construe "Augustanism" and to engage more openly with the multiple cultural and political (re)constructions of late first century B.C.E. Rome. This interpretative destabilisation of the poem is focused primarily on two interconnected strategies developed by Propertius in *Elegy* 4.9: (1) a problematisation of the interplay between the visual and verbal registers, leading to a signifiatory space where definitions and demarcations are fluid and shifting, and (2) an ironising approach to Virgilian discourse that plays upon a nexus of gender, identity, and cult and provides a cultural locus in which these themes can be developed. Following Virgil, Hercules' foundation of the Ara Maxima ought to be the primary aetiological focus, yet this foundation is summarily dismissed. Furthermore, the other key aetiology—why that particular cult of Hercules excluded women—is deflated by Propertius's ironising treatment. Taken together, however, the foundation of the Ara Maxima and its exclusion of women (in opposition to the women only cult of Bona Dea), nudges the reader towards one possible "meaning" of this text. This paradigmatic exclusion can function as a model for political and cultural valorisation of gender difference in a society where gender roles

Propertius IV (Berkeley 2001) was not available in time for me to be able to take it into account.

3 Fox 1999 deals elegantly with the critical strategies necessary to circumvent the construction of monolithic ideologies of our own. Clearly, there should be no easy identification of ideological and political resistance. See also Kennedy 1993.34–38 on the problems posed by the construction of discrete interpretative compartments for poetic and political worlds and by the negotiation of "Augustus" within a variety of discourses.

are predicated on male political and military engagement and female exclusion from the civic public sphere.⁴ Perhaps this poem also questions the potentially far-reaching consequences of such separatism for the Roman state. As was the case with the tricky narrator of *Elegy* 4.2—Vertumnus—and the succeeding poems, the poem teaches a lesson in reading between the lines, using offbeat angles and disturbing emphases to underline instability and artificiality in Augustan representation.⁵

Recent readings of *Elegy* 4.9 have begun to draw out the resonances of gender and nationality that pervade Propertius's poetic construction of *Elegies* Book 4, particularly poems 4 (Tarpeia) and 10 (the *spolia opima*). Janan (1998.65) observes the potential correlation between Propertius's transformation of Tarpeia's treachery into a cornerstone foundation myth and his construction of the eventual reconciliation between Sabines and Romans as a function of this betrayal. Thus Tarpeia's act of betrayal can prefigure the strength in diversity that characterises Augustan Rome. With this potential reading of Tarpeia's story as a backdrop, we can reapproach the Propertian Hercules. When we do, we discover that the metamorphosis of Tarpeia from traitor to fundamental Roman foundation-heroine has a peculiar effect. Textually in Tarpeia's wake, Hercules' violent separation of masculine from feminine, primitive past from "Roman" present, fluidity from stability, can set up a cyclical pattern: Herculean separation follows Tarpeian unification, male self-glorification succeeds a kind of female self-abnegation. Yet for Propertius's reader, the joke is that (temporally) the action is out of synch: "Roman" Tarpeia textually—and thus narratively—precedes Hercules' imposition of the future Rome on a proto-Roman landscape.⁶

4 Shimmering in and out of the poem's context come Clodius, Antony, Fulvia, Octavia, Dido, Cleopatra, Augustus, and Livia. Compare the potential Cleopatras of this poem with Propertius 2.16.35–41, 3.11.29–56, and 4.6. Wyke 1992 discusses Cleopatra's function in Augustan poetry. Livia's role is still under construction, and the Ara Pacis is in the future, but the approach to gender (and its potential for politicisation) adopted by Propertius in this poem responds to contemporary Roman political and cultural concerns on a variety of levels. In a society where literary production is politicised, Propertius offers us in Book 4 a whole a series of complicated and complex meditations on what it means to be a poet of love and an elegist. Keith 2000.78–81 provides a succinct introduction (and further bibliography) to the way in which perceptions of social and cultural fragmentation were leading to an increasingly close connexion between gender and nationality during the first century B.C.E.

5 See Casali 1997 on "reading more" in Ovid's exile poetry.

6 Conversely, we may also speculate as to a potential contradiction between Tarpeia's metamorphosis into a proto-heroine as a reward for her mingling of Roman and Sabine

The four potential aetiologies available to readers of *Elegy* 4.9 could mark this poem as a quintessential Augustan aetiological text, but the scope and treatment of these *aetia* demand further attention. Propertius deals as if in passing with the topographical aetiologies of the Velabrum and the Forum Boarium (4.9.5–6, 16–20) before moving on to an expansive treatment of why Hercules' cult at the Ara Maxima excludes women. An obscure explanation of Hercules' transformation into the Sabine god Sancus provides the end point (73–74). The foundation of the Ara Maxima slips into intertext. The way in which Propertius treats these historical markers impacts directly on the developing cultural and dynastic signifiers of Augustan Rome, particularly as formalised in Virgil's recently posthumous *Aeneid*. Propertius's dynamic appropriation of the point of intersection between textualised, mythic, and historic city goes to the heart of this poem's relationship with other literary constructs of Augustan Rome and Augustan "experience." As has often been observed, there are strong Augustan resonances in the myth of Hercules and Cacus.⁷ During the civil war between Antony and Octavian, Antony had associated himself with the protection and support of both Dionysus and Hercules, claiming Hercules as an ancestor. These divinities were also closely linked to Alexander the Great, and Antony tapped into the potentially positive, expansionist, and conquistadorial ideology that they could command. Octavian retaliated by stigmatising the instability, irrationality, and otherness that these figures could also evoke. Antony was not alone in his appropriation of the attributes of Alexander the Great; particularly relevant for Octavian's need to discredit this association is Caesar's apparent Alexander-emulation, linked by Suetonius (*Caesar* 7) to Caesar's visit to the temple of Hercules at Gades.⁸

peoples, and Hercules' violent enforcement of gender separation in Roman cultic practice. Does the poetic temporal loop make a difference? Hinds 1998.111–15 considers the temporal (and intertextual) loop between Virgil's post-Homeric Achaemenides (*Aeneid* 3.590–691) and Ovid's Macareus (*Metamorphoses* 14.158–440), emphasising how both carve out cultural *loci* from within, forcing each audience to re-engage with the multiple available layers of narrative "present" and "reading" present.

7 See Galinsky 1972 for a comprehensive introduction to the ongoing reinvention of Hercules, and Griffin 1977 on the parallels drawn between Antony and Hercules. Even before Antonian appropriation, Hercules was a problematic figure: hero, lover, warrior, and clown. Propertius's Hercules is an important stage in his ongoing redefinition. Newlands 1995.235 comments on the significance of Hercules' polyvalence for Ovid *Fasti* 6.812.

8 Alexander became an important player in the personality clashes that characterised the first century B.C.E. and continued to be used as a potential imperial model until the Emperor Julian. See Spencer 1997.62–126.

Octavian's victory, and the need to unify civil-war-torn Rome, may have brought with it a desire to purge these figures of Antonian associations, but the Caesarian connexion suggests that the process of deconstructing and reconstructing Hercules would be difficult. Virgil's reinvention of Hercules in the *Aeneid* ties this complicated process into the general programme of Augustan renewal. Octavian's Actian triple triumph (13–15 August, 29 B.C.E.) overlaps with the feast day that celebrated the events retold by Propertius in this poem. Virgil's previous fusion of Octavianic triumph and Herculean *aduentus* focuses attention on Propertius's revisionary handling of the connexion.⁹ Hercules' foundation of the Ara Maxima can simultaneously symbolise the (re)foundation of Rome by the newly invigorated Augustus/Hercules, while, at the same time, the narrative sidelining of this foundation evokes a world in which Augustan centrality to the progression of Roman history is not only questioned, it is summarily dismissed.

Propertius's textual and generic reconfiguration of Hercules and Rome is of particular significance given the disturbing potential for binary opposition that characterises Hercules in pre-Actian propaganda and his subsequent Virgilian and Horatian realignment. Augustan moves to reclaim Hercules make close attention to Propertius's poetic engagement with the *Aeneid* particularly important, but a binary relationship with the *Aeneid* and the Virgilian Hercules is not the only oppositional nexus at work in *Elegy* 4.9.¹⁰ The poem initially seems to fall into two distinct sections—Hercules the hero and Hercules the transvestite who reverts to an almost parodic Roman masculinity—but the two are in fact part of the overarching mechanism by means of which a greater binary opposition is played out. In this

9 See Griffin 1977 on the struggle between Antony and Octavian for ideological supremacy. Virgil's treatment of Hercules' defeat of Cacus in *Aeneid* 8 offers an allegorical reworking of Actium in which Cacus takes the role of Antony; the scale (and scope) of Propertius's revision of the encounter make it a prologue for Hercules' defeat of a group of women. Comparisons with Octavian's declaration of war against Cleopatra rather than Antony are inescapable. Similarly, as Propertius 2.16 may suggest, we might want to think about Antony as a potential alter ego for Propertius himself, in which case the poet "becomes" Hercules, while Hercules shimmers in and out of Augustus's personal pantheon. Thus "Hercules" can be Antony, Augustus, and Propertius, depending on our perspective. For Horatian rehabilitation of Hercules see, e.g., Horace *Odes* 1.12.25, 3.3.9, 14.1; 4.4.62, 5.36, 8.30. See Staples 1998.17–24 on Ovid's revision of Hercules and Cacus (*Fasti* 1.543–86).

10 See Janan 1998.67–69 on the system of linguistic symbolisation and the culture of binary opposition between "us" and "them" that underpins Propertius's interaction with the *Aeneid*.

way, Propertius presents a poem about the impossibility of artificially imposing any rigid ideology, a poem which, ironically, then becomes a function of the “Augustanism” that it destabilises.

OBSERVING THE LIE OF THE LAND: TOPOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY

The undermining of generic expectation set in motion by Propertius’s evocation of Virgil is paralleled by a destabilisation of the narrative locus, expressed through an emphasis on appearance and openness to the gaze and the fluidity and marginality of the available narrative sites. As the reader is drawn further into the poetic landscape, its dependence upon a tangled network of literary and cultural associations is immediately apparent, yet the reader is also encouraged to engage with the landscape on the level of lived urban experience (4.9.3–6):

uenit ad inuictos pecorosa Palatia montis,
et statuit fessos fessus et ipse boues,
qua Velabra suo stagnabant flumine quoque
nauta per urbanas uelificabat aquas.

He came to the unconquered hill, the sheep-grazed Palatine,
and halted his weary cattle, weary himself,
where the Velabrum overflowed into a flood,
and sailors set sail upon urban waters.

These lines encourage the reader to close a loop between imaginary and experiential appropriations of the city and its history. Their immediate appeal to the reader is expressed through the foregrounding of perceptual reality and, in particular, through perception of the physical environment. Dual levels of available experiential reality serve to destabilise the ground beneath our feet when we gaze upon both the Augustan and the “sheep-grazed,” primeval Palatine(s) and float upon the now dry Velabrum(s).¹¹ In

¹¹ See Edwards 1996.57–61 on this trope in Ovid *Fasti* 6.401–14 (the lacus Curtius and Velabrum: instability at the heart of Rome) and elsewhere. Edwards ties this Ovidian treatment of Vertumnus to Propertius 4.1, but does not make a connexion between this passage from the *Fasti* and Propertius 4.9. It would be surprising, I suggest, if there were

the same way that the opening references to the Palatine and the Velabrum offer temptingly solid but actually strikingly fluid points of intersection between topography and chronology, the Forum Boarium also exists on a variety of experiential levels.¹² This area and its immediate vicinity was characterised in the first century B.C.E. by its Herculean temples, and, as I have suggested, Hercules was a deity with (potentially) problematic significance. Thus within the heart of the newly developing Augustan city, between the Capitoline, Aventine, Palatine, and the Tiber, is a public space with six places of worship dedicated to Hercules, Antony's ancestor.¹³ This problematic topography may well have been a significant factor in Augustus's reorientation of the Palatine complex (as suggested by Wiseman 1994.104–09); why would Augustus choose to face Herculean reminders of the victory that Antony might have won when a shift in direction could open up the powerful republican connotations of the Forum?

Rhetorical permanence—the persistence of all of these features in past and present cities—allows Propertius the aetiologist to construct not just a rationale for any or all of the potential aetiological *foci* in this poem, it allows him to write a Roman itinerary, creating a mytho-political map of the city from prehistory to the present. Mapping the visual and experienced urban environment, whether symbolically, verbally, or textually, is more than an act of representation, it is a creative and interpretative act that results in the construction of a new model for reading the city. Nevertheless, successive “maps” need not and, I suggest, cannot impose a unified response

not some level of intersection between Ovid's Vertumnus turning the river (6.409–10), Ovid's drunken partygoer (6.407–08), and Propertius's Hercules—who encompasses both roles. With thanks to Martha Malamud for highlighting the “poetic” plurals.

12 Boyer 1996.321–22 rightly suggests that a city is a combination of both vernacular and rhetorical *topoi*. In this way, a combination of a nostalgia-tinged sense of place, popular festivals, communal experience, and civic, public, and political constructs inform the way in which we articulate and define our civic identities. It is at the shifting points of intersection between the vernacular and the rhetorical that individual and collective experience of the city is located. Yet once a topography is formalised and established, it stands as a warning that the fluidity of experience upon which the lived city is founded has become static and therefore is on the point of decline.

13 The temple of Hercules Magnus Custos and the temple of Hercules Musarum (near the Circus Flaminius), the temple of Hercules Victor (or Invictus; near the Porta Trigemina), the temple of Hercules Pompeianus (near the Circus Maximus), the temple known as the Aedes Aemiliana Herculis (close to the Ara Maxima in the Forum Boarium). See Favro 1996.153 and n. 20. Ziolkowski 1992.46–56 discusses the history and context of these sites.

to urban semiotics. In Rome the imperial capital, individual and collective experiences and responses continue to persist as further layers of mythic, political, historical, and even mundane accretions coalesce.¹⁴

Like the city and its mythic topography, the first two protagonists are problematic and slippery characters; even with his first word, Propertius alerts us to the paradoxical instability that will characterise both poem and hero. *Amphitryoniades*, a sonorous epic opening with no introductory pre-ample, demands our attention and forces us to confront a hero whose identity proclaims his integration into a stable and persistent patriarchal system. But Hercules is not confined by this patronymic—he becomes *deus* (13), then *Alcides* and *Hercules* three times in succession (16, 17; 38, 39; 51, 70), while in the concluding narratorial comments, he is reinvented as the Sabine god Sancus (73–74). Hercules' genealogical identification binds him into a structure of mythological, literary, and social stability, yet this genealogy is subsequently undermined by the succession of available names presented.¹⁵ Furthermore, Hercules' name is also a mark of his difference: he is an alien in the Italian landscape and, with an imperializing, coloniser's voice, he imposes a future Roman landscape onto the aboriginal narrative present.

The instability of Hercules' identity is signalled by his shifting names. In these changing patterns of naming, Hercules offers a parody of epic and antiquarian conventions in his own person, but a more subtly Augustan and contemporary resonance is also made available. We might read a not-so-subtle emphasis on Hercules' doubtful parentage through the patronymic *Amphitryoniades*, a reading which takes a dangerous swipe at the carefully negotiated construct of Augustus as *diui filius*: not yet a god, and not quite a son, rather like Hercules himself. Such openness to subversive reading lies at the heart of the poem's intersection with the mythic and broader cultural tropes of Hercules, but it is also a function of its structural destabilisation of the literary experience. When the text of the poem physically concludes on the page, its closing address to the shadowy Sancus (71–72) takes Hercules' instability full circle. His problematic identity has ultimately led to his redefinition, a redefinition that removes him from the

14 See Boyer 1996.204–11 on modes of mapping.

15 Newlands 1995.230 suggests that Ovid's use of the Greek form Alcides (*Fasti* 6.812) at the end of his panegyric of chaste and virtuous women evokes a tradition that would further undermine his usefulness as an Augustan comparative: Hercules the indiscriminate father of numerous illegitimate children by a succession of different women.

epic, heroic world of Jupiter, Alcmena, and Amphitryon and places him in a narrower, localised context. The opening epic model constructs him as Amphitryoniades (1); the world at large, saved by him, calls him Alcides (38); for the Sabines, he becomes Sancus.

Propertius's treatment of his subject matter mirrors this Herculean slipperiness: beneath the layers of epic and elegiac expectation, we find a distorted pastoral world. This is not Virgil's Arcadia, despite echoes of the *Eclogues*;¹⁶ instead, as is the case in *Aeneid* 8, it is a form of *rus in urbe*, where the pastoral prototype can be played out within the city's future confines. Hercules, when we meet him, is not the conquering hero but the weary cowherd, arriving at an inhabited, yet pastoral Palatine. When he stops to rest, the indigenous peoples or, as we should call them, the previous settlers (*incolae*), are less than friendly.¹⁷ The broader implications of the poem's pervasive instability become evident in the figure of Hercules' first antagonist, Cacus. This Cacus is not the monster of the *Aeneid*, but he remains an inhuman figure, three-headed and treacherous.¹⁸ It is a small step from this three-headed, cave-dwelling cattle-thief to the influential Theocritean, post-Homeric, Polyphemus. But Polyphemus's Cyclopean single eye is present in *Elegy* 4.9 only indirectly; instead, Cacus's triple heads function as the warped or dislocated gaze that characterises the alterity of the poem's pre-Roman world where water and woodland co-exist with urban space. The importance of these heads is emphasised by the *tria . . . ora* of line 10 (picked up by the *tria tempora* of line 15). Cacus, Propertius insists, has three mouths, and the manner of Hercules' attack spells out how each mouth must be silenced. Cacus, the original newcomer, who might already have named and colonised the landscape, who might, as pastoral inhabitant, already have defined it in verse, has his voice, each of his voices, silenced. Hercules' voice and verbal appropriation of the landscape prevail. Cacus's ineffective monstrosity and Hercules' almost incidental destruction

16 For example, line 15's evocation of the first refrain to *Eclogue* 8, e.g., 8.21.

17 Although (as Janan 1998.65 notes) *incola* has strong overtones of "residence" and close association with a place, it can also imply that someone is a foreign settler. Thus Cacus, the potential "Antony," gains a further layer of ambiguity: he both is, and is not, an aboriginal. In this way, he can almost function as a prototype for Hercules himself, who eventually becomes enshrined in Rome's foundation mythology while simultaneously playing a part in the ideology of Antony and then of Augustus.

18 On Livy's version of the Cacus episode (and his unmonstrous appearance), see Fox 1996.100–04 and Paratore 1971.

of him destabilise the Virgilian model while partaking of the same mythic topographical signifiers: the cave and grove must recall *Aeneid* 6.9–13, while Cacus's three mouths playfully deflate Virgil's hundred Sibylline mouths (*Aeneid* 6.42–44). Octavian's direct, public superimposition of his Actian celebration over Hercules' earlier triumph gives added significance to Propertius's emphasis on the triple attack on Cacus. He uses it to gather up the temporal implications of *tempus*, while still requiring it to signify "head," offering his audience a sly reference to the conflation of Herculean adventure and Augustan triple triumph.¹⁹

In this opening section of the poem, Hercules appropriates the landscape through his colonising gaze. Through the temporal loop set up by the poetic narrative between past and present civic spaces, Hercules' direct speech (16–20) is responsible for the city of Rome, and Rome itself has been conscripted to provide the cultural (and monumental) space for Propertius's fourth book. The teasing alliance between narrator and Hercules is emphasised by the narrator's initial naming role in lines 1–6, and the circle of collusion is completed by the concluding lines of the poem, in which Hercules/Sancus is asked to favour Propertius's collection of poems. Much as Hercules has been responsible, in this aetiology, for the visual palimpsest created by superimposing Augustan Rome upon a mythic past, Propertius himself is creating a Rome that is monumental both in its textual configuration of the Augustan city and in its appropriation of founding moments from Roman history and myth.

A return to the correspondences between Cacus and Polyphemus now opens up a further level of epic correspondence for Hercules, who is connected to Odysseus through both his experience with the monster and his relationship with Athena. Although Propertius keeps silent on Athena's support for Hercules, she does still figure indirectly in the poem when the priestess reminds Hercules of the story of Tiresias (55–57), perhaps recalling Odysseus's consultation of Tiresias's ghost (*Odyssey* 10.490–95, 11.90–99). Any evocation of Tiresias acts as a sharp reminder to the reader of the ambiguous role of an audience and the potential dangers of witnessing the inappropriate. Various versions of Tiresias's story exist, but two main variants are particularly relevant here. One tradition has Tiresias blinded as a

19 Propertius's Cacus has yet another Virgilian echo, recalling Cerberus's triple-throated baying at *Aeneid* 6.417–18: *adverso recubans immanis in antro*, "his massive body stretched out in a cave opposite."

result of glimpsing Athena whilst she was bathing, gaining the gift of prophecy in recompense. A second version portrays him as having lived as both man and woman at different times. On being asked by Hera and Zeus to judge whether men or women enjoy sex more, he claimed that his experience proved women got more enjoyment from sex. He was blinded as a punishment by the angry Hera, but granted prophetic powers by Zeus. Both stories are significant for Propertius—Pallas links Hercules to Odysseus, while Hera's enmity toward Tiresias recalls her pivotal role in Hercules' labours.²⁰ The theme of gender transgression echoes both Hercules' pride in his emasculation when enslaved by Omphale (47–50) and the foregrounding of his gender fluidity by the focus on outward and visual signs in the contrast presented in lines 45–50.²¹ Having encouraged his audience to expect Callimachean aetiologies, the poet confounds our inevitable anticipation of a "Bath of Pallas," but this is not the only available way of interpreting Propertius's scheme. "Pallas" is a doubly significant name for all readers of the *Aeneid*, first, as the goddess Minerva and, second, as Evander's son. Pallas stands by Augustus in his struggle against Antony on the shield of Aeneas (8.698–700), whilst the climax of Augustus's triumphal procession a few lines later takes him to the threshold of the temple of Palatine Apollo.²² The Virgilian Tiber explains that the Palatine is part of the Arcadian heritage of Evander, whose ancestor, another Pallas, gave his name to their town, Pallanteum (8.51–44).²³

20 We may wonder whether this offers an echo of Juno's *ira* in the *Aeneid*; Ovid's association of Juno with Livia suggests yet another level of significance for Propertius's treatment of gender in this elegy. See Newlands 1995.44–47.

21 Staples 1998.28 notices how Tiresias's sex change plays an implicit role in the myth as recounted by Propertius. The tacit presence of this variant emphasises the way in which Propertius constructs a discourse of reading between the lines.

22 One subject of the decorative plaques from the temple of Apollo on the Palatine may give further cause for thought: Apollo and Hercules fighting over the Delphic tripod. As Kellum 1997.158–61 suggests, this must be a veiled reference to Actium; the image represents a point in the struggle when it might potentially go either way. Kellum suggests that these plaques, along with others representing the Danaids (cf. Propertius 2.31) and Cleopatra, make the Palatine temple into an Actian reader crammed with allusions to the horrors of civil war. The importance of the Danaid motif for the *Aeneid* is noted by Keith 2000.77–78. For other examples of this kind of imagery, see Zanker 1988.58–65, who describes a clay mould for a bowl from c. 30 B.C.E. which depicts Hercules/Antony and Omphale/Cleopatra wearing each other's clothes.

23 Spence 1999 argues persuasively for an implicit connexion between "Pallas" and Palatine in the *Aeneid*, and although Vesta's Palatine immigration (12 B.C.E.) was probably a few years in the future when this poem was composed, the network of associations constructed by Virgil demonstrates that many of these *topoi* were in the air, even in the 20s B.C.E.

Tiresias is not, however, the only signifier that vision—and openness to view—are pivotal in this dynamic reconfiguration and realignment of Rome past and present. An exploration of the importance of looking and sight brings us first to the poem's caves (9, 12, 33). Cacus, the inhabitant of the first cave, defends his secret (the stolen cattle) with *implacidas fores* ("implacable doors," 14), but these are no match for the Herculean rage that smashes them down, bringing us to the essential Herculean paradox. Hercules might appear to be an expansive and liberating force—particularly when he follows the opening of Cacus's cave by shooing his cattle into the fields—but the civiliser is himself uncivilised. Propertius's reference to Geryon, the original owner of the cattle (1–2), demands recognition of Hercules not just as the weary Propertian cowherd but also as an outlaw or robber, therefore essentially a double of Cacus (18). Secondly, although *arua* (19) can mean "fields" in the general sense, it does also have the more specific sense of ploughed or cultivated land, and this suggests that Hercules' stolen cattle are now taking over land already cultivated by "natives." His naming of the fields for Rome as the future Forum Boarium highlights this.

Moving on to the second and longer section of the poem, we find that Hercules approaches another enclosed, secret-bearing, space. He hears the laughter of "enclosed" girls (23), and, as we approach the shrine with Hercules, we find his visual experience precisely mapped out for us through a cluster of enclosing, excluding, and visually obscuring words: *umbrosus* (24), *clausa* (25), *retego* (26), *limen* (27), *umbra* (30), *antrum* (33), *secretus* (60), *opacus* (61), *ianua* (62). The close but subtly differentiated relationship between cave and grove is emphasised by the use of *metuendus* (9) and *uerendus* (53) respectively. It is this shadowy, enclosed world that Hercules physically breaks open, motivated by (heroic) wrath (62). But as was the case after his assault on Cacus, rather than opening up the embryonic Roman landscape in his triumph, Hercules again uses his victory as a limiting and restrictive force. Girls will forever be excluded from Hercules' Ara Maxima (68–69).

If we now return to Hercules' potential role as a model for Augustus as displayed in Virgil, then Propertius's development of the story suggests two particularly significant interpretations. Sending up and playing upon the Virgilian treatment of Hercules' role as civiliser and prototype Roman, this Hercules can still *appear* to have a liberating and civilising agenda, but, in fact, the disparate lengths of the two main sections of the poem suggest that, like the generalissimos of the first century B.C.E., he is less concerned with the Roman future of this primitive space than with his own self-

aggrandisement. Alternatively, Propertius also makes a more appropriately “Augustan” reading available to his audience. The primeval Italian landscape constructed in the poem is dank and wooded and peopled with a monstrous robber and a mysterious female cult. Into this unstructured and anti-Roman world strides Hercules, and, by the end of his adventure, its watery and unstable ground and shadowy groves are codified, regulated, and at least partially dried up (63–64). In both readings, Hercules imposes a destined Roman future on the promised land, but, by making these alternative interpretations available, Propertius exposes a problem at the heart of Augustan culture: the choice of interpretations may seem to be ours, but he shows us how difficult it is to choose or to predict the consequences of our decisions.

GENDER AND CIVIC IDENTITY

Parce oculis, hospes, lucoque abscede uerendo (“Spare your eyes, stranger, and withdraw from this dread grove,” 53). The priestess’s words threaten Hercules’ vision, but they also suggest that his violation of the grove, and, in turn, our voyeuristic collusion, will have an ambivalent result. In order to understand the implications of this threat for our understanding of the full scope of Propertius’s programmatic destabilisation, we need to concentrate on the nature of the proposed punishment (loss of vision) and the poem’s interrogation of gender norms based upon physical appearance.

Hercules’ apparent pride in his self-professed transvestism when pleading to be allowed into the sacred space to quench his thirst is not as straightforward as it seems. Hercules argues that he is entitled to enter the shrine because of physical changes that he has made to his appearance and behaviour in the past, which, he maintains, entitle him to claim honorary female status.²⁴ These changes are his adoption of the Sidonian *palla* and the breastband and his performance of servile tasks, but rather than proving him a second Tiresias, Propertius’s description of Hercules’ feminised past emphasises the hero’s essential male signifiers: his hairy chest and hard hands are retained and even highlighted by their feminised context. Furthermore, the context for Hercules’ appropriation of women’s costume

24 Not all the changes are in the past, as Warden 1980.107 observes: the word *pulvis* for the dust that covers Hercules’ beard is feminine, rather than the more usual masculine. Even gendered language conspires to destabilise the hero.

implicitly associates women and female attire with slavery, a polar opposite to normative Roman masculinity.²⁵ That Hercules' dominatrix Omphale is unnamed only gives added bite to subversive overtones of Virgilian Dido and of Cleopatra, overtones set in place when Hercules refers to his sojourn in Lydia.²⁶ Hercules/Herakles, of course, is a Greek god, but a Greek god at the onset of a period of change during which emperors in the wake of Augustus would seek to transform him into an archetype for Roman imperial power. This means that, like Octavian/Augustus, Hercules is undergoing a metamorphosis, shedding some of his past associations and emerging remodelled. The decadent and eastern nuances evoked by these lines are part of a nexus linking the "old Hercules" with Antony and his problematic overtones, but, by connecting the super-male Hercules in drag with the cult of Bona Dea, Propertius encourages his audience to speculate on a further complex of associations.

Both Antony's wife Fulvia and Augustus's wife Livia were the subjects of negative political propaganda, Fulvia for her active and thus transgressive role in the Perusine War, and Livia for what was believed to be her excessive (and hence improper and inappropriate) influence on Augustus and Roman politics. This gendered rhetoric of insult had to have an emasculating effect on the husbands involved, and if we see echoes of Cleopatra, Dido, and other demonised Roman women in nameless Omphale, then Hercules' plea ought to be all the more convincing.²⁷ Yet it is also unlikely that an Augustan audience for this poem could be unaware of a further layer of connexion between Hercules, Augustus, the Ara Maxima, and the temple

25 See Platter 1995.220. The popularity of artistic representations of Hercules and Omphale invites us to gaze transgressively upon a feminised Hercules as we would upon the female body. Here Hercules is both (descriptive) artist and object. See Segal 1998 on the gendered body in the *Metamorphoses*. Elsner 1996 articulates how the gaze can be eroticised while Sharrock (forthcoming) approaches the gender implications of the intersection between looking and reading. Joshel 1992 suggests ways in which politics can be inscribed on the female body.

26 On the pejorative overtones of "Sidonian," see Hexter 1992.347–50; Hercules' Sidonian *palla* may be even more complicated, if we understand Sidonian Dido to signify "virago" (i.e., unnatural woman). Zanker 1988.45–53, 57–65 discusses ways in which Antony and Cleopatra could be constructed as Hercules and Omphale. On Plutarch's version of the character assassination of Antony in his *Life of Antony*, see Russell 1998. Cf. Plutarch *Comparison of Demetrius and Antony* 3. On Omphale and gender transgression, see Kampen 1996.

27 See Russell 1998 on Antony.

of Bona Dea. As noted by Ovid in the *Fasti*, Livia chose to echo Augustus's temple restoration programme by renovating the temple of Bona Dea.²⁸

This "Augustan" temple, standing on the Aventine, was said by Ovid to have been founded originally by a Vestal Virgin named Claudia (*Fasti* 5.155), and Livia's Claudian connexions—both by marriage and birth—offer an excellent reason for her choice of building project, but the origins of the temple may have been more problematic than Ovid suggests. Cicero records (*de Domo* 136–37) how, in 136 B.C.E., the Vestal Virgin Licinia had founded a shrine on the same spot; ten years later, she was buried alive, having been convicted of losing her virginity. Clearly, Licinia is not a model that Livia would care to be associated with. Ovid tweaks the record with his ideally virginal Claudia, who may be intended to evoke the wrongly accused Claudia Quinta and her miraculous transportation of Magna Mater into Rome (*Fasti* 4.305–44). We may speculate as to whether Ovid intended to pay a compliment to Livia, to comment implicitly on the ongoing process of historical revision, or even to do both.²⁹ If the public connexion that Ovid emphasises between the imperial couple as temple restorers was intended to emphasise their unity and mutual loyalty, why might Propertius's Hercules, a proto-Augustus figure, destroy a shrine closely associated with Livia's patronage? To answer this question we need to return

28 We do not know when Livia's restoration of this temple took place, except that it was before Ovid's composition of the *Fasti*. If, as is possible, it post-dates Propertius 4.9, then the nuances which this poem would immediately have made available would have added an extra dimension to both poem and building project. We can compare the significance of these potential successive readings to the simultaneous availability of Virgilian, Propertian, and Ovidian versions of Hercules for readers of Lucan *B. C.* 4.593–660 and Silius Italicus's Hannibal. On Hercules in Virgil, Lucan, and Silius, see Keith 2000.52–57.

29 Through his treatment of the cult of Hercules at the Ara Maxima and the inextricable links he provides between this and the cult of Bona Dea on the Aventine, Propertius inexorably draws Augustus (and Livia) into this final collection of poetry, an alternative couple to Propertius and Cynthia, or even Antony and Cleopatra. Livia's increasing centrality in Augustan ideology is reflected in her active engagement in temple rebuilding, as Purcell 1986 suggests (see, e.g., Ovid *Fasti* 5.153–58 on her restoration of the Bona Dea temple). One of the early projects sponsored by Augustus was his stepfather L. Marcius Philippus's restoration of the temple of Hercules Musarum in 29 B.C.E. The symmetry between Augustus's sponsorship of this restoration, Pompey's restoration of the temple of Hercules Pompeianus (dedicated to Hercules Invictus), Scipio Aemilianus's foundation of the temple of Hercules Victor, and Sulla's reconstruction of the temple of Hercules Magnus Custos is indicative of the need for Augustan reclamation of Hercules. On the implications of these foundations and refoundations, see Ziolkowski 1992.19–21, 46–56. On the temple of Hercules Musarum, see Newlands 1995.210–19.

to our temporal loop: without destruction (whether by Hercules or by the ravages of time or neglect), the Bona Dea temple will not be available for Livia's restoration. Without Propertius, we might argue, Livia is out of a job.

This reading suggests that Propertius is staking a claim for the role of literature in the symbolic mapping of the Roman experience, but, typically, even this reading is unstable. The Bona Dea cult in this elegy bears little relationship to the civic cult that contributed to the continuing well-being and prosperity of the Roman state.³⁰ Propertius's giggling *puellae* (33) are straight out of the world of love elegy, strikingly unlike the *matronae* and Vestal Virgins who actually carried out the rites. Instead of being situated in a mysterious, liminal grove, as in Propertius's pre-Roman Rome, Bona Dea's temple was on the Aventine, and her rites were celebrated annually in the house of a magistrate with *imperium*. The playful girls of this poem have no greater civic function, either narratologically or within the public expression of the actual Roman cult. Hercules' centrality for Rome's future is emphasised, the worship of Bona Dea is never explicitly addressed. Within the world of the poem, possession of a name grants authority. This connexion highlights the dislocation of women from the civic future and the contrast between female silence and male appropriative speech. Unlike Hercules, who rejoices in an excess of names, the women who feature in this poem remain nameless, a condition that is exaggerated by Propertius's choice of *dea femina* (25) rather than the more specific euphemism Bona Dea to describe the goddess of the shrine.³¹ The sacred, secluded stream, which flows for girls alone (59–60), seems to suggest a restriction of female access to the national space.³² In the national space structured by Propertius's

30 E.g., Cicero *ad Att.* 1.13.3. On Roman traditions of Bona Dea, see Wiseman 1974, Beard, North, and Price 1998.1.129–30, 138, Staples 1998.11–51.

31 The only female to receive a name of sorts is Athena, and her "Pallas" is a depersonalising epithet. The lack of personal names for Roman women independent of their (paternal) family identity highlights the significance of Propertius's impotent, nameless women.

32 Pliny comments (*NH* 10.79) that flies and dogs were excluded from the Ara Maxima, and Plutarch—after Varro—narrows this down to dogs (*RQ* 90 = *Mor.* 285E–F). This may be the result of a misunderstanding of *κυνόμια* (see McDonough 1999.476), but conjures up an image of the sanctuary surrounded by swarms of flies, packs of dogs, and herds of women! We may wonder whether Propertius's exposition of this myth of feminine exclusion could also be highlighting the paradox whereby men were excluded from the rites of Bona Dea, but these rites had to take place in the house of a magistrate, allowing a symbolic male presence (see Staples 1998.42). This would be particularly ironic in a world where family and female influence were inexorably gaining greater importance as more and more power was gradually appropriated by Augustus and the imperial family.

Hercules, genealogy and individual identity triumph over collective female organisation, but in that triumph is a prefiguration of Augustus and Livia, the husband and wife team.

It is difficult to imagine that any Roman reader could visualise a self-confessedly transvestite Hercules forcing his way into the Bona Dea shrine without recollecting Publius Clodius Pulcher's transgression in 62 B.C.E. when he illicitly entered Caesar's house—disguised as a woman—where the rites of Bona Dea were being celebrated.³³ Both transgressions involve playing a role and adopting the visual signs of femaleness to gain a complicated end. Hercules may have wanted a drink, but, on another level, the language used to express his raging thirst, his heat, and his draining dry of the stream suggests a sexually polarised satisfaction. Through the implicit parallels with Clodius—and, more ironically, with Livy's canonisation of the rape of the Sabine women and Propertius's version of Tarpeia (*Elegy* 4.4)—Propertius's mythic discourse may also allow Bona Dea and women to vindicate their strategic roles within Roman ideology. Depending on one's perspective, Clodius was pursuing sexual conquest (Caesar's wife) or acting to undermine a key sacred function of the Roman state, but, in both instances, the primary issues are the susceptibility of gender to acting out and the civic importance of gender differentiation. Ovid echoes Propertius's focus on the destabilisation of boundaries, of difference and opposition, in his story of Faunus's disastrous attempt to seduce Omphale, who turns out to be Hercules in drag (*Fasti* 2.303–58). The clothes swapping of the lovers loses its connotations of slavery in this story, but the significance of appearance and its deceptive potential remain at the heart of the complex of available meanings.³⁴ For Ovid's Faunus, clothing represents deception, and thus he abandons clothes, but as Tiresias's encounter with Pallas demonstrates, nudity and the body laid bare are not the answer in Propertius's scheme. Yet even this almost excessive tangle of connexions around Clodius and the cult of Bona Dea has dynastic ramifications. Fulvia's appropriation of Antony's masculine role at Rome makes her previous marriage to cross-dressing Clodius take on added significance for the gender inversion paraded in this poem. Their daughter Clodia would become successively

33 For the persistence of this story in Augustan Rome, see Herbert-Brown 1994.143. This story also has overtones of Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*: playing out the hypermasculinity of the drag queen.

34 See Lindheim 1998. On this story in Ovid, see Fantham 1983.

Antony's stepdaughter and, briefly, Octavian's wife.³⁵ These implicit literary echoes of politically loaded gender transgressions demand that we attend to the increasingly central position of sex and marriage in Augustan ideology.³⁶

Ultimately, Hercules fails in his plea to be taken seriously as a woman because his rhetoric fails to convince the Priestess. His triumph depends upon active and violent intervention rather than feminine "wiles" and persuasion, and thus, for all that Hercules does undergo a series of metamorphoses in this elegy, his "victory" is predicated on his failure to act out a female role successfully. Paradoxically, Clodius's legal "victory"—his acquittal in 61 B.C.E. on charges of sacrilege—could both re-emphasise the imperfections in his drag act whilst also drawing out the performance element in the Roman legal system. To emerge victorious, Clodius had to "act out" his civic identity in a culturally appropriate manner (through the courts) and prove that he had never tried to don a female disguise. For Clodius, an affirmation of his Roman masculinity was dependent upon the notoriety of his failure as a woman (though we may suspect that his legal victory was a testament to his financial backing). Similarly, Octavian configured his normative male *Romanitas* in opposition to a feminised Antony, the imperfect Roman; yet as with Actian propaganda, so with Hercules also: fixed meaning remains problematic. Reassessing Propertius's use of *uates* (57) may assist. If Tiresias gained by his transgression, then, logically, the same should be true for Hercules. Athena's complicated birth and patronage of both male and female pursuits mark her out as gender transgressive, something that is emphasised by Tiresias's gazing upon her strong limbs and the brief reference to the absence of her characteristic Gorgon (58). Both parties are implicated in a cycle of gender instability, yet the blindness

35 Marriage to Antony's stepdaughter Clodia must have been part of the triumviral packaging, but Clodia's fate mirrored that of Octavia, similarly married off for dynastic and propagandist purposes. Yet while we tend to remember Octavia the wronged wife, Clodia has slipped through the historical net. Octavian divorced Clodia in the wake of the Perusine war, so we might construct Clodia's divorce as part of the fallout of her mother's military interference and political ambition (see, e.g., Velleius Paterculus 2.65.2; Cassius Dio 46.55–56, 47.1–2, 14–15, 18–20, 48.21; Suetonius *Augustus* 62.1; Appian *B.C.* 4.3, 7; Plutarch *Antony* 20.1, 21.4). On the tangle of sexual and marital connexions between Clodius, Caesar, Antony, and Octavian, see Fox 1999.

36 Could it be ironic that Propertius goes to such lengths to emphasise the formative structural role played by women in Roman history and myth, and the persistence of Cynthia, in his aetiological collection? Perhaps the ultimate aetiology is an implicit meditation on the causes of Propertius's poetry itself.

inflicted upon Tiresias is followed by prophetic clarity of vision. Furthermore, in an Augustan context, Propertius's emphatic use of *uates* (57) suggests that Tiresias is gaining more than a prophetic gaze: he can also assume the role of poetic *uates*, thus recalling Hercules' earlier visual and linguistic appropriation of this *ur* landscape. In this way, Tiresias's prophetic reward may be emphasising the emptiness of the Priestess's threats and suggesting that only by breaking down normative boundaries can one develop any real understanding. Hercules' transgression of the gender rules that govern the shrine may therefore suggest the possibility of a greater poetic and civic good, and even a valorisation of Roman masculinity, yet the ensuing hardening of gender differentiation can also offer a more nuanced message. Hercules simultaneously excludes the eroticised *puellae* of love elegy (69) and appropriates a kind of vatic stance (67–70), perhaps self-consciously mirroring the apparent new beginning staked out by Propertius in his fourth book of elegies. Working with this reading, Propertius's poetic programme can offer an ironic reflection on the process of poetic composition in Augustan Rome and on the generic boundaries that define poetic forms.³⁷

This concern with generic and gender boundaries suggests that we reappraise the relationship between the Propertian and Virgilian Hercules. In *Elegy* 4.9, Propertius rehearses a narrative of masculinity that draws relevance from the heroic model set in place in Virgil's narration of Trojan Aeneas's journey to the site of Rome. Of course this theme of the foreigner who becomes Roman evokes not only Hercules but also Virgil's development of Cybele/Magna Mater and her worship as a defining feature of the Trojan exiles for their new (Italian) fellow countrymen. Furthermore, it implicitly recalls the otherness of the Trojan interlopers and Rome's call upon the Phrygian goddess in the face of a renewed threat from Carthage in 204 B.C.E. In the *Aeneid*, Magna Mater comes to symbolise Rome (6.777–95), suggesting that Hercules is not just a prototype of Aeneas but also implicated in the explicitly foreign cultic structure of Roman worship of Magna Mater. Alongside Virgil's Aeneas and Magna Mater, his arrival plays a formative role in the foundation and continuing vitality of Rome.

The cult of Magna Mater in Rome was characterised by the Galli, eunuch priests who were associated with the excessive attention to personal

37 Propertius's use of *aeternum*, "for all future time" (70), emphasises the importance of temporal simultaneity whilst also evoking, e.g., Tibullus 2.5.23, Livy 28.28, 4.4.

ornament and hairdressing that are described in the *Aeneid* by Iarbas as typical of the emasculated east.³⁸ Iarbas's emphasis on Phrygia, the traditional home of Cybele, and his use of *semiuir* are echoed by Numanus Regulus's identification of these attributes with the Trojan exiles (9.617–20), thus forming a wider pattern of connexion between the Trojan proto-Romans and the cult of Magna Mater.³⁹ Virgil's foundation of Rome integrates these ambiguously foreign, Trojan catalysts, but the ambivalent figure of the Gallus may offer yet another counterpart for the Propertian Hercules. The Hercules of *Elegy* 4.9 uses his appearance as a form of attack against the defences of the shrine, and cites his lion-conquering activities (45–46) immediately before his loving description of his female attire. Traditionally, an ability to control lions is as characteristic of the eunuch Gallus as it is of Hercules himself.⁴⁰

HISTORY AND RHETORICS OF IDENTITY

Hercules' first assault on the sacred precinct is verbal, but his rhetorical failure is the precursor of his explosion into violence. Perhaps this inevitably recalls the outcome of Clodius's transgression. Like Propertius's Hercules, his self-presentation as a credible woman failed, but whereas Hercules' narratological failure is verbal, Clodius successfully defended himself in court when charged with tricking his way into the Bona Dea rites. The victorious Clodius's performative victory in the courts was a public vindication of his "innocence," yet, ironically, the failure of Hercules' persuasive rhetoric may still rebound to his credit in Propertius's scheme. Hercules the failed orator is also Hercules the hero whose defeat drives him into a warped *aristeia* of victorious, masculine aggression. This dilemma forced upon Hercules and his readers further destabilises the epic conventions and norms of heroic behaviour adopted (and adapted) by Virgil in the *Aeneid*, and plays on Roman ambivalence surrounding the Galli's ecstatic worship of Magna Mater.

38 Iarbas calls Aeneas *ille Paris cum semiuiro comitatu* ("that Paris with his band of half-men," 4.215), expressing contempt for his perfume-drenched locks (*madens*, 4.216).

39 Also note how Turnus longs to drag the perfumed and curled locks of *semiuir*, "half-man" Aeneas in the dust (*Aeneid* 12.97–100).

40 In the *Anthologia Palatina*, we find a Gallus travelling through Asia Minor. While sheltering in a cave, he meets a lion, and although the lion attacks him, he fends him off using his ritual music, frenzied dance, and religious insignia (6.217–20, 234, 237).

Propertius's appropriation of Hercules' formative role in the foundation of Rome provides him with a model for the processes of historical and cultural realignment that were sponsored by Augustus. By destabilising Hercules' adventure (and Rome's beginnings), Propertius undermines the process of writing and consuming history, forcing us to confront its instability and openness to successive revisions. The shifting landscape and its hero's confused identity address the civic and cultic alterity at the heart of the Roman experience. Wrath is the defining factor in each of Hercules' eruptions in this poem, echoing Aeneas's *furor* and offering us a second non-Roman who can stand as a precursor to the developed civic identity. Both are figures with disturbing non-Roman associations who are in turn normalised, and Hercules' Roman assimilation is prefigured in the failure of his persuasive transvestism and the success of his brute force. Like the Galli, his transgressive elements have to be codified and contained within a civic and cultic framework for their presence to be acceptable and beneficial. Just as Aeneas is transformed from Trojan to proto-Roman, and Augustus awaits elevation from *diui filius* to *diuus Augustus*, Hercules completes his Propertian journey as an Italic deity, Sancus—still non-Roman, but allowed a privileged position within the urban civic framework.⁴¹ These closing lines of *Elegy* 4.9 are vitally important for our understanding of Ovid's poetic response in the *Fasti* because they signal the political and cultural weight that Propertius is attaching to the composition of verse. For Ovid, Hercules' approval concludes *Fasti* 6.797–812, and the harmony of this ending could be linked to Augustus's return to Rome in 13 B.C.E. If so, then Ovid's Herculean ending becomes a palimpsest of Propertius's poem, redrawing and redefining the return of Augustus that Propertius can only prefigure, and configuring a harmony to which Propertius is unwilling to commit.⁴²

In this context, the concluding lines of Juno's speech at *Aeneid* 12.823–25 become particularly relevant. The conquered Latins are to change

41 See Fox 1996.174. We know almost nothing about the deity whose full name appears as Semo Sancus Dius Fidius. His name is associated with "sanctioning" and appears in connexion with treaties. Is Propertius punning on etymologies of Sancus and Augustus? Hercules' emphatic *uir* (4.9.34) would seem to deny the possibility of apotheosis, but the *deus* of lines 13 and 32 complicates this usage. Could Propertius be playing upon the sense of *uir* as "husband," foreshadowing the erotics of the burning desire with which Hercules bursts into the sanctuary?

42 See Barchiesi 1997.268–71 and, especially, 269 n. 14. But unsurprisingly, even this harmony is destabilised by Ovid's omission of the "restored" nature of the temple of Hercules Musarum.

neither their name, language, nor clothing to that of the Trojan victors. For Juno, tormentor of Hercules and Aeneas, language, naming, and appearance are of pivotal importance. In a world shaped by the conflicting forces of powerful and emotive propaganda, this focus on words, language, and constructed appearance, developed through an allusive, mannered, and destabilising narrative of a figure at the heart of the Augustan pantheon, must have had particular resonance.⁴³ In *Elegy* 4.9, Propertius performs the impossible task of constructing a monolithic Augustan identity for Roman culture heroes whose continuing vitality must be found in their mythic unruliness: Cacus's defeat is not final, instead it is subject to ongoing literary revision, while the gendered struggle symbolised by the foundation of the Ara Maxima remains central to Augustan Rome. In the end, the poet must cast doubt on the long-term viability of any attempt to impose an authorised version upon the complexity of myths and memories that pervade the rocks, bones, flesh, and blood of a living community.

University of Birmingham

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43 On the interplay between Virgilian and Ovidian versions of Juno's hatred of Hercules, see Newlands 1995.223–29. Propertius's configuration of this relationship must play a part in Newlands's 1995.223 suggestion that Ovid *Fasti* 6.800 echoes Propertius 4.11.88.

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