

REDRESSING ELEGY'S *PUELLA*: PROPERTIUS IV AND THE RHETORIC OF FASHION*

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Much recent criticism of Roman love elegy, especially Propertian love elegy, has been concerned with the exposure of elegy's *ego* and *puella* as poetic constructions whose 'partially realistic' characteristics and actions serve as metaphorical representations of the poet's writing practice and poetic ideals.¹ As Duncan Kennedy has pointed out, however, this discourse of representation has already threatened to create its own limitations of applicability, as it privileges the 'partial realism' of love elegy's first-person narratives, in which an authorial male narrator (*ego*) writes of his female subject (*puella*), at the expense of the more openly unrealistic representational strategies of works such as Ovid's *Heroides* and *Fasti* or, the more immediate concern of this article, the fourth book of Propertius' elegies.²

Indeed, while the changing characters and voices of Propertius IV (or at least the dead and living Cynthias of IV.7 and IV.8) are regularly adduced as evidence *against* the realism of the *puella* in the earlier books, these mythological, legendary-historical, or otherwise unrealistic characters have not been afforded consideration as representations or reflections of their own, 'different' elegiac discourse.³ But if Cynthia is both a character in and characteristic of Propertian love elegy, might we not expect the characters of Book IV to define and reflect their own discourse in a similar metaphorical fashion? And if textual realism is a conventional rather than a natural phenomenon, then a work's formal strategies should be especially discernible when its characters are more readily perceived as 'unrealistic' constructions. The purpose of this paper, then, is to explore the strategies of Book IV. In particular, I will examine Propertius' remanipulation of the visual imagery, i.e., the physical characteristics, clothing and props so important to characterization in the first three books, as he constructs new characters, and thereby a new elegy, in his final book.

Through a manipulation of the poetic wardrobe, Propertius introduces new patriotic players into Book IV, including Hercules, a Roman *matrona*, the vestal Tarpeia, a 'real' historical Cleopatra,⁴ and even the gods Vertumnus and Apollo. But in fact the characters his elegiac stream presents, as well as the situations they face, are often an uncomfortable mixture of patriotic and amatory ideals, as women wield (or wish to wield) weapons and historic, even epic-sized men take on elegiac traits. In the poems, several of these characters attempt to use a change of clothing as an enabling strategy in the hope that it will somehow allow them to change from one identity to another, thus enabling them to cross boundaries otherwise forbidden. I will argue that this 'rhetoric of fashion',⁵ and especially the pictures that result from it, can be read as a dramatic visualization of the incongruous combination, or clash, of two poetic ideals, which is a central concern of Propertius' fourth book.

Within the confines of this article, I will consider closely two examples, Hercules and Vertumnus.⁶ Hercules' double characterization in IV.9, and especially the hero's attempt to

* An abbreviated version of this paper was delivered at the American Philological Association Annual Meeting in New Orleans, 1992. My warmest appreciation goes to Stephen Hinds and Jeff Tatum, who carefully read earlier versions of the paper and offered many useful suggestions as well as encouragement. In addition, I thank Ludwig Koenen, David Potter, Daniel Pullen, and the Editorial Committee for their comments.

¹ On the *ego*, especially P. Veyne, *Roman Erotic Elegy: Love, Poetry and the West* (1988); on the *puella*, M. Wyke, 'Written women: Propertius' *Scripta Puella*', *JRS* 77 (1987), 47-61; also 'Mistress and metaphor in Augustan elegy', *Helios* 16 (1989), 25-47, and 'Reading female flesh: *Amores* 3.1', in A. Cameron (ed.), *History as Text* (1989). Cf. also A. R. Sharrock, 'Womanaufacture', *JRS* 81 (1991), 36-49.

² D. F. Kennedy, *The Arts of Love: Five Studies in the Discourse of Roman Love Elegy* (1993), 13. Kennedy (13-21) discusses the representation of the first-person male authorial *persona* in Tibullus 1.1-3, 5, 6.

³ cf. e.g., Veyne, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 48. An exception is M.

Wyke, 'The elegiac woman at Rome', *PCPhS* 33 (1987), 153-78; however, Wyke is concerned primarily with the diversity of female voices, and she does not consider the issue of Book IV's characters as representatives of a new, constructed discourse in the manner suggested here.

⁴ With the question of a 'real' Cleopatra already the ambiguity between representation and reality is highlighted; for Cleopatra, even before her death, was for the Romans both real and a construction to be manipulated for propagandist purposes. Cf. M. Wyke, 'Augustan Cleopatras: female power and poetic authority', in A. Powell (ed.), *Roman Poetry and Propaganda in the Age of Augustus* (1992), 98-140.

⁵ For an analysis of the rhetorical use of 'written fashion' as a semiotic system, cf. R. Barthes, *Système de la mode* (1967); also Barthes, *S/Z* (1974). Indeed, fashion metaphors are often an important means by which a text cloaks its existence as text to instill a sense of 'reality'.

⁶ The additional characters of Book IV will be treated in a larger study of elegiac decorum in Book IV, now in progress.

reconstruct himself as a *puella*, complicates the textual 'reality' of the mistress (and the *ego*)⁷ in the earlier poems, and also provides a vivid dramatization of elegy's new look in Book IV. In addition, the rhetoric of Hercules' argument foregrounds the issue of decorum, an important aspect of poetic discourse, as well as a significant stylistic and cultural concept for the Romans generally. It is the second example, the god Vertumnus in IV.2, who revises the rules of elegiac decorum and introduces the 'rhetoric of fashion' for the new characters of Book IV.

I. THE CLASHING POETICS OF BOOK IV (IV. I)

In his fourth book of elegies, Propertius proposes to expand the focus of his elegiac poetry beyond the confines of love elegy with patriotic, aetiological poems. In doing this, he sets up an on-going dialogue with the poems and poetics of his first three books. The opening poem of Book IV, which itself falls into two parts, illustrates even in its structure the tension between the two, seemingly mutually exclusive, poetic ideals to which Propertius aspires.⁸ I will consider this poem briefly, examining in particular the key passages that demonstrate the poet's conflicting programmes.

The first lines of the poem concentrate on the greatness of Rome, particularly in comparison to her humble beginnings. Much as in the *Aeneid*,⁹ Rome's ancestry is traced to the Trojans, from whose ashes she has risen (cf. 53-4). Then in IV.1.55-70, Propertius announces his new subject.

optima nutricum nostris lupa Martia rebus, qualia creverunt moenia lacte tuo!	55
moenia namque pio coner disponere versu: ei mihi, quod nostro est parvus in ore sonus!	
sed tamen exiguo quodcumque e pectore rivi fluxerit, hoc patriae serviet omne meae.	60
Ennius hirsuta cingat sua dicta corona: mi folia ex hedera porrige, Bacche, tua, ut nostris tumefacta superbiat Umbria libris, Umbria Romani patria Callimachi!	
scandentis quisquis cernit de vallibus arces, ingenio muros aestimet ille meo!	65
Roma, fave, tibi surgit opus: date candida, cives, omina et inceptis dextera cantet avis!	
sacra diesque canam et cognomina prisca locorum: has meus ad metas sudet oportet equus. ¹⁰	70

Best of nurses for our fortunes, she-wolf of Mars,
what walls have grown from your milk!
For I would try to lay out those walls in pious verse:
Ah me, that a voice so small is in my mouth!
But still, whatever stream flows from my puny breast,
all of this will go to serve my country.
Let Ennius wreath his own words with a ragged garland:
provide for me leaves from your ivy, Bacchus,

⁷ Hercules' attempt to reconstruct himself within the poem's discourse places him in the position of the poet (or here *ego*) as creator.

⁸ On the two poetic programmes and 'new themes' of Book IV, see W. A. Camps, *Propertius Elegies Book IV* (1965), 1-6; H. E. Pillinger, 'Some Callimachean influences on Propertius Book 4', *HSCP* 73 (1969), 171-99; J. Van Sickle, 'Propertius (*vates*): Augustan ideology, topography and poetics in elegy IV,1', *Dialoghi di Archeologia* 8 (1974), 116-45; M. Hubbard, *Propertius* (1974), 116-56; C. W. Macleod, 'Propertius 4,1', *PLLS* 1 (1976),

141-53; J. F. Miller, 'Callimachus and the Augustan aetiological elegy', *ANRW* II.30.1 (1982), 371-417; H.-P. Stahl, *Propertius: 'Love' and 'War'* (1985), 248-305; and Wyke, *op. cit.* (n. 3).

⁹ On which these lines are based in part; also important for this poem (and Book IV) is Tibullus II.5.

¹⁰ Unless otherwise noted, citations from Propertius are from the Teubner edition of Fedeli (1984). All translations or paraphrases are my own and aim to be helpful rather than poetic.

so that Umbria may become swollen with arrogance because of my books,
 Umbria, native land of the Roman Callimachus!
 Whoever sees the citadels climbing up from the valleys,
 let him measure those walls by my talent!
 Rome, grant your favour; this work rises for you; grant shining omens, citizens,
 and let a propitious bird sing for my undertakings!
 I shall sing rites and days and the ancient names of places:
 these are the goals toward which my steed must sweat.

Lines 69–70 clearly mark a break from the personal, amatory poetry of the first books and introduce the poet's patriotic, aetiological themes. But in the lines just before these, we see a hint of hesitation, as if the poet would like to back out but does not (57–60). Callimachean imagery fills these lines: the poet's voice is small, not really fitted to the big themes he is about to attempt. Also, his flow of inspiration is small (59), as is right for the refined style of the Callimachean-type poet.¹¹ In his earlier books, Propertius often refused to attempt epic or patriotic topics on this same ground.¹² But now he says that whatever stream he has, *all of this* will be used for such topics.¹³

In 61–4, there is again a hint of *recusatio* in the poet's promise. Ennius' crown is called *hirsuta* here, a stylistic label; he was viewed by the Augustans as an important predecessor, but was considered 'bristly' or 'shaggy', that is unrefined, in his style.¹⁴ Propertius seeks inspiration from Bacchus, and he hopes that his home-town Umbria may take pride in her offspring, the Roman Callimachus. Then in 67, he asks Rome herself for favour. His sentiment is clear: 'if you (i.e. Rome) can rise to greatness (cf. *maxima Roma* IV.1.1) from small beginnings, then perhaps I can as well.'¹⁵

Propertius' project for Book IV is set: a new, bigger, patriotic poetry, which really calls for bigger waters and strengths than he has; but he will exhaust his puny supply to attempt to speak of the rites and days and monuments of Rome, albeit trying to keep to his Callimachean principles of smallness and delicacy. It would seem a compromise has been reached, and that Propertius has introduced his Roman equivalent to Callimachus' *Aetia*.¹⁶

But there is another voice in the poem. For just after the poet's proclamation, the astrologer Horos¹⁷ arrives to try and stop him, prophesying sorrow for the poet and reminding him that 'love elegy' is his lot, and he should not expect to escape from the aspects of love that rule his life. Horos first speaks in 71–4, where he warns Propertius that he is heading in the wrong direction.

'Quo ruis imprudens, vage, dicere fata, Properti?
 non sunt a dextro condita fila colo.
 accersis lacrimas cantantis; aversus Apollo:
 poscis ab invita verba pigenda lyra.'

'Where are you hurrying rashly, wayward Propertius, to speak your fate?
 These threads have been spun from no propitious distaff.
 You are bringing tears with your singing; Apollo has turned away;
 You demand grudging words from a reluctant lyre.'

Apollo, the patron god of Callimachus and those poets who would follow after him, has turned away from Propertius and, presumably, his new project. Horos continues with a self-introduction and some 'prophecies' of his own. Through his examples, he reminds the poet

¹¹ For a brief but very informative overview of Callimachus' work, literary programme and use of imagery, cf. N. Hopkinson, *A Hellenistic Anthology* (1988), 83 ff. (on frg.1). Cf. esp. 98–101, for Callimachus' influence on Latin programmatic poetry, including Propertius IV.1.

¹² cf. esp. II.1, III.1–III.3, and III.9. The best discussion of the Augustan *recusatio* is still W. Wimmel, *Kallimachos in Rom. Die Nachfolge seines apologetischen Dichtens in der Augusteerzeit* (1960).

¹³ While in his first books Propertius was enslaved by his love to Cynthia, it now seems he will exchange his *servitium amoris* for a *servitium Romae*.

¹⁴ cf. e.g., Ovid, *Tristia* II.2.259.

¹⁵ For the idea of 'rising' as a particular aspect of the promise followed by hesitation in a *recusatio*, cf. e.g. II.10.11–12; III.9.52.

¹⁶ Wimmel, op. cit. (n. 12), 276–82, is the only one to emphasize this point; it is important, because it is this idea that the polarity has already been 'resolved' that makes the second part of IV.1 so striking. Cf. also Pillinger, op. cit. (n. 8), 172–4, on these lines.

¹⁷ For comments on the 'identity' of Horos, his connection with Apollo in Alexandrian culture, and the similar relationship between Propertius-Horos in IV.1 and Ovid-Apollo (through Germanicus) in the *Fasti*, cf. A. Barchiesi, 'Discordant Muses', *PCPhS* 37 (1991), 1–21.

that not everyone wins at war; for some (including especially women), there is a high price to be paid.¹⁸ Indeed, the poet is reminded that his life in Umbria had begun prosperously, and the walls of that city were already 'more famous' because of his talent (121–6).¹⁹ In fact, it would appear that while Rome had grown from her success, the poet's circumstances had 'decreased', presumably in the land confiscations. Horos' words imply that this reduced fortune was what originally led Apollo to give Propertius the 'little song' of elegy (127–34); and we may see here the poet looking back to his earlier books, as Horos' words include a retroactive explanation for Propertius' 'inactive life' in Books I–III.

At the end of the poem, Horos warns Propertius to return to the task he sees as appropriately set for the poet by Apollo (133–46):

tum tibi pauca suo de carmine dictat Apollo et vetat insano verba tonare Foro.	
at tu finge elegos, fallax opus (haec tua castra!), scribat ut exemplo cetera turba tuo.	135
militiam Veneris blandis patiere sub armis et Veneris pueris utilis hostis eris.	
nam tibi victrices quascumque labore parasti, eludit palmas una puella tuas:	140
et bene cum fixum mento discussseris uncum, nil erit hoc: rostro te premet ansa tuo.	
illius arbitrio noctem lucemque videbis, gutta quoque ex oculis non nisi iussa cadet.	
nec mille excubiae nec te signata iuvabunt limina: persuasae fallere [p]rima sat est.	145

Then Apollo dictates to you a little from his song,
and he forbids you to thunder out in the mad law-courts.
But you, compose elegies, a deceptive task (this is your camp!),
so that the rest of the crowd may write after your example.
You will endure military service in the warfare of Venus,
and you will be a useful antagonist for the boys of Venus.
For whatever victories you gain with your toil,
one girl frustrates your triumphs.
And although you shake out the hook well-fixed in your chin,
this will be nothing: the handle will hold you fast by your nose;
You will see night and day at her will;
and no tear will fall from your eyes unless at her bidding.
Nor will a thousand watches nor sealed thresholds help you:
a crack is enough for a woman persuaded to deceive.

This is basically a short review of the topoi of love elegy: here we see the *militia amoris*, the warfare of love, fighting the battles of Venus. The lover's (or poet's) triumphs and palms for his labours of love are mocked by one *puella* — the poet's mistress and subject of his poems. In 143–4 we see the *servitium amoris*, where the poet-lover serves as slave to his mistress. And finally, in 145–6, the theme of the *exclusus amator*, and the closed door, around the threshold of which lovers and mistresses carry out the essential action of their affairs.

Horos' prophecy complicates further the Callimachean compromise of Propertius' aetiological programme. For he reminds the poet that writing in the camp of elegiac poetry necessarily means an involvement with amatory themes. It now appears that the programme Propertius has planned is 'doomed' on two related but not equivalent counts: first, because his voice and font of inspiration are too small, and second, because his 'new' choice of themes is in any case inappropriate to the job of the elegist. Horos would seem to say 'if you attempt to fulfil your compromise programme, danger will follow as the amatory themes inherent to elegy clash with those of the new, larger enterprise.'

¹⁸ Wyke, op. cit. (n. 3), 155.

¹⁹ cf. 125–6 and 65–6; here also is the imagery of 'rising' and 'falling' that always holds a hint of *recusatio*.

In this opening poem, then, Propertius has created a clash between these two programmes: that of 'personal, love elegy' (*amor*) versus aetiological elegy with patriotic themes of epic proportion (*Roma*).²⁰ Propertian scholars have traditionally responded to this tension by sorting the poems of Book IV into those which are aetiological and patriotic (2, 4, 9, and 10), and those which retain their 'smaller elegiac' quality in the sense of making love themes most prominent (3, 5, 7, and 8).²¹ But it has been increasingly recognized that the ostensible alternation between amatory and aetiological poems is oversimplified;²² and simplicity is wholly contrary to the poetry of Book IV. For, in fact, all the elegies in Book IV are explorations of what occurs when these two opposites confront one another across whatever imaginary line the poet and his poetry create. Most of the oppositions — war and love, big and small, male and female, hard and soft, and epic and elegy — have been exploited in the poems of Propertius' first three books and make up the topoi of elegy in general. In Book IV, however, Propertius seems to attempt a change of balance, shifting favour towards 'real war' and bigger, patriotic themes and away from the slighter battles of elegy.²³ Further, Propertius has established a seemingly bipolar system in IV. I specifically in order to *challenge* that system by *combining* the two poles.

Indeed, each of the poems of Book IV in some manner represents the incongruous combination of these two discordant poetic ideals. Moreover, the poet manipulates those aspects of elegiac discourse that hold a significant value both as poetic themes and for their symbolic role in the larger context of Roman culture, and he uses these devices to highlight the points of 'crisis' between the oppositions privileged by either *amor* or *Roma*.²⁴ In his introduction of a 'rhetoric of fashion', Propertius manipulates the visual imagery used to identify the characters who in turn both reflect and define the nature of the poetry itself. In doing this, he exposes the issue of *decorum*, and what happens when a genre is subjected to material not appropriate to it — or clothes that do not fit.

II. HERCULES AS *apta puella* (IV.9)

In 1964, W. S. Anderson opened up new possibilities for interpretation of IV.9 when he exposed certain aspects of the poetic construction of the poem.²⁵ In the first part of his paper, Anderson pointed out the 'striking correspondences' between details in the poem's two stories, demonstrating the connection between them. I will summarize these quickly: in line 4, Hercules arrives in Rome tired (*fessus*); in 34 (and 66), he is again tired, this time after his mock-epic fight with Cacus. In 7, Cacus is described as a *hospes*, but not a good one, for later (14) Hercules must destroy the doors of his home; in 34, Hercules also seeks guest-friendship at the shrine of the Bona Dea, and the old priestess calls him *hospes* (53); but when she refuses him water, Hercules destroys her doors as well (61–2). And just as Cacus' cave is called an *antrum metuendum* (9), the *antrum* and *nemus* of the Bona Dea are protected by a *metuenda lex* (55). We are meant to play these two stories off against each other, so the 'big' defeat of Cacus informs Hercules' later destruction of the Bona Dea shrine.²⁶

Anderson also demonstrated that the story of Hercules at the Bona Dea shrine is an enactment of the elegiac paraklausithyron, in which Hercules, in the role of the *exclusus amator*, sings at the threshold of the Bona Dea in an attempt to gain entrance. Along with the

²⁰ For the labels *amor* and *Roma*, see Wyke, op. cit. (n. 3).

²¹ This could be said (to varying degrees) of most of those studies cited in n. 8 above, with the exception of Wyke. And of course, the 'division' is ostensibly a valid one.

²² cf. W. R. Nethercut, 'Notes on the structure of Propertius Book 4', *AJP* 89 (1968), 449–64; G. O. Hutchinson, 'Propertius and the unity of the book', *JRS* 74 (1984), 100–3; also Wyke, op. cit. (n. 3).

²³ This shift began earlier, in Book III, but there the 'favoured' side was still that of love; on this similarity between Books III and IV, cf. W. Nethercut, 'Recent scholarship on Propertius', *ANRW* 11.30.3 (1984), 1849–50.

²⁴ Other examples of devices remanipulated in Book IV form the basis of a larger study. Cf. also J. DeBrohun, *Hercules Belabored: Propertius 4.9 and the Discourses of Elegy* (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1992).

²⁵ W. S. Anderson, 'Hercules Exclusus: Propertius IV.9', *AJP* 85 (1964), 1–12.

²⁶ For a summary of scholarship on Propertius IV.9 since Anderson, cf. esp. F. Cairns, 'Propertius 4.9: "Hercules Exclusus" and the dimensions of genre', with a response by Anderson, in K. Galinsky (ed.), *The Interpretation of Roman Poetry: Empiricism or Hermeneutics* (1992), 65–103. Cairns does not refute Anderson's original conclusions about the poem. See also DeBrohun, op. cit. (n. 24), 1–4 *et passim*.

typical topoi exposed by Anderson, he noted that the inhabitants of the Bona Dea shrine precinct are called *puellae*, instead of the *virgines* (vestals) or *mulieres* (chaste matrons) one expects in the service of the Bona Dea.²⁷ These *inclusae puellae* (23) certainly fit better the setting of an elegiac paraklausithyron. Also, the speech of Hercules is comparable to that of an *exclusus amator*. When the hero starts his speech at 32, he casts his suppliant words before the doors (*ante fores*), an expression that often introduces one of these songs.²⁸ At 33, he prays for entrance, and he professes tiredness. Hercules also uses the *fortia verba* of the *amator*, who often boasts of his deeds of love or his strengths, in hope of admission.²⁹ When there is no answer, or, as here, the answer is no, the *amator* becomes very angry.

What I will examine more closely here are the specifics of Hercules' argument in 37–50, as the hero describes and then 'reconstructs' himself in an attempt to change his identity and gain access to the shrine and its waters.³⁰ When the thirsty Hercules arrives at the closed door of the Bona Dea shrine in iv.9, he first appeals for entrance using the *fortia verba* of the *exclusus amator*, in this case the 'earth-saving' labours of the heroic Hercules himself (37–42):

audistisne aliquem, tergo qui sustulit orbem? 37
 ille ego sum: Alciden terra recepta vocat.
 quis facta Herculeae non audit fortia clavae
 et numquam ad vastas irrita tela feras, 40
 atque uni Stygias homini luxisse tenebras?
 [accipit haec fesso vix mihi terra patet].³¹

Have you heard of that man who carried the world on his back?
 I am that man: the earth I carried calls me Alcides.
 Who has not heard of the brave deeds of the Herculean club
 and the weapons never used in vain against huge beasts?
 And that the Stygian darkness became light for one man?

Particular emphasis is given to his immense strength and the deadly effectiveness of his weapons. For he is that very man (*ille ego sum*, 38) who supported the world on his back. His club assumes the heroic name (and nature) of its wielder;³² and Hercules recalls as well his arrows, never directed in vain against huge beasts. Finally, he reminds us that even the Underworld became light (opened) to him alone of mortals; i.e., he has a history of getting into places no one else may go.

In case this 'straightforward' heroic approach should fail, however, Hercules is prepared to resort to more deceptive methods (45–50):

sin aliquem vultusque meus saetaeque leonis 45
 terrent et Libyco sole perusta coma,
 idem ego Sidonia feci servilia palla
 officia et Lydo pensa diurna colo,
 mollis et hirsutum cepit mihi fascia pectus
 et manibus duris apta puella fui. 50

²⁷ For the cult of the Bona Dea and its celebrations, see most recently H. H. Brouwer, *Bona Dea. The Sources and a Description of the Cult*, Etudes préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain 110 (1989), although with caution. While Brouwer argues for the use of *puellae* to describe the worshippers of the Bona Dea, this is based solely on the evidence of Propertius iv.9 (pp. 256, 295, 371–2).

²⁸ cf. esp. Tibullus i.1.56; i.5.74; Ovid, AA iii.581; *Met.* 14.717. These words are also customary for addressing the doorway of a temple, which makes the connection with the Bona Dea here especially effective; cf. Prop. iii.17.37. Anderson does not bring out this aspect of the *exclusus amator* argument, but it is mentioned by J. C. Yardley, 'The elegiac paraklausithyron', *Eranos* 76 (1978), 19–34. Cf. also P. Pucci, 'Lingering on the thresh-old', *Glyph* 3

(1978), 52–73, with bibliography, and E. McParland, 'Propertius 4.9', *TAPA* 101 (1970), 349–55.

²⁹ cf. e.g. Tibullus ii.6.12.

³⁰ Anderson rightly considered these lines part of Hercules' argument as *amator*, but he did not differentiate the two descriptions.

³¹ With Fedeli and Butler-Barber, I have accepted the postulation that 42 is an interpolation from 66. For a good presentation of the problem, see H. E. Butler and E. A. Barber, *The Elegies of Propertius* (1969), ad loc. In view of the 'double' argument here, it seems likely that the lost line 42 completed Hercules' first plea, before he moved to his softer approach in 45–50.

³² This is perhaps in contrast to the more 'bucolic' description of the weapon as *Maenalius ramus* in l. 15.

But if there is anyone whom my appearance or the bristles of the lion
 frightens, and my hair burned by the Libyan sun,
 I am that same one who performed the duties of a slave dressed in a Sidonian gown,
 and I completed my daily tasks of wool at the Lydian distaff.
 A soft breastband bound my shaggy chest,
 and despite my hard hands I was a proper girl.

In 45–6, he recognizes that his face and lion skin, as well as his parched hair, might appear frightening. In the lines that follow, he attempts to 'soften' these features. *Idem ego* in 47 responds to the *ille ego* of 38 and introduces Hercules' lighter, 'elegiac' appeal. In fact, there are many correspondences between Hercules' two approaches: in 37, Hercules introduces his self-description using the indefinite masculine pronoun *aliquem*, the second word in the hexameter; soon after, we learn that the 'unknown man' is Hercules himself. The same indefinite masculine *aliquem* holds the second position in 45, only this time the pronoun retains its ambiguity with an added dimension of gender confusion. On the first level, *aliquem* in 45 should refer generally to the shrine's inhabitants. Further ambiguity is involved, however, since we know already that the shrine is held by the female priestess and worshippers of the Bona Dea (cf. 25–6); and it is precisely this knowledge that Hercules attempts to exploit with his next words.

In 47–50, Hercules reminds his audience that he once performed very unheroic work, recalling his service as a slave to the Lydian queen Omphale.³³ Here, too, there are contrasting echoes of his earlier words: the *fortia facta* and *tela* have now been replaced by *servilia officia*, the *pensa diurna*; and the Herculean club (*Herculea clava*) of 39 has been replaced by the 'womanly' Lydian distaff (*Lydus colus*, 48). It seems the single human being (*uni homini*) for whom the Stygian darkness became light may also turn out to be a *puella*.

Lines 47–50 also contain an allusion to Propertius III.11.17–20; and *idem ego* effectively introduces this allusion.³⁴ III.11 may be read as an elaborate defence of the elegiac lover's *servitium amoris*, his enslavement through love to his female mistress.³⁵ As one of his supporting exempla, the poet reminds his critics that even the mighty Hercules was once enslaved to a woman, Queen Omphale in Lydia (III.11.17–20):

Omphale in tantum formae processit honorem,
 Lydia Gygaeo tincta puella lacu,
 ut, qui pacato statuisset in orbe columnas,
 tam dura traheret mollia pensa manu.

20

Omphale succeeded to such great honour for her beauty,
 a Lydian girl who bathed in Gyges' lake,
 that he who had set up pillars in the world he had pacified
 pulled soft tasks of wool with his hard hands.

Already in III.11, we see the poet exploit the reversal in gender roles that is inherent in the elegiac lover's situation and particularly prominent in the Hercules-Omphale story. For the services Hercules performed for his mistress were not even those of a male slave; rather, he used his rough hands (*dura manu*, 20) to do the soft (*mollia*), characteristically 'womanly' task of wool-working (*pensa*).

In fact, Hercules was ordered at some point to exchange clothes with his mistress, and this explains more fully his words in IV.9.47–50. Hercules places particular emphasis on his clothing, especially as it contrasts with his physical features and his current attire: he once wore a Sidonian cloak (*Sidonia palla*, 47), and a soft breastband (*mollis fascia*) bound his hairy chest (*hirsutum pectus*, 49), as he spun his daily allotment of wool (*diurna pensa*) with

³³ For sources and a discussion of the Hercules-Omphale story, cf. E. Fantham, 'Sexual comedy in Ovid's *Fasti*: sources and motivation', *HSCP* 87 (1983), 185–216.

³⁴ This constitutes what has been called an Alexandrian footnote: 'the same one' you saw earlier (i.e. in III.11, or, more generally, in 'that other' Hercules story). For this term, cf. D. O. Ross, *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus, Elegy and Rome* (1975), 78. Cf. also G. B. Conte,

The Rhetoric of Imitation (1986), 52–69, for this type of reference.

³⁵ cf. on this poem H.-P. Stahl, *Propertius: 'Love' and 'War'. Individual and State under Augustus* (1985), 234–47; W. R. Nethercut, 'Propertius 3.11', *TAPA* 102 (1971), 411–43; also Terence, *Eun.* 1027 (for Hercules-Omphale as exemplum).

rough hands (*duris manibus*, 50). Indeed, if clothes could make the man a girl, his might appear 'extraordinarily' typical. For while a *Sidonia palla* is not an unusual garment for an eastern queen to wear, it is also a distinguishing characteristic of a Propertian *puella*. In II.16, the poet finds himself shut out by Cynthia; for the praetor, the poet's rival, has returned from Illyria with expensive eastern gifts. Propertius warns Cynthia against her greediness, reminding her that the gods punish faithless women (55–6): 'quare ne tibi sit tanti *Sidonia vestis*, ut timeas, quotiens nubilus Auster erit.' And in II.29 a band of Cupids drag the fickle poet home to his mistress, who lies sleeping in her *Sidonia mitra* (15). Hercules also expects his recollection of the absurd detail of the *mollis fascia* to soften and conceal the bristling maleness of his chest. 'Despite my hard hands,' he says, 'I was a "proper" girl (*apta puella*).'

When Hercules recalls the soft (*mollis*) breastband on his hairy (*hirsutum*) chest, and he remembers spinning 'soft' wool (*pensa diurna* in IV.9.48 recall the *mollia pensa* of III.11.20) with his hard hands (III.11.20 *dura manu*; IV.9.50 *duris manibus*), the hero 'softens' his appearance in terms which resonate strongly with the Augustan poets' expression of the terminology of Callimachean poetics.³⁶ In poetic terms, then, Hercules has tried to 'reduce' his stature from epic (or at least hard, patriotic) to elegiac, thus implying that he 'recognizes' the (love) elegiac nature of his situation. In fact, this reduction begins as he prepares for his speech. When in 32 Hercules casts before the doors *verba minora deo*, the hero undergoes his first reduction, from god (or at least demigod) to elegiac *amator*.³⁷ Also, when he expresses his request for water in 36, he asks for only a handful, perhaps another programmatic reduction.³⁸

As we expect from Propertius, the visual imagery used to picture Hercules' 'cross-dressing' is vivid.³⁹ Each significant visual detail is attended to (face, hair, chest, hands): the replacement of the *Herculea clava* of 39 with the *Lydus colus* of 48 is a nice touch, since each would be carried over the shoulder or arm. We might almost believe we are 'viewing' the exchange on a comic stage.⁴⁰ In addition to his visual picture, the poet makes effective use of narrative space and time in making Hercules' cross-dressing simultaneously both immediate and believably remote. Because Hercules' 'female' description is given the rhetorically prominent last position in the final words of Hercules' speech, this is the picture most present in the reader's eye (and, presumably, within the poem, in the audience's ear). Within the narrative, however, Hercules' cross-dressing has been carefully removed from the poem's stage, or at least from its 'real' time. Only 45–6 describe Hercules as he appears now (*terrent*, present tense), i.e., as the audience within the poem sees him. The narrative event he recalls (perfect tense), while latest in his speech, is as distant from the poem's present as any true mythological exemplum.⁴¹ Through this combination of visual imagery, together with the manipulation of both linear space and narrative time, Propertius employs sound rhetorical technique to ease the suspension of disbelief, thus making the 'transformation' of the cross-dressed Hercules into a likely *puella* more acceptable.⁴²

There is an additional poetic manoeuvre involved in the construction of Hercules' rhetoric. I have noted that *idem ego* (47) not only answers to 45–6 and 38, but it sets up the

³⁶ In particular, Propertius' poetry always comes out 'soft' (*mollis*) in II.1.1–2, in contrast to the hard verse (*durus versus*) he is unable to write (II.1.41). Cf. also III.1.19–20, III.3.1, 18. For *durus*, cf. esp. II.1.41; for *hirsutus*, IV.1.61 (see n. 13 above), Ovid, *Tristia* II.2.259; Horace, *Odes* II.12. This opposition is so prevalent in the vocabulary of poetic conventions that Propertius can play on its 'reversal' already in I.6, where the soft lover carries out his *militia* under a *duro sidere* while Tullus serves in *mollis Ionia*; cf. Kennedy, op. cit. (n. 2), 31–3.

³⁷ cf. Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* III.26, Propertius II.34.83, for similar uses of *minus*; cf. also Latona's words in Ovid, *Met.* 6.368, which echo Propertius and are spoken in a similarly programmatic setting (I am indebted to K. Sara Myers for this point). Also, cf. on this James J. Clauss, 'The episode of the Lycian farmers in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*', *HSCP* 92 (1989), 297–314.

³⁸ Perhaps Hercules 'remembers' and expects his audience to remember that the lovely Hylas once tried for more with unhappy results — Propertius I.20.43ff. Cf. also Ovid, *Amores* I.6.3, where the poet asks for something *exiguum*. On the possible poetic nature of the water in IV.9, cf. DeBrohun, op. cit. (n. 24), 45–59.

³⁹ For Propertius' use of visual imagery, cf. esp. J.-P. Boucher, *Etudes sur Propertius. Problèmes d'inspiration et d'art* (1965).

⁴⁰ On possible aspects of mime in IV.9, cf. J. C. McKeown, 'Augustan elegy and mime', *PCPhS* n.s.25 (1979), esp. 77 ff.; also, F. Zeitlin, 'Travesties of gender and genre in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousae*', in H. P. Foley (ed.), *Reflections of Women in Antiquity* (1981), points out that role reversal is a typical comic device (cf. Plautus, *Casina*). What we do *not* see in Propertius' account is the woman who would be putting on his armour in the usual versions, thus completing the reversal.

⁴¹ Indeed, the recall works much as a mythological exemplum — only here the reference is to himself.

⁴² According to Horace, *AP* 179–88, those things which would be unacceptable or unbelievable should be removed from the eyes and only narrated to the audience. Cf. *Heroides* 9.119–22, where Deianira states that what she has heard is not nearly so painful as what she now sees with her own eyes.

allusion to III.11. In a sense, a fuller understanding of Hercules' words in IV.9 'requires' the information in III.11; for it is there we are told the circumstances of Hercules' servitude, i.e., that he became the slave of Omphale, presumably because of her beauty (cf. III.11.17).⁴³ This allusion places Hercules firmly in the world of *servitium amoris*, even setting up an implied comparison between him and the poet (*ego*) of Books I–III. In this reverse comparison, it seems Hercules would remind the audience (or at least the reader) that, like a Propertian *amator*, he was once weakened by his love, resulting in his servitude. Indeed, the hero was even further 'softened' by wearing his mistress' clothing, and was thus 'transformed' to become a *puella*.

It seems Hercules believes he can 'have it both ways', and he expects to convince his audience that by changing his clothing and props he may be 'transformed' from a huge, epic man into his virtual opposite, a soft, elegiac girl, thus making him suitable to join the girls within the shrine and the elegiac discourse they represent. He acts as if the wardrobe itself, which is a verbal wardrobe as well as a 'real' one,⁴⁴ holds the power to change the identity of the wearer, or at least to convince the audience.

What is the effect of Hercules' carefully crafted argument? As we see in the priestess' refusal, his rhetorical 'wardrobe change' is completely ineffectual. For all their vivid details, she gives no credence to his words, nor does she acknowledge them; rather she includes him readily among the men to whom the rites are forbidden. Her own words are carefully chosen. Even after Hercules' two introductions, she addresses him as *hospes* (53), and she warns him the altar is forbidden to men (*interdicta viris*, 55), reminding him that the shrine's waters flow only for *puellae*, from whom he is obviously excluded. We see this most clearly in the two 'halves' of l. 59: 'di tibi dent alios fontes: haec lympha puellis.'⁴⁵

Why is Hercules' argument not effective? The obvious answer is that, whatever he might say (or wear), he is not a *puella*. Also, because his cross-dressing rhetoric is subordinated to his role as *exclusus amator*, he should in any case be denied entrance. But let us return once more to Hercules' closing words, presumably those meant to summarize his argument most effectively (50): *apta puella fui*. A special set of associations surrounds the use of *apta* here. At one level, Hercules seems to have chosen the perfect adjective to describe his changed appearance. The primary meaning of *aptus* is 'fastened' or 'bound' (pple. from *apio*; OLD s.v. 1); and its cognate verb *apto* (from *aptus* + *-to*) has as its primary definition 'to put into position' or, with armour or ornaments, 'to put on' (OLD s.v. 1). It seems, then, that the semantic field of *aptus* can be extended quite readily to include the meaning 'outfitted' or 'dressed'; and in IV.9.40, Hercules may call himself an *apta puella* because he was once 'dressed' like one.⁴⁶ But *aptus* is not simply 'dressed'; the added signification of 'composed' (OLD s.v. 1b) means that something *aptus* is always *well*-fitted, or has been modified to fit (OLD s.v. 5). Here we see the oxymoron inherent in Hercules' appearance. As his own words have reminded us, his clothing does not really 'fit'. It will be helpful here to compare Propertius' depiction of this exchange in IV.9 to Ovid's picture in *Fasti* 2.305–58. In the *Fasti*, Ovid fully exploits the comic elements in the exchange, exposing the absurdity as he foregrounds his own devices (319–24):

dat tenuis tunicas Gaetulo murice tinctas,
dat teretem zonam, qua modo cincta fuit.
ventre minor zona est; tunicarum vincla relaxat,
ut posset magnas exseruisse manus.

⁴³ That Hercules serves Omphale because he has fallen in love with her is a reduction, perhaps by the Alexandrians, of the story as it appears in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, where Hercules is forced to perform his humiliating slave service to Omphale as punishment for killing Iphitus in anger; cf. *Trachiniae* 356–7. See on this R.O.A.M. Lyne, 'Servitium Amoris', *CQ* 29 (1979), 117–30.

⁴⁴ This slippage between 'real' and verbal clothing is most explicit in IV.5.53–8. Here the *lena* warns her pupil not to accept words over 'real' goods; and the words she warns against most strongly are those with which the poet 'clothed' his *puella* in I.2.

⁴⁵ This polarity begins in 25–6. The first word of 25 is *femineae*, the last of 26 *viris*. For this observation cf. McParland, op. cit. (n. 28).

⁴⁶ cf. here Tibullus 1.9.69–70: 'istane persuadet facies auroque lacertos/vinciat et Tyrio prodeat apta sinu?' where the clothing of the *puella* might also signify more than her love affair. P. Murgatroyd, *Tibullus I: a Commentary* (1980), ad loc., failed to appreciate the implications of *apta* in IV.9 when he noted that Tibullus was the only writer to use *apta* with clothing. Of course, the Roman poets' infatuation with the rhetorical possibilities of etymologies and wordplay generally makes the extension a natural one.

fregerat armillas non illa ad braccia factas,
scindebant magni vincula parva pedes.

She (Omphale) gives him light tunics dyed in Gaetulian purple,
she gives him the elegant girdle with which she was just now bound.
The belt is small for his belly; he loosens the clasps of the tunics
to thrust out his large hands.
He burst the bracelets, not made for those arms,
and his large feet split the small sandals.

Here, even more pronounced than Hercules' description in iv.9 of the 'soft breastband' on his 'hairy chest', we see how extremely ill-fitting Hercules' feminine clothing is, as he bursts his armlets and sandals.⁴⁷

However comically (in)appropriate is the sense of *apta puella* as a 'modified', 'outfitted' girl, there is another aspect of Hercules' wardrobe-change to consider. The last words of line 50 are usually translated 'I was a likely (i.e. suitable) girl'.⁴⁸ Within the 'reality' of Propertius' poem, Hercules is not simply trying to be funny; he wants his argument to work. And the point of Hercules' argument is precisely that he could 'pass' for a 'proper girl', where *apta* means 'fitting' in the more general sense of decorum as appropriate or even honourable.

More telling for *apta* as proper in combined terms of attire and behaviour is Deianira's depiction of Hercules in *Heroides* 9. Here Deianira, unlike the amused narrator of the *Fasti*, is very much concerned with the shameful nature of Hercules' cross-dressing:

non *puduit* fortis auro cohibere lacertos,
et solidis gemmas opposuisse toris? (59–60)

Were you not ashamed to bind those strong arms with gold,
and to set gems on those brawny muscles?

ausus es hirsutos mitra redimire capillos!
aptior Herculeae populus alba comae.
nec te Maeonia lascivae more puellae
incipi zona *dedecuisse* putas? (63–6)

You dared to wreath your shaggy hair with a turban!
The white poplar is more suited for Herculean locks.
And do you not think that it is a disgrace that you are
bound in a Maeonian girdle, in the manner of a wanton girl?

Puduit, *aptior*, and *dedecuisse* are all terms of decorum, and in each case Hercules' ill-fitted womanly attire is also seen to be a particular sign of shame. In lines 67–72, Deianira reminds Hercules that his enemies would be ashamed (*pigeat*) to have been defeated by a 'soft' man:

detrahat Antaeus duro redimicula collo,
ne *pigeat* molli succubuisse viro. (71–2)⁴⁹

Antaeus would drag away the bands from your hard neck,
so that he need not be ashamed to have yielded to a soft man.

It is in this double sense of *apta* as both well-fitted in terms of attire and proper or appropriate behaviour generally that Hercules' argument breaks down. For propriety, or decorum, signalled by *aptus* along with such words as *decens*, *conveniens*, and especially *decorus*, is an important stylistic and cultural concept for the Romans. With the use of *apta* here, Propertius comments on the artificial nature of Hercules' rhetoric, and he encourages the

⁴⁷ Hercules' oversized *magni pedes* could have generic implications within Ovid's poem, which is also an experiment in the expansion of elegy. Indeed, the same could be said for Ovid's depiction of the hero in *Heroides* 9 (see below). Cf. also *Ars Amatoria* 11.217–22.

⁴⁸ However, W. A. Camps, *Propertius. Elegies, Book IV*,

ad loc. translates *apta* as *deft*, adducing Briseis' words at *Heroides* 3.70.

⁴⁹ Note the 'hard-soft' opposition of *duro* and *molli* in these lines; and *succumbere* often has sexual connotations (cf. *OLD* s.v.2a).

reader to look for a special significance in Hercules' physical and verbal wardrobe and its effectiveness (or lack of effect).

III. LOVE ELEGY'S CHARACTERS. DECORUM IN BOOKS I-III

Before we turn with our concerns about propriety to Book IV, it will be useful to reconsider briefly the rules of decorum governing the poet's creation of characters and the discourse thus produced in the earlier books, i.e., how Propertian love elegy 'looks' and 'acts'. We have already noted Hercules' use of soft (*mollis*) clothing as part of his programmatic reduction to love elegy when he attempts to fit his new setting in IV.9. It could be further noted that the characterization of Propertius' love elegy as soft (*mollis*) over against the hard verse (*durus versus*) of epic extends to the features of both the lover and his mistress, whose hands and feet are *tener*.

The primary characters of love elegy are two: the *puella*, and the poet-lover (*ego*) who serves and writes of her. How these identifying characters both reflect and create the poetic discourse is perhaps most explicit in the opening poem of Book II, where the poet, when asked from what source (*unde*) he writes so many love poems (*amores*),⁵⁰ and why his book is so soft (*mollis*), proceeds to define his poetry and the process of poesis in terms of the appearance and actions of his *puella* and the course of their love affair (II.1.1-16). Propertius' poetry is presented as entirely made up of how Cynthia looks and acts: the clothing she wears or removes, her hair, her hands, her eyes. Whatever the poet-lover sees or experiences, or whatever he does with his mistress, makes up the matter of his poetry.⁵¹

Lines 5-16 form a 'catalogue' of the contents of Propertius' 'soft' (*mollis*) book, each item introduced with anaphoric *seu/sive*. Immediately in the first couplet (5-6), Propertius specifically identifies the contents of his volume of verse with Cynthia's appearance in terms of her clothing:

sive illam Cois fulgentem incedere cogis,
hoc totum e Coa veste volumen erit; (5-6)

Or if you compel her to proceed gleaming in Coan silks,
this whole volume will be out of her Coan dress.

Here it seems the poet's book (*volumen*) is both 'about' and metaphorically 'constructed from' Cynthia's dress.⁵²

In II.1.17-18, lines which introduce the *recusatio* proper, we see the poet himself, the writer of the discourse, as a character, and we are reminded that his appearance and talent both determine and reflect the genre in which he writes:

quod mihi si tantum, Maecenas, fata dedissent,
ut possem heroas ducere in arma manus...

If only the fates had granted me, Maecenas,
that I could lead heroic hands into arms.

The poet's hands and *arma*, as the Propertian reader knows from the poems, are far from heroic, as is his subject matter. As a lover he is no soldier, and he has no strength literally to lead heroic hands into arms. Also, *ducere* may represent the poetic process, where the poet-lover is equally unable to produce heroic hands, or heroic themes, in his poetry. The list of topics the poet is unfit to sing continues through 38, and includes not only Gigantomachies,

⁵⁰ II.1.1 establishes Propertius' *amores* specifically as written discourse; and the *mollis liber* of II.1.2 refers to his collection of poems. Cf. Wyke, op. cit. (n. 1, 1987).

⁵¹ For a detailed commentary on II.1, cf. Wimmel, op. cit. (n. 12); on the generic implications of this poem, see

J. Zetzel, 'Re-creating the canon: Augustan poetry and the Alexandrian past', *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1983), 83-105.

⁵² cf. on this especially Ross, op. cit. (n. 34), 58-9, 59 n. 2.

Homeric themes, and early Rome, but also those the poet regrets most, the wars of Caesar himself, including Actium.

In II.1.39–46, the poet expresses his inability particularly in terms of decorum:

sed neque Phlegraeos Iovis Enceladique tumultus
 intonet angusto pectore Callimachus, 40
 nec mea conveniunt duro praecordia versu
 Caesaris in Phrygios condere nomen avos.
 navita de ventis, de tauris narrat arator,
 enumerat miles vulnera, pastor oves;
 nos contra angusto versamus proelia lecto: 45
 qua pote quisque, in ea conterat arte diem.

But neither could Callimachus thunder out with his small breast
 the battles of Jove and Enceladus on Phlegraea's plain,
 Nor is my strength fit to compose in hard verse
 the name of Caesar among his Phrygian ancestors.
 The sailor tells of the winds, the farmer tells of bulls,
 the soldier recounts his wounds, the shepherd his sheep;
 I on the other hand turn my battles on a narrow bed;
 let each one spend his day in that skill at which he is most able.

Propertius' bed is narrow (*angusto lecto*, 45), like the narrow chest of Callimachus (*angusto pectore*, 40); and his strength does not fit (*conveniunt*) the hard verse (*duro versu*) of epic. In 43–4, he gives textbook examples of suitability: the sailor who knows the winds, the soldier his wounds, the shepherd his sheep; and in 45 he adds to these his own expertise. Then in 46 he adds a generalizing statement of decorum: 'let each man work according to his skill (*arte*).'⁵³

We are reminded in these opening lines of Book II that the primary characters of Propertian love elegy are recognizable through their appearance, including clothing and props, and that those characters represent, describe, and even create the discourse of the poetry. Propertius' book can be described as constructed from Cynthia's clothing; and the poet's own appearance both determines and reflects his position as a Callimachean elegiac poet. As the words of *recusatio* in II.1.17–18 show, a change of poetry from elegy to epic (or at least to 'hard verse') would require the strength to lead 'hero-sized' hands into arms, a strength Propertius does not have. Already we see that the poet's introduction of Hercules as a character in Book IV appears to violate these rules, and that Hercules' words in IV.9 are an attempt to reverse this tactic, thus 'softening' his appearance in order to fit the discourse he wishes to enter.

In III.9, another *recusatio*, Propertius' sense of poetic propriety appears fully developed. As in II.1, the poet himself again recognizes the limitations of his poetry. Now even more firmly situated in the language of Callimachean poetics, Propertius describes metaphorically his poetics as suited (*apta* in III.9.4 and 7; cf. *turpe* in III.9.5) to elegy and its small themes (III.9.1–8):

Maecenas, eques Etrusco de sanguine regum,
 intra fortunam qui cupis esse tuam,
 quid me scribendi tam vastum mittis in aequor?
 non sunt *apta* meae grandia vela rati.
turpest, quod nequeas, capiti committere pondus
 et pressum inflexo mox dare terga genu.
 omnia non pariter rerum sunt omnibus *apta*,
 palma nec ex aequo ducitur ulla iugo. 5

⁵³ The Propertian poet-lover often sets his activities beside those of 'conventional men' in lists such as this (I.6, III.9, III.11). This rhetoric is also 'turned against' the poet by the *lena* of IV.5, who reminds the *puella* that it is

precisely the 'real' soldier, sailor, or even ex-slave whose money should make him preferable to the poet, who has only verses.

Maecenas, knight born from the blood of Etruscan kings,
 you who desire to stay within your fortune,
 why do you send me out into so huge an ocean of writing?
 Huge sails are not suited to my boat.
 It is shameful to entrust to your head a weight you are unable to endure,
 and then, weighed down, on bended knee, to retreat.
 All things are not suited to all men equally,
 and no prize is led away by an equal chariot.

We see here the bipolar poetics to which we are now accustomed, but with the poet still entrenched on the 'smaller' side. In this passage, the poet combines his metaphorical 'body language' (5-6) with the metaphors of boats and bodies of water introduced primarily in the first poems of Book III.

In III.9.17-20, similarly to II.1.43-6, the poet gives more general examples of decorum:

est quibus Eleae concurrat palma quadrigae,
 est quibus in celeres gloria nata pedes;
 hic satus ad pacem, hic castrensibus utilis armis:
 naturae sequitur semina quisque suae.

20

There are some whom the palm of the Olympic chariot race runs to meet,
 and some whose glory is born in swift feet;
 one is bred for peace, another is effective in military arms:
 each man follows the seeds of his own nature.

Line 19 recalls the polarity of poems III.4 and III.5, where Caesar (III.4) is on the side of war, but lovers honour peace.⁵⁴ And lines 7 and 20 express most succinctly (even gnominically)⁵⁵ the poet's definition of propriety: 'Let each follow the elements of his own nature' (20). For the poet-lover of elegy, that means the small themes for which he is fitted.

IV. VERTUMNUS AND A NEW SENSE OF DECORUM FOR BOOK IV (IV.2)

When Propertius decided to use up his small stream of poetry for new, patriotic themes in Book IV, his ambitious programme necessarily included as well a decision to abandon his earlier rules of decorum. Instead, he will now use his small strength to 'lead heroic hands into arms', as he outfits a whole new cast of characters, including historical figures, heroes, and even gods. But in order to do this, he needs a new model of decorum.

Conveniently enough, these very issues are addressed by the first new character of Book IV, the god Vertumnus in IV.2. That poem IV.2 adds further programmatic implications to those introduced in IV.1 has often been recognized.⁵⁶ My particular concern here is to examine those aspects most pertinent to the issue of poetic propriety. From the beginning, Vertumnus places an emphasis on his appearance, and in particular on the diversity of forms he may represent while still retaining his single identity:

Quid mirare meas tot in uno corpore formas? (IV.2.1)

Why do you marvel at my shapes, so many in one body?

After an introduction and two elaborate false etymologies of his name, Vertumnus introduces the 'true' etymology in 19 ff.:

⁵⁴ cf. also I.6.29, where Propertius was born *non idoneus armis*.

⁵⁵ Wimmel, op. cit. (n. 12), 252.

⁵⁶ cf. on IV.2, J. H. Dee, 'Propertius 4.2. "Callimachus Romanus" at work', *AJP* 95 (1974), 43-55; E. C. Marquis, 'Vertumnus in Propertius 4.2', *Hermes* 102 (1974), 491-500; C. Shea, 'The Vertumnus elegy and Propertius

Book IV', *ICS* 13 (1988), 63-71; also P. Pinotti, 'Properzio e Vertumno: anticonformismo e restaurazione augustea', *Atti del Coll. Prop. III* (1983), 75-96; Pillinger, op. cit. (n. 8); Wyke, op. cit. (n. 3); A. Deremetz, 'L'élégie de Vertumne: l'oeuvre trompeuse', *REL* 64 (1986), 116-49; P. Hardie, 'Augustan poets and the mutability of Rome', in Powell, op. cit. (n. 4), 74-5.

mendax fama, noces: alius mihi nominis index:
 de se narranti tu modo crede deo! 20
 opportuna mea est cunctis natura figuris:
 in quamcumque voles verte, decorus ero.
 indue me Cois, fiam non dura puella:
 meque virum sumpta quis neget esse toga?
 da falcem et torto frontem mihi comprime faeno: 25
 iurabis nostra gramina secta manu.
 arma tuli quondam et, memini, laudabar in illis:
 corbis in imposito pondere messor eram...

Lying rumour, you are harmful; there is another index of my name:
 you, believe the god when he speaks about himself!
 My nature is suited to all shapes:
 into whatever you want, change me; I will be decorous.
 Dress me in Coan silks, I will be a 'soft' girl;
 And when I put on the toga, who will deny that I am a man?
 Give me a sickle and bind my forehead with twisted hay:
 you will swear that grass has been cut by my hand.
 I once bore arms and, I recall, I was praised in them;
 with the weight of a basket placed on me, I was a reaper...

Lines 21–2 elaborate on the principle of diversity in unity (and vice versa) which opened the poem and set up Vertumnus' own discourse of propriety. If we recall Propertius' earlier statements of propriety, we see that a very different set of rules governs Vertumnus' sense of decorum.

qua pote quisque, in ea conterat arte diem; (II.1.46)
 omnia non pariter rerum sunt omnibus apta; (III.9.7)
 naturae sequitur semina quisque suae. (III.9.20)

But then Vertumnus:

opportuna mea est cunctis natura figuris:
 in quamcumque voles verte, decorus ero. (IV.2.21–2)

So far from saying 'all things are not suited to all men equally', Vertumnus' nature is able to meet every challenge properly. In lines 23–40, Vertumnus demonstrates his versatility by showing that he can 'dress' for any occasion. Through a variety of wardrobe and prop changes, the god (or his statue) seems quite convincingly prepared to assume whatever role might be required of him. The first couplet (23–4) is particularly interesting: in addition to his many other talents, Vertumnus, if appropriately dressed, could pass for a *non dura puella*,⁵⁷ here described in the characteristic clothes of Propertius' Cynthia (or his love elegy); or if the purpose is better served, he can become a man simply by donning a toga. Vertumnus' description of himself in the clothing most representative of Propertius' love elegies, and his later claim that he can steal the guise of either Bacchus or Apollo (31–2), places his enabling wardrobe firmly in the poetic sphere. The god's list of costume changes represents an introduction to some of the themes to be explored throughout Book IV, as well as suggesting some of the characters who will appear.⁵⁸ But not all of Vertumnus' multiple personalities show up in later poems, and there are additional characters (or at least costume changes) not introduced in his index.⁵⁹

More generally, Vertumnus' ability to transform by changing his attire introduces a new sense of decorum, which it seems should fit better the bipolar poetics of Book IV. In II.1 the

⁵⁷ Of course, the fact that Vertumnus is made of bronze should make him particularly *dura*. Dee, op. cit. (n. 56), 51–2, plays with the ambiguity well. Already, it seems women's clothing has a 'softening' effect.

⁵⁸ cf. esp. Shea, op. cit. (n. 56), 68–70.

⁵⁹ His index includes many 'traditional' jobs; cf. Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.45–50. It is also noteworthy that except in IV.2.23, Vertumnus does not include women in his list, although they make up the majority of new characters in Book IV. In this respect, Vertumnus' list is more like those in II.1, III.9 or III.11, where the poet-lover's occupation is opposed to those of other *men*.

poet's book was constructed from Cynthia's Coan dress. In iv.4.2 Vertumnus, the representative of Propertius' new book, claims to 'go both ways' (23-4):

indue me Cois, fiam non dura puella:
meque virum sumpta quis neget esse toga?

Dress me in Coan silks, I will be a 'soft' girl;
and when I put on the toga, who will deny that I am a man?

On the one hand he may wear the *Coa vestis* of Propertian love elegy; but he may just as easily 'switch' to wear the manly toga of a new, harder poetry,⁶⁰ as well as assuming the many forms of the poet's new plan. Vertumnus' ideal of decorum explicitly takes the form of a rhetorical discourse of fashion, in which wardrobe changes serve as an enabling strategy that allows the wearer to change from one identity to another, even its polar opposite.

Chris Shea noted the ambiguity inherent in Vertumnus' ability to 'go both ways': '...the couplet appears to emphasize the polarization of the sexes as a paradigm for the limits of Vertumnus' powers, but the very fact that the shapes of both male and female co-exist in the same single body makes the god also a metaphor for the confusion of the sexes.'⁶¹ Of course, it is not only sexual identity which seems to be confused in this way, but identity generally.

But do these opposite shapes really co-exist? If we consider again the list of transformations Vertumnus presents, the reason other characters may not enjoy the same happy results becomes clear. As Vertumnus converts decorously from one identity to another, there is no transition phase where the two opposite or different identities must meet, never a point where one attribute 'disguises' another. In other words, Vertumnus is never required to have two different identities at the same time. He does not really have to cross-dress. As it turns out, the god of change is precisely that. Without clothing or props, he has no identity.⁶²

At first, Vertumnus' example appears quite successful when applied to the poet's creation of new characters, and thus a new elegy, in Book iv. For Vertumnus' role should be much like that of the poet, who can assume and discard identities with ease because his existence outside the poem is faceless and formless. Vertumnus thus represents the perfect medium between the poet and any role he wishes to assume or create.⁶³

This relationship between the poet and the versatile *persona* of Vertumnus is best exemplified if we compare the many *formae* Vertumnus represents with the *forma* of Books I-III, which almost exclusively referred to the form, in particular the beauty, of Cynthia. We see Cynthia's *forma* as the poet's creation especially when the poet deconstructs her beauty in III.24-5:

Falsa est ista tuae, mulier, fiducia formae,
olim oculis nimium facta superba meis.
noster amor talis tribuit tibi, Cynthia, laudes:
versibus insignem te pudet esse meis.
mixtam te varia laudavi saepe figura,
ut, quod non esses, esse putaret amor. (III.24.1-6)

You have a false confidence in your beauty, woman;
long ago you were made overproud by my eyes.
My love bestowed such praises on you, Cynthia;
I am ashamed that you are renowned because of my verses.
I often praised you as combining various charms,
so that what you were not, my love imagined you were.

⁶⁰ It is a natural development of the hard-soft imagery of Augustan poetics that the genres of epic and elegy are particularly gendered male (*durus*) and female (*mollis*). For this connection, see Propertius 1.7, and on 1.7 Kennedy, op. cit. (n. 2), 31-3, 58-9.

⁶¹ Shea, op. cit. (n. 56), 67.

⁶² There is one possible exception here. The *desultor* in iv.2.36 has a nature closest to that of Vertumnus. The trick rider is identified by his ability to jump from one

horse to another. Like the wily Vertumnus, the *desultor* is never really 'caught in the middle'. Or conversely, if he is suspended between two positions, one imagines him as perfectly balanced, not an unseemly mix of two opposites.

⁶³ Vertumnus is rather like the poet of Ovid, *Amores* II.4, whose 'catalogue' is introduced in 9-10, 'non est certa meos quae forma invitet amores/centum sunt causae, cum ego semper amem', and whose book 'aptat omnibus historis' (44).

If we reinterpret Propertius' words in the light of Vertumnus' similar pronouncements in iv.2, we see that Propertius' verses (*versibus meis*, 4) created Cynthia's *forma* much as Vertumnus' 'turnings' produce his many *formae* in iv.2.⁶⁴ Also, the *varia figura* with which the poet praised Cynthia (III.24.5) reminds us of Vertumnus' nature, which is suited to all figures ('*opportuna meast cunctis natura figuris*,' iv.2.21).

When the poet's final curse against his *puella* in III.25 is compared with Vertumnus' etymology of his own name in Book IV, we see in the god of change the fulfilment of Propertius' prophecy:

has tibi fatalis cecinit mea pagina diras:
eventum formae discite timere *tuae*. (III.25.17-18)

These deadly fates my page has sung for you:
learn to fear the consequence (result) of your beauty!

at mihi, quod *formas* unus vertebar in *omnis*,
nomen *ab eventu* patria lingua dedit.⁶⁵ (IV.2.47-8)

And to me, because I was changed from one into all forms,
my native tongue has given me my name from the result.

As we have seen in iv.2.23-40, the single *forma* of Propertius' first books (the *puella*) is only the first in a list of many which will appear in Book IV. And in terms of the poet's introduction of new characters in Book IV, Vertumnus, as the first of those characters, seems the perfect medium between the poet and any role or voice he wishes to assume. This is seen vividly in iv.9, as Propertius shifts from poet-narrator to assume both a male and then a female voice within the poem.

But is the poet in Book IV as faceless and formless as Vertumnus? As we saw in iv.1, the poet-narrator does not divorce himself from his discourse in Book IV, nor does he alter his appearance, but only his ambition. If the poet-narrator of Book IV is still the Callimachean poet with small voice and tender hands we remember from the earlier books, we might well anticipate difficulties when he attempts to 'lead heroic hands into arms' (II.1.17-18) or introduce patriotic themes and characters not fitted to the 'little boat' of his poems. As we re-examine the situation of Hercules in iv.9, we see in the hero's dilemma how these difficulties are manifested within the discourse of Propertius' elegies.

V. CROSS-DRESSING AND INCONGRUITY: HERCULES AS ELEGY'S NEW REPRESENTATIVE (IV.9)

That Hercules' appearance in a discourse reserved for 'soft' themes and characters might serve as an example of a poet's attempt to 'lead heroic hands into arms' is announced more openly in another *recusatio* poem, this one not from Propertius himself, but from his contemporary Horace.⁶⁶ Horace begins *Odes* II.12 with a list of topics that must be rejected for the 'soft' lyric poetry he produces (II.12.1-9a):⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Shea, op. cit. (n. 56), 64 suggested that Vertumnus wants us to mark his use of *versus* in iv.2.57, with this connotation of 'verses'. Indeed, if this *vertere/versus/versare* pun works, the first line of iv.2 might recall more directly the beginning of poem III.11. In III.11.1-2, the reader presumably marvels at the fact that a woman 'turns' (*versat*) the poet's life (*vitam*), both 'changing' it from freedom to slavery and also 'ruling' its poetry (for *vita*=poetry, cf. I.2.1). Cf. the similar play with *versus* and *vertere* in iv.5.46, 56-7; also *versat* in iv.5.63. And Cynthia's ghost in iv.7 holds the 'change-ful' (*versutus*) *Nomas* responsible for her death. Also, III.11.5-8 comprise another 'traditional' catalogue of decorum, including soldier, sailor, and slave.

⁶⁵ cf. also iv.2.1-2. III.25 and iv.2 are the only two occurrences of *eventus* in the Propertian corpus. Also, if the name (*nomen*) of Book I is Cynthia, Vertumnus is the fitting *nomen* for Book IV.

⁶⁶ On associations between Propertius II.1 and Horace, *Odes* II.12, cf. R. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *Horace: Odes. Book II* (1978), on II.12. Cf. here also G. Davis, *Polyhymnia* (1991), 28-36 (on II.12, 30-3), for Horace's use of the *recusatio* as a device of 'inclusion' or 'assimilation' analogous to the rhetorical *praeteritio*.

⁶⁷ The text of Horace is cited from D. R. Shackleton-Bailey (ed.), *Q. Horati Flaccii Opera* (1985, repr. 1991).

Nolis longa ferae bella Numantiae
 nec durum Hannibalem nec Siculum mare
 Poeno purpureum sanguine mollibus
aptari citharae modis,

nec saevos Lapithas et nimium mero
 Hylaeum domitosque *Herculea manu*
 Telluris iuvenes, unde periculum
 fulgens contremuit domus

5

Saturni veteris;...

You do not want the long wars of fierce Numantia,
 nor harsh Hannibal, nor the Sicilian sea
 purple with Punic blood,
 to be fitted to the soft measures of the lyre,

nor the Lapiths and Hylaeus made fierce with too much wine,
 nor the sons of earth tamed by the Herculean hand,
 at which danger the shining house
 of ancient Saturn trembled...

In line 4 the verb *aptari* is used to describe Horace's inability to 'fit' hard themes (e.g. *durum Hannibalem*) to his soft measures (*mollibus modis*). And in line 6, one of these hard themes is the victory of the 'Herculean hand' over the sons of earth, a reference to the Gigantomachy. *Herculea manu* reminds us of Hercules' description of his club in iv.9.39–40 (*Herculeae clavae*).⁶⁸

When we return to our oversized Hercules in iv.9, we see that the hero, when confronted with a situation for which his 'manly' weapons are inappropriate, attempts to soften his features and become his own opposite, following the model of decorum set by Vertumnus. But unlike the formless god, when any 'real' character, once established within the discourse, attempts to adopt Vertumnus' enabling rhetoric of fashion, the attempted transformation has rather different results. If we reconsider Hercules' attempt to bind or conceal his hairy chest with the *mollis fascia*, we see that his argument is ineffectual because his cross-dressing is not a transformation. As Propertius' own picture as well as both passages from Ovid demonstrate, Hercules' cross-dressing produces rather an unbecoming incongruity (both comic and shameful), a state 'between', which seems enabling but in fact only exaggerates his lack of suitability.

There are additional ways Hercules does not 'fit' his would-be role as *apta puella*. If we look to Roman expressions of propriety outside the world of poetry, we find that Hercules' attempt to become suitable through his cross-dressing has in fact made him a paradigm of the worst kind of indecorum. When Cicero introduces the idea of decorum in the *De Officiis*, he equates a lack of decorum with effeminacy (I.4.14, 'quid indecore effeminateve faciat'). And when the orator declaims against his bitter enemy Antony in the *Philippics*, he attacks him in the worst possible terms of shameful behaviour, that of a man in 'woman's clothing' (*Philippics* II.18.44).⁶⁹ An example more suited to Hercules' behaviour occurs in Quintilian's *Institutes*. Quintilian introduces Book XI, 'on style,' with the following illustration of bad style:⁷⁰

...si genus sublime dicendi parvis in causis, parvum limatumque grandibus, laetum tristibus, lene asperis, minax supplicibus, summissum concitatis, trux atque violentum iucundis adhibeamus? ut monilibus et margaritis ac veste longa, quae sunt ornamenta feminarum, deformatur viri, nec habitus triumphalis, quo nihil excogitari potest augustius, feminas deceat.

...(what use is it) if we employ a lofty type of discourse in trivial cases, a small and polished style in important cases, a happy one in sad matters, a gentle one in rough matters, a threatening one in

⁶⁸ It is possible that Propertius was looking in part to Horace's poem. It is worth noting as well that in the second half of Horace's poem, in which he relates the themes which do fit his lyric poems, his poetry is described in terms of the beauty of the mistress Lycymnia, who is 'playing' (cf. *ludentem*, l. 20) with maidens at the festival of Diana, a scenario not unlike that encountered by Hercules in iv.9.

⁶⁹ In Cicero's example, the orator claims that Antony has done the converse of what Hercules attempts here: through Antony's disgraceful behaviour, he has made his 'male' clothing 'female'. Velleius Paterculus describes the literary patron Maecenas in similar terms in II.88.2; on this see Kennedy, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 31.

⁷⁰ Cited from M. Winterbottom (ed.), *M. Fabi Quintiliani, Institutionis Oratoriae Libri Duodecim* (1970).

matters of supplication, a submissive one in energetic situations, or a fierce and angry one when charm is required? It is as indecorous as if men should disgrace themselves with necklaces and pearls and a long dress, which are the adornments of women, or if women should put on triumphal robes, than which nothing more august can be imagined.

Quintilian's example of bad-fitting style is extraordinarily appropriate to the situation of Hercules in iv.9. For it is here we see the particular incongruity of 'mixing' male with female, a step beyond the simple effeminacy of Cicero's example. Also, we see in Quintilian's passage a direct analogy between the incongruity of clothing or appearance and the stylistic incongruity of combining two kinds of discourse (cf. *genus dicendi*), a conflation of real and literary uses of the wardrobe which is important for the poetic implications of Hercules' cross-dressing.

Let us consider as well a discussion of decorum within the world of poetry. Horace opens his *Ars Poetica* with several examples of incongruity in art (1-5):⁷¹

Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
iungere si velit et varias inducere plumas
undique conlatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
desinat in pisces mulier formosa superne,
spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?

5

If a painter should choose to join the neck of a horse
to a human head, and to spread varied feathers over
limbs picked up here and there, so that a beautiful
woman above ends shamefully in a black fish,
could you hold back a laugh, friends, when
admitted to such a sight?

Then in 19-23, he states his sense of propriety, in terms of unity:

...et fortasse cupressum
scis simulare. quid hoc, si fractis enatat exspes
navibus aere dato qui pingitur? amphora coepit
institui; currente rota cur urceus exit?
denique sit quidvis, simplex dumtaxat et unum.

20

And perhaps you know how to draw the likeness of a cypress.
But what of that, if when the money is paid, a hopeless man
who swims away with his ships broken is to be painted?
A wine jar was started: why, once the wheel is turning,
does it come out as a pitcher?
Finally whatever it is, at least let it be simple and uniform.

'Whatever you do, just make it simple and uniform,' he says. Hercules has violated Horace's rule of decorum as well: while he began as a bristling, epic hero, he is now a would-be *puella*, dressed in a costume simultaneously comic and grotesque, rather like the characters with which Horace begins.

When we look at Hercules' attempted cross-dressing in terms of the two poles of Propertius' poetry in Book iv, *amor* and *Roma*, we find that he is unsuited for either side. Looking back to the love elegy of Propertius' first books, Hercules is extraordinarily large for the male role he plays, of the *exclusus amator*. While he may be tired, he is very much unlike the effeminate *amator* of love poetry, whose tender hands make him unfit for weapons. Unlike those of the lover, Hercules' hands are hard and well-suited to arms. Through his slaying of Cacus, and especially through his own introduction, we receive a picture of the biggest sort of epic hero — strong shoulders, weathered hair and face, tough hands, and a hairy chest. His weapons match well both his size and his occupation: he is a most effective soldier (a monster-slayer). He is no more fitted to the elegiac situation he is involved in than the poet of II. I. 17-18 was suited to hard verse.

⁷¹ Horace, *AP*, cited from Klingner (3rd edn, 1959).

Furthermore the elegiac lover, and especially the Propertian *exclusus amator*, is nearly always impotent (he rarely gets the girl), unable to quench his thirsty desire or break through the closed door of his mistress. As part of his 'final' renunciation of Cynthia (and, presumably, the poetry she represents and inspires) in III.25, the poet, as the quintessential *exclusus amator*, bade farewell to the *limen* and *ianua* (III.25.9–10):

limina iam nostris valeant lacrimantia verbis,
nec tamen irata ianua fracta manu.

10

Farewell now, thresholds still tearful at my words,
and door never yet broken by my angered hand.

Two major aspects of the *exclusus amator*'s plight are recalled with these words: in line 9, the tears left upon the threshold;⁷² and in 10, the anger felt by the excluded lover. But the poet reminds the door that, however angry he might have been, he had never used violence to destroy it. As readers of Propertius, we know this to be true. For in his other 'violent' *amator* poem, II.5.21–2, the poet, although angry, nevertheless left the door intact:⁷³

nec tibi periuro scindam de corpore vestis,
nec mea praeclusas fregerit ira fores.

I shall not tear the clothes from your perjured body,
nor will my anger break down your closed door.

In his role as *exclusus amator*, then, it should not be surprising that Hercules' *fortia verba* fail to gain him admission to the shrine and its water. Indeed, far from granting him entrance, the priestess urgently warns him to leave the grove (54):

cede agedum et tuta limina linque fuga.

Go now, and leave this threshold in a safe escape.

At 61, the priestess finishes her speech. What would the *exclusus amator* do now? He might cry, go to sleep there, or maybe threaten to break down the doors. But we have just seen in the poet's farewell in III.25 that he never acted in violence against the door, nor did his most violent *amator*, in poem II.5, vent his *ira* against the door. But Hercules is not really a lover; he is a proven door-destroyer. Not even the *implacidae fores* (14) of Cacus' cave (nor the gates of the Underworld, 41) could withstand his rage. When his attempt to use the enabling discourse of costume-change to manipulate or modify the 'old rules' of the elegiac world breaks down, his response is swift, effective, and destructive. He shatters the *opacos postis* of the girls with the full weight of his shoulders, more as if he were again entering the cave of the monstrous Cacus than a *putris casa*. Indeed, Hercules' enraged thirst (*iratam sitim*) in 62 is the same *ira* that opened Cacus' cave and killed him (*implacidas diruit ira fores*, 14). And the words used to describe Hercules' destruction of Cacus' dwelling in IV.9.14 are remarkably similar to those relating the action *not* performed by the Propertian *exclusus amator* in II.5.22: 'nec mea praeclusas fregerit ira fores'.

Closer to the violence that results from Hercules' cross-dressing is the example presented by Ovid in *Ars Amatoria* 1.689–702. This time the hero is Achilles, and he uses his cross-dressing together with his obviously superior strength as an opportunity for rape:⁷⁴

⁷² These tears themselves are often representative of elegy. Cf. IV.1.73, where Horos warns the ambitious poet that his new project will bring tears. For elegy as a poetry of 'lament', cf. R. Heinze, *Ovids elegische Erzählung* (1919), 19–20; for an etymological discussion of the term and its use by Roman poets, cf. esp. S. Hinds, *The Metamorphosis of Persephone* (1987), 103 ff., with notes.

⁷³ It is worth noting that II.5, like III.25, is also a *renuntiatio amoris* poem, in which the lover claims he will leave his mistress.

⁷⁴ Cited from A. S. Hollis (ed.), *Ovid Ars Amatoria Book 1. A Commentary* (1977).

turpe, nisi hoc matris precibus tribuisset, Achilles
 veste virum longa dissimulatus erat. 690
 quid facis, Aeacide? non sunt tua munera lanae;
 tu titulos alia Palladis arte petes.
 quid tibi cum calathis? *clipeo manus apta ferendo* est;
 pensa quid in dextra, qua cadet Hector, habes?
 reice succinctos operoso stamine fusos: 695
 quassanda est ista Pelias hasta manu.
 forte erat in thalamo virgo regalis eodem;
 haec illum stupro comperit esse virum.
 viribus illa quidem victa est (ita credere oportet),
 sed voluit vinci viribus illa tamen. 700
 saepe 'mane' dixit, cum iam properaret Achilles:
 fortia nam posito sumpserat arma colo.

Shamefully, if he had not granted this to his mother's prayers,
 Achilles disguised his manhood in a long dress.
 What are you doing, son of Aeacus? Wools are not your business;
 you seek renown by another skill of Pallas.
 What are you doing with baskets? Your hand is suited for carrying a shield.
 Why do you have measures of wool in that right hand, by which Hector will fall?
 Throw away the spindles girded with the toilsome thread;
 The spear of Pelias must be brandished by that hand.
 By chance there was a royal maiden in the same chamber;
 She discovered that he was a man by her rape.
 Indeed she was overcome by force, so one must believe.
 But she wanted to be overcome by force, all the same.
 Often she said 'stay' when Achilles was hurrying away;
 for with the distaff put aside, he had taken up his brave arms.

Achilles' cross-dressing, even if it is useful, is *de facto* a cause for shame (*turpe*, 689). Note in 693 that Achilles' hand is suited to weapons, not wool. And immediately following the rape, Achilles resumes his 'proper' arms. Line 702 reminds one much of Hercules' speech, with the same careful exchange of *arma* and *colus*. As the violent ending of iv.9 bears out, Hercules, even cross-dressed, is much stronger than the elegiac lover; he is more like the Achilles of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, whose shameful cross-dressing provided an opportunity for rape.⁷⁵

If he were believable as a *puella*, the 'woman' Hercules describes himself to be, with her rich eastern clothing, would fit best in the elegiac world of lovers, rivals, and mistresses. In fact, perhaps the only moment the hero almost fits is in line 50: 'et manibus duris apta puella fui'. In the juxtaposition of *manibus duris* and *apta puella*, there is a subtle 'reversal of the reversal'. For the adjective *dura* may be applied aptly to the elegiac mistress, who is 'harsh' in her power over the weakened poet-lover and her consistent refusal of his advances.⁷⁶ One senses a curious ambiguity between the readings 'despite my hard hands' and 'by virtue of' them. But while Hercules' position of power and hardness better suits the psychological power wielded by the elegiac mistress, he is nevertheless not a *puella*.

Of course, there is an added element of confusion here. For the elegiac world is not really the world of iv.9 (or Book iv). Instead of a house, there is a shrine, the old woman (*anus*) is not a typical *custos* or *lena*, but a priestess (*sacerdos*), and the 'right girl' should be a *matrona* or Vestal virgin.⁷⁷ But Hercules has proven himself equally ill-suited for the new, patriotic ambitions of Book iv (*Roma*). While his slaying of Cacus and eventual establishment of the Ara Maxima make him an important, even politically correct, aetiological figure, the cross-dressing brought on by his thirst makes him the worst example of an indecorous Roman male. And when the hero succumbs to his anger and breaks down the doors of the shrine all too easily, we are reminded that the *limen* of the *putris casa* was protected not by any physical

⁷⁵ cf. here also Propertius 11.8.39-40, where the poet-lover reminds his audience that he is far inferior to Achilles.

⁷⁶ cf. e.g. 1.7.6, 11.1.78.

⁷⁷ Hercules' 'conviction' that his cross-dressed descrip-

tion will make him *apta* is itself a commentary on the *puellae* within the shrine. We never 'see' these girls. Do they look as he describes himself, or is his denied entrance in fact an assertion of his 'difference' in more than one respect?

strength, but by a sacred law (*metuenda lex*). Therefore, it seems Hercules has in fact committed sacrilege against an important Roman shrine and its goddess (and presumably her worshippers), virtually desecrating the temple.⁷⁸

What, then, does Hercules' unsuccessful cross-dressing (and its aftermath) mean for the poem? It seems that in the figure of the cross-dressed Hercules, we may visualize most dramatically the 'results' of Propertius' project in Book IV: neither one type of elegy nor the other, nor a happy combination of the two, but a comic, even grotesque personification of the clashing fashions which represent an attempt to fit together the two poles of *amor* and *Roma*. In his depiction of Hercules, Propertius has manipulated the visual imagery, especially clothing and props, used to create the characters who in turn define the nature of the discourse itself. In doing this, he exposes the issue of propriety, inviting us to consider the new situations, even the dangers, which arise when a genre is subjected to material not appropriate to it.

If we return once more to the poet-lover's depiction of his poetry in fashion terms in II.1.5–6 and compare it with the model Vertumnus represents in IV.2.21–4, we see the situation faced by both the poet of Book IV and Hercules in IV.9. In II.1.5–6, the poet's 'soft' book is constructed from Cynthia's Coan dress, and her soft (and female) appearance overall. But when Vertumnus introduces his 'rhetoric of fashion' in IV.2.23–4, he claims to 'go both ways', and he is equally comfortable in the soft, female dress of elegy or the manly toga of a 'harder' poetry. Implicit in Vertumnus' model in IV.2 is the idea that a poet, or a character, or any *forma* or *opus* (l. 64) can be simultaneously and decorously one thing or its opposite as well as both together. But as we see in the case of Hercules in IV.9, the 'reality' of the poem's situation means that a character who would change his attire in order to transform himself and move from one 'side' to the other becomes instead an indecorous combination of both; in Hercules' case, a cross-dressed hero.

Indeed, it seems that both the 'small-voiced' poet who would nevertheless attempt to 'lead heroic hands into arms' by introducing bigger, patriotic themes in Book IV, as well as the heroic Hercules who puts on the soft, female dress of love elegy, are literary transvestites. So also is the elegiac discourse their presence and actions produce a sort of cross-dressed elegiac discourse, neither amatory nor patriotic, but an incongruous combination of these two ideals. In the introduction to her book *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety*, M. Garber described the transvestite as a 'third term', pointing out that 'the binarism male/female, one apparent ground of distinction ... between "this" and "that", "him" and "me", is itself put in question or under erasure in transvestism, and a transvestite figure, or a transvestite mode, will always function as a sign of overdetermination — a mechanism of displacement from one blurred boundary to another.'⁷⁹ Garber's description here is readily applicable to the programme Propertius has established for Book IV, and to the poems he produces. Once Propertius sets up a programme of oppositions in IV.1, elegiac discourse itself becomes a sort of 'third', an entity 'between' the patriotic and aetiological themes the poet plans for the new project (*Roma*) and the amatory themes we have come to expect from his first three books (*amor*).

The character of the cross-dressed Hercules in IV.9 vividly illustrates Propertius' project for Book IV. Indeed, the cross-dressed hero embodies the complication of the poet's ostensibly bipolar programme even more strongly than would an 'ordinary' (or 'real') male, in that Hercules is not only a man, but the biggest, manliest of heroes, who attempts to unite himself with the softest of creatures, the *puella*, in vain. In addition, an identification of the Propertian *ego* in Book IV with the situation of Hercules in IV.9 is encouraged by the specifically literary invocation of the hero in the closing lines of the poem, where it seems Hercules has replaced Cynthia or anyone else and become the new 'patron' of Propertius' book (71–2):⁸⁰

⁷⁸ The sexual imagery of the *limen* as well as the poetic and political implications of its remanipulation in Book IV will be considered in my larger study of this book; cf. for now DeBrohun, op. cit. (n. 24), 17–37.

⁷⁹ M. Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (1992), 16.

⁸⁰ Two articles which centre on an interpretation of these

lines are McParland, op. cit. (n. 28) and J. Warden, 'Epic into elegy: Propertius 4.9, 70f.', *Hermes* 110 (1982), 228–42 (a response to McParland). Also, Hercules' favoured position as 'patron' of Book IV can certainly be expected to have political as well as poetic implications. These further possibilities will be considered more fully in my larger study of Book IV.

Sancte pater salve, cui iam favet aspera Iuno:
Sanc[t]e, velis libro dexter inesse meo.⁸¹

Holy father, hail, whom now cruel Juno favours;
Sancus, may you wish to dwell propitiously in my book.

VI. CONCLUSIONS: A NEW *TURPIS LIBER*

This paper has argued that the characters of Propertius' Book iv, in their appearance and actions, metaphorically define and reflect their own elegiac discourse in the same manner that the *ego* and *puella* of the first three books both participate in and are characteristic of the discourse of Propertian love elegy.⁸² In Books i–iii the small voice, tender hands, and soft features of both the poet-lover and his mistress, and especially Cynthia's light Coan dress, are shaped to fit the delicate, Callimachean poetics of Propertian amatory elegy. But in the opening poem of Book iv, Propertius introduces a bipolar poetics for the new book and sets up a potential clash between the themes and ideals of love elegy (*amor*) and those of a harder patriotic, aetiological elegy (*Roma*).

The talking statue of Vertumnus in iv.2 appears to embody the poet's power to combine or alternate between these two poles, as Vertumnus' changeable *formae* replace the single *forma* of love elegy, the *puella*. Vertumnus revises the rules of decorum previously established for amatory elegy and introduces his own rhetoric of fashion, claiming to be decorous in any costume, and thereby suited to any role or situation the discourse might require. But in fact the cross-dressed Hercules of iv.9 proves a more fitting representative for the characters and situations that define the discourse of Book iv. Hercules' comic and shameful combination of hard and soft, male and female, soldier and lover, patriotic saviour and sacrilegious transgressor, personifies the indecorous elegy of Book iv, in which the characters and the poems themselves defy simple classification in terms of either *amor* or *Roma*, but serve instead as dramatic representations of the clash between these two incompatible poetic and cultural ideals.

Of course, the indecorous nature of Propertius' new elegiac discourse is not in itself grounds for dismissal of its validity. Propertian love elegy was characterized already by a shameful reversal of cultural norms, where lovers could not be soldiers and women held positions of power. The patriotic programme of Book iv necessarily attempts to reinstate the conventional oppositions love poetry has undermined, albeit with mixed results.⁸³ Thus while Book iv has a new look, it is not the lack of decorum *per se* which results in its apparent destructive confusion. Rather, difficulties arise because the oppositions privileged by *amor* and *Roma* are not really equal. One cannot avoid the fact that the 'manly' Hercules, and thus the side he represents, *Roma*, appears to win in iv.9; and the same is true in the other poems of Book iv. Indeed, Propertius' poetry in Book iv represents not a simple reversal of two poles, but rather the domination of *amor* by *Roma*. And the victory of *Roma*, with its overpowering themes and subjects, seems finally to endanger the integrity of elegiac discourse.

But in fact this 'endangerment' is itself a false term. For Propertius has signalled the boundaries of his genre in iv.1 only in order to signal his transgression of those boundaries. After establishing a discourse which implies the necessity of a choice — love elegy or patriotic, aetiological elegy (*amor* or *Roma*) — where only one side is already defined (i.e. love elegy, defined by Propertius himself), the poet proceeds to demonstrate in the poems themselves that

⁸¹ Along with Fedeli, Camps, and Pasoli, I have accepted the emendation *Sance* in 72, as part of the cult title for Hercules, *Semo Sancus*; cf. esp. *CIL* iv.568, *Sancto Semoni Dio Fidio sacrum*.

⁸² While it is beyond the scope of this paper to deal with other examples, it is important to note that Vertumnus and Hercules are not the only characters to try to 'have it both ways' through this rhetoric of transformation. In a later study, I will demonstrate that the critical perception

discussed here can be applied to all the characters and poems of Book iv.

⁸³ The issue of decorum in Augustan elegy has important political as well as poetic implications. In a larger study, I intend to demonstrate that the indecorous characters of Book iv have been exploited both for their value as poetic constructions and for their symbolic potential in the construction of Augustan hegemony.

it is possible to combine them, or at least to explore combinations. Even the defeat of *amor* at the hands of *Roma* is poetically effective. Through his remanipulation of symbols from both the poetic and real worlds, such as the visual imagery of physical characteristics and clothing, the poet has created a new type of elegiac discourse, a new *turpis liber* with its own lack of decorum.⁸⁴

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⁸⁴ cf. Propertius 11.3.4, 'et turpis de te iam liber alter erit'.