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The Didos of Book Four:

Gender, genre, and the *Aeneid* in Propertius 4.3 and 4.4*

In the second poem of Propertius' fourth book, the form-shifting deity Vertumnus claims that he is suited to any role that he is associated with because he can appear convincingly as a girl or a man: *indue me Cois: fiam non dura puella: | meque uirum sumpta quis neget esse toga?* ('dress me in Coan silk, I shall be a gentle maiden: and who would say that I am not a man when I don the toga?', 4.2.23-4).¹ Later in Propertius 4.9, another gender ambiguous character, Hercules, while trying to gain entry into the shrine of the Bona Dea, boasts that he had woven and performed a handmaiden's service (4.9.47-50):²

* I am grateful to audiences in Edinburgh and Montréal for helpful discussions, and to Donncha O'Rourke, Ian Goh and the anonymous reader for their constructive comments.

¹ Passages of Propertius are cited in the form in which they appear in S. J. Heyworth (ed.), *Sexti Properti Elegi* (Oxford, 2007a); variants and conjectures are not noted except in cases where they are important for the discussion. Translations of Propertius are based on S. J. Heyworth, *Cynthia. A Companion to the Text of Propertius* (Oxford, 2007b). For the origin, name, and religious significance of Vertumnus, see especially the recent and very thorough study of M. Bettini, *Il dio elegante: Vertumno e la religione romana* (Turin, 2015), which uses Prop. 4.2 as an anchor for his investigation; see also G. Radke, *Die Götter Altitaliens* (Münster, 1965), 317-20. The idea that Vertumnus is a god of change is also expressed by Propertius' contemporary Horace in *Sat.* 2.7.13-14.

² Several scholars have argued, persuasively, that Prop. 4.9 explores the constructions of gender through the indeterminate gender of Hercules. See S. H. Lindheim, 'Hercules Cross-dressed, Hercules Undressed: Unmasking the Construction of the Propertian *amator* in Elegy

*idem ego Sidonia feci seruilia palla
officia et Lydo pensa diurna colo,
mollis et hirsutum cinxit mihi fascia pectus,
et manibus duris apta puella fui.*

I have also done the tasks of a slave-girl in a Sidonian gown
and worked at the daily burden of the Lydian distaff.
A soft breastband has surrounded my shaggy chest,
and with my hard hands I was a fitting girl.

Scholars have noted that the language used by Propertius to depict gender inversion in these episodes has profound implications for understanding the generic complexity of the poet's new, more aetiological, fourth book. DeBrohun points out that when Hercules recalls the soft (*mollis*) breastband on his hairy (*hirsutum*) chest – a contrast further substantiated by his claim that he had become a *puella* with rough hands (*manibus duris*) – the hero 'softens' his appearance in terms that resonate strongly with the Augustan poets' expression of the terminology of Callimachean poetics, thus allowing readers to interpret this scene as an act of generic realignment that symbolizes book 4's attempt to accommodate both grand topics and erotic narratives.³ Similarly, the Coan silk (*Cois*, 4.2.23) worn by Vertumnus, which enables him to become a *non dura puella* (4.2.23), brings to mind Propertius' previous love elegies in

4.9', *AJP* 119 (1998), 43-66; M. Janan, *The Politics of Desire. Propertius IV* (Berkeley, CA, 2001), 128-45.

³ J. B. DeBrohun, *Roman Propertius and the Reinvention of Elegy* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2003), 161.

which the poet pledges allegiance to the aesthetics of the poetry of Philetas and Callimachus (cf. Prop. 1.2.2; 2.1.5-6; 3.1.1);⁴ by contrast, the god's appearance as a *uir togatus* in the next line (4.2.24) conveys more than just a change of costume, but also the kind of poetry associated with the symbol of the toga and manhood, such as epic.⁵ Indeed, it has become commonly accepted in Propertian scholarship to see Vertumnus as a metapoetic figure, whose ancient origin and ability to effect self-transformation encapsulate the poet's claim of changing the direction of his poetry in book 4 by composing more patriotic aetiological poetry.⁶ The gender switch of Vertumnus, much like his assertion that he can steal the guise of either Bacchus or Apollo (*cinge caput mitra, speciem furabor Iacchi; | furabor Phoebi, si modo plectra dabis*, 4.2.31-2) – the two 'rival' deities mentioned in the programmatic poem of book 4 (*mi folia ex hedera porrige, Bacche, tua*, 4.1a.62; *auersus cantat Apollo | poscis ab inuita uerba pigenda lyra*, 4.1b.73-4) – is a transformative conceit firmly grounded in the poetic sphere,⁷ signalling the book's oscillation between the poetry of Roman history and erotic love elegy, and

⁴ See P. Fedeli (1965) *Properzio. Elegie. Libro IV* (Bari, 1965) on 4.2.23; G. Hutchinson, *Propertius. Elegies. Book IV* (Cambridge, 2006) on 4.2.23-4; É. Coutelle, *Properce. Élégies. Livre IV* (Brussels, 2015) on 4.2.23.

⁵ Coutelle (n. 4) on 4.2.24. Note also Vertumnus' claim three lines later, *arma tuli quondam* (4.2.27); on metapoetic readings of this line, see Hutchinson (n. 4) on 4.2.27 and Coutelle (n. 4) on 4.2.27.

⁶ See e.g. Hutchinson (n. 4), 86: '4.1 has juxtaposed Rome's evolution and the possibility of change for the poet. This poem [i.e. 4.2] proves that possibility'; see also DeBrohun (n. 3) 169-75; T. S. Welch, *The Elegiac Cityscape. Propertius and the Meaning of Roman Monuments* (Columbus, OH, 2005), 42-3.

⁷ DeBrohun (n. 3) 171; see also M. Wyke, *The Roman Mistress* (Oxford, 2002), 84.

continuing the alternating ‘epic’ and ‘elegiac’ movements putatively established by Propertius 4.1.⁸

The present study focuses on two other instances of gender inversion in Propertius 4, both of which are enacted by female characters, namely Arethusa in 4.3 and Tarpeia in 4.4. My chief aim is to suggest that these two episodes of female gender inversion, like those enacted by Vertumnus and Hercules, also figuratively perform the generic dynamics of the poetry-book; but they do so with specific and sustained references to the fourth book of Vergil’s *Aeneid*, which itself is fraught with gendered and generic tensions. By establishing a dialogue with *Aeneid* 4, the story of Dido and Aeneas, as will be seen, becomes a foil for the gender relations and generic patterns of Propertius 4.3 and 4.4. When these two elegies are read in conjunction, the gender inversions of Arethusa and Tarpeia constitute a metaphor for Propertian love elegy’s attempt to enact self-change and make an incursion into the non-elegiac world; and the interpretation of Propertius 4.4, especially, benefits from an examination of the poem’s dialogue with both 4.3 and *Aeneid* 4. Furthermore, it will be argued that the representation of the *arma* and *uiri* in the stories of Arethusa and Tarpeia not only identifies Propertius 4.3 and 4.4 as a unitary and provocative response to *Aeneid* 4, but also draws attention to the extent to which Propertius is recomposing Vergilian material in these poems

⁸ For an innovative reading of the epic and elegiac movements of 4.1, see D. O’Rourke, “‘Eastern’ Elegy and ‘Western’ Epic: Reading ‘Orientalism’ in Propertius 4 and Virgil’s *Aeneid*”, *Dictynna* 8 (2011), 3-8. Several scholars have argued for a bipartite programme for Propertius’ final poetry-book, see H. -P. Stahl, *Propertius. ‘Love’ and ‘War’. Individual and State Under Augustus* (Berkeley, CA, 1985), 255-79; Wyke (n. 7), 78-114.

and, through them, redefining the dynamic between love elegy and epic in a post-*Aeneid* literary world.

The justifications for treating Propertius 4.3 and 4.4 together are twofold. First, the juxtaposition of these two poems, both of which depict a woman's love in time of war, naturally invite comparison and unitary reading – just as later in the collection the pairing of 4.7 and 4.8, which focus on the relationship between Cynthia and the poet-narrator, demands mutual reflection.⁹ Indeed, the notion that two distinct poetic movements can combine to explore a single subject matter inaugurates the fourth book of Propertius, regardless of whether one chooses to divide 4.1 into two separate poems.¹⁰ Secondly, while elegies 4.6 and 4.9 have been the focal point of the study of Vergilian-Propertian intertextuality,¹¹ critics have shown that the depictions of Arethusa and Tarpeia share similarities with several female characters in the *Aeneid*, such as Dido, Camilla, and Allecto. In his commentary on Propertius 4.3, Hutchinson

⁹ On the correspondence between 4.7 and 4.8, see J. Warden, 'The Dead and the Quick: Structural Correspondences and Thematic Relationships in Propertius 4.7 and 4.8', *Phoenix* 50 (1996), 118-129; Janan (n. 2), 110-27.

¹⁰ Critics generally agree that the intrusion of a second voice at line 71 retracts and amends the poetic programme set out in 4.1.1-70. For arguments in favour of division of 4.1 into two separate poems, see F. Sandbach, 'Some Problems in Propertius', *CQ* 12 (1962), 264-71, and Heyworth (n.1, 2007b), 424-5.

¹¹ See recently O'Rourke (n. 8). In addition, on the Actian scenes in *Aen.* 8 and Prop. 4.6, see J. F. Miller, 'Propertian Reception of Virgil's Actian Apollo', *MD* 52 (2004), 73-84; on the dialogue between Prop. 4.9 and *Aen.* 8.184-305, see J. Warden, 'Epic into Elegy: Propertius 4.9.70f.', *Hermes* 110 (1982), 228-42, and M. Janan, 'Refashioning Hercules: Propertius 4.9', *Helios* 25 (1998), 65-77.

has identified points of contact between the actions of Arethusa and those of Dido, and has suggested quite reasonably that the fate of the Carthaginian queen spells out for the reader one potential outcome for the Propertian *puella*, an idea which this article will explore further.¹² Scholars have also identified some Vergilian voices in the portrayal of the frenzy of Tarpeia in Propertius 4.4;¹³ Warden in particular has established parallels between Propertius' depiction of Tarpeia as an Amazonian Bacchant (4.4.71-2) and Vergil's 'dual representation' of Dido as warrior queen (*Aen.* 1.490-3) and frenzied Maenad (*Aen.* 4.300-3).¹⁴ Building on the observations of Warden, critics such as Janan and Welch, who have approached the poem from perspectives informed by contemporary psychoanalytic theory and feminist criticism, have since argued that the portrayal of Tarpeia as an Amazonian Bacchant draws attention to the poem's overall discourse of transgression.¹⁵ Readings of this kind, as well as intertextual connections between Propertius 4 and *Aeneid* 4, will form the basis of my discussion. Where the present study differs from previous treatments is its focus on the theme of female gender

¹² Hutchinson (n. 4) on 4.3.30.

¹³ On the allusion to *Aen.* 7.456-7 at Prop. 4.4.68, see the comments *ad loc.* by M. Rothstein, *Die Elegien des Sextus Propertius*, second edition (Berlin, 1920-4); E. V. D'Arbela, *Properzio. Elegie* (Milan, 1964), and Hutchinson (n. 4).

¹⁴ J. Warden, 'Another would-be Amazon: Propertius 4, 4, 71-72', *Hermes* 106 (1978), 177-187. Especially pp. 178-80, 182-4, 187; the quotation comes from p.184.

¹⁵ Janan (n. 2), 76-8; T. S. Welch, *Tarpeia: Workings of a Roman Myth* (Columbus, OH, 2015), 178-82. Janan (n. 2), 70-84 especially argues that 4.4 gives voice to a feminine desire that collapses the binary and hierarchical oppositions of conventional Roman thought, including those of Man/Woman.

inversion, and its central argument that Propertius 4.3 and 4.4 together make use of this motif to draw out the generic complexity of Propertian elegy and its relation to Vergil's epic.

I. Gender and genre in *Aeneid* 4 and Propertius 4

The various and well-attested generic affiliations of Dido's character in the *Aeneid* intersect with the different gender roles she takes on in the first four books of the poem, during which she undergoes (broadly speaking) a dramatic inversion from a competent, powerful ruler, to an emotionally charged and increasingly helpless woman wounded by love.¹⁶ The interactions between *arma* and *amor* in the sequence of events centred on Dido and Aeneas, especially in book 4, are bound up with Vergil's depiction of her as a character who transgresses gender roles and generic conventions. The poem's first extended description of

¹⁶ On the extent to which Vergil's depiction of Dido is indebted to models from (a) Latin love elegy: see F. Cairns, *Virgil's Augustan Epic* (Cambridge, 1989), 135-50. (b) Greek tragedy: see J. Moles, 'Aristotle and Dido's *hamartia*', *G&R* 31 (1984), 48-63; P. Hardie, 'Virgil and tragedy', in C. Martindale (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil* (Cambridge, 1997), 312-26; E. Oliensis, *Freud's Rome* (Cambridge, 2009), 64-6; V. Panoussi, *Greek Tragedy in Virgil's Aeneid* (Cambridge, 2009), 45-56, 133-8. (c) Apollonius' *Argonautica*: see N. Krevans, 'Dido, Hypsipyle, and the Bedclothes', *Hermathena* 173-174 (2003-04), 175-83; D. Nelis, *Virgil's Aeneid and the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius* (Leeds, 2001), 133-5. (d) Ennius' *Annales*: see M. Fernandelli, 'Come sulle scene: *Eneide* IV e la tragedia', *Quaderni del dipartimento di filologia linguistica e tradizione classica 'Augusto Rostagni'* 1 (2002), 164-211, esp. 164-81. (e) Roman Republican tragedy: see E. Giusti, *Carthage in Virgil's Aeneid* (Cambridge, 2018), 88-147.

the Carthaginian queen ostensibly emphasizes her masculinity, as Venus tells Aeneas that ‘Dido rules over an empire’ (*imperium Dido... regit*, 1.340) and that, despite being a woman, she once singularly took charge of the operation of leaving Tyre and founding Carthage (cf. *dux femina facti*, 1.364). When Dido emerges in person (1.496-7), her majestic appearance pointedly follows on from a portrait of Penthesilea – a *bellatrix* and Amazonian queen daring to challenge men (cf. *bellatrix, audetque uiris concurrere uirgo*, 1.493) – depicted on the city’s temple to Juno.¹⁷ Dido’s status as a capable leader and builder of nation receives further attention when she is next seen surrounded by ‘weapons’ while implementing laws and rulings on ‘men’ (cf. *saepta armis solioque alte subnixa resedit. | iura dabat legesque uiris*, 1.506-7). The positioning of *armis* and *uiris*, here enclosing (cf. *saepta*) a statesman-like Dido within, underlines that her inversion of gender is strongly associated with the poem’s metadiscourse on genre.

Book 4 of the *Aeneid* further reasserts the gender identity of Dido as it tells the story of her illicit desire, questionable marriage, abandonment by Aeneas, and eventual death. Within this narrative arch one can detect a sustained interplay between features of elegy, epic, and aetiology, amongst others. The opening movement of the book (4.1-89) is dominated by the language and imagery of love elegy as Dido is consumed by the burning *amor* she feels for Aeneas (cf. especially 4.1-2, 22-3, 54, 66-7);¹⁸ both her growing status as the city-founding heroine responsible for the emergence of Carthage as a military force, and the progress of the

¹⁷ On the sexual and social transgressions of Penthesilea and Dido, see A. Keith, *Engendering Rome: Women in Latin Epic* (Cambridge, 2000), 115-19.

¹⁸ Cairns (n.16), 135-50 argues the Vergil’s depiction of Dido draws heavily on the tradition he found represented in contemporary Roman erotic elegy, especially Propertius and Gallus.

Aeneid as an epic poem, are suspended, as the passage below shows (4.86-9, note especially the words in emphasis):

non coeptae adsurgunt turres, non arma iuuentus

exercet portusue aut propugnacula bello

tuta parant: pendent opera interrupta minaeque

murorum ingentes aequataque machina caelo.

The towers she was building ceased to rise. Her men gave up the exercise of war, and they no longer worked on harbours or made fortifications safe from attack. The work that had been started now interrupted, and the huge threatening walls and cranes soaring to the sky all stood idle.

Yet the image of Dido in book 4 is not simply that of a tragic woman suffering from love; rather she continues to exhibit elements of epic masculinity as well as elegiac femininity, and the book itself stages *amor* and *arma* as being in constant tension. In the scene which describes the appearance of Dido and Aeneas as they set out for hunting, critics have noted that Dido's outfit and weaponry (4.136-9) are virtually identical to those of Camilla in the catalogue of Italian forces (7.814-7); and that Camilla herself, another *bellatrix* (7.805), is compared to the Amazon warrior-queens, Hippolyta and Penthesilea (11.661-2) – the latter, as shown above, prefigures Dido's own appearance in book 1.¹⁹ Through this series of connections the reader is

¹⁹ On similarities between Camilla, Penthesilea, and Dido, see e.g. R. O. A. M. Lyne, *Further Voices in Vergil's Aeneid* (Oxford, 1987), 136 n.57; B. W. Boyd, 'Virgil's Camilla and the Traditions of Catalogue and Ecphrasis (*Aeneid* 7.803-17)', *AJP* 113 (1992), 213-34; S. Nugent,

reminded of Dido's masculinity and transgressive nature; yet this image of Dido in arms is set in contrast with the way she is introduced in this scene (4.133-4): *reginam thalamo cunctantem ad limina primi | Poenorum exspectant* ('the queen was lingering in her chamber and the Carthaginian leaders waited at her door'). The notion of a woman delaying to meet men who eagerly wait outside her bedroom (*thalamo*) evokes the familiar trope of a *puella* being courted by the *exclusus amator* from Latin love elegy. Dido's eventual crossing of the threshold (*limina*) thus symbolizes a transgression that is at once generic and gendered.²⁰

'The Women of the *Aeneid*: Vanishing Bodies, Lingering Voices', in C. Perkell (ed.), *Reading Vergil's Aeneid: An Interpretive Guide* (Norman, OK, 1999), 261; N. Horsfall, *Virgil. Aeneid 7. A Commentary* (Leiden, 2000) on *Aen.* 7.814-15.

²⁰ In relation to this, it should be noted that later in book 4 when Aeneas makes up his mind to tell Dido of his departure, Vergil's depiction of him strongly resembles an effeminate elegiac *amator* seeking to gain favour: *temptaturum aditus et quae mollissima fandi | tempora, quis rebus dexter modus* ('[that] he would seek an approach, the most tender moment to speak, and a favourable means', 4.293-4); compare with Ov. *Met.* 9.611-12 (Byblis blaming the messenger for not conveying her sentiments to Caunus): *non adiit apte, nec legit idonea, credo, | tempora*. The word *aditus* in Vergil's passage also conveys the idea of spatial transgression (compare with its usage at *Aen.* 2.494 *fit uia ui, rumpunt aditus primosque trucidant*; or at *Aen.* 9.683 *inrumpunt aditus Rutuli ut uidere patentis*), evoking the image of an attempted infiltration by the shut-out lover, which itself is an inversion of the non-elegiac image of the military siege. C. Saylor, 'Some Stock Characteristics of the Roman Lover in Vergil, *Aeneid* IV', *Vergilius* 32 (1986), 73-7 also makes a number of general observations about Vergil's familiarity with some of the stock characteristics of the lover in Roman literature.

Amidst the interplay between the epic and elegiac elements in Dido's characterization lies the important fact that *Aeneid* 4 is also clearly meant to be aetiological. The union between Dido and Aeneas in the cave is referred to as the *causa* of her death and misfortunes (*ille dies primus leti primusque malorum | causa fuit*, 'this day was the beginning of her death, the first cause of all her sufferings', 4.169-70); and the suicide of the Carthaginian queen, precipitated by the breakdown of her relationship with Aeneas, proleptically engenders an *aetion* for the Punic Wars (4.625), a subject of Ennius' *arma*. The tension between *amor* and *arma* in this aetiologically-charged book of the *Aeneid* is also expressed through the semantic pluralism of the word *foedus*, which at first denotes a legitimate matrimonial contract to which Aeneas claims to have given no personal agreement (cf. *nec coniugis umquam | praetendi taedas aut haec in foedera ueni*, 'nor have I ever held out the marriage torch, or entered into that contract', 4.338-9), despite the contrary view of Dido (cf. *tum, si quod non aequo foedere amantis | curae numen habet iustumque memorque, precatur*, 'then she prayed to whatever just and mindful power there is that watches over lovers who have been betrayed', 4.520-1);²¹ but later the same word is used by Dido in her curse of the Trojans, demanding her descendants not to forge an alliance with those of Aeneas: *nullus amor populis nec foedera sunt* ('let there be no love or treaties between our peoples', 4.624).²² As *foedus* changes in meaning, and the context of its usage shifts from a confrontation between former lovers to an impending war between two future enemies, the expression *nullus amor* in Dido's final speech can be construed as the resumption of *arma* at the end of book 4 of the *Aeneid*.²³ Set against the book's aetiological

²¹ Cf. *OLD* s.v. *foedus* 3.

²² Cf. *OLD* s.v. *foedus* 1.

²³ Note that when Aeneas at the beginning of book 5 looks back at Carthage and sees the smoke from Dido's pyre, the poem pointedly frames her behaviour as being typically female (cf.

background, *amor* and *arma* are constantly placed as opposites in tension, and their relation is explored through the changing gendered characteristics and generic affiliations of Dido. By thus depicting the female protagonist of the most elegiac book of his epic, Vergil presents Dido and *Aeneid* 4 as the focal point of intergeneric dialogue and the gendering of poetic forms.

The fourth book of Propertius engages with the *Aeneid* from its outset. The opening four lines of the programmatic poem set up a contrast between the present-day *maxima Roma* (Prop. 4.1.1), whose pre-eminence is symbolized by the Palatine Temple of Apollo (4.1.3), and the site's primitive state in the days of Aeneas and Evander (*ante Phrygem Aenean collis et herba fuit*, 4.1.2; *Euandri profugae concubuerunt boues*, 4.1.4). The mention of these two characters from Vergil's epic as Propertius contemplates the rise of Rome from a minor settlement to a dominant *Weltstadt* not only foregrounds the new aetiological focus of his poetry, but also anticipates further interactions between the present poetry-book and Vergil's *Aeneid*, which can be seen clearly in poem 4.6. Here Propertian elegy takes on a theme that occupies central place in the ecphrasis of the shield of Aeneas in book 8 of the *Aeneid*, namely the battle of Actium (*Aen.* 8.675-728).²⁴ The Propertian poem explicitly identifies itself as a reinvention of epic narrative in accordance with the Callimachean aesthetic principles of refinement and light verse (cf. 4.6.3-5, 10),²⁵ and presents the events at Actium as (amongst

furens quid femina possit, 5.6) and symptomatic of the grief caused by love (cf. *duri magno sed amore dolores | polluto*, 5.5-6).

²⁴ See esp. Miller (n. 11); also J. F. Miller, *Apollo, Augustus, and the Poets* (Cambridge, 2009), 80-9.

²⁵ Cf. H. E. Pillinger, 'Some Callimachean Influences on Propertius Book 4', *HSCP* 73 (1969), 191-4; É. Coutelle, *Poétique et métapoésie chez Propertius: de l'ars amandi à l'ars scribendi* (Louvain, 2005), 596-7.

other things) a battle of the sexes.²⁶ The poem firmly underscores the idea that Cleopatra is a woman who dared to challenge the authority of a man and was punished for it (*en, nimium remis audent: pro turpe Latinos | principe te fluctus regia uela pati*, ‘look, they dare too close with their oars: it is shameful that Roman waves endure royal sails when you are the first citizen’, 4.6.45-6; *dat femina poenas*, ‘the woman pays the penalty’, 4.6.57), while at the same time questioning whether a victory over a woman is truly worthy, as the thinly-veiled sarcasm at verses 65-6 seems to attest (*di melius! quantus mulier foret una triumphus | ductus erat per quas ante Jugurtha uias!*; ‘Thank heaven! What a triumph a single woman would have been in the streets through which Jugurtha was led in the past!’).²⁷ Throughout Propertius’ reworking of the Vergilian material in elegy 4.6, inversions of gender and genre are never far from the surface. For example, the vitriolic description of Cleopatra’s fleet, *pilaque femineae turpiter apta manu* (‘javelins were shamefully fitted into a female hand’, 4.6.22), operates on the (horrific!) idea that a woman is taking on the masculine role of a soldier,²⁸ while the juxtaposition of *pilaque femineae*, when viewed within the broader context of the poem’s intertextual dialogue with the *Aeneid*, would seem most likely to be an inversion of Vergil’s *Arma uirumque*; thus the implication of this line seems to be: neither weaponry nor epic is suited to a feminine hand. The connection between gender and genre established by Propertius in his

²⁶ R. Gurval, *Actium and Augustus: The Politics and Emotions of Civil War* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1995), 227; DeBrohun (n. 3), 218; O’Rourke (n. 8), 10. See also Janan (n. 2), 102, who writes emphatically: ‘Contempt for the feminine, celebration of clear-cut hierarchies of dominance and power, and an absence of self-doubt, all exalting a self-assured Roman masculinity, constitute 4.6’s foreground.’

²⁷ On the awkward praise of 4.6.65, see Gurval (n. 26), 271 and Hutchinson (n. 4) on this line.

²⁸ Hutchinson (n. 4) on 4.6.22.

arguably most thoroughgoing engagement with Vergil's *Aeneid* should therefore encourage us to inquire into whether the dynamics of gender in elegies 4.3 and 4.4, which clearly respond to *Aeneid* 4, have any significant bearing on the generic relationship between book 4 of Propertius and Vergil's epic.

II. Propertius 4.3

Elegy 4.3 takes on the form of a letter written and narrated by Arethusa to her husband Lycotas who is campaigning abroad (4.3.1-4); the poem's engagement with the romantic plot of *Aeneid* 4 can be detected from the outset. The opening of the letter immediately throws their marriage into doubt, as the continued absence of Lycotas makes Arethusa wonder whether they are really married at all (*cum totiens absis, si potes esse meus*, 4.3.2), even prompting her to recall their wedding as a funeral (4.3.13-16) and claiming that the light of the marriage torch was drawn from a pyre (*illa | traxit ab euerso lumina nigra rogo*, 4.3.13-14).²⁹ This dramatic opening in which Arethusa appears as an abandoned wife trapped in an uncertain and moribund marriage already evokes Vergil's Dido. Verses 23-30 then bring into focus the poem's disruption of gender and genre as Arethusa's description of her husband calls into question just how masculine and soldierly Lycotas really is.³⁰ His delicate shoulders (*teneros...lacertos*, 4.3.23), unwarlike hands (*imbelles...manus*, 4.3.24), as well as Arethusa's fear of a rival attracting her husband's attention (4.3.25-6), all suggest that Lycotas is more suited to erotic rather than military engagement. By contrast, Arethusa's life appears as much wrapped up in the military as is any soldier's: *at mihi cum noctes induxit uesper amaras, | si qua relictas iacent*,

²⁹ DeBrohun (n. 3), 192.

³⁰ Hutchinson (n. 4) on 4.3.23-8. On the femininity of Lycotas, see also Janan (n. 2), 59.

osculator arma tua ('as for me, when evening brings on the bitterness of night, I kiss your arms, any that lie there, left behind', 4.3.29-30). The 'bitter nights' (*noctes amaras*, 4.3.29) endured by Arethusa recall those of the *exclusus amator*, the 'soldier' of the elegiac world (cf. Prop. 1.16.21-4);³¹ and Arethusa's *amor militis* is such that she is even desirous of weapons.³² However, the image of an abandoned wife kissing the *arma* (4.3.30) that had been left behind (*relicta*, 4.3.30) by her departed husband recalls the moment in *Aeneid* 4 when Dido instructs Anna to put the weapons left by Aeneas on what will become her own funeral pyre (*Aen.* 4.495-7):³³

*et arma uiri thalamo quae fixa reliquit
impius exuuiasque omnis lectumque iugalem,
quo perii, super imponas...*

And place on top of it the armour of the hero which the wicked man
left hung up in the bedroom, and all mementos and the marriage bed
on which I gave up my life...

Arethusa's earlier recollection of her moribund marriage to Lycotas now finds echoes in Dido's ominous pronouncement of having given up her life on the nuptial bed (*lectumque iugalem* |

³¹ DeBrohun (n. 3), 150.

³² On *amor militis*, Wyke (n. 7), 91.

³³ Hutchinson (n. 4) on 4.3.30.

quo perii).³⁴ Even the whiff of *militia amoris* in the Vergilian phrase *arma uiri thalamo* (4.495) is picked up by the Propertian expression *osculator arma tua* (4.3.30), which flirts with Latin sexual vocabulary.³⁵ As the elegy almost reaches its halfway point, the reader, confronted with numerous parallels between Arethusa and Dido, is left to wonder whether this Propertian *puella* can break out of the mould of her Vergilian predecessor.

Evocations of *Aeneid* 4 surface again later in Propertius' poem when Arethusa suddenly expresses her wish to join the ranks of the army in order to accompany her husband (4.3.43-6):

felix Hippolyte nuda tulit arma papilla
et textit galea barbara molle caput.
Romanis utinam patuissent castra puellis!
issem militiae sarcina fida tuae.

Lucky Hippolyta with her bare breast carried arms and,
barbarian that she was, covered her feminine head with a helmet.
How I wish that camps were open to Roman girls:
I would have gone as a pack faithfully to accompany your military service.

³⁴ Note also that Arethusa's complaint of loneliness and sleeplessness, *tum queror... | lucis et auctores non dare carmen aues* (4.3.31-2), mobilizes language that encourages intertextual comparison.

³⁵ The phrase *arma uiri thalamo* clearly also alludes to the opening and 'alternative title' of the *Aeneid*. On the significance of this kind of titular evocation in the *Aeneid*, see F. Mac Góráin, 'Untitled / *Arma virumque*', *CPh* 113.4 (forthcoming, October 2018).

Arethusa's desire to transform herself from an unhappy Dido-esque figure (cf. *infelix Dido*, *Aen.* 1.749; 4.68, 450, 596) to a *felix Hippolyte* (Prop. 4.3.43) is bound up with the poem's discourse on gender and genre. The femininity of Hippolyta is clearly indicated by *nuda...papilla*; her gender inversion is represented as the abandonment of *mollia* in favour of *arma*, two words also conventionally considered as the markers of elegy and epic respectively.³⁶ Furthermore, the contrast between the barbarity (*barbara*) of Hippolyta and the self-identification of Arethusa as a *puella Romana* suggests that there is something un-Roman about a woman assuming the role of a soldier. Unable to become a *felix Hippolyte*, Arethusa must therefore remain outside the military camp of her husband, denied from the world of *arma* and (her) *uir*. This *puella Romana* is forbidden from making an infiltration into the male domain of war, for Rome is defined by the demarcations of *mollitia* and *arma*, *puella* and *uir*, elegy and epic.

The conclusion of 4.3 not only extends the generic connotations of the poem's focus on gender roles, but also crystallizes the meaning of its engagement with Vergil's epic (Prop. 4.3.67-72):

sed, tua sic domitis Parthae telluris alumnis
pura triumphantes hasta sequatur equos,
incorrupta mei conserua foedera lecti!

³⁶ The image of an armed and bare-chested Hippolyta recalls Vergil's Camilla, who, as mentioned above, is compared to the Amazon; see also Hutchinson (n. 4) on 4.3.43-4. *Nuda...papilla* also evokes the scene of Camilla's death: blood oozed from her exposed breast (*exsertam...papillam*, 11.803-4) where she was struck by Arruns' spear. On the significance of this scene to the constructions of gender in the *Aeneid*, see Keith (n. 17), 27-30.

hac ego te sola lege redisse uelim:

70

*armaque cum tulero portae uotiua Capenae,
subscribam SALVO GRATA PVELLA VIRO.*

But, so may your spear untipped follow triumphal horses
after the conquest of sons of Parthia,
as you keep unstained the pledges of my marriage bed:
on this one condition I would wish for your return,
and when I take your arms as a votive offering to the Capena gate,
I shall write beneath:

[DEDICATED BY] A GIRL SAVED BY HER HUSBAND'S SAFE RETURN.

The word *foedera* (4.3.69) continues the poem's sustained dialogue with *Aeneid* 4 in which the breakdown of the *foedus* between Dido and Aeneas sets in motion the lack of a *foedus* between the Carthaginians and the Romans. Here in Propertius' poem the dynamic is reversed: the lack of a military *foedus* between the Roman army and its enemy is set to undo the matrimonial *foedus* between Arethusa and her husband.³⁷ Indeed, the presence of the *Aeneid* in the elegy's final couplet, which is enclosed by *armaque* (4.3.71) and *uiro* (4.3.72), demands readers to consider the extent to which this Propertian poem is incorporating and refashioning book 4 of the *Aeneid*. Propertius' elegy takes on a theme closely modelled on Vergil's story of Dido and Aeneas; but in the course of the poem the female protagonist aspires to break out of the mould of *infelix Dido*, and her desire to enact gender inversion more than flirts with the idea of the

³⁷ Welch (n. 15), 179 argues that *foedus* is often used by elegists to appropriate the sanctity and permanence of political alliances to the realm of love. Cf. Prop. 2.9.35; Catul. 64.335; 109.6.

transfiguration of love elegy into a higher literary genre. However, in the end this elegiac *puella* is unable to ‘arm’ herself and break into the world of (her) man. In contrast to Hippolyta, who is *felix* because she could ‘take up’ weapons (*tulit arma*, 4.3.43), Arethusa will only be happy once she has ‘given up’ weapons (*armaque...tulero*, 4.3.71): the *puella* figure representative of love elegy must remain unchanged.

The poem’s epigraphical ending, which constitutes an *aetion* for an object (4.3.72), reworks another important aspect of *Aeneid* 4 – the aetiology for the Punic Wars deriving from the enmity between Dido and Aeneas.³⁸ If it can be said that the loss of *amor* between Dido and Aeneas leads to an *aetion* of war and the renewal of *arma*, then the conclusion of Propertius 4.3 proposes an opposite dynamic, where the ending of Rome’s war with Parthia and the giving up of *arma* would conceive an *aetion* for an object that commemorates the *amor* between a husband and wife.³⁹ From this perspective then, Propertius’ poem can be seen as an idealized elegization, or an unarming, of Vergil’s epic. On the other hand, the juxtaposition of *puella* and *uero* in Arethusa’s proposed inscription (4.6.72) looks ahead to a happy reunion of husband and wife, an event which is never realized in the *Aeneid*. Therefore, the potentially elusive epitaph at the end of Propertius 4.3 also casts doubt on whether the present poem can pass as an *aetion*, and, combined with the image of Arethusa’s failure to ‘arm’ herself, the poem as a

³⁸ Note also that *Ov. Her.* 7, which presents itself as a letter from Dido to Aeneas, also ends with an epitaph (lines 195-6). The relationship between Prop. 4.3 and *Ov. Her.* 7 will be discussed later.

³⁹ On the poem’s contemporary associations and its reference to a military conflict with Parthia, see Hutchinson (n. 4), 101; A. Keith, *Propertius. Poet of Love and Leisure* (London, 2008), 162-4.

whole tacitly undermines the idea that Propertian love elegy can transfigure itself into a new form of writing.

III. Propertius 4.4

That the Propertian motif of female gender inversion can be construed as a metaphor for love elegy's self-transfiguration and transgression of literary genres finds further support in the book's next poem, in which Propertius recounts the story of the crime of Tarpeia and the origin of the allocation of her name to the Capitoline hill. The plot of the Propertian poem bears some similarities to one version of the events which Livy dismisses as *fabula* (1.11.8).⁴⁰ While Livy reports that some believed that Tarpeia betrayed Rome because she wanted the golden jewellery worn by the Sabines on their left arms, in Propertius' poem Tarpeia appears as a Vestal virgin who falls in love with the Sabine king, Tadius, when she catches sight of him practising manoeuvres and wielding weapons (*uidit...Tadium... | pictaque per flauas arma leuare iubas*, Prop. 4.4.19-20; *obstipuit regis facie et regalibus armis*, 4.4.21), and so fervently pursues a marriage to a disastrous end (4.4.55-62).⁴¹ As a Vestal virgin and eager bride, the

⁴⁰ Livy provides three different versions of the story of Tarpeia in *Ab urbe condita* 1.11.6-9, the first of which (where Tadius bribed Tarpeia to let his troops into the citadel) is presented as the most convincing. The two alternative accounts reported by Livy make no reference to any kind of erotic passion on Tarpeia's part. For a recent discussion of Livy's passage, see Welch (n. 15), 135-66.

⁴¹ Varro seems to be the first literary source to identify Tarpeia as a Vestal virgin (cf. *LL* 5.41 *hic mons ante Tarpeius dictus a uirgine Vestale Tarpeia*); see Welch (n. 15), 105-34, 107-115. On allusions to and reworkings of Varro *LL* 5 in Prop. 4, see C. McDonald, 'Rewriting Rome:

Propertian Tarpeia is therefore similar to Arethusa in (at least) two respects: she too desires an unlikely marital union, and she too is confined within Rome.⁴² That the portrayal of Tarpeia in this poem is in some ways an intensification of Arethusa's image in the previous elegy can be seen most clearly in the Vestal virgin's nocturnal monologue (4.4.31-8):

ignes castrorum, et Tatiae praetoria turmae,

et formosa oculis arma Sabina meis,

o utinam ad uestros sedeam captiua Penates,

dum captiua mei conspicer ora Tati!

Romani montes, et montibus addita Roma,

35

et ualeat probro Vesta pudenda meo!

ille equus, ille meos in castra reponet amores,

cui Tatius dextras collocat ipse iubas.

Campfires, and command post of Tatius' troop,

Topography, Etymology, and History in Varro *De Lingua Latina* 5 and Propertius *Elegies* 4.” *Ramus* 45 (2016), 201-8. K. O'Neill, ‘Propertius 4.4: Tarpeia and the Burden of Aetiology’, *Hermathena* 158 (1995), 53-60 has previously argued that the rival aetiological and amatory programmes of Propertius 4 intersect in the Tarpeia elegy, and that the transformation of a legendary story of historical significance into an unhappy tale of unrequited love can be construed as a kind of *recusatio*.

⁴² Additionally, Hutchinson (n. 4), 118 notes that Tarpeia's experience of only being able to see but not to know the man she loves provides a counterpart to Arethusa, whose real husband cannot be seen.

and Sabine arms beautiful to my eyes,
how I wish I might sit a captive before your hearths,
so long as I might see as a captive the face of my Tatius!
Roman hills, and Rome added the hills,
farewell, and Vesta too, who must feel shame at my sin:
that horse, that one will take my love back to camp,
on which Tatius himself dresses the mane to the right.

Tarpeia's wish at lines 33-34 may be compared to Arethusa's desire to enter military camp (cf. *Romanis utinam patuissent castra puellis*, 4.3.45), but hers is more extreme, as Tarpeia wants the horrifying role of female prisoner-of-war. Not only is the metaphor of *seruitium amoris* now made real,⁴³ but the gender dynamics of this metaphor – which usually has the male *amator* playing the part of the 'slave of love' – are now turned on their head. Similarly, verse 37 uses the military language of love 'in a way that totally negates the metaphorical way of describing love in the language of soldiery';⁴⁴ but yet again the elegiac trope of *militia amoris*, which has already been given a literal interpretation by Arethusa in the previous poem, now conveys a woman's desire to be physically present in a military camp. The convergence of the literalization of metaphorical tropes and the inversion of gender roles in Tarpeia's speech enables us to read her actions in multiple ways. On one level, she is a woman, a virgin, and an entity circumscribed by Rome, who is attempting to do things that she is not allowed to (namely arranging her own marriage and going outside the city); so her actions are a form of

⁴³ Hutchinson (n. 4) on 4.4.33-4.

⁴⁴ M. Fox, *Roman Historical Myths. The Regal Period in Augustan Literature* (Oxford, 1996), 162.

transgression of social and gendered boundaries.⁴⁵ On another level, because Tarpeia's proposed activities violate all the 'rules' of conventional elegiac tropes, she is also transgressing some boundaries of genre; in this case, both her attraction to Tatius' *arma* and her desire to relocate her *amores* to a literal military *castra* are open to a different, more metapoetic, reading. There is a sense that the bold desires and brazen activities of Tarpeia may be seen to exemplify Propertian love elegy's attempt to disrupt literary conventions and transgress into the non-elegiac world.⁴⁶

In the next part of her soliloquy Tarpeia cites the stories of Scylla and Ariadne, who betrayed their family and city for love, to justify her own illicit desire (4.4.39-42); her mentioning of these *exempla* then initiates a series of images which gradually bring the figure of Dido to the surface of the poem. Some of the parallels between the Propertian Tarpeia and the Vergilian Dido have already been noted by critics;⁴⁷ others are discussed in detail for the first time here. For example, at verses 55-6 Tarpeia imagines herself speaking to Tatius and demanding a marriage: *dic, hospes: spatierne tua regina sub aula? | dos tibi non humilis prodita Roma uenit* ('tell me, stranger, am I to walk as queen in your court? Rome betrayed comes as no lowly dowry to you', 4.4.55-6). In referring to herself as *regina* and Tatius as *hospes*, Tarpeia's words may evoke the opening of *Aeneid* 4 where Dido and Aeneas appear as *regina* and *hospes* respectively (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 4.1, 10). And the idea that a marriage between this *regina*-to-be and her *hospes* would threaten Rome (cf. *prodita Roma*) further substantiates

⁴⁵ See also Janan (n. 2), 79-81; Welch (n. 15), 178-82.

⁴⁶ See also Wyke (n. 7), 99.

⁴⁷ E.g. Warden (n. 14), 184-6; Hutchinson (n. 4) on 4.4.70-2.

the link between Tarpeia and Dido.⁴⁸ Against this background, Tarpeia's fanciful suggestion three lines later that her marriage could bring about a peace treaty between the Sabines and the Romans – *commissas acies ego possum soluere nupta: | uos medium palla foedus inite mea* ('as a bride I can part joined lines of battle: you should all enter upon a treaty mediated by my wedding gown', 4.4.59-60) – plays on the double-meaning of *foedus*, which, as we have seen, has precedents in *Aeneid* 4.⁴⁹ This quick succession of evocations of Vergil's Dido not only cast Tarpeia in the role of an epic heroine (who is about to embark on a disastrous course similar to that of the Carthaginian queen), but also lend us reason to interpret Tarpeia's claim that 'my bed will end the harshness of your arms' (*uestra meus molliet arma torus*, 4.4.62) as a pointed reference to the poem's attempt to render Vergil's epic elegiac.⁵⁰ Hutchinson suggests that "[the] strong generic associations of *mollis* and *arma* compel the reader to question the poet-narrator's own activity".⁵¹ But I would put it in stronger terms: the poet-

⁴⁸ Compare also the usage of *dos* here with Verg. *Aen.* 4.103-4 *liceat Phrygio seruire marito | dotalisque tuae Tyrios permittere dextrae*; see Coutelle (n. 4) on 4.4.56.

⁴⁹ Hutchinson (n. 4) on 4.4.59-60 thinks that a *palla* is too ordinary a garment to convey the idea of marriage (cf. *nupta*), and thus proposes: *uos mediae facibus foedus inite meis*. But none of the commentators on Propertius 4 takes issue with *foedus*.

⁵⁰ Wyke (n. 7), 99 interprets this line as a reprise of the bipolar programme established by the opening poem. DeBrohun (n. 3), 194, however, sees *molliet* as adding an elegiac touch to martial Tatus. The sexual connotation of *molliet arma* is well noted by Welch (n. 15), 177. Cf. also Prop. 2.1.13-14 *seu nuda erepto mecum luctatur amictu, | tum uero longas condimus Iliadas* ('or if her clothing is torn off and she wrestles naked with me, then to be sure I compose long Iliads').

⁵¹ Hutchinson (n. 4) on 4.4.62.

narrator does not so much invite a questioning of his literary operation as make a claim that Propertian love elegy is taking on material associated with epic.⁵²

In the final part of the poem, not only does Propertius engage more intensely with the *Aeneid*, but the motif of gender inversion also comes back into focus as a metaphor for generic interactions. Following her nocturnal monologue, Tarpeia's mental and emotional state are described in terms that allude to the maddening of Amata by Allecto on the one hand (*nescia se furiis accubuisse nouis*, 'not realising that she had lain with strange furies' 4.4.68; cf. Verg. *Aen.* 7.341-405, 456-7), and Dido's moral and psychological dilapidation on the other (*nam Venus, Iliacae felix tutela fauillae, | culpam alit et plures condit in ossa faces*, 'for Venus, happy guardian of the Trojan embers, feeds her sin and stores more torches in her bones', 4.4.69-70; cf. *uulnus alit*, Verg. *Aen.* 4.2; *culpa*, Verg. *Aen.* 4.19, 172).⁵³ The image of torches (*faces*, 4.4.70), moreover, extends the association of marriage torches with death made by Arethusa in the previous poem; their burning of Tarpeia's desire now foreshadows her own demise.⁵⁴ The poem's next simile, which compares the frenzied passion of the Vestal virgin to 'a Thracian bacchant beside the swift Thermodon, her clothes torn to reveal her breast' (*illa*

⁵² The reoccurrence of *mollis* and *arma* here (cf. previously at 4.3.43-4) provides another reason to treat 4.3 and 4.4 as a cohesive unit.

⁵³ Warden (n. 14), 186; Hutchinson (n. 4) on 4.4.60 and 70. There is still debate surrounding whether the subject of *alit* in Propertius' poem should be *Venus* or *Vesta*. Those who prefer *Venus* include L. Richardson, *Propertius. Elegies I-IV*, second edition (Norman, OK, 2006) and Heyworth (n. 1); but most editors print *Vesta*, see e.g. E. A. Barber, *Sexti Properti carmina*, second edition (Oxford, 1960), Fedeli (n. 4), Hutchinson (n. 4), and Coutelle (n. 4) amongst others.

⁵⁴ Fox (n. 44), 163.

furit qualis celerem prope Thermodonta | Strymonis abscisso pectus aperta sinu, 4.4.71-2), then establishes important connections between Tarpeia, Dido, and Arethusa. At *Aeneid* 4.300-3 Dido too is likened to a manic Bacchant; and as Warden argues, the juxtaposition of *Thermodonta* and *Strymonis* here in Propertius' poem alludes to Vergil's 'dual representation' of Dido as a Penthesilea-like warrior queen and a frenzied Maenad (cf. *Aen.* 1.490-3.; 4.300-1).⁵⁵ However, mentioning the river Thermodon also evokes the image of an Amazon (cf. Prop. 3.14.14; Verg. *Aen.* 11.659-60), whose strong association with virginity and military life are mirrored in Propertius' portrayal of Tarpeia as a Vestal virgin attracted to *arma*.⁵⁶ Therefore the simile also reinforces the resemblance between Tarpeia and Arethusa – since the latter, as we have seen in 4.3, is envious of the Amazon Hippolyta and eager to get out of the city, take up *arma*, and join the military camp of her husband.⁵⁷ It has been argued by Heyworth that

⁵⁵ Warden (n. 14), p.184.

⁵⁶ On the Amazons' eschewal of sex and preference for virginity, cf. Diodorus 3.53, 4.16; Hdt. 4.117. However, they are also said to be highly promiscuous, cf. Hdt. 4.113; Strabo 11.5.1-3. D. Ogden, *Greek Bastardy in the Classical and Hellenistic Periods* (Oxford, 1996), 183 suggests that the significance of these two apparently contradictory qualities lies in the fact that they are antithetical to marriage, which the Amazons are especially said to eschew, cf. Justin 2.4.

⁵⁷ The comparison between Dido, Tarpeia, and the Bacchant also works on a spatial level. As Janan (n. 2), 77 points out, a Bacchant originates within the city and is drawn outside its confines. Likewise, Tarpeia must remain where she is even though what she desires, namely love and marriage, can only be found outside the city. Similarly, Dido's passion rages uncontrollably within Carthage (cf. *totamque incensa per urbem | bacchatur*, Verg. *Aen.* 4.300-301) while her sexual union with Aeneas took place outside the city-walls.

Propertius' simile captures how 'the Vestal Virgin fired by Venus is like an Amazon become a raving Maenad';⁵⁸ I would add to his observation by suggesting that this simile, in the context of the evocations of both Dido and Arethusa in the preceding lines, also underlines Tarpeia's transformation from an Arethusa-figure to a Dido-figure. Like Arethusa, Tarpeia's yearning for a *uir* and her attraction to his *arma* lead her to fantasize (masochistically) about military life (cf. 4.4.31-8); but unlike Arethusa, who does not and cannot act on her wish, Tarpeia, maddened by desire and behaving in a manner reminiscent of Vergil's Dido, makes arrangements for her own marriage and attempts to broker a peace treaty (*hoc Tarpeia suum tempus rata conuenit hostem: | pacta ligat, pactis ipsa futura comes*, 'Tarpeia reckoned this her moment and met the enemy: she seals the agreement, herself to come along as part of the agreement', 4.4.81-2). Janan points out that, even were Tarpeia not a Roman woman and a Vestal virgin consecrated to chastity, these prerogatives would be her father's and Romulus' respectively rather than hers.⁵⁹ Therefore, as Tarpeia takes on tasks conventionally performed by men, she undergoes a symbolic gender inversion; and the expression *conuenit hostem* (4.4.81), especially, casts this Propertian *puella* in a light that is usually shone on an epic hero.

The transformation of Tarpeia from an elegiac *puella* to an audacious heroine of epic proportions draws attention to the discourse of genre with which the poem concludes. The reader is told that when the Sabines are eventually let in by Tarpeia, Tattius kills her with deadly brutality as he crushes her with the weight of weapons (*ingestis comitum super obruit armis*, 4.4.91). The *arma* and the violence of the outsized intruder, as DeBrohun succinctly puts it, suddenly 'take over both the poetic and "real" worlds of the poem'.⁶⁰ Conspicuously, Tattius is

⁵⁸ Heyworth (n. 1), 451.

⁵⁹ Janan (n. 2), 81.

⁶⁰ DeBrohun (n. 3), 148.

here referred to as *hostis* (4.4.89), and the combination of *hostis* and *arma* suggestively implies that epic – specifically the *Aeneid* – is a problematic force in Propertian love elegy. Tarpeia, like Arethusa, cannot breach the camp of her beloved, and her own gender inversion ends in disaster. By contrast, Tattius is able to enter Rome, break into the world of Tarpeia, and kill the *puella*. As the transgressive power of the *arma* and *uir* marks the incursion of the *Aeneid* into Propertian elegy, the meaning of the motif of female gender inversion also changes: having begun as a metaphor for Propertian elegy's self-transfiguration, the thwarted attempt of Arethusa and the death of Tarpeia invert even this metaphor, as poems 4.3 and 4.4 combine to underline the loss of love elegy in the course of its transformation.

The ending of Propertius 4.4 also provokes reflections on the nature of Vergil's *arma* and *uir*. The occasion of Tarpeia's betrayal, according to Propertius' poem, is the celebration of the Parilia, a rural festival that had over time become associated with the foundation of Rome (4.4.73-80; cf. Ov. *Fast.* 4. 721-862);⁶¹ the fact that Tarpeia seeks to undermine Rome on its birthday makes her a force that threatens the existence of Rome, like Dido in the *Aeneid*. Moreover, the final moment of Tarpeia's life – especially the image of Tarpeia approaching what is touted as her nuptial couch (cf. '*nube*' ait '*et regni scande cubile mei!*', 'Marry, and climb the bed of my kingdom', 4.4.90) but instead suffering a death by *arma* at the hands of the man whom she desires – recalls the tragic demise of Dido: the queen of Carthage dies by the sword which once belonged to Aeneas (cf. *ensemque recludit | Dardanium*, Verg. *Aen.* 4.646-7; *illam...ferro | conlapsam aspiciunt comites*, 4.663-4), and her marital bed forms part of the funeral pyre (cf. *conscendit furibunda rogos*, 4.646; *notumque cubile | conspexit*, 4.648-

⁶¹ On the Parilia, see M. Beard, 'A Complex of Times: No More Sheep on Romulus' Birthday', *CCJ* (formerly *PCPS*) 33 (1987), 1-15.

9; *incubuit toro*, 4.650).⁶² In light of these parallels, there is sufficient reason to see the final scene of Propertius 4.4 as a recomposition of Vergil's account of the death of Dido; and through this recomposition, which vividly brings out the force of *arma* and *Tatius*, the poem calls into question Vergil's *Arma uirumque* and all that it stands for. Of course, the portrayal of Tarpeia as one who betrayed her city for the sake of marriage casts an unfavourable light on Dido, encouraging the reader to view the Carthaginian queen through the distorting lens of the story of Tarpeia. But despite all her faults, Tarpeia's death hardly glorifies *Tatius*.⁶³ In a manner similar to Propertius 4.6, wherein the poet seems to question whether Augustus' victory over a woman (namely Cleopatra) is truly heroic (cf. 4.6.65-6), the depiction of *Tatius*' murder of Tarpeia here in 4.4 strips the *arma* and the *uir* of their culminating glory. Indeed, by closing this poem with an image of a Dido-esque victim destroyed by arms and a man, it is implicitly suggested that the suppression of illicit desire and punishment of female transgression have been written into the foundational myth of Rome by Vergil. The overwhelming power Propertius attributes to *arma* and *uir* in his poem about Rome's past thus problematizes Vergil's epic and its entanglement in the rewriting of Roman history.

On the other hand, a poem that purports to be an aetiological account of the origin of the Tarpeian Rock evidently engages in a similar creative activity as the *Aeneid*, which traces the origin of contemporary Rome back to Trojan Aeneas. By highlighting the unstoppable force of *arma* and *uir* in the story of Tarpeia, Propertius' poem also embeds an originary masculine

⁶² Keith (n. 17), 115 argues that at *Aen.* 4.642-7 Vergil conflates Dido's mad desire for death with her sexual passion for Aeneas in the queen's action of grasping her lover's sword.

⁶³ Hutchinson (n. 4), 118: '[The] morality of the final section is so stark, the inequality of the match between [Tarpeia] and her opponents so extreme, that we are drawn to question...the terrifying fierceness and brutality of *Tatius*.'

power into the physical formation of Rome, and retrojects a narrative of the restitution of sexual order onto the very fabric of Roman history, as well as book 4 of the *Aeneid*. Indeed, Propertius' account of the punishment of Tarpeia also retrospectively underlines a moral message latent within the story of Arethusa, who, as we have seen, fails to transgress and cannot be anything but a faithful Roman wife. Given that Propertius 4 is probably published only a few years after the passing of the Augustan marriage legislation in 18-17 BC,⁶⁴ it would hardly be seen as an inconvenience by Augustus that Propertius is writing the failure of female sexual transgression into the history of Rome.

IV. Conclusions

Propertius 4.3 and 4.4, as this paper argues, encourage the reader both to interpret them through the lens of book 4 of Vergil's *Aeneid*, and to interpret the *Aeneid* through them. The gender inversions of Arethusa and Tarpeia not only fall within a pattern of similar motifs seen throughout book 4 of Propertius which figuratively perform the apparent generic elevation of Propertian love elegy (cf. *Roma, faue: tibi surgit opus*, 4.1a.67), but also thoroughly engage in a dialogue with the tension between *amor* and *arma* encapsulated in the Dido-episode of the *Aeneid*. In this way, the transgressive drama of Propertius 4.3 and 4.4 underlines firstly the extent to which the reinvention of love elegy as something grander is affected by the gendered opposition between *amor* and *arma* in Vergil's epic. Secondly, and more intriguingly in my view, by depicting Arethusa and Tarpeia as Roman reincarnations of the Vergilian Dido, and

⁶⁴ The *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* was passed in 18 BC, followed a year later by the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*. The earliest possible date of publication for Propertius 4 is 16 BC, see Hutchinson (n. 4), 2-3.

by framing 4.3 and 4.4 as a pair of corresponding and self-conscious explorations of what would happen when *arma* stand in the way between the desiring female subject and the *uir* wanted by her, Propertius characterises book 4 of Vergil's *Aeneid* as the paradigmatic poetic text with which to explore the opposition between *arma/uir* and *amor/femina*. Seen against this background, Propertius' presentation of his female protagonists as ultimately unsuccessful Dido-types – circumscribed both by the limitations placed on their gender and by the conventions which demarcate epic and elegy – pointedly reasserts book 4 of the *Aeneid* as the cultural symbol of the prevailing authority of *arma* and *uiri*.

The depiction of Arethusa as a present-day Dido, and Tarpeia as a Roman equivalent to the queen of Carthage, further suggest that in the course of these two elegies Propertius seeks to present *Aeneid* 4 as a text which has effected a change in the way that women throughout Roman history are understood. Propertius connects the fate of both Arethusa and Tarpeia to the survival and eventual triumph of Rome in a manner strongly reminiscent of Vergil's treatment of Dido. In the *Aeneid*, Dido threatens to derail Aeneas' progress towards Italy; she and her descendants are the fatalities of the unstoppable rise of Rome. Correspondingly, Arethusa is presented by Propertius as an unfortunate human consequence of the expansion of the Augustan empire, which takes her husband away from her: so Arethusa suffers because Rome must pacify the world (cf. 4.3.7-10, 35-6, 63-9). The death of Tarpeia on the other hand, as Propertius is surely aware, paves the way for a truce between the Romans and the Sabines which eventually joins the two peoples into one; her fate, in Propertius' poem at least, testifies to the triumph of the sanctity of Vesta/Rome. By thus presenting the reader with two more Didos – one in the contemporary Roman society of Augustus, another in the time of Romulus – Propertius retrospectively locates a universal 'truth' about the women of Rome's past and present in Vergil's story of Dido and Aeneas, retrojecting a gendered reading of the history of Rome onto book 4 of the *Aeneid*. Through this pair of elegies' engagement with Vergil's epic,

Propertius thus implies that, as long as there is a Rome, and as long as there are *arma* and *uir*, there will always be another Dido.

The unitary and bi-directional reading of *Aeneid* 4 and Propertius 4.3 and 4.4 also has implications for the understanding of Ovid's *Heroides* 7, the letter from Dido to Aeneas, as an early instance of the reception of not only Vergil's Dido, but also Propertius' reading of Vergil's Dido. Recent Ovidian scholarship generally accepts that the composer of the *Heroides* was aware of Propertius' poetry; indeed, a number of critics are inclined to see the Ovidian Dido-epistle as formally indebted to the Propertian Arethusa-epistle, even though the relative dating of the fourth book of Propertius and Ovid's *Heroides* remains uncertain.⁶⁵ My interpretation of Propertius 4.3, which argues that this elegiac epistle reworks elements of *Aeneid* 4 and depicts Arethusa as another Dido, would in this case foreground the link between Dido and Arethusa in Ovid's elegiac epistle, and point to the possibility that Ovid saw a connection between Vergil's Dido and Propertius' Arethusa. The Ovidian epistle concludes with Dido asking Aeneas to visualize her distraught appearance as she writes the letter with tears streaming down her face (*perque genas lacrimae strictum labuntur in ensem*, Ov. *Her.*

⁶⁵ For further discussions of the relationship between Prop. 4.3 and Ov. *Her.* 7, see esp. P. E. Knox, *Ovid. Heroides. Select Epistles* (Cambridge, 1995), 17-18; L. Piazzzi, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Heroidum Epistula VII. Dido Aeneae* (Florence, 2007), 217. Regarding the influence of Prop. 4.3 on the *Heroides* in general, see A. R. Baca, 'Ovid's Epistle from Sappho to Phaon (*Heroides* 15)', *TAPA* 102 (1971) 33; H. Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides* (Princeton, 1974), 347-8; S. H. Lindheim, *Mail and Female. Epistolary Narrative and Desire in Ovid's Heroides* (Madison, WI, 2003), 29. On the relative dating of Prop. 4 and *Heroides*, see H. Dörrie, *Epistulae Heroidum* (Berlin and New York, 1972), 28-9; P. E. Knox, 'The *Heroides*: Elegiac Voices', in B. W. Boyd (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Ovid* (Leiden, 2002), 126; Hutchinson (n. 4), 7, 101.

7.185) – an image reminiscent of Arethusa’s self-portrayal in the opening of Propertius’ poem (*si qua tamen tibi lecturo pars oblita derit, | haec erit e lacrimis facta litura meis*, ‘if any part is blotted out and missing as you read it, this will be a blot caused by my tears’, Prop. 4.3.3-4). The correspondence between the two characters is reinforced when Ovid’s Dido ends her letter in the same way as Arethusa does – with an imagined inscription (Ov. *Her.* 7.193-6):

nec consumpta rogis inscribar Elissa Sychaei,

hoc tantum in tumuli marmore carmen erit:

PRAEBVIT AENEAS ET CAVSAM MORTIS ET ENSEM;

IPSA SVA DIDO CONCIDIT VSA MANV.

When I have been consumed by the pyre,
my inscription shall not read: Elissa, wife of Sychaeus;
this brief epitaph will be read on the marble of my tomb:
FROM AENEAS CAME THE CAUSE OF HER DEATH,
AND FROM HIM THE BLADE; FROM THE HAND OF
DIDO HERSELF CAME THE STROKE BY WHICH SHE FELL.

Even if one chooses not to see word *causam* (*Her.* 7.195) in the Ovidian Dido’s epitaph – later replicated verbatim in Ovid’s own poem about *causae* at *Fasti* 3.549-50 – as a nod to the *aetion* of an object embedded in the final couplet of Propertius’ elegy (*armaque cum tulero portae uotiua Capenae, | subscribam SALVO GRATA PVELLA VIRO*, 4.3.71-2), the parallel between

the Ovidian Dido and the Propertian Arethusa is still evident.⁶⁶ Given that critics have long suggested that the women of Ovid's *Heroides*, and Dido especially, often come across as astute readers of other stories in which they appear,⁶⁷ it would not seem inconceivable that Ovid's Dido has read about her own appearance in Propertius' story about Arethusa-as-another-Vergilian-Dido.

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⁶⁶ L. Fulkerson, *The Ovidian Heroine as Author* (Cambridge, 2005), 28 points out that the ending of *Heroides* 7 also alludes to the quasi-epitaph which Vergil's Dido provides for herself at *Aen.* 4.655-6. On the resonances between the concluding epitaph of *Heroides* 7 and the final distich of *Heroides* 2 ('Phyllis to Demophoon'), see Jacobson (n. 65), 62-4; Lindheim (n. 65), 98, 104-7; Piazzzi (n. 65), 303-6. On the use of epitaphs in the *Heroides* and its tradition in Latin love elegy and elsewhere, see A. Barchiesi, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Epistulae Heroidum 1-3* (Florence, 1992), 180-2.

⁶⁷ See esp. M. Desmond, 'When Dido Reads Vergil: Gender and Intertextuality in Ovid's *Heroides* 7', *Helios* 20 (1993), 56-68; Fulkerson (n. 66), 26-32.