

Introduction

From Callimachean Amor to Roman Callimachus—Elegy as “Third”

In his fourth and final book of elegies, Propertius expands the focus of his poetry beyond the confines of love elegy through the addition of patriotic, aetiological themes. In doing this, he consciously constructs an ongoing dialogue with the poems and poetics of his first three books.¹ The choice of august Roman topics as the matter for his elegiac poetry inevitably brought Propertius into conflict with his own earlier designation of amatory elegy as his particular sphere of Callimachean poetry. The poet therefore poses for himself a special challenge when he proposes to exchange his “Callimachean” love elegy for the aetiological elegy of the “Roman Callimachus.”

In the love elegies of Books 1–3, Propertius had already claimed the “small voice” of the pure Callimachean for the *ego* of his poet-lover, and it is the character and lifestyle of the Propertian *ego* (and his *puella*) that most strongly determine and reflect the character of his elegiac love poetry. Especially problematic for Propertius’ decision to engage public themes is the fact that the portrayal of his elegiac *ego* in the subjective role of poet-lover had always extended beyond the sphere of formal aesthetics. Propertius, more than any other Augustan poet, represents the *ego* of his love elegies as

1. On the two poetic programs and new themes of Book 4, see Camps, 4:1–6; Pillinger 1969; Van Sickle 1974; Hubbard 1974, 116–56; Macleod 1976; Miller 1982; Stahl 1985, 248–305; Wyke 1987a; Fox 1996. For a different view of the structure and relations between the four books, see Butrica 1996. Micaela Janan’s *The Politics of Desire: Propertius IV* (Berkeley, 2001) appeared after the final revisions of this book were completed; therefore, the arguments presented by Janan do not enter into any of my discussions.

persistently and thoroughly incapable of participation in any sphere not specifically linked to his position as elegiac poet and politically disengaged lover.² In every aspect of his life—his origins among the victims of Rome’s civil wars (as described in poem 1.22); his relationships with his patron Maecenas, his friend Tullus, and others; and especially his exclusive love for Cynthia—the poetic, the personal, and the political are represented as inextricably joined, in a manner that consistently dissociates the Propertian *ego* from any active role either as a proper Roman citizen or as a poet who can write properly about Rome. His “small voice” and talent are perfectly suited for, but also limited to, the amatory themes and private concerns of love elegy. Because Propertius had already stated his Callimachean position so emphatically and convincingly in terms of his amatory elegy, the new, Roman aetiological elegy of Book 4 must—and does—appear to be a violation of the very nature of elegy as Propertius had previously defined it.

The concluding words of the previous sentence are of considerable importance for what they imply about the way we read and understand Propertian elegy, both the love elegies and the elegy of Book 4. So also is my persistent use of the verb *represent* as a qualifying boundary for the relationship between the biographical poet (and man) Propertius and the *ego* of the Propertian elegist. If we keep in mind that the characters and themes of the subjective love elegies of Books 1–3 were already conscious creations on the part of the poet more than the spontaneous personal expressions they at first appear, we are better prepared to recognize that Propertius himself not only was aware of the difficulties posed by his decision to change his elegiac poetry and his Callimachean identity but was prepared to address those difficulties in his own poetic manner.³

Throughout his poetry, Propertius favors dramatization over exposition as his method of presentation. Before Book 4, this is most evident in the *Monobiblos*, in which the poet-lover obviously is already a “Callimachean” elegist, although he never explicitly says so, instead conveying his alignment with the stylistic ideology of the *doctus poeta* through the use of recognizable vocabulary, themes, and conceits and through the dramatic situations in which he involves his *ego*, his *puella*, and the other characters of his poems. Much criticism of Roman love elegy in the past two decades has concentrated especially on Propertian elegy in an effort to expose the *ego* and *puella* as poetic constructions whose “partially realistic” characteristics and actions

2. See, for example, Prop. 1.7.29–30, 2.1.17–18, 3.9.5–6.

3. For the opposition between “spontaneous personal expressions” and “objective, conscious creations,” see Ross 1975, 58.

serve as metaphorical representations of the poet's writing practice and poetic (as well as political) ideals.⁴ This type of critical approach, which has proved so useful in its application to the partial realism of love elegy, can also be used to elucidate the more openly unrealistic or, at times, differently realistic strategies of a work such as Propertius Book 4.⁵

Propertius' final book exhibits an almost fully realized dramatization of its characters, themes, and strategies, which is closest to that seen in the elegist's earliest poems. Just as we now recognize that Cynthia and the poetic *ego* are simultaneously characters in and characteristic of Propertian love elegy, so also we may expect the characters of Book 4 to define and reflect their own discourse in a similar metaphorical fashion. In addition, if textual realism is more a convention than a natural phenomenon, then a work's formal strategies should be especially discernible when those strategies are more readily perceived as consciously created constructions. One of the basic goals of this study is to explore a number of Propertius' characteristic elegiac elements and themes as they are remanipulated and revalued by the poet as he engages with his Roman aetiological subjects in Book 4.

If the problem of Propertius' shift from Callimachean love elegist to the Callimachus of aetiological elegy is approached with the poet's dramatic method of representation in mind, the reader is better equipped to recognize that one of the first Propertian "characters" that must be redefined if Propertius is to reinvent his elegiac poetry in the fourth book is Callimachus himself, or, more specifically, Propertius' particular construction of Callimachus as a predecessor. For, like the Propertian *ego*, with whom he is closely linked, Callimachus, too, can usefully be viewed as one of the "partially realistic" characters of Propertian love elegy, albeit in a special sense. A brief consideration of Callimachus' role in Propertius' elegy will help us to see how Propertius defines and refines the evolution of the programmatics of his poetry in Book 4.

A central component of Callimachus' particular appeal to the Roman poets was his emphasis on the individual poet's self-conscious—and often polemical—expression of his own position both within his poetry and in the

4. On the *ego*, see especially Veyne 1988; on the *puella*, Wyke 1987b, 1989a, 1989b, 1994. See also Sharrock 1991; Kennedy 1993, especially 1–23; DeBrohun 1994.

5. "Differently realistic" refers especially to the poetic depiction of historical figures such as Cleopatra, Octavian, and the Battle of Actium itself in poem 4.6, or Cossus and Marcellus in 4.10. The term may also be used to describe Arethusa and Lycotas in 4.3, the revived Cynthia of 4.8, and even the appearances from beyond the grave of the *lena* in 4.5, Cynthia in 4.7, and Cornelia in 4.11. For a suggestion of the application of this "representational" approach to such works as Propertius Book 4 and Ovid's *Heroides*, see Kennedy 1993, 13.

wider tradition in which he works.⁶ The Roman poets recognized that Callimachus had developed the polemical expression of his poetic program as a sophisticated means not merely of defending his avoidance of writing a certain kind of poetry but also—and more importantly—of asserting positively his own criteria for and position within the superior type of poetry he was endeavoring to produce. In a similarly sophisticated “Callimachean” maneuver of their own, the Romans themselves in turn appropriated the essential elements of Callimachean programmatic polemics as a means of talking about their own poetry in relation to their own poetic tradition. This skillful, and sometimes quite subtle, manipulation of Callimachus was accomplished through translation of or allusion to key polemical passages of his poetry, through the use of metaphorical oppositions obviously derived from or inspired by Callimachus’ own use of vivid metaphorical contrasts, and sometimes—most notably, with Propertius—through the direct mention of the poet by name.⁷ When employed in this manner, Callimachus and his programmatic polemics themselves became a kind of rhetorical tool, which the Romans could use to construct—and reconstruct—Callimachus as a predecessor in the manner that was most immediately useful for the purposes of their own poetry, even when their poetic practices did not match precisely the actual poetry or poetic principles of Callimachus himself. The most conspicuous manifestation of this rhetorical appropriation was the Augustan poets’ development of the *recusatio* topos.⁸

In the *recusationes* of his love elegies, Propertius constructed a version of

6. The discussion of the Roman poets’ manipulation of Callimachus and his poetics as a rhetorical strategy in the next few pages owes much to the demonstration of this phenomenon in Thomas 1993. For the role of Callimachus in Roman poetry, see especially the exhaustive treatment in Wimmel 1960. See also Clausen 1964; Cameron 1995, especially 454–83.

7. The key polemical passages of Callimachus’ work included especially the prologue to the *Aetia*, *Epigram* 28 Pf., and Apollo’s encounter with Envy in the coda of the *Hymn to Apollo* (*Hymn* 2.105–12). Callimachus’ metaphorical oppositions included wide and narrow paths (or traveled and untraveled roads); large and small, muddy and pure, or public and private waters; and fat or heavy against slim or light (e.g., “a fat sacrificial victim, but a slim Muse”), with the lesser side always favored as representing the better poetic quality. The Roman poets added to these the metaphorical oppositions of large and small boats (for epic and elegiac poetry), and they also developed such “collapsible” oppositions as that of epic’s *arma* and elegy’s *militia amoris* and the even more versatile opposition of “hard” (*durus*) and “soft” (*mollis*). For a concise overview of Callimachus’ work, literary program, and use of imagery, see Hopkinson 1988, 83–101 (on frag. 1); see especially 98–101, for Callimachus’ influence on Latin programmatic poetry, including Propertius 4.1. For a more comprehensive study of Callimachus’ work and influence, see Cameron 1995.

8. For important observations on the use of the *recusatio* as an incorporating device (an aspect not treated here), see Davis 1991.

To appreciate how thoroughly Propertius has molded his Callimachus to fit his own poetic purposes, one must keep in mind that Callimachus' own refusal to compose epic did not include a fiction of inability. This "apologetic" aspect of the Roman *recusatio* was developed by the Augustan poets as a means to negotiate between the poetic and the ideological implications of their own opposition to writing epic, which was understood to be the appropriate genre for the celebration of themes of national significance. As Propertius' poem illustrates, these nationalistic themes included the achievements of Augustus himself.

In lines 39–40, Propertius deliberately fashions his predecessor so that Callimachus appears to be complicit in Propertius' own claim that he lacks sufficient strength "to establish the name of Caesar among his Phrygian ancestors" in epic verse (*duro versu*). In line 40, Propertius applies a term of Callimachean poetics (*angustus*) directly to the earlier poet's *pectus*.¹¹ With this, the elegist constructs a Callimachus whose lack of "thunder" appears to be directly related to the presumed weakness of his "slender chest." Callimachus is also linked with the amatory subject matter of Propertius' elegy through the verbal connection between Callimachus' *angusto pectore* in 40 and Propertius' *angusto lecto* in 45, the metaphorical site of the poet-lover's elegiac compositions.

Callimachus and his poetics are similarly appropriated to reflect Propertius' amatory elegiac concerns in his other programmatic poems.¹² In the three elegies that open the third book, all of which are filled with Callimachean imagery, Propertius stakes his claim to fame and future immortality as a poet on the basis of his Callimachean love elegy. The book opens with a direct invocation of Callimachus, now paired with the Coan poet Philitas. Inspired in part by Horace's representation of himself in *Odes* 3, Propertius elevates his poetic status to that of a poet-priest (*sacerdos*, 3.1.3), and he seeks entrance to the metaphorical grove of his inspirational models on the basis of his own poetic accomplishments.¹³

In poem 3.3, a *recusatio* that will be recalled by the poet in the programmatic passages of 4.1, Propertius adapts the model of Apollo's visit to Cal-

11. In addition to describing the chest specifically, the term *pectus* referred to the seat of the body's emotional, moral, and intellectual faculties, as well as the source of the voice itself; see *OLD*, s.v. 3.

12. These include in Book 2: 2.10, 2.13, 2.23–24, and 2.34; in Book 3, especially 3.1–3.3 and 3.9.

13. See especially Hor. *Odes* 3.1.1–4. The reference to the elegist's *amores* in 3.1.11 makes it clear that Propertius continues to define his Callimachean elegy as amatory. For the relationship between Propertius Book 3 and Horace's *Odes*, see especially Solmsen 1948; Hubbard 1974, 68–115; Putnam 1980.

limachus in the *Aetia* prologue to fit the needs of his own poetic situation.¹⁴ Just as the elegist, in a dream, is about to drink from the “large waters” [*magnis fontibus*] (3.3.5) that inspire historical epic in the Ennian tradition (*unde pater sitiens Ennius ante bibit*, 6), Apollo stops him. Admonishing Propertius that epic is not his sphere, the god uses Callimachean metaphorical language to remind the elegist that the “boat” of his talent is small and must be kept close to the shore. Apollo then leads Propertius to the grove of the Muses, where Venus’ doves dip their beaks in the waters of a Hippocrene apparently designated especially for love poetry.¹⁵ In this “love-elegiac” context, Calliope, like Apollo before her, reminds the elegist that the themes of Roman historical epic are not his concern. In lines 47–50, she describes for Propertius his proper role.

quippe coronatos alienum ad limen amantis
nocturnaeque canes ebria signa fugae,
ut per te clausas sciat excantare puellas,
qui volet austeros arte ferire viros. 50

[For you will sing of garlanded lovers at the threshold of another and of the drunken signs of a nighttime escape, so that he who wants to strike at stern husbands with skill may learn from you how to charm out locked-up girls.]

Calliope does provide a new, elevated status for the poet, which suits the more professional tone of Propertius’ elegy in Book 3.¹⁶ No longer strictly confined to the subjective role of the poet-lover who himself attempts to win his *puella*, Propertius is now also the instructor for other poet-lovers, who will learn their skills from his example. In the final lines of the poem,

14. Virgil, in the *recusatio* that opens *Eclogue* 6, had produced a “pastoral rendering of Callimachus’ rejection of epic,” when, in his allusion to Apollo’s visit to the poet in the *Aetia* preface, his own pastorally minded Apollo addressed the Virgilian narrator specifically in his role as shepherd-singer; see Clausen 1994, 174.

15. For Callimachean water imagery, see especially Wimmel 1960; Kambylis 1965; Ross 1975, 118–23. Propertius refers to Venus as *domina* in line 31, a designation regularly applied also to Cynthia.

16. It has long been noticed that there is a change of tone in Book 3, introduced by Propertius when he emphasizes in the opening poems his achievements specifically as a love poet rather than his role as subjective lover. In addition, the elegist has already begun to combine private and public themes (in, e.g., poems 3.7, 3.11–13). However, he continues in his third book to insist on his status as amatory poet; and in most instances, he maintains his pose as lover, even if only as a point of departure (see, e.g., 3.11, 3.13). On Book 3, see especially Putnam 1980.

Calliope supplies Propertius, in good Callimachean fashion, with waters that are more appropriate to his task.¹⁷

Propertius' construction of Callimachus and Callimachean poetics in his love elegy was obviously tendentious—customized to fit his own poetic agenda. While the “narrow-chested” Callimachus of 2.1 and the Callimachean Apollo in 3.3 were ideally suited to represent Propertius' amatory elegiac program, their presentation was only partially dependent on the actual poetry and poetics of Callimachus himself. Unlike Propertius, Callimachus was by no means exclusively or even primarily a love elegist; and nothing in his surviving poetry provides a direct model for the amatory elegies of Propertius and his contemporaries. In contrast, when, in Book 4, Propertius embarks on his project of Roman aetiological elegy, he is turning to a more direct engagement with Callimachus as a poetic model. Just as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were Virgil's primary models for the *Aeneid*, Callimachus' *Aetia* is the chief inspiration and model for Propertius' aetiological elegiac collection.

Propertius' new endeavor is not, however, meant to be simply a Roman replica of the *Aetia*. Rather, Book 4 is a turn to a specific type of Propertian elegiac Callimacheanism that retains its primary qualities but is simultaneously more expansive and aetiological, tending toward, at times verging on, epic grandeur. At the same time, part of Propertius' peculiar version of Callimacheanism involves keeping his own “love-elegiac” background. He does this in a manner worthy of his predecessor. As I have mentioned already, Propertius knew that his decision to increase the thematic range of his elegy with Roman *aetia* would create a conflict with his own earlier definition of elegy as exclusively amatory. It is my thesis that Propertius planned from the outset of Book 4 to make this conflict an integral part of his new elegiac program.

Propertius recognized in the subject matter of Roman aetiology a means of expression that would allow him to expand the horizons of his elegy in two different directions at once. On the one hand, the exploration of the origins of Rome's institutions provided a unique opportunity for Propertius to retain his elegiac identity and his proclaimed model while making his own contribution to the contemporary poetry that was attempting to define the national character of Rome under the emerging principate of Augustus. The aetiolog-

17. 3.3.51–52: *talia Calliope, lymphisque a fonte petitis / ora Philitea nostra rigavit aqua*. The dual inspiration of Callimachus and Philitas is present here, as it was in the opening line of Book 3. In this instance, Propertius employs a prominent Callimachean metaphor even as he refers to Philitas by name.

ical poems of Book 4 could take their place as elegy's representative beside those other Augustan poetic monuments, Horace's *Odes* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. On the other hand, the aetiological focus of Book 4 also enabled the poet to revisit the "original" characters, themes, and concerns of his amatory elegy even as he employed them in a novel context. The elegist could, therefore, simultaneously explore the past and evolving present both of Rome and of his own elegiac poetry. Moreover, because Propertian elegy's new national purpose contrasted starkly with its own amatory origins, Propertius also retained the oppositional nature of his elegy, now viewed from a different vantage point.

In the poems themselves, Propertius forcefully dramatizes the problematic aspects of his new project, while simultaneously highlighting its possibilities. That dramatization begins immediately with the complicated first poem of the book. In poem 4.1, which H. E. Pillinger called "the *recusatio* to end all *recusationes*,"¹⁸ Propertius reinvents his elegiac poetry in a quintessentially Callimachean manner, using as both his poetic and his programmatic model the *Aetia* prologue. I will revisit this poem in greater detail in the first two chapters of this study. In the next several pages, however, I will concentrate especially on those passages that introduce most directly the poet's new elegiac program for Book 4, as well as its attendant complications.¹⁹

Propertius versus Horos: A Callimachean Battle for Elegy

The opening poem of Book 4, 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.²⁰ The first lines of the poem concentrate on the grandeur of contemporary Rome, particularly in comparison to the city's humble beginnings (1–38); and in lines 39–54, Rome's

18. Pillinger 1969, 174.

19. Propertius' immediate dramatization of his new program in poem 4.1 provides certain difficulties for the critic, who must, for the sake of clarity, separate out different aspects for discussion. For this reason, a number of themes and strategies already active in 4.1 will only be adumbrated here, with fuller discussion to follow in chapters 1 and 2.

20. The two sections are lines 1–70, spoken by the Propertian *ego* as authorial narrator, and lines 71–150, attributed to the prophet-astrologer Horos. The bipartite scheme and complex structure of this long opening poem has led some to divide it into two separate elegies; see especially Sandbach 1962, recently supported by Murgia 1992. For explicit arguments in support of the poem's unity as preserved in the manuscripts, see especially Fedeli, ad loc.; Butler-Barber, ad loc. See also Macleod 1976, 145–47 (Macleod directly refutes Sandbach). That no division is necessary will, I believe, emerge clearly from my discussion of the poem.

ancestry is traced to the Trojans, from whose ashes the city has risen (cf. 53–54). Finally, at 4.1.55–70, Propertius directly announces his new subject.

| | |
|--|----|
| optima nutricum nostris lupa Martia rebus, | 55 |
| qualia creverunt moenia lacte tuo! | |
| 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 porrigite, Bacche, tua, | |
| ut nostris tumefacta superbiat Umbria libris, | |
| Umbria Romani patria Callimachi! | |
| scandentis quisquis cernit de vallibus arces, | 65 |
| ingenio muros aestimet ille meo! | |
| 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. | 70 |

[She-wolf of Mars, best of nurses for our affairs, what walls have grown up from your milk! For I would try to lay out those walls in pious verse: alas, that there is only a small voice in my mouth! But still, whatever stream flows out from my tiny chest, all of this will serve my native land. Let Ennius wreath his own words with a shaggy garland: Bacchus, offer to me leaves of your ivy, so that Umbria might swell with pride because of my books—Umbria, the fatherland of the Roman Callimachus! Whoever sees the citadels climbing up from the valleys, let him assess those walls by my talent! Rome, give your favor; this work rises for you. Citizens, grant me shining omens, and let a bird on the right side sing on behalf of my undertakings! Sacred rites and festival days I will sing, and the ancient names of places: these are the goalposts toward which my horse must sweat.]

Lines 69–70 clearly mark a break from the personal, amatory poetry of Propertius' first books and introduce the poet's patriotic, aetiological themes. In the lines that lead up to these, we learn much about the nature of the new elegiac project. In the poet's expressed desire "to lay out those walls [of Rome]" in 57, he associates his plan for elegiac expansion with the growth and

development—as well as the founding—of Rome itself; and this *ktisis*, or city founding, is itself an *action*.²¹ Unfortunately for Propertius, however, the elegist's desire to establish the walls of the city carries epic associations in the case of Rome. Already in poem 2.34, Propertius had included the construction of Rome's walls in his description of Virgil's *Aeneid* "in progress" (*qui nunc Aeneae Troiani suscitata arma / iactaque Lavinis moenia litoribus*, 2.34.63–64). Propertius again recalls the *Aeneid* in 4.1, as *pio versu* in line 57 refers simultaneously to the moral superiority of the higher genre and to the hero of Virgil's poem.²² The martial features of such an epic-sized enterprise are evident in the elegist's description of Rome's walls in 55–58: the reference to Rome's foster mother, *lupa Martia*, also recalls the city's paternal descent, from the god of war himself.²³

Lines 57–58 encapsulate the elegiac poet's problem with his "higher" enterprise: in the hexameter, the poet announces his desire to attempt the epic-sized task of "laying out Rome's walls"; but in the pentameter, a cry of elegiac lament follows as the poet recognizes that he lacks the resources for the task. Already in *coner* of 57, the inability of the elegist is implicit in the (literally) conative nature of Propertius' proposal. Callimachean imagery fills these lines. The poet's "voice" is small (*parvus in ore sonus*), not really fitted to the grand themes he is about to attempt. Also, his "flow of inspiration" is small (*exiguo quodcumque e pectore rivi / fluxerit*), as is expected for the refined style of the Callimachean poet. We are vividly reminded how meagre are the resources with which the elegist will now attempt to "serve his country." In his earlier books, Propertius often refused to attempt epic or patriotic topics on this same ground.²⁴ But now he says that whatever stream he has, all of this will be used for such topics.²⁵

In lines 61–64, there is again a note of *recusatio* in the poet's promise. Ennius provides another example of poetry that is too large for the elegist's voice. As we have seen, in poem 3.3, Propertius dreamed that he had put his

21. See Macleod 1976, 143–44.

22. Cf. also *pios umeros* at 4.1.44, in reference to Aeneas. The relationship between the poems of Propertius' fourth book and the *Aeneid* is not easily delineated, as the poets treat a number of the same subjects, but with remarkably little overlap in language or handling. Propertius certainly knew Virgil's poem, however, and he treats a number of its epic subjects, especially the aetiological subject matter of Book 8, throughout his final book. Propertius also mentions the theme of Rome's founding in the *recusatio* of poem 3.9 (lines 49–51).

23. On the significance of *arma* in poem 4.1, see further chapter 1.

24. Cf. especially 2.1, 3.1–3, and 3.9.

25. While in his first books Propertius was enslaved by his love to Cynthia, he now attempts to exchange his *servitium amoris* for a *servitium Romae*.

“small lips” to the “great waters” that inspired Ennius’ epic *Annales* when Apollo quickly pulled him back to his own “smaller,” elegiac sphere.²⁶ In addition, Ennius’ crown is called *hirsuta* here, a stylistic label; he was viewed by the Augustan poets as a revered ancestor but was considered “bristly” or “shaggy” (i.e., unrefined) in his style.²⁷ Propertius seeks inspiration from Bacchus, and he hopes that his hometown of Umbria may take pride in its offspring, the Roman Callimachus.²⁸ Then, in line 67, he asks Rome itself, as well as its citizens, for favor; and he persists in his claim that his work does, indeed, “rise” for Rome. His sentiment is clear: “if you (i.e., Rome) can rise to greatness (cf. *maxima Roma*, 4.1.1) from small beginnings, then perhaps I can as well.”²⁹

With *inceptis* in line 68, the elegist marks the “beginnings” of his new poetry and his new choice of themes, which are specified in line 69: *sacra diesque canam et cognomina prisca locorum*. It now appears that Propertius’ project for Book 4 is set: a new, grander, patriotic poetry, which calls for larger “waters” and “strengths” than he has; but he will exhaust his puny supply in an attempt to “enlarge” his elegy and produce poetry *about* Rome, albeit trying to keep to his Callimachean principles of smallness and delicacy. It would seem that Propertius has reached a compromise and has initiated his Roman equivalent to Callimachus’ *Aetia*.³⁰

The nature of this compromise is important, because it is the idea that a polarity has already been resolved here that makes the second part of poem 4.1 so striking. It would appear that Propertius has managed to introduce his new, “larger” elegy while making a claim for retaining his “small voice,” his Callimachean allegiance, and his elegiac genre. As the Roman Callimachus, he remains determined to increase the compass of his poetry. But implicit in the development of his argument in lines 55–60 is the continued “refusal” of the pure Callimachean poet, as well as his proclaimed inability to produce epic, whatever his desire. Instead, the Propertian elegist will devote his entire elegiac “stream” to the elevation of his own genre, not with epic, but with the Roman equivalent of Callimachus’ own larger elegiac enterprise, the

26. Prop. 3.3.1–26.

27. See, for example, Ovid *Tristia* 2.259.

28. For Bacchus as a source of “limited elevation” or “lyric” (Pindaric) elevation, see Prop. 3.17; Miller 1991b. For further discussion both of Bacchus’ role in Book 4 and of Umbria’s relationship with Rome as Propertius’ *patria*, see chapter 2.

29. For the idea of “rising” as a particular aspect of the promise followed by hesitation in a *recusatio*, cf., for example, 2.10.11–12; 3.9.52.

30. Wimmel (1960, 276–82) is the only one to emphasize this compromise. See also Pillinger 1969, 172–74, on these lines.

Aetia. In the elegist's announcement that he is writing Roman *aetia* in Book 4, we see his attempt to represent his new elegiac project as a special sort of compromise: the poet is not continuing the love elegy of his earlier poetry, but neither is he betraying his Callimachean ideals altogether by producing a fully formed martial epic.

Suddenly, however, there is another voice in the poem. Just after the poet's proclamation, but before Propertius can embark on his new "beginnings," the astrologer Horos arrives to try and stop him, prophesying sorrow for the poet and reminding him that his job is, indeed, to write elegy, but that elegiac discourse requires *amatory* subjects.³¹ Horos first speaks in lines 71–74, 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 cantans; aversus Apollo:
poscis ab invita verba pigenda lyra.’

[“Where are you rushing, without foresight, to speak your fates, unstable Propertius? These threads have not been spun from a favorable distaff. You bring forth tears with your singing; Apollo is turned away. You demand from an unwilling lyre words it grudges to give.”]

Horos—and, through him, Apollo—reacts to Propertius' proposal as though the elegist has prophesied for himself an epic-sized enterprise. Horos relates that Apollo, the patron god of Callimachus and those poets who would follow after him, has turned away from Propertius and, presumably, from his new project as well. Indeed, the god who turns away in line 73 recalls closely the Callimachean Apollo who steered the poet's elegiac boat out of “larger waters” in poem 3.3.

There is an additional complication in Horos' words. The astrologer-prophet reproaches Propertius with the accusation that the poet's new project “brings tears.” But tears are themselves an elegiac symbol, and for Propertius, they are also an especial marker of his own elegiac origins. Because Horos himself will turn to Propertius' personal and poetic beginnings later in his speech, it is worth recalling Propertius' earlier description of those

31. In *quo ruis* in line 71 there is a foreshadowing of danger, as *ruo* is often used for those recklessly rushing to destruction. This motif is repeated throughout Book 4 (e.g., cf. Tarpeia at 4.4.71, Hercules at 4.9.31).

beginnings and their relation to the traditional origins of the elegiac genre itself. In the final poem of the *Monobiblos* (1.22), which serves as a *sphragis* to the first book, Propertius specifically describes his family and birthplace in terms of the victims of Rome's civil wars.³² In what takes the form of a somber lineage, Propertius speaks of his home using funeral terms: *Perusina sepulcra, Italiae funera, pulvis Etrusca*, and finally, in the closing couplet, *fertilis Umbria*. *Fertilis* provides a jarring contrast to the images that precede, creating a picture of a richer period for Propertius' earliest years, before the destructive battles of the civil wars.³³

In noting that the soil of Etruria has brought him especial grief, Propertius associates his lamentable beginnings mentioned in 1.22 with the grief felt by the family of the dead soldier in the poem immediately preceding. Through these tearful recollections in the final poems of his opening book, Propertius expresses his own origins in terms that recall the traditional origins of elegy itself as a poetry of lament: *versibus impariter iunctis querimonia primum*, as Horace related in the *Ars poetica* (line 75).³⁴ In the final poem of Book 3, Propertius' renunciation of his *puella* (and, presumably, the love elegy she represents) also included a "farewell" to love elegy's "weeping thresholds" [*limina lacrimantia*] (3.25.9).³⁵ Fittingly, then, tears return as elegy begins again in poem 4.1, though now they are inspired by a different elegiac situation. Even in Horos' (and presumably Apollo's) expressed disapproval of the poet's plan, we are reminded of the essentially elegiac nature of the new enterprise.

Horos continues with a self-introduction and some prophecies of his own (lines 75–118).³⁶ He abruptly finishes his "history lesson" in line 119, and in the last section of the poem, he turns specifically to the relationship between the poet's life and his elegiac poetry.

32. On poem 1.22, see especially Putnam 1976; Stahl 1985, 99–129. See also Nicholson 1999. For a more detailed exploration of the relations between Propertius' origins and those of Rome, see chapter 2 in the present study.

33. Even this picture is mixed. Parker (1992) pointed out that Propertius alludes in his description of *fertilis Umbria* to Virgil's *Georgics* 2.185, in which land of similar abundance is praised. Parker suggests further that in the wider context provided by Propertius 1.21 (to which he adduces also *Georgics* 1.491–97), there may be a decidedly unhappy source implied for Umbria's fertility, as though the soil has been nourished by the remains (especially *ossa*) of those who fought the civil wars.

34. Putnam (1976, 109) notes: "The birth of the poet finds its literary parallel in the birth of a form, as epigram and lament."

35. For elegy as a poetry of lament, see Heinze 1919, 19–20; for an etymological discussion of the term and its use by Roman poets, see especially Hinds 1987, 103–7; see also Prop. 3.25.5, *nil moveor lacrimis*.

36. I will return to consider these lines more closely in chapter 1.

hactenus historiae! nunc ad tua devehar astra;
 incipe tu lacrimis aequus adesse novis. 120

[Enough of history: now I will come down to your stars; begin to compose yourself for fresh tears.]

Line 120 is reminiscent of the words Horos first spoke to Propertius at 71–74. *Incipe* provides a new beginning within Horos' speech and simultaneously recalls the poet's earlier announcement of the "beginnings" [*inceptis*] (68) of his aetiological project, as well as the prophet's reaction.³⁷ The "fresh tears" of line 120 recall the tears of line 74 and provide an additional reminder that the poet's new enterprise shares its origins with his "original" love elegy and also with the earliest beginnings of the genre. In the lines that follow, Propertius' new sorrows in fact appear to be "renewed" ones, as Horos' words in 121–34 take Propertius back to the earliest beginnings, both personal and poetic, of his elegiac poetry.

Umbria te notis antiqua Penatibus edit
 (mentior? an patriae tangitur ora tuae?)
 qua[m] nebulosa cavo rorat Mevania campo,
 et lacus aestivis intepet Umber aquis, 125
 scandentisque Asis consurgit vertice murus,
 murus ab ingenio notior ille tuo.
 ossaque legisti non illa aetate legenda
 patris et in tenuis cogeris ipse lares:
 nam tua cum multi versarent rura iuveni,
 abstulit excultas pertica tristis opes. 130
 mox ubi bulla rudi dimissa est aurea collo,
 matris et ante deos libera sumpta toga,
 tum tibi pauca suo de carmine dictat Apollo
 et vetat insano verba tonare Foro.

[Ancient Umbria bore you to well-known Penates—do I lie? Or is the border of your native land reached?—where misty Mevania sheds dew on the low-lying plain, and the waters of the Umbrian lake grow warm in the summer, and where a wall rises on the top of ascending Assisi, that wall better-known

37. Propertius' aetiological project is reflected in the fact that he repeatedly emphasizes the problem of "beginnings" in this opening poem.

because of your talent. And you collected bones that should not have required collecting at that age, the bones of your father; and you yourself were forced into humble Lares: for whereas many bulls had once turned your fields, the bitter surveyor's rod took away your well-cultivated wealth. Soon after, when the golden locket was removed from your inexperienced neck and the free citizen's toga was put on before the gods of your mother, then Apollo dictated to you a small part of his song, and he forbade you to thunder out words in the mad forum.]

These recollections of the elegist's early life serve as further reminders to the poet that his own sorrowful personal circumstances have rendered him ill-equipped for the kind of large-scale, patriotic Roman undertaking he has proposed. In the first place, Propertius is not, strictly speaking, Roman: at lines 121–22, we see that his *patria* is more precisely Umbria; and the mention of Umbria reminds us of the poet's earliest description of his home in poem 1.22.

While Horos notes that the walls of Assisi are more famous because of Propertius' talent, the remainder of his speech holds out little promise for the poet's expressed desire to "lay out the walls of Rome" in his verse.³⁸ In fact, it would appear that while Rome had grown from its success, the poet's circumstances had decreased, both through the early death of his father and in the land confiscations of Rome's civil wars. Horos' words imply that this reduced fortune was what originally led Apollo to give Propertius the "little song" of elegy (4.1.133–34); and we see here the poet looking back to his earlier books, as Horos' words remind us of poem 1.22 and include a retroactive explanation for Propertius' "inactive life" in Books 1–3. Apollo's gift to Propertius of a "little song" is accompanied by the god's refusal to allow the poet to "thunder out in the forum," that is, to pursue a political career. These orders from Apollo, spoken in the strict Callimachean terms of the *Aetia* preface—small poetry, no thunder³⁹—appear to follow directly from the elegist's personal circumstances.

In the lines that follow, Horos reminds Propertius (and his readers) of the task originally and, as he sees it, appropriately set for the poet by this "Callimachean" Apollo (4.1.135–46).

38. Cf. 4.1.125–26 and 65–66; here also is the imagery of "rising" and "falling" that always holds a hint of *recusatio*.

39. See Callim. *Aet.* frag. 1.21–25 Pf.

at tu finge elegos, fallax opus (haec tua castra!), 135
 scribat ut exemplo cetera turba tuo.
 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 145
 limina: persuasae fallere [p]rima sat est.

[But you, compose elegies, a deceitful task (this is your camp!), so that the rest of the crowd can write after your example. You will endure military service under the tender arms of Venus, and you will be a suitable adversary to the boys of Venus. For whatever victories you have prepared for yourself, one girl eludes your palms of honor. And although you will shake out the hook fixed well in your chin, this will accomplish nothing: the hook handle will keep hold of you by your mouth. By her judgment you will see night and day, and a tear will not fall from your eyes unless she orders it. Nor will a thousand posted watches nor a thousand seals on her thresholds help you: a crack is enough for a girl who has been 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, with the poet-lover fighting the battles of Venus. The lover's (or poet's) triumphs and palms for his labors of love are mocked by one *puella*—the poet's mistress, the subject of his poems. In 143–44, we see the *servitium amoris*, where the poet-lover serves as slave to his mistress. Finally, in 145–46, we have 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' report of Apollo's speech holds a special significance, both in poem 4.1 and for the poet's new project overall. For these words reintroduce directly, for the first time in 4.1, the subjects that traditionally—and, according to Horos and Apollo, necessarily—define Propertian elegy: *amor* and the elegiac *puella*. These themes provide a wholly different, but equally problematic, complication to the Callimachean compromise of Propertius'

aetiological program. In the first part of the poem, the poet insists that his new venture is not an epic one but rather a specifically elegiac expansion, into aetiological matters. But as Horos points out, in doing this, Propertius fails to acknowledge his own already established elegiac origins, poetic and personal, and so appears to believe that his “traditional” love themes can be discarded completely and with impunity. Apollo’s words, recalled by the prophet, provide a reminder to the poet that this may not be so easy. The admonition is clear: not only is Propertian elegy necessarily small scale, especially in relation to Rome’s magnitude; but in addition, it is necessarily involved with themes of love.

Lines 147–50 describe the precarious and dangerous world the poet is entering by daring to embark on his new enterprise.

nunc tua vel mediis puppis luctetur in undis,
 vel licet armatis hostis inermis eas,
 vel tremefacta cavo tellus diducat hiatum:
 octipedis Cancrī terga sinistra time! 150

[Now although your boat may struggle in the midst of the waves, although you go unarmed against an armed enemy, although the earth, shaken, opens up a gaping chasm, you must fear the ill-omened back of the eight-footed Crab!]

The middle of the sea and warfare are referred to in earlier Propertian poems, and throughout elegy, as the most dangerous places for the “little boat” of the elegiac poet’s genius to go,⁴⁰ or for the soldier of love, not war, to find himself. And while the astrological warning of the closing line eludes secure interpretation, Horos’ parting instruction as the poet—and his readers—enter the new world of Propertius Book 4 is a disturbing one: *time!* [“be afraid”!].⁴¹

In the encounter between the poet and Horos, Propertius provides a complex adaptation of his model, the prologue to Callimachus’ *Aetia*. In

40. See Prop. 3.3.21–24; 3.9.35ff.; see also Ovid *Tristia* 2 and *Fasti* 1.4, 2.3ff., where the list of elegiac topoi is very similar to Propertius’ list here.

41. Satisfactory interpretation of Propertius’ final line in this poem has so far proven elusive for commentators. In light of his two-sided program in 4.1, his warning in line 150 must be related not just to the epic-sized dangers of the aetiological themes but also to the continued expectation of love themes. Tantalizing are the concluding words of Virgil’s Gallus at *Eclogue* 10.67–69 (especially *sub sidere Cancrī* in line 68); see Kaufold 1996. See also Ovid *Fasti* 1.313–14. On fear, cf. Prop. 3.11.8.

particular, Propertius' first fully dramatized new character in Book 4 is a quintessentially "Propertian-Callimachean" invention. Among Callimachus' favorite programmatic devices was the intervention of an interlocutor, who could be either a malicious objector or an admonishing mentor. In the *Aetia* prologue, he employs one of each. In the opening lines, Callimachus reports that a group of carping critics have complained because he has not produced "a continuous poem in thousands of verses on the deeds of kings and heroes."⁴² Callimachus derisively refers to these critics as Telchines, thereby identifying them with a race of spiteful sorcerers.⁴³ Just after his indignant, dismissive reply to these meddling wizards, Callimachus recalls a more positive intervention in his early poetic career by Apollo himself, who instructed him, when he first began to write: "poet, feed the victim to be as fat as possible, but, my friend, keep the Muse slender."⁴⁴ In the epilogue to Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*, there appears another meddling figure, who is similar in mindset to the Telchines: Phthonos (Φθόνος), the personification of envy, informs Apollo that he despises the poet "who does not sing even as much as the sea."⁴⁵ Apollo promptly kicks Phthonos; then, continuing to use the water metaphors introduced by Phthonos, he states the same poetic principles he pronounces for the poet in the *Aetia* prologue.⁴⁶

In constructing Horos, Propertius combines aspects of each of these types of Callimachean interlocutors. Horos claims to speak as an authorized representative of Apollo, an assertion that gains support from the fact that he shares the name of the Egyptian counterpart to the Greco-Roman sun god (Ἥλιος).⁴⁷ As the conscience for Propertius' amatory elegy, Horos recalls the sentiments expressed by the Callimachean Apollo of the *Aetia* in his previous appearance as the mentor for Propertius' love elegy, in the *recusatio* of Propertius 3.3. Horos is not, however, identical with Apollo. In his intermediary role, he serves in a similar capacity to the voice of Callimachus

42. ἐν ἄριστῳ διηγεκὲς ἢ βασιλ[η] / . . .]ας ἐν πολλαῖς ἡνυσσὰ χιλιάσιν / ἢ . . .]ους ἥρωας (*Aet. frag.* 1.3–5 Pf.).

43. *Aet. frag.* 1.1 Pf.

44.] αἰδέ, τὸ μὲν θύος ὅττι πάχιστον / θρέψαι, τῆ]ν Μοῦσαν δ' ὀγαθὲ λεπταλέην (*Aet. frag.* 1.23–24 Pf.).

45. οὐκ ἄγαμαι τὸν αἰδὸν ὅς οὐδ' ὅσα πόντος αἰεῖδει (*Hymn* 2.106). Phthonos shares with the Telchines the primary characteristic of envy; they are called the "baneful race of Jealousy" [Βασκανίης ὀλοὸν γένος] at *Aet. frag.* 1.17 Pf.

46. *Hymn* 2.107–12.

47. For a discussion of the identity of Horos, his connection with Apollo in Alexandrian culture, and the similarity of the relationship between Propertius-Horos in poem 4.1 and Ovid-Apollo (through Germanicus) in the *Fasti*, see Barchiesi 1991; cf. also Montanari Caldini 1979. For Horos as the Egyptian Apollo, see, for example, Herodotus 2.144.2.

himself in the *Aetia* prologue, where Callimachus recalled the words Apollo spoke to him as he embarked on his own poetic career.

In an additional sophisticated twist created by the Roman Callimachus, Horos also shares characteristics with both the Telchines and Phthonos. Like the interfering sorcerers, Horos cuts a bizarre figure as a Greco-Egyptian street astrologer who boasts an ancestry from famous mathematicians and who haughtily interrupts Propertius' new project before it can begin. Horos' decidedly non-Roman heritage makes him a fitting representative of the opposition to Propertius' Roman endeavor.⁴⁸ And like Phthonos, Horos may also be viewed as a personified abstraction. In a display of learned etymologizing reminiscent of that employed by Callimachus himself, Propertius produces a figure whose name can be derived in two different ways, both of which reflect the significance of Horos' role in defining Propertius' new program.⁴⁹ If derived from the Greek ὥρα (year, season), Latin *hora* (hour), Horos' name provides an etymological guarantee for his credibility as an astrologer-prophet and lends additional credence to his proclaimed ability to predict Propertius' future based on his knowledge of the elegist's past.⁵⁰

Horos' name may also be derived from the Greek ὄρος, which means "boundary" or "limit" and is also used to designate the boundary stone that divides pieces of property.⁵¹ This concept fits well Horos' task of reminding Propertius that he is attempting to transcend the traditional boundaries of his elegiac poetry with his grand, aetiological scheme. Horos himself expresses a particular interest in boundaries in his recollection of Propertius' personal origins: at 4.1.122, he notes that he has touched the border of Propertius' homeland (*an patriae tangitur ora tuae?*); and in 130, he specifically recalls the "baneful surveyor's rod" [*pertica tristis*] that took away the poet's lands during the confiscations. In addition, Horos' first words to the

48. In chapter 1, I will examine more closely Horos' association with the Greeks as part of his opposition to Propertius' Roman poetry.

49. For a discussion of Alexandrian etymologizing, including that of Callimachus in particular, see O'Hara 1996, 21–42.

50. See LSJ, s.v. ὥρα; OLD, s.v. *hora*. The name of Horos' ancestor Horops, which is certainly not Babylonian, may be derived from ὥρ(α) + ὄψ ("voice"; from εἶπε ἴν) or ΟΠ (root of ὄψομαι, "see") and is equivalent to ὄροσκόπος; see Rothstein, ad loc.

51. LSJ, s.v. ὄρος. The boundary stones, which were most often inscribed at least with the word ὄρος, were used to mark not only private property lines but also the limits of public properties, such as temple precincts. Horos' name might, therefore, be viewed in one sense as denoting the boundary of an elegiacized sanctuary of Apollo. In poem 3.1, Propertius used a similarly religious image when he represented himself as seeking entrance, as a new *sacerdos*, to the sacred grove of the poets Callimachus and Philitas. For a good discussion of ὄροι (boundary stones) and their different purposes, see Lalonde 1991.

poet are concerned with the elegist's transgression of limits. In line 70, Propertius himself describes his energetic devotion to his aetiological project using the racing metaphor of a horse sweating with effort toward the goal-posts (*has meus ad metas sudet oportet equus*). Horos, however, defines Propertius' actions differently: at line 71, he addresses the elegist as an unsteady wanderer who is rashly speeding to prophesy his own future (*Quo ruis imprudens, vage, dicere fata, Properti?*). In a sense, Horos "replaces" the elegist's *metas* and positions himself as the rightful marker of the boundaries of Propertius' elegy.⁵² The definition of boundaries, both poetic and literal, is a central concern throughout Propertius' aetiological collection.⁵³ It is not surprising, therefore, that the concept should play a significant role in the delineation of the book's program.

With a sophisticated ingenuity that rivals that of his model, Propertius has chosen for his interlocutor a name whose several connotations reflect his multifaceted role in the poem. In Horos, Propertius combines Callimachus' mentoring Apollo figure with his Telchines/Phthonos type (as well as with the voice of Callimachus himself from the *Aetia* prologue) to produce a complicated character who serves simultaneously as both a boundary marker and an intermediary between the poet's two elegiac programs. Horos plays a critical role in the elegist's adaptation of Callimachus to suit the needs of his own double-faceted program. Whereas in the opening of Callimachus' *Aetia* the objections of the Telchines are triumphantly dismissed by the poet with the support of his mentoring Apollo, Propertius has remixed the different characters of his model, as well as the sentiments they express, in such a manner that neither side of his program can be disregarded unproblematically. None of the objections raised by Horos in the poem's second half can sufficiently refute the essentially Callimachean nature of Propertius' aetiological project. However, Horos, for his part, can legitimately claim the authority of a "Callimachean" Apollo as a support for his challenges to Propertius' proposal. His assertion that love elegy is Propertius' Callimachean sphere is

52. Propertius' etymological-metaphorical identification of Horos with ὄρος and his use of Horos as a personified marker of the boundary between his two programs may have been suggested to the elegist by his knowledge that the Athenian politician-poet Solon had used the image in a somewhat similar manner. Solon (37.9–10 West) produced a striking simile when he described his role as a mediator between the different factions in Athenian politics as "like a ὄρος in the space between two warring armies" [ἐγὼ δὲ τούτων ὡσπερ ἐν μεταχμίῳι / ὄρος κατέστην]. Horos serves a similar role in Propertius 4.1 as the intermediary between Propertius' two programs. In this sense, Horos might be viewed as the first talking monument of Book 4, followed closely by Vertumnus in poem 4.2.

53. See chapter 3.

founded on aetiological grounds, since amatory elegy was Propertius' original area of Callimachean poetry, a choice that resulted directly from the circumstances of the poet's life.

Additional aspects of Horos' role in defining Propertius' double-faceted program will be explored more closely in later chapters. I will mention here one further issue faced by Propertius in Book 4 that his introduction of Horos helps to resolve. Because Horos is closely related to Apollo but cannot be identified with him, the prophet-astrologer's speech allows Propertius to recall Apollo's role as the "Callimachean" mentor for Propertius' amatory elegy without, however, making it unambiguously clear where the god himself stands in relation to the new project. Horos therefore plays a pivotal role as the intermediary between the "original" Callimachean Apollo of Propertius' love elegy and the new role the god is to play in the elegist's aetiological collection. This is significant, since Apollo's *sacra* are the first to be pointed out in the tour of Rome that opens 4.1 (*atque ubi Navali stant sacra Palatia Phoebos*, 3); and the centerpiece of the aetiological collection is devoted to the *aetion* for his Palatine temple. As I will discuss in chapter 5, a central element in poem 4.6 is the exploitation of Apollo's manipulability as an amatory, an aetiological, and even an epic character.

The Polar Program of Book 4: *Amor* and *Roma*

Through the clash between the new, aetiological Propertian *ego* and Horos, the conscience of Propertian love elegy, Propertius has set up in the opening poem of Book 4 the tension that is the inevitable result of a confrontation between his two programs: that of personal love elegy (*amor*) versus that of aetiological elegy with patriotic themes of (nearly) epic proportion (*Roma*).⁵⁴ The elegies that follow appear at first to reflect this double program in a rather straightforward manner, and scholars have traditionally used this tension to divide the poems of Book 4 into those that are aetiological and patriotic (2, 4, 6, 9, and 10) and those that retain their "smaller" elegiac quality in the sense of making love themes most prominent (3, 5, 7, and 8).⁵⁵ Thus, certain questions are raised: is Propertius looking back to his earlier amatory elegies with some poems and in others moving ahead to his new

54. For the labels *amor* and *Roma* in relation to the two programs of Book 4, see Wyke 1987a, 155.

55. This could be said (to varying degrees) of most of the studies cited in note 1 in this chapter, with the exception of Wyke's. Of course, the "division" is ostensibly valid.

project, or did he begin a new, ambitious project and later abandon it, whether for personal or political reasons?⁵⁶ It has been increasingly recognized, however, that the ostensible alternation between amatory and aetiological poems is overly simple; and simplicity is wholly contrary to the poetry of Book 4.⁵⁷ On closer examination, there are links between poems from either category, and even individual poems are difficult to label neatly as one type or the other.⁵⁸

This recognition of the incongruous combination and juxtaposition of aetiological and amatory themes within single poems has led some critics to suggest that the ambiguity that results is itself reflective of the project of Book 4.⁵⁹ Throughout this study, I propose both to support and to expand this interpretation of Propertius' poems. Two aspects of my reading of Book 4 need to be highlighted here, both because they are essential to my understanding of the book's program and because they stand in firm opposition to critics who would still demand of Propertius a genuine change of heart, whether voluntary or compulsory, in his final book, and to those who remain skeptical about the unified nature of Book 4 as a completed collection. First, Propertius does not ultimately present a complete about-face in Book 4; to do so would have required a complete exposure and destruction of his former *ego*, an aspect of his elegiac identity the poet was not prepared to abandon altogether. Second, in regard to the unity of the final collection, it is my argument, based on the poet's representation of his new program in poem 4.1 and on the poems of Book 4 throughout, that the more overtly amatory poems of Book 4 were not added in order to "fill out" a collection of nationalistic, aetiological poems.⁶⁰ The inclusion of love themes in Book 4 was not an afterthought by the poet but an integral part of his new elegiac project from the beginning. As I have noted already in this introduction, Propertius' final book is aetiological in two competing senses, as the elegist simultaneously explores the present and past both of Rome and of his own elegiac poetry.

56. This view has been suggested most recently by Stahl (1985, 248–305).

57. See Nethercut 1968; Hutchinson 1984; Wyke 1987a.

58. For example, in poem 4.4, an *action* is given for the Tarpeian Rock, and the traitor Tarpeia, for whom the rock (and punishment) is named, betrays her city for love. In fact, every poem in Book 4 succumbs similarly when put to the test of simple categorization.

59. Included among these critics are Pillinger (1969, 171–72) and Wyke (1987a, 154–57).

60. Fedeli (xxii, xxx) views Book 4 as put together posthumously by an editor. Hubbard (1974, 116–18), after Dieterich (1900), considers it an unfinished collection of aetiological elegies filled out with amatory poems. For the history of those who argue for cohesiveness, see Nethercut 1968; Hutchinson 1984.

Once we recognize that 4.1 sets out a poetics of polarity but deny an easy division of the poems into one category or the other, we begin inevitably to employ such terms as *tension*, *confrontation*, *interchange*, *oscillation*, *undulation*, and even *transformation*, moving along an axis of terminology that begins to relax the severity of a binary poetics and to suggest a more continuous system, where crisis points eventually become possible “crossings.”⁶¹ Indeed, it is my argument that Propertius has established a seemingly polar system in 4.1 specifically in order to challenge that system by combining the two poles. We will see that each of the poems of Book 4 in some manner represents the incongruous combination of these two discordant poetic ideals. Further, in looking both backward to his earlier books and ahead and outward to his new patriotic, aetiological concerns, 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*. Therefore, the confrontation between poetic ideals is represented as a confrontation between cultural ideals as well.

Tertium Datur

Once we allow that ambiguity or tension is the point of Propertius’ program in Book 4, we need a focus, a space or medium, where that point is made. Here I would introduce a “third” element into Propertius’ seemingly bipolar system. In order to represent or discuss either the confrontation or the combination of these (or any) two opposites, one must acknowledge the existence of a third level of discourse, a “manipulable space” that operates between the two poles, that is, a place where they might “meet.”⁶²

Before I introduce the elements of Propertius’ “third discourse,” let me make clear what is meant here by “third.” Among the most approachable and lucid descriptions of this phenomenon is that of Marjorie Garber, who describes as a “third” the example with which she is primarily concerned,

61. Each of these terms, with the exception of *undulation*, occurs regularly in discussions of Book 4. For the term *undulation*, see Macleod 1976.

62. Certainly, the idea of a “third,” or a “space between,” is not in itself new. The desire to elucidate and manipulate that ambivalent element that challenges any binary system of organizing language, thought, or the perception of the world has long been an issue of philosophical debate, and it is at the heart of the rise in literary studies of poststructuralist theories of narrative knowledge as well as cultural poetics. See, for example, Derrida 1991, 219–22 and *passim*.