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Title

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Permalink

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Journal

Berkeley Undergraduate Journal of Classics, 4(1)

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Publication Date

2015

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Peer reviewed|Undergraduate

Dead Men Tell No Tales: Speaking, Death, and Poetic Authority in Propertius Book IV¹

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Abstract: Propertius begins his fourth book of poetry by claiming that he is a changed man; no more pining after his domina. Instead, he styles himself as the 'Roman Callimachus,' who is writing poetry in the service of his country (*Roma, fave, tibi surgit opus IV.1.67*). The fourth book of Propertius is notable for the cast of characters to whom the poet gives voice, particularly dead women. This study explores the way in which these internal female narrators, including Arethusa, Cynthia, Acanthis and Cornelia, should be understood as mounting a narrative challenge to the wider context of Propertian poetics by using the performative acts of both writing and speech to claim their authority. Such claims represent a contrast, not only with the wider historical and social reality of the poems, but also with the poet's intertextual references to his great rival in aetiological poetry, Virgil.

Considering the number of deceased among them, the women of Propertius Book IV are a surprisingly garrulous group. I will explore the way in which the poet's female characters take control of the narrative voice in order to claim independence and authority over their own poetic presentation. The standing of the elegiac poet is thus compromised, but at the same time Propertius appropriates this new female voice in order to mount a poetic challenge to his close rival, Virgil. It is of course pertinent to make clear that the interpretation adopted here relies on the separation of poet as author from poet as narrator, and the idea that the Propertian love-narrator, as well as the Virgilian Aeneid narrator, can be viewed as much as the poetic constructs of their authors as our female characters.

In the first poem of his fourth book, Propertius declares a change of poetic programme. The poet declares that he will now write aetiological poetry on the subject of Rome, identifying himself as the Roman Callimachus and promising to glorify the city (*Roma fave tibi surgit opus 67*). However, in the next poem in the collection, the astrologer Horos rebukes Propertius, telling him that he must write love elegy (*at tu finge elegos 135*) and 'suffer active service in the tender warfare of Venus' (*militiam Veneris blandis patiere sub armis 137*). Horos warns Propertius that Cynthia will still torment him, and reaffirms the poet's connection with amatory and elegiac poetry. Fox has commented on the way in which Horos' self-identification as a *vates* (75) is a reductive reinterpretation of a symbol of poetry on themes of political and historical importance, and rebuffs Propertius' pretension of being a poet/priest in 4.1a.² In Horos' poem, we can see the way in which the subjects treated here are a subversive reimagining of the aetiological elements of the previous poem. The poet often shapes this recreation along the axis of the feminine. A notable example is that of Arria and her sons (89-99), where the '*fatales pueri*' are killed in warfare thanks to the greed of their mother (*matris avarae*). This passage provocatively recalls the teleological narrative of poem 4.1a, in which the narrator addresses the *optima nutricum nostris lupa Martia rebus* (55), the she-wolf nurse of Romulus and Remus.

¹ I would like to thank very much Peta Fowler for her invaluable help, suggestions, and encouragement.

² Matthew Fox, *Roman Historical Myths: the Regal Period in Augustan Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 151.

However, the focus Horos gives to the fact that Arria has twin sons (*geminos...natos...Lupercus...Gallus...duo funera*) brings out an idea that the poet of 4.1a had suppressed. Whereas in the first poem, the she-wolf was a facilitator of the glory of Rome (*qualia creverunt moenia lacte tuo*), the shameful of Arria and the suffering of her twin sons subverts the aetiological tone in retrospect. The twin motif reminds us of the death of Remus at the hands of his brother, and the theme of fratricide is one that is evocative of civil strife and disruption. As the agent of action behind both their birth (*produceret*) and their death, Arria is figured as a provocative symbol of disruption, both to the political life of Rome and the poetic programme of panegyric aetiology Propertius endeavours to undertake.

Wyke has commented on the way in which the elegiac narrative of 4.4 also focuses on women as ‘agents of political disruption.’³ Tarpeia’s betrayal of Rome is exemplified by her betrayal of the hearth of the sacred fire of Vesta, and she laments that she will bring a ‘reproach upon the maidens of Italy, a sinful girl chosen to be the servant of the virgin hearth’ (*quantum ego sum Ausoniss crimen facture puellis/improba virgineo lecta minsitra foco* 43-4). However, the severity of the narrator’s treatment of Tarpeia is nuanced by an intertextual reading that sees her as aligned with Virgil’s Dido. This is particularly notable in lines 68-72. The prominence of *nescia* at the beginning of line 68 recalls the description of Dido in Book 1, where the narrator tells us that *ne fati nescia Dido finibus arceret* (1.299). The phrase *culpam alit* (70) amalgamates *vulnus alit* at 4.2 and Dido’s *culpa* at 4.172. Finally, the simile comparing Tarpeia, in her god-sent madness, to a Thracian bacchant (*qualis celerem...Strymonis*), inevitably reminds us of the Carthaginian queen, whose bacchant-like raving through the city (*totamque incense per urbem/bacchatur* 4.300-1) heralded the eventual downfall of Carthage. This interaction with a Virgilian prototype is the first in a poetic competition conducted in the feminine voice that I will explore further in my essay. In this example, Tarpeia’s relative proximity to Rome and her elegiac overtones represent a poetic challenge to Virgil’s teleological and epic narrative.

However, between Arria and Tarpeia comes Arethusa. Wyke has described her as representing the ‘loyal wife of Augustan motherhood.’⁴ She is pictured as weaving clothes for her husband (*cartensia pensa laboro* 33), thus apparently reinstating the ‘conventional epic opposition between male and female spheres of activity that earlier Propertian poems had undermined.’⁵ Arethusa can be seen as a foil to the subversive presence of Arria and Tarpeia in that she represents a force for social norms and teleological narrative, affirming the importance of the masculine activity of foreign warfare, rather than the preference of *militia amoris* as seen in the earlier books of Propertius. However, Arethusa’s embracing of the military narrative is ultimately dependent upon *militia*’s submission to elegiac concerns. This is seen in general by a narrative focus that is firmly placed within the domestic context rather than in the camp of Lycotas, and Arethusa’s literal embrace of her husband’s weapons colours the apparently straightforward epic narrative with an erotic tone (*osculator arma tua* 30). The submission of *Roma* to the demands of *amor* is encapsulated in the closing section of the poem. Arethusa portrays Lycotas as obtaining the distinguished award of the *hasta pura* and carrying his decoration in the general’s triumphal procession (*triumphantis equos* 69). However, this nationalistic achievement is

³ Maria Wyke, *The Roman Mistress: ancient and modern representations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 96.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

explicitly portrayed as dependent upon (*sic* ‘on this condition’ 68) Lycotas’ prior fulfilment of the amatory obligations to ‘keep inviolate the pledge of my marriage bed’ (*incorrupta mei conserva foedera lecti*).

The dependent nature of this relationship between public and private concerns is summed up by Arethusa’s future action of dedicating her husband’s armour with an inscription *salvo grata puella viro*, ‘only on the condition’ that he has been faithful to her (*hac sola lege*).⁶ The location of the inscription is significant. The Porta Capena, a gate at the start of the Via Appia, was where the senate had consecrated an altar of Fortuna Redux on Augustus’ return from the east in 19BC and instituted a large annual sacrifice. Now the power of the male senate is reimagined as the power of the female lover, and, most significantly, authority is configured through the act of writing (*scribebam*).

Arethusa’s relationship with writing seems to undergo a transformation in the course of the poem, which itself is explicitly a form of writing, an elegiac epistle. At the beginning, she apologises if any of her handwriting is ‘smudged and missing’ (*lectura pars oblita derit* 3), blaming her tears (*lacrimis*) and her terror at death (*dextrae morientis*). The weakness of writing is linked with the elegy’s origins in lament, and the elegiac mistress fears that she will be unable to convey what is in her mind because of the constraints of genre. However, she does go on to eloquently express her own wants and desires, enveloping the world of soldiering into her own domestic world and imposing her own elegiac demands upon her husband. The inscription at the end of the poem is an affirmation of her authority, an authority that is derived from her own act of writing. It is also interesting to note Arethusa’s self-characterisation as a *puella* when she expresses her wish that the Roman army was open to girls (*Romanis utinam patuissent castra puellis* 45). Despite the fact that she is married and therefore a *matrona*, Arethusa imposes her own narrative model upon the poem. She is now the *puella*, the all-important and all-powerful *domina* of Propertian elegiac.

It is at this point that the name Arethusa becomes significant. At the beginning of Virgil’s *Eclogue* 10, the male narrator calls on the nymph *Arethusa* for help in his last labour (*extremum laborem*) in narrating the unhappy love life of the poet’s friend Gallus, whose mistress is now pursuing another suitor and soldier in a notable echo of the situation in Propertius’ poem (*tua cura Lycoris/ perque nives alium perque horrida castra secuta est* 22-3). In Virgil, Gallus, the founder of Latin love elegy, scratches his love verses on to the trees of the wood (*tenerisque meos incidere amores/ arboribus* 53-4). However, his attempt at writing bucolic poetry ultimately proves to be futile when he must concede the superiority of *Amor* and yield to its power (*omnia vincit Amor; et nos cedamus Amori* 69). GB Conte has written in length about Virgil’s metaliterary approach in *Eclogue* 10, wherein the dying Gallus functions as a sustained allusion to the dying Daphnis in Theocritus *Idyll* 1.⁷ In the Theocritean forerunner, Daphnis refuses to yield to Aphrodite, and he chooses to die rather than become a slave to the overpowering force of Eros.⁸ For Conte, Virgil’s ‘Daphnidization’ of Gallus should be interpreted as the poet inviting his friend to

⁶ A soldier returning in triumph would be more likely to be dedicating the arms of his enemy, cf. Aeneas’ dedication at Actium, *Aeneas haec de Danais victoribus arma* Virg. *Aen.* 3.286f. In contrast, the dedication of Lycotas’ arms here is a symbol of the retirement from soldiery imposed upon him by Arethusa. For a similar ‘tools of the trade’ dedication, see Horace *Carm.* 3.26.

⁷ Gian Biagio Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation*, trans. Charles Segal (London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 104-128.

⁸ Theocritus *Idylls* 1.104 Δάφνις κήν Ἄϊδα κακὸν ἔσσειται ἄλγος Ἔρωτι.

leave elegy and become a bucolic poet.⁹ However, despite Gallus' declaration in lines 50-51 that he will change from the *Chalcidio...versu* of elegiac poetry to the *pastoris Siculi...avena*, his parting words at line 69 show Gallus reverting back to the world of elegiac poetry and embracing servitude to the higher power of both Eros/Amor and his *domina*, Lycoris.¹⁰

We can thus see Propertius' Arethusa as marking a poetic challenge on Virgil's poem. Arethusa and Gallus are linked by their obsessive anxiety about their beloved, away in a military camp. In particular, both are worried about their lover's *teneras* limbs (*teneros...lacertos/imbelles...manus* 23-4; Virg. *Ecl.* 10.47-9 *teneras...plantas*). By describing Lycotas in such typically elegiac terms, she imposes the trope of *militia amoris*, a typical element of the elegiac male poet's *self*-representation, onto her distant and silent husband. A precursor to Arethusa's capping of Gallus can be seen in Propertius 1.8, wherein the elegiac poet is, unlike Gallus, able to persuade his mistress to remain with him thanks to his poetry (*blandi carminis obsequio* 1.8.40). However, for the poet this is but a brief respite, and at the opening of the following poem we are reminded of the lamentation and suffering that is an inevitable part of the character of the male elegiac narrator (*me dolor et lacrimae merito fecere peritum* 1.9.7). However, in poem 4.4 Propertius shows us Arethusa's resolute mastery of the typical elements of elegiac poetry, which she re-deploys in a way that sees her come out on top. In the authority of her written text in 4.4, she is able to outdo both the founder of Latin elegiac and her creator himself, and curb the emotions and dependency of love to her own terms, her own law (*hac ego te sola lege redisse velim*).

In 4.4, the act of inscription is a manifestation of the poem's larger act of speech through poetic narrative. Female characters' appropriation of narrative and writing as vehicles of power is also witnessed in poems 4.5 and 4.7. Both poems are full of elements that recall the tropes of the elegiac poetry of Propertius' earlier works. In poem 4.5, the bawd Acanthis exposes Propertius' elegiac narrative as artificiality. For example, we see the mundane reality of the *exclusus amator* trope, when Acanthis advises her student to 'let her caretaker...be deaf if someone knocks empty-handed' (*ianitor...si pulsat inanis surdus...et somniet* 48). The authorial power wielded over his elegiac mistress by Propertius in the earlier books is transplanted to the mistress herself and thus comically debunked-Acanthis tells her to feign writing a love-letter to an imaginary lover (*supplex ille sedet posita tu scribe cathedra/ quidlibet* 37-8). The power of writing is given to the woman, but along with it comes Acanthis' general disdain for the legitimacy of the written word, implied in the anticlimactic enjambment of *quidlibet*, and developed further by her contempt for the worth of poetry when given in lieu of gold and fine silk (*qui versus...isitus tibi sit surda sine arte lyra* 57). For the elegiac male narrator, who could trump his wavering mistress with threats of removing her from his poetry (*an te nescio quis.../sustulit e nostris Cynthia carminibus* 1.11.7-8), this is a scary new world.

This questioning of the authority of the Propertian book is complemented by poem 4.7, a rebuke of the male poet by Cynthia's ghost. The dearly departed Cynthia

⁹ Conte, *Rhetoric of Imitation*, 107.

¹⁰ Particularly pertinent to this analysis is the discovery in 1978 of a fragment of Gallus' *propenticon* to Lycoris discovered at Qasr Ibrim. As well as proving that the elusive poet wrote in elegiac couplets, it also confirms that the trope of the elegiac *domina* and the male elegist's *servitium amoris* found their introduction in Gallus, with the fragment finding the poet wishing to write '*carmina.../quae possem domina dicere digna mea*' (6-7). For the full text with commentary, see Edward Courtney, ed., *The Fragmentary Love Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 263-70.

accuses Propertius' claims of elegiac love and devotion in the previous books of being mere pretensions, revealing him as absent from her funeral and claiming that nobody saw him 'bowed with grief or warming his suit of mourning with tears' (*curvum funere...atram lacrimis incaluisse togam* 27-8), again recalling the lamentful origin of elegy, but this time completely disavowing the poet-narrator's appropriation of the theme. Cynthia concedes that Propertius paid her due attention in his poetry (*longa mea in libris regna fuere tuis* 50), but orders him to burn them and 'stop trying to win praise through me' (77). Instead, she gives Propertius an inscription to write (*scribe* 83), which emphasises her name and divorces her from any identification with Propertian verses (*hic Tiburtina iacet aurea Cynthia terra* 85).¹¹

By forming a frame around the teleologically inclined narrative of Poem 6 on the Battle of Actium, the speeches of Acanthis and Cynthia undermine the authority of the male narrator's voice and force us to question the authenticity and authority of that poem in turn. Framed on both sides by women critical of the veracity of his poetic voice, the authority of the Battle of Actium poem, 'a very male poem,'¹² which represents Propertius' new project and his panegyric for Caesar (*Caesaris in nomen ducuntur carmina* 13) is fatally undermined. How can we trust a poet who has so often proved to be a liar? At the beginning of 4.6, Propertius tries to claim the authority of the Augustan *vates*, asking to be silent not only the current audience, but also, if we see the poem as part of the macrotext of the entire book and intimately linked with that which went before it, the bawd Acanthis and her slander of his poetic credulity.¹³ But you can't keep good women down, not even dead ones, and in 4.7 Cynthia once again speaks up (*vocem misit* 4.7.11) to undermine the Propertian narrator. Readings of line 79 are divided on whether the imperative should be *pone* or *pelle*. Among others, Hutchinson believes that Cynthia wishes to no longer be associated with Propertius' property, and is therefore asking him to remove it.¹⁴ However, the emendation of Sandbach,¹⁵ accepted by Goold and Heyworth in the *OCT*, to *pone hederam tumulo* is particularly attractive when we remember the apparent custom of crowning the tombs of dead poets with ivy, particularly seen in Greek Hellenistic epigrams.¹⁶ By having Cynthia demand her own tomb to be adorned as that of a dead poet, she can be seen to be claiming a poetic authority for herself, and fashioning herself as a poet, even in death. We can in fact interpret poem 4.7 as a demonstration of Cynthia revisiting and rewriting poem 2.28. In this earlier poem, the speaker Propertius asks Jupiter to 'have pity' on his mistress Cynthia, who is apparently near to death (2.28.1-2). However, he makes it clear that his mistress' current state is a result of her '*lingua nocens*' and inability to '*parcere signis*' (13-14). Not only will it be Propertius' written pledge to Jupiter that will save her (*sacro me*

¹¹ The reading of this line is unclear. Note Hutchinson, who reads, *sed tiburina iacet hic*. The reading given here is that of Heyworth in the *OCT* text.

¹² Gregory Hutchinson, ed., *Propertius Elegies: Book IV*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 154.

¹³ A Barchiesi in *The Poet and the Prince: Ovid and Augustan Discourse* (Berkeley, 1997), 102, has commented on the effect of the link between the ending and opening lines of poems 4.5 and 4.6, both imperative statements, both related to the act of speech, but one encouraging abuse and slander (*addite verba mala* 4.5.78) and the next claiming the authority of the priest (*sint ora faventia sacris* 4.6.1). For him, the gap between the two poems is 'an image of the poet's capacity of self-transformation...and the reader...rightly pauses to meditate on this splitting of personality'.

¹⁴ Hutchinson *Propertius Book IV* 186.

¹⁵ FH Sandbach, 'Some Problems in Propertius' *CQ* 12 (1962): 273-4.

¹⁶ For example, Dioscorides over the tomb of Machon, *χισσον ὑπερ τυμβου ζωντα Μαγωνι*, *Anthologia Palatina* 708.

carmine damno/ scribam ego 42-3), but it is he who will decide what Cynthia will say (*illa...narrabitque sedens longa pericla sua* 46). In 4.7, Cynthia throws back the humility imposed upon her by the narrator there, and asserts her own authority as a poet.

However, the female voices of these poems not only launch an internal challenge to Propertius *qua* narrator, but also that of Virgil. JF Miller has discussed the way in which Propertius' account of the Battle of Actium should be seen in relation to, and in competition with, Virgil's own account of the battle on the Shield of Aeneas at the close of Book 8.¹⁷ I think this element of poetic competition can also be detected in Propertius' portrayal of his female characters and their authority. At the end of poem 4.7, and the end of Cynthia's speech of indictment (*postquam querela mecum sub lite peregit* 95), the narrator uses Virgilian allusion to set up a damning contrast between the veracity of Cynthia's words and those of Propertius. She warns Propertius not to reject those souls that come as dreams from the Gates of Righteousness. The *piis...portis* (87) both reference and cap Virgil's gates of true and false dreams at the end of *Aeneid* Book 6 (893-6), when the poet describes Aeneas as leaving the realm of the dead through the gate of ivory, the gate from which false dreams come to the world above (*sed falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia Manes* 6.896). The Virgilian passage has provoked much confusion and analysis of the negative effect created by the oblique connection between Aeneas and the *falsa insomnia*, with their implication of deception, illusion and unreality.¹⁸ Propertius takes the ambiguity of the external Virgilian narrator and transforms it into the authority of the internal character of Cynthia. The deceased woman is adept at using the poetics of allusion to her own advantage, taking away the doubt imposed upon the character by the subversive ambiguity of the *Aeneid* passage and instead asserting the authority of her own ghostly speech, an effect emphasized by the assertiveness of the imperative '*nec tu sperne*' (87). By using this act of literary appropriation to introduce her own voice to the mix, Cynthia, as a narrative voice adopted by the poet, mounts her challenge to the idea that the teleological narrative of Virgil can be viewed as definitive.

Thus, the ghostly deceased gain the prominence and authority they lack in Virgil's narrative. This is further emphasized by another intertextual link between the two poets. Propertius describes how Cynthia's ghost escapes his attempt to embrace it. The final phrase '*inter complexus excidit umbra meos*' surely recalls the evasiveness of the ghosts of Creusa and Anchises (*ter frustra comprehensa manus effugit imago* 2.793; 6.700). In their original iterations, both these images use their appearance to expound on the teleological journey of Aeneas towards the goal of Rome. In Propertius' reworking, Cynthia uses her epiphany to complain about love and undercut the authority both of Propertius, and by extension Virgil's, presentations of the Battle of Actium.

The increasingly powerful voice of women in Book IV is conveyed through the progression of image of the bitten neck. In 4.3, Arethusa is still, for all her authority, vexed by the idea of another girl giving Lycotas love bites (*dentibus ulla puella/ det mihi plorandas per tua colla notas* 25-6). By the fifth poem, Acanthis is encouraging her student to take the role of Lycotas, and 'have fresh bites' on her neck to provoke jealousy in her lover (*morsus circa tua colla* 39). This progression culminates in 4.8, when romance merges with violence, and the furious Cynthia literally bites Propertius' neck in anger (*imponitque notam collo morsuque cruentat*

¹⁷ JF Miller, *Apollo, Augustus and the Poets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 81ff.

¹⁸ RJ Tarrant, 'Aeneas and the Gates of Sleep' *Classical Philology* 77 (1982): 51-55.

65).

However, it appears that it is the case that the power of the female voice begins to die the moment it peaks. We seem to end poem 8 on a tone of reconciliation and conclusion; Propertius and Cynthia are one again reunited, and peace and balance have once again been restored (*toto solvimus arma toro* 88). This is also enacted on a macroscale by the following two poems. Hercules' exclusion of women from the rites of the Ara Maxima (*haec nullis umquam pateat veneranda puellis* 69) signifies the exclusion of women from Propertius' own poetics, and this comes to pass in 4.10, the most overtly epic and teleological poem in the book and the only one to feature no female characters.

Therefore the devotion of the last poem to a woman comes as a surprise, and this is reinforced by the opening two words, both of which seem to demand a change in poetic direction (*desine Paulle* =πᾶνω). Lowrie has discussed the way in which Cornelia can be interpreted as an *exemplum* who encapsulates 'the ideology underlying Augustus' marriage legislation.'¹⁹ Her chastity, fidelity and especially her position as *matrona* all single her out as a very different creature from the elegiac mistresses of Propertius' earlier works. After the transformative power of Hercules in 4.9 and the male poetics of 4.10, we would perhaps see Cornelia as embodying the female subject of a new poetic programme for Propertius.

However, we should also be alert to the subversive elements in Cornelia's poem. Funeral speeches were not conventionally in the deceased's own voice, but instead delivered by a male member of her family. Eulogies of the female dead were increasing during the time of Propertius, a change signaled by the speeches of Julius Caesar for his deceased wife Cornelia and aunt Julia in 69 BC.²⁰ Plutarch, quoting Suetonius, writes that Caesar used his aunt's eulogy, in which he referred to her ancestry, via her father, from the gods, to emphasize the divine ancestry of the Caesars as a whole.²¹ It appears that women were important as tools of political propaganda and male self-aggrandizement, and this is particularly apparent in the age of the Principate. The social reforms of Augustus are characterized by a focus on the place of women in the imperial family and wider imperial world. Suetonius²² credits the emperor with having harnessed the imperial household, and especially his female relatives, to create a 'consistent ideology associated with the emperor's public persona.'²³ Particularly pertinent is the historian's claim that 'he prohibited them from saying or doing anything unless they did so openly and it was such as might be recorded in the household diary.' This anecdote seems to accord with a general phenomenon to be noted throughout the Roman period, which Moses Finley referred to as the 'silent women of Rome.'²⁴ Cornelia's appearance before the subterranean law courts therefore represents a remarkable case of speaking in the shadows.²⁵

¹⁹ Michele Lowrie, *Writing, Performance and Authority in Augustan Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 355.

²⁰ E Malcovati, ed., *Oratorum Romanorum fragmenta liberae rei publicae* (Turin 1953) 121 F 28-9, 30-1.

²¹ Plutarch *Life of Caesar* 5.1-5.

²² Suetonius, *Life of Augustus* 64.2.

²³ Susan Fischler, 'Social Stereotypes and Historical Analysis: The Case of the Imperial Women at Rome', in *Women in ancient societies*, ed. LJ Archer et al. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 129.

²⁴ M Finley, *Aspects of Antiquity: discoveries and controversies* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1968), 129-142.

²⁵ We have more examples of women pleading cases before the law courts from the later years of the Republic, when it would appear they were compelled to do so by the absence of men caused by the

Thus, against the backdrop of both a poetic and political-historical context in which the male voice is heard above all, we should see the prominence of Cornelia's speech as subversive. This is manifested in the poem's allusion to the theme of gender distortion, which characterizes the Propertian elegiac narrator, when Cornelia commands her husband to 'play the mother's part' (*fungere maternis vicibus*), and this last iteration of the theme in Propertius' *oeuvre* is perhaps the most subversive of all, taking place within the domestic and Augustan sphere of the *pater familias*. Similarly, Cornelia's reference to her children as a '*feminei...triumphi*' on line 71 is equally subversive, and perhaps offers an internal contretemps to the sardonic exclamation in Poem VI, when the narrator exclaims '*quantus mulier foret una triumphus/ ductus erat per quas ante Iugurtha vias*' (6.65-6). The threat of foreign Cleopatra to the patriarchal norm is not only reimagined but subtly revitalized within the domestic confines of the Roman elite.

Wyke has commented that 'elegiac Cornelia's speech shapes her as an orator, magistrate and triumphant general,'²⁶ and the lack of a frame around the speech means that Cornelia represents the culmination of the female voice that has become louder as the poems in Book IV progress. In 4.11, we have a complete domination of the poetic narrative by the feminine, and it is she who signals to the audience the end of the book (*flentes me surgite, testes*).

In conclusion, the female characters of Propertius Book IV use the acts of writing and speech in order to reclaim poetic authority for themselves and gain control over their own representation within the Propertian corpus. They provide a comical undercutting of the male narrator's own speech and expose his inability to truly fulfil his nationalistic aim expounded in the first poem of being the 'Roman Callimachus.' However, perhaps we can see in the final poem Propertius finding his own poetic authority again, but this time negotiated through the words of Cornelia. When Cornelia describes herself as worthy of being daughter to Augustus (59), we are reminded of the *puer miserande* of Aeneid Book 6, Marcellus, Augustus' prospective heir and culmination of a long parade of future Roman heroes. However, unlike the speech of Cornelia, these heroes are all silent. Similarly silent is Virgil's own figure of future Roman matronhood, Lavinia, who can only blush at the teleological role she plays in the future of Rome (XII. 64-5). Thus, the loquacious women of Propertius Book IV mount a challenge to Propertius but also act as his weapon of choice in the poetic competition with Virgil's teleology in the *Aeneid*. Dead men may tell no tales, but dead women definitely do.

civil wars and proscriptions. For example, Valerius Maximus (*Memorabilia* 8.3.3) tells us of Hortensia, who in 42 BC appeared before the tribunal of the Second Triumvirate on behalf of the *ordo matronarum*, which was to be taxed to support the war.

We also have preserved for us the lengthy inscription set up around Rome by an unknown husband on the death of his wife, known as the *Laudatio Turiae*. Among other remarkable deeds, the inscription tells us that 'Turia' saved her husband's life during the proscriptions, defended their house against the gangs of Milo, and pleaded in court before Lepidus for her husband's civil rights to be restored. For a discussion that sees the public actions of 'Turia' as simultaneously justified by her otherwise traditional feminine virtues of *fides* and *pietas*, see Emily A Hemelrijk, 'Masculinity and Femininity in the *Laudatio Turiae*,' *CQ* 54 (2004): 185-197.

²⁶ Wyke, *Roman Mistress*, 113.

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