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Palimpsest: Intertextuality and *Amores* 1.2

Amores 1.2 evokes both the *Aeneid* and Propertius 3.4. Yet the Propertian poem contains its own Vergilian allusions. In this paper, I focus on how Propertius 3.4 anticipates *Amores* 1.2. Each poem evokes the triumph theme and calls attention to the presumed kinship of Augustus and Amor. The irony of taking such claims literally, however, is clear in the elegiac context. Augustus the moral reformer sorts ill with Augustus Cupid's cousin. Propertius deployed this trope, taken from Caesarian propaganda, while evoking both the *Aeneid* and Augustus' projected campaign to recapture Crassus' lost standards. The passage can be read as both serious praise of what would have been a popular campaign and ironic undercutting of *militia* in favor of *otium*.

Ovid's use of this same tropic complex is both simpler and more complex. It is simpler because the political context of the mid-twenties is gone. The *pax Augusta* is an accepted reality and both civil wars and wars of conquest are to be a thing of the past. For the Ovid of the *Amores*, the topical reference for Propertius 3.4's triumph motif and the political complexity it implied was vanishing. Roman commanders could no longer aspire to the triumph. By 19 BCE, it had become the exclusive property of the imperial household.

However, Ovid complicates his use of the trope by weaving it into a denser intertextual web. The most obvious intertext is Propertius 3.4 itself. Propertius (3.4.1) makes clear reference to the *Aeneid*'s "arma virumque cano." *Amores* 1.2 echoes its Propertian antecedent by also invoking Vergil's master narrative. It could not simply repeat the Propertian gesture, however, for Ovid had already parodied the beginning of the *Aeneid* in the first hemistich of the *Amores*. The difference between *Amores* 1.1's citation of *Aeneid* 1.1 and Propertius' is revealing. Where Propertius leads the reader into the problematics of greed as a motive for conquest, Ovid's gesture is self-reflexive. It leads to a joke on Cupid's theft of one foot from every other line of the epic hexameter to create the elegiac couplet.

In *Amores* 1.2, Ovid looks to a different Vergilian intertext. He selects one of the most pro-Augustan passages in the *Aeneid*, Jupiter's prophecy to Venus of Rome's coming greatness and of Augustus' closing the gates of the temple of Janus. The Ovidian passage exactly opposes Vergil's. Where Vergil writes a moving paean to the end of civil slaughter, Ovid proclaims the *amator*'s subjection to Love's empire. Ovid's triumph motif recalls the Propertian intertext as well, but where 3.4 presents a private perspective on the public spectacle of Augustus' conquest of the Parthians, *Amores* 1.2 makes a public spectacle of the poet's subjection to the whims of Love.

While Ovid's appropriation of the triumph motif is certainly subversive, its inversion of established values—unlike Propertius'—takes place within a vacuum. When Ovid reverses the order of Vergil's passage, binding *Mens Bona* and releasing *Furor*, he does not invert Vergil's meaning. Ovid neither denies that the civil wars have ended nor calls for their resumption. Rather his position is predicated on the assumption that Vergil's prophecy has been fulfilled. Ovid's *Furor* represents not the bloody maw of fratricidal

strife, but the mundane irrationality of sensual abandon, allowed to run riot in the pacified fields of early imperial ideology. It is a rational irrationality that accepts the terms of the Augustan settlement and re-presents them as the conditions of possibility for its own desire.