

Propertius' Swan Song  
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I contend that Propertius 4.10 is in fact an earnest attempt by the author to reconcile the Callimachean poetic standard with the elegiac genre. Based on analyses of poems 4.9, 4.10, and 4.11, I further argue that the final three poems of Propertius' fourth book constitute a traditional epilogue, demonstrating the author's claim to be the "Callimachus Romanus". To these ends, it is necessary to demonstrate briefly Propertius' adoption of Callimachean themes, and to treat each poem individually as well as in context. Modern scholarship rarely considers the enigmatic poem 4.10, though Harrison (1989) and Ingleheart (2007) have, I believe, raised serious questions about an enigmatic poem.

With my new interpretation of poem 4.10, it is possible to reread poems 4.9 and 4.11, and develop a unique model for rendering the final three poems as a coherent whole. Poem 4.9 presents a recently developed epic tale (immortalized in *Aeneid* 8), creating a humorous contrast with Vergil's version while raising serious questions concerning Roman patriotism in the new principate. Propertius proceeds, in poem 4.10, to take the most epic of Roman traditions, the *spolia opima*, and render it in elegiac couplets, challenging the conventions of Callimachean poetics, and furthering the uncertainty of 4.9's unanswered questions by presenting an ambiguous aetiology. Finally, poem 4.11 looks back on a successful poetic career, through the mouth of an honored Roman matron, Cornelia. I argue that when read in this way, these poems constitute Propertius' claim to fame, thinly veiled and composed with immense Callimachean influence.

This paper contributes to a necessary discourse concerning the scholarly treatment of Propertius 4.10, a poem often discarded for its brevity. When considered at all, the principal secondary works often deem the poem an artistic failure, or polarize the discussion into either a vehemently patriotic, masculine work, or a caustic denunciation of Roman values. By evaluating not only poem 4.10, but treating it as an important part of a greater work I respond directly to the more recent treatments of the poem (Ingleheart 2007), and provide an interpretive framework for the textual connections between Propertius and Callimachus in the final three poems as well as the fourth book as a whole. Furthermore, this paper deals specifically with how exactly Propertius adapted the Callimachean aesthetic for aetiological elegy (Miller 1982) to a book of patriotic poetry. By reading poems 4.9, 4.10, and 4.11 closely as individual pieces, as well as within the scope of their mutual connections by proximity and textual associations, I conclude that Propertius links three poems of varying theme with the art, language, and style of his predecessor, contrasting artistic embellishment with the weight of patriotic Roman verse. Although Callimachean influence is found throughout book four (and the work of Propertius as a whole), nowhere is it more apparent than in the interaction of his final three poems, which individually as well as together constitute a testament to his claim to be the Roman Callimachus.