

THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO
LATIN LOVE ELEGY

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EDITED BY
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CONTENTS

<i>Notes on contributors</i>	page viii
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xiv
Introduction: Latin love elegy	I
THEA S. THORSEN	
PART I HISTORY AND CONTEXT	
1 Greek elegy	23
RICHARD HUNTER	
2 Latin precursors	39
FEDERICA BESSONE	
PART II THE LATIN LOVE ELEGISTS	
3 Caius Cornelius Gallus: 'the inventor of Latin love elegy'	59
EMMANUELLE RAYMOND	
4 Tibullus in first place	68
PARSHIA LEE-STECUM	
5 'The woman'	83
MATHILDE SKOIE	
6 Propertius	97
ALISON KEITH	
7 Ovid the love elegist	114
THEA S. THORSEN	

8

STEPHEN HARRISON

Time, place and political background

Time – chronology and politics

Chronology and historical context

Though proto-elegiac precursor texts such as Latin translations of Greek erotic epigrams are to be found in Roman literature from near the beginning of the first century BC,¹ Roman erotic elegy, in its ‘classic’ form which presents the male elegist addressing the *puella* or *puer* and leading the ‘alternative’ and angst-ridden life of love, seems to extend only over the second half of the first century BC. Gallus, probably born about 70 BC, is unlikely to have been writing elegy much before 50,² and Ovid’s *Amores* were clearly completed by the end of the century,³ by which point the poet had already turned to post-elegiac or even ‘meta-elegiac’ texts such as the *Ars Amatoria*.⁴

This two-generation literary life of love elegy can be integrally related to the tumultuous political, social and cultural changes of this period of Roman history. The fifty years following 50 BC saw the completion of several trends of the first century as a whole: the final breakdown of the traditional political system of the Roman Republic and the emergence of a monarchical regime, the unprecedented globalization of Roman culture in terms of conquest and military enterprise, and extended contact with and absorption of Greek and other non-Italian cultural influences.⁵ The disastrous impact of Roman civil war in the first part of this period (between Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon

¹ See Bessone (Chapter 2) in this volume.

² On Gallus see Raymond (Chapter 3) in this volume. ³ See n. 28 below.

⁴ On Ovid’s development and exhaustion of the genre cf. Gibson (Chapter 13) and Miller (Chapter 15) in this volume.

⁵ For these general tendencies see e.g. Raaflaub and Toher (1990), Edwards and Woolf (2006), Habinek and Schiesaro (1997).

in 49 and the future Augustus' victory at Actium in 31) is an especially notable feature.⁶

Most extant love elegy derives from the post-civil-war period. The disappearance of vicious internecine strife after Actium may well have stimulated a climate where 'peaceful' poetry such as love elegy could flourish, and where aspects of private life could receive literary emphasis now that public imperatives were less intense. The loosening of collectivist political and social traditions in the effective dismantling of the established Roman state which took place in the 40s may also have encouraged the relaxed approach to sexual morality which elegy projects in its presentation of leisured young men dominated by personal erotic concerns and (periodically) complaisant female and male lovers.⁷

In terms of detectable dates, the only love-elegies we know of which were certainly written before the battle of Actium are by Gallus. Gallus fr.2 Courtney (= fr. 4 Blänsdorf), celebrating the triumphant return of a Caesar to Rome, seems to refer to Julius Caesar in 45 BC,⁸ especially given the undoubted citation of adjacent lines of Gallus in Virgil *Ecl.* 10,⁹ in a poetry-book most likely dated to c.38 BC.¹⁰ The elegies of Propertius and Tibullus, though in some cases referring to earlier events from the civil-war period such as the sack of Perusia in 40 BC (see below), undoubtedly belong to a post-Actium Rome of peace and reconstruction; likely dates are c.30 for the first book of Propertius's elegies, c.26 for the first book of Tibullus, and c.26–24 for the poems known as Propertius 2.¹¹

Elegy and war

Tibullus' first book begins and ends with poems which reject war. In 1.1–6 the life of wealth derived from fighting is famously rejected for the quiet, rural life, yet to be revealed as the life of love:

diuitias alius fuluo sibi congerat auro
et teneat culti iugera multa soli,

⁶ For the impact of civil war on Roman culture from the first century BC see Jal (1963), Breed and Damon (2010).

⁷ For this background to elegy see especially Griffin (1985) 48–141.

⁸ For a detailed discussion see Nisbet in Anderson, Parsons and Nisbet (1979) 151–5 (= Nisbet (1995) 124–31).

⁹ See Hinds (1983).

¹⁰ I here follow Coleman (1979) 14–18 and Tarrant (1978) rather than Clausen (1994) xxii and Bowersock (1971).

¹¹ See Lyne (1998a).

quem labor adsiduus uicino terreat hoste,
Martia cui somnos classica pulsa fugent:
me mea paupertas uitae traducat inerti,
dum meus adsiduo luceat igne focus.

Let another pile up riches for himself in tawny gold
And hold many acres of cultivated soil –
He who feels the fear of continuous labour with the enemy near,
Whose sleep is banished by the sound of war-trumpets;
For me, let my modest life move me to a life of inaction,
As long as my hearth gleams with an unquenched fire.

The linked topics of war and materialism, and their rejection for peace and modest self-sufficiency, look to the Roman foreign conquests of the post-Actium years; this way of life is clearly rejected for that of rustic peace. Here we have a clear ideological divergence from the rhetoric of Augustan conquest, voiced in the same period at the end of Virgil's *Georgics* (4.560–62) or the ninth epode of Horace and demonstrated publicly in the triple triumph of 29 BC. Tibullus wishes his patron Messalla well in his military career, but will himself remain at home engaged in the campaigns of love (1.1.51–6):

O quantum est auri pereat potiusque smaragdi,
quam flet ob nostras ulla puella uias.
te bellare decet terra, Messalla, marique,
ut domus hostiles praeferat exuuias;
me retinent uinctum formosae uincla puellae,
et sedeo duras ianitor ante fores.

May all the gold and emeralds there are perish
Rather than any girl should weep for my journeyings.
For you, Messalla, it is fitting to wage war by land and sea,
So that your house may display the enemy's spoils:
I am held prisoner by the chains of a beautiful girl,
And I sit as a doorkeeper at her pitiless gates.

The military language of *uinctum* and *sedeo* marks the key metaphor of the *militia amoris*, the military campaigning of love:¹² Tibullus is captured by Delia, not by the enemy, and he lays siege to her house, not to enemy cities. Messalla can decorate his house with military spoils, but for Tibullus the urban house is the place of the life of love (see pp. 144–8 below), and

¹² See Drinkwater (Chapter 12) in this volume.

material prosperity is replaced by the abject status of the prisoner/slave. For Tibullus himself this creates something of an inconsistency, since in this same book he clearly represents himself as joining Messalla on campaign (in 1.3 and 1.7); but it is clear that Tibullan elegy is cast as poetry of peace which rejects war.

In the final poem 1.10 this inconsistency remains: Tibullus presents himself as going to war, presumably again with Messalla (1.10.13), but his loyalty to his patron is subordinated to a passionate attack on fighting in general (1.10.1–6):

quis fuit, horrendos primus qui protulit enses?
 quam ferus et uere ferreus ille fuit!
 tum caedes hominum generi, tum proelia nata,
 tum breuior dirae mortis aperta uia est.
 an nihil ille miser meruit, nos ad mala nostra
 uertimus, in saeuas quod dedit ille feras?

Who was the first to produce terrible swords?
 How fierce and how truly made of iron he was!
 Then it was that slaughter and battles were born for the race of men,
 Then a shorter route to dire death was opened up.
 Or is it that he, poor man, deserves no blame, and that we
 Have turned to our own perdition what he gave us to use against wild beasts?

Here the emphasis on humans disastrously fighting each other (*ad mala nostra*, where *noster* as often might mean ‘our Roman’¹³) reminds us that as Tibullus wrote Rome had not long emerged from a long period of civil war (see above). Elegy’s constant argument that Roman males should serve as soldiers in the cause of love, not in actual war, needs to be understood in a post-civil-war context: in particular, the experience of war in Italy in the 40s BC was clearly important for the elegists.

Tibullus’ attack on war at the end of his first book perhaps picks up something similar at the end of Propertius’ first book.¹⁴ That book closes with two interlinked short poems (1.21 and 1.22), closely related to types of sepulchral epigram, apparently marking the death, perhaps a decade before, of Gallus, a relative of Propertius, at the siege of Perugia in 40 BC.¹⁵ The emphasis in context is certainly not on the victory of Caesar (the young Augustus), but rather on the tragedy of local loss for Propertius’

¹³ OLD s.v. 7: of civil war again at Horace *Odes* 2.1.36 *quae caret ora cruore nostro?*

¹⁴ This can be added to the dossier of Tibullan reaction to Propertius 1 in Lyne (1998a).

¹⁵ For full treatments see DuQuesnay (1992) and Cairns (2006b) 46–50; see also Keith (Chapter 6) in this volume.

homeland (see pp. 148–9). Such direct lamentation for the losses of civil war may underlie Tibullus’ anti-war rhetoric in 1.10, and even his complaint about the deminution of inherited property at 1.1.41–2; Propertius also alludes to loss of ancestral land (4.1.128), and it seems possible that both poets suffered (as Virgil may have done) in the land-confiscations of 41–40 BC which provided pensions for the young Caesar’s victorious army from Philippi.¹⁶

This tension between the world of love elegy and the world of war is a key element in the genre, and clearly affects its attitude to the conquering career of Augustus (see next section). Civil war continues to play a role: one of Propertius’ first allusions to Actium is not encomiastic, but rather an ironic observation that if everyone led the life of love and luxury there would be no civil wars and consequent grief (2.15.41–6):

qualem si cuncti cuperent decurrere uitam
 et pressi multo membra iacere mero,
 non ferrum crudele neque esset bellica nauis,
 nec nostra Actiacum uerteret ossa mare,
 nec totiens propriis circum oppugnata triumphis
 lassa foret crinis soluere Roma suos.

If all desired to lead a life like this
 And to lie back with limbs under the influence of much wine,
 There would be no cruel weapon or warship,
 And the sea of Actium would not toss our bones,
 Nor would Rome, so often beset with triumphs against herself,
 Be tired of loosing her hair in grief.

Here as at Tibullus 1.10.5, *nostra* means ‘our Roman’: the life of love is presented as a better alternative for all Romans than the life of war.

In the gradual movement of Propertian elegy towards a more Augustan stance outlined in the next section, this dichotomy is gradually deconstructed. The pair of poems Propertius 3.4 and 3.5 present first an encouragement for Augustus’ upcoming eastern expedition (3.4.1–6):

arma deus Caesar dices meditatur ad Indos,
 et freta gemmiferi findere classe maris.
 magna, Quiris, merces: parat ultima terra triumphos;
 Tigris et Euphrates sub tua iura fluent;
 sera, sed Ausoniis ueniet prouincia uirgis;
 assuescent Latio Partha tropaea Ioui.

¹⁶ For possible Propertian land-losses see Cairns (2006b) 54–8; for Tibullan, see Murgatroyd (1980) 7.

The god Caesar plans war against the rich Indians
 And to cleave the straits of the jewel-bearing sea with his fleet.
 Great is the gain, Roman: the earth's last land has triumphs ready,
 The Tigris and Euphrates will flow subject to your laws;
 Late, but yet a [new] province will come under Italian rods;
 Parthian trophies will become used to Latium's Jupiter.

This thoroughly conventional nationalist position is tempered by the wish of Propertius (like Gallus before him) to see and praise the Princeps' triumphant return from his *puella's* lap (3.4.15–18). Here the elegist goes as far as the traditional form of the genre allows in praising Caesar's war. But 3.4 is followed immediately by 3.5, in which the Tibullan pacifist position is at once adopted (3.5.1–4):

Pacis Amor deus est, pacem ueneramur amantes:
 sat mihi cum domina proelia dura mea.
 nec mihi mille iugis Campania pinguis aratur,
 nec bibit e gemma diuite nostra sitis . . .

Cupid is the god of peace, it's peace that lovers worship:
 I have enough hard battles with my mistress.
 Rich Campania is not ploughed with a thousand yokes for my benefit,
 Nor does my thirst drink from a luxurious jewelled vessel . . .

The poet then declares that all triumphs and wealth-getting are vain from the perspective of eternity, and that he will move on to consider philosophical issues as he gets older. The implicit disjunction between these peaceful pursuits and Caesar's campaign is then made brusquely explicit in the last couplet (47–8):

exitus hic uitae superet mihi: uos, quibus arma
 grata magis, Crassi signa referte domum.

Let this end of life remain for me: but you, to whom
 War is more pleasing, bring Crassus' standards home.

Despite willingness to compromise, the poet cannot yet commit himself fully to the Augustan military project. The furthest he goes is in 4.6, where the battle of Actium, seen in 2.15 as the disastrous consequence of a wrong lifestyle choice, now becomes the triumphant origin of a great Roman cult-building. Here elegy and war can meet on the middle ground of Callimachean aetiology, and as stressed on pp. 140–4 below Propertius is responding to important positive treatments of the battle by Horace and Virgil.

A final aspect of this stand-off between love elegy and war is to be found in poems where love elegists address epic poets and discuss their two different sets of material. Here the dichotomy is between genres of literature rather than lifestyles, but the two are fundamentally related. In Propertius 1.7 the elegist addresses the epic poet Ponticus (1–6):

Dum tibi Cadmeae dicuntur, Pontice, Thebae
 armaque fraternae tristia militiae,
 atque, ita sim felix, primo contendis Homero
 (sint modo fata tuis mollia carminibus),
 nos, ut consuemus, nostros agitamus amores,
 atque aliquid duram quaerimus in dominam . . .

While Cadmus' Thebes is being narrated by you
 And the tragic war of the brothers' campaign,
 And (so may I prosper) you strive with supreme Homer
 (If only destiny is kind to your poetry),
 I, as is my wont, pursue that love of mine,
 And seek for something to use against my mistress's hard-heartedness . . .

For Propertius at least, the life of love and writing about it amount to the same thing, since poetry has a practical function in his love-affair in softening the *puella* (line 6). The second half of the poem argues that this will happen to Ponticus too (1.7.15–26): should he fall in love, he too will turn to writing elegy rather than epic, and life will influence literature.

The same scenario is set up in Ovid *Amores* 2.18, addressed to the epic poet Macer and clearly recalling Propertius' poem (1–4):¹⁷

Carmen ad iratum dum tu perducis Achillem
 primaque iuratis induis arma uiris,
 nos, Macer, ignaua Veneris cessamus in umbra,
 et tener ausuros grandia frangit Amor.

While you bring your poem to the anger of Achilles
 And put the first armour on the heroes who swore the oath,
 I, Macer, take it easy in the indolent shade of Venus,
 And soft Cupid breaks my force as I would attempt grand themes.

¹⁷ It is possible that Tibullus 2.6 is addressed to the same Macer and makes the same intergeneric contrast symbolically (i.e. his apparently literal departure for the wars is a literary change from elegy to epic); for a sceptical discussion see Murgatroyd (1994) 239–40.

Here there is a play between literally putting on armour and putting on *arma*, i.e. epic poetry as represented by the first word of Virgil's *Aeneid* (*arma uiris* clearly puns on *arma uirum*).¹⁸ The dichotomy between epic poet and elegist is set out, but again as in Propertius the poem suggests that the gap can be crossed: Ovid had ambitions to rise to epic (*ausuros grandia*), by the intervention of love, while Macer is expected to include the appropriate erotic stories in his account of the Trojan War before the *Iliad* (2.18.35–40):

Nec tibi, qua tutum uati, Macer, arma canenti
 aureus in medio Marte tacetur Amor.
 et Paris est illic et adultera, nobile crimen,
 et comes extincto Laodamia uiro.
 si bene te noui, non bella libentius istis
 dicis, et a uestris in mea castra uenis.

Nor is golden Love in the midst of war left in silence by you, Macer,
 At least where this is safe for a poet of battle:
 In that story there is Paris and his adulteress, a well-known crime,
 And Laodamia who went as companion to her dead husband.
 If I know you well, you narrate wars no more willingly
 Than this kind of material, and are coming over from your camp to mine.

The ideological stand-off between the poetry of love and the poetry of war can thus be defused, certainly in the realm of literature and perhaps in the realm of life.

Elegy and Augustus

In the years 30–24 BC, the young Caesar consolidates his hold on the state, takes the name 'Augustus' and spends a good deal of time away from Rome reinforcing Roman military dominion. But were the elegists our only source for the period, these crucial aspects would be hard to detect: Caesar/Augustus is decidedly low-profile in early elegy. Propertius mentions him only once in book 1, not very positively, as the sacker of Perugia (1.21.7), while Tibullus, patronized by the grand Messalla, does not mention him at all. Though the rise of elegy coincides with the self-establishment of Caesar's heir, in its initial phase it is distinctly uninterested in or antipathetic to the Augustan ideological cause.¹⁹

¹⁸ See McKeown (1998) 388.

¹⁹ Heyworth (2007a) argues that this remains Propertius' attitude throughout his career, but here I take the more evolutionary approach of La Penna (1977) or Cairns (2006b) 320–61.

This seems to change for Propertius in the mid 20s, in the course of books 2 and 3 (on the partial Augustan colour of 3.4 and 3.5 see pp. 134–40 above). One important factor is the intervention of Maecenas, trusted friend and adviser of Augustus and a man of high cultural and literary tastes, who had already early in the 30s 'recruited' Virgil and Horace for the new Caesarian cause.²⁰ It seems clear that Maecenas made approaches to Propertius: he is addressed in Propertius 2.1, where the campaigns of Caesar and Maecenas himself are discussed as potential topics, and Augustus (so named for the first time in Propertius) is feted in 2.10 (perhaps the final poem of the original Book 2); in both cases the poet suggests that his own more humble style of writing is not up to such grand subject matter in the typical *recusatio*, but its appearance on the poetic agenda even as a possibility marks something of a political shift since Propertius' first book.

Apart from the role of Maecenas, a further catalyst for Propertius' increased interest in public themes after his first book is the influential output of Virgil and Horace. Already in 2.34 Propertius shows knowledge of the forthcoming *Aeneid* (2.34.61–66),²¹ though Virgil's epic was not to be published for some years, while book 3 is clearly in some sense a reaction to the publication of the first three books of Horace's *Odes* in about 23 BC and clearly postdates that year.²² The evidently nationalist and Augustan engagement of these works, both of which contain (e.g.) encomiastic accounts of the battle of Actium (*Aeneid* 8.675–713, *Odes* 1.37), seems to have influenced Propertius towards more public themes, albeit very much on his own personal terms. The actual publication of the *Aeneid* c.19 BC had a clear impact on Propertius 4, emerging after 16 BC, which shows a much more nationalistic colour than the author's previous works and engages with many elements in Virgil's epic.²³ Poem 4.6 provides a full (if quirky) encomiastic statement of the Augustan position on Actium,²⁴ and it can be argued that the final three poems of the book, 4.9–11, provide a heavily Augustan closure to Propertius' extant oeuvre.²⁵

Propertian elegy's increasing political engagement over the period 30–15 BC seems to have been at least partly the result of pressure from Maecenas

²⁰ For a useful characterization of Maecenas' *modus operandi* cf. White (1993) 133–8, and for the most recent substantial account of Propertius' relations with Maecenas see Cairns (2006b) 250–94.

²¹ See e.g. Robinson (2006) 200–3, Heyworth (2007b) 275.

²² See most conveniently Fedeli (1985) 32–3 and Keith (Chapter 6) in this volume.

²³ See the summaries of links at Hutchinson (2006) 6–7 and DeBrohun (2003) 263.

²⁴ See e.g. Cairns (1984), DeBrohun (2003) 210–35, and the suggestive brief treatment of Keith (2008) 164–5; for a more ambivalent view see e.g. Welch (2005) 79–111.

²⁵ Cf. Harrison (2005).

as well as a personal response to political events and cultural circumstances. Recent scholarship continues vigorously to debate the relation of Propertius to Augustan policy and ideology, but even those who see Propertius' poetry as fundamentally opposed to the 'Augustan project' have to admit that at least on the surface the reader of his four extant books finds a love elegist who begins with an element of defiance of Caesar's heir in Book 1 and ends with Book 4, whose Callimachean aetiological project presents the poet's own version of nationalism, largely leaves behind the traditional material of the life of love, and represents some form of accommodation (willing or unwilling, sincere or insincere) with the Augustan regime and its policies.²⁶

Tibullus' second book, likely to have emerged incomplete after his death c. 19 BC, shows little more engagement with Augustan themes than his first, though it seems to echo the *Aeneid* in 2.5.²⁷ Ovid's *Amores* (probably principally written c. 25–12 BC, though the second edition we have was probably edited somewhat later),²⁸ resembles Tibullus in having little connection with the Augustan regime; it is interesting that the *Amores* never use the title 'Augustus'. It is possible that alternative sources of patronage and influence existed: we learn from Ovid's exile poetry that when young he had some encouragement from Tibullus' patron Messalla and links with his son Messalinus (*Ex Ponto* 1.7.27–8, 2.3.75–80), but the support of Messalla and his family is not at all apparent in the *Amores* themselves.

It might be argued that Ovidian elegy shadows Propertius to a degree by showing some movement over time towards more Augustan interests, in this case without the intervention of Maecenas, whose role with the poets clearly diminished after about 20 BC (he is not mentioned in the *Aeneid* or in Propertius' fourth book).²⁹ The first two books of the *Amores* mention the Princeps and Julian family only twice, both in ironic relation to Venus and Cupid, in a compliment urging Cupid to imitate the clemency of his great relative (*Amores* 1.2.51–2), and a suggestion that if Venus had followed Corinna's example and aborted Aeneas the world would have been (disastrously?) bereft of the Julian family (2.14.17–18). The third book, however, presents two complimentary references to Rome's leader and his

²⁶ For a recent survey and view see Heyworth (2007a).

²⁷ For the incompleteness see Reeve (1984), for the Virgilian engagement Murgatroyd (1994) 165–6.

²⁸ For the dating cf. McKeown (1987) 77–8.

²⁹ Scholars debate whether Maecenas fell from grace or simply took a back seat once Augustus himself was largely in Rome after 19 BC (having been absent for most of the 20s): cf. Williams (1990) and White (1991).

family which show a slightly more Augustan stance. At *Amores* 3.8.51–2 Julius Caesar is said to match Romulus/Quirinus, Bacchus/Liber and Hercules in achieving deification: here we find both an implicit compliment to Augustus as *diui filius* and an allusion to Horace's *Roman Odes* where the gods Quirinus, Liber and Hercules are presented as a model for Augustus' future apotheosis (*Odes* 3.3.9–16). At *Amores* 3.12.15–16 we finally find Augustus' achievements mentioned as a worthy potential poetic topic, though one which the poet unwisely rejects for Corinna:

cum Thebae, cum Troia foret, cum Caesaris acta,
ingenium mouit sola Corinna meum.

Though Thebes, Troy, and the deeds of Caesar were available,
Corinna alone stirred my talent to action.

This is one of several indications in the third book that the poet is moving out of love elegy into more obviously ambitious genres and topics.³⁰

Legal considerations might be added to poetic ambition and nationalistic themes as a further explanation for the political evolution of love elegy. The introduction of the *leges Iuliae* strongly encouraging citizen marriage and heavily penalizing adultery in 19–18 BC³¹ might be one reason why later elegy such as Propertius' fourth book turns away from its traditional narrative of the life of love (potentially adulterous) to more public themes. And yet post-*Amores* Ovid is far from playing safe: the series of eroto-didactic works which engaged him in the last years of the first century BC (the *Ars Amatoria*, *Medicamina Faciei Femineae*, and *Remedia Amoris*) clearly gave instructions on non-marital relationships to citizen men and women, and despite the famous 'insurance' passage which warns off married women as readers (*Ars* 1.31–2), the *Ars Amatoria* could easily be interpreted as a handbook of adultery, as it seems to have been in the matter of Ovid's exile a decade later (*Tristia* 2.245–6).

The trajectory of love elegy over the period 45–15 BC is thus a double one. Love elegy focuses on but then moves away from its traditional content of the life of love and rejection of public life in various forms to a greater receptivity to political and nationalistic themes; in this it reflects larger social and historical trends as the Roman state moves towards a new construction of Augustan community and more conservative moral values. Concomitantly it also moves towards higher literary genres, through both

³⁰ See Harrison (2002) 81–2. ³¹ For their provisions see Treggiari (1991) 277–98.

reaction to the loftier productions of Virgil and Horace and self-conscious internal development within the individual poet's literary career.³²

Place – Rome and elsewhere

Rome: tales of the city

Latin love elegy is predominantly an urban genre; even Tibullus with his emphasis on the countryside sets only a small proportion of his poems in rural landscapes.³³ The default location is the city of Rome, and within it often a private residence of some kind: prominent examples are Propertius 1.3 or Ovid *Amores* 1.5, where key events in the life of love are enacted in a Roman house. The elegiac *puella* herself is essentially an urban creature, however we define her degree of fictionality or social status:³⁴ though Tibullus may fantasize about Delia helping with farming in the country, this is clearly a vain hope of escaping from the urban cycle of passionate erotic suffering.³⁵ The elegiac lover too is quintessentially a resident of Rome: though Tibullus may record himself as leaving Rome to campaign with Messalla (1.3.1–2, 1.7.9–12) and even set elegies abroad on his journeys (1.3), and though Propertius can present himself as being in a storm at sea (1.17) or in wild countryside (1.18) in attempts to escape slavery to Cynthia, the characteristic location of the elegist and the life of love is in Rome. The elegist thus primarily pursues an erotic career in the domestic environment of the city rather than the conventional Roman male elite career of foreign military service; such actual warfare is replaced in the elegiac world by the alternative of *militia amoris*, campaigning for love.³⁶ Even Gallus, later to command armies in the key new territory of Egypt, seems in the 40s BC to present himself as a stay-at-home spectator of Caesar's military glory (Gallus fr. 2 Courtney = fr. 4 Blänsdorf). The setting of many elegies in the personal, interior space of the Roman house emphasizes this overall rejection of the conventional world of public achievement.

Such urban and interior settings also relate to questions of readership and readerly environment. At 3.3.19–20 Apollo suggests to Propertius that his poetry is the literature of the boudoir:

³² For the self-construction of literary careers by Roman poets see Hardie and Moore (2010).

³³ Though 1.1 is located in the country, 1.2 returns to the city, and only five of the sixteen extant Tibullan poems (1.1, 1.3, 1.10, 2.1, 2.3) are not set in an urban environment.

³⁴ See P. A. Miller (Chapter 10) in this volume.

³⁵ See Lyne (1980) 149–69. ³⁶ See Drinkwater (Chapter 12) in this volume.

ut tuus in scamno iactetur saepe libellus,
quem legat exspectans sola puella uirum.

so that your little book may often be tossed on a stool,
to be read by a girl alone waiting for her man.

To this explicit readership Ovid adds love-sick young men (*Amores* 1.15.38), and young people of both sexes who wish to learn about love (2.1.5–6). Though Propertius presents his poems on Cynthia (perhaps book 1) being read all over Rome and even in the forum (2.24.1–2), on the whole love elegy is a literature of the interior on both literal and metaphorical levels – a genre of brooding and introspection rather than poetry with a public function and location. This interior aspect is also evident in the close links between elegy's deployment of mythological scenes closely related to the kind of wall-painting characteristically found in the inner rooms of Roman town houses.³⁷ A good example is the opening of Propertius 1.3.1–8:

Qualis Thesea iacuit cedente carina
languida desertis Cnosia litoribus;
qualis et accubuit primo Cepheia somno
libera iam duris cotibus Andromede;
nec minus assiduis Edonis fessa choreis
qualis in herboso concidit Apidano:
talis uisa mihi mollem spirare quietem
Cynthia consertis nixa caput manibus . . .

Just as the Cretan girl, with Theseus' ship departing,
lay exhausted on deserted shores;
just as Andromeda, daughter of Cepheus, lay down
in her first sleep once freed from the hard cliffs;
and equally just as a Thracian woman, tired out from continuous dances
falls down on grassy Epidanus:
so Cynthia seemed to me to breathe soft rest,
supporting her head on her entwined hands . . .

Here the reader is invited to associate a catalogue of images of sleeping heroines with potential decorations of the domestic interior where the poem's action takes place.³⁸

³⁷ For the distribution of mythological paintings in Campanian town houses see Wallace-Hadrill (1994) 149–60, and for the links of Propertius 1.3.1–8 with wall-painting (in which Ariadne abandoned by Theseus (cf. Elsner (2007) 91–109) and Andromeda freed from her rock (cf. *LIMC* Andromeda I.69–71) were standard topics) cf. Valladares (2005).

³⁸ For the relevance of the images to the poem's erotic scenario see Harrison (1994).

Outside the domestic interiors where much of love elegy is set, the landmarks of Rome play a significant part in the life of love. Propertius 2.31 opens with the elegist's apology for lateness at an appointment with the *puella* – he has been delayed by the opening of the porticoes of Augustus' temple of Palatine Apollo:

Quaeris, cur ueniam tibi tardior? aurea Phoebi
porticus a magno Caesare aperta fuit.

You ask why I should come to you somewhat late?
The golden portico of Apollo has been opened by great Caesar.

The poem then goes on to spend the rest of its space on a full description of the Palatine temple which is one of the key sources for its reconstruction.³⁹ This constitutes a compliment to the young Caesar, part of the poet's movement towards Augustan interests noted above, but it also clearly integrates the Roman cityscape into the literary landscape of elegy. In the next poem (2.32), which is likely in fact to be a continuation of 2.31,⁴⁰ he goes on to suggest to Cynthia that she has no need to go outside Rome to flaunt her charms since the complex of Pompey's theatre provides ample opportunity (2.32.11–16):

scilicet umbrosis sordet Pompeia columnis
porticus, aulaeis nobilis Attalicis,
et platanis creber pariter surgentibus ordo,
flumina sopito quaeque Marone cadunt,
et leuiter nymphis tota crepitantibus urbe
cum subito Triton ore refundit aquam.

Clearly then Pompey's portico with its shady columns disgusts you,
Though well-known for its Attalid hangings,
And its many rows of evenly-growing plane-trees,
And its streams which cascade down have put Maro to sleep,
And its nymphs who resound gently over the whole city
When Triton unexpectedly pours water from his mouth.

As with the description of the temple of Palatine Apollo, the lavish detail vividly evokes a particular locale of Augustan Rome. The theme of Roman public buildings and resorts as spots for the *puella's* self-display for potential lovers is one repeated in love-elegy: Propertius 2.23.5–6 similarly suggests parks and porticoes as places where the *puella* can be found, while at Propertius 4.8.75–6 Pompey's complex, the Forum (when used for gladiatorial

³⁹ See now Miller (2009) 196–206. ⁴⁰ See Heyworth (2007b) 246.

displays) and the theatre are seen as sites where the elegist might seek female company. Urban assignation spots are not a feature in Tibullus, but are common in Ovid: in Ovid *Amores* 2.2.3–4 the Palatine portico of the Danaids again occurs, this time as another place for assignations, while *Amores* 3.2 offers the elegist's commentary on the chariot-races at the Circus Maximus, delivered to the *puella* in a successful search for future erotic consummation (3.2.83–4). The *Ars Amatoria* codifies all this into formal advice. There the man in search of an available *puella* and the *puella* in search of a suitable man are given detailed instructions about where to find one in Rome (1.67–170, 3.381–96): Pompey's complex (once more), the porticoes of Octavia and Livia, the porticoes of Palatine Apollo (again), and the temples of Isis and Venus Genetrix, and (above all, and yet again) the theatres (of Pompey and Marcellus) and the Circus Maximus.

The urban setting of elegy also assigns a role to city-wide gossip in the life of love. Propertius' elegist is keen to report the views of the city on the progress or otherwise of his affair with Cynthia: in 2.26.2 he urges an admiring reaction in Rome (*tota . . . in urbe*) to the fact that the *puella* is now his slave, but more often the urban rumours are ugly, such as the unspecific scandal about Cynthia in 2.32.24 (again *tota . . . urbe*) or his own bad reputation *per totam urbem* at 2.24.7. The climax comes at the end of Book 3, where, in his apparent farewell to Cynthia, Propertius talks of his treatment by her becoming the humiliating subject of talk at parties (3.25.1–2):

Risus eram positus inter conuiuia mensis
et de me poterat quilibet esse loquax.

I was a subject of laughter when tables were set out at feasts,
And anyone could talk freely about me.

Propertius 4 presents a quite different attitude to the city of Rome in the context of love elegy, showing how far both author and genre have moved over time. The Callimachean aetiological programme of the book, to sing of the 'old names of places' (4.1.69), means that the city of Rome becomes a repository of past history and current political significance as well as a field of current erotic endeavour.⁴¹ Though the story of Tarpeia in 4.4 combines aetiology and erotic narrative, and the two re-appearances of Cynthia in 4.7 and 4.8 are both set in an urban context (the latter explicitly in Propertius' own house on the Esquiline), the highlighting of the Palatine temple of Apollo in 4.6 and Jupiter Feretrius in 4.10 (and perhaps even of

⁴¹ Well explored by Welch (2005).

the Bona Dea in 4.9) can be argued to have a largely encomiastic purpose and clearly have no erotic dimension.⁴² Like the landscape of Rome itself, its representation in elegy has now become politicized in the Augustan interest.

Other locations – recreational, ancestral, imperial

One set of non-Roman locations in elegy mirrors the usual residential cycle of the urban Roman: Cynthia's excursion to the flesh-pots of Baiae in Propertius 1.11 reflects habitual Roman summer residence on the bay of Naples,⁴³ and journeys to Lanuvium, some 30 km SE of Rome (Propertius 4.8), or Falerii, some 50 km N (Ovid *Amores* 3.13), represent easy excursions from the capital; we find a full catalogue of such destinations for Cynthia at Propertius 2.32.3–6 (Praeneste, Tusculum, Tibur and Lanuvium). In the context of the urban life of love such journeys are usually represented as temporary desertions of the lover which provide rich opportunities for the *puella's* infidelity; in *Amores* 3.6 Ovid presents himself as anxious to cross a river to reach the *puella* in Tibur – an anxiety perhaps driven by fears of infidelity.

Another set of non-Roman locations is provided by the elegists' deployment of their Italian home regions. For Tibullus we have no firm evidence of his place of origin,⁴⁴ but Propertius in book 4 is presented as coming from Assisi in Umbria (4.1.63–6, 121–26), consistent with his concern with the earlier civil war at nearby Perugia in 1.21 and 1.22, in which he seems to have lost relatives.⁴⁵ It is not until his second book, announcing his 'return' after book 1, that Ovid declares his ancestral link with the Sabine Paeligni (2.1.1), but we then find a poem wholly set in his birthplace of Sulmo (2.16) in which he (unusually) urges the *puella* to come and join him. Here as in allusions to recreational destinations near Rome, we can detect some indication of the real migratory patterns of elite Romans, who often visited property in their ancestral regions.

Further places outside the city occur in the mentions of Rome's overseas provinces. In the world of love elegy these locations, like Italian pleasure-resorts, are usually seen as destinations for separate travel by one of the erotic partners which seriously endangers the love-relationship. In 1.6 Propertius refuses service in the Greek East with his friend Tullus in order to stay with Cynthia in Rome, a gesture pointedly reversed in 3.22, when in an address

⁴² Cf. Harrison (2005). ⁴³ Cf. D'Arms (1970).

⁴⁴ Unless the location of Albius (surely Tibullus) in *regione Pedana* (near Praeneste) at Horace *Ep.* 1.4.2 indicates his birthplace as well as a villa for relaxation; cf. Murgatroyd (1980).

⁴⁵ For literature see n. 15 above.

to the same friend some years later the elegist now wishes to leave Italy given the terminally poor state of his relationship with Cynthia.⁴⁶ In 1.8 (surely originally two poems)⁴⁷ Cynthia considers and is then dissuaded from going off to Illyria with a rival of the elegist; the theme of the *puella* departing for the provinces is found again at Ovid *Amores* 2.11, where Corinna seems to be about to sail away to foreign parts, abandoning Ovid and their love (2.11.7–8), a trip which clearly does not happen. In Tibullus 1.3 we find the elegist on Corfu, apparently fallen ill on the way with Messalla to the East, blaming himself for separation from Delia and looking forward to their reunion. This poem reminds us that travel to the provinces was often motivated by Rome's overseas wars and political expansion in this period, and the theme can illuminate political attitudes and their development. Propertius 3.12 blames an apparently real Roman Postumus, possibly a relative of the poet,⁴⁸ for abandoning his wife Galla in order to follow Augustus' Eastern campaigns, but 4.3, in a book of greater accommodation with Augustan ideology (see pp. 134–40 above), presents a *Heroides*-type letter of 'Arethusa' to her husband 'Lycotas' (clearly pseudonyms for real or imagined Roman elite members), again on Eastern campaign, which emphasizes more positive aspects and looks forward to the warrior's victorious return. Both the clear married status of the couple and the quasi-triumphalist tone of the poem suggest that we are now in a very different world from that of earlier elegy.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Of all Latin literary genres, love elegy is the most specifically located in time (the last half-century BC) and place (essentially, Rome); that it did not survive more than two generations must be due to the unique circumstances of this location and period as well as to internal literary constraints. The social and political loosening which marked the end of the Roman Republic was an apt moment of genesis for an essentially countercultural genre, while moral legislation and an increasingly authoritarian monarchy clearly contributed to its passing.

Further reading

Pelling (1996) provides a good narrative of Roman history for the relevant period; for works of broader cultural and historical context on Augustan

⁴⁶ For this ring-compositional link between the two poems see Heyworth (2007b) 399.

⁴⁷ See Heyworth (2007b) 37–8. ⁴⁸ See Cairns (2006b) 16–24.

⁴⁹ See Miller (Chapter 15) in this volume.

Rome see Galinsky (1996) and (2005). Griffin (1985) gives the most useful cultural framework for elegy at Rome. On political elements in Propertius, Heyworth (2007a) and Cairns (2006b) give interestingly different recent perspectives. The cityscape of Rome has been treated in connection with Propertius 4 by Welch (2005), but a substantial general treatment of Rome as the key scenario of elegy is lacking.

9

ALISON SHARROCK

The *poeta-amator*, *nequitia*
and *recusatio*

Ovid proudly introduces his second book of elegies as the work of a poet (= creator/writer) of his own badness:

HOC quoque composui Paelignis natus aquosis
ille ego nequitiae Naso poeta meae;
(Ov. *Am.* 2.1.1–2)

This too I have composed, I myself, Naso, born among the watery Paeligni, the poet of my own badness.

All four canonical elegists wear this and other conventionally reprehensible characteristics as a badge of honour and a positive aesthetic choice. Even in the highly fragmentary work of Gallus, *nequitia* looks like a generic marker in its appearance, alongside the sadness which it inspires, in one of the lines published in 1979. Like love itself, this preferential option for badness can work either to undermine the holder's virility or to proclaim it: on the one hand, the lover is thus addicted to behaviour in direct opposition to central tenets of Roman manliness, but on the other hand the display of sexual (and poetic) power therein expressed can also celebrate the poet-lover's (*poeta-amator*) potency. This characteristic of *nequitia* is most easily seen when both Ovid (*Am.* 2.4 and 2.10) and Propertius (2.22a+b¹) proclaim their insatiable and indefatigable desires for all things female. Ovid presents himself as wholly unable to resist this passion, despite his strong sense of its wickedness (*Am.* 2.4.1–10) – but we do not believe him for a moment. It is abundantly clear that the poet-lover is celebrating his erotic activity as an alternative – albeit outrageous – to conventional Roman manly pursuits. As Gale (1997: 80) says of Propertius: 'On the one hand, love

¹ Printed as separate but paired poems by Heyworth, who discusses the division at Heyworth 2007b: 200–2. Throughout this chapter, I use Heyworth's 2007 OCT edition of the poems of Propertius. Readers using other editions or translations may need to refer back to the OCT in order to follow the discussion.