

Ovid Amores 1.9 notes

***militia amoris* background**

- found from Greek lyric onwards to Roman Comedy. Present throughout elegy from Prop. 1 and Tib. 1.1 onwards, although changing forms in Ovid. Egs:

“Now let gay love be my pursuit while it is no shame to break a door down and a joy to have plunged into a brawl. ’Tis here I am brave captain and private. Begone, ye trumpets and ensigns! take wounds to the men of greed, and take them wealth. I, save on my garnered heap, will look down on hunger as I look down on wealth.” (Tib. 1.1.73-78)

“My fate will then be sweet to me, Caesar, when you are the most important part of Roman history, and when I read of many gods’ temples the richer after your return for being hung with trophies” (Gallus fr. 2)

- Used in the most simple way, it likens lovemaking to military battle (e.g. Prop. 2.1.13f; 14; 22A) or disagreements between lovers to warfare (e.g. Tib. 1.10.51-54). This metaphor is connected to elegy’s choice of love as a way of life (including the rejection of any literary work not founded or dealing with love); the lover’s life is compared to that of the soldier. It has more explicit political connotations than the gender inversions of the slavery of love, and has been read as such –cf. Lyne 1980 (*The Latin Love Poets from Catullus to Horace*), but also Fear 2005 (‘Propertian closure: the elegiac inscription of the liminal male and ideological contestation in Augustan Rome’. In: Ancona, Ronnie and Greene, Ellen eds. *Gendered Dynamics in Latin Love Poetry*, 13–40)

- *Militia amoris* in Tib. 1.1.73-78. Amusing paradoxes:

- i) The narrator claims to lead in love, clashing with the reader’s awareness that he does anything but lead

- ii) The implication of the rejection of wealth is that elegiac life can be led without access to wealth—yet we know that the *puellae* and *pueri* are notoriously high-maintenance! (Cf. Tib. 1.4.57-62)

- iii) Previously in 1.1: the narrator prefers inaction over grasping military activity to amass riches: “Tis right for thee, Messalla, to campaign by land and sea that thy house’s front may show the spoils of foemen: I am a captive fast bound in the bonds of a lovely girl...” (Tib. 1.1.53ff)

- The life of love is set up in opposition to the traditional *cursus honorum*. It has therefore often been viewed as an outright rejection of normative social and political values: Lyne 1980; Stahl 1985 (*Propertius: ‘Love and War’*). Equally, it may be viewed as comical that the narrator should seriously contend that love and drunken celebration is a viable alternative to fighting off threats to Rome: cf.: “If all men wished to spend a life like mine and lie with limbs weighed down with deep draughts of wine, there would be no cruel weapons or ships of war, nor would our bones be tossed on Actium’s waves, or Rome, so oft beset on every hand by her own conquests, be weary of letting loose her hair in grief. One thing at least with justice shall posterity be able to praise in me: my battles never outraged any of the gods.” (Prop. 2.15.41-48)

- The contrast between the narrators campaigning for love and real soldiery is made clear in Prop. 1.6.19-30 (where contrast between Tullus serving as a military envoy and the narrator), Prop. 1.6.29f (“I was born unfit for glory, unfit for arms: love is the warfare fate wishes me to undergo.”) and Tib. 2.6.1-6 (“For the camp is Macer bound. What shall become of gentle Love? Must he go with him and stoutly bear his arms about his neck? And, weapons in hand, will he be at the gallant’s side whether his path lie over the distant mainland or the tossing seas? Young sir, I prithee, brand the rebel that has left thy haunts of peace: call back the truant to thy banners.”). Here, it is only the discourse of military service that is appropriated by the elegists.

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Fear 2005:20 “In this manner, elegy engages in a strategy of recuperation and appropriation that attempts to enhance the value of its own activities. The elegist attempts to trope elegiac *inertia* (“idleness”) and *otium* (“leisure”) as an alternate and more demanding form of *negotium* (“business”, “affairs”). This strategy is most elaborately expressed in *Amores* 1.9, where the narrator expounds in detail the parallels between traditional *militia* and *militia amoris* (“the military service of love”).

NB Very few examples from earlier literature that love demands activity: Plato, *Symposium* 178E and an epigram in *Anthologia Palatina* 12.18. Normally, love is considered as part of *otium* (leisure) or *desidia* (inertness). Cf. Tib. 2.6 as acknowledging that...and *negotium* (duty) is the way to cure oneself of this ailment.

- In *Am* 1.9, lover’s work = soldier’s work
- The comparison of two types of activity is influenced by rhetorical exercises where one would be asked to discuss whether ‘the law or the sword’ deserves to be honoured more (Quint. *Inst.* 2.4.24)
- NB context of poem –cf. *Am.* 1.6: the lover gives up his vigil, defeated by the door guard; 3.6 where a flooding river stops the narrator from reaching his girl. Considering this, the reader must find it difficult to take the narrator entirely seriously.
- Note collapse of the metaphor carefully built up as a literary feint in Propertius and Tibullus
- Also consider whether it reveals the *militia amoris* of Propertius and Tibullus as a ridiculous notion in and by itself? Ovid as reader?

1-2 *Militat omnis amans...*: opening hemistich echoed at the end of the pentameter ("a favourite trick of style with Ovid" and probably influenced by the rhetorical figure of conduplication according to McKeown, 1988: 260-261). Emphasises.

1 *castra*: Turpin translate “warfare” (metonymy), though we surely also think of Cupid on camp (how would this image appear to Roman readers?).

2 *Attice*: vocative. Addressee unknown.

3 *quae*: referring to the “age”. War and Venus thus brought together.

3 *bello*: *habilis* takes dative

3 *Veneri*: dative after *convenit* (“befits”).

4 *turpe*: sc. est. Neuter predicate nominative.

4 *senilis amor*: i.e. an old lover.

5 *quos ... animos*: “the courage which” (antecedent drawn into relative clause, hence

5 *petiere*: syncopated (*petierunt*).

6 *socio*: *socius* can be found in military contexts, helping the blurring.

6 *bella*: pretty (but chosen to recall “wars”?)

6 *puella viro*: note the juxtaposition.

7 *pervigilant ambo*: the lover is vigilant, like a soldier. Differences?

7 *terra requiescit uterque*: but is the excluded lover (staying outside the beloved’s all night) really doing this out of necessity? Is the danger the same?

8 *ille ... ille*: the lover, then the soldier.

8 *ducis*: he guards the doors of his general.

9 *via*: journey. We see lovers going on journeys in the previous elegiac corpus.

9 *mitte*: imperative.

10 exempto fine: ablative absolute.
 10 sequetur: future.
 11 nimbo: cloud, i.e. downpour. Ablative of cause.
 12 flumina, congestas exeret ille nives,
 13 pressurus: future participle (about to..).
 13 Euros: winds (technically East)
 13 causabitur: i.e. make a pretext of.
 14: the lover does not wait for the right weather-conditions (including navigational factors).
 14 verrendis ... aquis: "'for skimming the water," i.e., for sailing. The dative of the gerundive is used with certain adjectives (like apta), especially those expressing fitness or adaptability..." (Turpin)
 15-16 et / et: both ... and.
 17-18 alter ... / ... alter: the one [i.e. soldier]... the other [i.e. the lover]. Vigilance in both cases. How different?
 18: motif of rival in love elegy.
 18 ut: "as".
 19 ille ... hic: i.e. soldier ... lover.
 19 graves: "hard to capture." (Turpin).
 19 excluded lover on threshold.
 19 durae ... amicae: mistress typically "hard".
 20 hic ... ille: i.e. soldier ... lover.
 21 soporatos: i.e sleeping.
 21-22 invadere profuit .../ caedere: infinitives after impersonal (gnomic) perfect profuit.
 23ff.: Homeric mythic figures brought in.
 23-24: Thracian Rhesus appears in *Iliad* 10 (Odysseus and Diomedes kill him while he and his men sleep and steal his horses)
 24 capti ... equi: vocative.
 25 nempe: "'certainly," introducing a statement confirming what has just been said, with the expectation that it will not be contradicted." (Turpin).
 25 somnis: ablative after *utuntur*.
 26 sua arma movent: "'wield their weapons," in the context a sexual double entendre." (Turpin).
 26 sopitis hostibus: ablative absolute.
 28 opus: understand "est": it is the task of (+ infinitive *transire*).
 29 Mars dubius nec certa Venus: deities standing for their spheres (war/love): enclosing the line. Both provisional and uncertain.
 30 quosque neges: "and those whom you would deny" (Turpin).
 30 posse: infinitive after *neges* introduces indirect statement (potential subjunctive from *nego, are*).
iacere: "lie prostrate, be brought low." (Turpin).
 31 desidiam quicumque vocabat amorem: vocabat (imperfect: "used to") introduces double accusative. Provocative rebranding of love as demanding activity in 31-2.
 32 ingenii est experientis amor.: i.e, love demands resourceful talent. Turpin: "of an enterprising nature"; genitive of quality / description.
 33 ardet in abducta Briseide magnus Achilles: love-focalized view of the *Iliad*. Reference to Agamemnon's taking of Achilles' spoil Briseis (Greek form of noun).
 33 ardet: vivid historical present. "It represents both his anger at Agamemnon (for taking away Briseis) and his passion for Briseis, the first of several famous examples Ovid gives from mythology of love mixing with war." (Turpin).
 33 in: +plus abl., "because of"

34 dum licet, Argeas frangite, Troes, opes!: Achilles' quarrel with Agamemnon leads him to withdraw from fighting.

34 Argeas: "Argive", agreeing with *opes* (i.e. troops).

34 frangite: plural imperative.

34 Troes: "Trojans", vocative.

35-36: technically correct but love-focalized view of *Iliad* 6 which features Hector and Andromache.

35 Andromaches: Greek genitive singular.

36 galeam capiti ... daret: "put the helmet on his head." (Turpin).

36 quae: she who (postponed).

37 summa ducum: "head of the leaders" (Agamemnon was the leader of the Argive side),

37 Atrides: patronymic (son of Atreus) i.e. Agamemnon. This is balanced by patronymic Priameide, daughter of Priam, for Cassandra. Agamemnon brought Cassandra back home, which sparked Clytemnestra's fury.

37 visa Priameide: ablative absolute.

37 fertur: is said to have (plus infinitive *obstipuisse* which takes the dative).

38 Maenadis effusis obstipuisse comis: "Cassandra was actually not a Maenad, but since her hair was always messy she is compared to one of the Maenads, who were notoriously unkempt." (Turpin). Cassandra was a prophetess and they could be portrayed as having dishevelled hair during inspiration.

39 : cf. *Odyssey* 8.266–366 (Hephaestus caught Mars and his wife Venus in a trap he made).

40: Hephaestus showed the couple to the other Olympians.

41-3: "The elegiac lifestyle is paradoxically troped as providing the *duritia* ("hardness", "rigor") that it is generally supposed to lack: a soul, *segnis ... in otia natus*, "slothful and born to leisure" (1.9.41), softened by the couch and the shade (1.9.42), has been whipped into shape by a strenuous *formosae cura puellae*, "concern for a beautiful girl" (1.9.43). in other words, an elegiac lifestyle is itself the solution to its own problematic *mollitia* ("softness") and *inertia*: "qui nolet fieri desidiosus, amet!" ("let him who doesn't wish to be idle, love!" 1.9.46)." (Fear 2005: 20)

41 discinctaque in otia: "'for easygoing leisure." discinctus means "wearing a tunic without a belt, wearing loose clothes," hence "easygoing, undisciplined." discincta otia is a striking phrase, in fact a transferred epithet, since logically the adjective applies to ipse ego, not otia." (Turpin).

42 mollierant: softness often associated with love elegy/lovers.

42 lectus et umbra: Turpin understands *lectus umbrosus* (hendiadys).

43 ignavum: sc. *me*.

43 puellae: objective genitive.

44 merere: infinitive after *iussit*.

44 aera i.e. (military) pay.

45 vides: understand *me*.

46 amet: jussive subjunctive.