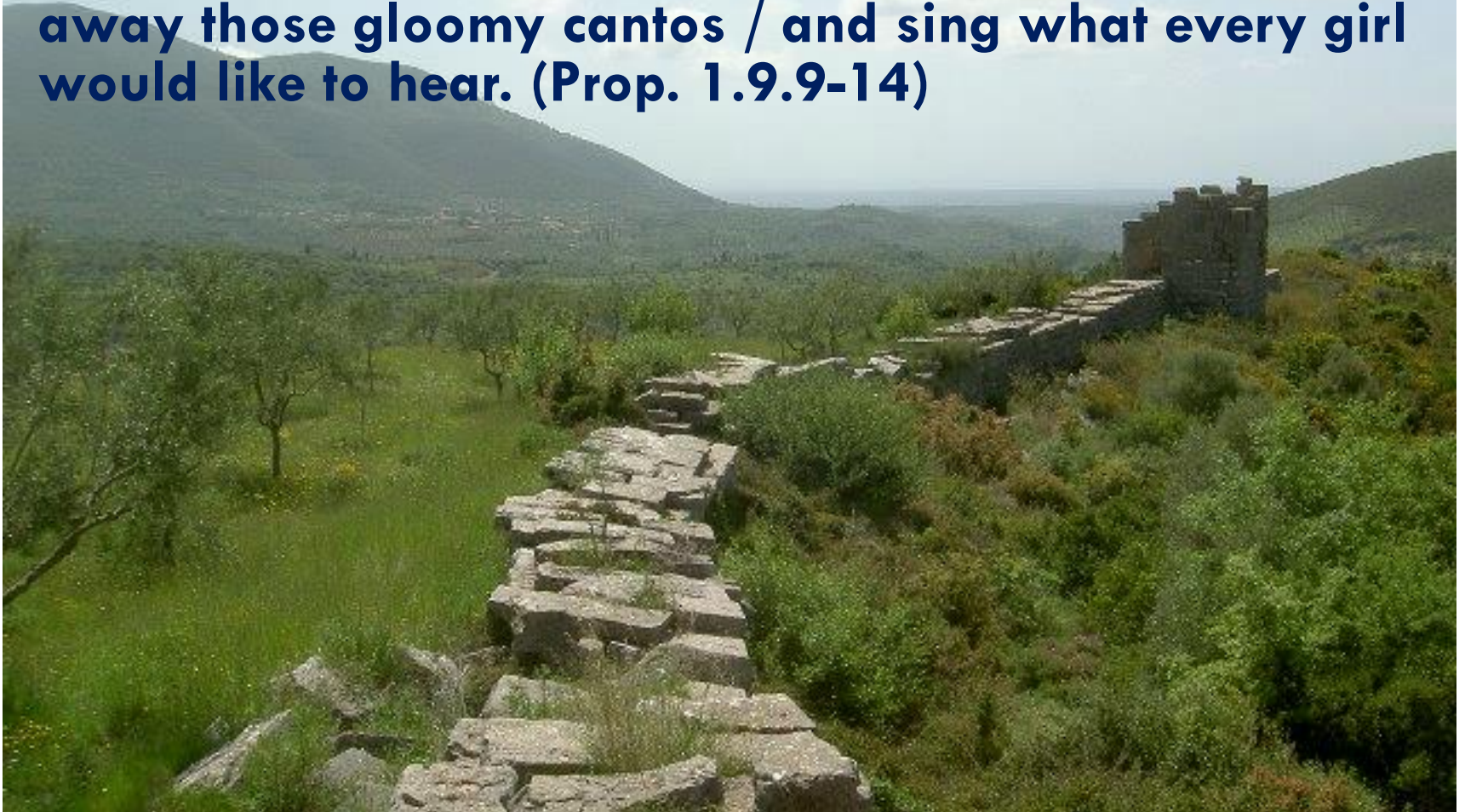


AUGUSTAN LOVERS 16

Representation of other genres – why write elegy?
Elegiac books and book structures

**Much good it does you now, poor wretch, to mouth
your epic / and weep Amphion's lyre-built walls. / In
love a line of Mimnermus is more help than Homer. /
Civilised love needs soft music. / Please go and stow
away those gloomy cantos / and sing what every girl
would like to hear. (Prop. 1.9.9-14)**



Genre matters

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Homer has instructed us in what measure the achievements of kings, and chiefs,
and direful war might be written. **Plaintive strains originally were
appropriated to the unequal numbers [of the elegiac]: afterward [love and]
successful desires were included.** [...] The sock and the majestic buskin
assumed this measure as adapted for dialogue, and to silence the noise of the
populace, and calculated for action. To celebrate gods, and the sons of gods,
and the victorious wrestler, and the steed foremost in the race, and the
inclination of youths, and the free joys of wine, the muse has allotted to the
lyre. **If I am incapable and unskilful to observe the distinction described,
and the complexions of works [of genius], why am I accosted by the name
of "Poet?"** (Horace, *Ars Poetica* 70-87)

Prop. 1.9.9-14

- **At times, elegists play with these rules even on a line-by-line level** (Below, hexameter is green, pentameter red)
- 'Much good does it do you now, poor wretch, to mouth your epic': hexameter line, mention of epic
- 'And weep Amphion's lyre-built walls': pentameter line, mention of lament
- 'In love a line of Mimnermus is more help than Homer': mention of love, but note how Mimnermus is invoked as a helper in the battle of love and Homer mentioned appropriately in the hexameter line
- 'Civilised love needs soft music': civilised, i.e. not on the battle field; love and soft music aptly placed in the pentameter line
- 'Please go and stow away those gloomy cantos': epic belongs in the hexameter line
- 'and sing what every girl would like to hear': the girl as the target audience is mentioned only in the pentameter line

Prop. 1.7.1-8

Ponticus, while you are telling
of Cadmus' Thebes / and of
grim warfare between
brothers / and rivalling
(bless me!) the primacy of
Homer / provided fate is
tender to your verse, / we,
as comes natural / agitate
our love / and seek ideas to
move a hard mistress, /
forced rather to be slave of
suffering than of wit / and
to complain of youth's hard
times.

- Issues at stake:
- Cadmus' Thebes + warfare between brothers?
 - ▣ Long-ago times; relevancy today?
 - ▣ Already written?
 - Bunching tragedy with epic – elegy trumps both?
- *Rivalling (bless me!) the primacy of Homer*
 - ▣ Aims of epic-writing
 - ▣ Callimachean ideals
- Elegy as 'werbende Dichtung'

Werbende Dichtung: Poetry with purpose?

Thus I grind out my life's measure, this is my fame, / for this I wish my verses to be named (1). Let them praise me, Ponticus, **because I only pleased / a cultured girl – and suffered her abuse.** (1) / Hereafter may **neglected lovers** (2) daily read me, finding help in the knowledge of our troubles. / Should **even** (3) you be hit by the Boy's inerrant bow / (which may the gods in our heaven forbid!), / far from your epic camp, poor wretch, and the Seven Captains, / you'll weep, while they lie dumb – **in dust eternal** (4). / You'll long in vain to write the verse of tenderness, / but late love will refuse you inspiration. / Then you will marvel at me as no minor poet, / and **give me first place** (5) among Roman wits.

1. Narrator's poetry associated with both success and defeat
2. Even in-story, his poetry is both for the *puella* and for a much wider audience, e.g. didactic texts for a community of elegiac lovers
3. If love hits, Ponticus will abandon epic as a useless genre
4. When does the dust settle? Is it already there? Is epic obsolete even before love strikes Ponticus?
 - ▣ Ponticus becomes the reader mentioned in 13f
5. Similarities between narrator and Ponticus? Are both excluded from the object of desire?

Werbende Dichtung 2: Prop. 1.9 again

- Looking more closely at 1.9 we note a number of different pulls on the narrator:
- 1.9.1-8 focus on the narrator's expert predictions of Ponticus conversion to elegiac life: 'Cynic, I told you...' 'I've earned my expertise by tears and suffering' (the method is slightly disconcerting!)
 - ▣ Confirmation of Ponticus new identity in 27f: 'your eyes once caught': Ponticus $\approx$ the narrator of Prop. 1.1.1f?
- 9-14 on elegy as an effective means of winning the girl 'what every girl wants to hear'
- 15f: things are going well 17f: bad things may come – but the narrator still has the skill to predict them accurately

Prop. 1.9.33f: Demontage

- *So for goodness sake confess your error now. In love it is often a relief to name one's ruin. (Prop. 1.9.33f)*
 - ▣ ...but whom does 'Propertius' most often name?
- This, not wooing of a woman, is the purpose of the narrator's discourse?
 - ▣ I've earned my expertise by tears and suffering / would I were heart-whole and a layman!
 - ▣ 'poor wretch'
 - ▣ 'than in your marrow feel so often the Boy's bow / and have no power to say her anger nay. / Love never offers anyone an easy flight / without at other times depressing him.'
- This should influence our interpretations and temper the tendency to give primacy to the 'love story'
- Other features, too, show that the 'love story' of our elegiac poets is one of several 'drivers' behind this genre – not the key motivation



Elegiac poetry books

Elegy and book structures

- In this part, we consider the structuring of elegy books
- We have already touched on some typical features
 - ▣ Programmatic poems with poetological statements opening a collection of poems:
 - E.g. Prop. 2.1 and 3.1; Tib. 1.1
 - ▣ Programmatic poems with poetological statements at the close of a book:
 - Prop. 2.34; Ov. Am. 3.15
 - ▣ *Please note that the poetological statements here may be both explicit and implicit: cf. womanufacture lectures*
 - ▣ *Sphragis* poems giving ‘autobiographical’ details at the close of a book:
 - Prop. 1.21 and 22; Ov. Trist. 4.10

Typical features of collections

- Names: Ancient texts usually known by the first words of the text:
 - ▣ Prop. 1 = 'Cynthia'
 - ▣ Cf. Prop. 2.24a: 'Fine talk from you, when you're notorious for a book and your *Cynthia* is read throughout the Forum'
 - ▣ Cf. Lucr. *On the Nature of Things*, 'Aeneadum genetrix', 'Mother of the people of Aeneas', Verg. *Aen.* 'arma virumque' (of arms and the man)
 - ...and the pun in Ov. *Am.* 1.1.1f: '*arma gravi numero bella parabam*' 'I'd meant in solemn metre to rehearse a tale of arms...'
 - As discussed previously, Ovid here toys with reader expectation

Size matters

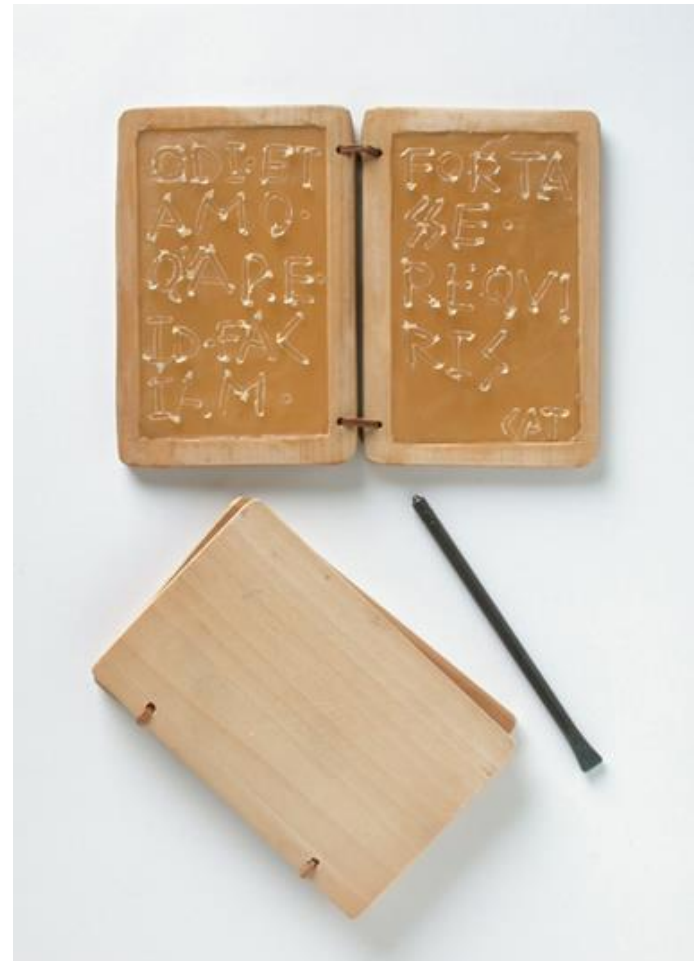
- Size: average about 800-900 lines
- True of most verse texts, both of epic and other genres
 - ▣ Cf. Prop. 1 = 706; 3 = 990 and 4 = 952; Tib. 1. = 812
 - ▣ Prose texts average about 60 pages
- Anomalies: Tib. 2 = 428; Prop. 2: 1364
 - ▣ Considerable discussion as to whether Prop 2 may originally have been conceived as two books:
 - ▣ The manuscript tradition for Prop. 2 is immensely confused: only for eight poems are we actually sure where they begin and end!
 - Heyworth edition
 - ▣ Prop. 2.13.25f: 'Procession enough for me if I have three slim volumes to bring as my gift to Persephone.'

Unity of Propertius' works

- Was 'our' Prop. 2 originally split in two books?
- Alternative reading of Prop. 2.13.25f: Prop. 2 + 3 + 4 make a unit
 - The narrator's claim in 2.13 may refer to future projects rather than to materials already published
 - The change of patron: Book 1 to Tullus, Books 2-4 to Maecenas – and Maecenas is the addressee of the *recusatio* poem Prop. 3.9, placed neatly in the middle of the book:
 - 'Maecenas, knight of Etruscan royal blood, keen not to rise above your rank, why launch me on a sea of writing so immense? Large sails do not suit my raft.' (Prop. 3.9.1-4)
 - Only from 2.1 do we get programmatic poems at the outset of each book, with the narrator proudly identifying as 'poeta'
- Prop. 1 can be seen as conceived as a stand-alone book in the style of Vergil's *Eclogues* or Horace's *Epodes*

Size matters: pragmatics

- Average book size determined by how much fits onto a scroll
- For individual elegies, authors may also want to keep alive the illusion that they were sent as messages between lovers, which would limit them to whatever can fit onto a double wax tablet (diptych)
- Cf. *Ov. Am.* 1.11.15-23; 12
- Size of individual elegies also connected to Callimachean aesthetics



Ordering of poems

- 'Meaning [...] is not always confined within the individual poem: a part of the poet's meaning can be contained in the relations between the poems in a book' (Hutchinson, 1984, 99)
- Due to the nature of papyrus scrolls, Roman readers would have been less likely to skip between poems than we are
 - ▣ Poetry would be read aloud, either by slaves or the individual reader, but linearity will still be key
 - ▣ Cf. Hutchinson on repeated in-text references to 'books'
 - ▣ BUT - we also need to allow for re-reading, which can support intratextual links not evident on a first read-through
 - Cf. Ov. Am. 2.19 and 3.4 on the guarding of the *puella*

Propertius 1: internal organisation

- **1** Narrator looking back on the beginning of his relationship with Cynthia, also hinting at a summary of what the following poems will detail
- **Cynthia poems:** 9 snapshots from a love story: 2, 3, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16-19: moving from simple problems to the narrator's death wish
- **Friends poems:** 9 snapshots of the relationship between the narrator and his friends, also reflecting on the progress of his love story: (1), 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 13, 14, 20
- **Sphragis:** 1.21; 22

Emphasis of the cycle

- **Passing of the year in Prop. 1:**
- 6 and 8: journeys by sea: spring time
- 11 and 12: Cynthia in Baiae: heat of the summer
- 16 and 17: frost and storms at sea: autumn or beginning of winter
- What are the consequences for our interpretation of the Cynthia poems?

Internal organisation: Tibullus

- The problem of Tib. 2: 428 lines only
 - ▣ Many scholars take it to be incomplete, and it is possible that the ancients did too, as a third book was added in early imperial times and circulated under Tibullus' name ('corpus Tibullianum')
 - The third book can be securely dated – it is not by Tibullus!
 - Identity of the author much discussed, particularly for the Sulpicia poems, which have been held to be our one corpus of Roman poetry by a woman
 - Cf. Keith, 2006 on trends in Sulpicia scholarship
- However, one unifying factor of Tib. 1-3 is the clear division of the poems in cycles across all three books: Delia, Marathus, Nemesis, Sulpicia

Internal organisation: Tibullus 1

- 1 Delia + simple life →
- 2 Delia
- 3 Delia
- 4 Marathus
- 5 Delia
- 6 Delia
- 7 [Messalla]
- 8 Marathus
- 9 Marathus
- 10 Simple life →

- Although they are interspersed with one another, the poems of each cycle are ordered according to a narrative chronology
 - ▣ Cf. Prop. 1 with its impression of us reading a love story
- Despite this, the transition between poems within the same cycle often holds a surprising twist

Internal organisation: Tib. 1

- Effects?
- It becomes clear from 1.4 onwards that the Tibullan narrator does not focus on one woman only
- Therefore, emphasis in Tibullus is not on Delia, Marathus, or Nemesis of Bk 2, but on **the elegiac lifestyle itself**
 - ▣ As you've seen, Tibullus elegiac life more clearly defined by rejection of war and wealth than we see in Propertius or Ovid
 - ▣ Both Delia and Marathus prove to be greedy lovers, as does Nemesis in Bk 2
 - ▣ The conflict between the Tibullan narrator's ideal of elegiac love and the 'realities' of elegiac love becomes more forcefully emphasised thanks to the intersecting cycles of poems
 - ▣ The narrator driven to more and more comical behaviour

Lecture plan based on poll

1. 2-parter: other genres and book structures
2. Horace workshop: *Odes* 1.13; 1.25; 1.33;
3. Preparing the presentation 1
4. Vergil's *Eclogues* and elegy
5. Historical authors
6. Changes in elegy: Ovid's *Amores*
7. The later Ovid 1
8. Cynthia's wish-list
9. Preparing the presentation 2
10. Elegiac reception

To take away

- Pragmatic factors need to be taken into account while discussing book structure
 - ▣ Average size
 - ▣ The illusion of elegy as ‘werbende Dichtung’
- Beginnings, middles and ends! Poets are very likely to place reflections on their writings in these particular positions
- *Intratextuality* as important as *intertextuality*