

AUGUSTAN LOVERS 9

Make love not war

Changes ahead

- Change of order of lectures:
 - ▣ Tuesday: *Militia amoris* (lover's warfare)
 - ▣ Thursday: *Paraklausithyra* (in front of the door)
 - ▣ Friday: Banqueting scenes and the language of marriage
 - ▣ Following Monday: Eternal love (workshop)
- ...and don't forget: seminar Friday 11.15

Militia amoris



*Light Venus is our duty now, while there is no disgrace
In breaking down a door, while brawling brings delight.
Here I can lead and soldier well. Eagles and trumpets, dismiss!
Bring wounds to greedy husbands, and bring them money too.
But let me live at peace myself, with produce heaped in store,
Looking down on hunger as I look down on the rich. (Tib. 1.1.73-78)*

Militia amoris: lover's warfare

- Elegy's perhaps most prominent and controversial *topos*
 - ▣ Present throughout elegy from Prop. 1 and Tib. 1.1 onwards, although changing forms in Ovid
 - ▣ Also found earlier from Greek lyric onwards to Roman Comedy
- 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, but also Fear 2006.

Militia as a metaphor for love

Think of Achilles when he
left Briseis' arms / did
Phrygians stop running
from his spear? / Or
when fierce Hector rose
from Andromache's bed /
didn't Mycenae's ship
fear battle? / Those
heroes could demolish
barriers and fleets; / In
my field I'm fierce Hector
and Achilles. (Prop.
2.22A.29-34)

- Hector and Achilles are introduced to the elegiac sphere as both lovers and prominent soldiers
 - ▣ Propertius is the first known writer to eroticise the Briseis episode of the *Iliad*; Ovid later expands on this
- The quality the narrator borrows from them, however, is prowess in battle – but used within the metaphor of *militia amoris*

Militia and metre

H: Think of Achilles when he left Briseis' arms

P: did Phrygians stop running from his spear?

H: Or when fierce Hector rose from Andromache's bed

P: didn't Mycenae's ship fear battle?

H: Those heroes could demolish barriers and fleets;

P: In my field I'm fierce Hector and Achilles. (Prop. 2.22A.29-34)

- The metre is used to reinforce the inter-changeability of love and war:
- The metrical aptum is overturned...
 - ▣ Heroic hexameter describes lovers rising from their beds
 - ▣ The soft pentameter describes their prowess in battle
- ...and then restored, and the narrator describes the heroes as distinctly (chronologically) different from himself in the hexameter...
- ...and appropriately talks about his prowess in bed in the pentameter line
- The difference between the narrator and Hector and Achilles is underlined by an allusion to Tib. 1.1.75...

Militia amoris in Tib. 1.1.73-78

*Light Venus is our duty now, while there is no disgrace / in breaking down a door, while brawling brings delight. / **Here I can lead and soldier well.** Eagles and trumpets, dismiss! / Bring wounds to greedy husbands, and bring them money too. / But let me live at peace myself, with produce heaped in store, / looking down on hunger as I look down on the rich.*

- Amusing paradoxes:
 - ▣ The narrator claims to lead in love, clashing with the reader's awareness that he does anything but lead
 - ▣ 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)
- Previously in 1.1: the narrator prefers inaction over grasping military activity to amass riches
 - ▣ 'It is right that you, Messalla, campaign by land and sea / to adorn your town-house with the spoils of war. / But I am held a prisoner, fettered by a lovely girl [...]

Lover's warfare over real warfare?

- 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
- 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

Prop. 2.15.41-48: If all were
keen to engage in such a life
/ and lie back, charging limbs
with wine, / there'd be no
cruel steel or men of war – no
bones / of ours would welter
in Actium's waves, / nor Rome,
beset so often by her own
successes, / grow tired of
loosening her hair in grief. /
For this at least posterity can
justly praise us: / *our* battles
have not grieved the Gods.

Differences and similarities

- The contrast between the narrators campaigning for love and real soldiery is made clear in:
 - ▣ Prop. 1.6.19-30: Contrast between Tullus serving as a military envoy and the narrator, 'By birth I am ill-equipped for glory or for arms; / Fate has drafted me for this campaigning' (1.6.29f)
 - ▣ Tib. 2.6.1-6: 'Macer joins the army. What will tender Love do now? / Go with him as comrade, shouldering a pack, / bearing arms beside a mortal on the endless road / leading over land and never-resting sea? / No, Cupid, brand the ruffian who has left your life of leisure, / recalling the deserter to the flag of love.'
- Here, it is only the discourse of military service that is appropriated by the elegists

Collapsing the metaphor: Ov. Am. 1.9

Lovers are soldiers, Atticus. Believe me, /
lovers are soldiers, Cupid has his corps. /
The age that's fit for fighting's fine for
Venus; / old men are shamed in loving,
shamed in war. [...] Long marches are a
soldier's job: a lover / after his girl to the
world's end will go. / High mountain
barriers, rain-doubled rivers / he'll cross
and trudge his way through drifts of snow.
/ At sailing time he'll not plead dirty
weather / or wait for stars to tell him
where to row. / Soldier or lover, who but
they'd put up with / the rain, the sleet, the
snow, the cold of night? One's sent to spy
upon a dangerous enemy, / one keeps his
rival, like a foe, in sight. Besieging cities, or
a hard girl's threshold, / on barbicans – or
doors – they spend their might. (1.9.1-20)

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

Ov. *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)
- Effects?
- First: context – cf. *Am.* 1.6: the lover gives up his vigil, defeated by the door guard; 3.6 where a flooding river does stop the narrator from reaching his girl. Considering this, the reader must find it difficult to take the narrator entirely seriously
- Second: collapse of the metaphor carefully built up as a literary feint in Propertius and Tibullus
 - Also consider: Does it reveal the *militia amoris* of Propertius and Tibullus as a ridiculous notion in and by itself? Ovid as reader?

Confusion & Collapse

So chuck it, anyone who thinks
love's lazy! / Love's for a dashing
soul who dares the most. / Achilles
was aflame for lost Briseis - / take
your chance, Trojans, smash the
Greek host! / When Hector left
Andromache's embrace / to fight,
his wife gave him his casque to tie;
/ when Agamemnon saw wild-
haired Cassandra / they say that
great commander's heart was
stunned. / Mars too was caught
and felt the blacksmith's meshes; /
no tale in heaven had more
publicity. (*Ov. Am.* 1.9.32-40)

- The examples ought to show that love is compatible with or equal to the greatest military heroics
- ...but in fact, a reader well-versed in mythology will know that they do not:
 - When Achilles pines for Briseis (or sulks about Agamemnon's decision), the result is inactivity – as the narrator indicates, but his emphasis on the Trojans as active neatly obscures the point and suggests a flurry of activity as the result
 - Agamemnon freezes in his tracks at the sight of Cassandra
 - Cassandra in bacchic frenzy or in grief highlights the clash between rational military command and irrational passion
 - Mars is physically cast in chains

Intertextual conundrums

- 'When Hector left Andromache's embrace / to fight, his wife gave him his casque to tie'
- First reading? Reference to *Iliad* 6; love seems to have a positive influence on military achievement
- 2nd reading? Homer's Andromache does not give Hector his helmet – and tries to dissuade him from going back into battle
 - ▣ Role inversion present already in the intertext



Use of exempla in Ov. Am. 1.9.32-40

- Both this example and the Briseis/Achilles one links this poem with Prop. 2.22A thus invites us to consider the development of the *topos* of *militia*
- To the reader, Ovid's use of examples betray the narrator's limited world view, and that we can't (wholly) trust him as an authority figure
- Elegiac and epic values cannot co-exist, so either the narrator here must cast characters associated with epic in the role of elegiac heroes, or as Propertius, use them in a metaphorical sense

To take away

- *Militia amoris* ‘make love, not war’ an extremely prominent *topos* of elegy
- Mostly, it functions as a metaphor and increases the pathos – but it is made concrete by Ovid, with amusing effects
- It encourages the reader to consider political interpretations
 - ▣ Scholarly opinion differs here – more on this in the lecture on elegy and the Augustan context!