

AUGUSTAN LOVERS

Reception of Augustan Love Elegy

What is Roman love elegy?

- It is written in elegiac metre
- It uses a first-person narrator
- In first-person, it speaks of experiences of love and writing
- It largely adheres to Callimachean aesthetics
- It exhibits a group of literary topoi, most notably:
 - ▣ Militia amoris
 - ▣ Servitium amoris
 - ▣ Inversion of gender roles compared to normative Roman society
- It engages closely with a specific group of other texts in the same genre

After Ovid's *Amores*...

- Ovid and Propertius both signal a departure from elegy in their work
- Yet Ovid continues to engage with elegiac topoi throughout his work
 - ▣ The *Ars* collapses the elegiac system by making falling in love a teachable experience subject to logic checks
 - ▣ The *Metamorphoses* show that the *puella* is an artistic creation
 - ▣ The exile poetry reinforces the connection with lamentation...
...but also expresses continued pride in the early elegiac works and position them as continually important reading
- We have explore how Tibullus Book 3 might represent another effort to widen elegy's brief by including a multitude of voices

What happens after Ovid?

- Martial's epigrams contain significant engagement with Ovid's work, especially his erotic elegies and his exile poetry
 - ▣ Many epigrams are elegiac in metre but not all
 - ▣ No consistent love story told
- Epigram as a genre has no compunction about sexual explicitness, cf. Martial's preface to his first book
- Uses of explicit sexual references in epigram wider than their counterparts in elegy
 - ▣ Invective
 - ▣ Titillation for the voyeur and reader
- "Staining" of motifs (cf. Richlin and Hinds) illustrative of the entrance of elegiac motifs into a genre that plays according to very different rules

I would make no apology for immodest unreserve in word - that is, for the language of epigram - were I the first to use it, but this is the manner in which *Catullus* writes [...] and every other author whose works are read right through; yet even if there be any man so ostentatiously prim, that one may not, even on a single page, speak plain Latin to him, he need not go further than this preface - or rather no further than the title. Epigrams are [...] for those who are used to look on at the games of Flora; therefore, let no Cato come to my playhouse; or if he come, let him watch the show [...] (preface to Mart. 1)

Phrygian slaves used to masturbate behind the door whenever his wife rode Hector's horse, and although the Ithacan was snoring, modest Penelope always used to keep her hand right there. [...] If you are pleased by austere morals, you may be Lucretia the whole day: at night I want a Lais. (from Mart. 11.104)

Elegiac vacuum?

- We have no texts from the empire that meet our criteria for what elegy is but...
- Elegiac metre is used for a range of content and its use expanded particularly in late Antiquity
 - ▣ E.g. Venantius Fortunatus with hymns in elegiac verse!
- Motifs and vocabulary from our elegiac authors recur in many contexts
 - ▣ Particularly in epigram in late Antiquity, e.g. Ausonius and epigrams in the *Anthologia Latina*
- ...and our authors, perhaps particularly Ovid, continue to be read: cf. Quintilian's comment on the elegists

Literature under Christian influence

- Christianity's increasing dominance has a distinct influence on the engagement with Classical Latin literature in the late antique period
 - Cf. readings of Vergil, esp. *Ecl.* 4 and 6 but also of the *Aeneid*
 - Cf. re-use of Vergil in Christian cento poetry, cf. Proba
- Using the paradigm of the *Song of Songs*, the expression of Christian religious love often uses a language reminiscent of erotic poetry
 - This is taken further in medieval literature, too

The young man was shaken from sleep, and saw the girl standing before his eyes [...] A fertile rest brought a new being for him to love, and seductive slumber was the birth of new emotions. She

Other parts of Dracontius' text implies a shared bond between Adam and Eve similar to the *foedus aeternum* of elegy

nymph from the sea: her head of hair was unshorn, her beautiful cheeks were blushing. Every part of her was beautiful – her eyes, face, neck and hands – a woman as only the fingers of the Lord could shape

(Dracontius, *De laudibus Dei*, 5th C CE)

Maximianus

- Well into the 6th C CE and in the migration period: the time of threat from barbaric tribes
 - ▣ Correspondences between the period of civil war in the 1st C BCE and late Antiquity?
 - ▣ “In military terms, the 4th to the 6th C presented a sustained example of just such harsh times, as military threats persisted on almost all fronts, and a sense of war’s costs continued to be registered in elegy.” (Uden, 2012, 470)
- Writes six substantial elegies and is the most concerted effort to engage with Roman love elegy
 - ▣ Book form: the six elegies form a *libellus* without intrusions of other material

Maximianus' first elegy

Envious (*aemula*) old age, why are you slack in hastening death? Why do you come so late to this exhausted body? I pray you, set my wretched life free from this prison. Death is now my respite; living, my penalty. I am not who I used to be. The greatest part of me has passed away, and feebleness and dread have hold of what survives. (1.1-6)

- *Aemula* also = competitor
- “I am not...” alludes to Ov. *Trist.* 3.11.25 and Prop. 1.12.11
- => Maximianus a late competitor of Ovid's?
- Age and decrepitude emphasised throughout the first elegy: surprising contrast when the narrator turns to remember love stories?
 - ▣ Old age and love in elegy?
 - ▣ Maximianus' old age a comment on the potential for elegy in his period?
 - ▣ The life cycle of a body also that of the empire?

Maximianus' elegies

- Elegy 2: his longstanding mistress Lycoris has left him for a younger man
 - Elegy 3: a secret affair with a woman called Aquilia
 - Elegy 4: infatuation with the dancer Candida, whom he abandoned
 - Elegy 5: he is seduced (while old and on a diplomatic mission) by a 'Greek girl' (graia puella)
 - Elegy 6: short epilogue
- What about the names?
 - Who acts?
 - What about the arrangement of poems?
 - How does this read if taking the first poem into account?
 - How does that relate to the reading of earlier elegy?

Elegy 5

I was sent to the Eastern territory with a legate's duty, to bind together the quiet work of peace for all. While keen to forge treaties between the twin kingdoms, I discovered the wicked wars of my own heart. (1-4)

For as she feigned to be caught by love for me, she made all the more ready to catch me herself. Standing under my window at night she sung in sweet murmur I don't know what in Greek. (7-10)

I was driven crazy like a second Odysseus, stupefied by her singing like a Siren. (19-20)

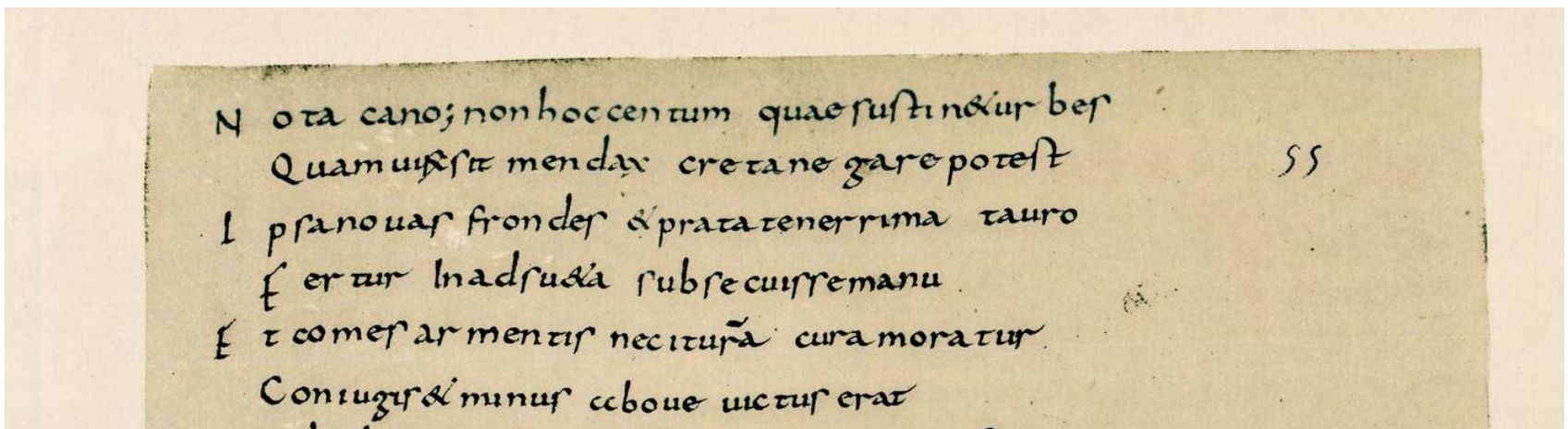
Her breasts standing firm, which one cupped hand would enclose, inflamed my eyes with passion. Ah, how her loins roused my mind, and the fleshy thigh beneath her drawn-out chest. (27-30)

She left me, as though the last rites of death were accomplished. (154)

- West vs. East:
 - An old man of Tuscan simplicity (40) vs. the Greek woman's native tricks (6)
- Inversion of roles, emphasis on the woman faking it
- The girl described as talented and skilled (docta)
- Difference in age:
 - Am. 3.7 asks what will happen to the narrator in old age if even as a young man he can't perform
- Difference in understanding of impotence
 - Cf. Augustine: illustrating how the body does not obey the mind
 - Cf. Sharrock's interpretation of 3.7 as emblematic of elegy's constant circling without getting the deed done
- A full translation (although old!) is available here:
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A41984.0001.001/1:9.5?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>

Elegy read and translated

- The *aetas Ovidiana* (12/13th C CE) in the wake of the Carolingian renaissance
- Andreas Capellanus' *Handbook on Courtly Love* (13th C) and the *Ars amatoria*
- *Ovide moralisé* (14th C) and similar traditions
- Gradual move away from a quantity-based metrical system to favour word stress and rhyme has an impact on later author's ability to signal a relationship to elegy through metre



First-person love poetry in the Renaissance

It was the day the sun's ray had turned
pale with pity for the suffering of his
Maker when I was caught, and I put up
no fight, my lady, for your lovely eyes
had bound me. It seemed no time to be
on guard against Love's blows;
therefore, I went my way secure and
fearless-so, all my misfortunes began in
midst of universal woe.

Love found me all disarmed and found
the way was clear to reach my heart
down through the eyes which have
become the halls and doors of tears.

It seems to me it did him little honour
to wound me with his arrow in my state
and to you, armed, not show his bow at
all.

(Petrarch, *Sonnet to Laura*, after 1327)

- Both Dante and Petrarch write first-person love poetry reminiscent of Roman love elegy
- Their narrators exhibit some of the same behaviour as did the narrators of Propertius and Ovid
- Aspects of setting (Italian city life) similar to the Roman context
- Petrarch's poems to Laura certainly interpreted biographically
 - Cf. Dante's habit of including references to characters from Florence's political life in the *Divine Comedy*

Early translations

- English and French translations of Ovid's erotic poetry from the beginning of the 16th C – that is, as early as any translations from Latin
- These translations go hand-in-hand with translations of the *Metamorphoses*, where Golding's 1567 translation into English exercises significant influence on Elizabethan literature
- Across Europe, elegy is translated alongside other Augustan literature and generally taken as autobiographical accounts of love stories

A reminder: Thomas Gray

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the
lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his
weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to
me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on
the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his
droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant
folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled
tower

The moping owl does to the moon
complain

Of such, as wandering near her secret
bower,

Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-
tree's shade,

Where heaves the turf in many a
mouldering heap,

Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,

The rude forefathers of the hamlet
sleep.