

AUGUSTAN LOVERS 7

The Poet Lover

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- Motives for writing poetry in elegy:
 - ▣ The *puella*: ‘These no Apollo, no Calliope sings to me; my only inspiration is a girl’ (Prop. 2.1.3f)
 - Cf. Ov. *Am.* 1.1 for a different take on love motivating elegy
 - ▣ Lovers: ‘Hereafter may neglected lovers daily read me, finding help in the knowledge of our troubles.’ (Prop. 1.7.13f)
 - Suitable reading for potential *puellae* too: cf. Ov. *Ars* 3.328-346
- So far, the aspects of lover and poet in the narrator’s character overlap entirely

The immediate aims of the poet lover

□ Poetry as a means of persuasion

▣ Pleading with or advising the *puella*: Cf. Prop. 1.2 and 2.18C

■ Wooing the *puella* directly:

- E.g. 'No woman wants to learn about cosmology / nor why the moon wanes for her brother's horses' (Prop. 2.34.51f)
- 'Werbende Dichtung' - Stroh

▣ Pleading with / addressing 'Outsider' characters

- Sometimes connected to the winning of the *puella*, cf. the servant girl Nape in Ov. Am. 1.11 or Lygdamus in Prop. 3.6.41f:
- 'And if this great war ends for me in happy accord, / for my part, Lygdamus, you shall be free.'

Nape, you're not just any lady's maid; / you're skilled at dressing hair that's disarrayed, / you're known for stealthy services at night, / and shrewd at giving signs kept out of sight; / and often when Corinna was in doubt / whether to come to me and venture out, / you urged her to be bold, and often too. (Ov. Am. 1.11.1-8)

□ Cf. also Ov. Am. 1.6 (to the porter)

Poetic blackmail

- Poetry as a means of control: giving the *puella* fame
- *'Have I deserved such treatment? Traitor, I'll make you pay. I too can sail off, Cynthia, and among so many fickle yet find one, who wants my verse to give her fame. Who will not trample on me callously, but make you jealous. Too late you'll weep, my long beloved.'* (Prop. 2.5.3-8)
- *'Others can write about you, or you can stay unknown'* (Prop. 2.11.1f)

Other motivations for poetry

- The overlap of poetic ambition and ambition in love in Prop. 2.13:
- Love (Cupid) forces the poet to take a certain direction
 - ▣ Note that here, it is not Cynthia but Cupid who dictates the topics!
 - ▣ Cf. the imposed change of genre in Ov. Am. 1.1
- What are the narrator's motivations?
 - ▣ Fame
 - ▣ Cynthia is but the judge of the quality of his poetry not the cause of it – cf. Prop. 2.1

*Fewer Achaemenid arrows defend
Susa / than Cupid has shot darts
into my heart. / He forbade me to
deride Muses so slender / and told
me to dwell thus in Ascræ's grove, /
not that Pierian oaks should follow
my words / or that I draw beasts
from Ismarus' vale, / but rather
that my verse should dumbfound
Cynthia: / I'd then be an artist more
famous than Argive Linus [...] I'd
like to read my work in the lap of a
clever girl / and have it approved
by faultless ears. (Prop. 2.13.1-13)*

Other motivations?

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- Geographical and literary credentials highlight the kind of fame the narrator is aiming for:
- Ascrea: the birth place of the (epic and didactic) poet Hesiod, counted as the first known writer after Homer
- Pierian oaks: Mt Pieria is where Hesiod claims to have met the muses inspiring his *Theogony*
- Mt. Ismarus: connected to Orpheus, whose song had the power to move even stones and rocks (cf. Verg. *Ecl.* 6.27-30)
- Linus: the mythic inventor of rhythm and poetry
- ...at the same time, note the intrusion of places connected to epic and tragic poetry!

Multiple motives

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- The sequence of literary forebears alluded to concludes with the implicit presence of Callimachus:
- 'Slender Muses' or soft poetry always an allusion to Callimachus preferences for the lesser genres over epic and tragedy
- In addition, fragments of Callimachus' *Aetia* incorporate a similar sequence
 - ▣ ...opening with a dream encounter with the muses on Hesiod's Helicon
 - ▣ ...closing with further references to the Muses and Hesiod
 - ▣ ...and also mentions Linus

Multiple motives

- The sequence of literary antecedents in Prop. 2.13 makes obvious against what criteria the narrator wishes his poetry to be held
 - ▣ Cf. also ‘No line of incense-bearing platters, but the small-scale rites of a plebeian funeral. Procession enough for me if I have three slim volumes to bring as my best gift to Persephone.’ (Prop. 2.13.23-26)
- As seen earlier, Cynthia is also shown to be equipped with the necessary background:
 - ▣ ‘I’d like to read my work in the lap of a clever girl (*docta puella*) / and have it approved by faultless ears (*auribus puris*).’

Other concerns than love!

- Note the increasing amount of elegies focussing on other topics than the *puella* in Prop. 2 onwards; similarly in Ov. *Am.* 2 onwards:
- Other artistic achievements
- Political and military achievement
- Other mistresses (Books 2 in both Ovid and Propertius celebrate many women)
- Both Ovid and Propertius increasingly focus on moving elegy towards new areas: cf. Ov. *Am.* 3.1 and 3.15

You ask why I have kept you waiting? Phoebus' golden Portico was opened by great Caesar, ranged to spectacular effect on Punic pillars, between which stands old Danaus' female throng. I saw there, truly, a Phoebus finer than himself, in marble, mouthing song to a mute lyre; and round an altar stood his cattle, Myron's work, four lifelike images of oxen... (Prop. 2.31)

Other rivalries: Prop. 3.1

- Propertius aligns himself with two Hellenistic poets, Callimachus and Philetas
- This is similar to what Horace does in 3.1 of the *Odes*: *I hate the common crowd and keep them away. Observe silence over your tongues. The Muses' priest, I sing songs not before heard, to maidens and to boys.*
 - ▣ Setting in a sacred place; calling himself 'priest' (*vates*)
 - ▣ Propertius wants to do in love poetry what Horace has done in lyric – transfer Greek material to Roman measure
 - Cf. also allusion to Cat. 1.1 'cui dono lepidum...'
- Note also how poetics continue to be a key concern
 - ▣ ..as one would expect in the first programmatic poem of a new book!
 - Beginnings, middles, and ends often used for programmatic messages

Prop. 3.1:

Shade of Callimachus and sacrifices of Coan Philetas, pray grant *me* admission to your grove. I enter first as priest of a pure fountainhead to offer Italian mysteries in Greek dances. Say in what grotto did you both refine your song? **On what foot entering?** What water drinking? Ah, farewell whoever holds Phoebus back in armour! Verse should move **with finish from fine pumice**; for which Fame lifts me high above the ground, the Muse born of me triumphs with garlanded steeds, and **with me in the chariot little Cupids ride**, a crowds of writers following my wheels

Prop. 3.1

- This programmatic poem shows Propertius' commitment to both Callimachean poetics, competition with other Roman poets, and to further writing of elegy.
- The debt to Callimachus in Propertius is more explicit in Books 3 and 4:
 - ▣ Book 4: origin myths for Roman customs and places
- Further reading: Keith 2008 Ch. 3 is useful here

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Prop. 3.1.1-12

- Poets have access to inspiration and learning not granted to everyone
 - ▣ Cf. the role of the Muses in Prop. 2.13 and Horace's *odi profanum et arceo*
- ...and take the role of prophets or priests (*vates*)
- Exclusiveness is key, and every word must be carefully weighed
 - ▣ Polishing with pumice is a typical image for the artistic process, cf. Cat. 1.1
- Exclusive difference: preference for smaller formats shown here: what foot entering (=> elegiacs); rejection of epic (farewell...)

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Prop. 3.1 continued

- Combines Roman and Greek images:
- The circus and horse racing often used as a metaphor for poetic work:
 - ▣ Ov. *Am.* 3.15.1f: Mother of tender Loves, find a new poet!
This is the last lap now for Elegy!
- The road leading to Helicon: An allusion to Hesiod's meeting with the Muses on Helicon, which had been trod by no-one before him
- Broad vs narrow also a reference to Callimachean aesthetics
- Many vs exclusive inspiration: again Callimachean; also epic not preferred!

Prop. 3.1.13-20

Why vainly loose your reins competing against me? It's no broad road that runs to the Muses. Many will add your praises to your annals, Rome, singing of Bactra as the empire's future bound. But my page has brought down this work from the Sister's mount by a new-found path for peacetime reading. Vouchsafe your poet, Pegasids, a soft garland, no heavy wreath will suit my head.

Prop. 3.1 continued

- Soft garland vs heavy wreath: allusion the Muses' reward, to garlands of epigrams in the Hellenistic tradition, and potentially to the rejection of civic duties (see how Propertius remains true to the genre of elegy!)
- Pegasids: the Muses, as the spring at their dwelling place of Hippocrene was created by the touch of Pegasus' hooves
- Suit: cf. the metrical rules of *aptum* – things only work if in their proper place
- Note that you need significant learning and reading experience to decipher these allusions

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Covert Callimacheanism

- The epigram (note the genre!) at the outset of Ovid's *Amores* traditionally taken to indicate a second edition of the *Amores*
 - *Am.* 2.18 and the dating of the *Heroides* linked to this issue
- McKeown, Breitzigheimer and Holzberg have argued that it is instead a humorous play on Callimachean aesthetics
- According to that theory, there would have been no second edition
- *Ov. Am.* 1.1 (preface)

We who before were Ovid's five **slim** volumes are three: he thought it better to **compress**.
Though reading us may still give you no pleasure, with two removed at least the pain is less.

Covert Callimacheanism

- Mythological side stories appear in all our authors:
- Tibullus here brings up a less well-known episode of Apollo's mythical biography, and does so extensively
- The assumption is that the reader will be well aware of the background
- ...and a humorous take on serious myths isn't unusual either!

Tib. 2.3.11-22:

Even fair Apollo fed the cattle of Admetus, but cithara and long hair did not help, nor could he cure his cares with therapeutic herbs, for Love defeated all his skill in medicine. Himself, albeit God, he drove cows from a byre, ... and to have taught the mixing of rennet with fresh milk, coagulating thus the milky mixture. Frails were woven then of the light stems of rushes and space left in the tight weave for the whey. O how many times his sister blushed to meet him carrying a bull-calf home through the fields, or while he sang in some deep valley, cows presumed to interrupt his music with their moos.

Covert Callimacheanism

- The Alexandrian footnote, term coined by David Ross writing on Catullus and elegy
- Usually implicit references to earlier *literature*
- On this, see Hinds 1998
- Ov. *Am.* 2.6:
Her parrot, flying **mimic** from the Indies, is dead.
- Cat. 3.1-5:
Grieve, o Venuses and Loves, and all the lovelier people there are, my girl's sparrow is dead, sparrow, my girl's darling...

Alexandrinian footnotes

- *Fama est*, the story is, they say, *ferunt...*
- Ov. *Am.* 2.17 a good example:
 - ▣ The narrator laments that Corinna is a harsh mistress
 - ▣ It is said the nymph Calypso loved a mortal and kept him though he tried to get away
 - Hom. *Od.* referred to here
 - ▣ And Nereid Thetis shared her bed with Peleus,
 - Cat. 64 alluded to here
 - ▣ Egeria with Numa, so they say
 - Horace and Livy both tell this story