

Bryn Mawr Classical Review 2003.06.03

Paul Allen Miller, *Latin Erotic Elegy. An anthology and reader. Edited with an introduction and commentary.* London and New York: Routledge, 2002. Pp. 486. ISBN 0-415-24371-8. \$80.00 (hb). ISBN 0-415-24372-6. \$27.95 (pb).

**Reviewed by A. Ramírez de Verger, University of Huelva
(ramirezdeverger@uhu.es)**

Word count: 2649 words

The introduction (pp. 1-36) covers, with great clarity and concision, general aspects of elegy (pp. 1-7), the historical background from the Gracchi (133 BC) to Augustus (pp. 8-11), the roots of elegy from Archilochus to Antimachus with special mention of Callimachus (pp. 12-15), the elegiac distich as a rhythm- and sense-unit (pp. 15-17), and a brief depiction of each of the authors dealt with: the expressive and intimate Catullus (pp. 17-20), the nostalgic and sensitive Tibullus (pp. 21-23), the sincere and independent Sulpicia (pp. 23-24), the Callimachean and allusive Propertius (pp. 25-29), and the ironic and parodic Ovid (pp. 29-34). It is difficult to say so much, so well, in so few pages devoted to elucidating the form and substance of the elegy of the elegiac poets.

A short and to-the-point bibliography closes the introduction (pp. 34-36). However, it could have included an odd title or two which would have been a useful complement to the students and teachers at whom the present volume is aimed: J.N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, Baltimore, 1982; R.J. Baker, *Propertius I*, Aris & Phillips, 2001 (another commentary on book I by J. Booth is forthcoming from CUP in 2004); J. Barsby, *Ovid*, Oxford, 1991 (2nd edition); J.V. Binns, ed., *Ovid*, London-Boston, 1973; B.W. Boyd, *Brill's Companion to Ovid*, Leiden, 2002; J. Ferguson, *Catullus*, Oxford, 1988; J. Godwin, *Catullus: Poems 61-68*, Warminster, 1995, and *Catullus: the shorter Poems*, Warminster, 1999; Ph. Hardie, *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, Cambridge, 2002; A.S. Hollis, *Ovid, Ars amatoria I*, Oxford, 1977; G. Lee, *Tibullus Elegies*, Francis Cairns, 1990 (3rd edition), and *The Poems of Catullus*, Oxford, 1998 (2nd edition); G. Luck, *Tristia*, Heidelberg, 1977 (Kommentar); C. Martin, *Ovid in English*, Penguin Classics, 1998; M. Platnauer, *Latin Elegiac Verse*, Cambridge, 1951; L.D. Reynolds, ed., *Texts and Transmission*, Oxford, 1983 (articles by Tarrant on Catullus, Ovid and Propertius, and Rouse-Reeve on Tibullus); G.W. Shea, *Delia and Nemesis. The Elegies of Albius Tibullus*, University Press of America, 1998 (we await the commentary by R. Maltby on Tibullus I-II, soon to be published by F. Cairns); M. Skole, *Reading Sulpicia: Commentaries 1475-1990*, Oxford, 2002; R. Whitaker, *Myth and Personal Experience in Roman Love Elegy*, Göttingen, 1983.

The anthology, presented (pp. 37-105) with no accompanying translation, covers the following texts: Catullus 68B, 70, 72, 75, 76, 85, 87, 101; Tibullus 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 2.3; Sulpicia 3.13-18; Propertius 1.1, 1.3, 1.6, 2.1, 2.7, 2.15, 2.16, 2.34, 3.4, 3.5, 3.11, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8; Ovid, Am. 1.1-3, 1.5, 2.5, 2.7, 2.8, 2.19, 3.4, Ars 1.61-228, Heroides 7, Tristia 2.207-468. For his texts, M. has chosen the OCT editions, except for Catullus, opting in this case for the edition by K. Quinn (1970), and Heroides 7, for which he has followed the edition by H. Bornecque in the Budé collection (1928). Students, however, would find it very instructive to be exposed, among others, to the editions with an English translation by G.P. Goold for Catullus (Duckworth, 1983; LCL 1988, 2nd edition), Tibullus-Sulpicia (LCL 1988, 2nd edition), Propertius (LCL 1990), Ovid (LCL 1977: Heroides and Amores; 1979: Ars; 1996, 2nd edition: Tristia), G. Luck's editions of Tibullus

(Teubner 1998, 2nd edition) and Propertius (Tusculum 1996, 2nd edition), P. Fedeli's edition of Propertius (Teubner 1994, 2nd edition) and the text (cited in the bibliography) of P. E. Knox for *Heroides* 7 (Cambridge 1995). I assume that the publisher's own reasons have prevailed regarding the choice of the best text, which in the case of *Amores* and *Ars amatoria* certainly is very good (E.J. Kenney, 1995, 2nd edition). It would be no bad thing for students to compare different editions in order to understand how difficult it is to establish the ancient texts and also to see how rare and priceless is the miracle which enables a philologist, working from his own conjectures or the literary evidence, to recover a passage of beauty (recall, for instance, the brilliant correction of Scaliger: *semihiante labello* for the *sed mi(c)hi ante* of the codices in *Catullus* 61.220).

There are a few readings which, in my opinion, could improve the text accepted by M. Here are a few:

Catullus 68: 139 *concoquit iram]* *contudit iram* Hertzberg, Ellis, prob. Goold, cf. Prop. 1.1.10; Ov. *ars* 1.12; Lygd. 3.6.13-4 : *cotidiana V*; 157 +*terram dedit aufert+*] the proposal for this locus *valde vexatus* would be *terram dat et aufert* from Lenchantin, cf. Hor. *Epist.* 1.16.33 (*qui dedit hoc hodie, cras, si uolet, auferet*) and 18. 111 (*sed satis est orare louem quae ponit et aufert*); Manil. 2.160 (*per socium effectus: multum comes addit et aufert*); Stat. *Theb.* 8.422 (*nunc premit ac uicibus tellurem amittit et aufert*) : *terram dedit aufert V* : *te tradidit* (Scaliger) *Afer* (Munro 1878), Goold 1983 : *te tradidit* (Scaliger) *auspex* (Lipsius) : *alii alia*; in poem 76 there would have been no harm in explaining to students the possibility, defended by S.J. Heyworth ("Dividing poems", in O. Pecere-M.D. Reeve, eds., *Formative stages of classical traditions: Latin texts from antiquity to the Renaissance*, Spoleto, 1995, 117-48), of separating lines 17-25 to constitute a separate poem.

Tibullus 1.2.7 the comma after *domini* (Luck reads *dominae* following the *Hamburgensis*) is the reading, for example, in the revised edition by Goold and in the commentary of Murgatroyd (Pietermaritzburg 1980, pp. 301-2); 1.2.42 *rapido]* *rabido*, accepted by Murgatroyd (cf. Luck's app. crit.) is preferable to *rapido*; 1.5.11 *puro]* *vivo* (Ov., *met.* 3.374; Calp. *Sic.* 5.78) is more expressive than *puro* (implicit in *lustravi*) alongside sulphure; 2.3.44 *mille]* if Heinsius' *fula* is read (cf. Prop. 3.2.11; Ov. *am.* 1.6.28) instead of *mille*, there is no need to fall back on an out-of-context hyperbole (p. 154); 2.3.54 *vias]* the reading should be *vices*, as Markland pointed out at *Stat. silv.* 5.2.152, p. 372, stating: "*ubi Broukhusius ad sensum optime interpretatur 'vestem auro variegatam, virgis aureis inter telas procurrentibus'. hoc vero non est 'auratas vias', sed 'vices'... Eleganter igitur 'auratas vices' appellat Tibullus virgas et strias aureas*"; 2.3.61-2 read Luck's text and Murgatroyd's commentary on pp. 276-7.

Sulpicia 3.14.4 *amnis]* *Arnus* (Heinsius) must be the original reading as *amnis* seems more of a gloss on *Arnus*; 3.17.3 *ego]* read a *ego*. In any case, before any commentary on *Sulpicia* a much more detailed study of the transmitted text would seem to be called for. If we compare the text presented by M. and that offered by Luck, especially at 3.13-15, I suspect our energies would be better spent trying to establish a more convincing text for the epigrams of *Sulpicia*.

Propertius 2.1.5 It is preferable to accept the *vidi* of the *Itali*, with Enk, Goold and Luck, rather than stubbornly maintain the unintelligible *+cogis+*; and in l. 6 the reading *totum de* (codd. *Vossii*, Goold, Luck) is to be preferred; 2.15.1 There should at least be a reference to the possibility of reading *nox o* instead of *o nox* in order to avoid the hiatus (*Itali*, Puccius, Luck, Goold); 2.16.27 *exclusis]* *excussis* must be the right reading and Passerat glossed it thus: *movere pedes in Veneris certamine*; *exutis* is the reading of Sandbach, Luck, Goold; 2.34.93 M. reads *vivet* for *etiam*, the reading of Barber, accepted by Goold and Luck; 3.5.8 M. correctly reads the *caute* of the mss.; 3.11.73 *tuto* for *toto*, with Fruter and Luck, is tempting; 4.4.1 *scelus* (Kraffert, Goold, Luck) makes more sense than *nemus*, on which M. comments: "this grove is mentioned only here" (p. 216); 69 *Venus*, following Kraffert, seems preferable to *Vesta*, although M's defence of the latter appears convincing (p. 220); 4.6.75 the *lectio difficilior, potis*, from mss. DV (Goold: "when poets are in their cups, the Muse quickens their genius", Luck) is much better than *positis*, a facile scribal correction; 4.7.57-8 M's explanation, inspired by Fedeli's

critical apparatus, is unconvincing. The solution is the text published by Luck and Goid: unda Clytaemestrae stuprum vehit altera, Cressam/ portans mentitam lignea monstra bovis./ ecce coronato pars altera rapta phaselo,/ mulcet ubi Elysias aura beata rosas, ...

Ovid, am. 2.19.48 the wit and irony lies in reading *mea*, not *tua*: if you cease to keep an eye on your wife, she will no longer interest me!; ars 105-6 the punctuation proposed by M. (as by Pianezzola, Milano, 1991, p. 16; cf. revised edition by Goid in LCL, 1979, p. 20; N. Holzberg, Tusculum, 1991, p. 12) might well be clearer, but at the cost of failing to appreciate the elegant and very Ovidian inclusion of *frondes* in the relative clause (cf., e.g., 2.17, 2.150, 1.265); 183 *timidi* should be punctuated as a vocative between commas, cf. Her. 13,79; am. 1,10,47; ars 3,457; fast. 1,685; 6,159-60,621; met. 15,75; trist. 1,2,105; Heroides 7.55 Bentley's *viam* must be correct, as read also by Goid and Knox (cf. Met. 3.602, 13.418) in contrast with the meaningless *etiam* of the codices; Tristia 277 Hall's *at vitia invitata* (or *irritata*) must be right, cf. am. 3.4.11; 359 it was Housman, not P. Green (p. 298), who suspected there might be a lacuna.

The commentary (pp. 107-303) on each poem is distributed into short introduction plus commentary proper, adapted to the level of the students at whom the book is aimed. M. deals with numerous and varied considerations, but above all devotes great attention to those literary aspects which will help give the reader a better understanding of poems written in another society, and one with a different mindset from ours. The commentary also serves to resolve difficulties of lexis (e.g., *coniunx* on p. 133; *nudas* on p. 296), style (e.g., p.177 on Prop. 1.6.35-6; p. 186 on *adynata* in Prop. 2.1.65-6; p. 193 on Prop. 2.15.51-2; p. 263 on the chiasmic arrangement of am. 2.19.36), morphology (e.g., p. 184 on *uno* = *uni*), syntax (e.g., *urbis* as both objective and subjective genitive on p. 154; *videre* as an infinitive of purpose after a verb of motion on p. 168; p. 230 on Prop. 4.7.21 Greek exclamatory genitive; p. 287 on Her. 123-4 on the syntactic construction of the distich), metre (e.g., p. 184 on the breaking of the disyllabic ending rule; p. 259 on elegis in Ovid, am. 2.7.4), literary questions (e.g., p. 166 on the structure of Prop. 1.1; p. 223 on the dependence on Callimachus in the composition of a new poem in Prop. 4.6-9-10), mythology (e.g., pp. 170-1 on Prop. 1.3), history (e.g., p. 187-8 on Prop. 2.7; p. 244 on Ovid, am. 1.2; p. 247 on am. 1.51-22; pp. 273-7 on ars 1.177-228) and the classical tradition (e.g., p. 201 quoting Ezra Pound's famous translation of Prop. 2.34.65-6).

I shall therefore only permit myself a few brief critical observations: Prop. 1.3.3-4 is understood better if placed between commas, as in Luck and Fedeli; 31 the sense of *diversas...fenestras* derives from the fact that windows had two leaves and moonlight could therefore enter through the space remaining when the leaves were half closed, that is, with one leaf positioned facing the other; 1.6 this elegy can usefully be explained to the student as a farewell poem (*propemptikon*), as was done several years ago by F. Cairns (*Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry*, Edinburgh, 1972, 1-16); 2.15 read also M^a J. Alcaide and G. Laguna, *La elegía II 15 de Propertio: contenido, forma, recepción*, *Exemplaria* 6, 2002, 123-164; 2.34.83-84 the explanation of this distich by Stahl (who reads in *docto*, not *indocto*) is attractive (*Love and War...*, 183-4): the melodious swan (Virgil) is not superior to the learned poetry of the goose (Propertius); 3.5.11-2 there is a very good explanation and clarification (on pp. 206-7) of the metaphor of the ship on the high sea as a symbol of human insatiability (cf. *Lucr.* 5.1434-35); 4.7 two studies on 4.7 are worth considering: J. Warden, *Fallax opus: Poet and Reader in the Elegies of Propertius*, Toronto, 1980, and T. D. Papanghelis, *Strange Beauty: a reading of 4.7, in Propertius: a Hellenistic poet on Love and Death*, Cambridge, 1987, 145-198; Ovid, am. 1.4.15-28 secret signs between lovers were common in banquets. Peter Green (*The Erotic Poems*, p. 272) has suggested there was a secret code of signals between lovers; cf. 2.5.15-20, 2.7.5-6, 3.11.23-24; Her. 16.258, 17.75-90; ars 1.137-138, 489-490, 569-574, 2.543, 549, 3.514; met. 4.63, 3.460-463; fast. 1.418; trist. 2.453-454 and note by Luck (*Tristia*, Heidelberg, 1977, 145-146); Tib. 1.2.21-22, 1.6.19-20, 1.8.1-2; Prop. 3.8.25-26; cf. also Booth (*Ovid, Amores II*, 1991, p. 119); 1.5.9-10 Corinna, named here for the first time, appears as a goddess (*puella divina*): the epiphany of the beloved in all her beauty, though without reaching the virtually explicit comparison with a goddess as in the case of Catullus' *Lesbia* (68B.70-74); cf. *Pont.* 3.3 (appearance/epiphany of Love); 2.19.20 there is no comment on the hiatus (*time 'insidias*); 3.4.4 "*facere*" is used euphemistically for "making love"; cf. *Catull.* 110.2; *Mart.*

1.46; Petron., 87.9; Iuv. 7.240; see Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, p. 204; id., "A Type of sexual Euphemism in Latin", *Phoenix* 35, 1981, 123-124.

The metaphorical world of love was well defined in the Latin lexicon. There would therefore be some point in familiarizing our students with those Latin terms which define and delimit, not without deliberate ambiguity and essential and evocative double meaning, the amatory themes and motifs. And while it is beneficial to refer constantly to the metaphors of *servitium amoris* (slavery of love) and *militia amoris* (love as military service), it would not have been unreasonable to cite other Latin terms, such as *puella divina* in Catullus, 68.70-6 on p. 111; *periurium amantum* in Catullus 70 on p. 115; *morbus amoris* (disease of love) in Catullus 76.17-8 on p. 117, 119; *tormenta amoris* in Tibullus 1.2.75-86 on p. 135; *furor amoris* (madness of love) on p. 167; *remedia amoris* in Prop. 1.1.19-30 on p. 169; pallor as a sign of lovesickness (*signum amoris*) on pp. 169, 259; love as a disease (*morbus amoris*) on pp. 169, 191; *rixae in amore* in Prop. 2.15.4 on p. 190, and 4.8.49-62 on p. 239; *notae tacitae in amore* in Ovid, *am.* 1.4 on pp. 249-51; *obsequium amoris* in Ovid, *am.* 3.4.12 on p. 266; *irritamina* or *irritamenta amoris* (incitements to love) in Ovid, *am.* 2.19.17-18 on p. 262 (cf. *am.* 3.7.11-12, 55-6, 3.14.21-6); teachers and students of love elegy ought to be familiar with the still extremely useful monograph by R. Pichon, *Index verborum amatoriorum*, Hildesheim 1966 (= 1902); also of use might be the article by A. La Penna (*Note sul linguaggio erotico dell'elegia latina*, *Maia* 4, 1951, 187-201) or the *Index selectus amatorius* in my edition of Ovid's *Carmina amatoria* (pp. 342-354) in the *Bibliotheca Teubneriana*.

The volume closes (pp. 305-479) with an anthology of literary essays on Latin elegy: a veritable gift for lovers of love poetry in Rome. This re-edition ranges from clear, straight-to-the-point key studies (G. Luck, "Introduction to the Latin Love elegy"; J.P. Sullivan, "The politics of Elegy"; R.O.A.M. Lyne, "The life of Love"; M. Wyke, "Mistress and Metaphor in Augustan Elegy") to others more theoretical and debatable (J.P. Hallet, "The Role of Women in Roman Elegy: Counter-cultural feminism"; P. Veyne, "The Pastoral in City Clothes"; D. Kennedy, "Representation and the Rhetoric of Reality"; B. K. Gold, "But Ariadne Was Never There in the First place: Finding the female in Roman poetry"; and D. Fredrick, "Reading Broken Skin: Violence in Roman elegy"). Re-reading these old, but ever-fresh, articles has been a real literary pleasure.

The book is nicely presented, but readers would surely have appreciated a more generous typeface: the small letter-size used makes the text something of a strain to read. I have detected very few errata: p. 56 a *ego*, not *ego*; p. 125 *adsitis*, not *adisitis*; p. 213 redundant italics in the commentary on 41-2; p. 413 read *tunicas* instead of *tunias*. In short, M's work will be of great use not only to the advanced undergraduate and Masters students at whom it is aimed, but also to all enthusiasts of Latin love elegy.¹

Notes:

¹ I wish to thank Mr. J.J. Zoltowski for the English translation.

[Read Latest](#)

[Index for 2003](#)

[Change Greek Display](#)

[Archives](#)

[Books Available for Review](#)

[BMCR Home](#)