

BOOK REVIEW

Latin Elegy and the Space of Empire. By SARAH LINDHEIM. Oxford Studies in Classical Literature and Gender Theory. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. x + 237. £ 65.00. ISBN: 978-0-19-887144-6.

Sara Lindheim's *Latin Elegy and the Space of Empire* examines the spatial dislocation experienced by Roman subjects during the geographic expansion of the late Republic and early Principate, as refracted through the lens of Latin love elegy. For Lindheim, the expanding empire explains the famously destabilized subject position of the *amator* in the poetry of Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus and Ovid. Lindheim's innovation lies in uniting a cartographic approach to elegy with a lucidly articulated understanding of the human subject in Lacanian psychoanalysis in order to contextualize the instabilities of the elegiac subject. While French psychoanalytic understandings of the *amator* have become *de rigueur* in the 21st century, the author draws a convincing parallel between the Lacanian subject's attempts to present a coherent self through language and constantly shifting territorial boundaries, precariously stabilized through a map (3).

The installation of Agrippa's map in the Campus Martius (c.12 BCE) becomes the cartographic gesture *par excellence* that replays the desire for stability in an evolving empire, and readers are reminded of its imminence throughout the monograph. Rome's obsession with its own borders is written into its foundation as the wall famously mocked by Remus, fueling Lindheim's argument that the drive to define what was within Rome's jurisdiction fundamentally shaped Roman consciousness. The author relies on the work of Talbert and Riggsby to advance the notion that, though maps were not a prevalent part of life, Romans comprehended the ability of a two-dimensional space to reproduce geographic reality.¹ That such a concept defined consciousness at the dawn of the Principate,

¹Talbert, Richard J. A. (2004). "Cartography and Taste in Peutinger's Roman Map," in *Space in the Roman World: Its Perception and Presentation*. Edited by Richard Talbert and Kai Brodersen. Münster: LIT Verlag, 113-141. Also Riggsby, Andrew M. (2019). *Mosaics of Knowledge: Representing Information in the Roman World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

when Augustus was championing his territorial acquisitions and Vergil's Jupiter was predicting *imperium sine fine* is not only defensible, but demanded as a frame for understanding the *amator's* struggle to fix his *puella* in time and space.

As Lindheim admits, she too must choose what to include and omit in her story of the cartographic impulse in Latin literature: she draws the line at Catullus' elegiac and polymetric verses, demonstrating how Pompey and Caesar's competitive efforts to expand Roman *imperium* inform the Catullan subject's self-representation. In the first chapter, Lindheim pushes the new understanding of geography in the Augustan age argued for by Nicolet (1991)² further back to the era of Pompey's conquests in the East and Caesar's expansion in Gaul, Germany and Britain. I found her readings of poems 11, 63 and 68 especially well-suited to examination through a cartographical lens. The gender confusion of Attis in poem 63 emerges as a symptom of the wide-ranging shift between Greece and Phrygia, whose links with Troy and Asia Minor surface in the text as indicators simultaneously of Rome's origins and the edges of empire, both self and other.

For all the *amator's* misgivings about his place in an empire unfurling, there is a degree of enthusiasm in Catullan verse over goods and people circulating in an increasingly porous environment. By the time of Propertius' Monobiblos, that enthusiasm has waned, as excitement yields to anxieties that the new Roman worldview creates. The author's reading of Prop. 1.12 reconsiders the notion of *finis* in line 20: while most commentators have understood a temporal nuance to the "end" here, corresponding with the beginning also ascribed to Cynthia *prima*, Lindheim argues that we should re-examine the assertion in light of *finis* as a "boundary" or "border." For Lindheim, building especially on Janan (2001) and Miller (2004),³ Propertius' depiction of a widely roaming Cynthia in the Monobiblos, in contrast to his own steadfast endurance at Rome, distinguishes this poet from the other elegists. The chapter includes an excursus of the historical context of Propertius' first three books, usefully invoking Octavian's triumphs during the period as a strategy, a means of "focus[ing] minds on the space of Roman empire," working in productive tension with the *amator's* plight (79).

² Nicolet, Claude. (1991). *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire*, translated by Hélène Leclerc. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

³ Janan, Micaela. (2001). *The Politics of Desire: Propertius IV*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Miller, P.A. (2004). *Subjecting Verses: Latin Love Elegy and the Emergence of the Real*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chapter 3 opens with discussion of Tibullus' depiction of the Golden Age, its lack of travel and desire for luxury goods that travel procures. Lindheim comments on representations of imperial expansion in Rome during the 20s BCE, offering an astute analysis of poem 1.7, a celebration of Messalla's birthday and his sponsorship of repairs to the *Via Latina*. Focusing on a dichotomy between *amor* ("love") and *viae* ("roads"), Lindheim argues that Tibullus' poetry is distinguished by its recognition that, for all their challenges to erotic subjectivity, *viae* (and the imperial expansion they signal) further the course of elegiac desire, returning the lover to his beloved Delia in poem 1.6.

In the following chapter, on Propertius Book 4, Lindheim presents a poet who has abandoned the notion of fixed *fines* as a viable solution for stabilizing himself and his *puella*. The author focuses on the links between maps and *moenia* ("walls"), demonstrating how Rome's foundational walls, introduced in poem 4.1, are already compromised. Poems 4.2-4.4 receive special attention, the centerpiece of which consists of Arethusa's lament for her absent *vir*/husband. She has recourse to a map ("worlds painted on a panel," *tabula pictos... mundos*, 4.3.37) that should allow her to track the movements of Lycotas, but ultimately fails to fix her beloved in space and time. The reassurances that Arethusa seeks from the map are strong evidence for the cartographic worldview, but also demonstrate challenges for Roman subjects faced with maintaining the polarities (e.g., that of Roman vs. Barbarian) that would affirm identity.

The final chapter falls into two parts, the first of which examines Ovid's elegiac *puellae* under pressure from luxury items imported from the far corners of the empire; while Ovid reacts against the anti-cosmetic tradition that upholds undorned woman as the ideal, the thoroughly cultivated *puella* has very little left of the subject herself (cf. *Rem.* 344). The second part of the chapter examines the Ovidian poet in exile in Tomis. The speaker's attempts to maintain a distinction between his Roman self and the surrounding *gentes* fail, revealing a subject defined as both Roman and Getic, Imperial and Barbarian. A brief conclusion recaps Lindheim's narrative of the elegiac subject's evolution and closes with a tantalizing reference to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, prompting further cartographic approaches to Augustan verse.

My only reservations about Lindheim's approach stem from her slightly imprecise chronology of cartographic pressures on elegy, which, as the difficulties of dating early drafts of Ovid's *Amores* attest, may not be as steadily progressive as the book indicates. Lindheim's attendance to the *puella*'s subjectivity is also less

vigilant than her focus on the *amator's*, leading to oversimplification of the poet's construction of his beloved: e.g., the *puella's* frequent assimilation to the Greek courtesan-heteira and her demands for luxury goods indicate the Propertian lover's ambivalence toward (rather than outright anxiety over) imperial expansion.⁴ Moreover, given the prevalence of the *meretrix* vs. *matrona* polarity in elegiac discourse, I was struck by the author's untroubled assertion of Arethusa's *matrona* status. Arethusa's longing for Lycotas and the discourse of their relationship reflects more that of the elegiac *puella* under exclusive contract than a legitimate citizen wife.⁵ But these are minor shortcomings in a study that makes an important contribution to understanding the critical ways in which imperial expansion impacted elegiac subjectivity. Arguments proceed logically, and Lindheim's prose is elegant, as is her ability to distil complex and, by some accounts, nebulous psychoanalytical concepts.

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⁴Keith, Alison. (2008). *Propertius: Poet of Love and Leisure*. London: Duckworth.

⁵James, Sharon L. (2012). "Re-reading Propertius' Arethusa," *Mnemosyne* 65: 425-444.