

BOOK REVIEW

Selections from Propertius, Tibullus and Ovid: An Edition for Intermediate Students: with introduction, commentary notes and vocabulary. By ANITA NIKKANEN. Bloomsbury Classical Languages. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Pp. viii + 171. Paperback, \$17.05. ISBN: 978-1-5013-5046-7.

This review examines another book from the Bloomsbury Classical Languages series containing selections from ancient Latin authors from the 1st centuries BCE and CE. These texts are intended to be read by intermediate Latin students who have completed a standard course in Latin grammar. For her book, Anita Nikkanen focused on nine elegiac poems in *Selections from Propertius, Tibullus and Ovid: An Edition for Intermediate Students*. The book focuses on Propertius' *Elegies* 1.1, 1.3, and 2.14, Tibullus' *Elegies* 1.1 and 1.3, and Ovid's *Amores* 1.1, 2.5, 2.7 and 2.8. Like the other texts in the series, Nikkanen divides the book into four parts. After a brief preface explaining why she wrote the commentary, students find an introduction to Latin love elegy, followed by the poems, the commentary and an extensive vocabulary list. The introduction is the most valuable part for the student new to love elegy.

Nikkanen outlines the history of the Roman elegist and their topics, explaining why love elegy is particularly accessible to the modern reader. She follows this with a history of the cultural, political and literary events leading up to and influencing Propertius, Tibullus and Ovid. She explains how the transition from republic to principate affected authors at the time. She includes as many biographical details as possible for the authors, always providing the source for what little we know about them. Next, Nikkanen includes a stylistic analysis of the poets, looking at the different tropes found in elegy and how they all use them in their various poems. Following this is a summary of all nine poems to help the student understand the essential content of the poems. She includes an extensive glossary

of the rhetorical and poetic devices found in the selection. Nikken helpfully provides examples of these devices from the selected poems to help illustrate the definitions. She then discusses the Greek influence on the Latin poets from Mimnermus to Callimachus before she wraps up the introduction with a detailed explanation on elegiac couplets and how to determine the meter of the Latin. Nikkanen helpfully provides a further reading at the end of the introduction.

As a High School teacher in an Advanced Placement-focused school, it is very exciting to have more commentaries on texts beyond the AP curriculum. This series provides students with a broad look at Latin similar in time frame to Virgil and Caesar, but that focuses on other topics. The inclusion of the three beginning poems for each author allows for a stimulating discussion by students about the poetic program selected by each poet. The commentaries are useful for students trying to understand the literary references included in each poem. However the editor's choice of separating the commentary from the text is frustrating since students still focus primarily on the vocabulary and forget to flip back to the helpful commentary, leading to needless struggles with some of the more challenging parts. While most teachers can overcome this by providing a photocopied packet of the commentary to be viewed side by side, it makes the book less desirable as a textbook for the intermediate high school student.

Additionally, inconsistencies in labeling authors make it challenging to follow. Simply labeling each poem with their poet's name would go a long way to pointless page-turning. These simple editorial corrections could make the book more accessible to more students. As it is now, although advertised as a book for all intermediate students, it is focused on just the intermediate students at the collegiate level.

While it is wonderful that more commentaries on a wider variety of texts are being produced for Latin teachers, it is unhelpful that they still use an outdated format for the students. We should continue to expand on who can read these books with simple changes such as providing facing commentary and vocabulary for the students. There is no need to sacrifice student accessibility as we bring alive these ancient poems.

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