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978-0-521-40767-0 - The Arts of Love: Five Studies in the Discourse of Roman Love
Elegy

Duncan F. Kennedy

Frontmatter

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The five chapters that make up this short book examine the love elegies of the Roman poets Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid from the point of view of the way the meanings attributed to the poems arise out of the interests and preoccupations of the cultural situation in which they are read. Each study is centered around a reading of a poem or poems together with a discussion of a variety of sophisticated theoretical approaches drawn from modern scholars and theorists such as Paul Veyne, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. In each case, the modes of analysis involved are pressed hard to see where they may lead, and, equally, where they may show signs of strain. All Latin texts and terms are translated or closely paraphrased.

Although the book concentrates on the work of the Roman elegists, the challenging insights it offers into the processes involved in the reading and appropriation of the texts of the past are relevant to scholars and students of classical literature in general, and its discussion of such key issues as history, textuality, representation, discourse, gender, ideology and metaphor will be of concern to those interested in literary theory and cultural studies.

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ROMAN LITERATURE
AND ITS CONTEXTS

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ROMAN LITERATURE AND ITS CONTEXTS

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The editors of this series share the growing belief that the dominant modes of study of Roman literature are insufficiently in touch with current research in other areas of the classics, and in the humanities at large. Students of Greek literature, in the best traditions of classical scholarship, have been strengthening their contacts with cognate fields such as social history, anthropology, history of thought, linguistics and literary theory; the study of Roman literature has just as much to gain from engaging with these other contexts and intellectual traditions. The series is designed to encourage readers of Latin texts to sharpen their readings by placing them in broader and better-defined contexts, and to encourage other classicists to explore the general or particular implications of their work for readers of Latin texts. The books all constitute original and innovative research and are envisaged as suggestive essays whose aim is to stimulate debate.

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**Five studies in the discourse
of Roman love elegy**

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University of Bristol*



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et multi, quae sit nostra Corinna, rogant

Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 3.538

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Preface

The five studies which make up this book are each built around a theme (representation, essentialism, metaphor, discourse and identification) which I have found useful in organizing my response to the texts of elegy and the types of reading they have recently evoked. Though the studies are nominally separate, key issues will be found to recur again and again. In particular, in a book written for a series entitled 'Roman Literature and its Contexts', I have tried to keep in mind the continuing need to examine the question of the historical sidedness of both the texts of elegy and the readings in which their meaning is realized here and now. Each chapter is centred around a reading of a poem or poems together with a discussion of those modern critics who in one way or another have something interesting to say which bears on the ways elegy is currently read. In each case I have tried to press their modes of analysis to see where they may lead, and, equally, where they may show signs of strain.

Acknowledgements

Love's atopia, the characteristic which causes it to escape all dissertations, would be that *ultimately* it is possible to talk about love only *according to a strict allocutive determination*; whether philosophical, gnomic, lyric, or novelistic, there is always, in the discourse upon love, a person whom one addresses, though this person may have shifted to the condition of a phantom or a creature still to come. No one wants to speak of love unless it is *for* someone. (Barthes 1979, 74)

These observations from Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse* come fittingly just before his discussion of 'The Dedication', and they are

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PREFACE

appropriate also to the dedication I have made. There are many people without whom I would never have been brought to ponder the issues in the way that I have in this book, and not all of them can be named in this acknowledgement. I owe much to my students, especially Damaris Barber, Deirdre Healy, Alex Langdon and Terry McKiernan, for always keeping me thinking, and to John Henderson, for never, over many years, allowing me to stop, and for showing me an unpublished piece on Ovid, *Amores* 2.7 (to appear in *Materiali e discussioni*). In helping me to turn my thoughts into a book, Denis Feecey, Stephen Hinds and Pauline Hire have played their various editorial roles to real perfection. A number of people were kind enough to read my drafts, and their reactions have helped to shape the final version. I am grateful to Alison R. Sharrock for her help at the initial stage and beyond, and to Catharine Edwards for her penetrating insights; Maria Wyke's presence informs this work more than the bare references to her writings might imply. My greatest debt is to the support I have derived from the constant criticism of Charles Martindale, that most determined of enablers, without whom the idea for this book would not have arisen, let alone come to a conclusion. Their generous and good-humoured forbearance has turned this *Tractatus Erotico-Philologicus* into a labour of love.