DOCTAE PUELLAE

S. L. JAMES: *Learned Girls and Male Persuasion. Gender and Reading in Roman Love Elegy.* Pp. xv + 350. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2003. Cased, US$55/£37.95. ISBN: 0-520-23381-6.

Since the appearance in 1950 of A. W. Allen's seminal article 'Sincerity and the Roman Elegists' (*CPh* 45, 145–60), and subsequently the influential work of Paul Veyne and Maria Wyke in the 1980s, the elegiac *puella* has increasingly come to be regarded as a literary construct—a figure whose traits of character and even personal appearance are wholly determined by the requirements and conventions of the genre. In this provocative study, Sharon James sets out to challenge, or at least refine, the commonly accepted view.

For J., the main literary model for elegy is New Comedy; but the latter genre is grounded in turn in the social structures of Hellenistic Greek and Republican Roman life. Hence, the *puella* can be identified with the comic *hetaira* or *meretrix*, but also with the 'real-life' courtesan (a woman, that is, like the historically attested Volumnia Cytheris, relatively independent but not marriageable, belonging to a higher social class than the street-walking prostitute yet reliant on a lover or lovers for financial support). Cynthia, Delia, Nemesis, and Corinna are generic types rather than portraits of real, historical individuals, but can nevertheless be seen as representatives of an actual historical class rather than as purely literary constructs. It is fundamental to J.'s argument that the *puella* can be unambiguously identified as belonging to this particular class: the inherently oppositional or antagonistic relationship between lover and beloved—which she shows convincingly to be characteristic of the genre—is essentially determined, in her view, by the demands of the *puella*'s profession. Because the courtesan inevitably has—so to speak—a built-in sell-by date, it is in her interests to have as many lovers as possible and to exploit them for maximum financial gain; the elegists' objective, on the other hand, is to persuade their mistresses to give them sex *gratis* (or in exchange for the financially negligible rewards of celebration in elegiac verse).

While I have considerable sympathy with this line of approach, J.'s argument seems to me in certain respects fundamentally flawed. In particular, complexities entailed by elegy's relationships with *multiple* intertexts are consistently downplayed. New Comedy is, certainly, an important model for the elegiac poets; but much of the energy and characteristic ambiguity of the genre is arguably derived from clashes between comic and other intertexts. Particularly important for the character and status of the *puella* and her relationship with the *amator* is the poetry of Catullus. Though—as Richard Thomas has convincingly demonstrated (*RhM* 127 [1984], 308–16, reprinted in *Reading Virgil and his Texts* [Ann Arbor, 1999], 44–52)—Catullus also draws on New Comedy, his Lesbia is fairly explicitly represented as a married woman of high social status. In important respects, she differs from the elegiac *puella* (as J. rightly observes [250, n. 79], complaints about the mistress's greed and demands for gifts occur nowhere in the Catullan corpus); but there are also striking similarities. The possibility that the status of the *puella* is—in consequence of this dual origin—indeterminate merits more serious consideration than J. is prepared to give it. Similarly, the lover's motives and character could be regarded as more complex than J.'s analysis suggests. Though it is certainly possible to read everything in elegy as disingenuous rhetoric (as Ovid so wittily demonstrates in the *Ars Amatoria*), the *amator* can also be viewed as a

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descendant of the naive *adulescens* of New Comedy. Which of the lovers is the manipulator and which the victim? A reading which finds this question undecidable is—to this reviewer, at least—more interesting and sophisticated than the univocal interpretation offered here. It is worth observing in passing that J.'s own approach ('reading elegy from the *puella*'s viewpoint') tends to predetermine the issue: the possibility that the addressee is no less—or even more—disingenuous than the speaker is occasionally recognized by J. (e.g. p. 317 n. 148), but tends to be elided thanks to the strategy of sympathetic identification which she favours.

The political implications of elegiac discourse, too, are considerably diluted on J.'s reading. She is inclined to take Ovid's claim that the *A.A.* is not addressed to respectable women at face value; this is to downplay the provocative humour of the passage, which pays lip-service to Augustan ideals of marital fidelity, while—surely—encouraging the reader to wonder whether the didactic speaker is not protesting too much (and so in fact drawing attention to the potential usefulness of the *praeceptor*'s advice to those engaged in extra-marital affairs). Similarly, J.'s insistence that *recusationes* and 'greedy girl' poems are to be read primarily as tactics of erotic persuasion underestimates the provocativeness of these *topoi* in relation to Augustan and traditional Roman values. The appropriation of traditional moralizing discourse in these contexts ('voluntary poverty' and the rejection of luxuries sound virtuous, at least up to a point) has implications beyond any putative attempt to bamboozle the *puella*.

The most arresting and impressive part of J.'s argument is the last section of Chapter 2, on the *lena* or 'evil housemother', as J. strikingly labels her. J. shows how the *lena*'s advice is both reflected in the actual behaviour of the *puella* throughout the elegiac corpus, and anticipates Ovid's cynical exposure of convention in the *A.A.* (the *lena*, that is, makes explicit the idea present as an ironic subtext in other poems that the *puella*'s goal is to maximize her fee, while the *amator* hopes to get away without paying at all). From Chapter 3 onwards, however, the analysis of individual poems becomes disappointingly repetitive, leading time after time to the conclusion that the only thing that 'really' interests the *amator* is free access to the *puella*'s sexual favours. This seems to fly in the face of the emphasis which Propertius—in particular—places on non-physical qualities, especially the *doctrina* which J. (ironically enough) sees as the mistress' most prominent characteristic; J. herself occasionally draws attention (e.g. p. 187 and n. 95) to passages where the speaker is eager for proof that the *puella* reciprocates his feelings (i.e. where he seems to want something more than physical gratification). Examples of tendentious analysis and special pleading could be multiplied: to cite just one instance, J. argues (pp. 205–9) that Ovid's sexual advice at the end of *A.A.* 2 is ultimately directed at control of the *puella*, whose pleasure is of secondary importance. In support of this claim, she cites 'aspiciam dominae victos . . . ocellos' (2.691) as evidence for 'the pleasure the *praeceptor* . . . takes from seeing [the *puella*] conquered by sensation' (p. 207)—without apparently noticing that the height of pleasure is declared less than thirty lines later to be reached when *both* lovers lie overcome (*pariter victi*, 728) by their pleasure.

I would not wish to end this review on too negative a note: there is much in J.'s book that is stimulating (in addition to the discussion of the *lena* mentioned above, I would single out the sections on *servitium amoris*, pp. 146–52, and on Ovid's abortion poems, read as a retrospective commentary on the Propertian and Tibullan *topos* of the vigil at the *puella*'s sick-bed, pp. 173–83). Anyone interested in love elegy, or in the literary representation of Roman women, should certainly consult this book: though some may, like the present reviewer, find J.'s readings too one-sided and too strident to be

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fully satisfying, they will nevertheless serve as a useful counterweight to those who—like Paul Veyne—read the poems as, essentially, humorous literary exercises, bearing little relation to the real world of the poets and their readers.

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ALLUSION IN THE *HEROIDES*

J.-C. JOLIVET: *Allusion et fiction épistolaire dans les* Héroïdes. *Recherches sur l'intertextualité ovidienne.* (Collection de l'École Française de Rome 289.) Pp. x + 356. Rome: École Française de Rome, 2001. Paper. ISBN: 2-7283-0561-7.

The growth of critical interest in the *Heroides* over the past thirty years might suggest to the casual observer that Ovid's women, so long silenced, have at last rediscovered their voices. However, this critical resurgence has proceeded hand in hand with an expansive and sophisticated theorizing of practices of 'allusion' and 'intertextuality' among ancient authors: thus the heroines too often find that they are shouted down by the more authoritative generic 'codes' of tragedy and epic from which the poems draw much of their material. In-depth study has been generally (though not exclusively) confined to those epistles which draw upon a clearly discernible and extant 'source text': Poem 1 (Penelope), Poem 7 (Dido), and Poem 10 (Ariadne) have undergone particularly close scrutiny in these terms.

Jolivet's contribution to the study of the allusive practices of the *Heroides* moves off such tried and tested paths. The book falls into two distinct sections, with three chapters focusing closely on individual epistles, four chapters which offer some theoretical overviews and broader readings of the rest of the corpus, and three appendices. The first three (extremely substantial) chapters explore, respectively, Poem 5 (Oenone to Paris), Poem 13 (Laodamia to Protesilaus), and Poem 11 (Deianira to Heracles); each of these chapters refers forward to one of the appendices, in which is drawn together all the ancient pre-Ovidian material pertaining to the Oenone-myth, the Laodamia-myth, and the Omphale-myth respectively. Yet even as they attempt to break new ground, these chapters demonstrate the difficulties in working with the *Heroides* when no readily apparent source text is available. Chapter 1 (on Oenone's epistle) is condemned to work with widely scattered fragments of evidence from mythological sources and a few brief excerpts from the *Iliad.* The analysis itself therefore proves (unavoidably) fragmentary and inconsistent: it has great value as *Quellenforschung*, but works too hard with the source material to have any reserves of energy left over for literary analysis. Indeed, the most lively and innovative ideas come in Chapter 3's discussion of the Deianira epistle, especially in the manner in which it interacts with Sophocles' *Trachiniae.* Here the survival of an intact intertext allows J. to voice some pertinent insights concerning the moment of the epistle's temporal insertion into the Sophoclean play and, more radically still, to hint at the presence of a distinctively 'Ovidian' strand in Sophocles: 'tout semble découler de Sophocle, même ce qui est le plus ovidien' (p. 186).

Chapters 4–7, much shorter in length, explore the issues of Ovid's *arte allusiva* in more theoretical terms. The fourth chapter ('L'Allusion et l'Erudition') discusses the disjunction between the voice of the *doctus poeta* and the voices of his epistolary heroines. Chapter 5 ('Forme et Fiction Epistolaires') considers the implications of the

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