

*Bella(trix) Puella*: Helen and Cleopatra in *Amores* 1.9.6.

This paper will investigate Ovid's allusive reference to Helen and Cleopatra in his poem *Amores* 1.9. Just like his Roman elegiac predecessors, Ovid continues the tradition of the *militia amoris* in the Roman elegiac genre; however, unlike his predecessors who show the difference between a soldier of war and a soldier of love, Ovid performs a parallel approach to show the similarities between a soldier and a lover. *Amores* 1.9 highlights this parallelism through the presentation of various Homeric heroes who are also known for their amatory narratives in the Homeric and Greek tragic traditions. While these heroes set the tone of the poem, Ovid specifically avoids mentioning the most appropriate Homeric character for the *militia amoris* trope: Helen. Although the direct mention of Helen is absent from the poem, this paper will argue that the presence of Helen is introduced at the very beginning of the poem. From there, the paper will link the allusion of Helen with the general representation of Cleopatra in Propertius' variation of the *militia amoris*.

In 1.9.6, Ovid writes, *hos petit in socio bella puella viro* "these [courageous] a beautiful woman seeks in her male partner." This paper will show how the appearance and position of *bella puella* in this line serve as a literary allusion to Helen when read against the Homeric tone of the entire poem. The paper will begin by showcasing how Ovid positions the words *bella puella* within the context of the line and the entirety of the poem. James McKeown (1995) notes that the appearance of *bella* is preferred to the more common *pulchra* "because of [its] supposed derivation of *bellum*..." (McKeown 1995: 303). The *puella*, therefore, becomes the representation of Ovid's vision of the *militia amoris*; namely, the elegiac lover is no difference than the Roman soldier. The paper will then highlight the similarities between this line and another line in *Amores* 2.12, the only poem where Ovid directly mentions Helen. Through the

allusive reference to Helen, the paper will investigate how line 1.9.6 also hearkens back to the Propertian model of the *militia amoris*, where the Cleopatra narrative figures prominently within this trope in Propertius' poems 2.15, 2.16, and 3.11. Robert Baker (1968) attests that Cleopatra's characterization in Propertius' poems are similar to the *puella* of Roman erotic elegy. From Baker's observation, the *puella* of *Amores* 1.9 vaguely alludes to the connection between Helen and Cleopatra. The paper will finally demonstrate the significance of the poem through its allusive connection of Helen in the Homeric tradition and Cleopatra in the elegiac tradition.

#### Bibliography

- Baker, R.J., 1968. "Miles Annosus: the Military Motif in Propertius." *Latomus* 27: 322-349.
- McKeown, J.C., 1995. "Militat Omnis Amans." *The Classical Journal* 90: 295-304.