Seminar 4: *Amores* 3.7
Q. To what extent is *Am*.**3.7 a reversal (or replay) of** *Amores* **1.5?**
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Compare and contrast exercise:
<u>Basic differences:</u>

- Length: 3.7 is one of the longest poems of the Amores, 1.5 one of the shorter. This reflects the length/outcome of the sexual encounters: 3.7 involves repeated failed attempts (girl seduces man); 1.5 is an easy triumph (man seduces/conquers girl)

- Shape and texture: 1.5 is linear, snappy, with a clear focus (expressed as the desiring male gaze); it gradually builds and ends in consummation and satisfaction for the lovers (although readers are left hanging, and must use their own imaginations to fill in the gaps). By contrast 3.7 is circular (its form communicates frustration, deferred desire); it is peppered with interjections (interrogatives etc: find examples) and the poet's arousal comes later than expected and (possibly?) at the wrong time. (find passage: make note of the line)

- Aspect: Amores 1.5 looks forward. 3.7 looks back on previous successes such as in 1.5. Find specific examples of this and note them down.

- Impotence vs power, or role reversal: in 3.7 the girl (NOT Corinna!) is trying to seduce the poet-lover by manipulating his body, and plays an (unusually) active role, but fails; in 1.5 the poet successfully seduces Corinna, and the emphasis is on different parts of her body. In 1.5, Corinna is passive; in 3.7, active. In 3.7, implicitly (?) the woman's strength is a turn off, or at least ineffectual. Her 'wrestling' kisses suggest she is in control, whereas in 1.5 she is almost his play-thing. He watches her as she undresses herself - as if she is completely in his power. In 3.7, the poet recalls how the girl 'called me her master *(dominus)*' (find and note down line)– ironically, in her new, active role, she is so desperate to seduce him that she appeals to (the fantasy of) conventional gender roles (master dominates passive female or effeminate lover), which are usually reversed in Roman erotic elegy (the girl is the *domina*, the poet-lover 'enslaved' to her). Possibility to consider: does the girl fail to seduce the elegiac poet-lover because she is not using the correct elegiac code? Note also that in 3.7 the poet offers a comic revision of the *servitium amoris* trope when he chastises his genitals for not obeying their master: his impotent body is, as it were, split (he is both master and slave)

- The gaze: in 1.5, the poet-lover's gaze is focused on Corinna, whereas in 3.7, he seems to look at her obliquely, and is focused on his own body and its inadequacies (but there are points in 3.7 – see handout – where he seems to recall seeing and touching Corinna in 1.5); remembering 1.5 is code for remembering previous erotic (and poetic) success. Read 3.7 again, and make note of references to looking, or being looked at.

- The puella's different mythological roles in 1.5 and 3.7: in 1.5, Corinna is a hybrid figure, imagined as an Egyptian queen (Semiramis) and as a prostitute (Lais); in 3.7, she is implicitly compared to a Homeric poet (Phemis) and to a painter (Thamyras), both *male artists,* yet her arts fail (at least this time, on the poet-lover). Yet in 3.7, we might also note, the girl has no definite name.
- In 1,5, the girl is silent; in 3.7 she speaks. Explore this further in 3.7

Mirrorings/similarities:
- Both poems, in different ways, open up gaps for the reader to fill with erotic imaginings. Find specific examples
- In terms of structure, both poems end abruptly: in both the reader is left wanting more? Both poems can be read, in different ways, as fuelling desire, and as spurring us to think about the desire to read on as erotic, or eroticized.
- The veiling function of the tunic in both poems: in 1.5 the tunic plays a crucial role in Corinna's striptease / the lover's undressing of her; in 3.7, the girl wraps herself in her tunic as she leaves, angry and disappointed (a reverse strip-tease?). Yet as she gets up and does this, the poet remarks on how beautiful she looks (is he aroused by veiling, or by the memory of 1.5?)
- Can you observe and write down any further points of contact? How might we interpret them?

Follow-up exercise:
1. Read Sharrock 1995 'The drooping rose: elegiac failure in Amores 3.7, in Ramus 24, 152-80.
2. Re-read *Amores* 3.7.1-30, and take one hour to write a commentary on it. If you are not doing the module with Latin texts, don't be afraid to look at and cite the Latin (although this is of course not a requirement in the final exam!). Follow the advice below (copied from the practical criticism tab on our module web pages):

Practical Criticisms: Some Guidelines

A literary commentary ('gobbet'; aka 'practical criticism' or 'prac crit') should not be the same as writing a short essay. A commentary is largely concerned with the explication of a single passage of text; an essay is directed towards a different goal - making a more general argument or arguments on a set topic, using a wide range of primary and secondary evidence. Here is a short guide to what to focus on:

Remember that the 'question' (for coursework prac crits) is just a spur to reading the text closely: you do not have to focus on it exclusively, as you would do in an essay, but it will be useful to give some direct response to the question in your final paragraph. Indeed, the point of the question is to help you frame your analysis and inspire you to write your concluding comments.

Try to write 2-3 sentences of introduction, then 2-3 more developed paragraphs, followed by some concluding remarks.

In your introduction, you should:
• identify the context (briefly but precisely), paying some attention to what follows as well as what precedes; when dealing with a single poem, mention its position in the book, and state briefly what it is about. If the passage/poem is part of direct speech, identify the speaker. You may want to refer briefly to genre, metre, tone.
• briefly outline your coverage of major themes. What interests you about this passage/ poem?

Then, in the **next two or three further paragraphs of detailed comment**, you should:
▪ say what you feel should be said about the passage/poem as a whole, broken down into two or three main themes. Pay close attention to the text, and make sure your your observations begin with the text itself. At the same time, it might be useful to attempt to contextualize (or even politicize) more broadly your observations. It is this, alongside detailed and creative interpretative of textual detail, which will often distinguish excellent first-class work from good second-class material. Throughout, remember to analyse and evaluate, not simply describe. Make sure also to engage with and reference secondary literature, and use footnotes as you would do in an essay. Insert a final bibliography, also, as you would do in an essay.

Always brainstorm before you start writing.
It might help to use this checklist of questions/reminders:
• What genre/form is this, and what metre is it written in? (i.e. form sets up expectations, produces and frames meaning)
• Who is speaking/narrating? What can you say about that voice? Is it aggressive, satirical, meandering, elusive, formal, authoritative, weak (etc.etc.)? If there is more than one speaking voice, what emerges when you compare them?
• Look at imagery, metaphor, simile: analyse their function and effect.
• Pay attention to rhythm, speed, phonic effects, visual effects.
• If you are dealing with narrative, how is that narrative spun out? What creates drama and intensity? Is this passage a turning point or a climax, or a coda, or an interlude? Have we 'been here before'?
• How does form illustrate or enact content?
• Pay attention to the vocabulary and diction used: is it formal, elevated, colloquial, casual, pompous, intellectual, grotesque, unusual? Is it ever designed to allude to a previous poem/passage/line/theme? Does any word I the passage/ poem have more than one meaning, and do multiple meanings or connotations have a potential function here? For example, do they create humour? Or innuendo? Does one connotation undercut the other?
• Look for patterns, and notice word order (in Latin): are words repeated? Look especially at beginnings and endings, and also (especially in poetry) at the beginnings and ends of lines. Is a word repeated in a different form (i.e. polyptoton)? Is it repeated in the same metrical position in a different line? What might be the point of this? Do we find a noun placed a long way away from an adjective describing it, and is there a point to this?
• In what position do you think this passage/poem puts its readers?