

Lecture-seminar 2: The elegiac poet-lover: power and libido in Ovid's *Amores***Words and etymologies:** *vulnus* *vulnerabilis* *mollitia* *imbecillitas***1. The free and the enslaved (humiliated, vulnerable)****a.** Lucretius *On the Nature of Things* 4.1116-24, 1146-7:

‘Then the same frenzy returns, and once more the madness comes, when they seek to get what they desire, and can find no device to master the trouble: in such uncertainty they pine with their secret wound. They consume their strength and kill themselves with the labour. One lover lives depending on another. Duties are neglected, good reputations totter and grow sick. Wealth vanishes, and turns into Babylonian perfumes...To avoid being lured into the snares of love is not as difficult as it is to escape once you are caught in Venus’ trap.’

b. Cicero *de Republica* 3.37 (=Augustine *Contra Julianum*, 4.12.61)

‘But the different kinds of ruling and serving should be distinguished. For as the mind is said to rule the body, it is also said to rule desire, but it rules the body as a king his citizens or a father his sons. But desire rules as a master rules his slaves, in that it restrains and crushes them . . . masters tire out their slaves just as the best part of the mind, that is wisdom, exercises the flawed and weak parts of the same mind, such as desires, anger, and other disturbances . . .’

c. Seneca *Ep.*47.17: ‘Show me a man who isn’t a slave: some are slaves to sex, others to money, others to social prestige, all are slaves to hope and fear.’

d. Augustus, *Res Gestae* 1:

‘In my nineteenth year, on my own initiative and at my own expense, I raised an army with which I set free the state, which was oppressed by the domination of a faction. For that reason, the senate enrolled me in its order by laudatory resolutions, when Gaius Pansa and Aulus Hirtius were consuls (43 B.C.E.), assigning me the place of a consul in the giving of opinions, and gave me the imperium.’

2. Power play: who gets to speak/write/sing

‘Although all elite men enjoyed a privileged position in two of the most obvious hierarchies (male/female and free/slave), many other bases of status, such as wealth, inherited political prominence, and the cultural prestige attributed to old Roman families (versus those in other Italian towns or in the provinces), served to differentiate within the group of elite men. Elegy plays with these hierarchies that shape the relationships between men and women, between masters and slaves, and among elite men. When the elegiac poet depicts himself in the thrall of his mistress, and therefore alienated from respectable men, he sets himself on the powerless side of all three of these hierarchies. And yet, this powerlessness is not unalloyed: the overwhelming effect of this poetry is the exalted, almost heroic, position of the poet, through whose eyes the reader sees these tableaux.’

(K.McCarthy, 1998, ‘*Servitium amoris: amor servitii*’ in Murnaghan *Women and Slaves*..., p179)

3. Ovid's *Amores*

- The *Amores* begin with a prefatory epigram, where Ovid marks the first 'cut', and sets up his sexualised poetics of pleasure-pain...

Qui modo Nasonis fueramus quinque libelli,
tres sumus; hoc illi praetulit auctor opus.
ut iam nulla tibi nos sit legisse **voluptas**,
at levior demptis **poena** duobus erit.

(We who just now were five books of Naso are now three; the author has put this before the previous edition. Though even now you may take no **pleasure** in reading us, the **pain** will be lighter with two books removed.)

Amores 1.1.

Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam cf. *Aen.*1.1 *arma virumque cano*
edere, materia conveniente modis. and *Aen.*6. 86, *bella, horrida bella...cerno*
par erat inferior versus—rissime Cupido equilibrium/perfect symmetry disrupted:
dicitur atque unum **surripuisse pedem**. the limping body of elegy is born
'quis tibi, saeve puer, dedit hoc in carmina iuris?' 5
Pieridum vates, non tua turba sumus.
quid, si praecripiat flavae Venus arma Minervae,
ventilet accensas flava Minerva faces?
quis probet in silvis Cererem regnare iugosis,
lege pharetratae Virginis arva coli? 10
crinibus insignem quis acuta cuspide Phoebum
instruat, Aoniam Marte movente lyram?
sunt tibi magna, puer, nimiumque potentia regna; an empire of love/lust
cur opus adfectas, ambitiose, novum?
an, quod ubique, tuum est? tua sunt Heliconia tempe? 15
vix etiam Phoebo iam lyra tuta sua est?
cum bene **surrexit** versu nova pagina primo, **erection...?**
attenuat nervos proximus ille meos;¹ **detumescence...**
nec mihi materia est numeris levioribus apta,
aut puer aut longas compta puella comas.' 20
questus eram, pharetra cum protinus ille soluta
legit in exitium spicula facta meum,
lunavitque genu sinuosum fortiter arcum,
'quod' que 'canas, vates, accipe' dixit 'opus!'
me miserum! certas habuit puer ille sagittas. 25
uror, et in vacuo pectore regnat Amor.
sex mihi surgat opus numeris, in quinque residat:
ferrea cum vestris bella valete modis!
cingere litorea flaventia tempora myrto,
Musa, per undenos emodulanda pedes! 30

(Arms and the violent deeds of war, I was making ready to sound forth – in weighty numbers, with matter suited to the measure. The second verse was equal to the first,

¹ Compare Horace *Ars Poetica* 25-7 (*brevis esse laboro, / obscurus fio; sectantem levia nervi, / deficiunt animique* - 'Striving to be brief, I become obscure. Aiming at smoothness, I fail in force and spirit')

but Cupid, they say, laughed and stole one foot away. “Who gave you, cruel boy, this right over poetry? We poets belong to the Muses; we are no company of yours. What if Venus were to seize the arms of golden-haired Minerva, or if golden-haired Minerva should fan into flame the kindled torch of love? Who would approve of Ceres reigning on the woodland ridges, and of fields tilled under the law of the quiver-bearing maid [i.e. Diana]. Who would deck out Apollo of the beautiful locks with a sharp-pointed spear, or let Mars stir the Aonian lyre? You have an empire of your own – great, yes, all too powerful. Why do you lay claim to new powers, ambitious boy? Or is everything, everywhere, yours? Are the vales of Helicon yours? Is even the lyre of Apollo safely his own? My new page of song rose well with first verse in lofty strain, when that next one – of your making – diminishes the vigour of my work; and yet I have no matter suited to a lighter beat – neither a boy, nor a girl with long and well-styled hair.”

Such was my complaint, when immediately he loosened his quiver, and chose from it arrows that were made for my undoing Against his knee, he showed off his strength in bending the sinuous bow into a moon-shape, and said “Singer, take that! This will be the material for your song!” Ah poor me! They were sure, those arrows that the boy had. I am on fire, and in my still vacant heart, love reigns. Let my work rise in six measures, and sink again in five. Farewell iron wars, with your distinctive beat! Crown with myrtle that loves the shore the golden locks on your temples, O muse, you who are to be sung to the lyre in elevens!)

4. The poet-lover enslaved

a. *Amores* 1.2. 19-25

Look I confess! Cupid, I’m your latest prize:
stretching out conquered arms towards your justice.
War’s not the thing – I come seeking peace:
no glory for you in conquering unarmed men.
Wreathe your hair with myrtle, yoke your mother’s doves:
Your stepfather Mars himself will lend you a chariot,
and it’s fitting you go, the people acclaiming your triumph

b. *Amores* 1.3.1-15.

Be just, I beg you: let the girl who’s lately plundered me,
either love me, or give cause why I should always love her!
Ah, I ask too much – enough if she lets herself be loved:
Cytherea might listen to all these prayers from me!
Hear one who serves you through the long years:
hear one who knows how to love in pure faith!
If no great names of ancient ancestors commend me,
if the creator of my blood was from the equestrian order,
if there aren’t innumerable ploughmen to refresh my fields,
my parents are both temperate and careful with wealth –
but Phoebus, his nine companions, the creator of the vine,
they made me as I am, and Amor, who gives me to you,
and unceasing loyalty, sinless morals,
naked simplicity, noble honour.

5. Mastery and the male gaze: *Amores* 1.5

It was hot, and the noon hour had gone by:
I was relaxed, limbs spread in the midst of the bed.
One half of the window was open, the other closed:
the light was just as it often is in the woods,
it glimmered like Phoebus dying at twilight,
or when night goes, but day has still not risen.
Such a light as is offered to modest girls,
whose timid shyness hopes for a refuge.
Behold Corinna comes, hidden by her loose slip,
scattered hair covering her white throat –
like the famous Semiramis going to her bed,
one might say, or Lais loved by many men.
I pulled her slip away –not harming its thinness much;
yet she still struggled to be covered by that slip.
While she would struggle so, it was as if she could not win,
yielding, she was effortlessly conquered.
When she stood before my eyes, the clothing set aside,
there was never a flaw in all her body.
What shoulders, what arms, I saw and touched!
Breasts formed as if they were made for pressing!
How flat the belly beneath the slender waist!
What flanks, what form! What young thighs!
Why recall each aspect? I saw nothing lacking praise
and I hugged her naked body against mine.
Who doesn't know the story? Weary we both rested.
May such afternoons often come for me!

6. The slave girl as go-between/substitute for *puella*

Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.351-62
(also compare Ovid *Amores* 1.11 and 1.12)

First gain the maid; by her you shall be sure
A free access, and easy to procure;
Who knows what to her office does belong,
Is in the secret, and can hold her tongue,
Bribe her with gifts, with promises, and prayers;
For her good word goes far in love affairs.
The time and fit occasion leave to her,
When she most amply can your suit prefer.
The time for maids to fire their lady's blood
Is when they find her in a happy mood.
When all things at her wish and pleasure move;
Her heart is open then, and free to love.
Then mirth and wantonness to lust betray,
And smooth the passage to the lover's way.

Ars Amatoria 1.375-98

You ask perhaps if one should take the maid herself?
Such a plan brings the greatest risk with it.
In one case, fresh from bed, she'll get busy, in another be tardy,
in one case you're a prize for her mistress, in the other herself.
There's chance in it: even if it favours the idea,
my advice nevertheless is to abstain.
I don't pick my way over sharp peaks and precipices,
no youth will be caught out being led by me.
Still, while she's giving and taking messages,
if her body pleases you as much as her zeal,
make the lady your first priority, her companion the next:
Love should never be begun with a servant.
I warn you of this, if art's skill is to be believed,
and don't let the wind blow my words out to sea:
follow the thing through or don't attempt it:
she'll endure the whispers once she's guilty herself.
It's no help if the bird escapes when its wings are limed:
it's no good if the boar gets free from a loosened net.
Hold fast to the stricken fish you've caught on the hook:
press home the attempt, don't leave off till you've won.
She'll not give you away, sharing the guilt for the crime,
and you'll know whatever your lady's done, and said.

Seminar

Servitium amoris - amor servae: the hidden victim in Amores 2.7-2.8

Read the following pair of poems:

- How does the poet-lover exploit and perform his power as an aristocratic male citizen in 2.7?
- Think about how 2.8 gives readers a shocking new perspective on 2.7.
- Imagine the perspectives of poet, girlfriend and slave-girl in both poems.

2.7

Am I then to stand trial on new complaints for ever?
Grant that I win, I am tired of fighting my case so often.
If I have looked back on the top rows of the marble theatre,
You pick out one of the women there as a cause for grievance.
Or if a fair beauty has looked on me with silent face,
You charge that in her face were unspoken signals!
If I have praised some girl, poor me! Your nails make for my hair.
If I mention her flaws, you think I'm hiding a crime.
If my colour is good, you charge me with coolness towards you.
If I'm pale, you say I'm dying with love for another.
If only I were conscious of having done some wrong!
Those who have merited punishment bear it with even mind.
But now you accuse me without reason, and by believing every

Groundless notion you keep your anger from having weight.
Look at the long-eared, pitiful ass, how slowly it moves,
Broken by never-ending blows!
And **look now**, a fresh charge! Cypassis, the skilled girl who does your hair,
Is cast at me, accused of wronging her mistress' couch!
May the gods save me, if I have a mind to sin, if I seek pleasure
In a filthy girl of sorry fate!
What free man would willingly mate with a slave,
And clasp a back that is cut by the lash?
Add that her work is to dress your hair, and she pleases
You with the assistance of her cunning hand.
As if I would interfere with a slave so dear to you!
Why would I, except to be rejected and then betrayed?
By Venus I swear and by the bows of her winged boy,
I am not guilty of the charge you bring!

2.8

Perfect in arranging hair in a thousand ways,
But worthy to dress only that of goddesses, Cypassis,
You whom I have found in our stolen delight to be
Not wholly simple, apt for your mistress' service, but even more apt for mine,
Who is guilty of having told of our affair?
Where did Corinna learn of our coupling?
Surely I didn't blush? Surely I didn't let slip some word
That gave a tell-tale sign of our stolen love?
Well suppose I did contend that he who could go crazy
Over a mere slave was out of his mind?
The Thessalian (Achilles) was set alight by Briseis' charms,
And a slave, Phoebas, was loved by the Mycenaean chief (Agamemnon).
I am neither greater than Tantalus' son, nor greater than Achilles.
Why should I judge disgusting for me what was fit for kings?
Yet when she fixed her angry **eyes** on you, I saw
The blush spread over your cheeks,
And how much more contained was I, if you recall,
When I swore my innocence in mighty Venus' name!?
You, goddess, may you bid the South-wind sweep over the Carpathian deep
The false oaths of a harmless heart!
In return for these offences to you, **dark Cypassis**,
Pay me today the sweet price of your caress!
Why do you shake your head and refuse, ungrateful girl, and feign fresh fears?
It will suffice to have earned the favour of only one of your masters.
But if you stupidly say no, I shall turn informer and confess everything,
I shall stand forth the betrayer of my own guilt, and tell
Your mistress where I met you and how many times we did it, Cypassis,
And in how many ways, and what those ways were!

The poems in Latin:

2.7

Ergo sufficiam reus in nova crimina semper?
ut vincam, totiens dimicuisse piget.
sive ego marmorei respexi summa theatri,
eligis e multis, unde dolere velis;
candida seu tacito vidit me femina vultu,
in vultu tacitas arguis esse notas.
siquam laudavi, misero petis ungue capillos;
si culpo, crimen dissimulare putas.
sive bonus color est, in te quoque frigidus esse,
seu malus, alterius dicor amore mori.
Atque ego peccati vellem mihi conscius essem!
aequo animo poenam, qui meruere, ferunt;
nunc temere insimulas credendoque omnia frustra
ipsa vetas iram pondus habere tuam.
adspecte, ut auritus miserandae sortis **asellus**
adsiduo domitus **verbere** lentus eat!
Ecce novum crimen! sollers ornare Cypassis
obicitur dominae contemerasse torum.
di melius, quam me, si sit peccasse libido,
sordida contemptae sortis amica iuvet!
quis Veneris famulae conubia liber inire
tergaque conplecti **verbere** secta velit?
adde, quod orrandis illa est operata capillis
et tibi perdocta est grata ministra manu—
scilicet ancillam, quae tam tibi fida, rogarem!
quid, nisi ut indicio iuncta repulsa foret?
per Venerem iuro puerique volatilis arcus,
me non admissi criminis esse reum!

2.8

Ponendis in mille **modos** perfecta capillis,
comere sed solas digna, Cypassi, deas,
et mihi iucundo non rustica cognita furto,
apta quidem dominae, sed magis apta mihi—
quis fuit inter nos sociati corporis index?
sensit concubitus unde Corinna tuos?
num tamen erubui? num, verbo lapsus in ullo,
furtivae Veneris conscia signa dedi?
Quid, quod in ancilla siquis delinquere possit,
illum ego contendi mente carere bona?
Thessalus ancillae facie Briseidos arsit;
serva Mycenaeano Phoebas amata duci.
nec sum ego Tantalide maior, nec maior Achille;
quod decuit reges, cur mihi turpe putem?
Ut tamen iratos in te defixit ocellos,
vidi te totis erubuisse genis;
at quanto, si forte refers, praesentior ipse
per Veneris feci numina magna fidem!
tu, dea, tu iubeas animi periuria puri
Carpathium tepidos per mare ferre Notos!
Pro quibus officiis pretium mihi dulce repende
concubitus hodie, **fusca Cypassi**, tuos!
quid renuis fingisque novos, ingrata, timores?
unum est e dominis emeruisse satis.
quod si stulta negas, index anteacta fatebor,
et veniam culpae proditor ipse meae,
quoque loco tecum fuerim, quotiensque, Cypassi,
narrabo dominae, quotque quibusque **modis!**

Bibliography (also see module booklet):

- Fitzgerald (2000) *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*. Cambridge. Esp. 63-68.
Gold, B. (1993) ‘“But Ariande was never there in the first place”: Finding the female in Roman poetry’ in N. S. Rabinowitz and A. Richlin (eds.) *Feminist Theory and the Classics*. New York and London, 75-101.
Hallett, J.P. (2015) ‘Making Manhood Hard’ in M. Masterson, N. Sorkin Rabinowitz and Robson, J. (eds.) (2015) *Sex in Antiquity. Exploring Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World*. New York and London, 408-421.
Henker, J. (1985) ‘Rape and the founding of Rome’ *Helios* 12: 41-8.
James, S. (1997) ‘Slave-Rape and Female Silence in Ovid’s Love Poetry,’ *Helios* 24: 60–76.
McCarthy, K. (1998) ‘“*Servitium amoris: Amor servitii*”, in Murnaghan and Joshel (eds.), *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture*. London¹_{SEP}, 174-92²_{SEP}.
McKeown, J.C. (1989) *Ovid Amores: Text, Prolegomena, Commentary*. A Commentary on Book 1. Leeds.
Murgatroyd, P. (1981) ‘*Servitium amoris* and the Roman elegists’ *Latomus* 40: 589-606.
Richlin, A. (1992) ‘Reading Ovid’s rapes’ in Richlin (ed.) *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*. Oxford, 158-179.

Extras:

- Connolly, J. (2000) ‘Asymptotes of Pleasure: Thoughts on the Nature of Roman Erotic Elegy in *Arethusa* 33.1 (2000), 71-98.
Liveley, G, Salzman-Mitchell, P. (ed.) (2008) *Latin Elegy and Narratology: Fragments of Story*. Columbus, Ohio
Henderson, J. (1992). “Wrapping Up the Case: Reading Ovid, Amores, 2, 7 (+ 8). II.” *Materiali e Discussioni per l’analisi dei testi classici* 28: 27–83.