

Amores 1.11 is a multi-faceted poem of persuasion. Addressed to the servant Nape, it is an attempt to persuade her to bring a letter of persuasion to the narrator's *puella* Corinna. We know from its sequel, *Amores* 1.12 that the persuasion of Nape succeeds, and the persuasion of Corinna fails; and this failure allows the narrator to indulge in a wonderful invective against the tablets that carried his message to his mistress. In this paper I will demonstrate that the reasons for the narrator's failure are implicit in *Amores* 1.11, and arise primarily from the narrator's inconsistent persona or, perhaps, his too consistent persona in the poem. On the one hand he is the eager lover and he expresses this eagerness directly to Nape, directly to the *puella* through the letter itself, and indirectly to the *puella* through his conversation with Nape. On the other he is the impatient master. He undercuts his exaggeratedly polite opening address to Nape with reminders of her status, and these reminders become more explicit as the poem advances and his requests turn into orders. His increasingly peremptory tone with Nape spills over into a similar tone with Corinna, as he imagines her reactions and responses through Nape. His orders to Nape, therefore, become his orders to the *puella*, an approach not appropriate if he does indeed want a favorable response.

The narrator's eagerness is present throughout the poem. Such words and phrases as *mane* (7), *pelle moras* (8), *dum loquor, hora fugit* (15), *continuo* (16), and *nec mora* (19) keep his impatience before our eyes. As any impulsive lover should be (Gross), he is very open about his request, a night with Corinna, and he makes his request early in the poem (13). His eagerness also appears as he disarmingly, it seems, cannot decide how he wants his Corinna to react. Certainly he wants her to read his message but should she respond at length (19) or should she limit her response to the one word, *ueni* (24), that he wants to hear and that might show impatience on her part as well? This confusion of expectations is meant to suggest the lover's impulsiveness, and he almost gushes as he jumbles his contradictory requests with his fantasies about how his message will be received.

However, equally present are the narrator's orders both to Nape and through her to Corinna. The former begin as an amusing conclusion to his ridiculously formal opening address to Nape (*accipe, perfer*, 7-8) and become more frequent a few lines later (*dices, redde, fac, mando, iubeto* 13-19). Their effect intensifies from a future tense couched as a suggestion (*dices*, 13) to the archaic and ultra-legal *iubeto* (19). This last verb also becomes a turning point in the narrator's assumptions about Corinna as he turns from imagining her reaction to predicting her response. It is natural and right that he order Nape, but his ordering her to order the *puella* is odd and wrong (McKeown). Through Nape the narrator begins to give orders of his own, couched as polite requests (*rescribat, comprimat, habeat* 19-24), but orders nevertheless. This cannot be a good approach. Instead of taking heed of his initial characterization of Corinna (*dubitantem Corinnam*), he barrels ahead with his plan, and allows his eagerness to undermine his position as a suppliant, who requests a meeting, to become that of a superior, who demands a response.

It becomes, then, almost obvious that the narrator's persuasion of Corinna will fail because, unlike Nape, Corinna does not have to listen to his commanding tone, even if the tone is well disguised. But we must question why the narrator is so strong and, as it turns out, so wrong. It may be because elegy must have tension to be good elegy, as James suggests, or because Ovid himself is uncomfortable with or desirous of pointing out the follies of elegy. But if we look at other poems of amatory persuasion, *Amores* 1.3, for instance, where the narrator begins just right by listing his good qualities and ends with a confident declaration of the immortality his poetry will bring; or *Amores* 1.4 where the narrator adopts a very authoritarian tone directly to the *puella*, (and, we assume, fails in this persuasion as well), we must conclude that the narrator cannot ever step away from his persona not even to beg as a good elegiac lover must. By being himself the narrator ensures his failure: *Corinna dubitans* is a direct reaction to the overbearing, bossy Roman male.

Bibliography:

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