

Seruitium Amoris in Ovid's Paraclausithyron (*Amores* 1.6)

Generically speaking, Ovid's *Amores* 1.6 is a paraclausithyron, and most of the scholarship on the poem has focused on Ovid's interaction with his predecessors and his innovations to the genre, which include the introduction of a refrain and changing the address from the door itself to the doorkeeper (Copley, Laigneau). What has gone unnoticed, however, is that these changes make the poem into an extended examination of *seruitium amoris*, allowing Ovid to undermine yet another elegiac topos in his first book of elegies.

This poem provides one of the clearest expressions of the concept of *seruitium amoris* because the apostrophe to the *ianitor* instead of the traditional door establishes a bond between the *amator* and the *puella*'s slave. Ovid presents himself and the *ianitor* as facing similarly harsh situations, each bound in their own way (Dimundo), and he elevates the status of the *ianitor* by employing rhetorical techniques (McKeown) and even hymnic language (Watson) in his attempts to convince the *ianitor* to open the door. Ovid presents the two of them as slaves to the same *domina*, with the poet being even lower than the *ianitor*.

But over the course of the poem Ovid chips away at the status he has granted the *ianitor* and the identification between himself and the slave that he has created, thereby showing how limited the *seruitium* of *seruitium amoris* really is. The introduction of the refrain (*tempora noctis eunt; excute poste seram*, 24, 32, 40, 48, 56) functions as a timer of sorts, showing that the identification between the two is only temporary, and will expire soon. Unlike the slave, Ovid can walk away at any time.

Ovid's wish to trade places with the slave (45–7) if he is with his own girlfriend is disingenuous, and at odds with the difference between their positions, a fact highlighted most clearly by Ovid's claim to have interceded on the slave's behalf with their mistress (20). Here the

literal and metaphorical uses of the term *domina* clash, and the difference between the *seruus amoris* and the *seruus* is clear: Ovid can ask favors of her, while the slave stands naked (19) and trembling before her (20). Furthermore, Ovid is drunk and free to move about the city, while the slave is chained and can only drink water, conditions from which Ovid wishes him to be released so long as he opens the door (25–6).

When Ovid realizes that he has failed to get the door open, he insults the *ianitor* and departs from the door in the traditional manner, leaving a garland and addressing the door. The final insult leveled at the *ianitor* comes as Ovid says farewell to the cruel door posts and hard threshold *duraque conseruae ligna ... fores* (74). The use of the non-elegiac term *conseruae* draws attention to what Ovid has done throughout the poem, and highlights the connection between the *ianitor* and the *ianua* itself that Ovid has been building throughout the poem (Laigneau). At the end of the poem, the *ianitor* and *ianua* are virtually indistinguishable, both objects chained in place, while Ovid can walk away, and his final address to the *ianitor* encourages us to focus on how Ovid's earlier references to the slave's position undermine his own rhetoric. Ultimately, it is not Ovid who is the *ianitor's* fellow slave, but the door itself. Ovid's parting shot to the *ianitor* is a reminder of the favor he has lost (71) and another reminder of his servile position—all a far cry from Ovid's earlier wheedling, hymnic praise.

The poem creates a relationship between the poet and slave that shifts from sympathetic to antagonistic. While much of the poem ostensibly elevates the position of the slave, at the same time it constantly reminds the slave of his inferior position, thereby highlighting the vast gulf between his station and that of the poet-lover, a contrast most pointed at the end of the poem when Ovid's valediction groups the *ianitor* with inanimate objects. Ovid's parting shot marks a return to the more normal form of a *paraclausithyron* in its address to the door, reminding the

ianitor that he has missed his chance to improve his lot by helping Ovid and revealing who is truly the slave.

Bibliography

Copley, F. O. 1956. *Exclusus amator. A Study in Latin Love Poetry*. Madison.

Dimundo, R. 2000. *L'elegia allo specchio. Studi sul I labor degli Amores di Ovidio*. Bari.

Laigneau, S. 2000. "Ovid, *Amours* I,6: un *paraclausithyron* très ovidien." *Latomus* 59:317–26.

McKeown, J. C. 1989. *Ovid: Amores. Text, Prolegomena and Commentary in Four Volumes*.

Volume II. A Commentary on Book One. Trowbridge.

Watson, L. C. 1982. "Ovid *Amores* 1.6: A Parody of a Hymn?" *Mnemosyne* 35:92–102.