Thea S. Thorsen

The Beloved: Figures and Words

This chapter explores specific figures and words associated with the role of the beloved in ancient literature. One of the most prominent of these roles is that of Latin love poetry's *puella* (Lat. 'girl'); it therefore offers a natural point of departure for this chapter's investigation. The *puella* resembles and is indeed in current scholarship commonly compared to the figure of the *meretrix* (Lat. 'prostitute') of Attic New/Roman comedy, who may also be an object of love. However, the conspicuous contrast between the frequent occurrence of the word *meretrix* in comedy and the virtual absence of this word from Latin love poetry suggests that the *puella* may also be fruitfully compared to other figures of the beloved. In this regard, the etymologically linked word *puer* (Lat. 'boy'), which appears in that same poetry also in reference to beloved persons, emerges as particularly relevant, especially as both Latin terms may correspond to the Greek gender-inclusive word παῖς ('child'), which can also denote the beloved in Greek poetry. As will be argued, a pursuit of the etymologically linked designations of both male and female objects of love – in both Greek and Latin – offers a fresh perspective on the striking figure of the *puella* in Latin love literature, which arguably helps us to interpret her as an embodiment of a particularly significant moment in the history of literature in the West.

Introduction

Love literature depends on the figure of the beloved, who is readily addressed as a poem's 'you', and also occurs in third-person narratives and descriptions as the 'other'.[1] The beloved thus represents both 'you' and the 'other' in relation to the lover, and their existence may be perceived as strongly as that of the lover's 'I'. This is certainly true of the beloved in poetry at Rome, where the figure acquires a particular complexity. From an overall perspective, this complexity apparently favours and promotes the beloved presented as a female figure. This may seem all as it should be from the perspective of our day and age, which is situated at

1 Cf. Barthes' definition of his *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*: 'C'est un portrait, si l'on veut, qui est proposé, mais ce portrait n'est pas psychologique; il est structural: il donne à lire une place de parole: la place de quelqu'un qui parle en lui-même, amoureusement, face à l'autre (l'objet aimé), qui ne parle pas', 1977, 7.

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the end point of a long tradition in the West of male lovers of women beloveds in heterosexual relationships. The allegedly ennobling dynamics of such devotion to the beloved is celebrated in the construct of 'courtly love'[2] and interpreted as a religion of the 'woman',[3] in which – in the words of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe – the allegedly 'eternal feminine draws us on upwards'.[4]

However, this hetero-male-centred perspective, disclosed by the 'us' which is easily understood to mean 'us men' in the Faustian punchline of Goethe, occludes the fact that there are also male beloveds, of both male and female lovers.[5] For in ancient literature there are likewise female figures who may be loving subjects, and from whose perspective the beloved is often male. In fact, in much of ancient literature the beloved seems just as readily to be of the same sex as the lover or of the opposite sex, irrespectively of whether the lover is male or female.[6] Thus, from the perspective of ancient literature, it is rather the dominance of the female figure as beloved in Roman love poetry that requires explanation: why is it that when we arrive at Rome in the Augustan age it is the female beloved who steals the show? Does something happen at this time, in the decades before Christ, and in this place, Rome, which is related to the empowering of feminine qualities and values? Or, perhaps, is what happens here related to a male chauvinist need to possess and exploit female figures in order to celebrate control and power?

Many prominent scholars have approached these questions and given different and important answers.[7] What I hope to add in the following is a fresh approach to some of the underlying dynamics of this process that ended in the predominance of the female beloved. I will do so by looking more closely not only at the figure of the beloved, but also at the vocabulary employed to describe that figure. In the latter regard I am inspired by Antony Corbeill's study, *Sexing the*

2 See my first chapter, n. 11.

3 See my first chapter, n. 12.

4 Goethe, *Faust*, Part II, Chorus Mysticus, last two lines: 'das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan'.

5 And not only in ancient literature, of course; this reminder is perhaps most urgently felt in scholarship on mediaeval love literature, given claims such as 'la femme devint religion' – see my first chapter, n. 12 – despite the fact all the while there were also women singer-songwriters, trobairitz, whose beloveds were male.

6 There are male lovers of male beloveds, female lovers of female beloveds, male lovers of female beloveds and female lovers of male beloveds; see esp. Williams 1990; 2010 2nd ed., Boehringer 2007 and Hubbard 2014.

7 Especially important attempts to explain the historical momentum of this poetry are Lyne 1980, James 2003 and Miller 2004; see also Watson 1983; 1992, Wyke 1987; 1989 = 2002, Sharrock 1991, Keith 1994, Greene 1995, Hardie 2003, Perkins 2011; 2014, Miller 2013, with further references and Hallett 2013, picking up, among other references, Thorsen 2012b.

World: Grammatical Gender and Biological Sex in Ancient Rome (2015), which argues that the categories of grammatical gender in Latin developed out of a transition from one state of the (mostly republican) language in which words occurring in the grammatically feminine gender might *also* occur in the masculine, to a state of the (mostly imperial) language in which words occurring in the grammatically feminine gender could *not* occur in the grammatically masculine gender, and vice versa. Notably, in Corbeill's research material these states represent trends that to a certain extent appear simultaneously, and sometimes even overlap, so that the development in question is not to be imagined as one clear-cut and linear chronological process. I will in the following argue that the beloved in Latin literature undergoes a similar development.

Figures

Curiously, while the prominence in Roman literature of the beloved as female is widely recognized, she famously keeps defying unequivocal definitions.[8] Metapoetically, she represents the poet's work of art,[9] yet as a fictional character, she appears to be more than a projection of the poet-lover's wishes and fantasies;[10] this figure often appears learned, *docta*, sometimes as learned as the poet, and in glimpses almost as a colleague of his in the trade of literature (Prop. 2.3.19–22);[11] moreover, she is not necessarily always attractive and seductive, but can also appear more or less repugnant to the lover (e.g. Catull. 8, 11, 58, 72, 76); the female beloved may readily have forceful aspects (cf. e.g. Prop. 4.7) and repeatedly appears to have a mind and a will of her own (e.g. Prop. 4.8).

She is powerful from the lover's point of view, not just because the poet loves and desires her and she can reject him, but also because she is part of a network of other lovers, rich admirers or even a husband, as is the case in the following poem, where Ovid's poet-lover accepts that his 'beloved girl' (*Am.* 1.4.3, *dilectam … puellam*) and 'lady' (*mea domina*, see passage quoted below) will have to return home not with him, but with her *uir* ('husband') when the dinner they have all three attended is over:

8 Cf. Miller 2013.

9 As stressed by Wyke 2002.

10 This is arguably so even when taking into account the argument of James 2003 that a man who is trying to get sex for free by means of poetry (= the elegiac lover) needs to posit a beloved (= elegiac *puella*) who may – at least potentially – be interested in poetry and hence *docta*.

11 See Keith in this volume.

Me miserum! monui, paucas quod prosit in horas;
separor a domina nocte iubente mea.
Nocte uir includet, lacrimis ego maestus obortis,
qua licet, ad saeuas prosequar usque fores.
oscula iam sumet, iam non tantum oscula sumet:
quod mihi das furtim, iure coacta dabis.

(Ov. *Am.* 1.4.59–64)[12]

Miserable as I am, I have urged you to what will help for only a few scant hours; I must be separated from my lady – night will command it. At night your husband will shut you in, and I, all gloomy and pouring forth my tears, shall follow you – as far as I may – up to the cruel doors. Then he will take kisses from you, yes, then he will take not only kisses; what you give me in secret, you will give him as a right, because you must.

(Transl. Showerman and Goold, adapted)

The word *iure* (*Am.* 1.4.64, 'by law') strongly suggests that the status of the relationship between the beloved and the *uir* is that of wedlock.[13]

Even so, Latin love poetry abounds with allegations of greed and readiness to offer sex in return for gifts and money addressed to the beloved, who is accordingly also easily associated with prostitution. In scholarship, the beloved in Latin love poetry is regularly understood in reference to the *meretrix*, mostly in terms of her alleged material greed. The *meretrix* is commonly envisaged as a professional sex worker, who may be a manumitted ex-slave and self-employed businesswoman,[14] but may alternatively be owned by a pimp, as in the following Ovidian passage,[15] where the figure of the *meretrix* is sharply distinguished from that of the beloved:[16]

12 See also e.g. Ov. *Am.* 2.19 and 3.4 and Davis 1999 for the political implications of this configuration, especially as concerns the charge of *lenocinium* (see Treggiari 1991, 288), which made it a punishable crime not to report one's wife if she was having an affair; cf. my first chapter n. 67.

13 Davis 1993, 67 claims to see 'intentional ambiguities' behind both *uir* (*passim*) and *iure* in *Am.* 1.4.64, with reference to McKeown 1989 *ad loc.*, who only refers to his introduction in McKeown 1987, where information about this ambiguity remains hard to find. Moreover, both McKeown and Davis refer such ambiguites to Ford 1966, who, however, does not discuss the significance of *iure*, but instead consistently translated *uir* as 'husband'. Thus, scholarship has in fact yet to produce arguments on which the interpretation of the relationship between the *puella* and the *uir* in *Am.* 1.4 as non-marital can be based. See also Davis 1999.

14 Lyne 1980, 8–17, and James 2003, 37.

15 See Sharrock and Brecke in this volume.

16 James 2003, 94–6 reads *Am.* 2.10 rhetorically, as an attempt to make the *puella* 'prostitute' herself to the poet-lover without demanding payment of any sort. However, the description of

Stat meretrix certo cuiuis mercabilis aere,
et miseras iusso corpore quaerit opes ;
deuouet imperium tamen haec lenonis auariet,
quod uos facitis sponte, coacta facit.

(Ov. *Am.* 1.10.21–4)

The prostitute stands for sale at the fixed price to anyone at all and wins her wretched gains with body on call; yet even she calls down curses on the power of the greedy pimp and does under compulsion what you [non-prostitutes] perform of your own will.

(Transl. Showerman and Goold, adapted)

In these two passages from the *Amores* there is one word that especially stands out: *coacta* (*Am.* 1.4.64; 1.10.24 'forced'). The unique occurrence of this word only here in all of the three books of the *Amores* suggests that it is important. And indeed, when it is used in reference to a husband and a pimp respectively, this verbal echo underscores that both a wife and a prostitute share the same fate, inasmuch as one is forced (*coacta*) to have sex with a husband because he has power over her by law (*iure*), while the other is forced (*coacta*) to have sex with the random paying customer because she is under an owner's command (*imperium*). The important contrast between the unwilling, institutionalized sex that a wife/prostitute must have with her husband/customer and the willing lovemaking of a beloved with her lover (cf. e.g. Prop. 2.15 and Ov. *Am.* 1.5) is also underscored by the fact that she can actually reject this lover, which she also does from time to time (cf. e.g. Ov. *Am.* 1.12).

Furthermore, the figure of the female beloved in Latin literature is also associated with Roman citizen status. Catullus' own poems underpin the associations between Catullus' Lesbia and the noble citizen woman Clodia Metelli,[17] however fictitious these associations may be (Catull. 79.1–2; cf. Apul. *Apol.* 10).[18] Sulpicia, who is not only a beloved (cf. [Tib.] 3.8–12), but also a lover ([Tib.] 3.13-18), and indeed one who calls herself a *puella* as such ([Tib.] 3.14.3; 15.1; 17.1),[19] is readily overloaded with costly clothes and adornments of the kind that are easily associated with *meretrices* (cf. [Tib] 3.8),[20] and yet identifies herself as 'the daughter of

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the line of work of the *meretrix* is arguably compassionate, evoking through the phrasing of *miseras opes* the usual self-complaint of the poet-lover, *me miserum* (see e.g. Ov. *Am.* 1.4.59 above). See also Sharrock, who discusses this poem in this volume.

17 Skinner 2011.

18 See n. 45.

19 Fulkerson 2017, 221–94, makes numerous acute observations on the complexity of the *puella* Sulpicia.

20 '... the visual nature of the description almost forces the readers to look at her', Fulkerson 2017, 222.

Servius', who is most likely Servius Sulpicius Rufus,[21] making Sulpicia niece to Messalla Corvinus, known to be one of the key figures of Augustan literary culture, alongside Maecenas.[22] The lavishly adorned citizen *puella* Sulpicia (also as beloved, cf. [Tib.] 3.8.15; 24, 10.1; 11; 16, 12.2, *docta puella*; 9) is no whore. In fact, that is an allegation she reserves for her rival, whom she calls a *scortum* in the very same line in which her own aristocratic identity is underscored ([Tib.] 3.16.3–4):

> sit tibi cura togae potior pressumque quasillo
> scortum quam Serui filia Sulpicia.
>
> ([Tib.] 3.16.3–4)

> For you, a toga and a whore loaded down with a wool-basket may be worthier of your preference than Sulpicia, Servius' daughter.
>
> (Transl. Postgate and Goold)

As in the case of Sulpicia, Lesbia too, inasmuch as she evokes Sappho, also quite fittingly violates the dichotomy between lover and beloved. For the same dynamic in the case of Sappho herself can moreover be seen in Horace, where Sappho, as lover, both complains about her beloved *puellis* (*Carm.* 2.13.25, 'girls') and is herself referred to as the *Aeolia puella* (*Carm.* 4.9.12, 'the Aeolian girl'). Also, in Ovid's *Heroides* 15.100 Sappho calls herself *puella*, underscoring this word's capacity to accommodate a loving subject.[23] At this juncture we have entered into the realm of a different kind of metapoetics than the one mentioned above. And this kind of metapoetics is arguably not reductive, as the understanding of the *puella* as a product of 'womanufacturing' can be,[24] but enriching, drawing on references to other poetry, including that of women authors, such as Sappho and Corinna.[25]

To sum up, the female beloved in Latin literature is a *locus* of conflicting evocations: On a metapoetic level she is the poet-lover's creation and object, but also his (or her)[26] tribute to preceding poets, including female ones. Moreover, she is attractive, but also intimidating, powerful, but also 'forced', she can be someone else's wife and be compared with a prostitute, and yet brings with her associations with Roman citizenship. The figure of the *meretrix*, who most prominently features in the genre of Roman comedy before that of Latin love poetry, is

21 This may also have been her grandfather; see n. below.
22 *OCD* s.v. 'Sulpicia'.
23 For the vexed question of the authenticity of this poem, see Thorsen 2014, 96–122.
24 Sharrock 1991.
25 Thorsen 2019b.
26 If we take Sulpicia into account.

certainly important for understanding the figure of the female beloved in love poetry too, as has perhaps been most persuasively argued by Sharon James in her highly influential *Learned Girls and Male Persuasion: Gender and Reading in Roman Love Elegy* (2003). Nevertheless, there is no easy way of referring all these discordant associations to this figure alone, which arguably calls for an additional model of explanation.

Words

Three Latin terms have been used above in relation to the beloved as a female figure: *meretrix*, *puella* and *domina* (cf. above *Am.* 1.4.60), and two bodies of Latin literature have been identified as particularly rich in occurrences of this figure: Roman comedy and Latin love poetry. The main authors of these genres are Plautus, Terence (= comic playwrights), Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus, including Lygdamus and Sulpicia from the *Appendix Tibulliana*, and Ovid in his love elegies (= love poetry).[27] The distribution of the three Latin terms for the female beloved across these authors (whose output varies greatly in size) is as follows:[28]

Tab. 1: ~~Sample caption~~

Author	*meretrix*	*Puella*	*Domina*
Plautus	72	28	ca. 2
Terence	26	6	3
Catullus	1	46	10
Propertius	1	123	32
Ovid	4	221	98

As may be seen from this survey, the application of the word *meretrix* is highly common in comedy, but occurs conspicuously seldom in love poetry, and never unequivocally in reference to the beloved. Catullus uses the word only once (Catull. 110.7), of a certain Aufilena, Tibullus and the *Appendix Tibulliana* never,

27 I include *Heroides* 1–21, *Amores* 1–3, *Ars amatoria* 1–3 and *Remedia amoris* among his love elegies; see Thorsen 2013c.

28 Generated using the concordance tool of the PHI (https://latin.packhum.org).

Propertius once, of Cleopatra (Prop. 3.11.39), and Ovid five times in his love elegies,[29] of which only one instance includes a certain comparison between the figure of the *puella* and that of the *meretrix* (*Am.* 3.14.9), while another refers to the stock character in Menander's Attic New Comedy plays (*Am.* 1.15.18), one to the beloved of Sappho's brother (*Her.* 15.63), one to the kind of woman who is the direct opposite of the ideal *puella* (*Am.* 1.10.21); and finally, the word is used in reference to the dangers of materially greedy girlfriends in the *Ars amatoria* (*Ars am.* 1.435).[30]

At the same time, the survey above confirms that the genre which arguably displays the most complex figure of the beloved, namely Latin love poetry, most commonly employs the terms *puella* and *domina* for this figure. The latter term occurs less frequently, but is interchangeable with *puella*, as seen e.g. in *Am.* 2.4.3 (*dilectam puellam*) and 60 (*mea domina*). It may therefore be worth scrutinizing the word *puella* first and then that of the *domina* more closely, in order to get a better grasp on the figure she represents.

The word *puella* is a noun in the feminine gender and diminutive form. It is, as such, bound to a male counterpart, and often represented as derived from it, as seen e.g. from the *Thesaurus Lingae Latinae*, which notes '*v.[ide]* puellus' ('see "*puellus*"') under the entry '*puella*',[31] even though there are more than 1,300 occurrences of the word in the grammatically feminine gender, against fewer than 20 in the grammatically masculine form in classical Latin.[32] Be that as it may, both forms are etymologically linked to the non-diminutive form of the noun, *puer*. Notably, Varro claims that this word once used to be grammatically gender-inclusive in Latin*: Puer et in feminino sexu antiqui dicebant* (Varro, *Ling.* Fr. 37; Charisius, *Gramm.* I 84.5–11 Keil, '*puer* [child] the ancients used to say also as a feminine'). Varro backs up his claim by quoting e.g. Livius Andronicus, who in his *Odyssey* wrote *mea puer quid uerbi ex tuo ore supra fugit* (Fr. 3, 'my female child, what kind of word flies from your mouth?').[33] Moreover, Varro compares this gender-inclusive usage of the Latin noun with a parallel phenomenon in Greek: *ut Graeci ὁ παῖς καὶ ἡ παῖς* ... (Varro, *Ling.* Fr. 37; Charisius, *Gramm.* I 84.5–11 Keil,

29 See n. 27 above.

30 Cf. *procul a scripta solis meretricibus arte* (*Tr.* 2.303 'far from the *Ars amatoria* written only for prostitutes'), which is not as straightforward as it may seem; see e.g. Ingleheart 2010a, 261. See also Sharrock and Brecke in this volume.

31 *TLL* s.v. 'puella'.

32 Figures from PHI (https://latin.packhum.org).

33 There are different versions of this verse in different lines of transmission, which also includes the form *mea puera*; see Kent 1938, 626–9 and *TLL* 2517, 3.

'as the Greeks [use the] masculine article in Greek for παῖς meaning "boy" and feminine article in Greek for παῖς meaning "girl" ...'). The Greek παῖς is thus understood as having been the equivalent of the Latin *puer*,[34] in terms of being grammatically gender-inclusive, at least at some point in the history of the Latin language. By comparing the Greek gender-inclusive παῖς (where the grammatical gender distinction is made conspicuous by the preceding articles ὁ and ἡ) to the Latin gender-inclusive usage of the term *puer* at the time of Livius Andronicus, Varro sets up a linguistic trajectory at the other end of which we find the term *puella*. This linguistic trajectory therefore appears suggestively relevant to our understanding of the figure of the beloved *puella* in Latin literature.

In the literary examples Varro uses to back up his claim,[35] the significance of the female *puer* seems primarily to be 'daughter'. Similarly, in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, which sums up the meanings of the word *puella*, the first of the four main categories is the same: 1) a female child, girl, daughter; 2) a young woman, girl; 3) an object of sexual interest/one's sweetheart and 4) a slave girl.[36] Notably, all of these definitions contribute to an image of the *puella* as someone inferior in status and also an object of potential affection, whether non-erotic, as that of a father towards his daughter, or erotic, as that of a lover towards his sweetheart or the customer of a slave-prostitute, whether she is a freedwoman or subject to the ownership of a pimp.

However, as we have seen, the figure of the beloved, who most often goes under the designation *puella*, is complex. Thus, although a relatively young age is the conspicuous common denominator of all the four main categories identified in *OLD*, the *puella* is not always young. Thanks to the association between Clodia and Catullus' Lesbia, one of the most prominent *puellae* appears to be older than the poet who loves her. In the usual chronology, Clodia is thought to have been born in 95/94 BCE and Catullus c. 85 BCE, so that she is in her thirties when addressed by the poet. Thus, the beloved *puella* may violate the convention that the beloved must be young, as well as the word's central connotation of a younger, tender age.[37]

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34 And an etymological connection, however insecure, cannot be ruled out: 'The appurtenance of Lat. *puer* < *ph_2u-ero- 'smaller' is not certain', Beekes 2010, 1143. I am grateful to Eystein Dahl for pointing this out to me.

35 Kent 1938, 626–9.

36 *OLD* s.v. 'puella'.

37 So also Phaedra, calling herself *puella* at Ov. *Her*. 4.2, and Sappho at Ov. *Her*. 15.100; both are older than their beloveds. Moreover, Ovid's *praeceptor amoris* recommends senior lovers to both men (*Ars am*. 2.663–702) and women (*Ars am*. 3.555–76); it thus seems that Ovid modifies the presumed fixation on youth in the beloved in antiquity, cf. e.g. Konstan 2000 and 2002.

More importantly, the word's associations with slavery are highly complicated, partly due to the fact that the word *puella* is so closely linked to the term *domina*[38] (i.e. 'mistress of a slave') as another designation of the beloved in Latin love poetry, especially elegy. No doubt, of the two words, *puella* is much more prominent than *domina* in the corpus of Latin love poetry, as seen in the survey above. Yet, even if the word *domina* is less frequently used for the beloved than *puella*, the two terms are, as already pointed out, used interchangeably. According to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, the word *domina* denotes power, authority and ownership, as in a 'female head of a household' and 'a female ruler or leader', and expresses 'respect or affection.'[39] Thus, the paradoxical figure of the *puella-domina* might be said to function as a contradictory hendiadys, which may be explained according to the following logic: the lover wants to possess his beloved as one would possess a pet slave, a *puella*, but finds himself enslaved by the beloved as by a *domina*. From this situation arises the topos of *seruitium amoris*, 'slavery of love', which is one of the defining features of Latin love elegy.[40] The *puella-domina* figure thus appears to be a profoundly Roman oxymoron.

However, the double dynamic of an enslaving slave might also be seen as embedded in a poem attributed to the Greek lyric poet Anacreon:

> ὦ παῖ παρθένιον βλέπων
> δίζημαί σε, σὺ δ' οὐ κοεῖς,
> οὐκ εἰδὼς ὅτι ταῆς ἐμῆς
> ψυχῆς ἡνιοχεύεις.
>
> (Anac. Fr. 360 PMGF)

> O boy with the glance of a virgin, I seek you, but you do not notice, not knowing that you hold the reins of my soul.
>
> (Transl. Campbell, adapted)

The combination of the word 'boy', which carries the connotation of 'slave', and clearly also designates a beloved, with the image of this beloved as a rider or charioteer controlling the soul of the lover seems to capture some of the same dynamic as the oxymoron of the *puella-domina*. The designation of a beloved as παῖς, as seen in Anacreon's poem, also increases the relevance of Varro's observation for our understanding of the figure of the *puella*.

38 See e.g. Keith 2012.

39 *OLD* s.v. 'domina'; cf. also de la Bédoyère 2018. For post-Augustan, imperial applications of concepts such as πότνια ('mistress', 'queen', also of a goddess) and δέσποινα ('mistress', 'lady of the house', 'mistress of slaves') in Greek poetry, see Magnelli, 2016.

40 See Fulkerson 2013 and the first chapter in this volume.

Notably, the Liddell-Scott-Jones *Greek-English Lexicon* (*LSJ*) lists only the following three main significances of παῖς, as defined 1) in relation to descent, as a son or daughter; 2) in relation to age, as a male or female child younger than the speaker and 3) in relation to condition, as a male or female slave.[41] Yet the grammatically feminine ἡ παῖς is in fact also a term for the beloved in Greek literature, from Sappho[42] to Philodemus.[43] And, as is also seen in the poem by Anacreon, παῖς is employed more commonly still in the case of beloved boys, from at least as far back as Theognis, to Theocritus and beyond. Seeing a connection between the Greek παῖς and the Latin *puella* should also remind us of how strongly the *puella* is connected to the *puer* as beloved, which also occurs a few times in the diminutive form *puellus*.[44] Grammatically, the word *puella* is thus an example of a word in the feminine gender bound to a grammatically male counterpart, which, as demonstrated by Corbeill, was once a pervasive phenomenon in earlier Latin, though it later became evanescent.

The beloved: from both through two to the one and only

Against the background of these observations, an alternative to the *meretrix* figure as a point of comparison for the *puella* is offered by the etymologically connected term *puer*, which may also represent the beloved in Latin literature. As Corbeill points out, men and women, or girls and boys, have more in common than not. And this is arguably the case for the *puella* and the *puer* in the role of the beloved, too.[45] Both carry connotations of the erotic pet slave, such as Alexis

41 *LSJ* s.v. 'παῖς'.

42 E.g. Sappho, Fr. 49 Voigt, which includes both love and distaste for the παῖς Atthis in a way that is reminiscent of the figure of the *puella* as outlined above.

43 For Philodemus, see Keith in this volume.

44 *OLD* s.v. 'puellus'; Stephen Harrison kindly suggests that the occurrences of this word are either 'in archaic or archaising texts ... suggesting that this like feminine *puer* is an early usage', as in Apuleius; see my first chapter in this volume.

45 Cf. Apuleius *Apol.* 10, which is usually quoted as a source of information on the alleged historical identities behind the pseudonyms of elegiac *puellae* only, but in addition to informing us that Catullus' Lesbia was Clodia, Ticidas' Perilla was Metella, Propertius' Cynthia was Hostia and Tibullus' Delia was Plania, Apuleius reveals in this passage the identity of Vergil behind the name Corydon and of his beloved (whose real name we are not told) behind that of Alexis. When we add the real names of the boy loves of Lucilius, also mentioned in this passage, we get a fairly even distribution of same- and other-sex beloveds in Latin erotic poetry.

in Virgil's second *Eclogue*, who is *delicias domini* ('darling of his lord') and therefore inaccessible to others (Verg. *Ecl.* 2.2). Thus, the unnamed *puer* of Catullus' homoerotic verse in poems 15.5 (*puerum*) and 21.11 (*puer*), often assumed to be the beloved boy Juventius, but otherwise designated only as *meos amores* (15.1; 21.4), seems also to be such a pet slave and object of love, just like the *tenerae puerorum turbae* ('the tender throng of boys') at Tibullus' elegy 1.4.9.

That same elegy, which professes the poet's love for the boy Marathus, includes a lengthy passage on the perishable beauty that will fade with time, a concern shared with the poetic 'I' of Horace *Odes* 4.10 in regard to his beloved boy Ligurinus.[46] The concern for the preservation of beauty, particularly in the face of age, not only functions as a reminder of the present attractiveness of the beloved, but also creates a bridge between such accounts of the beloved as a *puer* with those of *puellae* and their looks, particularly in the works of Ovid.[47]

Furthermore, just like the *puella* figure, the beloved boy, too, may not reciprocate the lover's advances. Thus, Catullus is vehemently rejected by Juventius, who is mentioned explicitly as the male object of love in Catull. 24, 48, 81 and 99, and whom the poet wants to give as many as 'three hundred thousand kisses' (Catull. 48.3, *usque ad milia basiem trecenta*), but from whom he eventually steals but one:

Surripui tibi dum ludis, mellite Iuuenti,
sauiolum dulci dulcius ambrosia.
uerum id non impune tuli: namque amplius horam
suffixum in summa me memini esse cruce,
dum tibi me purgo nec possum fletibus ullis
tantillum uestrae demere saeuitiae.
Nam simul id factumst, multis diluta labella
guttis abstersti mollibus articulis,
ne quicquam nostro contractum ex ore maneret,
tamquam commictae spurca saliua lupae.
praeterea infesto miserum me tradere amori
non cessasti omnique excruciare modo,
ut mi ex ambrosia mutatum iam foret illud
sauiolum tristi tristius helleboro.
Quam quoniam poenam misero proponis amori
numquam iam posthac basia surripiam.

(Catull. 99)

46 Cf. also Hor. *Carm.* 4.1 and Palmore in this volume.

47 Cf. e.g. *Am.* 1.14, *Ars am.* 3.124–320 and, of course, the fragmentary *Medicamina faciei feminarum*, 'Cosmetics for female beauty.'

> I stole a kiss from you, honey-sweet Juventius, while you were playing, a kiss sweeter than sweet ambrosia. But not unpunished; for I remember how for more than an hour I hung impaled at the top of the gallows tree, as I excused myself to you, yet could not with all my tears take away ever so little from your anger; for no sooner was it done, than you washed your lips clean with plenty of water, and wiped them with your dainty fingers, that no contagion from my mouth might remain, as though it were the foul spit of some filthy whore. Besides that, you made haste to deliver my unhappy self to angry love, and to torture him in every manner, so that that kiss, changed from ambrosia, was now more bitter than bitter hellebore. Since then you impose this penalty on my unlucky love, henceforth I will never steal any kisses.
>
> (Transl. Cornish)

However, such bitter experiences as those of Catullus in this poem are not the only lessons to be learned by a lover in Latin poetry. This is demonstrated by the homoerotic teachings of Priapus in Tibullus 1.4:

> tunc tibi mitis erit, rapias tum cara licebit
> ascula : pugnabit, sed tibi rapta dabit.
> Rapta dabit primo, post adferet ipse roganti,
> post etiam collo se inplicuisse uelit.
> heu male nunc artes miseras haec saecula tractant:
> iam tener adsueuit munera uelle puer.
> At tu, qui uenerem docuisti uendere primus,
> quisquis es, infelix urgeat ossa lapis.
> Pieridas, pueri, doctos et amate poetas,
> aurea nec superent munera Pieridas.
>
> (Tib. 1.4.53–62)

> Then will he be gentle with you; then you may snatch the precious kiss: he will struggle, but let you snatch it. He will let you snatch it first; but later will he bring it for the asking, and presently even he will be fain to hang upon your neck. But now, alas! Our perverse age plies wretched art. Now gentle boys have learned to look for gifts. Whoever you are who first taught the sale of love, may an unhallowed stone weigh heavy on your bones. Love the Pierians, boys, and learned poets, do not let the Pierians succumb to golden gifts.
>
> (Transl. Cornish)

The element of force and Priapus' advice to interpret the beloved's 'no' as really a 'yes' might also compare with Ovid's advice in his *Ars amatoria* to use a bit of force in the case of *puellae*: *Vim licet appelles: grata est uis ista puellis:/ Quod iuuat, inuitae saepe dedisse uolunt* (Ov. *Ars am.* 1.673–4, 'You may call it violence; that kind of violence is welcome to girls; that which is pleasing they often wish to

have given unwillingly').[48] Thus, Ovid's seemingly male-chauvinist piece of advice to take 'no' as a 'yes' may in fact be mirroring Tibullan *erotodidaxis* regarding beloved boys.[49]

In addition to being hard (if not impossible) to get, the beloved *puer* may be unfaithful, susceptible to the wealth of rich suitors, who get sex in return for gifts and money, much to the lament of the poet-lover, who wants the *puer* to accept the gift of poetry instead (cf. Tib. 1.4.61–2), which exactly resembles the case of *puellae* (cf. e.g. Ov. *Am*. 1.10 and 3.8, the latter adding a political aspect to the riches with which one may achieve sex by linking these to Augustan military victories).

Finally, the beloved *puer* may also be associated with Roman citizenship, as seen from Catullus' designation of Juventius as *flosculus Iuuentiorum* (Catull. 24.1, 'the flower of the Juventii'), a phrase which seems to suggest the noble Roman family of that name.[50]

The status of the beloved *puer* is thus highly composite, and encompasses beauty and attraction, freedom to reject a lover, connotations of prostitution, as well as associations with the aristocracy, just like the figure of the beloved *puella*. Considering the similarities between the *puer* and the *puella* as figures of the beloved as well as their semantic connection, it is attractive to see the development outlined by Corbeill, from gender fluidity to more fixed and heterosexualized representations of grammatically male and female words in the history of the Latin language, as parallel to a development in Latin literature, in which Catullus' Juventius, the male beloveds of Virgil's *Eclogues,* Tibullus' Marathus, Horace's Ligurinus and even Ovid's plural *amores*[51] are a part of a vital yet vanishing feature, which is eventually eclipsed by the figure of the *puella*. For while one might have expected, due to these similarities between male and female beloveds,

48 See Zuckerberg on the issue, 2018, 105–22.

49 Ovid's piece of advice is further complicated by the fact that it alludes to the female figure Oenone's accusation of Helen as constantly saying 'no' but meaning 'yes' – see Brecke in this volume; however, there is also the narrative of Achilles and Deidamia to back up the theory, at *Ars am*. 1.681–704.

50 The Juventii were a Roman noble family from Tusculum; cf. Cicero, *Tu es e municipio antiquissimo Tusculano, ex quo sunt plurimae familiae consulares, in quibus est etiam Iuuentia* (*Planc*. 19, 'you are from the ancient Tuscan municipality, from which come several consular families, among them even the Juventii').

51 See Ingleheart in this volume, who explores the homoerotic aspects of Ovid's *Amores*. There are others too, such as the poet Valgius' Mystes, and, as Maltby points out in his commentary on Tibullus, 'The theme occurs ..., on the evidence of Verg. *Ecl*. 10.37–41, probably also in Gallus', Maltby 2002, 215.

mostly from the point of view of a male lover, that there would be male dominance on both the subjective and the objective side of love in Latin poetry, this is not the case. The conundrum of the prominence of the *puella* remains, in the sense that her presence, most concretely represented by the large number of verses dedicated to this figure, is not overshadowed by that of the *puer*, but quite the opposite.

I will close this chapter with an example that may be interpreted as a dramatization of this trajectory from the Greek gender-inclusive term παῖς to a *puella* who, not only as an object, but also as a subject in an erotic setting, acquires a presence so profound as 'you' and as the 'other' that she threatens to break loose from the role of beloved altogether. The example I have in mind is the reworking of Callimachus' story of Acontius and Cydippe (*Aet*. Frr. 67–75 Harder) in Ovid's *Heroides* 20–1, where the hero and heroine each pen their own letter.[52]

In the extant fragments of his *Aetia*,[53] Callimachus unfolds the tale of how the boy Acontius managed to trick Cydippe into unwittingly swearing to marry him in the temple of Artemis, and how the goddess struck Cydippe with illness every time she tried to marry the fiancé she was already engaged to, how her father eventually asked the oracle of Apollo what was the matter, and how his oracular response was that she had to marry Acontius, which she did, and was cured. The poet then closes his tale by divulging that he found the legend in the chronicles of Xenomedes, 'from which the child's story moved swiftly to our Calliope' (Fr. 75.76–7 Harder, ἐνθεν ὁ παιδὸς/ μῦθος ἐς ἡμετέρην ἔδραμε Καλλιόπην).

I will make but one brief point, which is that the phrase ὁ παιδὸς μῦθος, 'the child's story', has been interpreted strikingly differently in scholarship; Constantine Trypanis translates it as 'the maiden's story', as does Giulio Massimilla, yet Anette Harder reads this as 'the boy's story' and Susan Stephens as the 'story of a boy'. In fact, as I have pointed out elsewhere,[54] there are three instances of the word παῖς in the extant fragments of the story in Callimachus; the first refers to Acontius (Fr. 67.2 Harder), the second to Cydippe (Fr. 75.16 Harder) and the third may, as the diverging translations suggest, refer to either (Fr. 75.76–7 Harder).

The potential gender-inclusiveness of the final παῖς in the extant Callimachean fragments is arguably exploited in Ovid's *Heroides* 20–1. In scholarship, Acontius has been regarded as the most prominent of the two, not least as

52 The following observations necessarily overlap with Thorsen 2019a, which nevertheless differs in terms of the arguments offered.

53 See Thorsen 2019a, n. 1 for a brief overview on the scholarship on the state of the *Aetia*.

54 See n. above.

an embodiment of the poet,[55] especially as (author-like) he carves 'Cydippe is beautiful' into the bark of trees as he walks about in the woods and longs for her (Fr. 73 Harder). Yet Cydippe must at least be literate to have read the oath Acontius inscribed on the apple he threw at the feet of her nurse, who picked it up and, herself illiterate, asked Cydippe to read it aloud in the temple of Artemis (cf. Fr. 75.39 Harder).[56] And so, in Ovid's *Heroides* the two παῖδες who both know their way around words emerge as fully fledged writers of their own letters.

In these letters both Acontius and Cydippe identify Cydippe as a *puella* (*Her*. 20.26; 37; 66 and 21.59; 122; 159), thus signalling that her role is that of the beloved. But the love story, which seems unproblematic as such in Callimachus, is rather disturbing in Ovid's presentation. A considerable body of scholarship has detected disquieting features in Acontius' interest in Cydippe, such as his violent threats, stalking and jealousy,[57] not to mention the suffering on the part of Cydippe, who is literally on the verge of death because of Acontius' so-called 'love', which he himself calls 'madness' (*Her*. 20.207, *furoris*).[58] Such features are confusing when they occur in what is supposed to be one of the founding myths of love literature, and to have a happy ending. At the same time, precisely against the background of this confusion, Cydippe, the 'you' and 'other' to Acontius, emerges not only as a writing subject, but also as one of the more remarkable personalities in ancient literature.

I will in the following illustrate this point with the help of two examples, one of Cydippe's learnedness and one of her sarcasm. At the beginning of her letter, Cydippe compares herself to Hippolytus and implies that she – because she too is a virgin[59] – ought to be protected by the goddess Artemis/Diana, who now punishes her for breaking her oath (*Her*. 21.7–12). What is more, she also elegantly

55 Acosta-Hughes 2009.

56 See also Thorsen 2019a, 136.

57 Unlike Callimachus' Acontius, Ovid's has come from his own Island of Ceos to that of Cydippe, and claims that he lurks outside her door as she reads her letter, *Her*. 20.130; his letter abounds with violent images, such as the following threats: *si noceo quod amo, fateor, sine fine nocebo/ teque …* *Her*. 20.35–6, 'if I hurt what I love, I confess, I will hurt you without end …' and *si non proficient artes, ueniemus ad arma*, *Her*. 20.47, 'if art/tricks will not work, I will resort to arms'; finally, in *Her*. 20.135–70 Acontius rants against his rival, claiming his right over Cydippe's body, which he compares to material property such as crops, fenced land and chattel.

58 For such interpretations, see Rosenmeyer 1996, Kuhlmann 2005, Rynearson 2009, Alekou 2011, Alekou (forthcoming) and Thorsen 2019a and Thorsen (forthcoming b).

59 By referring to herself by the elegiac designation *puella* and the non-elegiac term *uirgo*, Cydippe further contributes to the above-mentioned confusion, see also Brecke in this volume.

alludes to Euripides' *Hippolytus*[60] when she magisterially lectures Acontius on the juridical difference between the letter and the spirit of the law, thus:

quae iurat, mens est ; sed nil iurauimus illa ;
illa fidem dictis addere sola potest.
consilium prudensque animi sententia iurat,
et nisi iudicii uincula nulla ualent.
Si tibi coniugium uolui promittere nostrum,
exige polliciti debita iura tori;
sed si nil dedimus praeter sine pectore uocem,
uerba suis frustra uiribus orba tenes.
Non ego iuraui – legi iurantia uerba;
uir mihi non isto more legendus eras.
decipe sic alias – succedat epistula pomo:
si ualet hoc, magnas ditibus aufer opes.
Fac iurent reges sua se tibi regna daturos,
sitque tuum toto quidquid in orbe placet.

(*Her*. 21.135–48 Kenney)

It is the mind that swears, and I have taken no oath with that; it alone can lend good faith to words. It is counsel and the prudent reasoning of the soul that swear, and, except the bonds of the judgment, none avail. If I have willed to pledge my hand to you, exact the due rights of the promised marriage-bed; but if I have given you naught but my voice, without my heart, you possess in vain but words without a force of their own. I took no oath – I read words that formed an oath; that was no way for you to be chosen as husband by me. Deceive thus other maids – let a letter follow an apple! If this plan holds, win away their great wealth from the rich; make kings take oath to give their thrones to you, and let whatsoever pleases you in all the world be yours.

(Transl. Showerman, rev. by Goold)

The punchline about all the things Acontius might achieve through his non-juridical (i.e. criminal) methods is easily read as irony. And an ironic attitude arguably permeates Cydippe's whole letter, as seen e.g. when she calls Acontius *magne poeta* (*Her*. 21.110, 'great poet') in the same line in which she identifies his inscribed words on the apple as *insidias tuas* ('your ambush'), and when she characterizes her own body, the health of which is ruined due to her repeated illnesses, as *ingenii … magna tropaea tui* (*Her*. 21.114, 'your artistic talent's great trophy'). These are only a few of many examples of the Cydippe's strong personality as expressed through Ovid's poem.

60 ἡ γλῶσσ' ὀμώμοχ', ἡ δὲ φρὴν ἀνώμοτος, Eur. *Hipp*. 612, 'My tongue swore, but my mind is not under oath.'

It thus seems – along the lines that have so far been investigated in this chapter – that Ovid, in the case of Acontius and Cydippe, has taken the ambiguous, grammatically gender-inclusive ὁ παιδὸς μῦθος of Callimachus and turned it into the story not only of Acontius, but also of the *puella* Cydippe. Moreover, the larger-than-life character of Cydippe as *puella* appears to break loose from the constraints of the role of beloved – also in the sense of a product of 'womanufacturing' – while simultaneously assuming the literary realness of a person in her own right.

Conclusion

As has been maintained throughout this chapter, the words παῖς, *puer* and *puella* all appear connected, yet evoke at the same time seemingly irreconcilable associations, which arguably refer not so much to historical facts about real working girls (*meretrices*) as to an imposing literary presence of increasing complexity. This complexity arguably culminates in the figure of the *puella*. The beloved, especially in the guise of this figure, becomes far more than a pretty face, and impossible to ignore, even as this figure evokes categories of socially inferior status such as that of a slave or a girl. The ultimate argument of this chapter is, therefore, that Roman love poetry, precisely because of its sustained focus on the beloved, and especially in the figure of the *puella*, might be regarded as a decisive moment in the emergence of the reality of 'you' and the 'other' in the history of literature in the West.