

Ellen Oliensis, Berkeley Book Chats, April 29, 2019

Timothy Hampton: Welcome to Berkeley Book Chats. I'm Timothy Hampton, director of the Townsend center for the Humanities. Berkeley Book Chats showcase a Berkeley faculty member engaged in a public conversation about a recently completed work. This popular series highlights the richness of Berkeley's academic community. Today, our guest is professor Ellen Oliensis, the chair of the Department of Classics at Berkeley, and a scholar of classical Latin literature. Her most recent book is called *Loving Writing/Ovid's Amores* published by Cambridge University Press. It offers an original and compelling exploration of the love poetry of the Roman poet Ovid or Publius Ovidius Naso as he was called.

Timothy Hampton: Ovid we know is one of the most influential poets in the Western tradition, indeed, in all of world literature. It would be impossible to imagine our poetic tradition without Ovid. And it's a delight, therefore, to read this important reconsideration of his love poetry, which as we know, was massively influential for later poets. So Nellie, let me welcome you to the Book Chat. And thank you for agreeing to talk today about your work. Perhaps we could begin by me asking you to tell us about this particular corpus of Ovid's poetry. It's very influential, but it's not the most famous of his work. When we think of Ovid we usually think of the *Metamorphoses*, but the *Amores* are important as well. And maybe you could just describe this and place it a little bit in Ovid's corpus for us.

Ellen Oliensis: Yeah, sure. It's a more complicated question than it might seem to be, but I can give a simple answer to it. So the *Amores* is Ovid's first collection of poetry. This we know it's the first thing that he came out with, preceded the *Metamorphoses* by, well, that's hard to say, but I'm just going to make it up and say about 20 years, let's say. And the reason the question is a little complicated... So he's the first thing he wrote, the first work in his elegy corpus and his corpus of love poetry, which is followed by things like the [inaudible 00:02:32] poems, impersonating mythological heroines and the *Ars amatoria* [inaudible 00:02:37] and his other things. But anyway, so it's the first selection in his love poetry, but what makes it a little complicated is that the collection is headed by an epigram that tells us that the collection we're reading, the three book collection we're reading is second edition of what was originally a five book edition.

Ellen Oliensis: This has produced... There's a huge amount of scholarship around this. What did the missing five book collection look like? And I'm completely agnostic on the question of what it looked like whether there even was a five book collection because the epigram, that little introductory epigram does so much wonderful work for the collection that follows. Some scholars think it's, there was nothing proceeding it in any case. What this means, though, is that the chronology not only because of the epigram, but also because of some poems within the collection that seemed to point to later moments or later collections, the chronology of the *Amores* is very hard to pin down. So on the one hand, it's his first work and on the other hand, it isn't his first work. So yeah, just that.

Timothy Hampton: So how did you get into the working on this stuff?

Ellen Oliensis: So I have been working my way backwards through Ovid now for about 20 years, I would say. So I started with the exile poetry actually which I read on an airplane flying to California. In fact, at one point I-

Timothy Hampton: [crosstalk 00:04:09].

Ellen Oliensis: ... yeah. I got obsessed with the exile poetry, then I moved back in time to *Metamorphoses* and finally, I moved back to the *Amores* and for many contingent reasons. I mean, this project might have been something else but I think with the *Amores*, the reason I ended up actually committing myself to writing a book on the *Amores* is that I don't know quite how to put this but I felt that my pleasure in the *Amores* or my experience in the *Amores* was not registered for the most part in existing scholarship and it's always hard to say because I'm a huge fan of the existing scholarship on the *Amores*, which does all kinds of fabulous things. It's just full of brilliant work, but it just didn't match up with how I felt the *Amores*. So I kind of wanted to write a book that was more located in my own pleasure.

Timothy Hampton: That's great. I mean, that's the only reason to write a book, right? Is because there's a space in your own experience there that hasn't been filled up by the relevant or existent criticisms. So that's great. It's great to hear that. So could we talk a little bit about the persona of the *Amores*. So there's this guy called Naso or Naso, I assume it's pronounced Naso, though I think W.S. Gilbert rhymes with say so in one of his lyrics in *Iolanthe*. But we'll call him Naso for the purpose of argument. So there he's this kind of strange character who's a kind of double of the author, but he's not a double of the author. In fact, he's much more disruptive in some way than most poetic persona. Could you talk a little bit about how he works?

Ellen Oliensis: Okay, for me this is a very important point which I spent maybe too much time [inaudible 00:06:11] on the book. And in a way I have to say it's a little bit paradoxical because my first book, which was about Horace made a huge deal of the fact that it's kind of there're big problems with an absolute differentiation between the author and his persona. I was pushing to reunite Horace with his persona, whereas in this book, I'm doing exactly the reverse. I'm really trying to demarcate, a very strong distinction between Ovid and this character I'm calling Naso. But the reason for that is that I am doing that and then I undo that gesture. In the second half of the book, this is a roundabout answer to the question, feel free to come back and tell me I completely [crosstalk 00:06:55]-

Timothy Hampton: No, it's fun.

Ellen Oliensis: ... respond to you but there is a tendency because of various features of the *Amores*. There is a tendency, which is very natural and justifiable to draw a very sharp distinction between the poet of the collection and the lover of the collection. And a lover is this scandalous, ridiculous, dreadful, ludicrous character with whom we do not want to associate the author often. Whereas the poet is a poet, and therefore, we automatically want to associate him with poet Ovid. And my sense about this is that what happens in the scholarship again, understandably, and justifiably, and this is a perfectly reasonable thing to do, it's not what I want to do is that scholars tend to give the poet a free pass. In other words, when this the narrator, the character within the *Amores* is acting like a poet he tends... Is just a generalization not entirely true, but he tends to be treated as a representative of Ovid.

Ellen Oliensis: And to be kind of dignified by that association. Whereas the lover, of course, has nothing to do with Ovid [inaudible 00:08:06] this scandalous character. So, the reason I'm interested in Naso at using that name is precisely that I want to... I use the name Naso for the poet. In other words, for me is hugely important that the poet in the collection, be not identified with Ovid so that we have the license to recognize his more problematic attributes. So I'm very interested in putting the poet and the lover back together since after all, this is one character across the Amores. It's not like they're two different people running around the collection. There's one person running around the collection, to me it's really important that he's the same character throughout.

Timothy Hampton: Right, and you also don't have the temporal distinction between the poet and the... You don't have a narrative the way you do in [Dante 00:08:56], where Dante the pilgrim is not the same as Dante the poet right? I mean, it's more complicated. I've just received a message from one of my colleagues that I should remind those of you out there in Zoom land, that you can type in questions through the Q&A function of the Zoom platform, and we'll ask Nellie these questions at the end of the conversation. So feel free to do that. So that's great. I mean, I think that's... I have to say that reading this book, and I had read the Amores because they're pretty influential in areas that I work in, but I had not read them particularly closely.

Timothy Hampton: And I have to say it was, entering into your book was almost like entering into a kind of labyrinth, because we have this kind of initial sort of close analysis of the poems and sort of things that are going on and then by, if we move on and on in your reading, which is quite compelling and I don't want to... It's a bit of a page turner I have to say, the analysis gets more and more complicated and Naso's relationship to Ovid becomes more and more complicated and his relationship to the woman Corinna becomes more and more complicated and more and more issues start to enter into your reading questions of sexuality, questions of violence to castration, unix pop up here and there, masochism.

Timothy Hampton: I mean it gets wilder and wilder as the story goes on. And really, by the time we get to the end, at least by the time I got to the end of the book, I mean, I was just reading the poems in a completely different ways. So it was really quite compelling in that regard. So could you talk a little bit about the sex? There's sex all over the place. Somebody asked me, a colleague asked me if it was going to be appropriate for his teenage son to watch this event and I said I thought that it probably was. But could you just give us an idea of the way which sexuality works in the collections?

Ellen Oliensis: That's-

Timothy Hampton: It's a big question.

Ellen Oliensis: ... yeah. So what's interesting-

Timothy Hampton: Because it seems to be tied into reading a lot.

Ellen Oliensis: ... yes. So what's interesting to me is that... I agree. Sexuality is everywhere. This book is sort of eroticized from start to finish. But what's interesting is there's actually not a whole lot of sex in it. I mean, there isn't... If you compare the Ars amatoria, which actually has some passages about giving advice on things like appropriate sexual positions for women to assume depending on [inaudible 00:11:46], that really goes... Like talks about things that in case there are young

people in the audience, I probably shouldn't mention, but the Amores there's not much sex.

Ellen Oliensis: I mean, there's not much sexual action in the Amores. But this does not mean that the poems are not sexual. So this is also something that I'm interested and especially in the second half of the book where I shift my attention... Okay, if I can back up a second, in the first half of the book, basically, I'm trying to take the poet down, and show that his poetic ambitions are tied up with a lot of unsavory emotions like envy, like competition, especially with his girlfriend, which is strange in some ways. Anyway, so I'm kind of taking the poet down. The second half of the book, I'm trying to promote the lover which is a difficult endeavor in some ways. By thinking about these issues around sort of his peculiar form of eroticism, which I associate with masochism, and a couple of different registers, one more particular like [inaudible 00:13:00] that masochism [crosstalk 00:13:02] hence [inaudible 00:13:03]-

Timothy Hampton: And you work through that, you work through the [inaudible 00:13:07] connection there in a nice way-

Ellen Oliensis: Yeah. I mean I find it very suggestive I just find especially during [inaudible 00:13:13] account of [inaudible 00:13:14] just suggested for reading it off. And I'm just struck by how the various ways in which the Amores play according to that same style. And then at the end of the book, I'm interested in masochism in this more fundamental sense the kind of [Laplace 00:13:30] version of masochism, which has to do with sexuality as such and with sort of a fundamental intrusion of something alien in this kind of mode of agitation, which seems to me... I don't know if this is making any sense, this is very compressed, but it seems to me very much where the Ovidian project isn't... At that point I don't really mind saying the Ovidian project and I don't mind so much giving up the distinction toward the end of this book those two figures Ovid and Naso start coming very, very close together.

Timothy Hampton: Could we say something about the girlfriend? She puts up with a lot. Corinna, her name is, right?

Ellen Oliensis: Yeah.

Timothy Hampton: Can we talk a bit about the sexual politics of this and are they different from Catullus? I mean, we have a whole series of these Latin poets who are in love. But it seems to be particularly, I hate to use the word perverse in the case of Ovid, not because there's anything particularly sexually wild going on, as you say. In fact, there's not very much sex at all. But just the way in which she's been manipulated throughout the collection seems to be very interesting. And she takes on particular forms of agency and is evasive in certain kinds of ways, could you fill us in a bit on that?

Ellen Oliensis: Yeah, I mean, it is absolutely true that Ovid is one in a line kind of the last in that period, in a line of love poets starting with [Horace 00:15:13] and then we have Propertius and Tibullus and someone in, and his representation of Corinna who is the main named female with whom he associates himself, belongs to that tradition but also departs from it. And I have to say here is not an area where I feel that my book has much to contribute. I mean, I'm not knocking my book. I like my book, and I think it has a lot to contribute. But in this particular area, there's been really good work on this theme by a number of scholars, both on thinking about the problematic dimensions of the representation of its representation of Corinna and of women in general, and of how it relates to the

tradition in terms of kind of intensifying it, or going over the top with it, and operating therefore, perhaps as a kind of expose.

Ellen Oliensis: Probably because there's been so much good work on that subject on the sexual politics of the Amores and of elegy and love poetry in general in a Roman context, it's not a place that I go. And I guess the other reason I tend not to go there is that I am trying to do this kind of weird thing, especially in the second half of my book, which is find ways of identifying with Naso as a lover, and the more I enter into the zone of sexual politics, the harder that is. Maybe the more difficult that is to do. So one thing I will say about my take on masochism is that it restores some agency kind of in a perverse way to Corinna, and I'm not the first person to make this observation either.

Ellen Oliensis: But insofar as she seems to be a partner in a very stagey game of desire that Naso is inviting her to play with him. So there's a way that masochism helps me, skirt an issue that I feel is hugely important and almost inevitable way of thinking about the collection, but is one that I am really trying to avoid so that I can do something else. There's something experimental about that, and I do not... Yeah, anyway, that's all to say.

Timothy Hampton: Yeah, well, no, it's good. But that's a nice move in the book because it does make it possible for you to go in other places. And I mean, there's certain areas as you know when you write a book, where you sort of say, I don't want to go there because it's a rabbit hole, I'll never get out of and other people have worked on it, let's go over here. Speaking of rabbit holes, could... The one thing that most people know about Ovid, of course, is that he was exiled. You don't seem to have much interest in Ovid's exile, but you do sort of give interesting comments about it. So could you... I mean, I could read you a little... Well, I will read you a little bit about it. This is page 133. You say Ovid's relationship to Augustus to put the question as vaguely as possible is a fascinating subject, one that Ovid's eventual exile by the angry Emperor render's practically irresistible.

Timothy Hampton: From my own part, I take it for granted that Ovid's poetry represents a generalized threat to Augustus. A threat involving nothing so specific as resentment of a given piece of legislation, nor even of the erosion of republican [inaudible 00:18:51], diffused across Ovid's of most often in the form of a repeated revelation of the fictitious foundations of political authority. You can't stop there. So can you just say a little bit about that? I mean, no, this is not a book about Ovid's exile. But you have worked on the exile poem.

Ellen Oliensis: Yes.

Timothy Hampton: And it's impossible to think about Ovid and his place in the Western tradition or in world literature without thinking about the exile.

Ellen Oliensis: Yeah. So Tim, you're going to think I'm really... I'm recalcitrant. I'm a hopeless interlocutor, because yes, I am interested in the exile. Actually, and I've written some about this and I'm very interested in Ovid's relation to Augustus and there's been brilliant work on this by other people to whom I am much indebted, like [Arkezi 00:19:40] and Hardy and others. But in this book I am... Okay, let me put it this way. This question of Ovid's relation to Augustus for many people is in fact, a question that has to be asked about the Amores. Not everyone does.

Ellen Oliensis: There are many ways people take up the Amores Naso one. But I was very proud of myself that I only have one reference to Augustus in my index. That is actually intentional. In other words, this is yet another place that where I am

basically not going and again, it's not just because other people have done it, you know what I mean? It doesn't need to be done, someone else has said it, but because the Amores I am trying to read or to present is one that resides inside the kind of strange, fictional, fantastical, eroticized zone that Ovid has made for us. So I am doing my best to keep Augustus out of picture and I actually succeeded quite well. And I have to say that when I got my readers reports back from the press, I thought it might be the case that someone would say, "Hey, where's Augustus in this?" But luckily, they didn't. I mean, they didn't feel it as an absence. So-

Timothy Hampton: Yeah, well I didn't feel it as an absence either. But it's only my sort of natural curiosity and my general sense of the rest of Ovid [crosstalk 00:21:20] maybe [crosstalk 00:21:21] ask that question.

Ellen Oliensis: ... yes. And I will say that the Amores insofar as they're, of a piece of the Ars amatoria, which is Ovid's love poetry is put for as the alleged reason for his exile, because the immorality of his poetry going [crosstalk 00:21:37]. So it's a very reasonable thing to be thinking about in the Amores. And, yes, one can play them out in that direction. And I'm really-

Timothy Hampton: No, it's fine. So I wanted to shift gears a tiny bit. One of the things that I really loved about the book was the way in which it focused on... It began by focusing on questions of form. And it sort of ends by focusing on questions of form. And when we talk about poetry, it's very easy for people not to want to talk about questions of form, because they're technical, and they're often dry and so on so forth. I have to say, your discussion of form was not at all dry in this case. And could you talk a little bit... I mean, the collection begins in this really wacky way, where we're told that Ovid is busy writing an epic, and that it would appear or rumor has it, that love came and stole one of the feet from his poetry, so he can't write an epic now, could you... So there's kind of massive implications of a form. Could you explain that a bit more to us especially for those of us who are not Latinist?

Ellen Oliensis: ... okay, yes, I mean, the first poem of the Amores leaving aside the little epigram about the second edition, stages this crazy, crazy scene where just as you say Ovid is writing [inaudible 00:23:16] lines which are the same each right as the meter of epic of Homer and Virgil and so on. When he says in this amazing moment, he says that [foreign language 00:23:29] so you know [Cupid 00:23:34] is said to have laughed and stolen a foot, from his meter, leaving him with elegy couplets, because the second line of the couplet is technically a five foot line instead of a six foot line.

Ellen Oliensis: So he's stuck with a meter of elegy poetry, but he doesn't have anything to put in it because he's not in love and so on and Cupid then shoots an arrow to him and solves that problem. So what interests me about this poem, every one is taken by this poem because it's such a wild thing to do but on the one hand it has been taken quite properly to signal the priority of poetry over love since the origin of this collection is not desire exactly, it's a metrical phenomenon, which then has to be filled with something. But on the other hand, I'm interested in the extent to which that moment fictionalizes the poet. Like so the poet has this weird thing happened to him where Cupid shows up and they have a kind of discussion where he talks to Cupid and then Cupid says something to him and shoots him with an arrow. So there's a kind of almost epic scene event involving the character, the poet.

Ellen Oliensis: So I'm interested in the scene in two different ways on one hand, I'm interested in the way it inverts the conventions of poetry generally by exposing the fact that

when you're writing a poem, there's not just some overflow or something that lands into meter, right? It shows you the poet lets you into the poet's study on the one hand. And on the other hand that the poet study itself becomes kind of part of the fiction. And this is where I want to call that guy in the study, I want to call him Naso and not call him Ovid, so that I can get us to keep in mind the fact that his vicissitudes are at the same level as the erotic antics of him when he's behaving as a lover.

Timothy Hampton: So it is... Yeah. That's good. That makes sense. Yeah, that makes total sense. So is it the case... Are you still there? Yes.

Ellen Oliensis: I am sorry [crosstalk 00:26:02].

Timothy Hampton: Okay, it's all right. Is it the case... So, I don't want to get too anachronistic here. But I mean, this seems incredibly modern to me, this gesture that form proceeds content or that... But that the poetic self or the writing it self is also implicated in that problem and that you can't separate the two. I mean, it seems to me extremely modern. I mean, I think of in the French tradition, which is the one I know best, the poet Paul Valery talking about hearing a rhythm in his head, of which one of his most famous forms is generator, right?

Ellen Oliensis: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Timothy Hampton: So could we, since we're getting to the end of the hour, zoom out a tiny bit? Pardon that. No pun intended. Could we zoom out a tiny bit and think a little bit more about sort of modern analogs to your... I mean, there's a lot in these poems that reminds me of Shakespeare. And the strange inverted logic, the impossibility of distinguishing the poet from their lover, the curious games of mirroring and doubling that seem constantly to be happening, is that your sense as well?

Ellen Oliensis: Do you mean Shakespeare in the sonnets?

Timothy Hampton: I'm thinking of Shakespeare in the sonnets, right.

Ellen Oliensis: Yeah. Because to me, in some ways, I feel as if Shakespeare leaves intact, potentially anyway, what I call the authenticity effect. In other words, it's possible. It's possible to read the sonnets, if you want, as a kind of transcript or artful representation of emotions. I mean, you can do that. I'm not saying that [crosstalk 00:27:54], whereas Ovid makes that much harder. And this question about form I mean, I hadn't really thought about the fact that it's true that my book begins and almost ends with a form of elegy couplets. And one thing that again, you can tell me Tim, better [inaudible 00:28:11] than I can, but one thing that is going on in Ovid, which I don't feel in Shakespeare sonnets with the sonnet form so much is the intense eroticization, she's an ugly word, of the elegy couplet in Ovid because it's not simply that form comes first. It's that form is actually a medium of sexual energy. I actually believe that of the Amores and I don't feel that in Shakespeare, but I think I might feel it more in the plays than in the sonnets.

Timothy Hampton: I think so. Yeah. Well, certainly in the plays where form is often staged I mean, we think of something like the obvious moment, the moment in Romeo and Juliet where Romeo and Juliet are seducing each other, and they in fact, make a sonnet by putting their hands together and speaking to each other.

Ellen Oliensis: Yeah.

Timothy Hampton: That would be a perfect example. But you're right. I mean, there may be sonnet readers out there who thought more about this than I have. But something about this strange dialectical structure of the sonnet the way it's constantly turning back on itself and reflecting on itself seems to take it out of that kind of immediate erotic charge that you seem to be pointing to in Ovid and that's an interesting connection, given the fact that he's such an influential figure in writing about love. I had other things I wanted to talk about, such as the parrot poem, but we do have a question and somebody says, "What is your take on Ovid on Amores 1.5?"

Ellen Oliensis: Okay, well, yes. So Amores 1.5 is probably the most famous single poem in the Amores. It's the poem in which Naso recalls this siesta where Corinna shows up scantily clad, and he tears her clothes off and they have sex. And it's often taken to be the kind of pinnacle of a video in eroticism and the kind of quintessence of what the Amores are. This is Ovid, Ovid the one who actually... This is the moment, this is the sexiest moment, officially speaking in the collection. So, part of what I'm trying to do in this book is dethrone 1.5, in the sphere of erotics.

Ellen Oliensis: I would like to replace 1.5 as the pinnacle of Ovidian eroticism, with 1.4 the poem that proceeds it, I could say more about that, in exactly the same way that I would like to dethrone the immortal poet who shows up at the ends of the first and third books, I would like to dethrone that poet not replace him with a poet of the poems that come before but at least show how he is the same person as that unpleasant lover... I mean, how his poetic success is founded on the gestures he makes of relegating his girlfriend in the proceeding [inaudible 00:31:40]. So to me these are analogous... My desire, my possibly perverse desire to make that gesture. So with 1.5 it's... There have been wonderful things written about that poem, contouring and nuancing the discussion of its supposed direct sensuality showing that it's actually much more complicated than that. And there's been great work on input from that perspective. But for me, the problem with 1.5 is that it's... Well, I have no problems with 1.5. Let me just speak about [inaudible 00:32:18]-

Timothy Hampton: But you have things to say about it.

Ellen Oliensis: ... I read the poem as intended with 1.4 which is a poem which is nothing but discourse addressed to a girlfriend, who is going to be at the same dinner party that Ovid is going to be at, Naso. See, I said Ovid there. That's because it's the lover. I don't mind saying Ovid. If it's the lover, I don't mind saying Ovid. And he's giving her instructions on how to behave at this dinner party where she's going to be there with another man. And to me the real charge of the Amores, the real erotic energy in the Amores, happens in discourse, like in its frustrated, agitated, derailing at a discourse, not in this kind of to me very bland fill in the blank template of super masculine desire which is 1.5. It's like look at her breasts. Look at her legs. What a nice belly. Is just you make it up for yourself guys, basically. I just think it's aberrant and functioning partly as a response to enforce. I have about five pages on those two poems towards the end of my book, trying to-

Timothy Hampton: No, I love that part. And I have to say, one of the things that also really opened my eyes is the way in which you read poems together. And the way in which... I mean, a minute ago, you said the erotic charge is in the discourse, but also the erotic charge is in the relationship between poems in some kind of way, right? A lot of the ways in which they respond to each other, they reflect on each other. And in some way that in itself is quite startling. I mean, it reminded me a little bit of [Petrarch 00:34:07], where you where there's a blank space between the sonnets and stuff happens and we're not quite sure what to make of that. But in

Ovid's cases he's much more deliberate, and as you argue these poems are really in a kind of dialogic relationship to each other often.

Ellen Oliensis: ... yeah. I would say I mean with 1.4 and 1.5 you can see it's not hard to see the relation there because one is frustrated, the other is satisfied. One is night, the other is midday, they play together. The poems I find really most satisfying, are the ones that are just crazy like the second to last poem of the first book is about Corinna. Well, she's not named, but a woman who's lost off her hair is now bald, using too much [crosstalk 00:34:54]-

Timothy Hampton: I love that.

Ellen Oliensis: ... it's wacky poem. And then the next poem is Ovid Naso saying, "I've made it. I'm going to be one of the canonical poets. I'm going to live forever." Those two poems feel completely unrelated. I have to say one of the things I have got most satisfaction from is showing how they are in fact [inaudible 00:35:13] connected-

Timothy Hampton: That's the job of the critic, yeah. So I think we have time for one more question. We have a question from [Kethleen 00:35:21] McCarthy, who says, "I found really fascinating the way you show Corinna functioning as a kind of creative rival to Naso, as well as a partner in his masochistic game. Can you say more about the implications of these two aspects of how Corinna functions? Not only, you talked about the masochistic part, but she is a kind of rival?"

Ellen Oliensis: Yes, this is something... And actually, since Kathleen McCarthy raised the question, I will say that I feel as if this line of thought was inspired by her because she once asked me... You once asked me Kathleen. I can't remember what it was now, but something about rival poets not shown... There really aren't rival poets generally [inaudible 00:36:07] collections. So I thought that was really interesting, and within the world of the Amores rival poets or even... Well, I'll put it there. Rival poets are displaced by the girlfriend who holds the place of a rival, which makes very little sense, certain sense, right? Because she's not a poet, although Corinna, of course is the name of a famous poet, as one of my-

Timothy Hampton: That's so fantastic. I mean, again, it's one of this very strange features of the collection in the Western tradition. I mean, we always have rival poets. I mean, you read the troubadours, there's always a rival. There's either a rival lover or a rival poet and sometimes both. And here there is no rival poet, and she's the rival and that's crazy.

Ellen Oliensis: ... yeah, I mean, and she's the rival in this weird sense. And again, going back to the poem about her losing her hair and the poem about Ovid, Naso becoming an immortal poet, there's a whole play there where it's almost as if his ability to proclaim his canonization depends on her having lost her hair, her being in the zone, this other zone of the feminine, the worldly, the mundane, the perishable, whereas he has entered this completely other world. And that may sound crazy, but I think I demonstrate it in detail. I don't think that's simply gratuitous to say. The one exception within the Amores is the figure of Tibullus potential exception, as seeing her elegist. And there interestingly enough Ovid effectively appears to have no rivalrous emotions at all, although as has been shown, it is like I kind of bulk out the... Someone else's discussion. I think there are traces, there are residual traces of rivalries feelings there. But for the most part, it all gets into women. Not at man [crosstalk 00:38:10].

Timothy Hampton: Right. So I think it's probably time for us to wind up. I just want to thank you for taking time to talk to us. It's an extraordinary book. I mean, it seems to me as

someone who works on later poetry in the Western tradition, that there are all kinds of ways now in which we have to go back and reread a lot of lyric, especially thinking about the implications of Ovid's influence for any number of poets as they're thinking especially in the renaissance, but even later, so it's a really wonderful exploration. And once again, for those of you out there in Zoom land, it's called *Loving Writing/Ovid's Amores* by Ellen Oliensis, Cambridge University Press.

Timothy Hampton: Run, don't walk to your local online book, prepare and order a copy. It's really great and it reads easily and wonderfully. So it's really the best kind of literary criticism and thank you Nellie for talking to us and thanks for writing the book. And I want to tell everybody that we'll be doing this again soon. This is our first online Book Chat. But now that we seem to have been able to do it, we'll try it again. So stay tuned at the Townsend Humanities Center website for information about further book chats. And thank you again and we'll see you soon.

Ellen Oliensis: Thank you, Tim.

Timothy Hampton: Thank you, Nellie. We hope you enjoyed this Berkeley Book Chat and we encourage you to join us in person or via podcast for future programs in this series.