THE ART OF LOVE

BIMILLENNIAL ESSAYS ON OVID'S ARS AMATORIA AND REMEDIA AMORIS

Edited by

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Lessons in Love: Fifty Years of Scholarship on the *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*

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It is a critical topos to acknowledge that Ovid has enjoyed a resurgence of scholarly interest in the past twenty-five years. Among the modes of Ovidian scholarship receiving particular attention or development in this period have been the dynamics of genre, and Ovid's own acute generic self-consciousness; the complex intertextual dialogues created between Ovid and other writers, and indeed between Ovid's own works; Ovid's often subtle negotiation with the sociopolitical Augustan context in which he is writing; and feminist readings of Ovid's text. Though these developments are evidently fruitful for the study of all Ovid's poetry, it is quite noticeable that they have so far yielded particular benefits for the understanding and appreciation of *Heroides*, *Fasti*, and, above all, *Metamorphoses.* By contrast, *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris* have suffered relative neglect, especially by Anglophone scholars: at the current rate, a new monograph on the *Ars* can be expected to appear only once every ten years.2

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1 For the dominance of *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* in recent Ovidian scholarship, see the review article of Myers (1999), and the strong bias towards the *Metamorphoses* in the *Aetas Ovidiana* conference held in Dublin in 2002.

2 Before Gibson's (2003a) extensive commentary on *Ars* 3, the last major publications in English were Sharrock (1994a) and Myerowitz (1985). German scholarship has been slightly more active during this time period: Steudel (1992); Janka (1997); and Wildberger (1998). Compare this with the bibliography for *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*, which enjoys new books on an almost yearly basis.
1. DATING AND STRUCTURE

Despite our apparent familiarity with the details of Ovid’s career, no supposed fact from the great Augustan trickster can be taken at face value without questions of its poetic purpose. Two different theories on the dating of Ovid’s erotodidactic poems have been advanced over the past fifty years. It is a curious fact that, in outlining the structure for Ars (1. 35–40), Ovid makes no reference to his intention to instruct women; this intention is only revealed in the final (jolting) couplet of Ars 2 (745–6). Many readers have gone along with the poem’s façade, and supposed that Ovid’s poetic production occurred in two stages: Ars 1 and 2 were conceived together; these were then followed some years later, either separately or as part of a second edition of all the books, by Ars 3 and Remedia. All this occurred, it is generally agreed, between the years 2 B.C. and A.D. 2.5 However, some recent scholarship has rightly advised against too literal a view of Ovid’s (possibly tactical) silence in the poem’s preface. For example, Sharrock (1994a: 18–20) suggests that Ovid early on obscures any hint of his coming instruction to women, so as to keep his male addressees on side at the beginning of the poem; the poet’s volte-face is revealed to them only at the last possible moment.6 Consequently, a consensus is growing that Ars 1–3 and Remedia were conceived as a whole (playfully mirroring the four-book structure of Vergil’s didactic poem)—a view apparently strengthened by the consistent verbal and thematic links between the four books.7

The intrigue surrounding the last two verses of Ars 2 receives fresh examination in this volume in the contrasting readings of John Henderson and Niklas Holzberg. While Henderson argues that the ‘surprise’ of a third book has, in fact, been subtly telegraphed by Ovid’s assertions in Ars 1–2 of the need for parity between the sexes and for the male to be vanquished, Holzberg maintains that the last couplet of Ars 2 is indeed a surprise, but one in keeping with Ovid’s didactic strategies and the staging of reader response found elsewhere in Ovid and other poets.

2. GENRE AND LITERARY INFLUENCE

Critical attention has long been centred on the innovative ‘crossing’ of genres at work in Ovid’s erotodidactic poems and on the range of literary influences that are visible in the text. A great deal of work has

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3 A small collection of largely German papers on Ars Amatoria and Remedia Amoris appeared over thirty years ago edited by Zinn (1970). It is somewhat ironic that its most influential paper—by Little (in Zinn (1970: 64–105))—worked mainly to revitalize the issue of genre in subsequent scholarship on Metamorphoses and Fasti.

4 For a survey of scholarship on Ars in the 1990s, see also Arlemma (2001). I do not deal below with contributions to the modern textual criticism of the poems. I merely point out here the immense boost that study of Ars and Remedia received with the publication in 1961 of Kenney’s authoritative Oxford Latin Text. A second edition appeared in 1994 (corrected in 1995), incorporating the readings of a one-man manuscript—the Hamiltonensis—which had until 1965 been wrongly classified as a fourteenth- rather than eleventh-century production (see, briefly, Gibson (2003a: 43–5)). Other major editions of the poems to appear in recent decades include those by Lenz (1969) and Ramírez de Verger (2003). As for commentaries on Ars, useful and Pianezzola; Baldo, and Cristante (1991). There are now also substantial Ars 1; Janka (1997) for Ars 2; Gibson (2003a) for Ars 3; and Henderson (1979), Lucke (1982) and Pinotti (1988) for Remedia.

5 For the history of the debate, see now Watson (2002: 141), Gibson (2003a: 37–9). There have been some notable cases put forward for a radically different dating of Ovid’s output. Syme (1978: 13–20) argues that the first edition of Ars may go as far back as 9 B.C. Murgia (1986) argues on stylistic grounds for a date for Ars 3 of C.2 B.C., i.e. subsequent to the composition of the first seven books of Metamorphoses; for criticism of Murgia’s methodology, however, see Gibson (2003a: 39–43).

6 See also Holzberg (1997: 111–12) (= (2002c: 103)), who, noting Ovid’s assumption that both men and women will be readers of Ars 1 and 2, reads the ‘silence’ of Book 1 as a joke.

been done on highlighting the poems’ didactic qualities, by means both of recognized features of the didactic genre and of pointed (if ironic) allusion to generic predecessors, but it has been equally clear that there is nothing straightforward about the generic status of the poems.

Kenney (1958) noted the ways in which the poems observe generic ‘norms’ in their systematic use of introductory and transitional formulae typical of serious didactic; Gibson (1997) studied imperative expressions in the Ars in the context of conventional usage of such expressions by other instructional texts in both verse and prose; Durling (1958) drew attention to the (colourful) poetic persona of the didactic teacher; and many have commented on Ovid’s varied use of mythological digressions and exempla, a key component of ancient didactic. Fresh observations on the vitality and innovation of Ovid’s didactic project have been made recently by Volk (2002: 157–95), who highlighted Ovid’s novel status as practitioner of the art he teaches—he is lover as well as teacher and poet—and his conscious strategy of forging ‘simultaneity’ between the progress of the poems and the stages of his teaching. The poems also establish affiliation to didactic poetry by pointed allusion to poems in the genre, although the sentiments of Ovid’s predecessors are often recast to serve the ironic and incongruous function of ‘proving’ a point in the philosophy of love. Leach (1964) illustrated Ovid’s debt to Vergil’s Georgics; Sommariva (1980) and Shulman (1981) shed light on Ovid’s use of Lucretius; and Hollis (1973: 89–93) and especially Steudel (1992) produced evidence of much wider and complex appropriation of generic predecessors both Greek and Roman.

But the fact that Ovid has chosen the elegiac metre (novel in extant didactic) for these poems highlights a generic mixing with love elegy, which, as Küppers (1981: 2509–30) has demonstrated, is reinforced by the interplay with the erotodidactic tradition carried by characters such as Priapus and the lena from Roman love elegy. By a brilliant sleight of hand, which slips deceptively between apparent autobiographical and literary device, Ovid regularly draws on his amatory experiences from the Amores, adapting these emotionally turbulent encounters to the more serious purpose of rational directives to students.9

Other important, though perhaps less obvious influences have also been analysed. Labate (1984: 121–74) emphasized the conceptual similarities between Ovid’s instructions and socio-philosophical treatises such as Cicero’s De Officiis.10 Gibson (2003a: 13–19), drawing on the work of earlier critics, attempted to trace the history of erotodidaxis back to early Socratic traditions and, in focusing on Book 3, detected the influences of the ‘anti-cosmetic tradition’ (2003a: 21–5). The richness of the various sophisticated traditions behind Ovid’s love teaching, thus far detected, suggests that further work in this area may produce rewards.

3. THE SEARCH FOR THE SERIOUS MESSAGE IN ARS

With the affiliation of Ars to (and parody of) the didactic genre acknowledged and documented, scholars started to question whether such parody, along with other forms of Ovidian humour, were a purely literary game—as had been implicitly assumed previously—or a means of saying something more serious.11 From the 1970s onwards, scholarship on the poem took on a sterner aspect, as critics set out to find a ‘serious’ or more deeply ‘controversial’ message behind the laughter: no longer assumed to be simply a repository of splendid jokes, the poems began to be probed for implicit commentary on Roman love and Augustan politics.

Amor, Cultus, and Ovidian Sincerity

The Ars claims to offer a cultural service to its readers: it will teach us how to love. But critics have rightly asked what exactly ‘love’ (amor) is

9 See e.g. Dalzell (1996: 138–46). Sharrock (2002) alludes to the way in which Ovid refuses to let us know how ‘seriously’ to take his poetic and erotic personae.

10 See Section 3 below.

11 The issue is not unconnected with wider debates on the seriousness of messages in didactic poetry, on which see Heath (1985).
in the poem, in what sense it is teachable, and ultimately, whether there is any sense in which Ovid might be acting sincerely and seriously in his erotic advice. Fyler (1971) articulated what everyone has always known—that there is a serious problem in Ovid's love teaching, the inherent paradox of controlling the uncontrollable. He argued that amor is an irrational passion, and that the poet's attempt to bring it under a rational framework works only by trivializing the passion and reducing it to the level of an emotionless stratagem. On a more general level, he argued that Ars, therefore, could be seen as a serious anti-classical treatment of art and experience, in that it offered 'a sceptical examination of the limitations of genre as an ordering principle' (1971: 196). If it had become impossible for Ovid to be serious about love, then he could at least be serious about art.

A more optimistic view of Ovid's cultural aims in Ars was advanced a few years later by Solodow (1977). Solodow argued that, by comparing the life of the lover to that of the soldier, farmer, orator, and philosopher, Ovid seeks to raise the status of the lover and the (love-)poet to the plane of more traditionally respectable 'career paths': Ovid simultaneously plays with the didactic tradition and seeks to ennoble the lover, to attain dignity and authority for both himself and his subject. By means of his mock-solemn tone, which can be taken either as a joke or serious comment, Ovid allows us to entertain the notion of the lover as a 'cultural ideal'. The lover is presented first and foremost as a deceiver—of others and indeed himself—in love, the game of illusions. This deception is seen as a form of art, and the lover consequently as an artist: both the lover and the poet himself are thus included within this cultural ideal. Along the same lines, but with a more specific focus, Stroh (1979a) demonstrated the ways in which Ovid equates the skills of the lover and the orator: both types of individual must be adept at the art of disguise (dissimulatio) and simulation (simulatio). The 'lover', in such analyses, has become the agent of behaviour, rather than the subject of emotions.12

Solodow's emphasis on a potentially serious cultural message in Ars anticipated the emphases of two important monographs on the poems in the mid-1980s. Labate (1984) argued that the Ars rejects earlier elegy's straightforward opposition between Roman civil life and the life of love, and instead sets up love as a serious ethical concern by emphasizing the connections between the relationships of lovers and other Roman social models—in particular, the social bonds between friends, between the kolax or flatterer and his patron, and between slave and master. In a central chapter (1984: 121–74), Labate worked through Ovid's adaptation of Cicero's De Officiis. Cicero had emphasized the positive personal ethics by which one might earn respect from peers, establish harmonious personal relationships, and, ultimately, contribute to the smooth running of society: importance was placed on mutual gain through reciprocity, personal decorum, the arts of persuasion, and the avoidance of excess. Ovid, seeing love as a natural medium for the displaying of 'erotic' social virtues, likewise encourages his students to observe the rules of reciprocity in the giving of gifts, to exercise decorum in both their looks and behaviour, and to be attentive to the needs of their beloved and develop the arts of persuasion; acting in this way will win the favour of the beloved and ensure the smooth running of an amorous relationship.

Just one year later, on the other side of the Atlantic, another important, yet quite different, cultural assessment of the poem was advanced by Myerowitz (1985). Whereas Labate had been working within the traditions of Italian and German philology, Myerowitz came to the poem from an American tradition of sociological and cultural approaches to text. Most significantly, she argued that Ovid makes a clear (and potentially serious) distinction in the poem between instinctual love and the culturally determined manner in which this instinctual love is played out: Ovid stresses the way in which cultus ('culture', 'refinement') has the power to convert wild and instinctual love (amor/eros) into an elaborate and dynamic cultural game played by both parties: a 'conventionalised seduction'. The playing of this game is revealed as an art form, and the successful lover is in every sense an artist: both must apply control (ars) to a natural energy (be it eros and the woman (lover) or ingenium (artist)).13

12 This commonly felt 'essential paradox' is played out in many different ways by different critics, including in this volume. See Rosati on 'Love 1' and 'Love 2'.

13 Attempts, subsequent to Labate and Myerowitz, to discover a cultural or otherwise 'serious' message behind the poem include Kennedy (1993: 64–82), who re-emphasized the culturally constructed nature of Ovid's love experiences and love
In the present volume, both Katharina Volk and Molly Myerowitz-Levine reassert a (serious) sociological significance to the *Ars*, in that they both ask what Ovid’s comments on ‘the mating game’ have to say about love as a social phenomenon. Volk, concentrating on the rhetoric of the *praecceptor*, argues that lovemaking is presented specifically as a cultural construct, in that the poem’s instructions are consciously directed towards a specific audience, namely certain sectors of Roman society, at a (broadly) specific time, namely contemporary Augustan Rome. Myerowitz-Levine, on the other hand, takes her cue from some strands of modern evolutionary science, which argue against a straightforward opposition between Nature and Culture in favour of a system of complex interaction between the two: ‘human nature manifests itself on a field of reciprocity between Nature (universal) and Nurturing (culturally specific . . . )’ (Ch. 13 below). The process of sexual selection—in other words, ‘the mating game’, the subject of Ovid’s poem—operates at the intersection between nature (physical instinct) and culture (the specific strategies adopted to achieve sexual fulfilment). Myerowitz-Levine argues that, consistent with this philosophy, Ovid shows an awareness of not only the culturally specific aspects of lovemaking, but also those aspects that are universal and paralleled in the natural world. It is suggested, therefore, that the overall tenor of the poem is one closer to the tenets of modern evolutionary science than to cultural specificity. The kind of ‘love’ taught and reflected in the *Ars Amatoria* has, on this reading, fundamental similarities with the erotic behaviours and feelings of the human animal in any age and place, whereas in Volk’s reading it is specific to Ovid’s Rome.

**Augustan Politics**

It is probably fair to say that before the 1970s the potential antagonism between the poem’s erotic content and Augustan discourse had been acknowledged but not scrutinized in detail: any politically controversial aspects to the poem were, on one view, outweighed by the overwhelmingly harmless and ‘apolitical’ atmosphere of the burlesque.\(^{14}\)

Holme (1971) offered a serious and detailed analysis of some of the political implications of the *Ars*. In particular, he demonstrated how Ovid champions romantic love by using Augustus’ own discourse against him: so, for example, Roman lovemaking is viewed as a consequence of both Augustus’ much-vaunted *oium* and the subversive example set years ago by Romulus, a king with close associations with the emperor. In spite of this, the political force of the poem continued to be downplayed in the 1970s.\(^{15}\) Nevertheless, Holme’s broad approach eventually enjoyed serious, if critical, engagement from Labate (1984: 48–64). Labate argued that, in the *Ars*, there is no clash between the worlds of love and Augustan civil life, but rather the two are harmoniously combined as different sides of the same reality: solemn public joy could now be linked, without irony, to frivolous private joy (as in, for example, the celebration at the *naumachia* at *Ars* 1. 171–6). Clear models for this innovation, Labate (1984: 78–89) suggested, could be found in Hellenistic poetry, where the combination of the mundane (crowds of people, noise) and the public (opulence of public buildings) emphasizes the truly cosmopolitan nature of a city in which all classes of people can prosper. Moreover, the lovers’ sharing of space and time with Augustan civil life is ‘sanctioned’ by the conduct of Romulus against the Sabine women: from that point on, public ceremony and love became intertwined.

The easy combination of unlike attitudes has not suited all readers, however. Myerowitz (1985) argued that Ovid refuses to marry the two Augustan ideals of pride in the present and respect for the past;

\(^{14}\) Wilkinson (1955: 133) speaks of the ‘irreverent mind of the poet’; Kenney (1958: 208) labels the poem ‘an immoral and subversive work’ and suggests that it might foster adultery, but offers no development of these remarks. There is some evidence here, perhaps, of an older critical approach which tended to the opinion that texts could only really have political force if they specifically referred to formal political institutions and their personnel; see Kennedy (1993: 34–9).

\(^{15}\) Hollis (1973: 86) shies away from the political implications of the poem—‘the general atmosphere of the *Ars* was unhelpful to Augustus’ policy of moral reform’—emphasizing instead an atmosphere of ‘sharpness and detached, ironical humour’ (1973: 113). Compare also Barsby (1978: 21), who detects irreverence rather than political force.
moreover, the negative impression stamped on Romulus' orchestration of the first Roman marriages might be read as a criticism of Augustan legislative control over marriage (1985: 57–72). In direct opposition to Labate, Sharrock (1994b) put forward a forceful reassertion of the poem's political subversion. In particular, Sharrock (1994b: 107–13) stressed the necessarily political nature of Roman didactic poetry after Vergil and the fact that sex was an inextricably political issue in Augustan Rome. She emphasized the Ovidian tactic of using Augustus' maxims against him (1994b: 105–6, 108–9) and uncovered a deliberate violation of Augustan legislation in the Mars and Venus episode in Ars 2 (1994b: 113–22).

If one apparent trend of more recent times has been to revert back almost to the view that the poems are an essentially harmless and witty literary game, this volume rekindles the potential of the Ars for political antagonism. Sergio Casali argues that to view Ovid in Ars as an intentionally subversive character is an approach fully legitimized by Ovid himself, who tells us in his own (later) works about the anti-Augustan reception of the poem (most notably by Augustus himself): looking for anti-Augustan sentiment in Ars is, therefore, a strategy of reading which the poet prescribes for his 'Model Reader.' Focusing on the most overtly 'Augustan' part of the poem—the Parthian expedition of Gaius Caesar (1. 171–228)—Casali invites us to read the event as an episode which exposes tensions in the dynastic family and draws attention to the spectacle and theatricality of the Emperor's Parthian campaign.

Concentrating on Ars 3, Roy Gibson assesses the political implications of the praecceptor's advice of moderation in several aspects of women's lives. Instead of observing the traditional stereotypes that linked hairstyle, clothing, and use of cosmetics to either sexual purity or sexual promiscuity, Ovid advocates a principle of individual decorum, whereby each woman must choose the style that best suits her: in short, female appearance is judged to be a matter of aesthetics rather than morality. This Ovidian strategy can be felt to clash with Augustus' Lexes Iulias, which had reinforced the polar stereotypes for meretrix and matrona by requiring women to dress according to their sexual status. In rising above these stereotypes, however, Ovid can be seen to criticize the extremities of the Augustan law; on a more general level, this may amount to an implicit criticism of the contradictions of Augustan discourse itself.

The political status of women in the Augustan age is also the focus of Alessandro Barchiesi's paper, which sees both the Lexes Iulias and the Ars Amatoria as creative attempts to redraw the boundaries for different groups of women. Against a backdrop of widespread anonymity in the Ars, Barchiesi focuses on two named individuals—the historical 'first lady' Livia and the mythological Andromache—and demonstrates the ways in which these two women at one time represent polar opposites (the ideal wife and the concubine respectively), and at another appear to occupy a 'middle ground' between the two poles. The instability of female categorization in the Ars is, in turn, a (playful) commentary on the negotiation of gender roles in an Augustan age that embraces both the public image of the ideal wife and the ownership and (public) display of erotic, pornographic artwork.

4. GENDER, STATUS, AND THE SPECIALIZED NATURE OF ARS 3

For many years, it would seem, little distinction was made between Ars 1–2 and Ars 3, despite the fact that each was ostensibly addressed to opposing sides in the 'sexual war': or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Ars 3 was largely ignored in general discussions of the poem. In more recent years, however, analyses of the status of the female addressee and the diverse make-up of the internal

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16 See also, along similar lines, Davis (1995). 
17 See also Section 4 below. 
19 If it was the case that Ars 3 used to be regarded as little more than a literary experiment in reversing tactics from the earlier books, it was a partially misguided view: there are relatively few direct reversals of instruction; see Hollis (1973: 101–4); Downing (1990: 237–8); Miller (1993: 233).
audience of Ars 3 have opened up the text to both political and gendered readings.

Myerowitz (1985) offered an important contribution to understanding the difference between the instructions given to men and women in the poem, drawing attention to the way in which Ovid's instructions observe the traditional cultural distinctions between the 'active' male and the 'passive' female. The man's sexual journey is an active exercise that sees him progress (with any luck) from the public forum of the city at the beginning of Ars 1 to the private quarters of the girl's bedroom at the end of Ars 2; he is taught to rein in his natural instinctual love (eros) by converting it into sophisticated seduction (cultus); the ship, representative of man's control over nature, becomes a suitable metaphor for his sexual progress. The woman, by contrast, starts and ends Ars 3 in her bedroom, and is encouraged to occupy herself in the 'passive' exercise of cultivating her physical appearance and hiding blemishes; her eros is destructive and uncontrollable; consequently, the ship metaphor is never used of her role in the games of love. In essence, Myerowitz argued that women were not being instructed in their own right but in order that they might become 'sophisticated accomplices' in the male game of love: they needed to be able to appreciate and comply with the rules of the man's game of seduction. Along similar lines, Downing (1990) read the praeceptor in Ars 3 as an 'anti-Pygmalion' figure. Whereas Pygmalion famously constructed a statue of the perfect woman, only to desire that it be brought to life, the praeceptor works in the opposite direction by starting with the live woman and attempting to turn her into a (passive) living statue by covering her up with all manner of cosmetics and garments, and keeping her movement and speech to a minimum. In short, it was argued that the praeceptor, essentially hostile towards the real woman, whom he regards as savage, offensive, and physically flawed, aims to make her more amenable to the male audience by replacing the natural with the artificial. The issue, although formally it refers to the praeceptor not to 'Ovid himself', has close affinities with a perennially intriguing question in Ovidian scholarship: whose side is he on? Such generalizing views on Ovid's treatment of women have been nuanced by other critics who have argued that the praeceptor should be viewed as a figure who, whilst serving male interests for the most part, does offer some instruction to women which appears to be principally for their benefit.

Male-oriented instruction in Ars 3 implies the presence of a male audience for the book. Miller (1993: 238–41) noted that Ovid often distances himself from his female addressess in Ars 3, particularly in self-reflective comments on the progress and appropriateness of the lecture he is delivering: such reflections suggest the existence of a male audience in the background, at least for part of the time. This view received further development by Gibson (2003a: 19–21), who showed that an eavesdropping male audience had long been written into the tradition of erotodidaxis to women.

But ambiguity resides not only in the question of the make-up of the internal audience. The social status of the primary, female addressee is open to question—and this carries political implications in the light of the restrictions placed on the sexual behaviour of certain groups of women under the lex Iulia de adulteris coercendis of c.18 BC. What was already a 'golden oldie' in Roman love elegy (the status of the puella and the implications of that for the moral and political ambience of the imagined world), becomes even more complex an issue in erotodidaxis, where the reading situation (and hence the implied status of the readers) has gained a new generic foundation. Many have argued against a face-value acceptance of Ovid's frequent disclaimers about married women (as the targets or

20 For the progression of the instruction in Ars 1–2, see esp. Dalzell (1996: 138–9).
21 Perhaps the only discernible sense of 'progression' for women in Ars 3 is the general (but dimly marked) movement from 'elementary' to 'advanced' instruction; see Gibson (2003a: 1–7).
23 Downing (1990: 240) 'the calculated, artificial effect must replace the spontaneous, natural given'. The charge of misogyny in Ars was prominently levelled at Ovid by Leach (1964). For further differences between the instructions given to male and female, see Sharrock (1994a: 44–6); for further observations on the possible orientation behind the advice given to women in Ars 3, see Holzberg (1997: 111–15) (= 2002c: 103–7); Wildberger (1998: 343–80).
24 For such nuanced approaches, see Volk (2002: 165–6); Gibson (2003a: 19–21 et passim), who detects 'gender confusion' in the figure of the praeceptor, in that he is both male and usurper of the position usually occupied by a woman, the lena.
5. REMEDIA AMORIS: ANTIDOTE OR POISON?

Remedia has not traditionally received as much attention in its own right as Ars. For a long time, Remedia seems to have been regarded largely as an exercise in reversing the strategies of Ars—one experiment too far in the eyes of some.27 Granted that there are some clear examples of reversals of advice in Remedia,28 it is now widely acknowledged that this strategy constitutes only a small part of a poem that develops in directions quite distinct from Ars.

This is most obviously the case in the poem’s use of imagery and metaphor. In stark contrast to (male) passions in Ars, love in Remedia is consistently viewed as a destructive force, comparable to a disease or wound. Fittingly, Ovid assumes the identity of the medical doctor bringing relief to a patient. The doctor-poet makes regular use of medical terminology, and Remedia itself is structured along the lines of a medical assessment: the ‘doctor’ starts by dealing with the disease from incubation period, through to critical period and cure; he then moves to caring for the patient whilst he/she29 is in convalescence.30

In treating love in this way, Ovid draws on a variety of different traditions: Hellenistic didactic cure-poems, such as Nicander’s Alexipharmaca (on poisons and antidotes) and Theriaca (snakes and remedies for snakebites); Roman love elegy, which constantly speaks of the pain of love; and philosophical contemplation on the ruinous nature of love from Lucretius’ fourth book.31

In more recent times, scholars have looked for deeper messages from Remedia. Detecting a strong metatextual consciousness running through Ovid’s love-elegiac output, Conte (1989) viewed Remedia not simply as a rejection of love, but more specifically as a renunciation of elegiac love and, by inference, the composing of love elegy itself. The elegiac form of love, which involves both suffering and an unwillingness/ inability to relinquish the pain, is totally dismantled by a text purporting to teach a cure to willing patients.32

Coming to the poem from a different angle, Davisson (1996) argued that the exempla in Remedia, both mythological and non-mythological, fail to serve their outward function of acting as character role models for those seeking a path out of love. Instead, the reader is presented with predominantly negative foils (usually female), and many of the positive role models proffered are dubious, in that they suffer beyond love in the established mythical tradition.33 The (playful) implication for the reader is either that love cannot be easily cured, or that the cure itself may turn out to be fatal: either way, the reader may become reluctant to abandon love after such instruction.

Underlying Davisson’s piece is a view of Remedia as a didactic poem which, to some extent, deliberately ‘backfires’, in that it fails to offer convincing instruction on how to fall out of love. It is this general view of the poem which has produced some of the most interesting scholarship of the present decade. Brunelle (2000–1) has argued that Remedia cannot escape erotics on any level: it is not just its erotic content—handled either directly or through allusion and innuendo—that is a problem, but also the pleasurable sound and rhythm of the elegiacs themselves, a metre inextricably linked to

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26 See also Section 3 above.
29 Though the instruction is purportedly offered to women as well as men (e.g. Rem. 51–2), the overriding impression is that the instruction is predominantly aimed (once again) towards men; see Henderson (1979: 42); Davisson (1996: 242); see also (John) Henderson in this volume.
33 For a reassertion of Ovid’s logical use of mythological exempla in Remedia, however, see Jones (1997: 50–9), who conducts a detailed analysis of Ovid’s rhetorical strategy of offering an enjoinder to his readers accompanied by arguments/proofs.
love. All this is at odds with Ovid’s purported attempt to rid the reader of thoughts of love. In effect, then, Ovid has created ‘a poem whose elegiac form is diametrically opposed to its didactic goal’ (2000–1: 129). If we want a way out of love, then, we are ultimately compelled to separate out the inseparable: be a reader, enjoy the poetry and be drawn into love, or be a student, and avoid such poetry in the first place (but how can we learn this advice without being a reader?). Taking a different approach, Fullkerson (2004) has argued for the inescapable circularity of Ovid’s advice in Remedia. Ovid’s list of apparently unerotic pursuits designed to take the lover’s mind off love—forensic work in the law courts, warfare, farming, fishing, hunting, travelling—are, for the reader of Ovid’s elegiac poetry, by now so tainted with erotic overtones and potential as to draw him/her back to love, and back again to the Ars. What ultimately emerges is the painful truth that any cure is relative: the only escape from a bad love is to replace it with another (one hopes) less painful love.

Recent scholarship stimulates both Philip Hardie and Gianpiero Rosati in their differing readings of Remedia in this volume. Both are concerned with Ovidian repetition and intertextuality, and with the apparently contradictory claim in Remedia both to cancel and not to cancel the teaching of Ars. Rosati, consonant with Brunelle and Fullkerson, detects in the poem’s intertextual resonances a reaffirmation of the overriding power of love. Hardie, by contrast, argues for a serious and constructive message in Remedia: he suggests that Ovid is attempting to undo the teaching of Ars and replace it with the (albeit challenging) anti-erotic art of forgetting.

6. MYTHOLOGICAL ‘DIGRESSIONS’

Ars and Remedia are peppered with various extended mythological ‘digressions’—as they are still popularly (if inaccurately) known—which have long proved favourites with many readers. But their particular function or functions within the poems—beyond being simply an inherited part of the didactic tradition going back to Hesiod—have been a matter of some debate over the past fifty years. Owing to the length and colourful subject matter of some of these episodes, some scholars have viewed them purely as entertainment, with little or no connection to the contexts in which they were placed. By contrast, the first systematic analysis of fourteen of the mythological digressions, conducted by Weber (1983), argued for the strong logic and integrity of these episodes within Ovid’s overall didactic strategy. Few, however, were convinced by the neatness of Weber’s theories, and the debate has since developed into analyses of the complexity of the relationship between ‘digression’ and ‘main text’.

Myerowitz (1985: 151–74) argued that the mythological digressions involving Daedalus and Icarus and Calypso and Ulysses demonstrate that the controlling force of ars—as represented by Daedalus’ craftsmanship and Ulysses’ eloquence—has limitations, in that it is ultimately fixed by nature’s absolutes. As such, these episodes can be seen to deepen the arguments of the main text—which champions the power of ars in the sphere of love—by introducing paradoxes and limitations. Myerowitz also identified the metaliterary potential of the Daedalus and Icarus episode by reading Daedalus as the didactic poet himself: both Daedalus and the poet offer creative ways of attempting to control nature by ars.

These same two mythological digressions received fuller attention from Sharrock (1994a: 78–83, 87–195), who argued for much greater complexity in the didactic function of these episodes. The Calypso and Ulysses episode is ostensibly introduced as an example of how to keep hold of a girl, and yet it is immediately problematized by the fact that Ulysses actually wants to leave. The reader has to work hard for a lesson here: if we are being taught the merits of good speaking,

34 Interestingly, the apparent contradiction between Remedia’s alleged purpose and the seductive pleasure of the poetic medium was noted almost two hundred years ago by August Graf von Platen; see Brunelle (2000–1: 123 n. 1).

35 For views along these lines, see esp. Wilkinson (1955: 123–7), who speaks of these digressions as delightful and vivid narratives that help break the monotony of the poem’s instructional sections; see also Galinsky (1975: 42). For a more balanced early view of these episodes, see Hollis (1973: 104–10).

are we meant to follow the example of Ulysses (who entrances his girl with his speaking) or Calypso (who manages to detain her lover by her own rhetorical powers)? The Daedalus and Icarus episode is even more dynamic, in that it teasingly invites the astute reader to pursue a sustained metaliterary reading. Daedalus may be seen as the exiled/exilable poet, Icarus as the daring/doomed poem (Ars), the sun as the disapproving Augustus. But the mapping of myth onto reality is by no means exact, and the reader is encouraged to enter into playing with different meanings.

Such appreciation for the dynamic relationship between digression and main text has had a strong influence on scholarly treatment of several other mythical episodes in Ars and Remedies, and the present volume strives to push such negotiation further. Mario Labate argues that the first digression of the poem involving Romulus and the Sabine women, which draws attention to the absence of ars in the process of selecting a mate, acts as an effective anti-exemplum to make more prominent the positive teaching of the Ars as a whole. Taking a rather different approach to the issue, Alison Sharrock invites us to rethink the relationship between ‘digression’ and ‘main text’ by concentrating on the poem’s ‘narrative’ and, more specifically, on the temptations offered by the text to narrativize. By looking at both the narrative ‘digressions’ and the ‘action’ of central characters implicit in the instructional parts of the text, Sharrock argues that both parts can be seen to work together, rather than in opposition, in the creation of an ‘implied narrative’. It might even be said, Sharrock contends, that it is the instructional parts that are obstructive, in that they slow down the instructional momentum of the ‘digessional’ stories.

7. THE ROLE OF THE READER

One of the first to set forth an extended analysis of the role of the (sophisticated) reader in the construction of meaning in Ovid’s

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the fluctuating ways in which Ovid’s erotodidactic corpus has been received in more recent times. Hexter charts the curious history of Ovid’s erotodidactic works as school texts over the past thousand years, in which the poems became popular for either their (innocent) Latinity or their raunchy messages. Focusing on a single poem from twentieth-century poet Robert Graves, Liveley explores Graves’s close critical engagement with Ovid’s *Ars* and *Remedia*—an engagement that, on a more general level, comments on the challenges of reading (and misreading) Ovid’s poetry over the past millennium.

Part I

Poetics