

Ars Amatoria

B O O K 2



Sing “Io Paean!” Sing “Io Paean!” Sing it again!
The prey I’ve been stalking has fallen into my trap!
The happy lover has given the verdant palm to my songs,
which trump the Ascran and Maeónian old men.
Like this did Priam’s son, the guest, having snatched the wife, 5
set gleaming sail from heavily armed Amýclae;
like this was he who bore you in his victorious chariot,
Hippodamía, conveyed by foreign wheels.
Not so fast, young man! Your timber’s afloat in the middle
of the waves, and the harbor I seek is a long way off. 10

1. “**Io Paean!**”: Paeon was originally a healing god, then an epithet for Apollo and Asclepius as gods of healing, and finally (along with “io” or “ie”) a ritual cry of thanks for well-being and/or salvation—somewhat analogous to our “alleluia.”
2. **prey**: Latin *praeda*; see on 1.114 “prize.”
3. **palm**: A palm branch was given to the victor in an athletic or artistic competition.
4. **Ascran and Maeonian old men**: Hesiod (see on 1.27–28 “Clio . . . valleys”) and Homer (from Maeonia, in Asia Minor), considered the authors of the most ancient and finest poetry.
6. **Amyclae**: City in Sparta where Helen and Menelaus lived; see on 1.54 “Greek girl . . . Phrygian man.”
8. **Hippodamia**: Oenomaus of Pisa, father of Hippodamia, would allow her to marry only a man who beat him in a chariot race; Pelops won by trickery and carried off his prize.

It's not enough that (with me as prophet) the girl has come to you;
 my art is what caught her, my art is what must keep her.
 Nor does it take less prowess to keep what you've got than to find it:
 that was luck, but this will be a work of art.
 Now, if ever, Cytheréa and son, take my side; 15
 now, Érato, for you've got the name of Love.
 I'm ready to speak great things: what arts can make Love stay,
 the boy that strays throughout such a wide, wide world.
 He's flighty, and he's got two wings to fly away with;
 it's very hard to set a limit on those. 20

THE STORY OF DAEDALUS AND ICARUS

Minos had done everything to keep his guest from escaping,
 but he managed to find a daring route through wings.
 Daédalus, when he'd enclosed what the mother's crime had conceived—
 the semi-bovine human, semi-human bovine—
 said, "Minos most just, let there be an end to the exile; 25
 let my ancestral land receive my ashes,
 and since, driven by unfair Fate, I had not the power
 to live in my fatherland, grant me the power to die there.
 If an old man's thanks are too cheap, grant return to the boy;
 if you don't want to spare the boy, spare the old man." 30

15. **Cytherea:** Venus (from her shrine on the island of Cythera, said to be her birthplace, southeast of the Peloponnese).

16. **Erato:** The Muse of erotic poetry (from Greek *erōs*, "sexual love"). Virgil famously invokes Erato near the beginning of the *Aeneid's* second half (7.37); the *praeceptor's* invocation of her here signals the second half of his two-book advice to men.

21. **Minos:** He was peeved with Daedalus for facilitating his wife Pasiphaë's affair with a bull (for the story, see 1.289–326).

24. **the semi-bovine human, semi-human bovine:** Seneca the Elder (writer on oratory, ca. 50 BC–AD 40) relates an anecdote in which Ovid's friends chose his three worst lines, Ovid his three favorite lines; naturally, they turned out to be the same three lines, and this was one of them (*Controversiae* [Debates] 2.2.12).

These things he'd said, but he could have said these things and much more—

that one wasn't giving the man a way out.

As soon as he realized this, he said, "Now, Daédalus, now you've got some material for your genius to work with.

Minos has got control of the land and control of the sea; 35
neither the earth nor the waves will let us escape.

What's left is a path through the sky: through the sky we'll try our journey.

Grant permission, high Jupiter, to my attempt.

It's not that I'm aspiring to touch the seat of the stars;
yours is the only way I can flee my master. 40

If there's a path through the Styx, we'll swim through Stygian waves;
I'm going to have to change the laws of my nature."

Evils often inspire genius: who'd ever believe
that a man was able to take a path through the air?

To make the oars of birds he arranges feathers in order 45
and weaves a delicate work with linen bands;

the bottom part is attached by wax made supple by fire—
and now the labor of his new art was finished.

The boy, beaming, kept fingering the wax and the feathers,
unaware that these arms were made for his shoulders. 50

His father told him, "These ships will sail us to the fatherland;
with this device we'll escape the clutches of Minos.

Minos has closed off everything else, but not the air;
break through the air, which we can, through my invention.

But the maiden of Tégea, the comrade of Boötes, 55

41. **Styx:** See on 1.635–36 "Jupiter . . . Styx."

50. **arms:** Latin *arma*, "armor" or "equipment" rather than human "arms"—but Ovid *would* have made this pun had he written in English. (Latin *armus*, though from a different root than *arma*, does mean "shoulder.")

55. **maiden of Tegea, the comrade of Boötes:** Callisto, a nymph from Arcadia (of which Tegea is a district) who was raped by Jupiter, turned into a bear by Juno, and became the constellation Ursa Major ("Bigger Bear"). The

Oríon wielding his sword—you must not visit these;
 stay behind me on the wings I've given you. I'll go in front.
 You follow; under my leadership, you'll be safe.
 For if we get too close to the sun, going through the ethereal
 breezes, the wax won't be able to take the heat; 60
 or if we flap our wings down low too close to the waves,
 the supple feathers will get waterlogged by the sea.
 Fly between the two—and fear the winds too, my son,
 and spread your sails wherever the breezes bear you.”
 Amid these warnings he fastens his work on the boy and shows
 him 65
 how to move, like a mother bird teaching her chicks;
 then he puts on the wings he's fashioned for his own shoulders
 and timidly poises his body for the new journey;
 and now—about to take off—he kissed his little son,
 and the father's cheeks could not contain their tears. 70
 There was a hill, lower than a mountain, higher than a plain:
 here the two bodies were launched on their wretched flight.
 Daédalus moves his own wings himself and also looks back
 at his son's, and keeps his course in the same direction.
 And now, delighting in the new journey, shedding his fear, 75
 Ícarus soars more boldly with daring art.
 (Some man, while he was angling for fish with a quivering rod,
 saw them: his hand left behind the work it had started.)
 Now Samos was on the left (Naxos had been left behind,

constellation Boötes (“Ox-Driver”) comes (according to Ovid) from her son
 Arcas, raised to the stars at the moment he was about to shoot his mother,
 the bear. Together, these constellations roughly correspond to our Big Dipper.
 56. **Orion:** See on 1.731 “Orion.”

79–80. **Samos . . . Naxos . . . Paros . . . Delos:** Islands in the Aegean Sea.
 Heading roughly northeast from Crete, Daedalus and Icarus have nearly made
 it to Asia Minor (Samos is just off the coast).

and Paros, and Delos, loved by the Clárian god), 80
 Lebinthos was on the right, and Calýmne, shady with forests,
 and Astypalaéa, ringed with shoals full of fish,
 when the boy, excessively reckless in his unwary years,
 pushed his path too high and deserted his father.
 The bindings fail, the wax liquefies from the god too near, 85
 and his waving arms can't hold the wispy winds.
 Terrified, he looks down to the sea from the height of the sky;
 night rose and covered his eyes in his trembling dread.
 The wax had melted away; he shakes his naked arms,
 and panics, and has nothing to hold him up. 90
 He plummets, and says, "Father, father, I'm carried away!" as he falls;
 the green waters closed his mouth as he was speaking.
 But the unhappy father, a father no more, shouts, "Ícarus!"—
 shouts, "Ícarus! Where are you? What sky do you fly in?"—
 was shouting, "Ícarus!" . . . He saw the feathers in the waves. 95
 The earth covers his bones, the sea has his name.
 Minos had no power to imprison the wings of a man:
I'm trying to detain a winged god!

80. **Delos, loved by the Clarian god:** Apollo (who had an oracle and grove at Claros, in the Greek city of Colophon in Asia Minor) retained a fondness for the island of Delos, his birthplace.

81–82. **Lebinthos . . . Calymne . . . Astypalaea:** More islands in the Aegean not far from the Asia Minor coast.

85. **the god:** The Sun.

95. **was shouting, "Ícarus!":** The switch from "shouts" to "was shouting" suggests that in the very act of saying his son's name Daedalus learns the answer to his question. The threefold "shouting" (*conclamatio*) of a dead loved one's name was part of Roman funerary ritual; that Daedalus unwittingly performs this ritual while still hoping to find his son alive adds to the pathos of the scene.

96. **the sea has his name:** The Icarian Sea (near Icaria, an island southwest of Samos).

MAGIC WON'T WORK: JUST BE LOVABLE

He's on the wrong track, whoever scurries to Haemonian arts
 or gives what he's plucked from the brow of a newborn horse. 100
 It's not the herbs of Medéa that will make love live,
 or Marsian chants mixed with magic incantations:
 the Phasian would have kept Aeson's son, Circe kept Ulysses,
 if only love could be held onto by song!
 Nor will it do any good to give pale philters to girls; 105
 philters are bad for the mind and can lead to madness.
 Let every wickedness be far hence! To be loved, be lovable,
 something a handsome face alone won't give you.
 Even if you're a Níreus, beloved of ancient Homer,
 and a tender Hylas, snatched by the naiads' crime, 110
 to keep your mistress and not be stunned that she's left you behind,
 add your endowment of wit to the goods of your body.
 Beauty's a fragile good; the more the years pile up,
 the smaller it gets, and it's ravaged by its own length.
 Neither violets nor yawning lilies are always in bloom; 115
 the thorn hardens, left behind by the rose it's lost.
 Grey hairs are coming for you soon, you beautiful man;
 the wrinkles are coming soon to plow your body.
 Now build your mind to make it last and add on to your beauty:
 the mind alone remains till the funeral pyre. 120

99. **Haemonian arts:** Thessaly (see on 1.6 "Haemonian ship") was famous for its witches.

100. **plucked from the brow of a newborn horse:** This substance, called *hippomanes* (horse-madness), was believed to be a powerful aphrodisiac.

102. **Marsian chants:** The Marsi, a tribe of central Italy, were famous for miraculous snakebite cures and other magical practices.

103. **Phasian . . . Aeson's son:** Medea and Jason.

104. **song:** See on 1.2 "song."

107. **be far hence:** See on 1.31–32 "Get ye . . . foot."

109. **Nireus:** Called by Homer the handsomest of the Greeks after Achilles, and proverbial for his beauty.

Take no small care to have cultivated the liberal arts
 in your breast and to have thoroughly learned two tongues.

ULYSSES AND CALYPSO

Ulysses was no beauty, but eloquent he was—
 and he still tormented sea goddesses with love.
 Oh, how often Calýpso grieved at his hurrying away, 125
 and claimed that the water wasn't fit for sailing!
 She kept asking for The Fall of Troy again and again;
 he kept telling the same story different ways.
 They were standing on the shore; there, too, lovely Calýpso
 demanded the Odrýsian chief's bloody death. 130
 He, with a slender stick (for by chance he was holding a stick)
 depicts the work she asks for in the dense sand.
 "This" he said "is Troy" (he made the walls on the shore);
 "here's your Símois; pretend this is my camp.
 There was a field" (he makes a field) "which we spattered with
 Dolon's 135

121. **liberal arts:** Latin *ingenuae artes*, literally "freeborn arts," the studies appropriate for a free person (Latin *liber* = "free"), as opposed to the "servile arts" appropriate for slaves (*servi*). Political correctness (which might flinch at such class snobbery) was millennia away.

122. **two tongues:** Latin and Greek (which was the language of high culture, flirtation, and showing off, as French used to be among the English).

127. **asking for The Fall of Troy:** Throughout this scene, the Roman reader would be reminded of Virgil's Dido, who similarly begged her lover to keep retelling his own Fall of Troy story and later tried to talk him out of entrusting himself to the stormy waves.

130. **Odryian chief:** Rhesus, a Thracian king (Odrysia = Thrace) allied to the Trojans. A prophecy stated that if his horses drank from the Xanthus river and ate Trojan grass, then Troy would never fall. Ulysses and Diomedes captured his horses and killed him on their night raid of the Trojan allies' camp.

134. **Simois:** A river of Troy.

blood, while he stays up hoping for Haemónian horses.
 The tents of Sithónian Rhesus had been over there;
 that night the captured horses carried me back—”
 he was drawing more, when suddenly Pérgamum was swept
 away by the tide, and the camp, with Rhesus its leader. 140
 Then the goddess said, “These waves you think will be faithful to you
 when you go—do you *see* what great names they’ve destroyed?”
 The moral: beware of trusting in a treacherous figure,
 whoever you are—or have something more than your body.

BE OBSEQUIOUS

Skillful indulgence is excellent for capturing hearts; 145
 harshness stirs up hatred and savage wars.
 We hate the hawk, because it lives constantly under arms,
 and wolves whose habit is to attack timid sheep;
 the swallow, though, because it’s gentle, is free from men’s traps,
 and the Chaónian bird has turrets to roost in. 150
 Get ye far hence, quarrels and battles of bitter tongue!
 Soft love is to be nourished by sweet words.

136. **Haemonian horses:** The horses of Achilles (who was from Thessaly: see on 1.6 “Haemonian ship”). Ulysses and Diomedes intercepted and killed Dolon on their night raid.

137. **Sithonian:** Thracian (Sithon was an old name for Thrace).

139. **Pérgamum:** See on 1.478 “Pérgamum.”

143. **figure:** Latin *figura*, like our “figure,” can refer to human shape or to a drawing. This is surely one of the *praeceptor’s* most outrageous concluding aphorisms.

150. **Chaonian bird:** The dove. The oracle of Jupiter at Dodona (in Chaonia, a region in Epirus in northwest Greece) was the oldest and one of the most famous in the Greco-Roman world. Prophetic messages issued from the rustling of the god’s oak tree and from the doves that nested in its branches. Ovid likes to draw parallels between himself and nice birds, especially prophetic ones.

151. **Get ye far hence:** See on 1.31–32 “Get ye . . . foot.”

Brides should drive off their men, grooms drive off brides through
 disputes,
 both constantly thinking the other one is suing;
 this is what's fit for wives, the dowry of wives is disputes; 155
 a girlfriend should always hear the sounds she wants.
 It wasn't the law that ordered you to come into one bed:
 in your case, the function of law is performed by Love.
 Have soft sweet nothings and words that are pleasing to the ear
 on offer, so she'll be happy at your approach. 160

ADVICE FOR PAUPERS

I'm not making my way as a teacher of loving for the rich;
 whoever is willing to spend has no need for my art.
 He who says "Take!" when he pleases has got all the genius he needs;
 I give up—he's got more charm than my inventions.
 I'm a prophet for paupers, because I loved as a pauper; 165
 since I wasn't able to give gifts, I gave words.
 The pauper must love with caution, the pauper must fear to give
 insults,
 must bear many things the rich don't have to put up with.
 I remember how I messed up my mistress's hair in my anger:
 how many days that anger robbed from me! 170

166. **I gave words:** This phrase, in this context, is the translator's despair. Latin *dare verba*, literally "to give words," is also an idiomatic expression meaning "to trick." Elsewhere, I have generally translated it "to give the slip (to)"; the pun in the present line is thus roughly equivalent to something like "Since I couldn't give her the expensive dress, I gave her the slip."

169. **I remember:** Phrases like "I remember," in poets like Ovid, generally signal a reference to a previous text, a phenomenon modern scholars often call an "Alexandrian footnote" (after the similar practice in Callimachus and other Alexandrian poets). In this case, the *praeceptor* "remembers" the hair-tearing scene in *Amores* 1.7. Part of the joke is that the "I" of the *Amores* and the *Ars* is supposedly the same person (despite their different personae); see "When the *Praeceptor* Reads" in the introduction. "I remember" could equally

I don't think I tore her tunic—I didn't notice it—but she
 had said so, and it was paid for at my expense.
 But you, if you're sensible—avoid the mistakes your teacher
 made, and fear the losses my fault incurred;
 make war with Párthians, but make peace with a cultured
 girlfriend, 175
 and jokes, and whatever provides the reasons for love.
 If she's not flirting and flattering you enough as her lover,
 stay the course and hold firm: she'll soften up later.
 Compliance will bend the branch and curve it away from the tree;
 you break it if you give it all your strength. 180
 Compliance is what swims rivers, nor could you conquer the stream
 if you swam against the direction of the current.
 Compliance is what breaks tigers and Numídián lions;
 the bull gradually submits to the farmer's plow.
 What was pricklier than Nonácrian Atalánta? 185
 That bruiser still succumbed to the merits of a man.
 They say for his own sad lot and the girl's ungente deeds
 Milánion often wept out under the trees;
 often at her command he bore treacherous nets on his neck;
 often he pierced fierce boars with his savage spear. 190

well be used of a character “remembering” his or her behavior in a text by a different author, as when, say, Ariadne in Ovid's *Fasti* “remembers” how she called Theseus “traitor” back when she was a character in Catullus's poem 64. 175. **Parthians:** See on 1.179–80 “O buried Crassi and flag.”

183. **Numidian:** Numidia, originally the country of African nomads, was an ancient kingdom (then Roman province, then client kingdom) in North Africa.

185. **Nonacrian Atalanta:** Nonacrian = Arcadian (from Mount Nonacris in Arcadia, in the central Peloponnese). In the version of Atalanta's story followed here, which is similar to that in Propertius 1.1 (who sees it as an exemplum of long-suffering love), Milanion won the beautiful virgin huntress's love by protecting her from the would-be rapist centaur Hylaeus, as well as by general subservience.

He often felt a wound from Hylaéus's outstretched bow
 (although he knew another bow better than this one).
 I'm not commanding you to arm up and scale the Maenálian
 woods, or to carry hunting nets on your neck,
 or commanding you to offer your breast to flying arrows; 195
 the commands my cautious art gives will be gentle.
 Give in when she fights back: giving in, you'll walk away victor—
 just be sure to play the role she commands.
 She's critical? Be critical. Whatever she approves, approve.
 What she says, say; what she denies, deny. 200
 She's laughed? Laugh in response. If she weeps, remember to weep;
 she should set the terms for your expression.
 Or if she's gambling and rolling ivory dice with her hand,
 roll badly, and let her win even if she rolls badly;
 or if you play knucklebones, don't make her pay if she loses; 205
 make sure you often get the ruinous Dogs;
 or if the counter will go forth in the guise of a bandit,
 make sure your soldier is killed by the glassy foe.
 Hold out her parasol yourself with its ribs extended,
 yourself make room in the crowd for her when she comes. 210
 Don't hesitate to produce a footstool for her trim couch;
 put on or take off the sandal on her tender foot.

192. **another bow:** Need I point out that this means Cupid's?

193–94. **Maenalian woods:** Maenalus is a mountain range in Arcadia, but also, in some versions, the name of Atalanta's father (in others he is Iasus or Schoeneus).

203. **ivory dice:** The reference here seems to be to the game of *tessera* (die), a kind of backgammon.

205. **knucklebones:** Knucklebones (*tali*) involved throwing four four-sided dice; the Dogs (all ones) was the worst throw, the Venus Throw (all different numbers) the best.

207. **bandit:** The reference is to a game called *ludus latruncolorum* (game of little bandits), a two-player military board game involving counters of different colors on a sort of checkerboard.

209. **Hold out her parasol yourself:** See on I.139 "mistress."

Often, too, even if you're shivering yourself, you need to
 warm up your mistress's hand in your freezing bosom.
 Don't think it's shameful for you (shameful, yes—but charming) 215
 to hold up her mirror with your well-bred hand.

BE HUMILIATED (LIKE HERCULES AND APOLLO)

That man who earned heaven (which he himself had previously borne)
 when his stepmother got tired of supplying monsters
 is said to have held a basket among the Iónian girls,
 and to have spun his unworked wool to perfection. 220
 The Tirýnthian hero obeyed his mistress's command:
 now go be shy about bearing what he bore!
 She commands you to be in the Forum: always be sure you arrive
 before the commanded hour, and don't leave till late.
 She's told you to go and meet someone? Put everything off: 225
 run! And don't let the crowd hold you back as you go!
 She's done with her banquet and making her way back home at night?
 Then too, come if she calls, in place of her slave!
 She's out in the country and tells you to come? Love hates the lazy:
 if you haven't got wheels, make your way on foot! 230
 The oppressive season and thirsty Dog Star must not delay you,
 or the road that's blinding white with heaps of snow.

217. **That man:** Hercules. During one of his labors (fetching the golden apples of the Hesperides, nymphs who tended a mythical garden), he held up the world for the Hesperides' father, Atlas, so Atlas could fetch the apples for him. Atlas intended to leave Hercules with the burden permanently; Hercules asked him to take it back for a minute so he could get his lion skin more comfortably settled, then absconded with the apples.

219. **held a basket:** Hercules spent a year doing women's work for Omphale, queen of Lydia (in Ionia, a region on the west coast of Asia Minor).

221. **Tirýnthian:** Tiryns, a settlement in the Peloponnese near Argos, was associated with Hercules either as his birthplace or as the kingdom he was destined to rule.

231. **Dog Star:** Sirius, which rose in August and was seen as bringing destructive heat and disease.

Love is a military exercise. Withdraw, ye sluggish!
 These flags are not for timid men to guard.
 Night, and winter, and long marches, and savage pains, 235
 and every labor belong to this soft camp.
 Often you'll suffer a shower let loose from heavenly cloud,
 and often you'll lie there shivering on the bare ground.
 Cynthus is said to have pastured the cattle of Pheres's son
 Admētus and hidden out in a tiny hut. 240
 What's fit for Phoebus is fit for anyone! Strip off your pride,
 whoever you are who care about love that will last.
 If a path through safe and level ground is blocked for you,
 and the door barricaded by a stubborn bolt,
 nevertheless, slip down head first through an open roof, 245
 and let a high window, too, give you secret passage.
 She'll be happy in knowing that she's the cause of your danger:
 this will be a sure pledge of love to your mistress.
 You could have often done without your girl, Leánder:
 you swam across so she might know your heart. 250

TAMPERING WITH THE SERVANTS

You shouldn't blush to win over her maids, each in order
 of rank, and you shouldn't blush to win over slaves:
 greet each one by his own name (it costs you nothing!),
 ambitious one, and shake their lowly hands!

233. **Love is a military exercise:** The following list of analogies between lovers and soldiers is abbreviated from the far more extensive one in *Amores* 1.9.
 239. **Cynthus:** Phoebus Apollo (from Mount Cynthus on Delos), who fell in love with King Admetus and endured the indignities here described.
 249. **Leander:** This brave soul proved his love to Hero, a priestess of Venus, by swimming the Hellespont (modern Dardanelles, a narrow—but not that narrow—strait between Greece and Asia Minor) every night to meet her, aided by the light she lit for him. One stormy winter night the light went out, he drowned, and she killed herself. *Heroides* 18 and 19 are love letters between the pair.

But still, when a slave solicits you (it's a minor expense!), 255
 give him some little gifts on the Day of Fortune;
 give the maid some, too, on the day the Gallic band
 paid the penalty, deceived by the clothing of wives.
 Trust me, make a crowd of your own; let the doorkeeper and
 the guard at her bedroom door always be among them. 260
 I'm not commanding you to give pricey gifts to your mistress;
 give little things, but little things cleverly chosen.
 When the field is nice and rich, when the branches bend with their
 weight,
 the boy should bring her rustic gifts in a basket
 (you can say they were sent you from your suburban property 265
 even if they were bought on the Sacred Way);
 he should bring either grapes or the chestnuts that Amaryllis
 used to love, but now she loves no more.
 Indeed, with a thrush, even, or by sending a garland,
 you can testify that you remember your mistress. 270
 (Using these to buy childless old people you hope will die soon
 is shameful; damn those who give presents a bad name!)

256. **Day of Fortune:** June 24. The cult of Fortune (Latin *Fortuna*) was established by Servius Tullius, the sixth king of Rome, who was thought to have had a slave mother; it was popular with slaves.

257–58. **day the Gallic band paid the penalty:** July 7. After the Gauls nearly took over Rome in 390 BC (see on 1.413 “tearful Allia”), the Romans’ Latin neighbors demanded the surrender of the Romans’ freeborn women and girls. Maidservants went in their place, then signaled the Romans to attack while their enemies were asleep. Ovid varies this by making the Gauls themselves, rather than the Latins, the victims of the deception.

266. **Sacred Way:** The Main Street of Rome.

267. **Amaryllis:** In Virgil’s *Eclogue* 2.52, the shepherd Corydon refers to a gift of “chestnuts, which . . . Amaryllis used to like” (Amaryllis is a typical country-girl name); the implication there, which the *praeceptor* clarifies here, is that Amaryllis has developed more expensive tastes.

271. **childless old people:** The *praeceptor*’s outrage here only serves to underline the many parallels between courting a girl and courting an inheritance.

USE POETRY

Why should I instruct you to send tender verses as well?

Woe is me, song hasn't received much honor.

Songs are praised, but it's magnificent gifts that are sought: 275
as long as he's rich, a total barbarian's charming.

Truly, we live in a Golden Age: the greatest honor's
on sale for gold, and gold is what bargains for love.

Homer, you can arrive in person, flanked by the Muses,
and if you bring nothing with you, out you go, Homer! 280

And yet there do exist—the rarest crowd—cultured girls;
the other crowd isn't cultured, but wants to be.

Both of these should be praised through songs; the reciter should
commend his songs, whatever they are, through sweet sounds.

Thus, for both groups, the song he spent all night on for them 285
may possibly play the part of a tiny gift.

MAKE EVERYTHING HER IDEA

But what you're about to do on your own and you think is useful,
always make sure your girlfriend asks you to do:

if freedom has been promised to some one of your slaves,
be sure it's through your mistress that he seeks it. 290

If you're remitting a slave's punishment and savage fetters,
make her owe you for what you were going to do.

The benefit should be yours, the glory should go to your girlfriend;
no loss—let her play the part of the one in control.

BE WOWED BY HER BEAUTY

But whoever is concerned with holding onto a girl— 295
be sure she thinks you're thunderstruck at her beauty.

If she's in Týrians, you'll praise the Týrian wraps;

297. **Tyrians:** Fabric dyed with the deep-purple dye from Tyre (a coastal city in modern Lebanon) was a quintessential luxury item.

if she's in Cöans, think the Cöans are charming.
 She's in gold? Let her be more precious to you than gold itself;
 if it's wool she's put on, applaud the wool she's put on. 300
 She's standing there in her tunic? Shout, "You set me on fire!"—
 but beg her, with timid voice, to mind the cold.
 Care's been taken in arranging her part? Praise her part.
 Her hair's been curled with fire? Curled hair, be charming.
 Admire her arms while she's dancing, admire her voice while
 she's singing, 305
 and launch into a complaint because she's left off.
 Even the sex itself—and the very best part—you're allowed
 to adore, and count off all the pleasures she's given.
 Though she's been more violent than the gruesome Medúsa,
 to her own lover, she'll become gentle and kind. 310
 Only make sure you're not obviously being fake in those words,
 and don't wreck what you've said by the look on your face.
 If it stays hidden, art works; if it's found out, it brings shame
 and deservedly erases trust forever.

WHEN SHE'S SICK

Often in autumn, when the year is most beautiful, 315
 and the grape begins to blush, full of purple wine,
 when now we're shriveled with cold, and now relaxed with warmth,
 the dubious air brings a languor to our bodies.
 Certainly, let her be well! But if she's lying there ill
 and has felt the evil of her climate in her sickness, 320
 then should your love and devotion be made plain to the girl;
 sow, then, something to reap later on with full sickle.

298. **Cöans**: Silk clothing from the island of Cos (in the eastern Aegean) was formfitting and see-through.

309. **Medusa**: A snaky-haired monster whose glance turned men to stone. For more on this myth (and its Freudian implications), see on 3.504 "Gorgon's fire."

You shouldn't show any impatience with her fretful sickness,
 and whatever she'll allow should be done at your hands,
 and she should see you weeping, and you should tirelessly kiss her, 325
 and she should drink in your tears with her parched mouth.
 Make many prayers, but all in her presence—and as much as you want
 have happy dreams that you can tell her about.
 An old woman should come to purify her bed and room,
 and to bring sulfur and eggs with trembling hand. 330
 All these things will show evidence of pleasing concern;
 for many, this route has led to a spot in a will.
 But don't go courting the patient's resentment by your services:
 your charming officiousness should know when to stop.
 Don't keep her away from food or give her draughts of bitter 335
 medicine; let your rival mix *those* concoctions.

B E C O M E H A B I T U A L

But don't keep using the wind to which you entrusted your sails
 near the shore, once you're out on the open sea.
 While a new love toddles about, it gains strength through experience;
 it will grow strong with time if you feed it up well. 340
 That bull you're scared of you used to pet when it was a calf;
 the tree you recline under now was once a sapling.
 Tiny at birth, the river acquires wealth as it runs
 and picks up many waters wherever it goes.
 Make her get used to you: there's no force greater than habit; 345
 until you achieve it, shy away from no boredom.
 Let her always see you, always offer her ears to you;
 keep on showing your face, night and day.

330. **sulfur and eggs:** Two ingredients commonly used for ritual purification, though not necessarily in combination.

332. **a spot in a will:** See on 271 “childless old people.”

THEN MAKE YOURSELF SCARCE—BUT NOT
TOO LONG (WITH MYTHOLOGICAL EXAMPLES)

Once you've got greater confidence that you could be missed,
 that she might actually care if you're far away, 350
 give it a rest: the field that lies fallow repays investment,
 and arid land absorbs the waters from heaven.
 Phyllis burned more moderately in Demóphoön's presence;
 as soon as he set sail, she really blazed up!
 Wily Ulysses tortured Penélope with his absence; 355
 you missed your Son of Phýlacus, Laodamía.
 But only short breaks are safe. With time, emotions wane;
 the absent love vanishes and a new one sneaks in.
 While Meneláus was gone, so Helen wouldn't lie alone,
 she spent her night in the warm embrace of her guest. 360

353. **Phyllis:** This Thracian princess, married to the Athenian Demophoön, missed him so much when he had to go back to Athens that, fearing he would never return (though he did intend to), she killed herself. For her story, see *Rem.* 591–608.

355. **Wily Ulysses tortured Penelope:** His twenty years of war and wandering, reasons the *praeceptor*, were a clever means of sharpening his wife's passion (that man was wily indeed!).

356. **Son of Phylacus:** Protesilaus (grandson of Phylacus), the first Greek to die at Troy (a prophecy stated that the first Greek to set foot on Trojan soil would be killed, and he was that man). His new bride, Laodamia, unable to endure the separation, prayed to see his Shade, and her prayer was granted for a few hours. She then made a bronze statue of him, which she embraced like the real thing; when her father found out and had the image burned, she leapt on the flames and killed herself (thus joining her husband in the underworld).

360. **her guest:** Paris. Part of what makes this section so funny is the clash between the sacred obligations of hospitality in Homeric society, the violation of which resulted in a massive war, and the comparative triviality of entertaining in aristocratic Roman circles. See on 1.54 "Greek girl . . . Phrygian man."

How stupid was this, Menelaus? You went off by yourself,
 while your wife and your guest were under the same roof?
 You're handing over timid doves to a hawk, you moron!
 Handing a pen full of sheep to a mountain wolf!
 Helen's not the one sinning here, nor is the adulterer: 365
 he's doing what you and anyone else would do.
 You're forcing this adultery by giving them time and place:
 what did the girl do but take your suggestion?
 What should she do? Man gone, guest here (no ignorant redneck!),
 and she's scared of sleeping alone in an empty bed. 370
 Atreus's son should deal with it. I declare Helen not guilty:
 she enjoyed the courtesies of a cultured man.

HELL HATH NO FURY

But neither is the tawny boar so savage in wrath
 when it flings off rushing hounds with its lightning tusk,
 nor the lioness when she's giving her teats to nursing cubs, 375
 nor the little viper an unwitting foot has stepped on,
 as a woman when she's caught a rival in her partner's bed:
 her blazing expression makes clear what's on her mind.
 She rushes to fire and the sword, and is carried away, all decorum
 gone, like one struck by the horns of the Theban god. 380
 The barbarian woman of Colchis avenged her husband's fault
 and betrayal of marriage laws through her own sons;

363. **timid doves to a hawk:** The irony here is enhanced by the common use of such predator-prey animal similes in epic battle scenes, especially given Paris's conspicuous lack of prowess on the battlefield (as opposed to his superiority in the bedroom).

369. **ignorant redneck:** Latin *rusticus*; see on 1.607 "rustic."

380. **Theban god:** Bacchus (whose mother, Semele, was from Thebes and who often appeared with bull's horns).

381. **barbarian woman of Colchis:** Medea.

another baleful mother is this swallow you see here:
 look, she has a breast that's stained with blood!
 This is what breaks down loves that are firmly established and
 strong: 385
 prudent men had better fear such crimes!

HOW TO CHEAT

Now, my ruling is not consigning you to just one girl—
 gods forbid! A new bride could scarcely get *that*!
 Have fun, but let propriety in cheating conceal your fault;
 don't look to acquire glory from the sin. 390
 And don't give a gift the other woman could recognize,
 and don't always have your naughtiness at the same time;
 and, lest the woman catch you in a hideout she knows,
 don't have just one place where you meet all your women;
 and whenever you write, first carefully inspect the whole tablet 395
 yourself: many women read more than was meant for their eyes!
 When wounded, Venus wages just war and hurls back the spear,
 giving *you* the same complaint she just complained.
 While Átreus's son was content with one woman, she, too,
 was faithful; her man's sin was what made her wicked. 400

383. **this swallow:** Procne. After the Thracian king Tereus, married to the Athenian princess Procne, raped her sister, Philomel (and locked her up in the woods and cut out her tongue), Procne found out when Philomel sent her a tapestry depicting the crime; Procne killed Itys, her son by Tereus, in vengeance. Tereus, Procne, and Philomel all turned into birds (he a hoopoe, the sisters a nightingale and a swallow—though which sister became which bird varies in different versions).

399. **Atreus's son:** This time, Agamemnon (though "Atreus's son" was Menelaus at 371). Ovid has fun juxtaposing the woman troubles of the two sons of Atreus with the two daughters of Tyndareus (Agamemnon and Menelaus were married to Clytemnestra and Helen, respectively). One of the payoffs for retaining patronymics in translation (e.g., translating *Atrides* as "Atreus's son" rather than substituting "Agamemnon") is that it highlights this irony.

She'd heard that, even with laurel in hand and fillet on brow,
 Chryses hadn't prevailed on behalf of his daughter;
 she'd heard about your troubles, abducted Lyrnésian woman,
 and how disgraceful delays kept prolonging the war.
 Yet these things, she'd heard: Priam's daughter, she'd seen herself: 405
 the victor was the shameful prize of his prize.
 So Tyndáreus's daughter let Thyéstes's son in her heart and bedroom
 and took terrible revenge on her sinning man.
 If things you've done a good job of concealing are somehow revealed,
 even if they're revealed, still, keep on denying them. 410
 Don't be more submissive or more flattering than usual:
 that's a very clear sign of a guilty mind.
 But don't go easy on the muscle; all peace depends on one thing:
 previous Venus must be refuted through sex.

WHAT TO EAT (OR NOT)

There are women who'd instruct you take savory, noxious 415
 herb; in my opinion, that is poison.
 Or they mix pepper in with the seeds of stinging nettle
 and golden chamomile ground up in old wine.
 The goddess, however, can't stand to be forced to her joys like that
 (the one lofty Eryx holds on his shady hill). 420
 White onion, from the Pelásgian city of Alcáthoüs,
 and the salacious herb that comes from the garden,

403. **Lyrnesian women:** Briseis; Achilles sacked Lyrnesos (near Troy).

405. **Priam's daughter:** Cassandra.

406. **prize:** See on I.II4 "prize."

420. **Eryx:** A mountain in western Sicily that housed a sanctuary of Venus.

421. **Pelasgian:** The Pelasgians were a mythical, pre-Greek tribe that lived in various Greek locations and colonized a lot; the term connotes something ancient and indigenous.

421. **Alcáthoüs:** Son of Pelops (see on 8 "Hippodamia") and founder of the city of Megara (in Attica, near Corinth).

422. **salacious herb:** Arugula (Latin *eruca*), used as an aphrodisiac.

and eggs should be consumed, Hyméttian honey consumed,
and nuts produced by the pine with its sharp leaves.

AN OPPOSITE STRATEGY: JEALOUSY

Learned Érato, why are you veering into magic arts? 425
My chariot should hug the post on the inside lane.
You who were just taking my advice to hide your crimes,
change course, and take my advice to *reveal* your cheating.
My fickleness isn't to blame: the curved keel doesn't always
make use of the same wind to carry its passengers. 430
Sometimes we sail with Thracian Bóreas, sometimes with Eurus;
often the sails swell with Zephyr, often with Notus.
Observe how in the chariot the driver now lets the reins flow
loose, now holds back the galloping horses by art.
With some women, timid indulgence gets no thanks for its slavery, 435
and if there isn't a rival around, love wilts;
often when circumstances are favorable hearts get spoiled;
benefits are hard to endure philosophically.
As a light flame whose strength is gradually wasting away
lies hidden itself, with ash whitening on its surface, 440
but nevertheless, if you add some sulfur it finds its extinguished
flame and the light that was there before returns:
so, when safety and stagnation make lazy hearts dull,
it takes some stinging goads to draw love back out.
Make her afraid about you, rehear her lukewarm heart; 445
let her grow pale at evidence of your crime.

423. *Hymettian*: Mount Hymettus, near Athens, was famous for its honey.

425. *Erato*: See on 16 "Erato."

426. *post*: The most dangerous part of a Roman chariot race was the tricky turn around the *meta* (turning-post) that marked its halfway point.

431–32. *Boreas . . . Eurus . . . Zephyr . . . Notus*: Roughly the North, East, West, and South winds.

435. *slavery*: See on I.139 "mistress."

O four times and—as many times as I can't even count—
 happy, the man over whom an injured girl grieves!
 A girl who, as soon as the crime has reached her unwilling ears,
 collapses, and speech and color desert the poor thing! 450
 I want to be the man whose hair she tears out in her fury,
 the man whose soft cheeks she goes after with her nails,
 the one she looks at through tears, and glares at with savage eyes,
 the one she wants to live without—but can't.
 How long, you ask? She should complain of her wound only
 briefly, 455
 so wrath doesn't gather strength from protracted delay.
 Long before that, your arms should encircle her snowy neck,
 and you should receive her weeping into your bosom;
 give kisses as she weeps, give Venus's joys as she weeps:
 peace will reign! That's the only way to cure wrath. 460
 When she's got up a good rage, when she seems your determined foe,
 then, go after the pact of sex: she'll be tame.
 That is where Concord lives, with weapons laid aside;
 that's the place—believe me—where Grace is born.
 The doves that fought just now—they're nuzzling beaks together; 465
 their murmuring is full of words and sweet nothings.

THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD AND HUMAN SOCIETY

The universe at first was a confused, jumbled mass,
 and the face of stars and earth and sea was the same;

447. **four times and:** The *praeceptor* takes the epic formula “three and four times” to the next level.

463. **Concord:** Latin *Concordia*. The *OCD* remarks, “The cult of personified harmonious agreement . . . within the body politic at Rome . . . is an effective diagnostic of its absence.” As so often, a political concept has been mischievously eroticized.

464. **Grace:** Latin *Gratia*—one of the hardest words to translate, as it embraces the whole range of its English cognates (“grace,” “gracefulness,” “gratitude,” “graciousness”).

soon sky was imposed on earth, the ground was encircled by sea,
 and empty void retreated to its own place; 470
 the forest received beasts, the air received birds to hold,
 and you, fish, kept hidden in yielding water.
 Then the human race used to wander in lonely fields—
 it consisted of pure strength and a rough body;
 the forest had been its home, grass its food, leaves its bed, 475
 and for a long time no one recognized anyone else.
 They say seductive pleasure softened those fierce spirits:
 woman and man had come to a stop in one place.
 All by themselves, without a teacher, they learned what do to:
 Venus did her delicious work without art. 480
 The bird has something to love; something to join her joys with
 is found by the female fish in the middle of the water;
 the deer follows her mate, serpent is captured by serpent;
 the dog clings in adultery with the dog;
 the ewe is happily mounted, the cow is happy with a bull; 485
 the snub-nosed she-goat holds up the smelly male.
 Mares are driven to frenzy, and follow stallions through places
 far distant, even with rivers in between.
 Therefore, for a wrathful woman, go get strong medicines;
 those are the only things to calm her fierce pain. 490
 Those medicines are better than Macháon's potions;
 when you've sinned, it's by these you'll be reinstated.

484. **adultery:** Latin *adulterium*, which implies the “contamination” or “counterfeiting” that would result from an illicit affair with a woman whose children *should* be legitimate heirs to their father’s property. “Adultery” seems a strange word to apply to sex between animals (and dogs no less, proverbial for their sexual shamelessness), but it is the word the *praeceptor* chooses.

491. **Machaon’s potions:** In Homer, Machaon is a son of the healing god Asclepius and a skilled doctor himself.

AN APOLLONIAN INTERVENTION

As I was singing this, suddenly Apollo appeared at hand
 and moved the strings of his gilded lyre with his thumb.
 Laurel was in his hands, his sacred hair was woven 495
 with laurel: he was a prophet to see as he came!
 He said to me, "O tutor of lascivious Love,
 go on and bring your students to my temple,
 where there is an inscription, famous throughout the whole world,
 that orders each person to be known to himself. 500
 He who is known to himself is the only one who'll love wisely
 and finish every job according to his strength.
 He whom Nature has given beauty, the woman should watch;
 one with good color, lie down and keep showing some shoulder;
 one who's charming in conversation, avoid sulky silence; 505
 one who sings artfully, sing; who drinks artfully, drink.
 But orators mustn't declaim in the middle of a conversation,
 or a crazy poet read his own songs out loud."

493. **As I was singing . . . at hand:** The sudden appearance of Apollo leads the reader to expect a *revocatio* (calling back), a formulaic scene (with pedigree harking back to Callimachus) in which a god appears and tells a poet to sing a different kind of poetry. For instance, as Virgil's alter ego Tityrus was singing of kings and battles (i.e., epic poetry), Apollo plucked his ear and told him to sing of pastoral themes instead (*Eclogue* 6.3–5). Such is not quite the intervention in store here.

495. **Laurel:** In *Metamorphoses* 1, Ovid relates how the laurel became Apollo's sacred tree: to save herself from Apollo's attempts to woo/catch/rape her, Daphne (Greek "laurel") metamorphosed into that tree in the nick of time. All of Apollo's attempts to find love in the *Metamorphoses*, in fact, end in frustration or disaster (he made the mistake of taunting Cupid early on, not entirely unlike a certain poet: see on 1.24 "the wound he's made").

500. **to be known to himself:** The famous inscription on Apollo's temple at Delphi, "Know Thyself," is applied (naturally) to erotic pursuits.

508. **a crazy poet read his own songs out loud:** Wouldn't it have been wonderful to be at the dinner party where Ovid read this line out loud?

That's what Phoebus advised; when Phoebus advises, listen!
 Faith in this god's sacred mouth is solid. 510

BACK TO THE SUFFERINGS OF LOVE

I'm called back to the topic. Whoever will love wisely
 will prevail and get what he's after through my art.
 Furrows don't always return what's invested in them with interest,
 nor does the breeze always help out wavering ships.
 As for lovers, there's little that helps them and more to hurt them: 515
 they need to accept that their spirits must bear a great deal.
 As many rabbits as graze on Mount Athos, or bees in Hybla,
 as many berries as Pallas's blue-green tree bears,
 as many shells on the shore—that's how many pains are in Love!
 The arrows we suffer are dripping with plenty of poison. 520
 They'll say she's gone out—but perhaps you'll see her there inside:
 believe that she's gone out and your eyes deceive you.
 Her door is locked to you, even though she promised you a night:
 put up even with lying on the dirty ground.
 Perhaps that perfidious maid will even say with a haughty 525
 expression, "What's *that* man doing besieging our door?"
 Get on your knees and sweet-talk the doorpost and the harsh girl
 and hang on her door some roses you've swiped from your head.
 When she wants, be there; when she's avoiding you, go away;
 it's boorish for men of breeding to become bores. 530
 Why should your girlfriend be able to say, "There's no escaping
 this man!?" Common sense isn't always a bad thing.
 And don't think there's any disgrace in putting up with the girl's
 curses and lashes, or kissing her tender feet.

517. **Mount Athos:** A mountain in Macedonia.

517. **Hybla:** A town in Sicily that made great honey.

518. **Pallas's blue-green tree:** The olive.

DEALING WITH RIVALS

- Why get hung up on small stuff? My soul urges greater things: 535
 great things I sing! People, give me your whole attention.
 My labor is arduous—but virtue is nothing if not
 arduous. My art demands difficult toil!
 Endure a rival with patience: victory will be on your side,
 and you'll be the victor in great Jupiter's Citadel. 540
 Believe that no mere man, but the Pelásgian Oak
 is telling you this: it's the greatest thing my art has.
 She's flirting? Deal with it. Writing to him? Don't touch the tablets.
 Let her come and go wherever she pleases.
 Husbands afford this freedom to lawfully wedded wives 545
 (when you, soft Sleep, are also assisting their cause).
 In this art, I confess, I'm not exactly perfect;
 what can I do? I fall short of my own advice.
 Some guy gives my girl a secret sign in my presence,
 I live with it? Don't let rage take me for a ride? 550
 I remember, her own man had kissed her; I complained
 about the kiss: my love's overflowing with savagery!
 More than once this flaw has hurt me: that man is more skillful
 who politely invites other men to come in.

540. **Jupiter's Citadel:** The temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus ("Best and Greatest") on the Capitoline Hill (the source of that baffling "o" in our word "capitol"—i.e., "building that houses a legislature") held the Romans' greatest war trophies, such as the *spolia opima* (finest spoils), armor taken directly by a victorious general from a conquered general.

541. **Pelásgian Oak:** See on 150 "Chaonian bird" and 421 "Pelásgian."

545. **lawfully wedded wives:** But of course, the *praeceptor* is not teaching adultery! He means only freedwomen (*libertinae*), who don't count! See on 3.615 "freedom has . . . been claimed."

551. **I remember:** An "Alexandrian footnote" (see on 169 "I remember") to *Amores* 1.4.

554. **politely invites:** Latin *conciliare*, sometimes used as a euphemism for "to act as a pander" (as in *Rem.* 524). For a husband to collude in his wife's

But it's better not to know. Let her cheating be covered up, 555
 so shame doesn't flee in defeat from a face that's told all.
 All the more then, young men, don't try to catch out your women:
 let them sin and think they've fooled you in sinning.
 Love grows for those who are caught: when two share the same
 fortune,
 both persist in whatever caused their downfall. 560

MARS AND VENUS

A story is told—the best-known one in all of heaven—
 of Mars and Venus captured by Múlciber's tricks.
 Father Mars, driven crazy by his insane love of Venus,
 had turned from a frightening captain into a lover.
 When he asked her, Venus (no goddess is more tender than she), 565
 no farm girl, didn't play hard to get with Gradívus.
 Ah, how often that minx is said to have laughed at her husband's
 feet, and his hands, hardened by fire or art!
 Whenever she mimicked Vulcan in front of Mars, it was charming;
 with her beauty was mixed an abundance of grace. 570
 But at first, they'd take great pains to keep their sex a secret;
 their misbehavior was full of bashful shame.
 On evidence from the Sun (who could deceive the Sun?),
 the actions of his wife were made known to Vulcan.
 (Sun, what a bad example you're setting! Ask her for a gift: 575
 if you'll shut up she's got something to give you, too!)

adultery, let alone to arrange it, was a serious and punishable offense (*lenocinium*, “pimping”) under Augustus's adultery legislation.

562. **Mulciber's**: Vulcan (Mulciber), the god of blacksmiths and technology, was great with his hands but lame in his feet—not the most attractive choice for the goddess of sex. The epithet “Mulciber” seems to have been derived from Latin *mulcere*, “to soothe” (he “soothed” destructive fire so it could be used).

566. **farm girl**: Latin *rustica*; see on 1.607 “rustic.”

566. **Gradivus**: A title of Mars, from the word for “stride” or “march” (*gradi*).

Múlciber arranges invisible nets around
 and above the bed: his work deceives the eyes.
 He pretends he's going to Lemnos. The lovers come to their pact:
 they get tangled in the nets and both lie there naked! 580
 He summons the gods. The captives make quite a spectacle;
 it's thought that Venus could scarcely contain her tears.
 Not only can't they cover their faces, they can't even make
 a screen for their obscene parts with their hands!
 Some joker said with a laugh, "O bravest Mars, if they're a 585
 burden for you, transfer those chains to *me!*"
 Scarcely did he free those captive bodies, Neptune,
 by your prayers: Mars heads to Thrace, she to Paphos.
 Now you've done it, Vulcan! What they did in secret before
 they do quite openly now, and all shame has vanished! 590
 But you keep confessing you acted like a fool, you dolt,
 and they say that you are sorry about your art.
 You all must be forbidden this: Dióne, captured, forbids
 the setting of that trap which caught herself.
 Don't you all go setting out nets for your rival, and don't go 595
 tracking down words a secretive hand has written;
 men should go after those things (if they think they're worth going
 after)
 whom fire and water has turned into lawful men.

579. **Lemnos:** An island sacred to him in the northern Aegean.

585. **Some joker:** In Homer, it is Mercury (a notorious prankster; he too has an affair with Venus later on).

587. **Neptune:** Neither Homer nor Ovid explains why the god of the sea should be the one to intervene here.

588. **Paphos:** A city sacred to her on the coast of Cyprus.

593. **Dione:** In some versions she's the mother of Venus, but she comes to be associated with Venus herself.

598. **fire and water:** The groom would offer these, as key ingredients of life, to his bride; the singular verb "has" emphasizes the formulaic nature of the phrase (which signifies not "fire" and "water" individually but "the ceremonial

See, I'm testifying once more: my fun here is only
 with things outside of the law: there's no hem in my jokes! 600

KEEP IT SECRET

Who'd dare to broadcast to the profane the rites of Ceres,
 or the great rituals founded in Sámothrace?
 It's a minor virtue to keep things quiet; on the other hand,
 to blab things that should be kept quiet is a major vice.
 It's right that tattletale Tántalus keeps on grabbing in vain 605
 at apples on the tree and thirsts in the middle of the water!
 Cytheréa expressly commands that her rites be kept quiet:
 I'm warning you—no chatterbox should approach them.
 Even if Venus's mysteries aren't hidden in caskets
 and tambourines don't clatter out frenzied warnings, 610
 still, every day, they're practiced in such a way between us
 that they're meant to remain just that: between us.
 Venus herself, when she's taken her clothes off, stoops a bit
 to cover her private parts with her left hand.

offering of fire and water"). Exiles were forbidden fire and water in the land from which they were banished. The two uses of "men" in this couplet play on the senses of *vir* as "male" and "husband"; see on 1.310 "your man . . . with a man."

600. **hem:** See on 1.31–32 "Get ye . . . foot."

601. **rites of Ceres:** The Eleusinian Mysteries (Eleusis was near Athens). In the Christian era, someone did in fact blab that these rites, which supposedly led to a blessed afterlife, culminated in the revelation of an ear of grain.

602. **Samothrace:** A Greek island in the northern Aegean, home of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, which hosted another famous mystery cult.

605. **tattletale Tántalus:** A legendary king of Sipylus (in Asia Minor) who was invited to dine with the gods and betrayed their hospitality by sharing their secrets; he also did some unpleasant things like pilfering their nectar and ambrosia and serving up his son Pelops in a stew. His punishment was to be eternally "tantalized" in the underworld.

607. **Cytherea:** See on 15 "Cytherea."

613–14. **Venus . . . left hand:** In works of art, at any rate.

Cattle do it everywhere, out in the open: naturally, 615
 at this sight, a girl averts her eyes.
 For our affairs, bedrooms and locked doors are appropriate;
 embarrassing parts are hidden under clothing;
 we look, if not for darkness, at least for a bit of shadowy
 cloud, and something less than open daylight. 620

THE EVILS OF SHOWING OFF

Even back when no roof yet kept out the sun and rain,
 and the oak tree used to provide both shelter and food,
 they took their pleasure in groves and caves, not under Jove:
 primitive people had such concern for modesty.
 But now, we put up posters about our nocturnal business, 625
 and pay big money just for the right to brag!
 Of course, you'll test out all the girls—whoever, wherever—
 so you can tell any man, “This one was mine too”?
 So you'll never be lacking ones you can point to with your finger?
 So whichever you touch will turn into an ugly story? 630
 That's a small complaint! Some make things up they'd deny if true,
 and say there's no one with whom they haven't had sex.
 If they can't touch their bodies, they touch what they can—their
 names!
 Rumor makes for a crime with the body untouched.
 Now go lock the door, you loathed guardian of the girl, 635
 and stick a hundred bolts in the sturdy post:

622. **oak tree . . . food:** Acorns were considered the standard fare for Primitive Man.

623. **under Jove:** A stock phrase for “under the open sky,” though in the *Metamorphoses* (3.363) Ovid re-activates the literal meaning when Juno finds nymphs in this compromising position.

625. **posters:** Latin *tituli*, “posters” or “placards,” like the *VENI VIDI VICI* (“I came, I saw, I conquered”) carried in Julius Caesar's triumphal procession (interesting anecdotal evidence for the basic literacy of the Roman populace).

what's safe, when the adulterer of her *name* is around,
 wanting people to think he got something he didn't?
I'm stingy about confessing even loves that have happened,
 and cover clandestine intrigues with solid good faith. 640

NEVER CRITICIZE

Whatever you do, don't criticize any faults in girls
 which many have found it useful to cover up.
 Andrómeda's complexion was never brought up with her
 by the one with lively feathers on both his feet.
 Andrómache seemed a bit too tall to everyone else: 645
 Hector alone declared she was just the right size.
 What you can hardly stand, get used to—you'll stand it fine;
 time will soften all; a new love is too sensitive.
 While a new grafted branch is growing inside the green bark,
 if any breeze rustles the tender thing, it'll fall; 650
 but soon, hardened by time, it will resist even gales,
 and the firm tree will possess adopted wealth.
 Time itself removes all blemishes from the body,
 and what was a fault ceases to be an impediment.
 Tender nostrils refuse to endure the hides of bulls; 655
 the smell goes unnoticed after persistent time tames them.

644. **the one . . . his feet:** See on 1.53 "Perseus . . . Indians."

645. **Andromache:** The epic and tragic heroine par excellence. The *praeceptor* takes particular delight in imagining her sexual behavior: see 709–10, 3.519–22, and 3.777–78.

654. **an impediment:** Latin *mora*, "delay," can mean either "lapse of time" or "impediment." It is unclear whether this is nominative *morā* (the translation I've chosen), which emphasizes the man's subjective experience ("an impediment to your finding her attractive"), or ablative *morā*, "what *was* a fault ceases to be (a fault) through lapse of time," which restates the point "time removes all blemishes" from the hexameter.

656. **tames them:** Usually, of course, it is bulls that need to be "tamed," not nostrils unaccustomed to the scent of leather.

Evils can be softened by names: have her called “dusky”
 whose blood is blacker than Illyrian pitch;
 if she’s got a squint, “like Venus”; grey hair, “like Minérva”;
 “slender,” if she’s so skinny she’s barely alive; 660
 whoever’s short, call “handy”; whoever’s obese, “full-breasted”;
 let vice be concealed by proximity to virtue.
 Don’t go asking what year she’s in, or under what consul
 she was born (the rigid censor has got *that* job),
 especially if she’s a little short on bloom, and her better 665
 years have gone by, and she’s already plucking white hairs.
 Young men, both this age and the later one are useful:
 one field will bear crops, the other needs sowing.
 [While your strength and years allow, put up with labors:
 soon stooping old age will creep in on silent feet. 670
 Cleave either the sea with oars or the earth with a plow,
 or give your warrior hands to savage battle—
 or else exert your muscle and strength and toil on girls:
 this too is military, this too takes resources.]

MATURE WOMEN ARE BEST

Moreover, they’ve got superior insight into the work, 675
 and that which alone can make a true artist: experience.

657. **names:** The following section parodies the “lovers’ euphemisms” theme, commonplace in satirical and philosophical discourse, which points out besotted lovers’ folly in covering flaws with pet names (calling a gangly girl “gazelle,” etc.). Naturally, the *praeceptor* turns the diatribe into prescriptive advice.

658. **Illyrian:** Illyricum, a territory in the western Balkan Peninsula that became a Roman province, was an exporter of *pix fossilis* (pitch dug out of the ground).

664. **rigid censor:** The censor’s job was to keep lists of Roman citizens, including their birth dates. Censors also exercised control over morals by putting black marks by the names of citizens who had disgraced themselves in various ways, which would debar them from political privileges (such as voting or holding office).

The losses brought on by years they make up for by cultivation,
 and their care ensures they won't appear to be old:
 and—just what you'd want!—they'll take their Venus a thousand
 ways:
 no manual has discovered more positions! 680
 It's doesn't take much prompting for them to experience pleasure;
 woman and man should equally find it rewarding.
 I hate that sex which doesn't give both a good conclusion;
 that's why I find the love for boys less appealing.
 I hate a woman who puts out because she has to put out, 685
 but she's totally dry and thinking about her weaving.
 For me, pleasure that's given out of duty holds no charm;
 I want no girl to perform a duty for me.
 I like to hear a voice that's confessing its own delight
 and begging me to go slow and hold myself back! 690
 I want to look into the conquered eyes of my mistress frenzied,
 languid, not letting herself be touched for a while!
 Nature has not bestowed these goods on early youth;
 they usually take three-and-a-half decades plus.
 Those who are in a hurry can have the new wine; I'll take 695
 my grandfather's bottle, laid up under ancient consuls.
 A plane tree, unless it's mature, isn't able to screen out Phoebus,
 and a meadow just sprouted is hard on the bare feet.
 As if you could put Hermíone ahead of Helen,
 and Gorgē was superior to her mother! 700

696. **under ancient consuls:** Romans generally marked years by the names of the two consuls (leaders of the senate, like joint presidents) for that year.

699. **Hermíone:** Helen's daughter; pretty enough, but no competition for her mother.

700. **Gorgē . . . her mother:** This example is complicated, because Oeneus, father of Gorgē by Althaea, did in fact sleep with his daughter. It is possible that instead of *Gorgē* the text read *Gorgo*, "The Gorgon" (see on 309 "Medusa" and on 3.504 "Gorgon's fire"), who would not have been difficult to beat in a beauty contest.

Whoever you are who want to attain a mature Venus,
if you can hold out, you'll get a fitting reward.

IN BED AT LAST

(WITH EXAMPLES FROM MYTHOLOGY)

Look! The bed's an accomplice, harboring a pair of lovers!
Muse, stand back—wait outside the locked door.
All by themselves, without you, they'll find a flood of words; 705
their left hands won't be lying useless on the bed.
Fingers will discover something to do in those regions
in which Love dips his arrows secretly.
Most valiant Hector did this formerly with Andrómache,
nor was it only in war that he came in handy; 710
great Achilles did it too with the Lyrnésian captive,
flopping into his soft bed, worn out by the foe.
Briséis, you allowed yourself to be touched by those hands,
the ones that were always dyed with Phrygian blood?
Or was this the very thing that turned you on, you minx— 715
that the hands of a conqueror were touching your limbs?

ADVICE ON TECHNIQUE

Believe me, the pleasure of Venus is not to be hurried along,
but drawn out, gradually, with slow delay.
When you've discovered the place the woman loves to be touched,
don't let modesty stand in the way of your touching it: 720
you'll see her eyes gleam, sending tremulous bursts of lightning,
as sunlight often flashes back from clear water;
there will also be moans, there will be a loving murmur,
sweet groans, and words appropriate to the game.

709. **Andromache:** See on 645 “Andromache.”

711. **Lyrnesian captive:** Briseis; see on 403 “Lyrnesian women.”

713. **those hands:** See on 1.15 “hands that Hector was to feel.”

714. **Phrygian:** See on 1.54 “Greek girl . . . Phrygian man.”

But don't either spread your sails too big and leave your mistress 725
 behind, or let her pass you in the race:
 reach the finish line together! Then pleasure is complete,
 when woman and man lie there equally beaten.
 That's the course you should stick to when there's lots of free time,
 and fear isn't urging on a secretive work; 730
 when taking your time isn't safe, it's best to bear down with all your
 oars, and give free rein—and spurs—to your horse.

WHO'S THE GREATEST LOVE POET NOW?

The end of the work is at hand: give me the prize, grateful youth,
 and bring a myrtle wreath for my perfumed hair!
 As great as Podalírius with healing art for the Dánaans, 735
 Achilles with right hand, and Nestor with brain,
 as great as Calchas with entrails, Télamon's son with weapons,
 Autómedon with chariot: so great a lover am I!
 Celebrate me as a prophet, men, to me sing praises:
 let my name be chanted throughout the whole world! 740

734. **myrtle**: Venus's favorite tree, lush and abundant in the Mediterranean world.

735. **Podalirius**: Brother of Machaon (see on 491 "Machaon's potions") and another skilled practitioner of the family art of healing.

735. **Danaans**: A name for the Greeks in the *Iliad* (Danaus was a mythical progenitor of the Greeks; see on 1.73 "daughters of Belus").

736. **Achilles with right hand**: See on 1.15 "hands that Hector was to feel."

736. **Nestor**: The proverbial wise (if somewhat long-winded) old man who counsels the Greeks in the *Iliad*.

737. **Calchas**: The seer whose advice helped the Greeks win the Trojan War—though an oracle predicted that he would die when he met a prophet better than himself, which happened when he met Tiresias's grandson Mopsus. Prophecy through observation of animal entrails ("haruspicy") was a well-established pseudoscience in the ancient world.

737. **Telamon's son**: Ajax.

738. **Automedon**: See on 1.5 "Automedon."

I've given you arms! Vulcan had given arms to Achilles:
 conquer, as he conquered, with the presents given.
 But whoever has overcome an Amazon with my sword
 should inscribe on the spoils, "NASO WAS MY TEACHER"!

Look! Tender girls are begging me to give *them* instructions! 745
 You all will be the next concern of my pages.

741. **Vulcan had given arms to Achilles:** After Achilles lost his armor by lending it to Patroclus (who was killed), his mother, Thetis, solicited spectacular new armor from Vulcan, including the world's most famous shield (described at length in *Iliad* 18).

743. **Amazon:** The most famous group of mythical female warriors; in the final metaphor of this book, the *praeceptor* takes the "battle of the sexes" quite literally.

744. **NASO:** Literally, "the Nose"; Ovid calls himself this fifty-two times in his poetry. Roman *cognomina* (sg. *cognomen*) or "official nicknames" were often (apparently) silly or insulting; e.g., Brutus = "Stupid," Strabo = "Cross-eyed," Cicero = "Chick Pea," etc.