

# THE ART OF LOVE

*BIMILLENNIAL ESSAYS ON OVID'S ARS  
AMATORIA AND REMEDIA AMORIS*

Edited by

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## Preface

Sets of rules and precepts on love and relationships retain the capacity to offend. An American bestseller of the 1990s by Ellen Fein and Sherrie Schneider—*The Rules: Time-Tested Secrets for Capturing the Heart of Mr Right*—dedicated to marrying off its female readers to suitable prospects, might appear to have little obvious connection with the poem that Augustus found guilty of teaching 'foul adultery' (Tr. 2. 212). But, in *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen*, Jenny Davidson devotes a coda ('Politeness and its Costs') to taking issue with *The Rules* on grounds that may seem familiar to readers of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*:<sup>1</sup>

The advice for women who want husbands that is given in the notorious bestseller *The Rules* is relentlessly pragmatic. . . . The book puts forward a practical thesis about the payoffs of delayed gratification and self-restraint in the form of 'simple working sets of behaviors and reactions': concealing one's feelings and withholding sex with the goal of receiving a marriage proposal. . . . The pragmatism of Fein and Schneider's language, and its relentless orientation towards a single goal, suggests a patently self-interested brand of self-control whose extension into other social arenas would be quite sinister.

We can perhaps grasp or relive something of the shock of the *Ars Amatoria* by taking on board the open hostility expressed here towards the very notion of pragmatic advice on 'love', learned behaviours, and concealment of feelings, and the evident anxiety expressed about the leakage of the principles of *The Rules* into cognate areas. But self-interest in matters of love is not all that worries Davidson. She goes on to argue that 'The authors of *The Rules* articulate many of our culture's most disturbing assumptions about women . . . that women are more manipulative and cynical than men, that they are deeply hypocritical, indeed that all women's relationships with men are colored by levels of self-interest and

<sup>1</sup> J. Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen* (Cambridge, 2004), 176–7.

then you'll always find a way to sell a grand triumph to the Roman audience.<sup>53</sup>

The propaganda machine that knew how to bring to the right-hand bank of the Tiber a whole flotilla of *Persides . . . rates*, 'Persian ships' (1. 172), for the circus pseudo-battle of 2 BC, would have no problems in bringing to Rome the Euphrates, the Tigris, Armenians, *Daneia Persis*, 'the Persian land of Danae', and a city that rose up, note, actually *in Achaemeniis uallibus*, in Achaemenian valleys. For the Achaemenids, a welcome return to Rome, after the battle of the Achaemenid Xerxes against the Athenians at Salamis, on the banks of the Tiber.

<sup>53</sup> On Ovid as spinning 'the problem of belief and interpretation' in the *Ars* passage see Beard (2003: 35–7).

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### *Ars Amatoria Romana:* Ovid on Love as a Cultural Construct

Katharina Volk

Early in Jane Alison's recent 'Ovid novel' *The Love-Artist*, the poet is somewhat improbably taking a vacation in a remote corner of the Black Sea, a place uncannily similar to that of his ultimate exile. However uncivilized this area may be, it turns out that the Roman poet's works have already preceded him and that the *Ars Amatoria* especially has made quite an impression on the female population:

[T]hey'd been transformed, a new consciousness like light falling upon them, their clothes worn differently, several desperate efforts made to control their snaky hair. Within weeks there wasn't a Phasian girl who hadn't crouched over a pool of water and turned herself this way and that with newly quizzical eyes. *Goat girls*, Ovid would call them, *Don't be a goat girl from the Caucasus—be sure to shave your legs!* (Alison (2001: 20–1))

The Phasian girls' efforts at beautification are clearly pathetic, and however much they may try, the teachings imparted in the *Ars Amatoria* simply do not work for them. As Ovid himself says, in the passage to which Alison is clearly alluding, he is not in the business of instructing girls from such barbarian locations:

Versions of this chapter were presented as papers at the conference 'Ars Amatoria 2000' in Manchester (September 2002), at Dartmouth College (November 2003), and at Rutgers University (March 2004). My thanks for comments and suggestions go to the audiences at these events and especially to Roy Gibson, Steven Green, and Alison Sharrock, the organizers of the Manchester conference and editors of this volume.

quam paene admonui, ne trux caper iret in alas  
 neue forent duris aspera crura pilis!  
 sed non Caucasea doceo de rupe puellas  
 quaeque bibant undas, Myse Caice, tuas. (Ars 3. 193–6)

(How close I came to admonishing you that the wild he-goat should not settle in your armpits and your legs should not be rough with hard hair! But I am not teaching girls from the Caucasian rock or those who drink your waters, Mysian Caicus.)

What the *praeceptor amoris* is up to is teaching the art of love specifically to the men and women of Rome. In this chapter, I examine the ‘Romanness’ of the *Ars Amatoria* and argue that the explicit restriction of Ovid’s audience to certain members of the Roman people attests to an underlying awareness that *amor*—‘love’, as taught in the poem—is a practice defined by its historical, geographical, and social context or, to use a fashionable term, that it is a ‘cultural construct’ rather than a universal experience.<sup>1</sup>

That the *Ars Amatoria* is geared exclusively to Romans is clear from the famous first distich of the poem:

si quis in hoc artem populo non nouit amandi,  
 hoc legat et lecto carmine doctus amet. (Ars 1. 1–2)

(If anybody in this people does not know the art of love, let him read this and, having read the poem, love as an expert.)

Ovid’s teaching is meant for ‘this people’ (cf. *in hoc... populo*, 1)—clearly the *populus Romanus*—and, we infer, for no one else. Within the tradition of didactic poetry, this exclusive attitude is next to unique. It is true that didactic poems often have individual addressees, such as Hesiod’s Perses, Empedocles’ Pausanias, and Lucretius’ Memmius, while Ovid offers to instruct ‘anyone’ (cf. *si quis*, 1) in his targeted audience.<sup>2</sup> Still, even when there is a specific student figure, the usual implication is that the poem imparts universally valid teaching. For example, it would be absurd to assume that Lucretius

<sup>1</sup> The focus of this chapter is thus the opposite of that of Molly Myerowitz Levine (‘Ovid’s Evolution’, Ch. 13), who maintains the universality of Ovid’s amatory instructions (see also below).

<sup>2</sup> On the addressee in ancient didactic poetry, see the papers in Schiesaro, Mitsis, and Clay (eds.) (1993) and Volk (2002: 37–9 and Index s.v. ‘teacher-student constellation’).

regards Epicureanism as useful only for Memmius; on the contrary, it is generally recognized that intra-textual didactic addressees (such as Memmius) function as foils or dummies for the larger extra-textual readership that is actually envisaged. This is not to say that didactic poems and their characters lack individual features altogether: Memmius clearly is a Roman aristocrat, and the *Works and Days*, to take another example, shows plenty of local colour, however historically accurate, or not, we believe Hesiod’s depiction of Ascrea to be.

Even Vergil’s *Georgics*, a didactic poem with a national theme and an envisaged audience of specifically Italian farmers, does not stress its ‘Italianness’ except in a few distinct passages, most notably the *laudes Italiae* in Book 2, where the poet grandly addresses the *Saturnia tellus* (‘land of Saturn’, 173), to which his poetry is dedicated (173–6). On the whole, though, the *Georgics* reads just like a general textbook of agriculture, in the tradition of the *Works and Days*, and if its instructions are, at least in theory, such as to apply in particular to the conditions—climatic, geological, and otherwise—of the Italian peninsula, this does make a lot of sense: in agriculture, after all, geography makes a difference. It is not immediately obvious that the same holds true for love also, and the pronounced *Romanitas* of the *Ars Amatoria* is thus worthy of closer investigation.

In spite of the generalizing *si quis*, it is clear that Ovid does not intend his teaching for the entirety of the Roman people: while the group of his male students remains largely undefined, except for the frequent implication that they are *iuuenes* (‘young men’), the poet severely restricts his female audience. Already in the proem to Book 1, he excludes married women (31–4), a stricture that is repeated again and again throughout the work (see 2. 599–600, 3. 57–8, 483, and 613–16) and that is, of course, occasioned by Augustus’ marriage laws that made adultery a crime.<sup>3</sup> The poet’s generic description of his female pupil as *modo quam uindicta redemit* (‘she whom the rod recently set free’, 3. 615) appears to indicate that he particularly envisages freedwomen as the audience of his amatory instructions, and it has therefore often been assumed that the imagined student body of the *Ars Amatoria* is thus more or less identical with the

<sup>3</sup> Ovid clearly alludes to this legislation in 1. 34 (cf. *crimen*), 2. 599 (cf. *lege*), and 3. 58 (cf. *leges et sua iura*) and 614 (cf. *leges duxque*).

typical personnel of Roman love elegy, that is, young, presumably upper-class, male citizens<sup>4</sup> and young women of lower status, especially freedwomen.<sup>5</sup> This picture is somewhat complicated by the fact that there is no evidence that freedwomen were exempted from the strictures of the *lex Iulia*<sup>6</sup>—which does raise the question of what women Ovid really thinks he is teaching and whether he can possibly be sincere in his avowed adherence to the Augustan laws.<sup>7</sup>

However, in this chapter I am interested not in the actual intention of the historical author Publius Ovidius Naso (who may have wanted his *Ars Amatoria* to be read by women of all social strata and any marital status—or who may have been writing primarily for men) or in the many possible ways in which the text can be read (and, obviously, it could and can be read as a manual for adultery), but solely in the rhetoric employed by the poem's speaker, the persona of the *praeceptor amoris*, to whom I refer, throughout the chapter, in a kind of critical shorthand, simply as 'Ovid' (or, occasionally, 'the *praeceptor amoris*' or 'the poet'). This distinction is important. To take another example, I venture the guess that the historical Ovid would have been pleased enough to know that his work was being studied among non-Romans, be they girls from the Caucasus or modern European and American critics. It can also not be denied that amatory behaviour remarkably similar to that described in the *Ars Amatoria* could and can be observed at places other than Augustan Rome and that numerous and diverse people, from

<sup>4</sup> The social status of the *Ars Amatoria*'s young men is never made explicit, but passages such as l. 459–68 (discussed below), where Ovid appears to assume a high level of education on the part of the *iuvenes*, clearly point to their belonging to the elite (cf. Gibson (1998: 302 and n. 23)).

<sup>5</sup> See Stroh (1979b: 325–36). Of course, inquiring about the social status of the protagonists of elegy (and the *Ars Amatoria*) makes sense only up to a point: after all, these literary characters may not reflect actual contemporary social categories, living in a poetic world that works according to its own laws (cf. James (2003: 35–68)).

<sup>6</sup> McGinn (1998: 194–202) discusses the categories of women who did not fall under the law; as far as we can tell (unless we want to use *Ars* 3. 615 as evidence; cf. Stroh (1979b: 325–6)), freedwomen were not among them.

<sup>7</sup> On Ovid's female students and all issues surrounding the *lex Iulia*, see Gibson (2003a: 25–37, 334–5 (specifically on the problematic passage 3. 611–16), and Index s.v. 'freedwomen (*libertinae*)'); cf. also *idem* (1998) and his contribution to this volume, Ch. 7.

Alison's Phasians to contemporary Westerners, may over the centuries have been attempting to implement Ovid's erotic instructions, whether successfully or not.<sup>8</sup> My sole focus in what follows, though, is on the ways in which the persona (not the author) presents his amatory teaching as targeted to a very specific audience in a very specific historical and geographical situation. Thus, however we are to understand Ovid's restrictions of his female audience in detail, we can nevertheless conclude that in these passages, the poet shows himself to be aware of writing at a particular moment in time (during the reign of Augustus) and that he explicitly aims his instructions exclusively at specific sections of contemporary Roman society, a fact that is in itself remarkable and largely unparalleled.

Love, as taught by Ovid, is an activity that takes place exclusively in the city of Rome and its environs. The extensive description of where to find a *puella*, which takes up the first half of *Ars Amatoria* 1 (67–262), is a gold mine of topographical and historical detail, enumerating such venues as porticoes, temples, fora, theatres, and the circus and such urban events as gladiatorial games, re-enactments of naval battles, triumphs, and banquets, in addition to fashionable spots just outside town, such as Baiae and Nemi. As the *praeceptor amoris* assures his students in l. 51–60, there is no reason for them to leave town to pursue their amatory interests (note that it is naturally assumed that the young men are in Rome and nowhere else):

tot tibi tamque dabit formosas Roma puellas,  
'haec habet' ut dicas 'quicquid in orbe fuit.' (l. 55–6)

(Rome will give you so many and such beautiful girls that you will say: 'It contains whatever there is in the world.')

A more explicit instance of wordplay with *urbs* (~*Roma*) and *orbis* occurs a little later when Ovid mentions the mock naval battle staged by Augustus in 2 BC, which was attended by visitors from all over the world (*ingens orbis in Vrbe fuit*, 'the whole world was there in the City', l. 174) and thus presented an especially good opportunity for

<sup>8</sup> An undergraduate student once told me that he considers the *Ars Amatoria* his 'bible' in *eroticis*. On the continuing appeal of the *Ars Amatoria* to modern readers, see also Myerowitz Levine, Ch. 13 in this volume; on creative engagement with the poem through the centuries, see Genevieve Liveley's paper, Ch. 16 in this volume.

picking up girls.<sup>9</sup> In addition to such explicit references to Roman places and events, there are also throughout the poem a number of passing allusions to things unmistakably Roman that add local colour: for example, the fruit basket that the lover is advised to present to his mistress with the claim that it comes from his suburban estate was really bought in a cheap shop in the Via Sacra (2. 263–6), and it would be very bad form to ask a girl under which consul she was born, a task better left to the stern censor (2. 663–4).

If the Roman audience and locale are thus quite obvious, there is also another way in which the *Ars Amatoria*, especially in the first two books, presents itself as uniquely Roman. In his course for the young men, Ovid humorously avails himself of the discourse of Roman education, that is, the entirety of practices designed to shape a *iuuenis* into a true Roman man. The most prominent of these practices is instruction in the art of public speaking, and scholars have noted that the title of Ovid's poem constitutes a play with *ars oratoria* and that the *praeceptor's* amatory teaching is modelled on, and of course parodies, typical Roman rhetorical teaching (see Stroh (1979a)). The parallels between the two are clearest in the passage where Ovid explicitly points to the uses of rhetoric in seduction:

disce bonas artes, moneo, Romana iuuentus,  
non tantum trepidos ut tueare reos:  
quam populus iudexque grauis lectusque senatus,  
tam dabit eloquio uicta puella manus. (1. 459–62)

(Roman youth, I admonish you, learn the good arts, not only in order to help trembling defendants: just like the people and the stern judge and the assembled senate, thus also the girl will submit to you, conquered by your eloquence.)

Note especially the exaggerated exhortion, *disce bonas artes, moneo, Romana iuuentus* (1. 459): the *praeceptor amoris* here pompously

<sup>9</sup> A large number of the pick-up places and opportunities listed by Ovid are not only particularly Roman, but specifically associated with Augustus and his family (witness the Porticus of Octavia and Theatre of Marcellus, 69–70; the Porticus of Livia, 71–2; the Temple of Palatine Apollo, 73–4; the Forum Iulium, 81–2; the mock naval battle, 171–6; and the anticipated Parthian triumph, 177–228). The *Ars Amatoria* thus teaches the young men not just how to practise *amor* in Rome, but how to avail themselves of the opportunities afforded by the Augustan regime and adapt their amatory pursuits to both the place and the historical circumstances.

adopts the morally charged role of teacher of the Roman youth, appropriately quoting a favourite line-ending of Ennius (*Ann.* 499, 550, and 563 Skutsch; cf. Hollis (1977) on *Ars* 1. 459). In what follows, he proceeds to give detailed instructions as to the right style to be employed when wooing the *puella* (1. 463–8).

Ovid's concern for the properly Roman education and behaviour of his pupils is evident also elsewhere. He stresses the importance of studying the liberal arts and learning Greek as well as Latin (2. 121–2; cf. Janka (1997 ad loc.)) and, crucially, gives detailed advice concerning men's outer appearance (1. 505–24).<sup>10</sup> There, a narrow course has to be steered between grubbiness and effeminacy in order to realize the goal of cultivated manliness, an ideal achieved through such specifically Roman practices as acquiring a tan on the Campus Martius and sporting a spotless toga (1. 513–14).<sup>11</sup> Recent work by Maud Gleason (1995), Erik Gunderson (2000), and others has focused on the Roman obsession with the proper construction of masculinity, a discourse with which Ovid was clearly familiar and which he uses, tongue in cheek, for his own purposes.

I have been surveying some of the prominent 'Roman' features of the *Ars Amatoria*, features that make Ovid's work stand out among didactic poems, which usually tend to stress, or at least imply, the universality of their teaching. This specificity of Ovid's didacticism is, I believe, intrinsically connected to the poet's understanding of his poem's subject matter and to the question of what it is that the *Ars Amatoria* purports to teach.<sup>12</sup> There is in the scholarly literature a certain confusion over what Ovid's 'art of love' is actually about, a confusion that is, I would argue, deliberately engineered by the poet himself. While the Latin word *amor* typically connotes a strong feeling of desire and affection, Ovid for most of the *Ars Amatoria* uses it instead to refer to the social practice of establishing and

<sup>10</sup> The traditional nature of Ovid's instructions on the latter topic is apparent from the fact that they closely resemble those given in Cic. *Off.* 1. 130 (see Labate (1984: 135)).

<sup>11</sup> Exercising on the Campus Martius was meant to prepare a Roman man for his military duties, while wearing the toga was associated with his civic activities. In Ovid, the practices designed to make a young man a Roman soldier and citizen are thus wittily reinterpreted as making him a Roman lover.

<sup>12</sup> For a fuller discussion of the argument put forth in this paragraph, see Volk (2002: 168–73).

participating in sexual relationships. The *Ars Amatoria* is thus really something like the art of dating, the art of the love affair, and *not* the art of love. This, of course, is the reason why it is teachable in the first place: *amor* is for Ovid not a feeling but a mode of behaviour, and thus can be mastered by following the simple steps laid out in his didactic poem.

Being a social practice, the love taught in the *Ars Amatoria* is not something universal, experienced equally by all people everywhere, but a phenomenon that is shaped by place, time, and circumstances. In other words, it is a cultural construct: any culture, any society will define and practise 'love' differently. My argument is that Ovid is well aware of the cultural constructedness of *amor* and that this is one of the reasons for the Romanness of his poem: love as practised in Rome, in the age of Augustus, by certain social groups is simply *not* the same as love practised by other people, at another time, elsewhere—and the *Ars Amatoria* is therefore of necessity a predominantly Roman poem.

The discovery that sexual activities, as well as the very concept of 'sexuality', are not unchanging facts of human life but very much a product of a given society's concepts and values is typically associated with the work of Michel Foucault and has informed much recent scholarship on Greek and Roman sexuality;<sup>13</sup> however, at least some of the ancients themselves came to the same conclusion. In Plato's *Symposium*, for example, Pausanias surveys differing amatory practices in a number of places and even provides sociological explanations for the discrepancies among them (182a7–c4). Thus, in societies where eloquence does not play a large role (as is supposedly the case in such backwaters as Elis and Boeotia), homosexual relationships are formed without much ado and without the complicated wooing ritual in place in Athens. By contrast, in the tyrannical Persian empire, such relationships, which are deemed a possible danger to the state, do not exist at all.<sup>14</sup>

If Plato could be aware that love is not the same the world over, so surely could Ovid. Note, though, that while the practice of 'love' as

<sup>13</sup> See Foucault (1976–84), vol. 1 and the papers in Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin (eds.) (1990) on Greek sexuality, and Hallett and Skinner (eds.) (1997) on Roman sexuality.

<sup>14</sup> For a similar discussion, see Xen. *Lac.* 2. 12–14.

described in the *Ars* is clearly culturally determined, Ovid appears to regard the very act of sex as something natural that is the same for all people and that thus, interestingly, need not be taught. Witness his description of how primitive man and woman were perfectly adept at having intercourse, without a *magister* and without any *ars*:

blanda truces animos fertur mollisse uoluptas:  
constiterant uno femina uirque loco.  
quid facerent, ipsi nullo didicere magistro;  
arte Venus nulla dulce peregit opus. (2. 477–80; cf. also 2. 703–8)

(It is said that seductive pleasure softened the harsh minds [of early human beings]: man and woman had come together in one place; without a teacher, they learned themselves what to do; Venus accomplished her sweet work without any art.)

Sex, to put it simply, is nature; love is culture.<sup>15</sup>

Before looking in greater detail at the 'cultural constructedness' of love in the *Ars Amatoria*, I would like to stress once again that I am concerned here solely with the 'official rhetoric' of the poem, that is, the attitude of the persona as it is explicitly stated or can be reasonably inferred. Thus, contrary to appearances, my argument is not in fact in direct contradiction to that of Myerowitz Levine in Ch. 13, who argues that the courtship techniques recommended by Ovid reflect universal amatory behaviour that transcends time and space. In my opinion, this may well be true, but it is not how Ovid himself presents his instructions, which is all I am interested in. While Myerowitz Levine is a universalist, Ovid is a constructionist, as I hope is becoming clear (and note that, as always, I am speaking about 'Ovid', the poetic persona). Myerowitz Levine and I are thus really talking about different things.

To clarify further my approach in this chapter and to place it in the context of Ovidian scholarship, I would like to point to a number of other interpretative paths that I am not adopting. The observation of the *Ars Amatoria's* Romanness can be, and has been, taken in a

<sup>15</sup> It should be pointed out, though, that while Ovid appears to regard the basic sexual act as natural and not something to be taught, sexual technique (cf. 2. 717–32 and 3. 789–808) and in particular sexual positions (3. 771–88) are subjects of his amatory instruction and thus appear to fall on the other side of the nature–culture divide.

number of directions. Thus, most prominently, Mario Labate has examined the 'rhetoric of the city', showing that while all Latin love elegy typically takes place in Rome, it is only Ovid who puts a positive spin on the genre's urbanism.<sup>16</sup> In what follows, though, I am not in the first place interested in Ovid's ideology of city life and his contribution to the creation of an ideal of 'urbanity', a concept that has been traced through the ages by Edwin S. Ramage in his monograph (1973). I will likewise largely ignore the topic of Ovid's attitude to the Roman Empire (on which see now Habinek (2002)) and the much-debated question of the poet's relationship to Augustus (taken up once again by Sergio Casali in Ch. 11 of this volume). While the issues just enumerated are all closely related to the topic of this chapter and will occasionally come up in passing, I have deliberately narrowed my object of inquiry to the idea of love as a cultural construct. What I am trying to demonstrate is that the striking Romanness of the *Ars Amatoria* reflects an awareness on Ovid's part that the practice of *amor* is indeed determined by its time and place—nothing less and nothing more.

In itself, the fact that the *Ars Amatoria* has, as we have seen, a distinctly Roman flavour does not yet prove that Ovid thought that 'Roman love' was in any way different from love practised elsewhere. Strikingly, though, throughout the poem, the *praeceptor amoris* explicitly contrasts his own brand of *amor* with love that is taking place in other contexts. In doing so, he constructs a negative foil of what 'love here and now' is not like and thus, of course, helps define the positive image of the particular incarnation of *amor* that he is teaching. The first contrast is that between love now and love in the past, particularly in the hallowed age of early Rome. This is most prominent in the famous passage from the beginning of Book 3 where Ovid so amusingly rejects the 'good old days' in favour of the present age (3. 107–28, esp. 121–2; cf. Gibson (2003a): ad loc.). Critics have wondered how this attitude relates to Augustan ideology: the poet's sentiment is surely far removed from the idealization of early Rome found in such authors as Vergil. However, as especially Karl Galinsky has shown (1981/3; 1996: 97–100), the whole Augustan ideal of an earlier Golden Age is intrinsically ambivalent

<sup>16</sup> See Labate (1984) and cf. also the author's contribution to this volume, Ch. 10.

from the beginning, for how can you boast (as Augustus did; see Suet. *Aug.* 28. 3) about 'having found a city of brick and left a city of marble' and at the same time maintain that things were better in a more primitive age? This same ambivalence is found in Ovid, who, despite his enthusiastic allegiance to the present, is still aware of its moral shortcomings (cf. 3. 123–6).

What interests me is the context of Ovid's celebration of contemporary Rome. It is part of a large section at the beginning of Book 3 where the *praeceptor amoris*, in instructing the women, stresses the importance of *cultus*. He is well aware, though, that beautification did not always play a role in amatory relationships:

corpora si ueteres non sic coluere puellae,  
nec ueteres cultos sic habuere uiros.  
si fuit Andromache tunicas induta ualentes,  
quid mirum? duri militis uxor erat.  
scilicet Aiaci coniunx ornata uenires,  
cui tegumen septem terga fuere boum!  
simplicitas rudis ante fuit; nunc aurea Roma est  
et domiti magnas possidet orbis opes. (3. 107–14)

(If the girls of old did not take care of their bodies in the same way, the girls of old also did not have similarly groomed men. If Andromache was dressed in bulky tunics, no wonder: she was the wife of a rough soldier. Surely his wife would come all made-up to Ajax, who was covered by seven cow-hides! Rough simplicity was there before; now Rome is golden and possesses the great riches of the conquered world.)

The women of old were less sophisticated, and so were the men they were trying to seduce. Life and thus love were different in the olden days, which were characterized by *simplicitas*. In the reign of Titus Tatius (mentioned a few lines later in 3. 118), people just did not behave the way they do today.<sup>17</sup> While there is certainly a value judgement (the women of old are made fun of, and the poet explicitly approves of modernity), the main point is that different circumstances call for different practices, and that here and now, in Augustan

<sup>17</sup> Cf. also *Med. Fac. Fem.* 11–12: *forsitan antiquae Tatio sub rege Sabinae | maluerint quam se rura paterna coli* ('perhaps the ancient Sabine women in the reign of Tatius preferred the fields to be cultivated rather than themselves').

Rome, women have to pay attention to *cultus* if they want to succeed in love.<sup>18</sup>

The *simplicitas* which was appropriate in an earlier age but no longer is today calls to mind that other negative buzzword, *rusticitas*. You cannot successfully practise the art of love in the urban environment of Rome if you behave like a country bumpkin, for example, if you walk with the *rusticus... motus* ('rustic motion', 3. 305–6) exhibited by the wife of an Umbrian farmer:

illa uelut coniunx Vmbri rubicunda mariti  
ambulat, ingentes uarica fertque gradus. (3. 303–4)

(That one walks like the sunburned wife of an Umbrian husband, and, broad-legged, takes immense strides.)

Again there is, of course, an element of derision, but the implication is that it is appropriate for an Umbrian wife to walk this way—but it is not appropriate for the young women of Rome.<sup>19</sup>

If already in the Italian countryside different rules of behaviour apply, the same is even more true for far-away peoples. As we have seen (in 3. 193–6, quoted above), if Ovid were teaching women from the Caucasus, he would have to go about his task differently and talk about such basics as the avoidance of body odour and the importance of shaving one's legs. However, he is instructing Roman *puellae*, who already know how to brush their teeth and apply make-up.

In this passage, Ovid implicitly contrasts foreign practice (as he constructs it) with the way things are in Rome: it is simply assumed that if you live on the Caucasian rock, you don't know about deodorants. There is clear ethnic stereotyping here, but there is not a lot of aggression. At other places, though, namely when talking about those Roman archenemies, the Parthians, the poet reverses his

<sup>18</sup> The same contrast between the past and the present also underlies the story of the rape of the Sabine women in *Ars Amatoria* 1, which Mario Labate discusses in Ch. 10 of this volume.

<sup>19</sup> Note, though, that the *puellae* are also cautioned against a way of walking that is too lascivious (3. 301–2, 306). As Roy Gibson in his contribution to this volume, ch. 7, discusses in detail (see also Gibson (2003a: ad loc.)), Ovid's treatment of the proper gait is a prime example of his general insistence on the 'middle way', a moderate kind of amatory behaviour that avoids extremes (cf. Gibson (forthcoming)).

strategy. Instead of claiming that the eastern people practise *amor* in a way unacceptable at Rome, he—patriotically and, of course, humorously—actively wishes on them those amatory mishaps that his Roman pupils are told to avoid. Thus, a Roman woman must never let herself be caught putting on her wig—that kind of embarrassment is fit for a Parthian girl:

dictus eram subito cuidam uenisse puellae:  
turbida peruersas induit illa comas.  
hostibus eueniat tam foedi causa pudoris  
inque nurus Parthas dedecus illud eat! (3. 245–8)

(My sudden arrival had been announced to some girl: in her haste, she put on her hair the wrong way around. May a cause for such awful shame befall our enemies and may that infamy afflict the Parthian girls!)<sup>20</sup>

Somewhat differently, the men are advised to keep peace with their 'cultured' (*culta*) Roman girlfriends and to save their fighting spirit for the barbarian Parthians (2. 175–6).

Perhaps the most interesting negative foil that Ovid uses to define love in contemporary Rome is mythology (and note that, as is typical in ancient literature, the poet presents his mythological stories simply as events of some undefined past, history in the widest sense). Normally, of course, Latin poets, and especially the elegists, use mythological exempla to point to the similarity of the mundane present and the fabled past, creating strong and often deeply meaningful parallels between situations and characters in the two different realms. For the most part, the mythological stories in the *Ars Amatoria* work along these same lines. Thus, for example, the young men are advised to judge women's beauty under good lighting conditions, just as the Judgement of Paris, too, took place in plain daylight (1. 245–52), and women are crazy about sex today, just like Pasiphae and others were in the past (1. 269–344). However, on more than one occasion, Ovid uses mythology as a negative example, pointing out that nowadays things are not as they were in the old stories and that

<sup>20</sup> The 'hair turned around' (cf. *peruersas... comas*, 246) constitutes a witty allusion to the notorious Parthian battle manoeuvre of the feigned turn-around (see Green (1982: 388)).

the rules that apply to mythological characters do not apply to his own pupils.<sup>21</sup>

This negative contrast of the present age to the mythological past can work in a number of different ways. First, Ovid cannot resist the temptation to point out that the reason why so many mythological love stories have a tragic ending is simply that the likes of Medea, Ariadne, Phyllis, and Dido were not familiar with the art of love (*quid uos perdidit, dicam: nescistis amare*, 'I will say what ruined you: you did not know how to love', 3. 41). His own students, of course, will not make the same mistake.<sup>22</sup>

Second, though (and this is actually a bit of a contradiction), mythological heroines are not, in fact, in need of the teacher's instructions:

non mihi uenistis, Semele Ledeue, docendae,  
perque fretum falso, Sidoni, uecta boue  
aut Helene, quam non stulte, Menelae, reposcis,  
tu quoque non stulte, Troice raptor, habes.  
turba docenda uenit pulchrae turpesque puellae,  
pluraque sunt semper deteriora bonis.  
formosae non artis opem praeceptaque quaerunt;  
est illis sua dos, forma sine arte potens. (3. 251–8)

(You did not come to be taught by me, Semele and Leda, and you, woman of Sidon, riding over the sea on a false bull, or Helen, whom you, Menelaus, are not stupid to demand back and you, Trojan abductor, are not stupid to keep. The crowd that comes to be taught consists of pretty and ugly girls, and there are always more faults than virtues. Beautiful women do not need the help of art and instructions; they have their dowry, beauty powerful without art.)

A woman in the league of Semele, Leda, Europa, and Helen, one who is perfectly beautiful, will succeed in attracting a lover no matter what. Real women, however, are hardly ever perfectly beautiful; in fact, as Ovid realistically observes, unsightliness is rather more common than beauty. No wonder, then, that the Roman *puellae* have to

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the remarks of Mario Labate on Ovid's use of 'anti-exempla' (specifically the story of the rape of the Sabines): 'The contrast of the anti-exemplum... serves to highlight the instructions of the teacher.' (Ch. 10 of this volume).

<sup>22</sup> On mythological heroines as (negative) role models in the *Ars Amatoria*, see also the contribution of Duncan Kennedy to this volume, Ch. 4.

approach the practice of *amor* in a way entirely different from their mythological counterparts.

However, it is not as though Ovid generally regards the women of mythology as too good to be true, model females too perfect to be emulated by contemporary *puellae*. As a matter of fact, the behaviour of these heroines would all too often be entirely inappropriate for a practitioner of Ovid's specific brand of *ars amatoria Romana*. Thus, in 3. 109–12 (quoted above), the poet presents Andromache and Tecmessa as negative exempla, pointing out that their unattractive clothing and lack of adornment was indeed fitting for their own situations, given the lack of sophistication on the part of their husbands, but that it is not at all fitting *hic et nunc*, for the sophisticated women of *aurea Roma*.

The tragic heroines Andromache and Tecmessa appear once more later in Book 3, again as examples of how Ovid's female students ought not to behave:<sup>23</sup>

odimus et maestas; Tecmessam diligit Aiax,  
nos, hilarem populum, femina laeta capit.  
numquam ego te, Andromache, nec te, Tecmessa, rogarem  
ut mea de uobis altera amica foret.  
credere uix uideor, cum cogar credere partu,  
uos ego cum uestris concubuisse uiris.  
scilicet Aiaci mulier maestissima dixit  
'lux mea' quaeque solent uerba iuuare uiros! (3. 517–24)

(We also dislike glum women. Let Ajax love Tecmessa; a cheerful woman captivates us, fun-loving people that we are. I'd never ask you, Andromache, or you, Tecmessa, that the one or the other might be my girlfriend. I can hardly believe—though I am forced to believe it because of your offspring—that you had sex with your men. As if his depressive woman ever said to Ajax, 'my light', and whatever other words are accustomed to pleasure men!)

In the opinion of the *praeceptor amoris*, the sadness and earnestness of these women (they are *maestae*) is a turn-off: he himself certainly would not be interested in them and can hardly believe that they ever

<sup>23</sup> Note, however, that, as Alessandro Barchiesi discusses in his contribution to this volume, Ch. 6, Andromache is also on occasion (*Ars* 2. 709–10, 3. 777–8) shown engaging in types of behaviour that are deemed commendable; see also Gibson (2003a) on 3. 519–20.

'did it' at all. By pointing out how absurd it is to imagine that Tecmessa would have addressed Ajax as *lux mea*, Ovid stresses the profound difference between the world of tragedy and mythology and that of his Roman contemporaries: the amatory relationships of today's women just do not work along the same lines as those of the heroines of old.

As these examples show, Ovid defines Roman love implicitly by contrasting it with examples of how love is practised elsewhere or was in the past. In nearly all these cases, the poet makes it clear that he regards his own place and time as preferable and frequently mocks or denigrates the 'other' that he has set up. However, the main point of these passages is not, in my opinion, to hit away at the smelly Caucasian girls and Andromache with her bulky tunics, or chauvinistically to glory in the greatness of the Roman Empire. Attesting to an awareness on Ovid's part that love is not the same the world over—that it is, indeed, a cultural construct—these negative examples enforce the importance of the poet's own *Ars Amatoria*. If love (as opposed to sex) is not natural, but requires cultural and social expertise, then it is indeed something one needs to study, and if one happens to be in Augustan Rome, *in hoc populo*, then the best way to study it is by perusing Ovid's exclusively Roman Art of Love.

One thing is striking about the negative examples just discussed. They nearly all come from Book 3, the part of the *Ars Amatoria* addressed to the women. Why is this? Are women somehow more in need of being told what true Roman amatory behaviour is like, while the men already know? Indeed, in some of the passages the women are explicitly asked to adjust their own approach to fit a mode of behaviour that the men already exhibit anyway. Thus, in 3. 107–12, the *puellae* are instructed to practise *cultus* for the very reason that they have such 'cultivated' (*cultos*, 108) men;<sup>24</sup> similarly, in 3. 517–24, women are warned against being *maestae* because today's men are a *hilaris populus* (cf. 3. 518) and do not like glum women.

To a certain extent, this discrepancy can be explained by the fact that Book 3 comes after Books 1 and 2 and that at this stage in the

<sup>24</sup> As Roy Gibson points out to me, the same idea that female *cultus* responds to an already extant level of male refinement is found in *Med. Fac. Fem.* 23–6 (cf. Rosati (1985 ad loc.)).

game, Ovid's male students are imagined as being already well-versed in the practice of Roman *amor*: they themselves have been taught to be *culti* and always in a good mood, and now the women have to reach that same stage.<sup>25</sup> While the use of explicit counterexamples is less prevalent in the first two books, there still is a strong indication that the *iuuenes* are supposed to be shaped into specifically Roman men, as is clear from the rhetoric of education employed in *Ars Amatoria* 1 and 2.

Still, there seems to be a certain gender imbalance that calls for an explanation. One might maintain that Ovid is here adhering to that typical line of thought by which 'male' equals 'Roman' and 'cultured', while 'female' equals 'foreign' and 'barbarian'. Is it because of their very femininity that women are more prone to social malapropisms and therefore need to be continually admonished? To put this same idea into its socio-historical context, it is probable that Ovid's envisaged male students are born and bred Roman citizens (members of the upper classes, who, as we have seen, receive training in the liberal arts and in rhetoric), while his female students (whatever their exact social status may be; cf. the discussion above) belong to a lower level of society and—especially if we take seriously the poet's insistence that he is writing for freedwomen—may very well be predominantly foreigners. Perhaps these former slaves are more in need of being cued in to the sophisticated mores of the capital of the world—or at least, this may be the patronizing attitude of the *praeceptor amoris*.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> One of the underlying conceits of the *Ars Amatoria* is the supposed simultaneity of teaching and learning: thus, in the course of Books 1 and 2, the young men are imagined as putting into practice the teacher's instructions at the same moment as they are imparted (cf. Volk (2002: 173–88)). On the 'narrative' of the *Ars Amatoria*, see also Alison Sharrock's contribution to this volume, Ch. 2.

<sup>26</sup> See Gibson (1998) (also (2003a: 35–6)) for a discussion of other ways in which Ovid on occasion alludes to the low social status of his female pupils.