

Ovidian Style Guide: "Breezy colloquialisms" and "Scholarly Flair"¹

I. Rhetorical and Literary Devices: Those figures of speech discussed by Brunelle (*Ovid. Ars Amatoria. Book Three*, posted on the course website under "readings") are marked with an asterisk. This list is not meant to be exhaustive. It consists of some literary and rhetorical devices that Ovid employs in his works. Please consult this list, paying careful attention to how these devices function. What effect do they have on the reader? Why would Ovid employ such devices in the context in which they appear?

Those that are underlined appear in the reading for April 25, 1.511-524, 589-610. Please feel free to underline any that we find as we translate, and be sure to keep an eye out for these in the future.

Sound/Rhetoric

Alliteration: repetition of the initial letter. Sometimes alliteration can produce sounds for a particular effect (m, sadness, mourning; p/c, excitement in the alliteration, 1.155; t/p, vigor and forcefulness, 1.631).

**Apostrophe: direct address to someone or something not present, adding variation or authority.

Assonance: rhyming vowel sounds.

Juxtaposition (often of opposites): 3.712, *ipsa nemus tacito clam pede fortis init*; 1.157 *respice praeterea, post vos quicumque sedebit, / ne premat opposito mollia terga genu*.

**Litotes: a double negative that serves as a strong and emphatic positive.

Metonymy: substitution of one word for another.

Onomatopoeia: words sound like that which they describe (*Amores* 2.6.3, beating of the breast described with words containing 'p').

quamvis sint sub aqua, sub aqua maledicere temptat. (*Met.* 6.376).

"The consonance of *-qu-* here, in each instance occurring in the stressed syllable at the start of a metrical foot, echoes the guttural croak of the newly-transformed frogs."²

**Pathetic fallacy: "weeping willow." Nature responds to human suffering.

**Periphrasis: a circumlocution that allows Ovid to use words or concepts that would not otherwise be suitable to poetry.

**Polyptoton: repetition of a noun or a verb in another form. Polyptoton appears often in Ovid.

**Praeteritio: pretending to omit something by mentioning, thereby drawing attention to it (I won't mention that...).

Rhythm: Ovid prefers dactyls, but he sometimes uses dactyls to convey what it expressed in the line (dactyls express lightheartedness or chaos, while spondees express sadness, weariness, slowness).

Synecdoche: referring to part of something to indicate the whole.

**Rising Tricolon (Tricolon Crescendo): three clauses, each longer than the next. The third foot caesura lends itself to a rising tricolon in the elegaic couplet. There is also a tricolon decrescendo.

¹ Brunelle, 19.

² Owen, Matthew. *Ovid. Unseens*. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 2014, p. 45.

Syntax

**Anaphora: repetition of the same word at the beginning of phrases for emphasis.

**Chiasmus: AB-BA.

**Double Enallage (double hypallage or double transferred epithet):

3.70 (pentameter) *frigida deserta nocte iacebis anus.*

You will lay in bed, a frigid old woman on a deserted night (3.70).

**Hypallage (transferred epithet): when an adjective that should logically agree with one noun is transferred to another (see double enallage).

Hyperbaton: disruption of word order for dramatic effect. Words that syntactically belong together are separated, *te propter*.

Hysteron Proteron: put on your shoes and socks.

**Syllepsis (Zeugma): "syntactical combination of the literal and the metaphorical" (Brunelle 21).
Manus ac supplices voces ad Tiberium tendens (Tac. Ann. 2.29.2), stretching out hands and (uttering) suppliant cries to Tiberius (G&L 690).

Structure

Balance: of both parallels and contrasts of opposites.

1.18 *saevus sterque pater, natus uterque dea.*

1.275-76: *utque viro furtiva venus, sic grata puellae:*

vir male dissimulat: tectius illa cupit.

Contrast: 1.123, *altera maesta silet, frustra vocat altera matrem*; 1.13 *qui totiens socios, totiens exterruit hostes, / creditur annosum pertimuisse senem.*

Internal Rhyme: ending of the word immediately preceding the caesura rhymes with the final syllable of the line (can occur in both hexameter and pentameter lines), or when the first and last word of a line rhyme.

II. Meter (see previous handouts on meter)

a) Ovid prefers dactyls, more than Tibullus and Propertius.

b) In the hexameter line the caesura will usually come after the first syllable of the third foot.

c) The pentameter line will end in a two syllable word; the caesura will occur after the first two and half feet.

d) A single monosyllabic word is generally avoided just before a third foot caesura (exception: 3.258, *est illa sua dos, forma sine arte potens.*)

e) Hexameter line: the third foot "nearly always provides contrast between verbal accent and metrical emphasis; in the fifth and sixth feet the verbal and metrical converge" (Brunelle 16).

1.513 *munditie placeant, fuscentur corpora Campo.*

1.515 *lingula ne rigeat, careant rubigine dentes.*

f) Pentameter line: the last word, which is always a two syllable word, is never preceded by a monosyllable. This means that the final full foot of the pentameter is spread out over two words, each

with their own verbal accent that is compromised by the rhythm of the meter. Words of two syllables are always accented on the penult. But the penult of the two syllable word occurring at the end of a pentameter line will always be a short, and, therefore, there will always be a tension between verbal accent and metrical emphasis. This creates, in Brunelle's words "and inexhaustible sonic variety" (16).

3.4 *faverit in toto qui volat orbe puer.*

***"The pentameter rephrases the hexameter's abstract thesis with an arresting visual metaphor" (Brunelle 18).

g) Ovid avoids elision (*Ars*, Book Three: only one elision for every ten lines); infrequency improves speed and clarity.

III. Brevity

Every couplet is a contained unit, and each couplet often contains several sentences. When sentences do extend beyond a couplet, form often matches content (3.633-44).

IV. Imagery: "A method of expanding Ovid's erotic domain" (Brunelle 17).

a) Agriculture: Love is like agriculture: men control fields; men control women; men control nature; women, like fields, are nature. "Ovid's agricultural themes also subvert Vergil's patriotic account of farming in the *Georgics*: now patience, hard work, and cultivation of raw nature create not the agricultural bounty on which Rome depends but the personal beauty in which Rome delights" (Brunelle 17). See the exhaustive list in Julia Dyson Hejduk, posted on the course website.

b) Legal language: love can be reduced to legal procedure. At the same time, by describing the skills of love through legal language, Ovid undermines the legal system itself (Brunelle 18). How might this complicate our interpretation of 385-90, where the maid is referred to as an *index* (a legal term describing an informer), especially given that going through the maid to commit adultery was considered a crime under Augustan law?

Paul, *Opinions* 16: "Sexual intercourse with female slaves, unless they have deteriorated in value or an attempt is made against their mistress through them, is not considered an injury."

V. Ovid and Elegiac Poetry

Catullus (84 BCE-54 BCE)

Virgil (70 BCE-19 BCE)

Horace (65 BCE-8 BCE)

Tibullus (55/50 BCE-19 BCE)

Propertius (49/47 BCE-16 BCE)

Ovid (43 BCE-17 BCE)

Greene, Ellen. *The Erotics of Domination. Male Desire and the Mistress in Latin Love Poetry*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

"The discourses of male desire in Latin love poetry...demonstrate that love (*amor*) is intimately bound up with the hierarchies and social inequalities in the power systems of Roman politics. Amatory discourse in Roman love poetry cannot, I believe, be dissociated from male assumptions about desire which reflect the hegemonic discourses of a patriarchal value system. As Michel Foucault has shown in

The History of Sexuality, Greco-Roman erotic relations affirmed and consolidated social and political hierarchies. In the Greco-Roman model, true masculinity was attained only after an adolescent boy passed through the stage of passivity and feminization (i.e. objectification). His masculinity in adulthood depended on control over his *domus* (household), over political and economic affairs, and, most importantly, over himself. Maintaining that control so important to Roman "masculinity" meant constant attention to any deterioration in social status, to the mastery of one's appetites, and to moral fortitude. Indeed, any loss of vitality resulting from sickness, old age, or overindulgence in physical pleasure, any lapse of moral resolve were threats to the preservation of masculine identity. Ancient masculinity is thus always at risk, but never so much as in the presence of the sexually wanton female, whose erotic impulses are imagined to be inexhaustible. The instability of Roman "masculinity" is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the amatory texts of Roman poets. Catullus' Lesbia poems show a constant tension between the male lover's assertion of his moral resolve and his reversion to "womanish" state in which he lapses into powerlessness and emotionality. The diminution of the Catullan lover's "maleness" when confronted by a woman he regards and depicts as sexually wanton, as we will see, allows Catullus to reveal the fragmenting effects of *amor* on the self

Whereas the Catullan lover appears to struggle against his own "feminization," the Roman elegiac poets—particularly Propertius and Ovid—proclaim in their poems a radically unconventional philosophy of life through their apparently deliberate inversion of conventional sex roles—in which women are portrayed as dominant and men as subversive (Greece *xii-xiii*)...Ovid goes much further than Propertius in suggesting that the identification of the elegiac mistress as *materia* implies an inherent dehumanization and exploitation of women..By portraying the elegiac lover flagrantly using his mistress as his poetic *materia* for the sake of his personal and professional profit, Ovid deconstructs the romantic rhetoric of this poetic predecessors and reveals what he believes to be the hypocrisy in the elegiac pose" (Greene xv).

BOOK ONE

I

I'd meant in solemn metre to rehearse
 A tale of arms and war and violence,
 Matching the weighty matter with my verse,
 All lines alike in length—no difference;
 But Cupid laughed (they say)
 And filched one foot away.

Cruel boy, who made you judge of poetry?
 We're not your rabble, we're the Muses' choir.
 Shall Venus snatch blonde Pallas' weaponry,
 Blonde Pallas fan the flames of passion's fire?
 And who'd approve if Ceres stood
 Queen of every upland wood?

Or shall the warrior Virgin rule the byre,
 Long-haired Apollo learn to use the lance,
 While Mars on Helicon strikes up the lyre?
 Great is your reign, too strong your dominance.
 Why, greedy child, should you
 Go for this work that's new?

Is all the world then yours? The Muses' shrine
 Yours too? Even Phoebus' lyre not now secure?
 On the new page arose my proud first line,
 Then came the next, unstringing me for sure;
 And there's no theme of mine
 Can suit that slighter line,

No boy, no girl with long and lovely hair—
 I'd made my protest. He drew instantly
 An arrow from his quiver, chosen with care
 To lay me low, and braced against his knee
 His crescent bow. 'Here, poet, take
 This for the verses you next make.'

Translation: A. V. Melville
 Ovid. The Love Poems,
 Oxford World Classics
 OUP, 1970

Poor me! That boy's sure arrows never stray.
 I'm burning. In my vacant breast love reigns.
 So in six beats my verse must rise today,
 And settle back in five. Farewell, you strains
 Of steely war! Farewell to you,
 And to your epic metre too!

Muse, wreath your golden tresses
 With myrtle of the sea,
 And in eleven stresses
 Compose our poetry.

2

What can it be that I should find my bed
 So hard, the blankets slipping, sleep quite fled,
 And through the night, so long, I lie awake,
 Tossing about until my tired bones ache?
 I think I'd know if love were teasing me,
 Or does his damage steal on secretly?
 That's what it is. He's shot his subtle dart;
 Love's in possession, tossing my poor heart.
 So shall I yield, or feed the flame and fight?
 I'll yield: a load borne readily lies light.
 From torches waved I've seen the flame leap high;
 When no one brandishes, I've seen it die.
 Oxen that fight first yokes are beaten more
 Than those who've learnt the plough's a pleasant chore.
 A proud horse finds a hard bit brings distress;
 One that's submissive feels the bridle less.
 Love strikes the stubborn far more savagely
 Than those who will confess their slavery.
 Look, Cupid, I confess—your latest prize—
 I hold out abject hands, my heart complies.
 No need of war. Favour and peace are all;
 No praise for you—unarmed to arms I'll fall.

Harness your mother's doves and wreath your hair
 With myrtle. Your stepfather, I declare,
 Will give a fitting chariot, where you'll stand
 As crowds triumphant shout on either hand.
 Defly you'll drive your birds and, following,
 A train of captive youths and girls shall bring
 A triumph that shall make the welkin ring.
 Myself, new prize, my wound just made shall wear,
 And in my captive heart fresh fetters bear.
 In the triumphal train Good Sense you'll see,
 Hands bound behind her back, and Modesty—
 Whatever stands against Love's armoury.
 All things fear you. In welcome loud and long
 The cheering crowd will chant the triumph song.
 Endearments, Madness, Wanderings of the brain,
 Shall be your escort in the happy train,
 Constant supporters, following your cause.
 With these fine troops you vanquish in your wars
 Both men and gods: their service lost, you'd be
 All undefended in your nudity.
 Your mother from Olympus' peak in joy,
 Delighting in the triumph of her boy,
 Her plaudits and her praises shall bestow,
 And scatter roses to adorn your brow.
 With jewelled wings and jewelled locks, behold,
 You'll ride in golden state on wheels of gold.
 And, if I know you, you'll ignite then too
 Your furnace in the hearts of not a few.
 Then many a wound you'll deal as you pass by:
 Even should you wish, at rest your bow can't lie;
 Your fierce flame scorches when its heat is nigh.
 So Bacchus marked his Indian victory—
 Though you are drawn by doves, by tigers he.
 Therefore, since in your triumph I form part,
 Don't waste your victor's wealth on my poor heart.
 See how your kinsman Caesar's victories go:
 The conqueror protects the conquered foe.