Double vision: Ars Amatoria 1, 2 and 3

Ovid’s Medicamina might read as an accompanying pamphlet to his grand Ars Amatoria – the epic in elegy that arms both male and female reader-lovers for war, and then adds sulphur to the conflagration.¹ But whereas in the Medicamina, male and female subjects ultimately overlapped and clashed in the same narrow, domestic space, fighting over one mirror, in the Ars the sexes are set in parallel, and each have their own books and worlds – Ars 1 and 2, ostensibly, for the guys, and Ars 3 for the girls. We will see later on how Ovid sets up similar patterns, and explores similar themes, in the ‘double’ Heroides, which develop male and female perspectives on the same relationships. However, as I will explore at length in this chapter, the tease of the Ars Amatoria’s fiction is that lovers get to peep into each others’ universes, learning similar tips and tricks, and sabotaging each others’ attempts to get the psychological upper hand. Ovid gets us hooked, like fixated fans, on an oversensitive backtracking and comparison between books, on probing the nuanced differences and wild contradictions between advice given to ‘men’ and to ‘women’, and on second-guessing its lurking, potentially double-crossing motives and implications. Ovidian sex is often painful to watch, not least because the didactic text lures readers in, and makes maddened lovers of us all. Along with Cupid at Ars 1.170, the reader ‘is himself part of the performance he is viewing’ (et pars spectati

¹ As Gibson notes (2003) 85, the idea of love as a battle between lover and beloved is implicit in the earliest occurrences of militia amoris (e.g. Sappho fr 1.2ff.), while arming the lovers against each other seems to be a Propertian invention (3.8.3ff., 4.8.88).
Double vision: Ars Amatoria 1, 2 and 3

muneris ipse fuit). 2 The Ars is a didactic text about self-knowledge and self-image that breeds anxiety, suspicion and self-doubt, a joke on the rhetoric of knowledge which claims to teach the unteachable. As we will see at the end of this chapter, its culminating tale of Cephalus and Procris is a fitting finale to an education marred by double-takes and crises of credibility (vix mihi credetis, sed credite / ‘you hardly believe me, yet believe’ 3.439).

Yet while critics have looked hard at scenes, or individual books, from Ovid’s Ars, explored erotic–didactic traditions, celebrated intertextual labyrinths and metaliterary esprit, they tend to avoid relationships. This is partly because scholarship has long assumed a separation between Ars 1 and 2 (addressed to men, and giving advice on how to get and keep a girl respectively), and Ars 3 (giving comparable advice to a ‘female’ audience), which has often been deemed to have been ‘tagged on’ afterwards with little concern for integration, together with the Remedia Amoris. Yet as Sharrock argues, the appearance of a two-book poem is duplicitous, whether or not there were two editions. The notion that we are dealing with a three-book work is hinted not only in the mirroring of advice to men and women, and in the parallel examples of three-book amatory works like the Amores (following Tibullus’ elegies), and the double Heroides (three pairs of letters) but also in passages such as Ars 1.35–8, which lays out a three-step program (principio 35; proximus 37; tertius 38), and 1.39–40, which puns on the meta (of Book 2) as both the goal and the turning post for the poet’s speeding chariot: 4

hic modus, haec nostro signabitur area curru:
haec erit admissa meta terenda rota.

This is my limit, this the space my chariot will mark,
this the goal my flying wheel will graze. Ars 1.39–40

When the intercourse between books (especially 1–2 versus 3) is studied at all, shallow conclusions are reached on the projected outcome of lovers’

2 Ovid’s amphitheatre is a panopticon. See Gunderson (1996):
‘The arena can be taken as an apparatus which not only looks in upon a spectacle, but one which in its organisation and structure reproduces the relations between observer and observed . . . the spectacle of the arena has a specular effect which makes a new spectacle of its own observers, revealing and determining them through their relationship to the image of themselves produced by their relationship to the arena’ (115–16).

3 Similar statements litter the Ars, and are classic Ovid: e.g. 1.79, quis credere posset?
4 See Sharrock (1994) 18–20. Also see the beginning of Ars 3 (Gibson 2003 ad loc.), where arma supernunt in line 1 hints at the idea that the third book was an afterthought or supplement. The three-book work is confirmed at Tr.1.1.112 (when Ovid imagines his book cases from exile, the text that teaches how to love is a ‘three’, even though the books try to disguise themselves); cf. Tr.2.246 (e tribus unus). For a recent analysis of the Ars as perpetuum carmen, see Henderson (forthcoming).
battles, and recent readers have been keen to pounce on the praeceptor as a fake feminist who sets up women as victims/objects while seeming in Ars 3 to betray a male audience. After weighing up the options (feminist or woman-hater), Watson concludes that Ovid ‘stays on the side of the male’ in Ars 3.\(^5\) Downing envisages a Narcissus–Echo (or in his terms, a Pygmalion–puella) model, whereby the second half of Ars 3 is simply a ‘point-for-point counterpoint to specific precepts in the first two books’, a ‘mechanical process’ of ‘inverted citations’: he concludes that Ovid writes as a misogynistic ‘anti-Pygmalion’ in Ars 3, turning repulsive real women into inanimate artefacts and textual materia, and sees the worlds of Ars 1 and Ars 2 (where men are often encouraged to privilege personality and wit over looks) and Ars 3 (where cosmetics are all-important) as neatly opposed.\(^6\) Leach’s earlier article on Georgic imagery in the Ars Amatoria has done much to influence feminist readings of the text: she suggests that ‘a well-organised pattern of anti-feminist humor pervades the poem . . . Ovid proceeds on the assumption that women are naturally uncivilised . . . like animals and crops [they] respond in proper season to the right stimuli.’\(^7\) However, Leach chooses to ignore points where similar imagery is applied to men (who become animals to be hunted, tender crops to be reaped, hay to be burnt, timber to be cut and fruit to be plucked in Ars 3\(^8\)), and thus not to read Ars 1, 2 and 3 together.

In his dense unravelling of the Cephalus and Procris tale, similarly, Green rubbishes the two lovers’ innocence and Ovid’s veneer of equality, revealing the transparency of male disloyalty in Ars 3, only to bury the embarrassment of male readers’ identification with emasculated dud Cephalus: once we have decided that Procris is a ‘conniving little trollop’, we can safely chuckle over male double-standards and getting the boys off scot-free.\(^9\) Not so: especially since male students in the Ars Amatoria are ever at the mercy of contrary, unpredictable aurae, which at any point can sink their ship. As Gibson reminds us in passing, if addressees in Ars 3 fail to benefit from Ovid’s instruction, so do students in Ars 1 and 2.\(^10\) The praeceptor is ever the lover himself, playing the jilted, bitter, infatuated and ambitious boyfriend intent on manipulation, entrapment and reprisal.\(^11\) This is a teacher who

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\(^{5}\) L. Watson (2002) 159: ‘on the whole Ovid’s precepts are presented with the advantage of the male lover in mind’. Contrast Martin (1999), an unusual recent example of the opposite view, which claims Ovid as the closest thing in ancient Rome to a feminist.

\(^{6}\) Downing (1999).

\(^{7}\) Leach (1964) 148, 151.

\(^{8}\) See Ars 3,562 (cingenda est altis saepibus ista seges) and 573–6 (ignibus heu lentis uretur, ut umida faena, / ut modo montanis silva recisa iugis. / certior hic amor est, brevis et fecundior ille: / quae fugiunt, celeri carpite poma manu).

\(^{9}\) Green (1979–80).

\(^{10}\) Gibson (2003) 21, n.53.

\(^{11}\) See Sharrock (1994) passim, especially 1–86.
definitely doesn’t practise what he preaches (haec ego, confiteor, non sum perfectus in arte; / quid faciam? monitis sum minor ipse meis / ‘in this art, I confess, I’m not perfect; what am I to do? I fall short of my own counsels’ 2.547–8). Readers are never safe, even (or especially) under Daedalus’ skilled leadership (me duce tutus eris 2.58), since the higher they fly, the farther they fall.

While Sharrock begins to explore the complex dynamics between books/lovers of the Ars, and comes close to entertaining dual subjects (‘that character, the Reader, is in fact two: man and woman’), her objection that erotic (and especially elegiac) discourse can usually only accommodate lover and beloved, rather than two lovers, or (more convincing) can only conceive of powerful women in male terms, combined with her decision to concentrate her reading on Ars 2, immediately suspends further analysis of this point. Myerowitz, meanwhile, underdevelops her point that women in the Ars are often construed as rival artists (ensuring lovers are independent players) and that Ovid’s game is predicated on mutuality, opposition, interaction, and argues at the same time that ‘women in the Ars are passive objects of male eroticism’. In this chapter, I want instead to dive into the challenges and risks of reading the books (and the gendered subjects) of the Ars Amatoria together and side by side, and to highlight the sparks of competition that flash between them. I will be mapping out how polarities and reflections are configured and complicated in the poem, and how our dispassionate teacher drives us crazy in reading love – the Ars is perhaps the most difficult and frustrating of Ovid’s poems to read. In doing so, my analysis will flit, often rather frantically, between passages, dancing along with Ovid’s Bacchic soundtrack even as I try to write down the score.

CHECKMATES

This text will always present us with a basic problem: initially, about how each book relates to its predecessor, as well as how differently Ovid deals with male and female addressees. We always have to ask to what extent Ars 2 is a repetition/continuation of Ars 1, and likewise to what extent Ars 3 mirrors or is tagged onto Ars 1 and 2. Is each book just the same tale told in different ways (with Ovid the wannabe epicist following in the footsteps of Odysseus, who referre aliter saepe solebat idem 2.128)? Do Books 1 and 2 go together, or are they very different, and is Book 2 ‘between’ Ars 1 and 3?

(in what sense)? How does the balance (or lack of it) between 1/2 and 3 work out (especially when, as I noted in the introduction, the Remedia Amoris seems to function in many ways as Ars 4)? Is it really the case that ‘that which follows is not so good as that which went before’ (nec bona tam sequitur, quam bona prima fuit 3.66), and is Ars 3 a belated thorn after the neat garland of Ars 1 and 2 (3.68)? Or does poetry, with its powers to call back those (elegiac) waves (3.63), cheat linear time to play by different rules? Just as Ars 3 contains (we often imagine) asides and cheap jokes for male ears, to what extent do Ars 1 and 2 also nudge an (imaginary?) female readership to read between the lines? Is it just the case that Ovid acts the sophist par excellence, ‘playing the same game of love from opposite points of view’?

When ars amatoria sanctions cross-dressing, even in print (girls in Ars 3.497–8 should call their male lover ‘she’ in letters to avoid detection), can we ever be sure who Ovid’s ‘intended audience’ really is? Who, for instance, is addressed in the tum sumus incauti at 3.371, ‘us men’, or ‘everyone, men and women’, and is the line at 1.619 (blanditiis animum furtim deprendere nunc sit / ‘and now is the time to ensnare the mind with crafty flatteries’), after the interjection to puellae at 617, to be read as part of the aside to women, or as a continuation of advice to men?

At points like these, we seem to see double, and are reminded simultaneously of Ovid’s warning at 3.764 (nec, quae sunt singula, bina vides / ‘don’t see double where there is only one’), and his caution at 3.496 that one writing tablet can contain two hands (ne teneat geminas una tabella manus). The question of to what extent Ovid plays the role of lena (especially the lena of the Amores), and to what extent we can see a ‘male’ recuperation of her role in Ars 3, is a fraught one that magnifies a wider, irresolvable issue of whose side our poet is on. Ovid’s board game allegories in Ars 3.353ff., which involve threes and twos against ones, pose further riddles (especially for us, as the details of these games are little known): the girl (and the reader/poet?) is to throw three dice, and then reflect which side she should

15 For further discussion of the Remedia as part of the program of the Ars, see Henderson (forthcoming).
16 Also note that at the beginning of Ars 3, Ovid continues to address men as well as his female audience (e.g. at 3.6, and 41–2). And at Rem.49–50, he tells readers that any instruction he gives (now and in the past?) is intended for both men and women. Ovid also plays with the idea of a female readership in Ars 1 and 2, e.g. 1.31ff., 617f., 2.745f.
18 See Myers (1996) and Gibson (2003) 19–21. In the Amores, the lena was only concerned with the advantage of her female pupil: she banned involvement with poet-lovers, and recommended anger as a weapon, whereas Ovid reverses both these precepts. Yet the question, especially when it comes to the subject of ira, is always whether he means what he says, whether he is always willing aurae to fan the flames even as he claims to want to suppress irrational passions.
19 For the basics, see Gibson (2003) 242–50.
best join, and which she should challenge (et modo tres iactet numeros, modo cogitet, apte / quam subeat partem callida quamque vocet 3.355–6). But she should also learn to play the ‘battle of the brigands’, when ‘one piece falls before his double enemy, and the warrior caught without his mate fights on, while the enemy retraces repeatedly the path he has begin’ ( unus cum gemino calculus hoste perit, / bellatorque suo prensus sine compare bellat, / aemulus et coeptum saepe recurrit iter 358–60). 20 Compare Ars 2.203–8, where men are urged to throw dice badly (difficult to imagine, this, in a game of chance − but a neat excuse for losing, in any case), in order to let her win (‘if the piece is marching under the semblance of a robber’s band, let your warrior fall before its glassy foe’ 207–8). If not, they’re told, ‘let no forfeit follow if she loses’ (2.205). To what extent is Ovid’s association of male cunning and power with an uncontrollable dice a joke that lays bare the real randomness of his precepts, and of relationships more broadly? As Ars 3.371–80 warn, board games are notorious for making lovers reveal their hidden passions (nudaque per lusus pectora nostra patent / ‘in our games our hearts show clear to see’ 3.372), and a civilized pastime can quickly descend into passionate combat and tragi-epic display (resonat clamoribus aether 3.375; cf. resonat magnis plangoribus aether Virg. Aen.4.668). 21

The reflections that plague the cartoonishly elegiac Ars are by no means always uniform and equilibrated, as Downing argues, even on a basic level, where two inter-mirroring books battle a third (Thalia is always borne on ‘unequal wheels’, imparibus rotis 1.264). I will suggest that, just as in the Medicamina, Ovid toys in the Ars with the axiomatic catoptric tale of Narcissus and Echo, yet allocates both roles to both men and women (Narcissus himself is of course already a double figure, embodying both desiring subject and loved object). Moreover, as Ovid’s instruction on cultus transforms men gradually into Narcissuses over the course of Ars 1 and 2, he sets them up to fall in love with and gaze at Medusas as well as Echos. As we will see, the Perseus–Medusa confrontation is repeatedly staged in the Ars as a drawn-out or ongoing collision, in which demonic stares boomerang between lustrous surfaces, human and artificial.

We also glimpse traces of the (related) Salmacis–Hermaphroditus union, and the figures of Medusa and Salmacis, with their coruscating eyes, are copied in the characters of Juno, Athena, Dido, and Medea. The Gorgon and her doppelgangers become Dionysiac figures, who together with the raving Bacchants that inspire Ovid’s imagery and allegories, haunt the

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20 Compare gemino hoste with gemini libelli (3.47).
21 Also cf. Virgil, Georg. 3.150 (furit mugitubus aether), Aen. 5.228 (resonatque fragoribus aether), and also Ov. Met. 3.231, 6.695. See note in Gibson (2003) ad loc.
cynical, neat mechanics of didactic courtship, and threaten to invert or crack each looking glass. The Pasiphae of *Ars* 1, who seems to have been touched and metamorphosed by the ‘horned god’, produces the Minotaur that is Daedalus’ challenge and life sentence in *Ars* 2, while at 1.525, Ovid calls on Bacchus for inspiration (*ecce, suum vatem Liber vocat* / ‘look, Liber calls his bard!’), and at 3.667, his cry of desperation (*quo feror insanus?* / ‘where am I borne in my frenzy?’) mimics a series of deranged women: Procris herself, as she pounces rashly on Cephalus in this same episode (*Ars* 3.731–2), but also Dido (*Aen*.4.595), Byblis (*Met*.9.509), and Myrrha (*Met*.10.320). Seeing (and the Bacchants’ Theban blindness) is the dominant metaphor in this text, introduced in *Ars* 1, where seduction begins in the theatre, and by the myth of Paris’ judgement in the beauty contest, references to which span the entire work. More often than not, though, the object of men’s affection is not Venus but Juno, the woman judged but ill-rewarded for her looks who is thenceforth bent on retribution. Yet throughout the *Ars*, the roles of seer and seen (and subject–object positions more generally) are precarious and confused. Lookers are always looked at (*spectatum veniunt, veniunt spectentur ut ipsae* / ‘they come to the games to watch, but they also come to be seen’) and eyes regularly meet across crowded rooms (*atque oculos oculis spectare fatentibus ignem* / ‘you may gaze at her eyes with eyes that confess their fire’). The positions of male and female lovers in the *Ars*, as we will see in detail in the sections that follow, appear to continually shift and overlap, producing some striking contradictions, confusions and tensions that are especially evident when we read Books 1 and 2 against Book 3, and vice versa.

**AN EYE FOR AN EYE**

In the *Ars*, the idea of self and other/enemy collapsing into one, and/or suffering the same fate, or of falling into traps he or she has set, is endemic, embroidered by a relay of verbal and metrical patternings which enact a nervous, ambitious mirroring between books, and between male and female lovers: *et qui spectavit vulnera, vulnus habet* / ‘he who watched the wounds

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22 Bacchus is *insignis cornu* (3.348), and Pasiphae runs to the woods like a Bacchant ‘sped by the Aonian god’ (1.312).

23 As critics have noted (e.g. J. F. Miller 1993), we can trace an increasing ironization of teacher *qua* teacher in the *Ars*: Ovid betrays a considerable lack of control over his material, a comic manipulation of his didactic mask which is itself evidence of artistic control. On this point also see Durling (1958).

24 As Gibson notes (2003), Ovid also behaves like a tragic Medea or Dido at 3.671–2, when he casts aside indecisiveness and settles on a course of action despite the personal consequences.
Double vision: Ars Amatoria 1, 2 and 3

has himself been wounded’ 1.166; *laesa Venus iusta arma movet telumque remittit* / ‘Venus when injured wages righteous war, and flings the weapon back’ 2.397; *victor erat praedae praeda pudenda sua* / ‘the victor was his own captive’s shameful prey’ 2.406; *in laqueos, quos posuere, cadant* / ‘let them fall into the snare which they have laid’ 1.646; *ergo, ut periuras merito periuria fallant, / exemplo doleat femina laesa suo* / ‘so, that perjuries may rightly cheat the perjured, let the woman feel the pain of the wound she first inflicted’ 1.657–8.25

Ovid makes the elegiac couplet (as well as the three-book schema), which replays *ad infinitum* an (imperfect) mirroring of the hexameter line,26 function as a system to enact and configure every specular patterning. In his tit for tat game that plays on elegiac doubleness, men are advised to ‘deceive the deceivers’ (*fallite fallentes* 1.645). In *Ars* 1 and 2, the way to woo women is to ape their every move: in *Ars* 1, pupils are instructed not to shy away from union (*iunge tuum lateri qua potes usque latus* / ‘snuggle up against her as much as you can’ 1.140; cf. *nec . . . sit pudor . . . lateri continuasse latus* / ‘don’t hesitate to join your side to hers’ 495–6). Moreover, while at this point the male protagonist seems to be the active partner (*illam respicias, illam mirere licebit* / ‘you might look at her, admire her’ 1.499), it is he who must contrive, Echo-like, to mirror her (*cum surgit, surges; donec sedet illa, sedebis* / ‘when she rises, you will too; when she sits, you sit’ 1.503). If we look forward to *Ars* 2.197–202, Ovid again advises his pupils to mimic their beloved’s actions and words. Yet this passage is also very reminiscent of the experience of Narcissus in *Met*.3, an episode which, as Rosati has discussed at length, is saturated with verbal repetitions and mirrorings:27

\[
\begin{align*}
cede repugnanti: cedendo victor abibis; \\
fac modo, quas partes illa iubebit, agas. \\
arguet: arguito; quicquid probat illa, probato; \\
quod dicet, dicas; quod negat illa, neges. \\
riserit: arride; si flebit, flere memento: \\
imponat leges vultibus illa tuis.
\end{align*}
\]

25 The fate of the ‘biter bitten’ is proverbial, and is the traditional fear of the *praeceptor amoris*: see e.g. Tib. 1.6.9f., Ov. *Am*.1.4.45f., 2.18.19f., 2.19.33f.

26 In *Am*.2.17.21–2, Ovid compares the unequal partnering of hexameter with pentameter to his relationship with Corinna, which he then likens to Vulcan’s courtship of Venus (Vulcan also incarnates the uneven elegiac couplet since he walks with a limp): *carminis hoc ipsum genus inpar; sed tamen apte / iungitur herouss cum breviore modo* / ‘this kind of verse it itself uneven; and yet it’s right that the heroic line is joined to the shorter one’. As Sharrock puts it (1990) 571: ‘reciprocity is reflected in the basic structural unit of elegiac poetry, prone as it is to balance, anaphora, and many varieties of repetition and echo’. On the elegiac resonances of the Narcissus–Echo story see Knox (1986) 19–23, and Rosati (1983).

Give in if she resists: if you yield you’ll come out winner;  
Just play the part that she has written for you.  
If she blames, you blame too; approve what she approves,  
affirm what she affirms; deny what she denies.  
If she laughs, laugh with her, if she weeps, mind you weep too.  
Let her dictate your every expression.  

Compare Met. 3.457–62, when Narcissus addresses his own reflection, just before realizing that he is his mirror-image:

*spem mihi nescioquam vultu promittis amico,*  
cumque ego porrexii tibi brachia, porrigis ulro;  
cum risi, adrides; lacrimas quoque saepe notavi  
me lacrimante tuas; nutu quoque signa remittis  
et, quantum motu formosi suspicor oris,  
verba referis aures non pervenientia nostras.

You give me hope with your friendly face,  
and when I stretch out arms to you, you stretch yours too.  
When I smile, then you smile back; and I’ve often seen your tears  
as I weep myself; when I beckon, you give a nod,  
and, I suspect, from the movement of those perfect lips,  
you even answer me with words that never reach my ears.

Ovid’s male pupils, then, are to play-act as Echo, or as Narcissus’ reflection, in order to catch their prey, complicating passivity as aggression in disguise and confusing subject/object roles. Who is it that makes the first move in Ovid’s relationships, when in Ars 1, the cynical man on the pull is combating a wound already inflicted?

In the first two books of the Ars, Ovid visualizes his male audience not just as Narcissus’ mirror-image, but also as undergoing a gradual transformation into Narcissus himself, culminating in Ars 2, where, as Sharrock argues, the Ovidian *praeeptor* suggests a homoerotic relationship between himself and his pupil, addressing him as *puer formosus*, and flattering him like an elegiac *puella* or abandoned heroine.²⁹ ²⁸ At 2.209–16, Ovid comes close to suggesting that men should themselves enjoy the accoutrements of femininity in catering to their girlfriend’s every need: he should hold her parasol when they are out walking, offer her the footstool, help her take off her dainty slipper, and hold her mirror in his hand:

²⁸ E.g. 2.112: *ingenii dotes corporis adde bonis*; cf. Propertius 1.2.6, to Cynthia.  
²⁹ 2.111: *ut dominam teneas, nec te mirere relictum / ‘so that you might keep your mistress, and not marvel to find yourself abandoned*.  

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nec tibi turpe puta (quamvis sit turpe, placebit)  
ingenua speculum sustinuisse manu.

Don’t think it shameful (it may be shameful, but it’s sure to please),  
to hold a mirror in your freeborn hand.  

_Ars_ 2.215–16

We are tempted to ask: ‘Please whom?’ Ovid declines to spell out here the  
idea that the lover holds up the mirror for the girl, rather than using it (in  
addition) to admire himself. There seems to be a fine line between flattering  
and _imitating_ women, as lovers inch ever closer to Narcissus’ tragic fate.  
We should recall that _Ars_ 1.503ff. had dictated firmly that men should never  
be concerned with preening themselves, an activity for which a mirror is  
esential, for fear of looking like a woman, or a eunuch Bacchant out only  
to satisfy other men.30 Yet by _Ars_ 2, it is clear that mirror-gazing Narcissus  
is _the_ unnamed model for the charming young lover, desired by both men  
and women, who undertakes Ovid’s rite of passage to adult sexuality. _Ars_ 3,  
meanwhile, counsels women to avoid men who profess elegance and good  
looks, or who spend time arranging their hair (3.433–4):31 when men and  
women want the same floury robe, this is a recipe for war (as well as for  
another reenactment of the Narcissus–Echo courtship). Look for example  
at the reverberation at _Ars_ 3.449–50, which as Gibson notes, reverses the  
situation at 1.431ff., where it is women who are accused of habitual petty  
theft:32

‘_redde meum_!’ clamant spoliatae saepe puellae,  
‘_redde meum_’ toto voce boante foro.

‘give it back, it’s mine’ robbed women often cry;  
‘give it back, it’s mine’ echo voices through the forum.  
_Ars_ 3.449–50

By _Ars_ 3 (thanks partly, no doubt, to Ovid’s flattery in _Ars_ 1 and 2), men  
just love themselves (_praecipue si cultus erit speculoque placebit, / posse suo  
tangi credet amore deas_ / ‘especially if he is well-dressed and likes the look  
of himself in a mirror, he’ll believe that goddesses could fall in love with  
him’ 681–2). This is the same flaw that mars women in _Ars_ 1.613 (_nec credi

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30 Ovid’s advice in _Ars_ 1 is, however, typically slippery. Ovid’s first example of a ‘bit of rough’ is Theseus,  
whose unaccessorized hair was no barrier to him whisking off Ariadne (1.509–10). Yet a mere 50 lines  
later, it is girly Bacchus himself who ultimately comes out on top, when he steals away Ariadne on  
the rebound from Theseus.

31 As Gibson notes (2003) _ad loc._, the phrase _in statione_, used here for styling the hair, suggests ‘feminine’  
attention to the hairdo, cf. e.g. _Am._1.7.68.

32 Gibson (2003) _ad loc._
labor est; sibi quaeque videtur amanda; / pessima sit, nulli sua forma placet / ‘nor is it hard to be believed; each woman thinks herself lovable; even if she’s hideous, there is none her own looks do not please’).

Of course, the Narcissus myth maps neatly onto Ovid’s project of self-knowledge in the Ars, and students/readers (like Narcissus’ underworld equal Tantalus) are doomed to suffer repeatedly the Narcissus narrative of naïvety and credence followed by intense and shameful self-awareness (duc age discipulos ad mea templo tuos, / est ubi diversum fama celebrata per orbe / littera, cognosci quae sibi quemque iubet / ‘come, lead your pupils to my shrine, where there is a saying of global fame, which orders each to be known to himself’ 2.498–500; cf. nota sibi sint quaeque / ‘let each woman know herself’ 3.771): the path to success in love in the Ars is haunted, after the Metamorphoses, by Narcissus’ tragedy. Yet, just as obviously, a textbook that schools pupils in the art of acting and perfecting a look can also produce top-class, Protean impressionists (and for men, at least, it’s what’s inside that counts). After all, Achilles managed to enter Deidamia’s chamber and rape her by dressing in drag (haec illum stupro comperit esse virum / ‘when she was violated she found out he was a man’ 1.698).

Similarly, the role of Narcissus (like that of Echo) can potentially be adopted as a mask by both men and women, to be worn and dropped when it suits.

In Ars 3, women too are instructed in the same mirroring strategies, first at 461–2 (although here they do not physically copy men, but adopt the same techniques and exchange equivalent things):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{si bene promittent, totidem promittite verbis;} \\
\text{si dederint, et vos gaudia pacta date.}
\end{align*}
\]

If they make fair promises, promise in as many words:

If they give, give back your bargained joys.

Then at 491–2:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{iudice me fraus est concessa repellere fraudem,} \\
\text{armaque in armatos sumere iura sinunt.}
\end{align*}
\]

I judge that fraud may be repelled by fraud, that arming against the armed is allowed by law.

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33 Readers are warned about this fate at Ars 2.605–6: o bene, quod frustra captatis arbore ponis / garrulus in media Tantalus aret aqua! / ‘It’s just that Tantalus clutches in vain at the apples on the tree, and is dying of thirst in the midst of water’.

34 At Ars 1.761ff., the wise man should change fashions as often as Proteus changes shape.

35 Note that Ovid’s address to Achilles (quid facis, Aeacide? 1.691) parallels the apostrophe to ridiculed Pasiphae at 1.303 (quo tibi, Pasiphae?).
And finally at 513–14 (this time the mirroring is bodily, as it is in Met.3):

spectantem specta; ridenti mollia ride;
innuet, acceptas tu quoque redde notas.

Look at him who looks at you, send back his charming smile:
If he beckons, acknowledge and return his nod.

Indeed, at points throughout the Ars, we can read female characters approximating Echo’s role in her relationship with Narcissus. For example, when Ovid, at Ars 2.441–2, adds sulphur to the flames of passion and goads a woman’s heart, he hints at triggering another reiteration of the Narcissus–Echo tragedy:

sed tamen extinctas admoto sulphure flammias
invenit et lumen, quod fuit ante, redit.

But add sulphur, and it sniffs out the smothered flames, and the light that glowed there once, returns.

Compare the description of Echo at Met.3.372–4, enflamed by Juno’s wicked spell:

quoque magis sequitur, flamma propriore calescit,
non aliter quam cum summis circumlita taedis
admotas rapiunt vivacia sulphura flammas.

And the more she chased, the more she fed the fire, just as reactive sulphur, smeared round the tops of torches, catches light in an instant from a nearby flame.

In the story of Ariadne’s abandonment at Ars 1.525ff., similarly, the heroine (or the poet?) repeats her own exclamation, ‘quid mihi fiet’ ait. / ‘quid mihi fiet’ ait / “what will become of me?” she cried, “what will become of me?” (536–7). Her wails are then (re-)echoed by Bacchic percussion in the lines that follow (sonuerunt cymbala toto / litore, et adtonita tympana pulsa manu / ‘then all along the shore the cymbals clashes and drums were banged by frenzied hands’ 537–8). She is so crazed with grief that she faints, losing the blood in her body and breaking off novissima verba (539) just as bodiless Echo can only repeat the last words she hears (reddere de multis ut verba novissima posset Met.3.361). Theseus’ parting has robbed her of her voice (et color et Theseus et vox abiere puellae 1.551). Yet these are her own words, not someone else’s, and Ariadne plays the roles of both Echo and Narcissus. She pounds her soft (ultra-realistic) bosom with her hands (iamque iterum tundens mollissima pectora palmis 535), just as Narcissus strikes his hard ‘marble’ breast at Met.3.481 (nudaque marmoreis percussit pectora palmis),
yet Ariadne’s self-punishment is intensified by the excited hands of Bacchants, banging out the drumbeat of repetition. So too, Bacchus’ elopement with Ariadne stages, for everyone to see, the Dionysiac/Oedipal subtext to the Narcissus and Echo episode often recognized by critics in *Metamorphoses* 3:16 Ariadne acts out Pentheus’ part as the terrified object of the Bacchants’ look (in fact she is ‘to be gazed at’ for evermore, *spectabere*, as a star, 557) while embodying (in her multiple identifications) the deranged doublings that characterise both Narcissus’ and Bacchus’ gaze. For Dionysius has the power to make his victim Pentheus see double at Euripides, *Bacchae* 918–19, a line imitated by Vergil in the tragic stage simile applied to Dido at *Aen.* 4.470, [*Pentheus videt*] *et solem geminum et duplices se ostendere Thebas,* and in turn alluded to in Narcissus’ confrontation of his own eyes at Ovid *Met.* 3.420 (*spectat humi positus geminum, sua lumina, sidus*).

Similarly, in the line I have just highlighted at *Ars* 3.513 (*spectantem specta . . .*), the woman is actively looking, yet her gaze is secondary, for she is the mirror-image of the man looking at her (*spectantem*), just as in *Ars* 3.419–22 the beautiful woman who offers herself to be seen is like a wolf on the attack.37 The syntax here renders woman *both* object and subject: being looked at can itself be, paradoxically, a combative stance, as the figure of Medusa proves. As we’ve seen already in the *Medicamina*, both sexes in Ovid have sanctioned access to the magic of the mirror, the device which notoriously confounds the distinction between self and other.38 A comparable paradox takes shape in *Ars* 3.311ff., when women are advised to develop their voices and become dangerously attractive Sirens to hook their men (as well as, we imagine, to sink the ships Ovid steers).39 Yet this risk factor is subdued or rivalled by the notion that women who sing use their voice instead of their looks to seduce (*pro facie multis vox sua lena fuit* / ‘for many voice in place of face has been their procuress’ 3.316), a line which comes close to punishing clever, persuasive women with Echo’s

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16 See Hardie (2002a) 165ff., and Feldherr (1997). In *Met.* 3.421, Narcissus’ hair is *digni Baccho,* and there seems also to be a mirror link between Narcissus and Bacchus: while Narcissus is duped by a mirror image, effeminate Dionysus carries a mirror, which the Titans use to trick him before tearing him to pieces. See Frontisi-Ducroux and Vernant (1997) 223, 234–5. On the Dionysiac associations of Lucr. 4.572–94, an important source for Ovid’s Echo and Narcissus, see Buchheit (1984) 144–6.

17 *ad multas lupa tendit oves, praedetur ut unam, / et lovis in multas devolat alas aves:* ‘she draws near to many sheep, so that she might prey on just one, and the eagle of Jupiter swoops down on many birds. So, too, the beautiful woman should show herself off to the public, and out of many there might perhaps be one she attracts.’

37 As Plato observes in the *Sophist*, mirror images share with semblances of all kinds an ambiguous mixture of being and non-being (240a). McCarty (1989) 162, comments: ‘the mirroring vision is precisely something that *is* there yet also *not* there, hence it challenges the mentality that thinks in terms of here and there, or self and non-self’. It is ‘ontologically ambiguous as well as fascinating’.

38 As Gibson notes (2003) *ad loc*, courtesans and prostitutes are often called or compared to Sirens.
fate by making them voice alone. Especially as they are instructed to start practising by repeating ditties heard in marble theatres (et modo marmoreis referant audita theatris 3.317). At his most sadistic (a malicious Cephalus, say the gossips), the lover might get a kick out of hurting his girl and taking away her voice, as we see in the middle of Ars 2:

{o quater et quotiens numero comprehendere non est felicem, de quo laesa puella dolet! quae, simul invitas crimem pervenit ad aures, excidit, et miserae voxque colorque fugit.}

How immeasurably happy is the man for whom an injured woman pines! At first, she refuses to believe the crime, then slumps, poor girl, white-faced and drained of voice.

_Ars_ 2.447–50

Compare Procris at _Ars_ 3.699–702, another Echo impersonator rendered mute by the revelation of a lover’s infidelity:

coniugis ad timidas aliquis male sedulus aures auditos memori detulit ore sonos; Procris, ut accepit nomen, quasi paelicis, Aaurae, excidit, et subito muta dolore fuit.

Some idiot gossip gave his wife, who listened nervously, a blow by blow account of what he’d heard. And when he said the name of ‘rival’ Aura – so it seemed – Procris sank, struck dumb by the sudden, painful blow.

Yet (quite apart from the fact that it takes one to know one), packaging woman as Echo is always, like everything else, a fraught game in the _Ars_, as the following section explores.

FATAL ATTRACTIONS

For in stripping his _laesa puella_ of her voice by cheating on her in _Ars_ 2.450, Ovid’s lover also stirs a Medusan revenge. Look now at 2.451–4:

ille ego sim, cuius laniet furiosa capillos; ille ego sim, teneras cui petat ungue genas, quem videat lacrimans, quem torvis spectet ocellis, quo sine non possit vivere, posse velit.

May I be the man whose hair she tears out in her fury; may I be the man whose tender cheeks she gouges with her nails, the man she stares at as he weeps, who she fixes with her angry eyes, the one she can’t live with, but can never live without.
When she tears his hair, scratches his cheeks and glares at him with livid eyes (torvis ocellis 453), this is also the gaze that epitomized Medusa at 2.309 (ut fuerit torva violentior illa Medusa . . . / ‘though she might be more violent than grim Medusa . . . ’). Throughout the Ars Amatoria, in fact, we can trace a Medusa–Perseus conflict whose antagonisms disrupt the easy symmetries of the Narcissus–Echo tale. ‘Sharp goads must spur on love’ (acribus est stimuli eliciendus amor 2.444), and Medusa’s wild and bloated face, her hair streaming and hissing like a raving Bacchant, is guaranteed to spice up any flagging romance. Ovid’s calls for peace at Ars 2.145ff. ring ridiculously hollow, especially after conflicting advice in Ars 1 (indeed he begins this new section at 2.143 by admonishing readers not to trust appearances): while harshness causes hatred (odium) and savage wars (2.146), Ovid’s so-called pacifism itself begins with hatred (odimus / ‘we hate’ 2.147), directed at wolves (i.e. women: see e.g 3.8, 3.419); the ‘gentle sparrow’ free from men’s attack (at caret insidiis hominum, quia mitis, hirundo 2.149) turns up again at 2.383, amongst Ovid’s examples of women enraged by male infidelity, this time as bloodstained Procne, the hirundo who took revenge precisely for male violence. The lawless love of 2.157, non legis iussu lectum venistis in unum, has become the violata iura of 2.381. And at 2.169–72, the memory of an irate poet roughing up Corinna in Amores 1.7 again stains his dove-white message (even though pupils are afterwards encouraged to ‘avoid their master’s errors’ (2.173). It is always the case that militiae species amor est (‘love is a kind of warfare’ 2.233).

In Ars 1.53, similarly, (although at this point, fledgling lovers are not forced to look the Gorgon in the eye), Ovid promises that men will feel like Perseuses in Rome, where there are thousands of Andromedas for the taking. Yet Perseus’ association with a much more dangerous woman is barely concealed, especially on re-reading: perhaps they would prefer an older, sharper type? (1.65). In Ars 2 and 3, the middle-aged woman has a nasty look about her, as I discuss below. The hunter should know where the boar with gnashing teeth hides (1.46), just as a lover should find out where girls hang out (try the Portico of the Danaids, for instance, 1.72, which commemorates the slaughter of grooms on the night before their

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40 The adjective torvus is also used of the boar at 2.190, transfixed by Milanion in his bid to impress (and finally capture) Atalanta.

41 Lupa is often used to describe women who are predatory in a sexual or financial sense, especially low-class prostitutes.

42 Although Ovid stresses at 2.154–6 that quarrelling is only done by husbands and wives, not lovers, many of his examples thenceforth are based on conjugal couples, and the idea of there being two separate kinds of love affair is very confused.
wedding). There’s no question about it: the knives are out, and Ovid is already willing male and female lovers to stab each other in the back.

The possibility (or the promise) of encountering a Medusa in the *Ars* is both scary and tantalizing, and the Ovidian lover is schooled to tread a fine line between exciting competition and emasculating threat. The trick, Ovid tells his readers in *Ars* 2.287ff., is to let her play the queen, to let her think she is in control of the acts of seeing and being seen (*perde nihil, partes illa potentis agat* / ‘waste nothing, let her play top dog’ 294). Let her believe you are spellbound by her beauty, a victim of her Gorgon’s gaze (*attonitum forma fac putet esse sua* / ‘be sure she thinks you’re awestruck by her looks’ 296). We might recall that *attonitus* is the adjective used to describe the effect of Medusa’s snake-hair, worn as an image on Minerva’s breast, in *Met.*4.802 (*ut attonitos formidine terreat hostes* /‘so as to frighten her fear-numbed foes’). In reality, he goes on to reveal, she is probably ‘more violent than Medusa’, but she too will play down her powers and be ‘mild and gentle to her lover’ (*ut fuerit torva violentior illa Medusa, / fiet amatori lenis et aequa suo* 2.309–10). Compare *Ars* 3.553–4, where women must pretend not to have a scary face:

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dissimulate tamen, nec prima fronte rapaces
este: novus viso casse resistet amans.
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But fake it, and don’t let your face betray your greed:
A new lover will run a mile if he sees the trap.

Or note *Ars* 3.281–90, where women should guard against a Gorgon-like grimace when laughing at jokes:

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quis credat? discunt etiam ridere puellae,
quae rictus parvaeque utrimque lacunae,
et summos dentes ima labella tegant,
nec sua perpetuo contendant ilia risu,

est quae perverso distorqueat ora cachinno;
risu concussa est altera, flere putes;
illa sonat raucum quiddam atque inamabile: ridet,

ut rudit a scabra turpis asella mola.
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Who would believe it? Women even learn to laugh;
For this, too, they need to know the etiquette.
The mouth should gape just slightly, cheek dimples at a minimum,
and the edge of the lip should cover where the teeth begin.
Nor should they bust a gut with ungovernable giggles,

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but chuckle with a feminine sort of trill.
One will distort her face with a hideous cackle,
another is in fits and looks like she’s weeping.
That one snorts – a harsh and highly unattractive sound,
like a foul ass braying at the rough millstone.

The idea that the lover pretends to be attonitus by his girl’s face at 2.296 is undermined by the ensuing revelation, at 2.309, that she really is a Medusa. Maintaining that your paralysis is a put-on is one way of defending yourself (or at least your reputation) against a woman’s Gorgon-like powers. The lover with a black belt in amatory arts must always wield a mask-like face that is as impenetrable as Perseus’ shield (offe, nec vultu destrue dicta tuo / ‘see to it that facial expression doesn’t undo your words’ 2.312): thus petrification can always be passed off as the ultimate self-control. Yet the risk is always that a lover grows into the pose that at first is so artificially worn. As we have seen, when in Ars 1 Ovid advises his students to play the heartstruck beau (just as he did in the opening poems of Amores 1), he warns: saepe tamen vere coepit simulator amare; / saepe, quod incipiens finxerat esse, fuit / ‘yet often the pretender starts to fall in love for real, often he turns into the role he has played’ (615–16).

Just as there seems to be space for complacency, Medusa’s feral face is again unveiled in the description of a woman scorned at 2.373ff. She can out-savage a red boar, a lioness, or a poisonous snake:

sed neque fulvus aper media tam saevus in ira est,
fulmineo rabidos cum rotat ore canes,
nec lea, cum catulis lactantibus ubera praebet,
nec brevis ignaro vipera laesa pede
femina quam socii deprensa paelice lecti:
ardet et in vultu pignora mentis habet.

A red boar on the rampage is not half as savage when it circles rabid hounds with lightning jaw;
Nor is the lioness, as she feeds her newborn cubs,
nor the tiny adder wounded by a careless foot –
Nothing’s like a woman whose lover has strayed:
Her face says it all – she’s burning up with rage.

Ars 2.373–8

No dissimulating and playing the meek puella now: her face (and Medusa is all face) betrays every emotion. However, a few lines later Ovid adds (ever the mischievous tease), don’t let this put you off . . . (2.387ff.). Compare Ars 3.7–8, where he resists male readers’ objections when they ask: ‘why add
Double vision: Ars Amatoria 1, 2 and 3

poison to the serpents, or betray a sheepfold to the mad she-wolf?’ (‘quid virus in angues / adicis et rabidae tradis ovile lupae?’).

In Ars 3, Ovid again ‘hates’ the Medusan woman while at the same time making her essential to his militia amoris: mad moods are simply ‘not becoming’, being the antithesis of candida pax (3.501–2), especially when the female face ‘swells up with passion, the veins blacken with blood, and eyes flash more savagely than Gorgon’s fire’ (3.503–4). After all, Pallas Athene, whose position here, as Gibson suggests, is linked to the appearance of the Gorgon’s head on the goddess’ shield, threw away her flute when she saw her own red, puffed-up reflection in a stream (505–6). Just so, Ovid adds, replaying at the same time Narcissus’ delusion and Perseus’ revenge: ‘should you in mid-passion look in a mirror, scarce one of you would know her own features’ (vos quoque si media speculum spectetis in ira, / cognoscat faciem vix satis ulla suam 3.507–8). Moreover, the Gorgon’s snaky hair (often in disguise, naturally) seethes through Ars 3: for good reason men should not be allowed to see a woman’s tresses lawless (non sint sine lege capilli 3.133), or unbound (3.235–8), and the poor slave forced to play hairdresser weeps, bloodstained, over the ‘hated locks’ (plorat in invisas sanguinulenta comas 242). The best way to satirize and demonize a woman, especially if she is attractive, is to destroy her beautiful hair (remember that Medusa herself suffered this fate, since before her metamorphosis, her hair was her best feature).

Gibson (2003) ad loc.

This line subtly hints at both naïvety and a tragic confrontation of reality: she does not recognize (cognoscat), in the sense that she does not want to, but nevertheless does (?) acknowledge the truth of her reflection.

See again Met.4.796–7: nec in tota conspectior ulla capillis / pars fuit / ‘nor was there any part of her more worth looking at than her hair’. On Freudian and other interpretations of female hair as symbol of desire, and on why ‘the objectification of woman as a sexual body necessarily requires coming to terms with the presence of her head’, see Eilberg Schwartz (1995) i–14.

Also compare the smug Am.1.14 (formosae periere comae 31).
hair, if it is *contrived* to appear dishevelled, is a very attractive look on many women (*et neglecta decet multas coma* 153). Yet the problem is always that the *Ars Amatoria* makes it very tricky to distinguish between a real Medusa or wild, Dionysiac woman, and a woman who is merely trying on the mask for size: indeed, the figure of Medusa, with her false, fixed face, epitomizes Ovid’s trained actor–lover.

If we return for a moment to *Ars 2*, we can see that the misogyny that surrounds the sexually mature woman and invests her with castrating, paralysing (stiffening) powers, has its mythical incarnation in the figure of the Gorgon: she is the trump card Ovid plays, as he concludes his defence of the older woman with one final, dazzling exemplum:

\[
\text{scilicet Hermionen Helenae praeponere posses,}
\]
\[
\text{et melior Gorge quam sua mater erat?}
\]
\[
\text{et Venerem quicumque voles attingere seram,}
\]
\[
\text{si modo duraris, praemia digna feres.}
\]

Could you honestly rank Hermione over Helen, and was the Gorgon better looking than her mother? Whoever you are, if you want to try out older women - just stick it out, you won’t be disappointed.

*Ars* 2.699–702

The Gorgon’s mother may be a push-over for a Perseus accustomed to younger, deadlier women like her daughter (crucially, he’ll see her *eyes* confessing defeat when they make love: *aspiciam dominae victos amentis ocellos*; 2.691). Yet the hint at her continued fertility in line 668 (*iste feret segetes, iste serendus ager* / ‘that field will bear crops, that field must be sown’) harbours the threat of Medusa’s (re-)birth. This anti-Venus, at once irresistible and (or because) repulsive, is more trouble than she looks. Ovid’s appeal, far from reassuring his male readers, whips up the paranoid fear of Medusa’s gaze which runs throughout his instruction in *Ars 1* and 2, books primarily geared, of course, towards hooking the daughters, not the mothers. Yet as I have stressed, both male and female lovers in Ovid are (to a greater or lesser degree) advised to attempt to manipulate the Gorgon’s powers, to mechanize their surface appearance: the male reader uses her

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47 Medusa causes death-by-erection: the state of being petrified is a kind of priapism (as well as, paradoxically, a state of impotence). Ferenczi (1926) postulates, in addition to the idea that Medusa’s snaky hair is a mass of castrated penises, that ‘the fearful and staring eyes of the Medusa head also have the secondary meaning of erection’.

48 While it highlights some basic contrasts, Downing’s argument (1999) 235, that in the *Ars Amatoria*, men (in *Ars 1* and 2) mechanize and replace their inner lives, whereas women (in *Ars 3*) mechanize and replace their superficial, surface appearance, oversimplifies the opposition of male and female in
Double vision: Ars Amatoria 1, 2 and 3

stony stare to his advantage by predicting and (apotropaically) feigning it himself (or so he claims), whereas the puella enhances the power of her gaze by assuming a passive, kindly look, thus foiling attempts by her opponent to forearm himself against her withering glance. As in the Medicamina, Ovid’s fantasy of erotic interaction is a duel of (potential) equals in which mirroring male and female contestants battle it out for control of the look. Throughout the Ars, we are seeing, the catoptric myths of Narcissus and Medusa, often plotted in tandem, make nonsense of stable hierarchies and unequivocal advantage.

AND SO TO BED

We cannot discuss the power games of Ars 1 and 2 (versus 3), however, without looking closely at the ‘finale’ to male instruction, the sex scenes at 2.703ff. For at first sight, at least, this passage seems to leave gender wars behind and paint a progressive picture of harmonious equality and mutual submission between the sheets.49 As James puts it, the episode has ‘often been cited as an example of a protofeminist manifesto of women’s rights to sexual pleasure’.50 Ovid has been stressing the artistic skills of the older woman, which ensures her ability to rival and provoke (both author and male lovers): these women wrote the Kama Sutra, and no flat tabella could outdo their live performance art (utque velis, Venerem iungunt per mille figuras: / invent plures nulla tabella modos / ‘according to your taste, they will embrace you in a thousand ways; no picture could devise more modes than they’ 2.679–80), just as, at Ars 3.321–4, educating women as artists invests them with a power to animate stone that rivals Orpheus/Pygmalion.51 Far from serving as bleating Echos, they need no help from the Muses to

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49 As Henderson puts it (forthcoming): ‘the idea that women must conquer you too, in bed, is to all appearances a surprise twist, as the conclusion to two books of all-out predation, assault, seduction and exploitation’.

50 See James (2003) 205, and the discussion that follows. Throughout her interesting analysis of the Ars, James is interested in the praeceptor’s misogynistic attitude towards women, but this leads her to play down or ignore points at which male supremacy is undercut. For her (210–11), the puella ‘bears all the risks of elegiac love’, while the male amator ‘risks only his time, money, and ego’.

51 A woman should learn to play the lyre, because ‘with his lyre Orpheus of Rhodope moved rocks and hearts . . . At the sound of your music, most just avenger of your mother, the stones dutifully formed walls by themselves.’ Compare Downing (1999), which argues that Ovid/male readers play the anti-Pygmalion artist, turning real women into shackled statues: see e.g. 3.219–20, where an unimproved woman is compared to the statues of Myron, which although famous, were once a ‘hard mass and lifeless weight’.
be well-spoken (sponte sua sine te celeberrima verba loquentur / ‘of their own accord, and unassisted, they’ll talk with eloquence’ 2.705) – thus two desiring subjects have entered Ovid’s bedroom (conscius, ecce, duos accepit lectus amantes 2.703). Lines 703–32 of Ars 2 celebrate the blissful, effortless parity of the two sexes, and two experienced lovers, who generously give and take pleasure:

conscius, ecce, duos accepit lectus amantes:
    ad thalami clausas, Musa, resistite fores.
sponte sua sine te celeberrima verba loquentur,
    nec manus in lecto laeva iacebit iners;
invenient digiti quod agant in partibus illis,
    in quibus occulte spicula tingit Amor.
fecit in Andromache prius hoc fortissimus Hector
    nec solum bellis utilis ille fuit;
fecit et in capta Lynneside magnus Achilles,
    cum premeret mollem lassus ab hoste torum.
illis te manibus tangi, Brisei, sinebas,
    imbutae Phyrgia quae nece semper erant.
an fuit hoc ipsum quod te, lasciva, iuvaret,
    sed sensim tarda prolicienda mora.
cum loca reppereris, quae tangi femina gaudet,
    non obstet, tangas quo minus illa, pudor:
aspicies oculos tremulo fulgore micantes,
    ut sol a liquida saepe refulget aqua;
accedent questus, accedet amabile murmur
    et dulces gemitus aptaque verba ioco.
sed neque tu dominam velis maioribus usus
    desere, nec cursus anteat illa tuos;
ad metam prope rerat simul: tum plena voluptas,
    cum pariter victi femina virque iacent.
hic tibi servandus tenor est, cum libera dantur
    otia, furtivum nec timor urget opus.
cum mora non tuta est, totis incumbere remis
    utile et admissus subdere calcar equo.

Look, the knowing couch has taken in two lovers:
Stop there, Muse, at the locked bedroom door.
Unassisted, of their own accord, they’ll converse wittily,
nor will their left hands lie idle on the bed.
Their fingers will find what to do in those parts
where Love in secret dips his darts.
Heroic Hector did this with Andromache –
he didn’t just excel at fighting wars;
Achilles tried the same with captive Briseis, when he pressed the soft couch wearied from the foe. By those very hands, Briseis, did you let yourself be touched, hands forever stained with Phrygian blood. Was this your fetish, slutty girl, to have limbs caressed by a conquering killer’s paws? Trust me, the pleasure of sex should not be rushed, but gradually, slowly, coaxed along its way. When you’ve found where she loves to be touched, don’t let shyness stop you touching it: You’ll see her eyes glint and flicker with light, like the sun when it sparkles on still water; then she’ll moan, and murmur lovingly, sweet groans and words that fit the sport. But don’t you spread your sail too full and leave her flagging, and never race ahead; Aim for the goal in tandem: that’s the greatest pleasure, when man and woman lie in bed, both beaten. This is the course you should keep to, as long as leisure time is free, and no fear hurries on the secret work. But when delay is risky, best to press on with all oars, and spur on the galloping horse.

Ars 2.703–32

The advice of 725–32 is clear, it seems: this Tantric couple must orgasm together, and a real man takes care not to out-race his partner, so as to ensure both can lie vanquished together (727–8). Yet (alongside the similar instruction given to women in Ars 3, especially), these lines put up a disappointing, or misleading show. What is interesting about the passage, first of all, is that it seems to depict not penetrative sex, but mutual masturbation: indeed, this may be the only sure way in which male and female lovers can be absolutely equal and symmetrical, as they are in line 728 (cum pariter victi femina virque iacent). The emphasis throughout is on hands, fingers, touching, a foreplay that never ends – the joke being that, first, we are only in Book 2, after all (meta at line 727, as in Ars 1.40, can mean turning post as well as goal: this finis is not to be rushed, says Ovid, but it inevitably comes too soon), and secondly, that readers looking for the big sex scene, the climactic point at which Ovid’s lover conquers his prey, don’t get quite what they were hoping for. This is not ‘warfare’, in a text in which militiae species amor est: we missed it, because in this passage Hector and Achilles retire from the battlefield when they enter the bedroom. Achilles collapses onto a ‘soft’ couch (mollis 712), and is already ‘knackered’ (lassus 712):52 is he too tired to do anything

52 For this connotation of lassus see Tib. 1.9.55, Juv. 6.130, with Adams (1982) 196.
more? Is ‘equality’ just an occasional side-effect of male exhaustion? In the epilogue to Book 2, at 735–6, the graduate-lover is as great as Achilles, who was famed for his right hand (*quantus... Aeacides dextra... erat*); but this was not quite what we had in mind. There is never any point in this passage when it is clear that the lovers have the kind of sex we are waiting for (and critics have usually assumed they have anyway). In lines 725–32, we pick up on Ovid’s usual sporting metaphors for sex: sailing in 725–6, rowing and horse riding in 731–2. But at 725–6, both lovers are ships, controlling their own path and speed, just as both are chariot racers at 727, and *iacent* at line 728 suggests that they are potentially both lying down flat at the moment of *plena voluptas* (727). The final distich (731–2) does suggest penetration, but this mock-epic scene is an afterthought, not the heights of pleasure, advice to be followed only if the lovers fear interruption (*cum mora non tuta est*).

We might be also tempted to read a more loaded ecstasy into these lines when we focus on the interesting image at lines 721–2, when the woman shoots her worn-out partner a dazzling look, like the sun sparkling as it is reflected in water (*aspicies oculos tremulo fulgore micantes, / ut sol a liquida saepe refugit aqua*). This meeting of eyes is, as ever in Ovid, highly charged. Here we are reminded of the Salmacis–Hermaphroditus episode (a close double of Narcissus–Echo, again amalgamating subject and object, male and female) in *Metamorphoses* 4. Compare *Met*. 4.347–9, a passage I also quoted in the introduction, where in the famous sex scene Salmacis’ gaze is similarly likened to the blinding reflections of the sun on a shiny surface, this time a mirror:

Salmacis exarsit; flagrant quoque lumina nymphae,
non aliter quam cum puro nitidissimus orbe
opposita speculi referitur imagine Phoebus.

Salmacis burned; her nymph eyes gleamed,
like when a mirror held against the sun
reflects its shiny, dazzling orb.

If we read on, we’re reminded that, far from taking it slowly, Salmacis is a woman who can’t bear to delay or have her joys postponed (*vixque moram patitur, vix iam sua gaudia differt Met*. 4.350; *c.f*. *Ars* 2.717–18). No dead heat here – she’s the sure winner (*vicimus et meus est’ exclamat Nais*).

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54 The water in this scene is compared to glass (see *Met*. 4.354–5).
Double vision: Ars Amatoria 1, 2 and 3

Met. 4.356: contrast Ars 2.743–4, where Ovid’s aim all along was to conquer the Amazon). Salmacis wraps around Hermaphroditus like a serpent from the Gorgon’s bedazzling head (ut serpens Met. 4.362), or, even more evocative, a Medusan mass of octypus tentacles (Met. 4.365–6). The beautiful boy denies her the joy she craves in vain (Met. 4.368–9). Moreover, the process of grafting, which is a metaphor for Salmacis and Hermaphroditus’ violent union at Met. 4.375–6, has just been used by Ovid at Ars 2.649–50 (although here the outcome is rather less certain, as every aura that spurs on, or blows back Ovid’s boat can ‘shake the weakling shoot’). Just as Ovid compulsively rehashes the Narcissus–Echo tale in the Ars Amatoria while also cracking and complicating its fantasies, so he evokes the Salmacis–Hermaphroditus metamorphosis here only to stop just short of its denouement. Nevertheless, the scene is tinged with Salmacis’ furious energies, reminding us of the scariness of the older woman and destabilizing our impression of a couple blissfully in sync. Ovidian sex is rarely without timor, as Ovid hopes in 2.730.

So is this the crescendo we’ve been waiting for, or is it a little too soft-focus to be true? He may be ‘finished’ (finis adest operi 2.733), but how satisfied is she, especially when we flick forward to the end of Ars 3, a Lover’s Guide for women? Here Ovid seems to press replay on Ars 2, encouraging the girls to revel in (this time obviously penetrative) sex, so that the act ‘delights both alike’ (femina, et ex aequo res iuvent illa duos 3.794; cf. quod iuvet, ex aequo femina virque ferant 2.682), and to express their excitement freely (nec blandae voces incundaque murmura cessent, / nec taceant mediis improba verba iocis 3.795–6; cf. accedent questus, accedet amabile murmur, / et dulces gemitus aptaque verba ioco 2.723–4). But now the focus is on the panoply of potential turn-offs that might mar this climax, too (the drunk woman up for sex is an ugly sight, turpe 3.765, and should make all efforts to hide stretch marks, saggy breasts, blokeish height, etc. 3.771–86). Our praeceptor now turns to those poor girls who have been denied or cannot feel pleasure, probably because they are now too busy concealing their defects: infelix, cui torpet hebes locus ille, puella, / quo pariter debent femina virque frui / ‘unhappy the woman for whom that place, source of joy for women and men alike, is dull and unfeeling’ 3.799–800 – a reversal of 2.727–8: tum plena voluptas / cum pariter victi femina virque iacent /’then pleasure is

55 Ted Hughes’ version of Ovid’s Salmacis and Hermaphroditus myth makes Salmacis’ resemblance to Medusa more overt. He pictures her wounded by her own gaze reflected in a mirror: ‘Salmacis groaned softly / And began to tremble / As the sun / Catches a twisting mirror surface / With a splinter of a glare / Her own gaze flamed and hurt her.’

56 For recent discussion of how we read Ars 3 after the end of Ars 2, see also Henderson (forthcoming).

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full, when man and woman lie conquered together’. They should fake it, and fake it properly, he advises (although, beware, this Don Juan will always know: a pudet! arcanas pars habet ista notas / ‘ah, for shame! That part of your body has its secret signs’ 3.804). And one last thing: the woman who after ‘love’s joys’ asks her lover for ‘reward’ (financial or sexual) should not wish her prayers to have much weight (gaudia post Veneris quae poscet munus amantem, / illa suas nolet pondus habere preces 3.805–6).57 Male students in Ars Amatoria may have been duped into bedding a Medusa or a Salmacis, but in return many a puella is doomed to frustration, taunted by Book 2’s manual. Real erotic parity remains as tantalizing as Narcissus’ reflection. Game over (lusus habet finem 3.809).

WIND UPS

Ovid is notorious for giving confusing, contradictory or unconvincing advice, and for mystifying the distinction between reality and appearance: not only is he inconsistent within the Ars itself, but he frequently refers to earlier works, especially the Amores, in ways that prompt us to go back and re-read, either because we recognize an antagonism, or because the poet appears to resolve what seemed to be a riddle elsewhere. In doing so, he prods readers to reflect on a multi-layered series of interrelationships (epitomized by the relation between male and female), extending an experiment in re-reading already finessed in Amores 2.

We might see our headache-inducing interrogations sketched (or caricatured?) at Ars 3.471–2, where Ovid’s puella pores over the missive received from her lover, trying to ‘deduce from his words whether or not he is feigning or true’ (inspice, quodque leges, ex ipsis collige verbis, / fingat an ex animo sollicitusque roget). We do some confused backtracking to the Amores, too, for example at 3.415–16, where Ovid uses the figure of Danae to prove to women that if they’ve got it, they should surely flaunt it: quis Danaen nosset, si semper clausa fuisset, / inque sua turri perlatuisset anus? / ‘who would know Danae, had she always been a prisoner, and became an old woman stuck in her tower?’ Yet at Am.2.19.27ff., as Gibson notes, Ovid argued the opposite case, for keeping your puella in her garret and having her play hard to get (she’s only attractive when she’s a challenge), especially given that Danae did manage to meet a lover without stepping

57 munus can mean specifically sexual gift/favour/service: see e.g. Petron. 87.8, Cat. 61.227, with Adams (1982) 164.
out of doors, when Jupiter himself seduced her. Who hasn’t read their *Amores* as instructed (3.343)? Is this a point at which uneducated women, or women with pretensions to learning who are easily provoked, are bound to be caught out? (You should really aim poetry at both levels of female audience, Ovid advises at 2.279–80). Lines 3.665–6, similarly, seem to nail Ovid’s guilt in *Am.2.7* and 2.8, while also reminding pupils that this is a poet who makes fools of first-time readers,\(^6^0\) *nec nimium vobis formosa ancilla ministret; saepe vicem dominae praebuit illa mihi* / ‘nor let too pretty a slave-girl attend you; she has often played the mistress’ part for me’.

Meanwhile, just as competitive male readers of *Ars 3* are free to sneer at women exposed in all their flaws, something confuses them or shakes their confidence. For instance, while in *Ars 2*, as we’ve seen, men are told that older women are still fertile and fabulous in bed, readers of *Ars 3*.59ff. are warned that they’ll get no attention from lovers when they’re old, and that their fertility runs out all too quickly (*tempus erit, quo tu, quae nunc exclusis amantibus, / frigida deserta nocte iacebis anus, / ‘the time will come when you who now shut out lovers, will pass the night a cold and lonely old woman’ 69–70).\(^6^1\) Which version (if any) do we buy, and what might be the (mixed) motives behind each account? Were men fools to be persuaded by Ovid’s argument in *Ars 2* (especially after warnings about the terrors of male aging at 2.113ff., where a rose always leaves a spiky thorn behind), hooked and blinded by the promise of great sexual technique? Was this just a tactic by rival lover Ovid to divert their attention from all of Rome’s ravishing younger beauties, a trick to get them to bed a Medusa, or to play out an Oedipus tragedy (so closely paralleled by Narcissus) in which they are paired off with women old enough to be their mothers (the mature lady is a *mater* at 2.700)? To what extent does *Ars 3* operate as a revealing mirror in which to re-read *Ars 1* and 2? Or are students safe to assume that advice

\(^{58}\) Gibson (2003) *ad loc*. Gibson also discusses here how, although Ovid seems to promise his female pupils an attractive freedom, he is also teasing them with the suggestion that, if they do put themselves out there in this way, they may well be taken for common street prostitutes. As he argues, ‘the willingness of Ovid’s readers to identify with the *puellae* is being tested here.’ Also see introductory comments at 35–6.

\(^{59}\) There is often opportunity in *Ars 3* for men to hiss and patronize, prompted by potentially double-edged compliments (e.g. 159–60: ‘ah, now kind nature is to you, whose defects may be made good in so many ways’), or by outright insults that sound like whispered aside to a sniggering ‘secret’ readership (e.g. 255–6: ‘women plain and fair come to learn from me – but I always get more ugly ones than beauties!’). And of course, as we have seen, beauty routines gross to watch are satire for male readers (although this could well backfire and kill off all desire, as *Rem.351*–6 confirms: *multa viros nescire decet* / ‘there are many things men are better off not knowing’ 3.229).

\(^{60}\) For discussion of the twists and turns of re-reading these two poems, see Henderson (1991 and 1992).

\(^{61}\) This is the typical taunt of the dumped lover, as Gibson notes (2003) *ad loc.*; cf. Horace, *Odes* 1.25.1ff., Prop. 3.24.31ff., Catull. 8.14ff. On Ovid as rival lover also see Sharrock (1994) especially 1–86.

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given in *Ars* 3 is simply a different breed of bait, transparently designed to coax open that door, and to seduce reluctant women in their prime?

Ovid undermines, or flatters, ‘male’ and ‘female’ readers with equal gall when he tells them, at 1.276, *vir male dissimulat: tectius illa cupidit* / ‘the man dissembles badly; she conceals desire better’, and at 3.31–2: *saepe viri fallunt, tenerae non saepe puellae, / paucaque, si quaeras, crimina fraudis habent* / ‘often men deceive: but tender girls do not; should you inquire, they are rarely charged with cheating’. Although here, suspicious men are alert to the possibility that girls really can and do deceive all they like and get away with it – it is just that they are almost never caught. As Ovid reminds us at 2.515, there is very little to aid lovers (readers), but much to thwart them (*quod iuvat, exiguum, plus est, quod laedat amantes*). Similarly, we can pick up on what at first seems a blatant double-standard between *Ars* 2 and 3 designed to catch the girls off-guard and render them more transparent (2.313 dictates: *si latet, ars prodest* / ‘if art is hidden, it avails’, whereas at 3.397 women are told, *quod latet, ignotum est; ignoti nulla cupidio / ‘what is hidden is unknown; what is unknown no-one desires’). But the instruction to men in *Ars* 2 is itself complicated by passages such as 2.427ff., in which deception, on the contrary, should be exposed: *qui modo celebas monitu tua crimina nostro / flecte iter et monitu detege furta meo* / ‘you who were now concealing your crime, on my instruction, turn your path, and on my advice, uncover your deceit’. The prospect that graduates in *ars amatoria* often (but not always!) say the opposite of what they mean, that their facial expressions and verbal articulations must be read according to a mirror-logic whose reflections never stand still, is fundamental to Ovidian erotics (innocent Corinna tries hard to look guilty at *Am*. 2.19.13–14, and the lover at a banquet talks in code, wishing a girl’s husband luck while cursing under his breath, *Ars* 1.569ff., 601–2). This idea is exploited to its limit by the play-off between the *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*: far from providing the antidote to poisonous *Ars*, the *Remedia* infects its therapy with the stagesets, metaphors, and techniques of seduction, yet also throws the spotlight back on its mirror-text to undercut what seemed to be convincing advice, or to taint it with the memory of passion-killing tips, so that a linear, polarizing reasoning is itself muddied.

Often disharmony between books or passages of the *Ars* is very difficult to gauge, and may even perplex some readers/lovers and not others. At 2.349ff., for example, men are reminded that absence makes the heart grow fonder, and various mythic examples illustrate the point; this absence (like most strategies in the *Ars*) is a nuanced business – it must not be longer than ‘short’, so as not to leave space for rivals (*sed mora tuta brevis* 357). Yet
'short' is a time-length which is never defined (the same strategy worked with exemplar Penelope at 2.355, yet Ulysses, surely, was gone for years, as 3.15 confirms: *est pia Penelope lustris errante duobus* / 'Penelope was faithful, although her husband roamed the world for a decade'). However *Ars* 1.477 has already claimed that perseverance will overcome even Penelope, and cautioned male lovers patiently to endure rivals (*rivalem patienter habe* 2.539) – not that Ovid himself could bear to endure such torture, he admits at 2.549–50. Does the advice at 2.349ff. simply serve both husbands and lovers simultaneously, or chip away at the confidence of both types? It is difficult for male (as for female) readers hooked on this fiction to ever feel smug, when every other line is (or seems) booby-trapped.

At 2.315–36, to give a further example, Ovid instructs on what to do if your mistress falls seriously ill during a bitter autumn: if lovers are attentive, compliant and appear distraught, they stand a good chance of making it into her will if she fails to survive the winter (*in tabulas multis haec via fecit iter 332*). They should ‘make many vows, and all aloud’ (*multa vove, sed cuncta palam 327*), yet this kind of speech act was the undoing of another famous trickster who made her appearance as victim back in *Ars* 1.457ff., when she swore out loud that she would wed Acontius (*littera Cydippen pomo perlata fefellit, / insciaque est verbis capta puella suis* / ‘a letter carried in an apple betrayed Cydippe, and the maid was deceived unawares by her own words’). This was also, of course, Cephalus’ fatal error: if only he hadn’t spoken his thoughts aloud and got caught! As we’ve seen, Ovid’s advice in *Ars* 1.569ff. stressed the importance of covered speech, silent communication, and of letting one’s rivals talk instead. What will Ovid’s lover have promised if his mistress fails to die as planned? Might he have been tempted to talk of marriage, feed her dreams of conjugal bliss (*somnia laeta 2.328*), anything and everything she wanted to hear? The spiteful poet concludes: don’t offer her cups of bitter juices, ‘leave them for your rival to mingle’ (*rivalis misceat illa tuus 2.336*). Yet a lover who follows this advice to the letter might well fall prey to Ovid’s poison pen.

As in the *Metamorphoses*, the theme of fatal misunderstandings (or at least, here, potential misunderstandings) dominates the *Ars Amatoria*, and comes to a head with the tale of Cephalus and Procris at 3.685–768 (also told at *Met*.7.672–862). Ostensibly, the story is designed to warn women
against being oversuspicious, especially when they hear of a rival: sometimes, contrary to everything we’ve been led to expect so far, men are not having affairs (at any rate, not with the woman you imagine). Procris mistakenly believes that when, as she is told, Cephalus calls for the breeze (aura) to refresh him as he sits in a grove, he is beckoning a woman; she is speechless with grief, and rushes to the wood like a Bacchant (one of many in the Ars), thinking she will catch Cephalus red-handed. Sneaking up on him, she hears him repeat his wish and realizes her error just in time, yet when she rushes to embrace him, he thinks he is being attacked by a wild animal, and pierces her breast with an arrow, leaving her to die in his arms. Yet if we have read Ars 1 and 2, far from offering a soothing moral, the tale fuels further distrust of Cephalus’ innocence and highlights the crime of adultery (this is then reemphasized in the version of the myth told in Met. 7, where Aurora does carry Cephalus off, albeit, he swears, against his will: Met. 7.703–4). We have already looked at a similar passage in Ars 2.435ff., where readers were told that passion wanes when a rival (or at least the suspicion of one) does not exist (et, si nulla subest aemula, languet amor 436), and that lovers like nothing more than to provoke jealousy, rage and aggression in their mistresses. I also noted the close verbal parallels between 2.447–50, the sexy portrait of the woman scorned where the existence of a rival is never in question, and 3.699–702, when the ‘false’ report of a rival reaches Procris’ ears.

As well as casting doubt on the credibility of that passage in Ars 2 (do men really want their faces torn by Medusan bitches, or would they be far more likely, like Cephalus, to freak out and hit back if ‘attacked’?), the Procris and Cephalus tale in turn gets re-read when we flick back to the previous book, and when we consider the other surviving ancient accounts of the myth, parts of which seem to seep into or shadow Ovid’s re-make, both here and in Met. 7. When Cephalus repeats his invocation to aura in 3.728 (or the goddess Aurora, pronounced with a cute stammer, or cut off by the wind before eavesdropping ears), does he mean the same thing the second time, and can we not read innuendo in meos releves aestus (‘relieve my heat’

64 Gibson (2003) ad loc. also argues that ‘the temptation to doubt the innocence of Cephalus’ call to aura is strong’ (358).

65 The main sources for the myth, apart from the passages discussed here in Ovid, are Phercydes, FGrH 3F34 (=fr. 34 Fowler) ap.Schol. CMV Hom. Od.11.321; Pseudo-Apollodorus, Bibl.3.15.1; Hygin. Fab.189, 241; Ant.Lib. Met.41; and Servius, Ad Virg. Aen.6.445.

66 At Ars 1.598, Ovid tips off men to make their ‘crafty tongue stumble in stammering talk’ at a dinner party (fac titubet blaeso sub sola lingua sono), as the excuse of drunkenness lets them get away with murder. Compare the echoing charms of female lisping at Ars 3.293–4 (quid cum legitima fraudatur littera voce l blaesaque fit iuo lingua coacta sono).
3.697)? Especially as sexual pleasure puts the wind in a man’s sails at 2.725 (sed neque tu dominam velis maioribus usus / desere ‘but don’t you spread too full a sail, either, and leave your mistress behind’)? Winds are proverbial for their capacity to aid deception by blowing away lovers’ perjuries (e.g. Ars 1.634). In Ars 1.489–90, Ovid instructed men to hide their approaches in cunning ambiguities, ‘lest someone intrude hateful ears to your words’ (neve aliquis verbis odiosas offerat auris 1.489; cf. coniugis ad timidias aliquis male sedulas aures / auditos memori detulit ore sonos 3.699–700): maybe Cephalus is just not cunning enough.

Servius suggests that Cephalus’ constant moaning about aura attracted the attention of the goddess to begin with (she presumably misheard him), as she regularly hunted on Hymettus, and that they then began an affair.67 And as Gibson notes, Aurora is associated through etymology with aura.68 Our suspicions are raised when Ovid’s Cephalus wishes for aura in the first place, given that the grove is already breezy (lenibus impulsae Zephyris auraque salubri / tot generum frondes herbaque summa tremit. / ‘gentle Zephyrs and health-giving breezes sway the varied foliage, and the tips of the grasses tremble’ Ars 3.693–4). As our sources show, Cephalus was a character traditionally known to have been guilty of infidelity: he has already been introduced as a lover of Aurora at Am.1.13.39–40, and in Ars 3 itself (nec Cephalus roseae praeda pudenda deae. / ‘nor is Cephalus a prize that shames the rosy goddess’ 84).69 The verbal ambiguities of Met.7.835ff., where the tale is also told, hint that Cephalus may indeed have been making another attempt to hook up with Aurora on the morning of Procris’ death. In retrospect, even Ovid’s opening comments at Ars 1.43–4 (haec tibi non tenues veniet delapsa per auras; / quaerenda est oculis apta puella tuis / ‘she will not come floating down to you out of thin air – the girl who you have your eye on must be pursued’) read as a pointed joke (don’t think you’ll get as lucky as Cephalus, who only had to mention aura to have a delicious goddess appear at his feet).70

Moreover, this myth constantly thematizes a mutual distrust, competition and misunderstanding between lovers (hence its climactic position at the end of the Ars). There is no innocent party here – both are guilty, and both pay the price for suspicion and infidelity. For while we suspect

67 Servius, Ad Virg. Aen.6.443 (‘Cephalus labor fessus ad locum quendam in silvis ire consueverat et illic ad se recreandum auram vocare, quod cum sape faceret, amorem in se movit Aurorae’).
69 Cf. Hesiod, Theog.986–7, Paus. 1.3.1
70 Instead, Ovid instructs at Ars 1.45ff., she has to be hunted, like a stag, boar, or fish: Cephalus takes this advice (wittingly or not) literally, and treats Procris as a fera (3.733).
Cephalus’ adultery, the notion that Procris is the blameless victim is just as dubious. The daughter of Erechtheus has a shady reputation of her own – she is a wife highly skilled in *ars amatoria* who had many lovers and could be bought, as proven by Cephalus himself, who in some versions of this complex myth (including Ovid’s in *Met.* 7) dressed up as a merchant and succeeded in seducing her. This story of tragic passion begins with Cephalus’ paranoia, not Procris’, and we are reminded that the previous passage in *Ars* 3 has been advocating female deception (616ff.). Moreover, Cephalus’ trick makes of Procris not just a lapsed Penelope, but a Procris, Dido-esque man-hater determined to get her own revenge (she is described as *genus omne perosa virorum*, ‘loathing the whole race of men’ at *Met.* 7.745). Indeed (in the second-century version given by Liberalis, *Met.* 41.6), Procris proceeded to pay back her husband with a disguise of her own, dressing herself up as a male hunting companion equipped with a javelin that never missed its mark and a hunting dog that caught whatever it pursued, which had been given to her by Minos (with whom she had had an affair, also mentioned by Ovid at *Rem.* 463). When Cephalus saw his rival’s advantage, he requested that he sell the magic javelin and dog, even offering half his kingdom in exchange. After repeated refusals, Procris-in-disguise suggested *si utique . . . perstas id possidere, da mihi id quod puere solent dare* (‘if you’re determined to have them, give me that which boys usually give’ Hygin. *Fab.* 189.7), a proposition which can only mean submitting to anal sex (men who prostituted themselves in this way were universally condemned in the ancient world). Cephalus agreed, and in a denouement which mirrors Ovid’s tale in *Ars* 1.689ff., where Achilles puts away weapons and dresses in a woman’s robe to steal into Deidamia’s chamber and rape her, Procris revealed her true identity. Of course, we can never know for sure whether Ovid and Antoninus Liberalis shared the same sources, and how unique the second-century account of Procris’ revenge really is, although the idea that the javelin and dog were acquired in just this way is suggested strongly by Ovid at *Met.* 7.687, where Cephalus

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71 On this also see Green (1979–80).
73 On Procris as a Dido figure in *Ars* 3, see Gibson (2003) ad loc. on 3.684, 713ff. and 737ff.
74 Ant. Lib. 41, Ps. Apollod. 1.15.1; cf. Hom. *Od.* 11.321. When Procris met Minos on Crete, she cured his embarrassing genital problem (he ejaculated snakes, scorpions and millipedes), by fashioning him a goat’s bladder condom, much in the way that Daedalus made a cow-costume for afflicted Pasiphae. Minos gave her the javelin and dog in gratitude. In Apollodorus, as Davidson puts it (1997) 178: ‘Procris is depicted as a promiscuous and venal woman with a penchant for sorcery.’
76 As Green notes (1979–80), this part of the myth casts *Met.* 7.747–56, where Procris brings back a dog and javelin to Cephalus as presents, in a whole new light.
is ‘ashamed to tell at what price he gained’ the spear, a gift from Procris (756), and admits that he too is capable of ‘yielding’ (succumbere) just like his wife did, if offered great enough gifts (749–50). Ovid also alludes here to Procris’ ‘revenge’ (laesum prius ulta pudorem / ‘having sufficiently avenged her outraged feelings . . .’) 751.

In the (ironically romanticized) version told in Met.7, Cephalus’ passive role is suggestively emphasized: Aurora carries him away (rapit 7.704) against his will, and the reminder that Procris’ sister Orithyia was raped by Boreas (7.695) gets us musing about violent, penetrative winds and what it really means for Cephalus to be continually summoning aura (and/or man-eating Aurora). Naturally, the part of the myth covered in Ars 3 happens after this incident, leading some sources to claim that Cephalus was enraged when he spotted Procris in reconciliation mode, and speared her deliberately (just as she, apparently, had promised to ‘spear’ him): 78 it is only later sources that convey the death as accidental. 79 Ovidian metaphor helps propel the joke that Procris dies by her own crime (proving the adage of 1.658: ‘let the woman feel the pain of the wound she first inflicted’), as puel-lae throughout the Ars are referred to as prey to be hunted by well-armed men, and the scene also reenacts Cupid’s routine of spiking his victims and Infecting them with love. Meanwhile, the actions of both Procris and Cephalus together perform the controlled tactic of the poet lover, who when introducing this passage, exclaimed (as if in the character of Procne surprising her husband in the woods) quo feror insanus? quid aperto pectore in hostem / mittor et indicio prodor ab ipse meo? / ‘Where am I borne in my frenzy? Why do I rush with open breast against the foe, to be betrayed by my own evidence?’ (3.667–8), yet went on to address Cephalus in a similar manner: quid facis, infelix?/ ‘what are you doing, luckless one?’ (3.735). When Procris hurled herself at Cephalus, was she, like Ovid, acting the part, and feigning wrath over a rival as the praeceptor advised (dolor et de paelicis fictus 3.677), just for the fun of kissing and making out? 80 And how dumb was Cephalus to pass up that opportunity, and misread the signs? He should have known that Procris’ hysteria was simply proof of her

77 Anderson (1972) ad loc., and many other commentators believe, as Anderson puts it, that ‘this covertly alludes to other details of the myth which Ovid decorously suppresses’. Yet the point is he does not fully suppress them at all, and his politeness is a form of ironic mischief.

78 Pherecydes, FGrH 3F34

79 As well as Ovid, SPs. Apollod.3.15.1; Hygin. Fab.189.9, Servius, Ad Virg. Aen.6.445. But Cephalus certainly suffers a hefty sentence for an ‘accident’: as Ps. Apollod.3.15.1 and Paus.1.37.6 tell us, he was condemned to banishment for life, and retired to Thebes.

80 Especially given the phrase in amplexus ire, at 732, which as Gibson highlights (2003) ad loc., carries the suggestion of sexual union. Cf. Ars 1.770, Met.7.616, 11.228.
adoration (or was that advice to women at 3.675ff. faulty, dangerous, even a trap?). Both Procris and Cephalus are potentially canny performers getting what they really want, and when we allow this passage to be stained by metaphor, the death-scene could read as elegiac revenge or reconciliation (is the violent union and dramatic smooch at lines 743–6 the climax we were missing, or half-missing, at the end of Ars 2?). Similarly, when the story is told again in Met.7, Procris is both a deluded Narcissus figure (7.829–30: she fears a mere nothing, an empty name), and appears as an Echo (a mere vox, 7.843) to Cephalus. And if, either way, Cephalus has the last laugh, his victory comes, manifestly, at the expense of ridicule and shame (plus, he loses the girl in the end). Men’s triumph in Ars 3, if we can call it that, is sour and double-edged at best. In his recent analysis of this episode in Ars 3, Gibson is rightly suspicious of the snares Ovid seems to set his readers, asking, ‘Does the myth really suit the point the praeceptor wishes to make about women’s hasty reactions? In this myth two people are hasty . . .’ Yet he concludes that we are nevertheless ‘invited to admire the ingenuity with which the poet makes the tale fit the lesson’. On the contrary, I suggest, Ovid’s cleverness lies in the slippery way in which he manipulates and disorients both male and female audiences. Not only does this tale never quite fit its lesson: it also calls into question what lesson we were meant to grasp to begin with.

This rollercoaster reading of the Cephalus and Procris tale epitomizes the experience of reading the Ars, and of playing the game of seduction more generally. For the aura that charms Cephalus and leads to Procris’ deadly error blows randomly throughout this text, propelling, delaying and sometimes threatening to wreck Ovid’s ship of poetry/love. Both male and female lovers fear that aura will ruin their relationship (‘when the new graft is growing in the green bark, if any breeze shakes the weakling shoot, it will fall’ 2.649–50), just as flying per aetherias auras (2.59) is lethal for the young Icarus, who also falls, from the sky (decidit, cadens ‘pater, o pater, auferor!’ inquit 2.91). While Ovid wishes, like Cephalus, for a light breeze (dum sumus in portu, provehat aura levis 3.100, straight after the mention of Aurora’s passion for Cephalus in 3.84), for women too, knowing how to manipulate aura is ars itself, a concept which gets spelt out in the accusative auras: haec movet arte latus tunicisque fluentibus auras / accipit / ‘this woman sways her hips with skill, and welcomes the breeze with flowing robe’ (3.302). Students of the art of love are at the mercy of aura, and can only passively

81 Compare Green’s conclusion (1979–80) 24, that the story shows ‘a husband should be allowed his solecisms in peace’ and that ‘ars remained a male prerogative’.
spread their sails and hope for the best (quaque ferent aurae, vela secunda dato! 2.64; cf. sed propera, ne vela cadant auraeque residant / ‘but hurry, lest the sails sink and the breezes fail’ 1.373). Yet this is a fickle force which does not always assist ‘perplexed vessels’ (nec semper dubias adiuvat aura rates 2.514). Ovid’s arousing but unpredictable breeze becomes a loaded token of readers’/lovers’ insecurity, ensuring that the outcome of his staged contest between books and genders is ever postponed, blown back onto elegiac seas.