MYTHOLOGICAL EXEMPLA IN OVID'S *ARS AMATORIA*

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ONE of the most conspicuous features of Ovid's didactic style in the *Ars Amatoria* is the use of short mythological paradigms to reinforce his amatory precepts.[1] Although scholars have frequently mentioned this phenomenon,[2] a detailed discussion of the real function of exempla in the poem has not as yet been undertaken:[3] the present article attempts to fill this gap. To begin with, I will classify the various types of exemplum employed by Ovid, concentrating attention on their superficial purpose as a form of argumentation. Selected examples will then be discussed in order to determine whether the effect that they produce in their context is consistent with their ostensible function.

Of the sixty-six brief allusions to myth in the *Ars,* four-fifths serve as examples to corroborate the poet's argument.[4] In rhetorical terms, these may be classified as a variant of the παράδειγμα (exemplum), though in both theory and oratorical practice the paradigm from history is naturally more frequent.[5]

Although ample precedent exists in Greek and Latin poetry for the corroborative use of myth,[6] its prevalence in the *Ars Amatoria* is best viewed as an extension of a feature which was already common in the poetry of Propertius and had been taken over by Ovid in his *Amores* and *Heroides*. Apart from the numerous cases in these earlier elegies where myths take the form of a comparison between the poet's *puella* and the heroines of mythology, or between his own situation and that of a mythical character, exempla are frequently employed for purposes of argumentation.

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1. A distinction should be drawn between brief exempla and longer mythological narratives (cf. L. P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* [Cambridge, 1955], pp. 122–23). The latter, while in many cases corroborating the argument, are also to be viewed in the light of the digressions commonly found in didactic poetry (see A. S. Hollis, "The *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*," in *Ovid,* ed. J. W. Binns [London, 1973], p. 90). They are therefore not included in the following discussion.

2. E.g., H. Renz, *Mythologische Beispiele in Ovids erotischer Elegie* (Ph.D. diss., Tübingen, 1935); Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled,* p. 122; E. de Saint Denis, "Le malicieux Ovide," in *Ovidiana,* ed. N. I. Herescu (Paris, 1958), pp. 194–99; G. Luck, *The Latin Love Elegy*[2] (London, 1969), p. 171.

3. See, briefly, B. Effe, *Dichtung und Lehre,* Zetemata 69 (Munich, 1977), pp. 246–48, who recognizes that the argumentative function of the exempla is not their true function. For the difference between the real and ostensible function of two exempla in Propertius, see J. H. Gaisser, "Mythological *Exempla* in Propertius 1. 2 and 1. 15," *AJP* 98 (1977): 381–91.

4. The remainder either take the form of comparisons between the poet and mythical characters (e.g., 1. 5–6, 11–16; 2. 5–8, 735–38, 741) or are used to epitomize qualities such as chastity (e.g., 1. 477–78) or beauty (e.g., 2. 109–10).

5. For the παράδειγμα as an example from history, cf. J. Martin, *Antike Rhetorik* (Munich, 1974), p. 119; but see Quint. *Inst.* 5. 11. 18.

6. See H. V. Canter, "The Mythological Paradigm in Greek and Latin Poetry," *AJP* 54 (1933): 201–24.

When urging a certain mode of behavior, for instance, the poet often cites the conduct of a mythological figure as a model to be emulated (e.g., Propertius 1. 1. 9–16, 2. 15–22; Ovid *Am.* 2. 9. 7–8, *Her.* 4. 93–100). In other cases, by contrast, the fate of a character in mythology serves as a warning against following a certain course of action (e.g., Propertius 1. 20. 17–50; Ovid *Am.* 2. 2. 43–46, *Her.* 5. 105–6).[7]

In the second poem on Corinna's abortion (*Am.* 2. 14), the poet varies his technique by casting the exemplum in the form of a hypothesis. The argument against abortion is presented thus: "if the women of old had all acted in this manner, the human race would have become extinct" (9–12); the lesson is then driven home by a series of exempla, culminating in the daring "si Venus Aenean gravida temerasset in alvo, / Caesaribus tellus orba futura fuit" (17–18).

A third use of exempla—to corroborate a proposition—is well represented in both Propertius and Ovid's *Amores*. At Propertius 2. 3. 51–54 and *Amores* 1. 9. 23–24, for example, mythological paradigms serve to verify a general truth. In the *Amores*, however, a more complex function is sometimes performed by the exempla—and here Ovid anticipates his practice in the *Ars Amatoria*. In these cases the thesis which the myths illustrate is stated not merely as a comment by the poet on a theme such as "militat omnis amans," but is part of an address to some third person designed to persuade him to undertake a certain course of action. In other words, this type of exemplum combines the functions of offering a model of behavior and reinforcing a statement. At *Amores* 1. 8. 47–48, to take a poem in which the preceptive style of the *Ars Amatoria* is foreshadowed, the *lena*'s suggestion, that Penelope's real motive for testing the suitors with the bow was to size up their sexual prowess, corroborates her argument that *rugae,* the external sign of chastity, are inevitably a cover for *crimina.* Although this is the immediate function of the exemplum, in the broader context of the poem the argument that no woman is chaste at heart is advanced as a means of persuading Corinna to shake off false modesty and accept the *dives amator.* Thus the example of Penelope also serves indirectly as a pattern of behavior for Corinna.

The *Ars Amatoria* contains fifty-two exempla of the types under discussion.[8] The ostensible aim of the vast majority is to offer examples of behavior to be imitated by the student of love. Occasionally, the fate of a character serves as a warning (e.g., at 1. 593 the downfall of the Centaur Eurytion illustrates the dangers of excessive drinking; cf. 3. 457–60 and 505–6). Third, a small number of cases may be isolated in which myths support a premise, such as the unrestrained violence of female passion

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7. For these two uses of myth in Propertius, see G. Lieberg, "Die Mythologie des Properz in der Forschung und die Idealisierung Cynthias," *RhM* 112 (1969): 328–29.

8. The following is a complete list: 1. 53–54, 247–48, 283–340, 363–64, 441, 457–58, 509–12, 593, 625–26, 633–36, 647–54, 679–80, 713–14, 731–32, 743–46, 761–62; 2. 103–4, 185–92, 217–22, 239–40, 249–50, 353–56, 359–72, 381–86, 399–408, 605–6, 643–46, 699–700, 709–16; 3. 11–22, 33–40, 83–86, 107–12, 138, 142, 143, 155–58, 189–90, 191–92, 311–14, 321–26, 429–30, 439–40, 457–60, 505–6, 517–24, 631–32, 654, 759–60, 775, 777–78, 783–84.

(1. 283–340). But since the basic format of the poem is the presentation of advice, it is not surprising that in most instances where exempla support a statement, the secondary function of providing a pattern of behavior to be followed or avoided is also present.[9] The example of Clytemnestra (2. 399–408) illustrates the contention that a wronged woman will take her just revenge by committing an act of infidelity on her own part,[10] while at the same time it reinforces the precept (2. 389 "ludite, sed furto celetur culpa modesto") by offering Agamemnon's fate as a warning: it was his failure to keep Cassandra hidden from Clytemnestra that (according to Ovid) led to his murder.[11]

The exemplum taking the form of a hypothesis, noted above in *Amores* 2. 14, is found three times in the *Ars Amatoria*, on each occasion in the context of a warning: at 2. 103–4 lovers are advised to avoid the use of magic, since if it were effective, Medea could have held on to Jason and Circe to Ulysses; and at 3. 759–60 girls are advised to practice moderation at banquets—Paris would have regretted carrying off Helen if he had seen her wolfing down her dinner.[12]

Finally, Ovid sometimes varies his use of exempla by presenting a contrast between the actions of mythical characters and the precept being enunciated. For instance, the potential lover in search of a girl friend is assured that he will not have to travel far afield, as did Perseus and Paris, in order to attain his object (1. 53–54), while modern girls are urged not to follow the example of the past with respect to the doctrine of *cultus,* for its neglect by such heroines as Andromache and Tecmessa may be explained by the fact that the men of those days were also *inculti* (3. 107–12). In these passages the poet imagines a possible argument against his precepts, in the form of mythological exempla which counteract them, and forestalls such objections by attributing the behavior of the mythical characters in question to the difference in circumstances between mythical times and modern-day Rome.[13]

So far, the mythological exempla used by Ovid have been discussed purely from the viewpoint of their ostensible function. In the *Ars Amatoria,* however, the effect produced on the reader by each exemplum differs sharply from its superficial purpose, and it is now time to consider the nature of this effect, together with the methods employed by Ovid to achieve it.

9. Cf. the example from *Amores* 1. 8 just discussed.

10. 2. 397–98: "laesa Venus iusta arma movet telumque remittit / et, modo quod questa est, ipse querare facit."

11. Euripides (*El.* 1036–38) also makes the bringing home of Cassandra an excuse for Clytemnestra's behavior. Ovid may, in addition, have been influenced by the Deianira story (as portrayed in Sophocles' *Trachiniae;* cf. also Ov. *Her.* 9. 119–36) when introducing the motif of a series of mistresses, the last of whom is brought home in front of the wife.

12. In the third case, 3. 439–40, Ovid's injunction to girls to believe his warning against dandies ("vix mihi credetis, sed credite") is reinforced by the statement: "Troia maneret, / praeceptis Priami si foret usa sui" (for a plausible solution to the textual difficulties involved here, see G. P. Goold, "Amatoria Critica," *HSCP* 69 [1965]: 85–87).

13. Cf. also 3. 517–24 and 1. 743–46; in the latter, the possible objection is answered with a type of ἀδύνατον: "si quis idem sperat, iacturas poma myricas / speret et e medio flumine mella petat" (747–48).

In the hands of an orator, the exemplum was a straightforward method of argumentation, the aim of which was to lend credibility to the speaker's case; its effectiveness was dependent on the closeness of the parallel between the exemplum and the point it was designed to illustrate.[14] The same is true of the majority of mythological exempla used by Greek and Roman writers of epic, tragic, lyric, and didactic poetry. So, for example, when the chorus in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* (602–38) use a series of three myths to illustrate the evils of female passion, their aim of corroborating the argument is fulfilled because the examples chosen are not only striking instances of female passion and its results, but also provide an apt parallel with the situation which provoked the chorus' comments: the behavior of Clytemnestra. Like her, the three cases cited—Scylla, Althea, and the women of Lemnos—are all females whose passions (love, anger, and jealousy, respectively) are so extreme that they are led by them to commit atrocious and unnatural crimes: the betrayal of father and country, the murder of a son, or of a husband.

Such exempla differ strikingly from those used in the *Ars,* since almost all the latter fail to fulfill their ostensible, corroborative function, either because the myths themselves are not treated seriously, or because they are essentially inappropriate to the context. In both cases, the superficially serious purpose of the exempla is intentionally undercut by the intrusion of wit.[15]

In discussing the treatment of exempla in the *Ars Amatoria,* it will be convenient to group the myths according to the various methods employed by the poet to achieve a witty effect. Three categories emerge: (1) myths in which no erotic element is present; (2) myths concerned wholly or principally with erotic themes: this second class may be subdivided into (a) those that offer a true parallel to the Ovidian context and (b) those that are only superficially appropriate.

NON-EROTIC MYTHS

In several cases, wit is expressed by the incongruity of applying serious epic themes to trivial erotic situations, such as comparing the seduction of a girl with the capture of Troy (1. 363–64),[16] or the bribing of the girl's *custos* with offerings made to appease Jupiter (3. 654). The efficacy of *preces* to win a girl is demonstrated by the exemplum of Priam, who succeeded by this means in persuading Achilles to return the body of Hector (1. 441). In this last example, the specific myth is followed by a general illustration, "flectitur iratus voce rogante deus" (442), where there is a play on the two senses of *rogo* (asking a god for a favor and asking for sexual favors).[17]

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14. Cf. Martin, *Antike Rhetorik,* p. 120 (quoting Neocles), and Anaxim. *Rhet.* 8. 1. 1429a22.

15. A certain number of precedents for the witty treatment of exempla are to be found in elegy: e.g., Prop. 2. 8, 18B, 22A. 25–34; Tib. 2. 3. 11–28; Ov. *Am.* 1. 7. 7–10, 31, 1. 8. 47–48, 1. 9. 33–40, 2. 14. 13–18.

16. Cf. 1. 478 and, for a Propertian precedent, 2. 14. 1–8.

17. *Rogo* in the latter sense is common in elegy; for examples, see R. Pichon, *Index Verborum Amatoriorum* (Paris, 1902), p. 254. A. S. Hollis, *Ovid: "Ars amatoria" Book 1* (Oxford, 1977) ad 441, compares Hor. *Epod.* 17. 11–18 for the use of a "grandiose *exemplum* in a trivial context."

Finally, the exemplum of Thrasius and Perillus (1. 647–54) deserves comment. In the first place, there is a witty incongruity in comparing the gruesome fates of the two characters with the deception of women: while the words *necis* and *perire* (656) are apt enough in the context of the myths, they are an obvious exaggeration when applied to the punishment Ovid has in mind for *puellae* (658 "exemplo doleat femina laesa suo").

In addition, Ovid's use of a variant of the tradition involves an element of irony. In the usual version of the tales, the emphasis was not on the deaths of the *artifices,* but on the tyrants, Busiris and Phalaris, who put their devices to use.[18] In transferring attention to Thrasius and Perillus,[19] Ovid not only ignores the tyrants' other victims, but also exonerates them from blame in connection with the deaths of the two *artifices,* on the grounds that "iustus uterque fuit" (655). Given the traditional view of their barbarity, the phrase is singularly ironical; the irony mounts when we consider that Ovid's male pupils who are to administer justice to the *puellae* are by implication compared with the infamous pair.[20]

MYTHS ON EROTIC THEMES

Myths used appropriately. Only a small minority of the erotic myths employed by Ovid are suited, as they stand, to the point they are meant to illustrate; in these cases their effectiveness as proofs is undercut by an element of wit derived from incongruity.

At 1. 633–36, for example, Jupiter's swearing of false oaths is both an example for lovers to follow and an *aition* for the proverbial vanity of lovers' oaths.[21] It is probable here that Ovid had in mind Tibullus' lines on the same topic (1. 4. 21–24):

> nec iurare time: veneris periuria venti
>   inrita per terras et freta summa ferunt.
> gratia magna Iovi: vetuit Pater ipse valere,
>   iurasset cupide quidquid ineptus amor

The similarities between the two passages are obvious, but it is the points of divergence which highlight the effect that Ovid is striving to obtain, that is, to bring out the incongruity between Jupiter's two roles, as almighty king of heaven, and as habitual adulterer.[22]

Tibullus begins with the commonplace notion that the *periuria veneris*

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18. For Busiris, cf. Cic. *Rep.* 3. 9. 15; Virg. *G.* 3. 5; Hyg. *Fab.* 31. 2, 56; Serv. ad *Aen.* 8. 299. For Phalaris, Pind. *Pyth.* 1. 95; Cic. *Verr.* 4. 33. 73, *Pis.* 18. 42; and cf. *RE* 19. 1650–51 s.n. "Phalaris"; A. Otto, *Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer* (Leipzig, 1890), pp. 277–78.

19. Probably following Callimachus' *Aitia;* cf. Hollis, *"Ars amatoria,"* on 647–56 and his appendix 4.

20. An additional element of irony is discernible, in that Busiris and Phalaris were both eventually killed by the same method they had used for others (Hyg. *Fab.* 31. 2; Serv. ad *Aen.* 8. 299 [Busiris]; Heraclid Pont. *Frag. Hist.* 2, p. 233; Cic. *Nat. d.* 3. 82; Ov. *Ib.* 437 [Phalaris]); so too in Book 3 (491–92, 611–58) the tables are turned on the men. It cannot, however, be stated with certainty that Ovid intended such irony to be felt, since the third book may not have been part of the original plan of the work (cf. Hollis, *"Ars amatoria,"* pp. xii–xiii).

21. On lovers' oaths, see R. G. M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: "Odes," Book 2* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 122–23 (ad 2. 8).

22. See B. Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet*[2] (Cambridge, 1970), chap. 4 (esp. pp. 102–8, 122–27) for a good discussion of the incongruity of *maiestas* vs. *amor* in the *Met.;* cf. also Prop. 2. 22A. 25–28.

are carried away by the winds.[23] Jupiter is not introduced until the second couplet, where the origin of the invalidity of lovers' oaths—Jupiter's false oath to Juno in connection with Io—is merely hinted at.[24] In the Ovidian passage, by contrast, Jupiter appears in the first line, and it is he who gives the orders to the winds to carry away the *periuria amantum*.[25] The use of *iubet,* in combination with the detail *ex alto* and the epithet *Aeolios* (which might remind the reader of Virgil *Aeneid* 1. 65–66: "Aeole (namque tibi divum pater atque hominum rex / et mulcere dedit fluctus et tollere vento)"), results in an emphasis, in lines 633–34, on Jupiter's position as king of heaven. The second couplet offers a contrasting picture of Jupiter as the lecherous adulterer, forever attempting to hide his infidelities from his suspicious wife. This effect is achieved partly by the explicit mention of Juno, which recalls Jupiter's marital problems arising from her jealousy, but especially by changing the usual story of a single perjury, in the case of Io, to make Jupiter's perjuries habitual (*solebat*); this evokes the god's numerous well-known love affairs, thereby effectively underlining his role as adulterer.

A second, shorter, example in which wit is derived from the incongruous juxtaposition of the two aspects of Jupiter's character is 1. 713–14. Here the exemplum ("Iuppiter ad veteres supplex heroidas ibat; / corrupit magnum nulla puella Iovem") demonstrates that the man should take the initiative. As Hollis comments, the idea of a mythical heroine trying to seduce Jupiter is intentionally ridiculous; this is underlined by the use of *magnum,* a reminder of his position as king of the gods.[26] Further, the use of *supplex* in the first line introduces an amusing paradox: normally it is the god who is approached by suppliants, so that the two roles of Jupiter involve a complete inversion of behavior.

In several cases characters are placed by Ovid in positions which are not made explicit in the normal versions of the myth, and which stand in witty contrast to their accepted role. The most notorious instances picture Homeric heroes engaging in sexual acts. The exemplum of Milanion and Atalanta at 3. 775–76 may have been influenced by a work of art;[27] but in the following example of Hector and Andromache, the incongruity between their usual role as a warrior and his wife and their new role as a pair of lovers is underlined by the language used, the sexual act of κελητίζειν being expressed in highly poetic terms (*Thebais nupta* of Andromache, and *Hectoreo equo*).

23. On Tibullus 1. 4. 21, see K. F. Smith, *The Elegies of Albius Tibullus* (New York, 1913), ad loc.; to his list may be added Catull. 64. 59, 142.

24. Smith, *Elegies,* cites Hesiod frag. 187 Rzach (who attributes it to the *Aegimius*) = frag. 124 Merkelbach-West (part of the *Catalogue of Women*).

25. A combination of Tibullus and Propertius 2. 16. 47–48 ("non semper placidus periuros ridet amantis / Iuppiter . . .").

26. *"Ars amatoria,"* ad 714; cf. the exemplum of Hercules and Omphale (2. 217–22), where Ovid makes much of the incongruity between Hercules as lover and as heroic figure.

27. A 1st century wall-painting from Pompeii shows an unnamed couple in this position (see M. Grant, *Erotic Art in Pompeii* [London, 1975], p. 153). That Milanion and Atalanta themselves were depicted in art is attested by Suetonius (*Tib.* 44. 2); cf. also Ov. *Am.* 3. 2. 29–30: "talia Milanion Atalantes crura fugacis / optavit manibus sustinuisse suis."

The exempla of Hector and Andromache and of Achilles and Briseis are treated in a similar manner at 2. 709–16. The contrast between Hector as a warrior and a lover is brought out explicitly in 710 and to a lesser extent in 709, by the use of *fortissimus*. Similarly, Achilles is called *magnus* (711) while engaging in intercourse with Briseis (who is described by the high-sounding *capta Lyrneside*);[28] and the juxtaposition of *hoste* and *torum* in the next line also underlines his dual role. The same *victrices manus* which he used against the Trojans are now employed for a sexual purpose (cf. 707–8).[29]

Myths inappropriate to their context. First, the exemplum of Paris at 1. 247–48 may be considered. The fact that Paris' judgment of the goddesses took place in broad daylight is adduced to support the advice that lamplight, in combination with wine, does not provide a reliable guide to a woman's appearance. As it is presented by Ovid, the exemplum is appropriate enough on the surface, since it shares with the argument an essential element, the judging of female beauty. But when the usual frame of reference of the myth is taken into consideration, it becomes apparent that this seeming resemblance is false: in the traditional version of the myth, Paris appears as judge of a beauty contest; Ovid's "judgment," by contrast, involves the sizing up of a potential girl friend. In order for the myth to appear relevant, at least superficially, Ovid forges an artificial link between the myth and a context which is essentially alien to it. This he does by selecting an irrelevant detail not made explicit in traditional versions of the story, the fact that the judgment took place in daylight.[30] The incongruity between the normal context of the myth and the new context to which it is applied results in a witty modernization of the mythical characters: Paris appears in the role of an elegiac lover weighing the relative merits of three *puellae;*[31] in other words, the motivation behind his actions has been altered.[32]

At 1. 51–56, the Roman lover, with any number of girls to choose from at home, is contrasted with Perseus and Paris, who obtained their women from abroad. In this case, Ovid links an inappropriate pair of examples to the argument by viewing the myths from a novel angle and, in the case of Andromeda and Perseus, by stressing a usually insignificant aspect of the story, the difference in their nationalities.[33] In the traditional version of the myth, Perseus' journey abroad was undertaken not to look for a

28. Cf. also the elevated language of 714.

29. In 708 the use of *spicula* anticipates the theme of war. The interplay of love and war in the passage is all the more effective because it is an extension of the elegiac topos of the lover as soldier (cf. *Am.* 1. 9. 33–36, where the same *exempla* are used).

30. Paris is depicted on vases as a rustic playing music when approached by the goddesses (cf. T. C. W. Stinton, *Euripides and the Judgement of Paris* [London, 1965], p. 28): presumably, then, the encounter is in the daytime. But in a fragment of Pindar (*P. Oxy.* 2451. 14 = Snell³ frag. 6ᵃ) the judgment takes place at night.

31. For epigrams on the theme (in a somewhat coarser vein), cf. *Anth. Pal.* 5. 35, 36. Paris' words to Venus, "vincis utramque, Venus" (248), would be appropriate enough if spoken to a *puella,* but seem rather casual and disrespectful as an address to a goddess.

32. For elegiac precedents, cf. Prop. 2. 8. 29–38; Ov. *Am.* 1. 8. 47–48.

33. For a similar stress on Andromeda's nationality, cf. *Anth. Pal.* 5. 132. 7–8.

girl friend, but to kill Medusa and bring back her head;[34] in the Ovidian context, Perseus becomes an eager young man who, because of a shortage of girls in his own city, is obliged to travel as far as Ethiopia to find one.

In the case of Helen and Paris, the difference in nationality and Paris' journey undertaken specifically in search of Helen are, of course, integral to the tradition. Nevertheless, here too Ovid changes the motivation to some extent: it is suggested by the context that Paris was unable to find a girl in Troy and had to travel to Greece in search of one;[35] yet, traditionally, he already had a mistress at home (Oenone) and went to Greece, not in a vague quest for a girl friend, but in response to a specific promise from Aphrodite.[36]

Radical alteration of characters' motives also occurs at 2. 353–56. Here three examples are used to illustrate the theme that "absence makes the heart grow fonder": Phyllis, Penelope, and Laodamia. The play of wit in this case is at Ovid's own expense, for the very aspect of the mythical tradition which is emphasized—the reactions of each heroine to her lover's absence—had received its most detailed treatment in his own *Heroides*.[37] In that work, as elsewhere, the three heroines appear as women bereft of their men: their feelings prior to the separation can only be surmised. One would not normally give the matter thought, but the most natural inference is that the women's excessive grief provides evidence of the depths of their passion before the departure of their lovers.[38] Ovid, on the other hand, would have us believe that it was the men's absence which occasioned such feelings on the part of the heroines; in fact, in the case of Phyllis (and, by implication, of Penelope and Laodamia), the hero's presence affected her only moderately. Furthermore, the exempla illustrate the precept that it is wise to absent oneself deliberately for a time (*da requiem*): is Ovid reinterpreting the absence of the men in question as a purposeful attempt on their part to fan the flame of love? This certainly seems to be the significance of the adjective *sollers* (355): on the surface it is an appropriate epithet for Ulysses;[39] but in context it also implies that he is a skilled lover who realizes the value of a period of separation.[40]

The exemplum of Danae at 3. 631–32 could be an apt enough illustration of the futility of setting a guard on women, except that it is the passage's point that a *custos* may be eluded if the girl is sufficiently eager. In the traditional myth, of course, Danae is one of the many innocent

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34. He accidentally comes across Andromeda on the way back. The story is found in Euripides' *Andromeda* (Nauck², 392) and elsewhere (see Roscher *Lex.* s.n. "Perseus," 1993–2060).

35. Note that Paris and Helen are not named, but are called *vir Phrygius* and *Graia puella:* thus the important point, the difference in their nationalities, is stressed; this is further brought out by the juxtaposition of *Phrygio* and *Graia*.

36. Cf. Stinton, *Euripides,* pp. 51–63; Roscher *Lex.* s.n. "Paris," 1586–92.

37. Numbers 2 (Phyllis), 1 (Penelope), and 13 (Laodamia).

38. This could certainly be inferred from *Her.* 2. 65: "sum decepta tuis et amans et femina verbis."

39. For *sollers* used of Odysseus in a serious context, cf. Ov. *Pont.* 4. 14. 35, and compare the Homeric πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς.

40. Cf. H. Jacobson, *Ovid's "Heroides"* (Princeton, 1974), p. 273, n. 101. Further wit is expressed in the advice which follows immediately—"sed mora tuta *brevis* . . ." (357)!

victims of Jupiter; in order to fit the exemplum into the context, Ovid omits the role played by the god and concentrates the blame solely on Danae: "hunc tamen illa *suo crimine* fecit avum" (632).

At 2. 643–46, the exempla of Perseus and Andromeda and of Hector and Andromache illustrate the precept, "parcite . . . vitia exprobrare puellis" (641). The first of these centers on a detail not usually made explicit—the color of Andromeda's skin—which is extracted by inference from the tradition, where she appears as the daughter of the king of Ethiopia. A similar phenomenon may lie behind the second example, although it is difficult to detect any detail in other accounts of Andromache from which it could be inferred that she was excessively tall.[41] On the other hand, since the novelty of Ovid's treatment of myths lies essentially in reinterpretation of the existing tradition rather than in the invention of entirely new facts, it is possible that he was following here some Hellenistic source of which we have no knowledge.[42]

In both examples, as well, the myths are modernized, so that Perseus and Hector are made to act the part of modern-day lovers. In the first place, Andromeda's dark skin and Andromache's height, factors which are completely irrelevant in the normal versions of the myths, become part of the topos, common in erotic poetry, of faults which the man in love overlooks:[43] thus Perseus and Hector, as typical lovers, are represented as turning a blind eye to these *vitia*. But in keeping with Ovid's particular view of love (expressed in line 642: "*utile* quae multis dissimulasse fuit"), the implied motivation is not what one might naturally infer: Hector and Perseus did not overlook the faults of their girls because as lovers they were blind to them,[44] but in a conscious effort to put up with something essentially disagreeable to them.

In the five instances of inappropriate exempla so far discussed, their witty effect involves reducing heroic characters to the level of contemporary elegiac lovers. Several other examples might be mentioned,[45] but it may be interesting, in concluding these remarks, to examine a case in which the myth serves a somewhat different purpose.

The use of the Milanion-myth as an illustration of *obsequium* (2. 185–92) is unsurprising, and might seem, at first glance, a straightforward exemplum, well suited to its context. In this case, the precepts which follow provide the surprise, and the function of the myth becomes apparent. Elements of wit are, to be sure, not entirely absent in the myth itself: witness the use of *subcubuit*, which is almost certainly intended as

41. Except, perhaps, in the etymology of her name, and the fact that it was also the name of an Amazon (Schol. Hom. *Il.* 3. 189; John Tzetz. *Posth.* 182).

42. Or perhaps, as P. Brandt, *De arte amatoria libri tres* (Leipzig, 1902), suggests (ad loc.), he was influenced by the stage (Ennius' *Andromache?*). See H. D. Jocelyn, *The Tragedies of Ennius* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 253 (a comment by Cicero, *Att.* 4. 15. 6, on a small actor who played Andromache has more point if her excessive height was notorious); cf. Juvenal 6. 503.

43. Cf. Pl. *Rep.* 5. 474D–E, Lucr. 4. 1160–69, Hor. *Sat.* 1. 3. 38–40.

44. The traditional lover is blinded by his *furor* (cf. esp. Prop. 3. 24). The Ovidian lover, retaining his sanity and rationality, is well aware of his beloved's faults.

45. E.g., 2. 103–4, 249–50; 3. 107–12, 155–58, 189–90, 429–30.

a double entendre,[46] and the reference to Cupid's bow and arrows (192 "sed tamen hoc arcu notior alter erat").[47] Nevertheless, the function of the myth in the context is to establish a frame of associations connected with the traditional elegiac concept of *obsequium*. Recalling, in its details, the first poem of Propertius, it points also to Tibullus 1. 4, where the carrying of hunting nets is one of the *labores* that the lover must be prepared to undergo.[48] In this way, the reader is led to expect that the *obsequium* spoken of in 179–84 is of this same type, and thus the following lines 193–242 come as a complete surprise. Instead of urging his pupils to follow Milanion's example, Ovid presents his precepts in the form of a contrast, emphasized by the placement of *non te* at the beginning of line 193: Milanion may have had to undertake *labores* to win Atalanta, but the Ovidian lover will not be required to do so. For him, *obsequium* means no more than agreeing with the girl, letting her win at dice, and so on. The full significance of the exemplum in the passage is now apparent: the novelty of Ovid's interpretation of *obsequium* is brought out by juxtaposing it with the serious elegiac view of it embodied in the Milanion-myth,[49] the wit being underlined by an implicit contrast between the heroic and dangerous tasks undertaken by Milanion and the trivial, everyday situations faced by the Ovidian lover.

The above discussion has, it is hoped, demonstrated how the mythological exempla employed so frequently throughout the *Ars Amatoria* make a major contribution to the wit of the poem. But this function of the exempla does not exist in a vacuum: it may also be related to the broader theme of Ovid's didactic persona. One of the basic ingredients in the poem is the incongruity between the poet's assumed role as serious teacher of an *ars* and his constant "mocking of his own pretensions."[50] The mythological exempla may be seen to contribute to this process: by employing what is normally a straightforward rhetorical device of argumentation, the poet reinforces his persona as Professor of Love, only to undermine immediately the seriousness of that role by ironically[51] treating the exempla in an essentially witty fashion.[52]

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46. For *subcumbo* in a sexual sense, cf. Varro *Rust*. 2. 10. 9; Catull. 111. 3; Ov. *Fast*. 2. 810; Petron. 126. The notoriety of obscene pictures of Atalanta and Milanion (cf. n. 27 above) lends weight to this interpretation.

47. Contrast the more pathetic words of Propertius: "ille etiam Hylaei percussus vulnere rami / saucius Arcadiis rupibus ingemuit" (1. 1. 13–14).

48. Tib. 1. 4. 49–50. In addition, the analogies from nature that precede the exemplum (with the anaphora of *obsequio*) are reminiscent of an earlier passage in the poem (17–20), both in style and subject matter.

49. The Milanion myth was one of the traditional παραδείγματα of the *obsequium*-motif (cf. A. L. Wheeler, "Erotic Teaching in Roman Elegy and the Greek Sources. Part II," *CP* 6 [1911]: 62–63).

50. To borrow a phrase from E. J. Kenney ("Nequitiae Poeta," in *Ovidiana*, p. 201).

51. For an earlier ironic use of exempla by Ovid, cf. *Her*. 4. 93–100, where the mock-serious treatment of Phaedra's character may be viewed as a precursor of Ovid's persona in the *Ars;* cf. Jacobson, *Ovid's "Heroides,"* p. 155.

52. The above article is a revised version of a chapter in my Toronto Ph.D. thesis, "Studies in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*" (1979); I would like to acknowledge the help of Professors R. J. Tarrant and K. F. Quinn.