

## AMORES 1.3 AND DUPLICITY AS A WAY OF LOVE\*

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In 1.3, the very first poem of the *Amores* that concerns a girl, Ovid declares his material poverty and modest social status redeemed by faithfulness and fame-conferring poetic talent. At first glance, this appears to be nothing more than a familiar combination of stock elegiac topoi; indeed, Wilfried Stroh, most recently, has pronounced it altogether thematically derivative:

So hat die Elegie am.1.3, das Gedicht nach der 'Schablone,' gerade weil sie so unoriginell ist, eine Schlüsselstellung in den *Amores*. Der Dichter nimmt darin das Programm seiner Vorgänger auf, freilich—nur noch zum Schein. Dass es wirklich nur Schein ist, darauf soll der Leser in am.3, 12 gestossen werden. Die in am.1.3 übernommene und erneuerte Fiktion markiert sich hier selber als Fiktion indem ihre notwendigen Konsequenzen gezeigt werden. Die oft vertretene Auffassung, Ovid sage in diesem Gedicht, man dürfe seinen Worten nicht glauben, ist richtig und falsch zugleich. Falsch ist sie nach dem Wortsinn, richtig ist sie in gewisser Weise nach der gedanklichen Konsequenz.<sup>1</sup>

He says that only the retrospective viewpoint of *Am.* 3.12, where the

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<sup>1</sup> *Die Römische Liebeselegie als Werbende Dichtung* (Amsterdam 1971) 170. In this he concurs with Paul Brandt, ed., *P. Ovidi Nasonis Amorum Libri Tres* (1911<sup>2</sup>; rpt. Leipzig 1963) whose opinion (in the introduction to his commentary, p. 13) he quotes on p. 105, note 52:

In keiner Elegie des *Amores* beweist Ovid mehr als in diesem, dass ihm das stereotype erotische Motiv nur Mittel zum Zweck ist, Verse zu schmieden.

The view of S. d'Elia (*Ovidio* [Naples 1959] 116) also quoted in this note is that *Am.* 1.3 is "un mero esercizio metrico."

author calls his work the product of pure imagination, causes the earlier poem to be distinctly Ovidian.

If Ovid's disavowal of historical veracity in *Am.* 3.12 is significant for *Am.* 1.3, much more so is the nature of the illustrative examples he uses as proof. The first group (21–24) and the third (31–34) have to do with metamorphoses; the second (25–30) concerns, alternately, figures who capture (Cerberos and the Sirens) or try to capture (Tantalus) and those who are captured (Tityos, Encelados and Aeolus' winds). The final section includes examples of metamorphosis (35, 37–38), of the day turned around (39), and of magical tamers (Jason, 36 and Amphion, 40). These illustrations are noteworthy, for they suggest that the *Amores* are all about metamorphoses of role and reversals of situation, especially with respect to the alternating roles of capturer (tamer) and captive. The following paper will attempt to show that *Am.* 1.3 is highly original in that it introduces these factors as the cornerstone of the Ovidian couple relationship and incorporates many of the major stylistic devices and motifs that create its wit throughout the work.

That *Am.* 1.3 is not conventionally serious and straightforward appears likely, first of all, in view of the two preceding poems of the collection. *Am.* 1.1, an introductory "program" poem, has itself been called the key to the rest of the work.<sup>2</sup> In it Ovid tells us he took up the elegiac genre because of compulsion by the mischievous boy-god *Amor*. As a result, in *Am.* 1.2, he represents himself as *Amor*'s new booty, an enchained and suppliant captive in the god's triumphal procession. To quote the apt evaluation of Reitzenstein, "it is unmistakable . . . that here . . . Ovid already has in mind a new unique style" in which playfulness is the norm:

Es gibt auch vor Ovid in der römischen Elegie wohl ein gelegentliches Hinneigen zum rein Spielerischen, das entscheidend Neue bei ihm aber ist, dass es als Norm in die Liebespoesie aufgenommen wird.

Es ist unverkennbar . . . dass Ovid schon hier in seinem ersten Werk einen neuen, eigenen Stil zu geben beabsichtigt, und dass, was ihm so oft von seinen Kritikern als Unvermögen vorgeworfen wird—wir

<sup>2</sup> Erich Reitzenstein, "Das Neue Kunstwollen in den *Amores* Ovids," *RhM* 84 (1935) 72. See also T. W. Dickson, "Borrowed Themes in Ovid's *Amores*," *CJ* 59 (1964) 175.

dürfen ästhetisch darüber urteilen, wie wir wollen—einer bestimmten und dem Dichter wohl bewussten Kunstabsicht entspringt.<sup>3</sup>

Central to the “playfulness” of *Am.* 1.1 and 1.2 is Ovid’s experience of a change in status from epic warrior to victim of militant love.

The reversal theme of this important experience reappears in other structurally significant poems of the *Amores*. In 2.18.13–18, a reiteration of the story in *Am.* 1.1, *Amor* foils Ovid’s grandiose poetry merely by laughing at it.<sup>4</sup> Ovid omits the other details of *Amor*’s attack and stresses his laughter to indicate more strongly the literary import of this ostensibly autobiographical event: his work, unlike previous elegy, is going to be funny.<sup>5</sup> The context of the reminiscence is Ovid’s explanation how *Amor* and his girl have prevented him from writing in his original genre. It is significant that both catalysts have similar, two-sided personalities: the girl’s love forces Ovid to write amatory poetry here in 2.18; but her disdain effects the same alteration in *Am.* 2.1. Likewise, *Amor*’s harshness (*frangit Amor*, end of 2.18.4) and his playfulness (*risit Amor*, beginning of 2.18.15) cause Ovid to change genre.<sup>6</sup> In 1.1 the author’s response is indignation; in 2.18 it is acquiescence.

In these accounts Ovid avers, with transparent ingenuousness, that he has tried (1.1) and tried again (2.1, 2.18) to write lofty poetry but has been foiled each time. Thus he introduces Books 1 and 2 and makes a transition to Book 3.<sup>7</sup> By placing his stories of occupational metamorphosis in structurally important poems he indicates that transformations of status and balanced occurrences of an identical but often reversed situation are to be a basic thematic and structural principle of the work.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* See also Katherine Berman, “Some Propertian Imitations in Ovid’s *Amores*,” *CP* 67 (1972) 170–77.

<sup>4</sup> In lines 15–16 the expanding tricolon, which reflects the crescendo of the god’s laughter, the repetition of *que* and the rhymes and alliterations make Ovid’s epic accoutrements appear more and more ridiculous.

<sup>5</sup> See Reitzenstein (above, note 2) 70 and Dickson (above, note 2).

<sup>6</sup> Reitzenstein has observed (above, note 2) 75 that his personality is also potent and simultaneously puerile in *Am.* 1.2.

<sup>7</sup> This technique is revealed by *resumpsi* in 2.1.21 and *ingenium . . . revocatur* in 2.18.11 which refer to the poetic impulse for the book to follow. All three accounts are also related by repetitions of the phrase *risisse Cupido* at the line end of 1.1.3 and *risit Amor* at the line beginning of 2.18.15, *sceptra sumpta* in 2.18.16 and *sumptis ab armis* in 2.18.11.

<sup>8</sup> This hypothesis is not entirely new. Walther Kraus, “P. Ovidius Naso,” *RE* 2.1

If, along with Reitzenstein, we regard *Am.* 1.1 and 1.2 as a prologue to the whole,<sup>9</sup> *Am.* 1.3 becomes the first poem of the collection proper. Surely we may expect that here Ovid will establish more firmly the irreverence and fun of his introduction, especially with respect to the concept of duality that underlies its all important account of his reversal in professional status.

One equivocal aspect of *Am.* 1.3 has in fact been observed: the analogy (in lines 21–24) which correlates the girl whom Ovid addresses with Io, Leda and Europa indicates too that their lover, Jupiter, is analogous to the poet. The function that this parallel performs is to belie Ovid's denial that he is a *desultor amoris* (a jumper from one woman

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(1942) col. 1023, has noted that reversals of thought characterize the relationship between many paired poems:

Für die Anordnung der Gedichte [2.19] hat W. Port . . . zunächst festgestellt, dass solche parallelen Inhalts auf die verschiedenen Bücher verteilt sind. Dazu kommt als positives Element die Behandlung eines Gegenstandes in fortschreitender oder gegensätzlicher Weise durch ein Paar aufeinanderfolgender Gedichte (I 11: 12, II 2: 3, 7:8, 9:9b, 13:14; auch II 4:5 bilden einen Kontrast); . . . Aber auch zwischen nicht nebeneinanderstehenden Gedichten spielen Beziehungen, so dass erst das Ganze das Einzelne in die vom Dichter gewollte Beleuchtung rückt: so ist II 4 zu I 3, II 5 zu I 4, III 4 zu II 19 die Antithese;

And T. F. Higham, "Ovid: Some Aspects of His Character and Aims," *CR* 48 (1934) 114 has observed that the *Ars Amatoria* "in its basic paradox and in the reversals of thought and situation about which it is built . . . typifies not only Ovidian rhetoric but also Ovidian humor." According to Wilhelm Port, "Die Anordnung in Gedichtbüchern augusteischer Zeit," *Philologus* 81 (1926) 452, *variatio* underlies this phenomenon in the *Amores* and not any more formal architectonic plan:

. . . Ovid bestrebt war, die in ihren Motiven ähnlichen Gedichte nach Möglichkeit auf verschiedene Bücher zu verteilen. Hierdurch schon erreichte er *variatio* der Gedichte innerhalb der einzelnen Bücher. Diese Verteilung auf die Bücher war der leitende Gedanke. Eine Anordnung innerhalb derselben, die jedem Gedicht einen bestimmten Platz anweist, wie wir sie bei andern Dichtern finden, hat Ovid nicht vorgenommen, weil durch die Verteilung der ähnlichen Gedichte auf verschiedene Bücher schon die Gefahr der Einförmigkeit innerhalb jeden Buches vermieden war. Nur gewissen Gedichten, die er durch ihre Stellung besonders hervorzuheben wünschte, gab er einen bestimmten Platz.

However, Erich Burck, "Römische Wesenszüge der augusteischen Liebeselegie," *Hermes* 80 (1952) 195, says that Port's thesis is not proven by his (vague) comments on whole paired poems but must be demonstrated by close poem-by-poem interpretation. In this recommendation and in the observation that smaller, intra-poem units are unmistakably related in the *Amores* he anticipated the methodology of this paper.

<sup>9</sup> See above, note 2, 73. Karl Galinsky in "The Triumph Theme in Roman Elegy," *WS* 82 (1969) 92, also suggests that *Am.* 1.2 is a continuation of 1.1, with lines 7–8 picking up where 1.1.25–26 left off.

to another) because of the fact that his counterpart is so notable a *desultor* both by reputation and within the context of the poem. Ovid's exaggerated claims of fidelity (in lines 12–14) and their mocking sound effects reinforce this contradiction so that his declarations of *fides* begin to ring false to everyone except, presumably, his addressee.<sup>10</sup>

Other factors in the correlation between Jupiter and Ovid in *Am.* 1.3 qualify and fill out the above interpretation and thus establish the *Amores'* lover and love experience as characteristically two-fold.

First, Ovid notes stereotypically that the girl has made him her booty (line 1). Yet, curiously enough, it is not Jupiter, his counterpart, but the three women in the mythological *exempla* who are *praeda*, victims of kidnapping and rape. And second, Ovid protests his *nuda . . . simplicitas* (line 14) whereas Jupiter appears conspicuously disguised (in lines 22–24), fooling Leda in the form of a river bird and abducting Europa as a *simulato . . . iuvenco*. These contradictory dualities in the Jupiter/Ovid analogy give us all the more reason to suspect Ovid's ostensibly straightforward claims of fidelity.

Indeed, his alliterative apologia is apparently his deceitful way of capturing (making *praeda* of) the girl who he says has made booty out of him.<sup>11</sup> That is, he is out to trick and capture her with his poetry,

<sup>10</sup> This interpretation was advanced by Leo C. Curran, “*Desultores amoris: Ovid Amores* 1.3,” *CP* 61 (1966) 47–49. He says that Ovid's lack of candor first becomes noticeable in the “somewhat startling” adjectives *nuda* (*simplicitas*) and *purpureus* (*pudor*), and is sustained by the mocking “pu-pu” alliteration of the second expression. This phrase may have additional ironic impact by comparison with the context in which it is used in *Am.* 2.5. There the poet reproaches his girl for shamelessly taking up with another dinner guest after he had apparently fallen asleep (13–32). The undeniable accusation of infidelity causes her shame: *conscia purpureus venit in ora pudor*, 34. Of *Am.* 1.3.11–14 J. M. Fyler, “*Omnia Vincit Amor: Incongruity and Limitations of Structure in Ovid's Elegaic Poetry*,” *CJ* 65 (1969) 198, has said that “Ovid's presentation of his lover's credentials, a list of comically incongruous gods and unexceptionable but rather banally stated virtues ends with the bawdy ambiguity of ‘naked simplicity’ and ‘blushing modesty.’” Curran notes in addition that the occurrence of *desultor* is “arresting” because of the rarity and predominantly technical significance of the term itself as well as by the repetition of the “or” sound at the end of the lines immediately preceding it. In this way, he concludes, Ovid draws attention to the *desultor* image which becomes the pivotal concept of the poem.

<sup>11</sup> In their commentaries Paul Brandt (above, note 1) and F. W. Lenz, *Ovid: Die Liebeselegien* (Berlin 1965) and Rudolf Neumann, *Qua Ratione Ovidius in Amoribus Scribendis Properti Elegiis Usus Sit* (Diss., Gottingen 1919) 26–28, make note of the resemblance of *Am.* 1.3.7–12 to Prop. 3.2.9 ff. The Propertian passage is both an apologia for modest means (11–14) and a statement of poetic potency (9–10; 15–16), which

just as Jupiter, disguised, tricked and so seduced the three heroines, and as *Amor* tricked and captured him (*tecta . . . arte*, 1.2.6) in *Am.* 1.1 and 1.2. So Ovid appears to be using the declarations of *fides* (trustworthiness) which were genuine for previous elegiac lovers as a *dolus*, part of the war-game of love.<sup>12</sup> The employment of such a tactic is quite fair within the context of the poem and is symptomatic of the *Amores* overall, for he says, in line 1, that he prays for *iusta*, just things. If the girl began by making him her booty it is surely "just" that he in turn should try to establish the relationship on a reciprocal basis by making her his.<sup>13</sup>

Ambiguity of behavior—trick seduction, disguise, and, especially, verbal prevarication—play a central role in the first poem of the *Amores* that is addressed to a girl, for these motifs are key elements of

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is preceded by a section on the magical power of *carmina* to control natural phenomena and to beguile lovers (3–8). The gods with whose aid Propertius says his *carmina* attract women, as in *Am.* 1.3, are Bacchus, Apollo and the Muses. These resemblances between the Propertian and Ovidian apologiae would remind Ovid's readers that contrary to his abject posture and self-effacing statements, he too possesses magical poetic powers with which to attract the girl he addresses in this poem.

<sup>12</sup> Jean-Paul Boucher, *Études sur Propertius, Problèmes d'inspiration et d'art* (Paris 1965) 85–104, has stated that *fides*, which occurs as many as 32 times in the Propertian corpus, is one of the key words of his amatory vocabulary. Boucher suggests that Propertius be dubbed *fidi amoris praeceptor* because mutual fidelity is the core of his philosophy of love. He adds that for Propertius *fides* is also a means by which to attract a woman.

In Ovid's *Amores*, *fides* or its declensional variants occur 17 times, and the adjective *fidus* twice. Not surprisingly, the majority of these occurrences have to do with some sort of betrayal of faith. Four times the girl's maid has either betrayed someone to whom she is obligated (1.11.6; 2.7.25) or is encouraged to do so by the poet (2.2.38, 42). Three times *fides* refers to Ovid. In 2.15.28 he sends a gift to his girl which he declares is a token of his faith. Fantasizing himself as the gift ring, he imagines a scene in which he forcibly seduces her. He admits to having sworn his faith falsely in 2.8.18 and in 3.12.42–43 claims to have praised his girl in verse without historical accuracy. The girl, in 3.3.1, is said to have broken her faith (*fidem sefellit*), and Corinna has tampered with the *fides* of her closed door in 3.1.50. So it seems that Ovid's transparent protestations of his *fides* in 1.3 introduce a situation of illusory or abrogated fidelity that is to be typical in the *Amores*.

In addition to 1.3.16, Ovid twice in the *Amores* employs the phrase *si qua fides*: in 1.8.11 he claims to have seen, *si qua fides*, stars dripping blood because of Dipsas' magical spells, and in 2.6.51 he describes, *si qua fides*, the fantastical Elysian landscape inhabited by pious birds. These occurrences of the phrase in contexts in which there cannot be *fides* support the impression that its use in 1.3 is meant to be ironic.

<sup>13</sup> See A. W. Allen, "Elegy and the Classical Attitude Toward Love: Propertius I, 1," *YCS* 11 (1950) 271, for comments on this connotation of the word *iustum*.

the literary love game that Ovid and she play throughout the work. In the final poem of Book 2, for example, Ovid gives lengthy amatory advice and never once mentions guilelessness. He says rather that any girl who hopes to remain alluring should delude her lover (*deludat amantem*, 2.19.33) and appear unavailable. If Danae had not been shut away, he opines, she would not have become a parent; if Io had not been disguised she would not have been so attractive to Jupiter (2.19.27-30). Likewise, Corinna remains desirable by deliberately rejecting the author with transparent lies (2.19.11-14), then enticing him with *blanditias* and *dulcia verba* (2.19.15-18).<sup>14</sup> Dipsas the *lena* also instructs Ovid's girl friend in the multifarious deceptions of *simulatus amor* (1.8.71-102) and culminates her exhortations with the advice to seduce and deceive verbally:

lingua iuvet mentemque tegat: blandire noceque;  
impia sub dulci melle venena latent. (1.8.103-04)

Ovid himself recommends specifically verbal misrepresentation in *Am.* 3.14, the next to last poem of the work. Here he implores the girl to be chaste not in fact but in appearance so that he may be taken in by her pretense of fidelity:

da populo, da verba mihi: sine nescius errem  
et liceat stulta credulitate frui. (3.14.29-30)

He predicts the same sort of mutual duplicity in *Am.* 2.2, where he says that the current woman of his desire, having been found unfaithful, will “give words” to her husband, who will in turn “give words” to himself by the acceptance of her denial:

viderit ipse licet, credet tamen ille neganti  
damnabitque oculos et sibi verba dabit; (2.2.57-58)

<sup>14</sup> Ovid emphasizes the deliberately balanced duality of her conduct by devoting two distichs to each mood. He says elsewhere, more generally, that he hopes to enjoy his *domina* and to be mistreated by her in equally alternating cycles,

et modo blanditias dicat, modo iurgia nectat:  
saepe fruar domina, saepe repulsus eam. (2.9b.21-22)

for uneventful love is actually harmful:

quidlibet eveniat, nocet indulgentia nobis:  
quod sequitur, fugio; quod fugit ipse sequor. (2.19.35-36)

The alternating phrases of 2.9b.21-22 and the structure of 2.19.36 itself embody the *Amores'* view of love as an ever-fluctuating state, see-sawing between situations that are the obverse of one another.

And in *Am.* 2.9b, when Ovid thinks of the stupid man who enjoys loveless nights of restful sleep, he joyfully imagines himself being entrapped by his girl friend's verbal deceptions:<sup>15</sup>

me modo decipiant voces fallacis amicae  
 (sperando certe gaudia magna feram),  
 et modo blanditias dicat, modo iurgia nectat; (2.9b.19-21)

Conversely, in *Am.* 3.3 the repeated complaint is that the girl has lied to him (*fidem iurata fefellit*, 1; *periura*, 3; *mentita est, perfida*, 10; *falsum iurare*, 11). Moreover and worse, he says, she has escaped just punishment (*impune fefellerat illa*, 15) by turning it upon himself:

perque suos illam nuper iurasse recordor  
 perque meos oculos: et doluere mei. (3.3.13-14)  
 alterius meriti cur ego damna tuli? (3.3.16)  
 ut sua per nostram redimat periuria poenam,  
 victima deceptus decipientis ero? (3.3.21-22)

The poet shows how he and she have exchanged their proper roles by comparing himself to two undeservedly punished mythical women, of whom the second is particularly analogous to the girl: Andromeda (17-18) was to die for her mother's arrogant beauty and Semele (37-40) was a paramour of Jupiter destroyed at Juno's hands by approaching too near his lightning bolt. Ovid's recollection is that the ultimate outcome of the Jupiter/Semele union was Dionysus. This serves as an oblique reminder that poetry is for him and the girl the compensatory intellectual offspring of their association (a concept introduced in 1.3 and to be examined presently). Recognizing that the poetic creativity which depends upon her makes him "godlike" in a sense, Ovid decides forthwith to endure her arrogance (41-46), just as the gods reproached earlier in the poem also accept impiety on her part.

<sup>15</sup> Having ended 2.9a by asking Cupid for a reprieve from love, Ovid begins 2.9b by admitting that he would not want to live without it:

"vive" deus "posito" si quis mihi dicat "amore"  
 deprecet . . . (2.9b.1-2)

Recalling how often in the past Cupid has revived his amorous feelings, he later abandons ambivalence and whole-heartedly invites the god's attack:

fige, puer: *positis* nudus tibi praebeor *armis* (2.9b.11)

The structural similarity of line 11 to that of line 1 underlines the completion of his reversal in attitude.



Thus his attitude undergoes a reversal between the beginning of 3.3 and its end and reconfirms his frequent amatory wishes.

The above citations clearly show that in Ovid's mind the girl of the *Amores* is capable of using, indeed should use *verba* as deceitful weapons.<sup>16</sup> He reciprocates, unsurprisingly, by means of his *carmina*, as *Am.* 1.1 and 2.1 illustrate. In lines 7-21 of the former poem, when Ovid protests *Amor's* theft of his sixth epic metron, he argues against the expectation that he will henceforth write elegy: would it be appropriate, he asks rhetorically, for Minerva to brandish Venus' torches if Venus stole Minerva's weapons? Would Ceres ever reign in the woods and Diana hunt in the fields; or would Phoebus use Mars' sword and Mars use Phoebus' lyre? Ovid's inference is that it is similarly inappropriate for him to use the weaponry of elegiac meter in his poetic realm of epic battle. So *Amor's* arrow shot corrects the incongruity and forces the poet to abandon hardhearted (*ferrea*) heroic wars for those of love.

In *Am.* 2.1 the use of *carmina* as verbal weapons is explicit. Ovid says that he originally wrote about the wars of mythical characters and fulminated, so to speak, with Jupiter's weaponry. This arsenal became useless when the girl closed her door to him and, in order to win her back, he took up *lenia verba*, the arms of elegiac poetry.<sup>17</sup>

blanditias elegosque levis, mea tela, resumpsi:  
 mollierunt duras lenia verba fores. (2.1.21-22)  
 at facie tenerae laudata saepe puellae  
 ad vatem, pretium carminis, ipsa venit. (2.1.33-34)

The verbal weaponry that Ovid talks about so plainly in this introduction to Book 2 and alludes to obliquely in 1.1 is what we see in action in *Am.* 1.3.

In this poem, the third point of comparison between Jupiter and Ovid concerns fertility and motherhood. Ovid asks the girl to offer herself to him not as a sexual object but as "fertile" material for his poems. He promises that *carmina* will issue forth.<sup>18</sup> By contrast, all

<sup>16</sup> We also hear of her deceitful words in 3.11.24 (*verba dissimulata notis*), 2.5.20 (*verba iussa pro certis notis*), and 2.16.45 (*verba puellarum, foliis leviora caducis*).

<sup>17</sup> Other references to *arma* as poetic weapons are in *Am.* 2.4.2 and *Am.* 2.12.

<sup>18</sup> *Praebe te mihi, felicem materiam* and *provenient* strongly suggest sexual union and birth. In *Am.* 3.8 the poet complains that women are no longer interested in poetry

three of the mythical heroines are known to have borne offspring as a result of their union with Jupiter.<sup>19</sup>

Because he and the girl will be sung together throughout the world (1.3.25-26) Ovid says that his name and hers will always be united. Therefore he can, in a sense, justly claim that she will be his *cura perennis* (1.3.16). Similarly, Jupiter and the three heroines have a famous "long-term" relationship in a literary sense. But the one whose powers may create this bond is obviously not Jupiter but a poet. It is his *carmen* also that may give Io, Leda and Europa each her own *nomen*.<sup>20</sup> In this context, the *carmina* that are to come forth from association with Ovid appear to have much more value than the mere children that Jupiter procreates. Therefore, although the two men may be *desultores* in life, the poet can compensate for his infidelities much more impressively than Jupiter can. So Ovid shows that he is more desirable a lover than the god!

This boast adds another dimension to his pleas and protestations of good character. In the first four lines of the poem, he expresses a wish

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as a love gift, but that for the rich lover a woman *praebuilt ipsa sinus et dare iussa dedit*, 33-34. The following Ovidian uses of *praebeo* also have a sexual meaning:

A.A. 2.685: *odi, quae praebet, quia sit praebere necesse*

Ep. 4.95: *nec tamen Aurorae male se praebibat amandum*

Ep. 5.132: *quae totiens raptast, praebuit ipsa rapi.*

*Provenio* often expresses procreative capacity:

F. 4.617: *largaque provenit cessatis messis in arvis*

A.A. 3.102: *cultis bene Liber ab uvis / provenit*  
and *felix* can mean "happy with respect to children:"

Met. 6.155: *felicissima matrum dicta foret Niobe*

Met. 8.486: *an felix Oeneus nato victore fruatur.*

<sup>19</sup> Motherhood seems to have been a virtually guaranteed fringe benefit of Jupiter's adulterous love. By Io he fathered Epaphus (*Met.* 1); by Leda, Helen, Castor and Polydeuces, and by Europa, Minos, Rhadymanthus and Sarpedon. In *Am.* 2.19 parenthood is again the result of Jupiter's amorous ploys. The poet, advising a friend to guard closely his own girl so as to make her more attractive to himself, claims (27-28) *si numquam Danaen habuisset aenea turris, / non esset Danae de Iove facta parens*. In *Ep.* 16.55 we find: *dat mihi Leda Ioven cygne decepta parentem* and in *Am.* 3.4.21-22 in *thalamum Danae ferro saxoque perennem / quae fuerat virgo tradita, mater erat*. Thus, we have good reason to understand the comparison between poet and god in its paternal aspect.

<sup>20</sup> Ovid may have omitted their names in order to show that the identities of these women depend upon literary memorials of their stories. Even Jupiter, who also goes unnamed, has a *nomen* here in the same way. It follows that Ovid's omission of his addressee's name was similarly motivated, and not, as Strohm has said (above, note 1) 154, note 49 the result of his modesty in approaching her for the first time.

—to be loved, immediately backs down from it by adding a second, lesser wish—to be treated well,<sup>21</sup> and finally backs down from this by settling on the modest hope that the girl will merely allow herself to be loved.<sup>22</sup> Venus will have answered his prayers, he exclaims with inappropriately effusive gratitude, if only she grants him this last paltry desire. It is immediately hereafter in the poem that Ovid bombards the girl with his barrage of personal credentials. At the beginning of these *blanditiae*, which are comically incongruous with their modest goal, Ovid is a mere *eques*; at their end he is more desirable than Jupiter.

This exaggerated, two-fold polarization of Ovid's character is quietly humorous here in 1.3; it recurs and is outrightly funny in *Am.* 2.1. When the girl shuts him out there, Ovid immediately drops his epic thunderbolt and returns to the kind of magical poems which can charm the moon out of the sky, break snakes apart, turn rivers backwards and—win over girls. This instantaneous and drastic change in self-perception and the analogy between performing supernatural

<sup>21</sup> The phrase he uses, *cur ego semper amem*, recurs in the same metrical position in *Am.* 2.4.10. In this poem Ovid does not address himself to the one girl of his dreams, but confesses his Don-Juanish proclivities with mock-resignation, and says, *centum sunt causae cur ego semper amem*—specifically every attractive girl in the city (11–48)!

<sup>22</sup> *Patiatur amari* reappears, in the same metrical position, in 3.2.57. Ovid and a new girl are at the track waiting for the race's beginning. As the parade of gods passes by he makes a prayer to Venus:

... inceptis adnue, diva, meis  
daque novae mentem dominae, patiatur amari; (3.2.56–57)

This is the same prayer he says he has made to the goddess in 1.3.4. The request reminds one of the invocation often addressed to gods at the beginning of a literary work. That it is used in 3.2 for the beginning of a love affair alerts readers to the literary nature of the experience Ovid anticipates. The resemblance of this passage to 1.3 reflects upon the literary nature of the beginning of the affair presented there. After the prayer, as in 1.3, Ovid next turns his thoughts to the girl, silently vowing that she will be a *domina* to him, a goddess greater than Venus. This assertion, colored as it is by the wolfishness of his solicitude for her (in 3.2.21–42; 63–64) is nothing but comic hyperbole. Indeed, in his immediately preceding jockey fantasy (3.2.7–16) Ovid likens himself to Pelops, who won the race for Hippodamia by deceit and treachery. However, Ovid ignores this aspect of the story and, regarding Pelops as pathetic, concludes with unblinking naivety that he won the race purely *favore suae . . . puellae*. The disparity between Pelops' vulnerability and his better-known history creates the humorous impression, later confirmed, that Ovid's own behavior will be something less than innocent. The analogy reveals once again the two-sided Ovidian persona that is operative in the poem and in the *Amores* as a whole.

feats and seducing a girl have a very comic effect.<sup>23</sup> In *Am.* 1.3 similar elements are in play, subtly set off against one another. When Ovid anticipates success in winning the girl by means of his poetry he is no longer a lowly country equestrian but greater than the greatest god.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, however, he is comparable to Jupiter in terms of the tactics they both employ in love. And finally, he is inferior to the god because Jupiter maintains his lofty status perennially whereas the writer's is unstable.<sup>25</sup> In this respect Ovid is similar to *Amor* in *Am.* 1.2, who is numinous and all-powerful on the one hand but, on the other, is *nudus* (1.2.38) without his companions in warfare, *Blanditiae*, *Furor* and *Error*. Without his own immortalizing literary weaponry Ovid too would be *nudus* (1.3.14) in romance; with it, however, he is a *vates*.

This theme alone—Ovid's vatic identity—shows a developmental progression in the *Amores* and comes to an up-beat, triumphant conclusion. Of the 13 times that Ovid uses *vates* autobiographically to mean "poet," 8 occur in 1.1, 2.1, 2.18, 3.1 and 3.15, the pieces which set

<sup>23</sup> A change in self-perception is also involved in Prop. 1.3. The poet, returning drunk to Cynthia's house very late at night and finding her asleep, compares her to the lonely, sleeping heroines Ariadne and Andromeda. In a third comparison a Bacchant is asleep after a frenzied dance. According to Antonie A. Wlosok, "Die Dritte Cynthia-Elegie des Propertius (Prop. 1.3)," *Hermes* 95 (1967) 341-42, the reader anticipates Bacchus' imminent arrival in two of these three scenes; what he finds instead is Propertius, seeing himself as Bacchus as he tries to embrace the sleeping Cynthia. Because he fears her *iurgia*, he does not dare to wake her up. No longer "Bacchus," he sees himself now as a watchful "Argus" (19-20).

Wlosok's conclusion is that this poem concerns, basically, nearness and distance, understanding and misunderstanding in love. Cynthia does not perceive the sincerity of Propertius' love, but regards him as a roguish Theseus, whereas he sees himself as Bacchus the savior of Ariadne.

While fear of Cynthia's wrath causes Propertius to alter his self-image, it does not invalidate his initial persona because the goodness of his loving intentions (like Bacchus') pervades the entire poem. Although he changes from an active to a passive role with respect to Cynthia, his love feelings remain the same. In *Am.* 1.3 the disparity between the poet's roles—total domination or total submission—is comically dramatic and is the only level of reality that exists.

<sup>24</sup> This state of affairs is underlined by the three uses of *nomen* in the poem.

<sup>25</sup> All but one anecdote about Jupiter in the *Amores* show him behaving as a suitor. Exactly like Ovid, he is attracted to women in direct proportion to their unavailability (2.19.27-30), which he always overcomes by a transformation of appearance (1.10.7-8; 3.8.29-34; 3.12.33-34). The poet also uses Jupiter's behavior towards himself as a personification of his fluctuating self-esteem and as a reflection of his amatory fortunes (see *Am.* 3.3.29-30, 35-36; 2.5.51-52; 1.7.35-36).

out his personal literary history and demonstrate the importance of transformation and reversal in the *Amores* as a whole. Indeed, in these very poems, the term *vates* itself marks off the stages of a gradual metamorphosis in Ovid's professional self-esteem, beginning with the pretense of doubt and ending with exultant high confidence.

By telling us in *Am.* 1.1 that his current occupation began with a defeat, Ovid introduces himself as the underdog lover traditional to elegy. However, we recognize the irony of this self-deprecation, partially because its basis is literary, and not romantic (as we might expect). Ovid confirms our suspicions that his modesty is specious by using the term *vates* to demonstrate in the course of the *Amores* that he is entitled to literary acclaim at least as great as that accruing to writers of epic or tragedy. His method is to begin in *Am.* 1.1 by suggesting that *vates* is not an appropriate appellation for one who writes poetry about love. Then, in 2.1, 2.18, 3.1 and 3.15, he goes on to illustrate the sense in which he is a *poeta* deserving to be known as *vates*.

Having said, in *Am.* 1.1, that he first came to elegy because of circumstances beyond his control, Ovid reports that *Amor* had commanded him (not to be a lover but) to be a writer of love. In reply to the poet's protestation—

Pieridum vates, non tua turba sumus. (1.1.6)

“I am a bard of the Muses, not one of your crowd,”

the child had released his arrow of amatory inspiration and addressed his suppliant as *vates*—

“quod” que “canas, vates, accipe” dixit “opus.” (1.1.24)

Thus he appears to mock Ovid for having called himself a *vates* of epic and seems to suggest that the poet will instead be “vatic” in the new genre. Later reappearances of the term bear out *Amor*'s prediction and qualify its application.

The first of these occurs in *Am.* 2.1, at the climax of Ovid's second account of occupational metamorphosis: having abandoned Jupiter's useless epic weaponry for the potent diction of elegy, Ovid announces:

ad vatem pretium carminis ipsa venit. (2.1.34)

The personal victory for which he congratulates himself as a *vates* here is the first of two criteria by which a mere versifier of *nequitiae* (as Ovid calls himself in lines 1 and 10 of the same poem) becomes more than just a *poeta*. (This aspect of his vatic identity undergoes modification, as we shall presently see.)

The second criterion involves instructional usefulness to others, as *Am.* 2.1.7–10 suggests and *Am.* 2.18 illustrates. In lines 7–10 of *Am.* 2.1, Ovid speaks of the young man astounded to discover his own love experiences in Ovid's poetry. (Indeed, in 1.15.38 Ovid had said: *atque a sollicito multus amante legar.*) In 2.18, the third telling of his vocational story, Ovid addresses the epic poet Macer, whom he describes as a military commander leading poetry to the subject of warfare. Ovid informs Macer that despite his role as a *vates* of epic battle, he is susceptible to the effect of *Amor*:

nec tibi, qua tutum vati, Macer, arma canenti,  
aureus in medio Marte tacetur Amor; (2.18.35–36)

The precedent to which Ovid alludes is, of course, himself, overcome by *Amor* when he had been a *cothurnatus vates*, writing this time of tragic themes:

risit Amor pallamque meam pictosque cothurnos  
sceptraque privata tam cito sumpta manu;  
hinc quoque me dominae numen deduxit iniquae,  
deque cothurnato vate triumphat Amor. (2.18.15–18)

Here he is making fun of Macer, just as *Amor* had made fun of him in 1.1, and performs for his friend the didactic function of a *vates*, but in the elegiac genre. *Amor*'s description as "golden" in 2.18.36 recalls the scene of *Am.* 1.2.42 immediately after Ovid's own initial conversion from epic to elegy, when he himself had been the captive of golden *Amor*. *Arma canenti* in 2.18.35 may also be intentionally reminiscent of the first words of *Am.* 1.1 (*arma gravi numero*, recognized as a parody of the *Aeneid*'s opening line) and as such may serve as yet another reminder of how an epic career may be cut short by *Amor*.

Thus, Ovid explores in 2.1 and 2.18 the two-fold spheres—personal and public—in which his elegiac activity may be "vatic" by its efficacy. Nevertheless, in the introductory poem of Book 3, the lady *Tragoedia* challenges Ovid's self-appraisal by tauntingly calling him a mere *poeta*

of *nequitiae*—the very title Ovid had used for himself at the beginning of *Am.* 2.1:

et prior “ecquis erit” dixit tibi finis amandi,  
o argumenti lente poeta tui?  
nequitiam vinosa tuam convivia narrant,  
narrant in multas compita secta vias. (3.1.15–18)

Mockingly she conjures up a typical man-in-the-Roman-street jeering at a *vates* who is scorched by love:

saepe aliquis digito vatem designat euntem  
atque ait “hic, hic est, quem ferus urit Amor.” (3.1.19–20)

*Tragoedia*’s intent is to throw up to Ovid the helpless lover’s plight to which he had confessed in *Am.* 1.1 and 1.2, prior to the demonstration (at Book Two’s beginning and end) that his literary prowess was “vatic.” She is trying to tell him that personal powerlessness and literary potency cannot go together. Fortunately, at this critical point, *Elegeia* steps in to defend her genre. She observes that *Tragoedia* has designed to argue in *Elegeia*’s own *tenuis* but powerful meter (35–42; 45–48). She demonstrates further that she, *Elegeia*, has vatic capabilities—by instructing people (43–44; 49–52) and by performing heroic and courageous acts (53–58). And she says that she has been personally useful to Ovid both for earlier amatory purposes and because of the fact that *Tragoedia* now is wooing him (59–60).

On the basis of *Elegeia*’s persuasive defense of her own “vatic” power to be instructive and useful, Ovid himself finally begs *Tragoedia* for more time to write love poetry:

exiguum vati concede, Tragoedia, tempus: (3.1.67)

By using the term *vates*, Ovid reminds *Tragoedia* of the justification behind his request and also attests to the renewed spirit by which he will continue his work in the remainder of Book 3.

At the end of this book, when bidding farewell to Venus in the first line of 3.15, he repeats the term for the last time:

quaere novum vatem tenerorum mater Amorum:  
raditur haec elegis ultima meta meis;  
quos ego conposui, Paeligni ruris alumnus, (3.15.1–3)

In these lines the conjunction with *vates* of the verb *componere* and

adjective *Paelignus*, which Ovid had used in the same metrical positions in 2.1 when describing himself as a mere *poeta*, signifies the completion of his change in self-respect. Later on in 3.15, he says he is a *poeta* great enough to make even little Sulmo great:

“quae tantum” dicet “potuistis ferre poetam,  
quantulacumque estis, vos ego magna voco.” (3.15.13-14)

This collocation of *poeta* with *vates* in the last poem of the *Amores* appears to amount to a declaration on Ovid's part that he has elevated his status as *poeta* to *vates* during their course. In summation, Ovid pretends in *Am.* 1.1 to doubt whether he can fulfill a vatic role in elegy and asks for inspiration in the endeavor (1.15), illustrates that he can fulfill it for his own amatory purposes (in 2.1) and for others' (in 2.18), confirms his and *Elegeia's* claim to vatic didactic and practical powers (in *Am.* 3.1), and lastly proclaims vatic status for himself in *Am.* 3.15.

Nevertheless, the remaining autobiographical usages of *vates* qualify and limit the scope of Ovid's triumph and incorporate the *vates* theme into the *Amores'* overall reversing pattern. In *Am.* 3.6, when unable to cross a river on the way to his girl, the poet initially wishes for magical aids (3.6.13-16), only to dismiss them as the useless inventions of the old-time, epic-writing *vates*:

prodigiosa loquor veterum mendacia vatum:  
nec tulit haec umquam nec feret ulla dies. (3.6.17-18)

He decides to use instead his own art of elegiac persuasion to prevail over the recalcitrant river (19 ff.). After this fails in 3.6 and backfires later on in 3.12 by attracting other lovers to the girl, Ovid says that the words by which he has described his own love are just as fictitious as the mythical tales by which he had tried to win the river's affection:

nec tamen ut testes mos est audire poetas:  
malueram verbis pondus abesse meis. (3.12.19-20)  
exit in immensum fecunda licentia vatum<sup>26</sup>  
obligat historica nec sua verba fide: (3.12.41-42)

In the face of amatory failure, Ovid attempts here to turn inside out the relationship between mythic past and historical present that had

<sup>26</sup> The metrically similar, line-end phrases *mendacia vatum*, 3.6.17 and *licentia vatum*, 3.12.41 underline his reversal of attitude.



formed the core of the Vergilian “*vates*-concept.”<sup>27</sup> His acknowledgment in 3.12.19 of personal ineptitude (for which he says he is really just a *poeta*) and his crocodile tears in line 41 about the too-great potency of his more public instructional or persuasive abilities (for which he calls himself *vates*) reaffirm in one respect the self-appraisal developed by the *vates* theme and negate it in another. That is, Ovid confesses to powerlessness in supposedly real-life romance and attributes it to the deleterious effect of his great power in literature! His petulant wish on this occasion is that the Muses and Apollo, the companions proudly announced in *Am.* 1.3, had been adverse to the personally disastrous but publicly successful literary activity they helped begin there.<sup>28</sup>

Three other autobiographical usages of *vates*, in 1.8 and 2.4, also concern romantic experiences in which Ovid’s talents are immaterial to or inadequate for personal amatory success. Thus the poet restricts *vates* as a term to mean: inspired literary strength for the instructional benefit of the public. This limitation is entirely appropriate because the elegiac lover is traditionally powerless in romance despite his talent and, more importantly, because the *Amores* (as everyone knows) do not depict an autobiographically true love-life but rather demonstrate, with perennially enduring wit, how the game of love works. The dualities of role and situation that begin in *Am.* 1.3 are an introduction to the chief techniques and themes of reversal that unify and create the edifying drollery of Ovid’s dynamic, topsy-turvy couple game.

<sup>27</sup> See J. K. Newman, *Augustus and the New Poetry* (Brussels 1967) 101–28.

<sup>28</sup> Apollo’s role in 1.3 is personal; it is public in 1.15—to help Ovid aid other lovers (lines 35–38). This two-fold function appears to symbolize Ovid’s aims in the *Amores*. Its distribution in 1.3 and 1.15 provides another reason for believing 1.3 the first poem proper of the work.