TAPA 151 (2021) 000–000

The Ovidian Bedroom (*Ars amatoria* 2.703–34): The Place of Sex in Ovidian Erotic Elegy and Erotodidactic Verse*

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<sc>summary<sc>: This article constitutes a close reading of the sex scene that closes Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 2, and an analysis of its contribution to Ovidian first-person erotic elegiac poetry. Lines 703–34 are read comparatively alongside parallel passages, including *Amores* 3.14 and the end of *Ars* 3. This study pays particular attention to narrative strategies, erotodidactic instruction, the Latin sexual vocabulary, and wider issues relating to Roman sexuality, including gender dynamics and powerplay. Ultimately, the article argues that this sex scene demonstrates the programmatic and generic importance of sex for Ovid's first-person erotic elegy and erotodidactic elegies.

<sc>keywords<sc>: Ovid, sex, *Ars amatoria*, sexuality, erotodidactic, elegy

<sc>Latin love elegy is remarkably little concerned with sex, for a genre which professes to be erotic. The very nature of the genre is in part responsible: elegy depends on the poet-lover's erotic failure and is predicated on the lover's rare access to the beloved mistress (or boy). These beloveds often bar the lover from their presence or prefer his rivals, to cite just

two obstacles to successful elegiac love—and common themes for elegies.[1] An important study by Joy Connolly has connected what she refers to as "the unwillingness of elegy to investigate the physical angles of love"[2] with the work of Roland Barthes on narrative's deferral of pleasure. On Connolly's perceptive interpretation, elegy shies away from portraying sex to avoid bringing its narrative of the lover's desire to a premature close. In order for elegy to exist, then, the elegist must be unsuccessful in love. Such elegiac failure is further connected with a programmatic generic insistence on misery and mourning, derived from the genre's supposed origins in funeral lament.[3] Moreover, when elegy *does* depict sexual encounters and acts, it observes a generic decorum that disallows explicit descriptions of, and frank terminology for, matters pertaining to sex and the body,[4] unlike more unrestrained genres such as iambic and satire.[5] Yet, operating within these generic constraints, Ovid's first-person love elegies and erotodidactic poems are concerned with sex to an extent not yet fully analyzed, despite some important studies.[6] This is despite Ovid's racy reputation, and a broad recognition that his elegies are more highly sexed than his predecessors' work; to quote J. N. Adams, "Ovid's *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria* are more explicit than other elegy, but both works are lexically inoffensive."[7]

Sex in Ovid operates at a number of different levels: sexual encounters form the subject matter of several elegies, and Ovid also deploys a broad range of sexualized metaphors, not all of which have been recognized. One reason for this is that Adams' magisterial *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, the essential tool for studying this topic, pointedly eschews "fanciful speculations" about "obscene double entendres,"[8] in its concern with establishing common usages rather than collecting "ad hoc" sexual coinages.[9] Innuendo and innovative, one-off metaphors are, of course, characteristically Ovidian; Adams' approach means that Ovid's sexual imagery and sexualized language have not been afforded the attention they deserve. Moreover, outside the realm of subject matter and imagery, Ovid

insists on the generic appropriateness of sex to his elegies, and sex is so pervasive in his corpus that it even affects aspects such as style, bound up as it is with his characteristic stylistic excess and repetition.[10] Ovidian sex, then, is multifaceted and complex, although all too often Ovid's handling of matters sexual is dismissed as "puerile."[11] Moreover, scholarly *pudor* or even disdain for the sexual aspect of Ovid's work means that it tends to be overlooked.[12]

This article aims to meet a gap in Ovidian studies by interrogating the depiction of sex in one of the most highly sexualized portions of his elegiac corpus: the passage at the conclusion of *Ars amatoria* 2. There, Ovid finally leads the male lover into the bedroom, offering an unusually intimate exploration of sex. Sex is the obvious culmination and goal of the first two books of Ovid's *Ars amatoria*;[13] advice on sexual intercourse is heralded as the work's finale. This passage is flagged as having great significance, but it has received far less scholarly attention than it deserves for its prominent positioning, presentation, and, indeed, rarity value as a more than usually sexually explicit scene. For example, it barely features in Alison Sharrock's 1994 monograph on *Ars amatoria* 2, the only full-length study of the *Ars amatoria*'s second book.[14] In line with the scholarly approaches I have already identified, even recent studies which *do* provide detailed explorations of these lines tend to focus more on aspects other than the sexual nitty gritty. For example, Sharon James has provided a perceptive reading of these lines' gender politics, an important focus for Victoria Rimell's valuable exploration of this passage, which does more than most readings to explore the sexual aspects.[15] John Henderson's lively romp through this scene encompasses many different topics, but tends to cast most light upon sexual politics and the passage's relevance to the larger design of Ovid's erotodidactic project.[16] Even Markus Janka's detailed, insightful commentary fails to capture the passage's full complexity; while commentators are well positioned to explore those aspects of classical texts from which earlier generations

shied away,[17] *Ars am.* 2.703–34 are particularly resistant, in their studied ambiguity and consistent lack of specificity, to the sorts of single interpretations that many readers still often expect commentators to privilege.[18] While this paper offers a close reading of this passage, my interest in these lines stems from the way in which they offer the reader an insight into the wider programmatic importance and poetics of sex in Ovid. My study, then, aims to illuminate the complexity and ambiguity of Ovid's erotodidactic depictions of sex, as well as its genre-play and narrative strategies. More broadly, this paper should enhance our understanding of Latin love elegy (the genre to which Ovidian erotodidactic aligns itself generically), the Latin sexual vocabulary, and, indeed, Roman sexuality.[19]

Before turning to a detailed exploration of our passage, it is necessary to explore its wider place within the *Ars amatoria* and Ovidian elegiacs. Sex is set up as the natural structural conclusion of the teaching that Ovid offers his male readers over the first two books of the *Ars amatoria*, as his instruction is presented as a journey from inexperience to long-lasting love, and broken down into an initial step-by-step, tripartite lesson-plan. Steps 1 and 2 will be completed in book 1, and the second book is devoted to step 3:

principio, quod amare uelis, reperire labora,
    qui noua nunc primum miles in arma uenis.
proximus huic labor est placitam exorare puellam;
    tertius, ut longo tempore duret amor.
hic modus, haec nostro signabitur area curru,
    haec erit admissa meta premenda rota.

In the beginning, work at finding what you'd want to love,
    you who come now for the first time as a soldier to new weapons.
The next task is to win over a pleasing girl;

the third, to ensure that love endures for a long time.

This is the limit, this is the space that will be marked by my chariot;

this will be the turning post to be hugged by my speeding wheel.[20]

(*Ars am.* 1.35–40)

While sex is not explicitly mentioned in this brief summary of the curriculum, it is implied in line 38, as one ingredient of a long-lasting love.[21] Moreover, sex is an obvious marker of the erotic success that the poem promises attentive students, an indicator that the would-be lover has achieved the learning and, indeed, the mastery, promised in the opening couplet:

Si quis in hoc artem populo non nouit amandi,

hoc legat et lecto carmine doctus amet.

If anyone in this populace does not know the art of loving,

let him read this and, once the poem's read, let him love, an expert.

(*Ars Am.* 1.1–2)

That there are sexual undertones here is implied by the way in which Ovid draws on the broader erotodidactic tradition, especially Philaenis, who was believed to have taught sexual positions in an explicit manner.[22]

As Alison Sharrock well observes in an article of 2006, specifically sexual advice is long delayed. Sharrock points out that an implicit narrative, mirroring Ovid's step-by-step guide for love affairs, can be detected within the *Ars amatoria*, charting the lover's progress from naïvety and inexperience to mastery.[23] This creates the impression that the actual reader, as opposed to the naïve constructed reader-pupil,[24] is observing the erotic development of the latter in real time. On a narratological reading of the work, as Sharrock observes, sex ought to have been the climax of the first book, and not delayed until this point in the game.[25] Not only does Ovid's sex-advice come far too late in the lover's progress, but it is also

unnecessary: sex was treated as one tool in the lover's repertoire on several previous occasions, suggesting that consummation has already been reached.[26]

Indeed, long before the end of book 2, Ovid repeatedly advises his students to deploy sex as a tactic. For example, at *Ars am.* 1.669–72, he advises lovers who are apparently still in the seduction phase that they should add kisses to their coaxing words, and then take what naturally comes next after kisses:

oscula qui sumpsit, si non et cetera sumit,
    haec quoque, quae data sunt, perdere dignus erit.
quantum defuerat pleno post oscula uoto?
    ei mihi, rusticitas, non pudor, ille fuit.

He who has taken kisses, if he doesn't take the rest too,
    deserves to lose even those things which were granted [i.e., the kisses]
How much was lacking from full fulfilment of your wishes, after kisses?
    Alas, that was hicksville, not "restraint."

et cetera is a very obvious pointer to sex,[27] as is 671's notion that the lover might be completely fulfilled if he presses on to take further advantage.[28] This passage then makes the assertion that, should kisses prove ineffective, the student of love should use force (*uis*, 673) to make the seduced "rejoice" – an unsubtle allusion to rape.[29] Sex is taken for granted in several other passages that precede our bedroom scene. At 2.414, the lover who has been caught cheating is instructed to disprove his sexual infidelity through yet more sex, only this time with his girlfriend: *concubitu prior est infitianda uenus* ("previous sex is to be disproved through intercourse"). The framing of this line with two different words for sex, *concubitus* and *uenus*, emphasizes that the lover is already sexually experienced. Sex also proves useful in making peace with a jealous girlfriend at 2.457–64 and underlies Ovid's advice that older

women make good partners at 2.667–702. As Sharrock neatly observes of the implied narrative of the *Ars*, then, "the exact point at which consummation took place ... is occluded, as in all the best love stories ..."[30]

For the purposes of my own study, I am not so much interested in the implied narrative of the *Ars* as in the learning experience of the implied male reader, Ovid's pupil, as he reads the first two books of the *Ars*, on a quest for erotic *doctrina* to give him the confidence to go out there and love—precisely what Ovid advises that he should do in the final word of the poem's first couplet. The lover may well feel that Ovid has missed out an important part of his promised lessons by not instructing him on matters sexual, or even worry that he is still far from being *doctus* as he approaches what appears to be the end of the poem.[31] The sense that Ovid has failed to instruct his pupils in a crucial part of the curriculum is compounded just before the sex advice Ovid offers at 2.703 ff., when Ovid advises his pupils to go to bed with older women, precisely because they are sexually experienced:

> adde quod est illis operum prudentia maior,
>
> solus et artifices qui facit, usus adest.
>
> Add this, that they have greater insight into the work,[32]
>
> and that they have experience, which alone makes artists.
>
> (*Ars am.* 2.675–76)

The rookie student-lover may feel at a distinct disadvantage when faced with women who know the *artem ... amandi*, while the lover himself is still on the journey towards erotic knowledge laid out in the proem. Indeed, the recall of the proem through reference to *ars* (cf. 1.1 *artem ... amandi*) and *usus* (which looks to 1.29, where Ovid claims that his erotic *usus* informs his work) brings to the fore the reader's lack of skill and experience,[33] which have still not been remedied in sexual terms.[34]

Yet there are good and multiple reasons for Ovid to delay instruction on sex. Solid pedagogical considerations underlie this delay. Sadly, as any teacher knows, if you impart what your students take to be the most important part of your lesson prematurely, you risk losing their interest in the rest of what you have to teach them. Moreover, Ovid insists in several passages in *Ars* 2 that sex ought to be veiled in secrecy:[35] he characterizes it as the mysteries of Venus which should not be profaned, and lays repeated emphasis on the need for silence about this topic.[36] Sex is presented as a private matter between two individuals that should be hidden in the bedroom and behind a closed door: *conueniunt thalami furtis et ianua nostris,/ parsque sub iniecta ueste pudenda latet* (2.617–18), "Bedchambers and a door are suited to our affairs,/ and the part that we should be ashamed of hides under clothes placed over it." Hence it makes sense that it is only in the final forty-four lines of *Ars* 2 that Ovid finally gets round to disclosing sexual secrets.

But the male reader-as-pupil that Ovid constructs for *Ars amatoria* 1-2 is not, as we have already observed, the only reader of these books.[37] Readers of Ovid's earlier collection of first-person elegies, the *Amores*, will be inclined to take with a pinch of salt his professions of the need to maintain a decent silence about matters sexual. Such readers' skepticism will be increased by Ovid's claims that his *Ars* is based on his own experience (*usus*, 1.29), and his repeated references back to situations that had been presented as snapshots of his own love life in his *Amores*.[38] The intimate access that the *Amores* purport to offer into Ovid's personal erotic history includes much more explicit material than is usual for Latin love elegy, making even more outrageous Ovid's punning claim that he has only with proper discretion broadcast his *amores* (or should that be *Amores* capital?):

> nos etiam ueros parce profitemur amores
>
> tectaque sunt solida mystica furta fide.

I sparingly recount even true love affairs/ the *Amores*

and secret love affairs are covered up with solid good faith.

(*Ars am.* 2.639–40)

Moreover, readers of Ovid's *Amores* will be familiar with the teasing delay and pretense of discretion which characterize his treatment of sex in *Ars amatoria* 2: precisely such qualities are found in *Amores* 1.5. For while this poem is in some ways one of the most explicit sex scenes in Latin elegy, it repeatedly swerves away from the detailed description of sex that it has primed its reader to expect.[39] Despite Ovid's frustration of the desires of the reader of *Amores* 1.5 to be told more about his sexual encounter, later elegies in the collection explore in some detail aspects of sex, such as impotence (treated at length in *Am.* 3.7), that Ovid's fellow Roman love elegists either avoid or treat in brief, inexplicit fashion The reader who comes to the *Ars* from the *Amores* might therefore well expect that the sexual instruction that Ovid will offer here will similarly push at elegiac boundaries.

When Ovid finally leads his readers into the bedroom at *Ars* 2.703, expectations are therefore high that he will describe a scene that transgresses the discretion usual for elegy. These expectations are further increased by the parallels between our passage and an earlier, sexually daring poem in the *Amores.* The programmatically placed *Amores* 3.14, the penultimate poem of the collection,[40] provides an extended passage on the bedroom as the (unnamed) locus of sexual delights, the one place that demands sexual naughtiness, and from which *pudor* (or a sense of shame) should be absent:

est qui nequitiam locus exigat: omnibus illum
  deliciis imple, stet procul inde pudor!
hinc simul exieris, lasciuia protinus omnis
  absit, et in lecto crimina pone tuo.[41]
illic nec tunicam tibi sit posuisse pudori

nec femori impositum sustinuisse femur;
illic purpureis condatur lingua labellis,
inque modos Venerem mille figuret amor;
illic nec uoces nec uerba iuuantia cessent,
spondaque lasciua mobilitate tremat!

There is a certain place that demands naughtiness: fill it
with all delights, and let a sense of shame be far away!
As soon as you leave there, immediately let all wantonness be gone,
and leave your faults on the bed.
There, it should not shame you to have placed down your tunic
and to have supported a thigh placed over your thigh;
there, let the tongue be buried in rosy lips
and let passion make love in a thousand ways;
there, don't let sexy sounds and words cease,
and let the bedframe tremble with wanton movement!

(*Am.* 3.14.17–26)

There are several significant similarities between our passages. Both mark off the bedroom as the proper place for sexual activity and touch on the *pudor* associated with sexual conduct, while outlining sex scenes in unusually intimate detail. Thus, a full exploration of this passage from the *Amores* is an important preliminary to our reading of *Ars am.* 2.703 ff.

To contextualize it briefly, this *Amores* passage and its unusually frank sexual material comes within a poem addressed in its entirety to Ovid's unfaithful beloved. As usual, elegy here avoids describing the poet-lover's sexual bliss, as Ovid plays the role of a man so injured by his mistress' public infidelities that he wishes not for her to be faithful, but rather

to spare him the painful knowledge of her indiscretions. This leads Ovid to claim that wantonness is appropriate only to the bedroom, the theme of the lines that are our focus.[42] Scholars have not missed the irony that Ovid's claimed opposition to the broadcasting of sexual activity is undermined by the fact this passage itself contains "more salacious details than anywhere else" in the *Amores* collection.[43] *pudor* is certainly lacking in Ovid's description: although Ovid adheres to elegiac convention in avoiding obscene vocabulary, the passage pushes hard at the boundaries of what is acceptable for elegy to describe.[44]

Lines 21–22 clearly suggest a sexual narrative, via their progress from the removal of the woman's tunic in 21 to the immediate implied sequel of two bodies coming together on the bed in the pentameter. That by line 22 the lovers are already together on the bed is emphasized through the different cases of the word *femur* ("thigh"): following the practice of other authors, Greek and Roman, Ovid often hints at sexual closeness by the repetitive juxtaposition of words for sexually suggestive body-parts in different cases, or "amorous polyptoton."[45] Compare, for example, Tibullus 1.8.25–26: *sed corpus tetigisse nocet, sed longa dedisse/ oscula, sed femori conseruisse femur* ("but it is harmful to have touched a body, and to have given protracted kisses/ and to have joined thigh to thigh"). Yet Ovid goes further. Line 22's addition of *impositum sustinuisse* to the polyptoton of *femur* is far more physically explicit, creating an irresistible physical image of the *puella* under the man, and the reader can therefore picture quite precisely the sexual position.

Ovid's sexual daring perhaps increases in the next line, which can be read as an innocent reference to kissing, although mere kisses seem a rather tame sequel to line 22.[46] Alternatively, line 23 may contain just a hint of obscene double entendre: Ovid's lack of specificity about precisely in which rosy *lips* the tongue should be buried could be suggestive of cunnilingus.[47] Mentions of the tongue and/or licking are common in reference to this

practice,[48] and female genitalia or labia are designated as *labra* ("lips") in at least one late medical writer, Mustio:[49]

> quem uulgo connum appellant. cuius foris labra graece pterigomata dicuntur, latine pinnacula dicta sunt.
>
> Which they call in common usage the "cunt." Its external lips are called *pterigomata* in Greek, *pinnacula* ("little wings") in Latin
>
> (Mustio, p. 9.4–5)

J. N. Adams notes that Mustio's deployment of *labra* in this sense is unparalleled, and depends on the more widely attested use of χείλη (*keile*) by Greek medical writers;[50] he further vigorously disputes Judith Hallett's 1977 identification of a pun on cunnilingus via reference to *labra* and *os* at Martial 1.83.1 on the basis of "an obscure medical calque which is only attested in a very late translation" of Greek medical texts.[51] However, other aspects of Ovid's phrasing here may also subtly gesture towards cunnilingus. The repeated 'l' sounds in 23–24 may enact onomatopoeically the act of licking.[52] The description of the lips as *purpureus* ("rosy") might conceivably look to the woman's sexual arousal,[53] at least on the parallel of *Am.* 1.4.21–22, where the woman who remembers her previous sexual encounters with Ovid flushes with pleasure at the recollection:[54] *cum tibi succurret Veneris lasciuia nostrae,/ purpureas tenero pollice tange genas* ("when the wantonness of our lovemaking comes to your mind,/ touch your rosy cheeks with a tender finger"). However, against this interpretation, it is worth observing that the adjective frequently refers to the face,[55] and that, in the context of *Amores* 1.4, the woman in question might be flushed from drinking at the *conuiuium*.[56] I have also wondered about the word *condatur*, whose connotations of hiding with erotic reference seems slightly inappropriate to a passage the entire point of which is that the usual *pudor* that attaches to sex has no place in the bedroom, where passion can be

indulged with freedom.[57] However, conventional Roman ideas about the shame that cunnilingus brings to its male performer may receive a subtle nod through such vocabulary.[58] Further support for reference to cunnilingus in our passage comes from its wider context, via the preceding description of the bedroom as the place for *omnibus .../ deliciis*, "all delights" (17–18).[59] For while Roman texts typically express disgust at cunnilingus,[60] Ovidian allusion to it as a delight or pleasure would be entirely typical of his realistic, goal-oriented approach to love and sex, and would suggest (as common sense surely dictates) that the "public" view of this practice was not consonant with actual behavior in the privacy of the bedroom.[61] Even broader hints at cunnilingus as one of the options on offer in the bedroom's decent obscurity can be detected in the immediately following line's reference to a thousand modes of lovemaking: *modos Venerem mille figuret amor,* 24.[62] Cunnilingus is one way of making love, and if there is indeed a hint at its pleasures here,[63] Ovid's passage backs up recent arguments that Roman ideas about sexuality are not so focused on phallic penetration as they are often considered to be.[64]

Yet this passage in its entirety is couched as advice to the faithful *mistress* on her behavior in bed with another man. Therefore, if we take the instruction of *condatur* as constituting advice to the mistress on what she should do in bed, the line must be read primarily as a reference to *kissing*: Ovid could hardly advise his mistress to perform cunnilingus. However, the fact that Ovid does not clarify *whose* tongue is at issue here means that the reader may at least *momentarily* be encouraged to understand this vague and broad phrasing as containing a concealed, and always deniable, reference to that much maligned sexual act. Such play with his readers' expectations and with the limits of how far he might go sexually is highly Ovidian; indeed, Alison Sharrock and Duncan Kennedy have provided valuable discussions of precisely such questions of propriety and reader-reception with reference to potential sexual interpretations.[65]

However we are to read the reference to lips in 23, then, in referring at line 24 to a thousand different sexual practices (or positions), Ovid certainly invites his readers' imaginations to get to work in picturing the delights that the bedroom conceals. He provides further fuel for the imagination when describing the effects of what is clearly pleasurable and vigorous lovemaking, given line 25's reference to sounds that both indicate and stimulate sexual pleasure,[66] and line 26's reference to the movement of the bedframe. These two concluding lines increase the impression that this is an implied step-by-step narrative of a sex scene, that progresses from the undressing of the woman (21), through two bodies coming together intimately (22), and foreplay of one kind or another (23), to sexual intercourse in a variety of positions (24), rounded off with what Adams terms "some miscellaneous concomitant events" of intercourse (25–26).[67] Despite (or perhaps because of) some ambiguities in this passage, the privacy of the bedroom is capable of giving rise to highly risqué material.

As should be clear from this parallel and my previous discussion, then, Ovid's movement into the elegiac bedroom at the conclusion of *Ars amatoria* 2 is both much anticipated and heavily freighted. Without further ado, therefore, let us turn to a detailed consideration of this passage's treatment of sex. I provide a text and translation below:

conscius, ecce, duos accepit lectus amantes:
    ad thalami clausas, Musa, resiste fores.
sponte sua sine te celeberrima uerba loquentur,
    nec manus in lecto laeua iacebit iners.
inuenient 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 Lyrneside magnus Achilles,
    cum premeret mollem lassus ab hoste torum.
illis te manibus tangi, Brisei, sinebas,
    imbutae Phrygia quae nece semper erant.
an fuit hoc ipsum, quod te, lasciua, iuuaret,
    ad tua uictrices membra uenire manus?
crede mihi, non est ueneris properanda uoluptas,
    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 uerba ioco.
sed neque tu dominam uelis maioribus usus
    desere, nec cursus anteat illa tuos;
ad metam properate simul: tum plena uoluptas,
    cum pariter uicti femina uirque iacent.
hic tibi seruandus tenor est, cum libera dantur
    otia, furtiuum nec timor urget opus.
cum mora non tuta est, totis incumbere remis
    utile, et admisso subdere calcar equo.
finis adest operi: palmam date, grata iuuentus,
    sertaque odoratae myrtea ferte comae.

Look, the bed as confidant has received two lovers:
Muse, pause at the closed doors of the bedchamber.
Of their own accord without you they will speak frequent words
Nor will the left hand lie inactive on the bed.
The fingers will find what to do in those parts
in which love secretly dips his shafts.
The most valiant Hector long before did this with Andromache
nor was he useful in war alone.
Great Achilles did this with the Lyrnesian captive
when spent from the enemy he pressed on the soft couch.
Briseis, you allowed yourself to be touched by those hands
which were always steeped in Phrygian blood.
Or was it this fact itself, you wanton woman, that pleased you,
that a conqueror’s hands came to your limbs?
Believe me, the pleasure of sex must not be hurried,
but gradually must be enticed forth by slow delay.
When you have found the places where a woman rejoices to be touched,
Don’t let a sense of shame prevent you from touching them.
You will see eyes flashing with flickering radiance,
as the sun often glitters from the clear water.
Moans will come on, a loving murmur will come on,
and sweet groans and words that fit the sport.
But don't you leave your mistress behind using greater sails
nor let her go ahead of you in the race.
Hurry together to the goal: *then* there is complete pleasure,

when, equally overcome, man and woman lie together.
This is the course that you have to keep at, when free leisure time is granted,
and fear does not press on the secret work.
When delay is not safe, it is useful to press on with all the oars
and to give the spur to the horse that's been set off.
There is an end to my task: award me the palm, grateful young men,
and bring myrtle wreaths for my scented locks.

Given the wider context of the bedroom scene of *Ars* 2, it is no surprise that Ovid draws attention to it in a highly self-conscious, loaded manner. The opening of this passage comments subtly on the scene as the culmination of the sexual knowledge and expertise sought by the reader of the *Ars amatoria*. Allusion to the knowledge of the couch that is a privy party or confidant to the affair, through the polyvalent word *conscius*,[68] reminds us that the reader's erotic knowledge was what the *Ars* aimed at from its first couplet. Furthermore, reference to the hand that will not lie *iners* (706) on the bed contains a self-reflexive allusion to the *ars amatoria* in the sense of the lover's expertise, given the word's etymology. The lover-reader at this stage of the *Ars amatoria* does not lack *ars*, and this description of their hand as not being *iners* reflects their learning journey.[69]

Another, no less loaded element is the way in which Ovid draws attention to his (partial) breach of the veil of decency that elegy typically draws over matters sexual. This recalls his emphasis at *Amores* 3.14 on there being no place for *pudor* in the bedroom, while providing a new focus on the generic suitability of frank sexual description.[70] At the start of line 703, the juxtaposed *conscius* and *ecce* underscore just how unusual it is for the reader of elegy to act as a witness to such scenes. It is the *couch* or *bed* that explicitly appears in this role, recalling an epigram by Philodemus which identifies it, and the lamps of the bedroom, as witnesses or confidants to private scenes of lovemaking.[71] Yet the reader is clearly also

implicated as a witness to this scene. *Ecce* reinforces the sense of the reader's voyeurism,[72] and encourages the reader to act as a voyeur to the sex scene that they are invited to visualize, not least because it strongly recalls Ovid's *ecce, Corinna uenit* ("look, Corinna comes"; *Am.* 1.5.9). There, Ovid signals the entrance of his *puella* to one of the most extended bedroom scenes in his elegies, and *ecce* begins the work of constructing the reader of *Am.* 1.5 as a voyeur. The poem forces the reader into that role through its emphasis on the sight of Corinna's naked body,[73] and teasing dynamic of the simultaneous revelation and withholding of sexual information. This dynamic is best summed up by the notorious way in which Ovid cuts that sex scene short, and frustrates expectations of an explicit description of sex, with the abrupt *cetera quis nescit?* ("who doesn't know the rest?"; 1.5.25). While in our passage, *ecce* does not, as in *Am.* 1.5, encourage Ovid's reader to look more closely at the desirable body of a woman, the sense of voyeurism is arguably increased here by the way in which the reader is invited to look at two lovers together on the bed, and implicitly share in its knowledge.

Ovid's construction of the reader of our passage as a voyeur at its very outset colors the entire scene. It also prepares the ground for the instruction to his Muse to halt at the closed doors of the bedroom (704). This command is highly complex. On one level, Ovid is pretending to the *pudor* that he has already identified as suitable for the bedroom; the bed will witness the sexual secrets that follow, but the Muse need not progress any further. Marcus Janka's commentary (ad loc.) provides many parallels in both Ovid and Propertius for *Musa* used as a metonym for the poem or poetic work, and Janka notes that Ovid here satirizes the more expected topos of the poet asking for inspiration, and thereby recalls in particular *Ars am.* 2.15–16.[74] In those lines, Cupid, Venus, and then the muse Erato, are asked to favor Ovid's new task in the second book of keeping the woman that the male lover has won:

> nunc mihi, siquando, puer et Cytherea, fauete,
>
> nunc Erato, nam tu nomen amoris habes.

> Now, if ever, favor me, Cytherea and her boy,
>
> now too Erato, for you have the name of love.

To Janka's comments on Ovid's reversal of the expected poetic demand for inspiration, we might add that Ovid also upsets the expectation that the poet of *epos* will ask the Muses for *information*;[75] Ovid himself, who has claimed to be an experienced lover in the proem to the *Ars*, is thus subtly established as the ultimate authority on sexual lore.

Janka also further, and rightly, interprets line 704 as a comment on the over-exuberance of the subsequent sexual material, comparing the charge against Ovid at *Remedia* 362 that *Musa proterua mea est* ("my Muse is wanton"), and *Ars am.* 3.467–68, where Ovid tells his Muse to draw in her reins, checking the "extravagance"[76] of the immediately preceding passage, and getting his work back on course. Such commentary on and salacious preparation of the reader for the license of the sex scene that follows is undoubtedly *part* of what the command achieves.

However, it is too limiting to take *Musa* here as solely a metonym for Ovid's work; the command suggests a personified Muse, capable of movement and of obeying a poet's instructions.[77] If we understand *Musa* in this way, several other approaches open up. The reader, whose visual imagination is already stirred by *ecce* (703), cannot help but picture the Muse transgressively listening outside the door to what goes on inside, given the following emphasis on the sounds of the bedroom. The very next line refers to the *uerba* spoken in the bedroom; furthermore, at 723–24 Ovid goes into detail about the sweet nothings (or dirty talk) and the sounds of ecstasy of the lovers as matters progress. While the injunction to the Muse may seem, on the surface, to indicate an attempt at maintaining propriety, then, it has the opposite effect in actuality; it makes her complicit in a particularly sordid scene. Support for this reading, and for just how sordid the scene of an audience outside the door for

lovemaking could be, as Martial actualizes the strong potential already there in Ovid, comes from Martial's reference at 11.104.13 ff. to the Phrygian slaves who masturbate outside the door as Hector and Andromache have sex; despite extensive scholarly interest in this epigram's debt to Ovid's pose as the *praeceptor amoris* of *Ars* 3,[78] critics do not note that reference to masturbation in close connection with Hector and Andromache having sex also points to our passage.[79] The Muse is thereby painted as a prurient eavesdropper or a peeping Tom; a voyeuristic scenario familiar from the visual arts of the Roman world in this period,[80] encouraging the reader to reflect uncomfortably upon their own position.

If we take the command of 704 closely with the lines that follow it, then the Muse is implicitly told to stop because there is no need for her aid at this point: 705–8 spell out that the lovers are already capable, of their own accord, of speaking the words and performing the actions suited to the couch. Indeed, instructions to the male lover that are explicitly marked as such are not resumed until lines 717–18, with a formula, *crede mihi*, which draws attention to Ovid's experience and trustworthiness as *praeceptor amoris*,[81] and two emphatically didactic gerundives of obligation (*properanda*, 717, and *prolicienda*, 718). Ovid's suspension and then resumption of his didactic framework is heavily marked. This draws attention to the voyeurism and prurience of these lines; that Ovid departs from his didactic mission to give an extended picture of what happens in the bedroom emphasizes that this is description *for its own sake*. Teaching on this topic is not really required: this is a gratuitous sex scene.

It is typical that Ovid does not specify *why* the lovers need no instruction. A reading of the *Ars* as containing an implied narrative means that the immediately preceding passage offers one reason. We can understand the lover's sexual knowledge as a consequence of Ovid's male pupils having taken the advice of 2.667–702 to pursue an affair with a more mature woman That advice is repeatedly couched in implicitly sexual terms: the agricultural metaphor of *serendus ager* ("a field that must be sown," 668) is a clear allusion to sex,[82] as is

the reference at 673 to bringing *latus et uires operamque* to women ("your bodily strength and vigor and diligence");[83] all three terms are clearly sexual.[84] Ovid blatantly focuses on the sexual advantage that such older women offer at 675–76 and again at 679–82, as he focuses on their sexual experience and knowledge. Thus, the male reader, constructed throughout the first two books of the *Ars amatoria* as an inexperienced lover, can be understood to need no instruction in bed, because he has been a good pupil and taken to heart Ovid's advice to go to bed with a woman who *does* know what to do. This gives our scene an extra sexual frisson.[85]

Continuing the combination of prudery and prurience that we have unpacked as essential elements in Ovid's injunction to the Muse at 704, Ovid's opening picture at lines 705–8 of what the lovers get up to in the bedroom and on the couch is at once *both* decently unspecific *and* suggestively salacious, to the extent that the nature of the sex acts here referred to have been debated. References to fingers finding *quod agant in partibus illis* ("what to do in those parts," 707) are doubly unspecific in referring firstly to sex acts (*quod agant*)[86] and then to the genitals (*partibus illis*) using indirect and vague terminology that is both sexually *and* anatomically inexplicit; I shall return shortly to Ovid's innuendo-laden qualification of "those parts," and the way in which it undercuts the seeming restraint of this phrasing.

Furthermore, Ovid's apparent decency is balanced by repeated references to hands and fingers (706, 707), which must here allude to masturbation; this meaning is emphasized by reference specifically to the left hand, *laeua*, which was identified with masturbation and other "unclean" acts more generally in antiquity.[87] The point is further hammered home by Ovid's insistence on the *movement* of this hand with *nec ... iacebit iners* (706).[88] Masturbation was viewed as a particularly lowly and unromantic act,[89] and is hardly a suitable topic for elegy,[90] yet Ovid is so unspecific here that various interpretations have been proposed. Some, most notably Victoria Rimell, have interpreted Ovid as talking about *mutual*

masturbation,[91] as most have understood him to do in a reference to stolen sexual pleasures that take place under the very nose of the *uir*, husband or legitimate partner, of the *puella*, at a *conuiuium* in *Amores* 1.4.47–48:[92]

> saepe mihi dominaeque meae properata uoluptas
>
> ueste sub iniecta dulce peregit opus.
>
> Often for me and my mistress hurried pleasure
>
> has completed the sweet deed under cover.

Support for Rimell's argument can be found in the parallel circumstances: our passage contains the first sex scene in the *Ars amatoria*, and the first sex scene in Ovidian elegiacs occurs at *Amores* 1.4, even if it often gets overlooked, given readers' tendency to concentrate on the narrative of an afternoon's sexual liaison in Ovid's next poem, *Amores* 1.5. Recall of Ovid's earlier, prominently placed reference to mutual masturbation therefore forges a fitting link between these passages.[93]

References to both male and female experiencing sexual pleasure leading to orgasm at the end of our passage suggest that there must be some mutuality in the sexual acts from at least line 725 onwards. But earlier in this passage, Ovid may refer *solely* to the male partner using his hand to stimulate his female partner. The focus in lines 709–16 is on what the heroes of epic do to their women, and the references to Achilles allude to stimulation by the male of his female partner's genitals. Firstly, the reference to Achilles pressing on the soft couch, worn out from his martial encounters with the enemy, hints that he is *only* capable of stimulating Briseis manually after his previous, manly,[94] exertions. Rimell provides suggestive comments:[95]

> Achilles collapses onto a "soft" couch (*mollis* 712) and is already "knackered" (*lassus* 712): is he too tired to do anything more?

Rimell holds back, however, from spelling out her point about *mollis* as a description of the couch: that is, the word is not being used in its usual sense to designate simply the softness that is suitable to elegy, although that is clearly *part* of what is going on in a scene that takes two epic heroes and describes them instead as lovers, with the most sexually charged innuendo found precisely in the elegiac pentameters which mark the difference between epic and elegy.[96] Rather, Ovid hints that it was not only the *torus* that was soft in such encounters between Achilles and Briseis:[97] the hero manually stimulated her (it is implied) because he was too spent from the exertions of battle to get an erection and penetrate her as a man should.[98] The implication that Achilles was the only one stimulating his partner in this scenario is reinforced in lines 713–16, and particularly the emphatic opening and closing emphasis on Achilles' hands, and on Briseis' perverse pleasure (*iuuaret*)[99] in allowing his killer's hands near her *membra*. While *membra can* refer simply to Briseis' limbs, the fact that the word is used of the genitalia,[100] together with the broader context, suggests that it is *these* that she delighted to have Achilles touch.

Rimell builds on her argument about the manual stimulation that she detects in this passage to further suggest that what we have here is "a foreplay that never ends"; she detects an anti-climax that teases and frustrates the reader in this apparently climactic first sex scene of the *Ars*, and argues that the reader will not reach the consummation that they are expecting, of penetrative vaginal intercourse, until the sex scene in the parallel final 44 lines of book 3. She correctly notes that we have here a typically Ovidian, and indeed highly Barthesian, set-up of frustrated and deferred bliss.[101] Ovid may even comment on his own delay of the readers' gratification at 717–18: his insistence that pleasure should not be hurried, but benefits from teasing delay, refers most immediately to the sexual pleasure that is the topic of the overall passage, but the comment seems self-reflexive.[102] Nevertheless, it should be apparent from our reading of this passage so far that to insist on a single

interpretation of Ovid's writing on the subject of sex risks simplifying what is highly complex.

It seems to me not only possible but also programmatically significant that Ovidian indirection allows his readers to think of *all* of the sex acts thus far raised as possibilities. At this point I ought to say more on the topic of phallic penetration, the option to which, following Ovid, I have devoted the least attention. Even Rimell, who makes an excellent case for Ovid's focus on manual stimulation in this passage, allows that penile penetration is suggested by lines 725–32 and their active images of sex in terms of rowing, and riding a horse, both of which go back to Greek metaphors for penetrative sex, which tend to concentrate on the active role of the oarsman,[103] or rider:[104] that is, the penetrating male lover. Rimell also makes the important observation that this sort of sex is advised only in circumstances where sex must be rushed. But phallic penetration certainly does not seem to be ruled out by any of the vocabulary that Ovid uses from 717 onwards,[105] and it is already hinted at in the image of line 708. While this pentameter's metaphor of the arrows of Cupid *plural* maps neatly onto Ovidian talk of penetration by *digiti* in its immediately preceding hexameter,[106] it is suggestive that Ovid here uses an image that is so phallic; my translation "shafts" aims to capture his innuendo here.[107]

While Ovid is thus unspecific about exactly how sexual pleasure is being both given and taken, he *is* insistent on the pleasures of sex. These are suggested in the opening references to the spontaneously *celeberrima uerba* spoken in the bedroom (705). References to pleasure increase as the scene proceeds: from 715 to 720, each hexameter contains a word denoting pleasure that colors the entire couplet in which it appears, with *iuuaret* (715), *uoluptas* (717), *gaudet* (719).[108] Ovid then becomes more explicit about pleasures, moving from 721 onwards to the visual signs of sexual ecstasy; the sensuality is heightened by the demonstration of pleasure in ways that can be perceived through several senses. The

reference at 721–22 to the woman's eyes gleaming, adduced as a marker of pleasure,[109] hints at another physical indication of her arousal: *liquida* in 722's simile for the eyes' appearance as they glint with ecstasy seems loaded. For at line 686, Ovid had referred to his sexual distaste for a woman who, during the act, is *siccaque de lana cogitat ipsa sua* ("dry herself, and thinks about her wool-working"). The word *sicca* must refer to a woman who is not sufficiently aroused to grow wet with sexual desire; the reader therefore comes primed to view *liquida* as suggesting the physical sign of the woman's arousal that was missing in the earlier passage.[110]

In addition to indications of pleasure that can be observed through sight and touch, Ovid goes on to refer to the sounds of pleasure at 723–24. Here, he repurposes a key piece of generically freighted vocabulary in a manner that indicates the importance of sex for *his* brand of love elegy.[111] The first word that Ovid uses to describe the sounds that indicate erotic pleasure is *questus* (723). With this single word, Ovid threatens to undo the elegiac adherence to decency and the focus on suffering that determine the genre's usual approach towards sex. For *questus* is cognate with the verb *queror*, which is frequently and programmatically used of the *complaints* that elegiac lovers make of their mistress and their unhappy love lives, and which alludes to the origins of the genre in funeral lament.[112] Ovid rewrites this word's connotations of elegiac sorrow to make it synonymous instead with outward signs of erotic arousal and bliss; the usual elegiac groans of pain transform into the moans of ecstasy. This is a breath-taking swerve, an apparent reversal of elegiac norms, as the word which is synonymous with the generic suffering of elegy becomes an indicator of the heights of sexual pleasure rather than the depths of the elegist's despair.

Ovid's reworking of the usual failure and misery of the elegiac genre into the signs of his lover's erotic success by repurposing an important part of its generic vocabulary has been overlooked. But Ovid draws attention to it with a similar, if less generically charged,

rewriting of the misery that is characteristic of lovers in the pentameter that follows. Ovid's third and final description of the noises that accompany this sex scene, *dulces gemitus* (724), likewise reworks the *gemitus*, "groans" that more usually indicate love-sickness.[113] And yet, Ovid's subversion of the characteristic misery of lovers is only partial: for this description overwrites the sounds of misery that the reader of elegy would be inclined to hear in *gemitus* by emphasizing that they are *dulces*. However, that the addition of the adjective is necessary to achieve this effect ensures that the more usual connotations of misery are still heard, if only faintly.[114]

Ovid does not specify *who* produces these moans and groans of pleasure, and many Anglophone translators have assumed that it is the woman, whose sensual indication of her pleasure is the focus of the immediately preceding couplet.[115] Yet the couplet which follows on from these sounds of ecstasy suggests that the man has become a full participant in experiencing sexual pleasure,[116] as Ovid warns his male reader not to rush ahead past his mistress: that is, towards the implied destination of orgasm. This couplet also advises the male pupil not to let his mistress come before him,[117] making it clear that both partners are close to climax. Therefore, it is entirely possible that the sounds of pleasure of 723–24 are produced by both participants, who then lie orgasmically, or perhaps more likely *post*-orgasmically, together at 728.[118]

The simultaneous orgasm that Ovid implies here has attracted scholarly attention from a number of different angles; Sharon James, in exploring the sexual politics of this scene, argued that the erotic parity it suggests is nevertheless undermined: "the desire to give a woman pleasure ... is rather undercut by the pleasure the *praeceptor* himself takes from seeing her conquered by sensation. Female sexual pleasure, in other words, is a sign of male sexual prowess, as will be made clear again in *Ars* 3."[119] Victoria Rimell reaches similar conclusions by linking this scene of erotic parity with the sex scene in *Ars* 3.[120]

Another approach can be suggested by Ovid's generic reappropriation of *questus* (723): this might encourage the reader to look for further vocabulary and imagery that evoke elegy. Elegiac elements in fact pervade the conclusion of the passage, as Ovid treats the subject of orgasms: for the first time in this sex scene, the female partner in pleasure is referred to as *domina* (725), the term that denotes the specifically elegiac mistress,[121] and in the same line, the male lover is advised against using *uelis maioribus*. Such advice is highly appropriate for an elegiac lover, given the genre's programmatic preference for the small-scale over the large, which now apparently extends to the amount of effort that a male lover should put into lovemaking. Elegiac phrasing is also found at 729–32, where Ovid gives his male reader guidance that rewrites his earlier advice on the importance of taking your time: if circumstances demand it, the man must press full steam ahead in pursuit of his sexual pleasure. The precise circumstance which Ovid identifies as calling for such tactics is the highly elegiac scenario of fear urging on the *furtiuum ... opus* (730), "secret work/ sex." This phrase could be taken as a summary of elegiac love: elegy stresses repeatedly the *furtiuus* nature of the affairs it depicts.[122]

This surrounding abundance of elegiac imagery heightens the generic implications in the description of the lovers of line 728 as *pariter uicti* ("equally overcome"),[123] a description which has deservedly attracted attention for its comment on sexual politics.[124] Much less explored, but well worth attention, is its elegiac, generic force. This juncture is doubly generically loaded: firstly, in its deployment of the highly elegiac metaphor of *militia amoris*, or the warfare of love, as the lovers are both *uicti*, "conquered,"[125] through sex.[126] Moreover, Ovid had stressed that elegy is necessarily *unequal* in the programmatic opening to *Amores* 1.1, where Cupid steals a foot of Ovid's putative epic, making the shorter pentameter unequal to the first, hexameter foot: *par erat inferior uersus—risisse Cupido/ dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem* ("the lower line was equal to the first, but Cupid laughed/—so they say—

and stole one of the feet"; 1.1.3–4).[127] That our reference to erotic-elegiac parity appears in the unequal line, the pentameter, makes such generic play even more likely. Ovid refers to a man and a woman as *both* elegiacally-erotically conquered *and* un-elegiacally equal for a moment: the very moment of (or just after) orgasmic rapture. Ovid, then, revels in the paradox that in elegy, the generically and formally *un*equal genre,[128] man and woman can equally have pleasure in sex.[129]

But Ovid does not leave matters there, as the lovers either orgasm or take a post-orgasmic rest: we might imagine that the passage has its conclusion at 732, with the end of the specific advice for the bedroom,[130] but Ovid revisits the scene, and language, of the orgasm in the very next line: *finis adest operi* ("the end of the work is here"; 733). This looks to the imminent conclusion of *Ars* 2, but also shows Ovid's reluctance to move on from the orgasmic sex just described: both nouns are capable of a sexual interpretation. In addition to its primary sense here of "literary work," *opus* often means "sex" (as discussed earlier), and, in both Martial and Juvenal,[131] *finis* hints at the orgasm that is the ultimate *telos* of sex.[132] The potential for seeing a sexual meaning in *finis* here is increased by its combination with *opus*, and Ovid's reference just a few lines earlier to the lover hurrying with his beloved *ad metam* ("to the goal," 727). In this image, *meta* refers not *only* to the turning post in chariot races, but also alludes to its function as marking the *end-point*, the goal, of the race, the victorious conclusion that for Ovid's male charioteer-lovers is sex.[133] Ovid pulls off the same trick again at *Ars* 3.809, when he again transitions from lovemaking to lines which ostensibly conclude the work (although, in a very Ovidian reworking of material, the final instalment, the *Remedia amoris*, is yet to come, with its own revised sex advice; see n151 below). At *Ars amatoria* 3's conclusion, Ovid identifies the end of his poetic work with the end of sex that orgasm represents: *lusus habet finem* (3.809): the game that has a consummation is the play of lovemaking,[134] but Ovid's literary play is also complete.[135] That Ovid uses a word

describes his work as *play* that also means "sex" demonstrates his attitude towards sex. For Ovid, his elegies and sex are necessarily intertwined, as this paper argues. So *finis adest operi* (2.733) insinuates that "an orgasm is present to the sex act/ literary work": Ovid spells out that he has included in his elegy the ultimate *telos* of all erotic activity.

The joke, as scholars have well observed,[136] is on the reader, as this is a false ending: the sex scene that forms the conclusion of book 3 of the *Ars*, in obvious repetition of this passage, is the true climax of Ovid's *Ars amatoria.* Victoria Rimell well observes that it is arguably only in book 3 that the reader finally gets the scene of penile penetration that the phallocentric nature of Roman sex has led them to expect. Rimell provides an insightful analysis of how the "Lover's Guide" for women towards the end of *Ars amatoria* 3 reworks our passage,[137] but misses a few tricks. Before concluding this paper, it is worth examining a little more closely at how the sex scenes at the end of *Ars amatoria* 2 and 3 can work together to contribute to our understanding of Ovidian sex.

The sex scene in *Ars* 3 is highly repetitive of our passage; for our purposes, the most significant areas of repetition are its opening moves,[138] language and genre play, and focus on female sexual pleasure;[139] however, there are also marked and significant differences. *Ars* 3.769–808 focus on what is clearly penetrative, penile intercourse, instructing women on how to present themselves to their best advantage to their male partners, in accordance with their individual physical charms,[140] or flaws,[141] in a range of sexual positions (771–88). Whatever position is adopted, sex should lead to pleasure for both participants: *sentiat ex imis uenerem resoluta medullis/ femina, et ex aequo res iuuet illa duos* ("let the woman feel sexual pleasure, relaxed in the very depths of her marrows,/ and let that act delight two alike," 3.793–94).

The emphasis here on mutual sexual pleasure—the woman's orgasm is strongly implied in the hexameter,[142] with a focus on equal pleasure for both participants in the

unequal pentameter[143]— is again coupled with a focus on the sounds of sex. Ovid again recalls frequent elegiac vocabulary as he describes these sounds with *nec blandae uoces iucundaque murmura cessent,/ nec taceant mediis improba uerba iocis* ("nor let winning sounds and pleasing murmurs cease,/ nor in the midst of the play let naughty words be silent," 795–96),[144] since *blandus* is frequent in elegy; indeed, Ovid uses it to describe the Muse of the genre at *Rem. am.* 379 *blanda pharetratos Elegia cantet Amores,* "let winning Elegy sing of the quivered Loves."[145] However, the connection of orgasm to elegy is not quite so emphatic here as in *Ars amatoria* 2.

Ovid then rapidly switches from a scene of mutual pleasure to the woman who cannot achieve orgasm (3.797), who is advised *dulcia mendaci gaudia finge sono* ("fake sweet joys with lying sound," 3.798). This somewhat undermines Book 2's *dulces gemitus* (724), as the male reader may come to suspect that those orgasmic moans may have been faked too, and Book 2's concentration on the outward indicators of sexual pleasure is further destabilized as Ovid tells women to fake it with their movements (3.802), eyes (3.802), words (3.803), and breathing (3.803);[146] eyes and words indicated (putatively real) pleasure at 2.721–22 and 723–24 respectively.

Ovid then moves to actual, unfakeable signs of female sexual pleasure. I argued above that reference to the "liquid" gleam of the aroused woman's eyes at 2.722 hints at the vagina growing wet with arousal, but Ovid now makes unmistakable reference to this phenomenon as he concludes his instructions to women to fake orgasm: *a pudet, arcanas pars habet ista notas* ("Ah, the shame: that part has its secret signs," 3.804).[147] The shame here is usually read as a reference to Ovid's shame at breaking a taboo in discussing the nitty gritty of female sexual arousal,[148] but there may *just* be a hint for his female audience that the man who has failed to bring a woman to orgasm should feel ashamed.[149]

Taken together, then, the repeated sex scenes in these book-conclusions subtly indicate just how knowledgeable Ovid is in terms of sex. For the marrying of the instructions to men to masturbate their partners in *Ars amatoria* 2 with the encouragement to women "to revel in ... penetrative sex"[150] in *Ars amatoria* 3 fits extremely well with Ovid's third and final goal at *Ars* 1.38: to "make love last for a long time." Ovid's differing advice to the sexes, spread out over two books, achieves this aim by drawing out the act(s) of sex. And not only does it make men wait for the penile consummation that they desire, it also suggests to members of each sex that they should offer to their partners the sexual acts that the opposite sex might find most conducive to orgasm.[151] He thereby encourages couples to stay together—and it is only by examining the conclusions of books 2 and 3 *together* that the reader can understand that this aim has been successfully met.

Finally, the double, repetitive conclusions of the *Ars* with sex scenes forge an implicit link between sex, and Ovid's approach towards the elegiac genre, and to style. The repetition and excess of these parallel sex scenes mirrors both the very nature of elegy (in which the pentameter often repeats the point of the hexameter it lies physically beneath),[152] and the way in which Ovid's brand of elegy takes the repetitive nature of the genre to extremes.[153] These repeated sex scenes also look to Ovid's programmatic insistence that one sexual encounter is never enough, as he ends the sex scene of *Amores* 1.5 with *proueniant medii sic mihi saepe dies* ("may such middays come to me often," 26). Ovid's multiplication of sex scenes in the *Ars* puts me in mind of a striking description, by one of the supreme modern stylists of sex, of the writings of another master of the genre: Alan Hollinghurst comments that Edmund White's stylistic exuberance and insistent, repetitive proliferation of images "translate[s] libido into style."[154] The luxuriance and abundance of Ovid's elegiac style—as demonstrated in the double conclusions to the *Ars amatoria,* and the loaded elegiac language and imagery

they use to describe sex, which confuse sex with writing about it—is also irresistibly, inextricably linked to sex and the programmatic part that it plays in Ovid's erotic elegies.

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*Earlier versions of this paper were delivered at seminars in Cambridge in 2017, Durham in 2018, and Manchester in 2020; I am grateful to all attendees who provided useful feedback and helped to improve this piece. I am also grateful to Roy Gibson and Ioannis Ziogas for insightful comments on an earlier draft, and to *TAPA*'s anonymous readers—and above all, its editor—for their generous and constructive input. Thanks are also due to Erika Weiberg, who generously allowed me to consult a copy of her forthcoming work, and to my PhD student, Joe Watson, who acted as research assistant as I prepared a draft for publication, and offered many useful comments and suggestions. Possibly my biggest thanks, though, are owed to Wendy Pearson and to Jess Stacey, who helped me in numerous and vital ways during the disruption caused by Covid-19 in the period in which I completed this paper.

[1] On the many barriers to the fulfilment of elegiac love, see e.g., James 2003: 111.

[2] Connolly 2000: 87.

[3] E.g., Hinds 1987, 103–4.

[4] Zimmermann Damer 2019: 135–37 usefully comments on how elegiac decorum/ euphemism is in tension with elegy's self-characterization as "sexy poems for sexy young people" (136).

[5] Henderson 1999: 93–113, 181–201 is an exhilarating guide to the unrestrained approach to sexuality and lack of decorum in these genres.

[6] Zimmermann Damer 2019: 133–60 provides an excellent analysis of how Roman elegists depict sexual activity.

[7] Adams 1982: 224. Cf. Keith 2012: 297 on how "Ovid's elegy embodies a carnal physicality alien to that of Tibullus and Propertius"; Sharrock 2013: 151.

[8] Ibid., vii.

[9] Ibid., 3.

[10] Connolly 2000: 75 attributes elegy's "artful intertextuality of style" to "its preoccupation with the absence of love rather than its pleasures"; she discerns a political thrust to elegy's treatment of sexual pleasure, reading elegy as an elitist genre which disavows the body to demarcate its poets from the masses, their bodies, and desires. This interpretation could be strengthened by reference to Ovid's frequent observations on the banality of passion: e.g., *Amores* 1.5.25 *cetera quis nescit?* ("who doesn't know the rest?"), 3.7.12 (the *publica uerba*—i.e., customary words spoken in the bedroom).

[11] Morgan 2003: 68 refers to Ovidian epic as "given to puerile sexual humour." Compare Hinds 1988: 6 on "a broad tendency amongst critics to draw back at moments when they are about to treat Ovid as a complicated poet"; the passage that prompts Hinds' observation is *Amores* 1.5, the most famous Ovidian sex scene.

[12] The *pudor* that Adams 1982 displays was necessary in a ground-breaking work of scholarship, which ran the risk of being identified with 19th-century works on ancient sex. Many of these could be classified as pornography as well as (or instead of) scholarship, and several are used as source texts by Adams: for example, Forberg 1824 (on Forberg's pornographic affiliations and reception, see e.g., Orrells 2015: 65–99).

[13] Hinds 1998: 131 notes that the "logic of Ovid's start to finish approach" brings the reader to the bedroom at this point.

[14] Sharrock 1994: 20 discusses the *meta* at *Ars am.* 2.727 as the "turning post" that allows the work to end (temporarily) and to change direction, as *Ars am.* 3 addresses women.

[15] James 2003: 205–7; Rimell 2006: 89–94.

[16] Henderson 2006.

[17] Thus, much valuable work on Roman sexuality comes from commentators: e.g., Williams 2004; Kay 1985.

[18] Shuttleworth Kraus 2017, esp. 4–5.

[19] Many important studies of Roman sexuality (and its depiction in elegy) have been published in the last few decades: an early and important publication is Hallett/ Skinner 1997, and many other relevant works are noted below. Given the common Roman conception of sexuality as concerned with domination, it is little surprise that the language of sex in Roman authors is used as a metaphor for the workings of patriarchal and hierarchical Roman society: see Skinner 2005: 192–239. This paper therefore considers Ovid's writing about sex in this light; see further above. On how sexual activity constitutes identity for the elegiac lover (and Ovid, above all), see Zimmermann Damer 2019: 139–73.

[20] My text is taken from the most recent OCT for the *Ars amatoria* and *Amores* (with minor changes to punctuation). All translations are my own, unless noted otherwise. I translate *tero* as "hugged" to bring out the erotic innuendo of the verb (literally "rub"), used broadly for a range of sexualized acts: Adams 1982: 183, 219.

[21] Sex as the lover's goal is made explicit at *Ars am.* 1.453: *hoc opus, hic labor est, primo sine munere iungi* ("this the task, this is the toil: to bed her with no overheads"; this excellent translation is from Myerowitz Levine 2006: 268); the Virgilian grandeur of this task gives it particular emphasis. Ovid's references to the unbridled physical desires of women—e.g., *Ars* 1.277–82, 341–42; for the motif, cf. Prop. 3.19 (particularly 1–2) and Juv. 6—should also leave his male pupils in no doubt that sex plays a part in ensuring long-lasting erotic success.

[22] For the impact of Philaenis and other Greek writers of erotodidactic on the *Ars*, see Gibson 2003: 15–17. Commentators such as Vessey 1976: 82 cannot be correct in asserting that the *Ars* is anti-Philaenis.

[23] Sharrock 2006.

[24] For readers and reading in the *Ars amatoria*, see Sharrock 1994: 5–20; James 2008.

[25] Sharrock 2006: 36.

[26] Ibid., 36n20 remarks that "It is abundantly clear that the affair was consummated long before," noting that the advice to use sex as a "cure" for the mistress' anger at sexual indiscretion (see above) "implies a well-established sexual relationship"; she does not comment on the other passages I discuss above.

[27] For *cetera* as a sexual euphemism, cf. *Am* 1.5.25: *cetera quis nescit* ("the rest, who does not know?") and 3.2.84: *hoc satis est, alio cetera redde loco* ("this is enough for now, give me the rest in another place"). Greek uses the same euphemism: e.g., *AP* 5.128.3 τὰ λοιπά; Höschele 2006: 80–81.

[28] With *pleno ... uoto* (671), cf. *plena uoluptas* (2.727). *Vota* containing unfulfilled sexual desires occur when Venus perceives the hidden subtext of Pygmalion's prayers (*Met.* 10.277–78: *sensit … Venus …/ uota quid illa uelint*; "Venus felt what the prayers really meant"), which Pygmalion fulfils after the statue is made flesh (*Met.* 10.288: *rursus amans rursusque manu sua uota retractat*; "again and again the lover grasps his desires with his hand").

[29] Zuckerberg 2018: 132 notes that *gaudet*, used at *Ars am.* 1.676 of women rejoicing at being raped, is often a euphemism for female orgasm.

[30] The quotation continues "... or at least *Amores* 1.5," referring to another notoriously coy Ovidian sex scene: Sharrock 2006: 36n20.

[31] The lack of teaching on sexual techniques is made more glaring by Ovid's focus on what might be seen as unnecessary minutiae: e.g., maintaining one's fingernails (1.519) and wearing shoes neither too loose nor too tight (1.515–16).

[32] For the sexual connotations of *opus* here, see Janka 1997: 469 ad loc.

[33] Ovid's insistence on the male reader's lack of experience ignores the realities of Roman society, where elite men could have (non-consensual) sex with their slaves, male and female. Elsewhere, Ovid is more realistic about slaves as a sexual resource: e.g., at *Am.* 2.7 and 2.8, he blackmails Corinna's slave, Cypassis, into further sexual encounters by threatening to

reveal their past sexual activity (see John Henderson 1991, 1992; Zimmerman Damer 2019: 103–10). *Ars am.* 1.375, looking back to these paired poems, considers *an hanc ipsam prosit uiolare ministram* ("whether it's helpful to rape your target's maid").

[34] Indeed, the frustration of the expectations of the reader is increased by the fact that the sexual aspect of Ovid's third and final learning outcome is implicitly emphasized at the start of book 2. There, Ovid reminds his readers that *non satis est uenisse tibi me uate puellam:/ arte mea capta est, arte* ***tenenda*** *mea est* (2.11–12): "It is not enough that the girl has come to you (with me as your prophet):/ she has been captured by my art, she has to be held with my art"; as Marcus Janka 1997: 486 nicely observes, *Ars am.* 2.703 ff. provides a witty realization of this aim of *holding* the girl in a very concrete, physical sense, albeit this is delayed until the end of the book.

[35] See, e.g., the use of the myth of Venus's affair with Mars (*Ars am.* 2.561–600) to demonstrate that it is better to keep indiscretions secret than to publicize them. The word *celare* ("hide") occurs on nine occasions in the *Ars* in connection with this theme, and the concept of *pudor* 18 times. This theme also plays out in the first-person elegies, especially *Am.* 3.14 (see further above).

[36] See *Ars am.* 2.601–14, especially 607: *praecipue Cytherea iubet sua sacra taceri* ("Venus especially demands that there is silence about her rites").

[37] Sharrock 1994, esp. 102–7, treats readers and reading in the *Ars am.*

[38] For example, the *doctrina* about seducing women at the Circus (*Ars am.* 1.135–70) plays out almost identically to the plot of *Am.* 3.2, down to minutiae such as removing dirt from the *puella*'s dress (*Ars am.* 1.149–50; *Am.* 3.2.41–42) and being mindful of the rivals sitting in the rows behind (*Ars am.* 1.157–58; *Am.* 3.2.33–34). Again, the passage on *conuiuia* at 1.229 ff. recalls *Am.* 1.4, and Ovid's advice warning men against sex with their mistress' *ancilla* at

375–80 prompts the reader to recall the way in which his clandestine affair with Corinna's hairdresser, Cypassis, was uncovered by Corinna at *Am.* 2.7 and 8.

[39] McKeown 1989: 104 notes "With the brief question *cetera quis nescit?* in the final hexameter, Ovid abruptly disappoints our expectations of further revelations"; McKeown's characterization of readers' expectations as "ours" shows the extent to which Ovid has succeeded in arousing his readers' desire for sexual knowledge.

[40] On 3.14 as containing "one of the most explicit descriptions of elegiac sexual activity" that "shows Ovid's ability to outdo the prior elegiac tradition, from Catullus to his own *Amores*," see Zimmermann Damer 2019: 128–30 (quotations at 128).

[41] This couplet anticipates a series of comments in the *Ars* which command that the public and private spheres remain impermeable: cf. e.g., 3.227–34. *Amores* 3.14.20 also anticipates various passages in the *Ars* in which Ovid tries to limit the leakage between the behaviour expected of the lover and the standards of "normal" society: compare e.g., *Ars am.* 1.637–44, 2.271–72. I am grateful to Roy Gibson for this point.

[42] One might compare the way in which sexual activity was seen as appropriate to the brothel: e.g., Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.31–35.

[43] Martelli 2013: 66; Ziogas (forthcoming). For poems on the secrecy/ privacy of the bedroom which themselves breach that privacy, cf. *AP* 5.127 and 128 (by the Augustan epigrammatist Marcus Argentarius).

[44] My comments draw on and develop the brief and necessarily more evasive explication of this passage for AS level school pupils (that is, 16–17 year old high school students in the UK) in Ingleheart/ Radice 2011: 65–71.

[45] Wills 1996: 202–4.

[46] Indeed, kissing features rather as a *preliminary* to joining the thighs together at *Am.* 3.7.9–10: *osculaque inseruit cupida luctantia lingua/ lasciuum femori supposuitque femur* ("she

implanted closely entwined kisses with her desiring tongue,/ and she placed her wanton thigh beneath my thigh").

[47] Not long before his death, John Moles asked me whether I was aware of any interpretations of the conjunction of the tongue and lips in this line as alluding to cunnilingus; we had no further discussion on this issue, but I wish to acknowledge that he anticipated my thinking.

[48] For the phrase *cunnum lingere*, see Adams 1982: 134–36. For emphasis on the *lingua* performing cunnilingus, compare Mart. 11.61.1, 9–10 (where *cunni*, "cunts," 9, are told to rejoice that the inveterate cunnilinctor Nanneius is unable to raise his *linguam ... fututricem*, "fornicating tongue," 10), 11.85.1–2 (*lingua/ dum lingis*, "the tongue,/ while you were licking").

[49] Usually agreed to be the 6th <sc>c.e.<sc> author of *Gynaecia* who translated the works of the late first/ early 2nd century <sc>c.e.<sc> Soranus of Ephesus into Latin.

[50] Adams 1982: 99–100, citing Sor. *Gyn.*, p. 183.18 Rose and Hipp. *Mul.* 1.90.2.

[51] Ibid., 100n1.

[52] Cf. Auson. *Epigr.* 87.7, where the Greek letter Λ (lambda) is used to hint at the verb λείχω ("I lick") in an overtly sexual context. Auson. *Epigr.* 82–87 (and particularly 85) frequently utilise paranomastic techniques to suggest licking.

[53] Visible through the flushing of the genitalia rather than the facial lips; for Ovid's interest in the signs of female arousal as manifested in the genitalia, see further above.

[54] And/ or *pudor* (another conceivable response to *lasciuia*), which often shows on the face: e.g., *Am.* 2.5.34 *conscia purpureus uenit in ora pudor* ("rosy shame came to her guilty face"); Virg. *Aen.* 2.540–42 *Achilles/ … iura fidemque/ supplicis erubuit* ("Achilles blushed at the rights and honor of the suppliant"); Barton 2001: 224–28.

[55] E.g., *Am.* 1.8.22, 2.5.34, *Tr.* 4.3.70.

[56] Compare, e.g., *Ars am.* 1.232, 2.316.

[57] In a bold article that links the Lesbia of Catullus 5 with oral sex, Fontaine 2008 suggests that Ovid picks up on Catullus 5.12 with *Ars am.* 1.488–90, where men are advised to communicate in hidden, ambiguous ways with their ladyloves; hidden reference to cunnilingus in Ovid's instructions to his girl would constitute another example.

[58] Cf., e.g., Gal. *Simp. Med*. K 12.10, p 249**,** Mart. 7.67 and esp. 15–16; Richlin 1992 [1983]: 26–30. Krenkel 2006: 265–302 analyzes the Roman idea that oral sex polluted the mouth; see 279–80 for those who performed cunnilingus eating strong-smelling foods to disguise the smell that this practice was believed to impart to the cunnilinctor's mouth (cf., e.g., Mart. 12.85). Levin-Richardson 2019: 107 discusses a graffito (*CIL* 4.2257) which may suggest that the client at a brothel was shamed for his unusual public performance of cunnilingus.

[59] For specifically sexual usages of *deliciae* in a variety of senses, see Adams 1982: 196–97. My interpretation is supported by line 20's instruction to the lover to leave their *crimina* on the bed, which must (similarly) encourage lovers to do in the privacy of the bedroom what is regarded as a *crimen* by normal societal standards. Similarly vague reference to all kinds of crimes vel sim. is found in Cicero's accusation that Q. Apronius was a cunnilinctor: *Verr.* 2.3.9.23.

[60] See e.g., Mart. 7.67, where Philaenis' performance of cunnilingus comes as the climax of a series of obscene practices.

[61] Cf. e.g., Krenkel 2006: 295–97.

[62] Alternatively, *figuret* might hint at sexual *positions* (for *figurae* with this sense, compare e.g., *Ars. Am.* 3.771–72, *CP* 63.17, and esp. the similar phrasing at *Ars am.* 2.679).

[63] Miller 2013: 54 posits a similarly veiled allusion at Tib. 1.2.85–87: *non ego, si merui, dubitem procumbere templis/ et dare sacratis oscula liminibus,/ non ego tellurem genibus perrepere supplex/ et miserum sancto tundere poste caput* ("if I deserve it, may I not hesitate to throw myself down at her temples,/ and to give kisses/my little lips to her sacred

threshold,/ and to crawl over the earth as a suppliant with my knees,/ and to strike my wretched head against the holy door"). Miller comments: "The possibility of an erotic double entendre is not to be ruled out in the image of the poet on his hands and knees kissing the threshold to the temple of Venus"; moreover, Tibullus's hint that he might hesitate to perform such worship fits better with Miller's interpretation than a more literal reading, which is at odds with Tibullus's highly religious self-presentation in 1.1; *dubitem* would parallel *condatur* in our passage.

[64] Kamen/ Levin-Richardson 2018 provide an important and provocative re-evaluation of the phallic "penetration paradigm" that has dominated much modern discussion of Roman sexuality.

[65] Kennedy 1993: 57–63 is excellent on the pervasive sexual undertones and witty (yet deniable) double entendres in Ovid's *Amores*, including the phallic possibilities of the rising/ falling elegiac pentameter at *Am.* 1.1.17–18; cf. Sharrock 1995.

[66] *iuuantia* must refer primarily to the sexy talk that "delights" (cf. e.g., *Ars* 2.159; these two Ovidian examples are the only uses of *iuuo* in this neuter plural substantive sense that are uncovered by a PHI search), but it also "helps" the sexual scene along by stimulating: cf. *Am.* 3.7.12 *praeterea publica uerba iuuant* (to combat Ovid's impotence, his partner offers, in addition to various stimuli "also the well-worn words that help"), Mart. 11.104.11–12 *nec motu dignaris opus nec uoce iuuare/ nec digitis* ("and you do not deign to help out with the task at hand with a movement or a voice/ or your fingers").

[67] Adams 1982: 195 notes only the shaking of the bed (with references) and the slightly different panting that is "an often mentioned accompaniment of intercourse." For the vocabulary of orgasm that is *not* found in Adams, see further above.

[68] Pianezzola/ Baldo/ Cristante 1991: 230, commenting on *Ars am.* 1.354's reference to the *ancilla* (maidservant) as the *tacitis conscia fida iocis* ("faithful confidante to your secret sport"), a clear parallel for the sense of *conscius* in our passage, note that *conscia* is a calque on the Greek συνίστωρ. This word describes the lamp that observes the lovemaking in the bedrooms of *AP* (Philodemus) 5.4.1 and 5.5.1.

[69] The paradox that the lover's hand does not lack *ars* even when the Muse is not there to instruct them is part of the larger paradox of Ovid's refusal to provide erotodidactic advice at this juncture, discussed above. Janka 1997: 488 ad loc. interprets *iners* as "sine arte" in the sense "ohne versierte Tätigkeit."

[70] Martelli 2013: 72 notes how each of the books of *Ars* 2 and 3 "ends on a note of heightened narrative excitement as Ovid knowingly defies elegy's characteristic disinclination to represent the sexual act," quoting 2.703–4 and 3.769–68, and referring to Barthes on the "narrative short-circuit" created by excess sexual/ textual energy.

[71] *AP* (Philodemus) 5.4.5-7: Τὸν σιγῶντα, Φιλαινί, συνίστορα τῶν ἀλαλήτων/ λύχνον ἐλαιηρῆς ἐκμεθύσασα δρόσου,/ ἔξιθιν ("Philaenis, once you've got the lamp drunk with dewy oil, the lamp which is the silent confidant of our mysteries, get out"); in reworking this poet (active in Naples in the late Republic, and a contemporary of Catullus and Cornelius Gallus), Ovid follows predecessors such as Propertius, Tibullus and Virgil. For more on Ovidian and other responses to Philodemus, see e.g., Newlands 2016. In addition to noting Ovid's response to Philodemus, Brandt 1902: 122 ad loc. and Janka 1997: 586 also cite the relevant parallel of Prop. 2.15's related beatification of the bed on which Propertius experiences transports of sexual delight in his most explicit description of his own lovemaking.

[72] Volk 2002:182, commenting on how this scene gives the impression of meeting the current situation of Ovid's students, notes only that *ecce* is "vivid."

[73] Note especially, repetition of *uidi* at 1.5.19 and 23, bookending descriptions of various parts of her body.

[74] Janka 1997 does not note that Ovid thereby performs a strongly closural move, since many invocations of the Muses/ a Muse occur at the opening and closing of works.

[75] Compare e.g., Hom. *Od.* 1.1 ff., Virg. *Aen.* 1.8 ff.; Murray 1981: 90–92, 1983–10.

[76] Gibson 2003: 289–90 ad loc.

[77] In Ovid's 38 invocations to a *Musa*, only here and at *Ars* 3.467–8 (*supprime habenas,/ Musa, nec admissis excutiare rotis*; "press down on the reins,/ Muse, and don't shake off the speeding wheels") does the Muse seem to have this physical quality.

[78] Hinds 1998: 130–35, 2007, Watson 2005: 67–68, Janka 2006: 292–96, Lavigne 2008: 303–8, Öhrman 2013.

[79] Compare *Ars* 2.709–10 on Hector and Andromache as sexual partners.

[80] See Clarke 1998 passim (esp. 88).

[81] Janka 1997: 493 *ad loc.*

[82] For agricultural metaphors for sex (and reproduction), see Brown 1987: 240–41 on Lucr. 4.1107. Ovid makes much use of agricultural metaphors for the enterprise of the lover in *Ars* and *Remedia* (*Ars am.* 1.349–50, 2.351–52, *Rem. am.* 173–74)—however, until the *Remedia*, most of these metaphors are not so obviously sexualized.

[83] The translation is from the Loeb. For *latus* as the site of sexual vigor and its evocation of sex through reference to a body part that is close to the genitals, see Pichon 1991 [1902], s.v. *latus*; Adams 1982: 49, 90; McKeown 1989: 227 on *Am.* 1.8.48. *uires* evokes sex through its evocation of specifically *manly* strength (compare e.g., *Am.* 1.8.47 with McKeown 1989, 226 ad loc.); for the sexual sense of *opera*, see Adams 1982: 157.

[84] So Janka 1997: 469 ad loc., citing as a parallel *Am.* 2.10.25–26.

[85] Readers have apparently overlooked this, linking this phenomenon instead to the idea that sex is so natural that it needs no teaching, with reference to 2.467–92 (on primitive people and sex) and particularly 479–80: *quid facerent, ipsi nullo didicere magistro;/ arte Venus nulla dulce peregit opus* ("they learned what to do with no teacher;/ Venus completed her sweet work with no art"). These lines have been read as a "Lucretian-style pseudo-scientific history of creation, where sex is the great civilizing force" (Sharrock 1994: 234; for discussion of the passage and its place in the poem, see Myerowitz 1985: 48–57).

[86] *quod* is highly unspecific; *ago* is found with a sexual sense (perhaps to be translated as "I perform a sexual act"?) in several authors after Ovid (Adams 1982: 205, listing no Ovidian examples, although it certainly can carry this weight elsewhere in the *Ars am.*, e.g., 2.625: *at nunc nocturnis titulos imponimus actis*, "but now we erect plaques to our night-time deeds"): cf. e.g., Juv. 6.58–59 *nil actum in montibus aut in/ speluncis* ("no sexual act was performed in the mountains or in the caves")

[87] See Adams 1982: 209, who cites as references to masturbation our example of this motif, and Lucil. 307, *Priap.* 33.6, Mart. 9.41.1–2, 11.73.4; *Am.* 2.15.12 with McKeown 1998 ad loc.; Grewing 1997: 189 on Mart. 6.23.3; Krenkel 2006: 173–203 (esp. 177–78); Brandt 1902, 123 *ad loc*. There seems to be implicit contrast between the left hand that masturbates, and the right hand that achieves martial, public deeds when Ovid refers to Achilles' heroic *dextra* at *Ars am.* 2.736.

[88] McKeown (forthcoming) on 3.7.15 cites as parallels for *iners* in context of impotence *Rem.* 779–80 *fecit Atrides,/ quod si non faceret, turpiter esset iners* ("the son of Atreus did what he did [i.e., had Briseis sexually], because if he hadn't, he would have been shamefully impotent"), Cat. 67.26, Hor., *Epod*. 12.17, *Priap*. 83.4 *nec uiriliter/ iners senile penis extulit caput* ("lacking manliness, the impotent penis did not lift its elderly head"), 38, *TLL* 7.1.1312.71ff.

[89] Hence the instruction at 719–20 that the man should not feel *pudor* at giving his woman pleasure by touching her sexually may refer to him masturbating her, given that this act is more likely to provoke *pudor* and indeed, the woman's sexual delight, than penile intercourse (see above).

[90] There are no secure examples of reference to masturbation in the other love elegists: McKeown 1987: 96 notes as a possible parallel for *Am.* 1.4.47–48 (which must surely be understood as a reference to *mutual* masturbation, although other acts have been suggested; see above) Prop. 1.4.13–14 *quae/ gaudia sub tacita discere ueste libet* ("joys which it is a pleasure to learn beneath silent bedsheets"; more likely a reference to full intercourse under bedcovers, given the romantic context). Adams 1982: 208 flirts with the idea that Tib. 1.6.5–6 (*iam Delia furtim/ nescioquem tacita callida nocte fouet*, "Now crafty Delia stealthily embraces somebody or other in the silent night") refers to masturbation, but I am not convinced.

[91] The argument at Rimell 2006: 91–92 is explicitly framed as a counter to a critical tendency to assume that this passage depicts the full intercourse that a Romanocentric focus on the importance of the phallus and penetrative sex has primed critics to expect.

[92] McKeown 1989: 77.

[93] Compare also 1.4.47's *properata uoluptas* and the instruction here at 717 that *non est ueneris properanda uoluptas*; 729–32's reference to pressing on in circumstances where sex has to be hidden also seems to look back to the scenario of *Am.* 1.4 and specifically its reference to hurried, hidden sex.

[94] I use the word designedly: the point to the descriptions of *fortissimus* Hector, *non solum bellis utilis*, and to *magnus* Achilles are that they are great martial heroes—who are also great in bed, and so perform or prove their manhood and heroic status in two different spheres. There may be a further, smutty joke in *magnus* Achilles, particularly given that our passage

has room for phallic imagery: see above. Cf. e.g., *Met.* 11.265: *[Peleus Thetin] ingentique implet Achille* ("Peleus filled Thetis up with his huge Achilles").

[95] Rimell 2006: 91–92.

[96] For this sort of metrical/generic play, see Barchiesi 1993: 162.

[97] My doctoral student, Joe Watson, reminds me of the possible relevance here *torus*' sense of "swelling" or "protuberance," suggesting that there may be a double entendre in Ovid's representation of Achilles' *torus* ("bed") as *mollis*. For a possible use of *torus* as synonym for *penis*, see Sen. *Ep.* 90.4; it is used for non-sexual swelling of the male genitalia at Cels. *Med.* 7.18.10.

[98] For masturbation as practised by those who cannot manage penetrative sex, cf. e.g., Mart 2.43.14 (although the issue here is Martial's poverty, not his impotence); masturbation is the aroused would-be lover's last resort, a compensation for the failure to get penetrative sex, at Mart. 11.73. For *mollis* of those unable to get an erection, cf. Hor. *Epod.* 12.16. On elegiac masculinities, which challenged the usual model, see Zimmermann Damer 2019: 13–19.

[99] For this verb of *sexual* pleasure, cf. e.g., *Am.* 1.10.31.

[100] Adams 1982: 46 notes that it is usually used of the male organ but provides exceptions: Auson. *Epigr.* 78.4, 87.3, and perhaps Lucr. 3.346. The latter may refer to female genitalia, but it more likely forms a hendiadys with *aluus* to connote the womb—see Kenney 2014: 122.

[101] Cf. Heyworth 1992 on Ovid's *ars moratoria*.

[102] Ovid is interested in his reader's pleasure, as is shown by *legisse uoluptas* ("a pleasure to have read") at *Am.* Epigr. 3, where sexual connotations can probably be heard in *uoluptas* , as often: cf. e.g., Prop. 1.10.3, Ov. *Am.* 1.4.47, 3.4.31, *Ars* 2.623, Thomas 1988 on Virg. *G.* 3.130, Pichon 1902:300, Adams 1982: 197–98.

[103] For the male oarsman in sex, see e.g., *AP* (Hedylus or Asclepiades) 5.161, (Meleager) 5.204, (Antiphilus of Byzantium) 9.415, (Philippus of Thessalonica) 9.416; cf. Jeffrey Henderson 1991: 161–64. For sex as rowing or sailing, see Adams 1982: 167.

[104] For the metaphor of the rider, cf. e.g., Ar. *Vesp.* 500–2, *Lys.* 59–60, *AP* 5.202; Janka 1997: 501 ad loc. Janka also gives examples of Roman descriptions of the figure: e.g., Hor. *Sat.* 2.7.50, Ov. *Ars am.* 3.777–78 (see with Gibson 2003: 393 ad loc.; note that the woman is the rider there – another indication of Ovid's interest in erotic parity? See further above), 786; Adams 1982:165-66.

[105] The use of *tango* (719, 720), which Rimell 2006: 91 implicitly limits in its reference to the touching done *by hands*, need not be so limited; the verb is often used as a delicate euphemism for "sex" in general, without specific reference to manual stimulation (see Adams 1982: 185–87). Rimell understands *iacent* (727) as meaning that the lovers are "potentially both lying down flat at the moment of *plena uoluptas*" (726), which she clearly sees as a sexual position that better fits mutual masturbation; yet Ovid may well refer in his pentameter to the lovers lying together post-coitally, immediately after the orgasm of the preceding hexameter. Ovid would thus reprise his reference to lovers both lying shagged out after sex in *Am.* 1.5.25: *lassi requieuimus ambo* ("worn out, we both took a breather").

[106] Adams 1982: 208 suggests that as a double entendre hinting at masturbation, Apuleius's *beatus, cui permiseris illuc digitum intingere* ("lucky the man who you allow to dip his finger in there," *Met.* 2.7.19) may derive from the Greek *Asinus*-novel, comparing ἐνεβάψατο at ps.-Lucian *Asin.* 6. More likely, Apuleius owes this phrasing to Ovid's *digiti .../ ... tingit*.

[107] Janka 1997: 489 ad loc. observes the phallic connotations of *spicula*, which he sees as supported by context and phrasing; such connotations also fit frequent metaphors taken from weaponry to indicate the male member: cf. Adams 1982: 19–22 (he does not include *spicula* in our passage among his examples).

[108] Ovid may thus mimic the way in which sexual pleasure builds up towards a climax.

[109] For eyes indicating orgasm, cf. Juv. 7.241–42 (not adduced by Janka ad loc.); Adams 1982: 143.

[110] I compare above *Ars am.* 3.804. Cf. the description of a female orgasm at the Ovidian *Her.* 15.133–34 *ulteriora pudet narrare, sed omnia fiunt,/ et iuuat, et siccae non licet esse mihi* ("it shames me to tell further, but everything is done, and it delights, and I'm not able to be dry"; on the poem's authenticity, see Tarrant 1981, Rosati 1996, Thorsen 2014: 15–16). See also Lindheim 2003: 169–70. Cf. Mart. 11.16–8–9.

[111] Sex also seems to have played a bigger part in Cornelius Gallus's elegy than in most surviving examples of the genre, at least on the evidence of Propertius 1.10 and 1.13 (if Gallus there is to be identified with the elegist): see e.g., Cairns 2012: 65–66.

[112] Saylor 1967: 142–49; Kaufhold 1997: 95.

[113] Janka 1997: 496 notes that *gemitus* refers more usually to mourning and lamentation, but also to the sounds produced by love-sickness, giving among other examples Virg. *Aen.* 4.395, 4.409, Ov., *Her.* 6.153, 8.107. Possibly these sounds are also spurs to sexual pleasure, given the *apta uerba* of the pentameter — for which, see above.

[114] The oxymoronic combination and ordering of *dulces gemitus* also alludes to Sappho's famous characterisation of Eros as γλυκύπικρος ("bittersweet"; fr. 130.2); Sappho's compound word is split by the Roman poet into two separate words, which he uses to describe the positive side of the experience, but Ovid still recalls the overwhelming focus on the *negatives* in his model.

[115] E.g., "Then she will complain, then she will lovingly murmur, and sweetly sigh, and utter words that fit the sport" (Mozley/Goold 1979: 115); "She'll moan and gasp, murmur words of sweet endearment/ Well matched to the sport you're playing, heave soft sighs" (Green 1982: 213); "Soon she'll be murmuring, moaning, gasping, saying/ Words in tune with the

instrument you're playing" (Michie 1993: 67); "then she'll moan, and murmur lovingly,/ sweet groans and words that fit the sport" (Rimell 2006: 91). Contrast "Then plaintive tones and loving murmurs rise/ And playful words and softly sighing sounds" (Melville 2008: 127) and "there will also be moans, there will be a loving murmur,/ sweet groans, and words appropriate to the game" (Hejduk 2014: 127).

[116] Ovid typically does not make it clear at what stage the man's pleasure becomes an issue: sex happens between the lines in Ovid, from, e.g., *Am.* 1.5, where we cut from bodies pressed together to the aftermath of sex, to *Met.* 3.1–2 *Iamque deus posita fallacis imagine tauri/ se confessus erat Dictaeaque rura tenebat* ("and now the god, with the appearance of the deceitful bull put aside,/ had showed who he was and had made it to the Cretan countryside"), where sex is elided through *se confessus erat*: the act is implied instead in the description of Jupiter showing who he is (a highly sexed god and serial rapist). Cf. Sharrock 2006: 36n20, quoted above.

[117] For the vocabulary of motion with sexual reference, see Adams 1982: 193–95. Adams gives no examples of *eo* as equivalent to modern English "come" (i.e., climax), but (*ante)eat* clearly has such force here, not least because this sense is suggested by the metaphor of the journey.

[118] *uicti ... iacent* more likely suggests post-orgasmic lying together on the bed, especially as it occurs in the line which follows *plena uoluptas* (727; Brandt 1902: 124 ad loc. well adduces as a parallel for the orgasmic force of this phrasing, Petron 86 *coitum plenum et optabilem*, "full and longed-for intercourse").

[119] James 2003: 207.

[120] However, she notes that "real erotic parity remains ... tantalizing" (2006: 94), because women are instructed at *Ars* 3 to fake orgasms if necessary.

[121] E.g., Keith 2012.

[122] Janka 1997: 499–500 *ad loc.* cautions against understanding *furtiuus* as implying adulterous love here, arguing that Ovid refers rather to ensuring that sex is shrouded in decency. However, the reference to the lack of safety (731) *must* hint at sexual liaisons where there is a risk of getting caught, and hence scenarios that are typical of elegy (Brandt 1902: 124 ad loc. cites Hor. *Serm.* 1.2.127–34). One of the ideal settings for elegiac love is the *liberum otium* of 730; see Tib. 1.3, 2.6.5 (where *otium* is the possession of Cupid), 3.7.181, André 1966.

[123] Cf. *Ars am.* 2.682 *quod iuuat, ex aequo femina uirque ferant* ("that which delights [i.e., sex], men and women equally feel"; lines 683–84 contrast this with boy-sex, which does not lead to mutual orgasm), 3.800 (of the sexual parts) *quo pariter debent femina uirque frui* ("in which men and women equally ought to delight"; Gibson ad loc. compares *Am.* 1.10.35–36: *uoluptas,/ quam socio motu femina uirque ferunt*; "the pleasure which both men and women bring with a shared movement").

[124] E.g., Henderson 2006, esp. 80–81; Rimell 2006. Weiberg (forthcoming) convincingly argues that erotic parity is a mirage here, as Ovid immediately undercuts *pariter uicti* to privilege male sexual pleasure for his male pupil-readers, by moving to imagery for sex which stresses the active, thrusting male role in sex, with the image of the male lover as oarsman and charioteer, who should focus on his own sexual pleasure (729–32). I suggest at n128 that, even before 729–32, 725–26 hint at the absence of real equality, and at the usual elegiac powerplay.

[125] It makes sense, in terms of ancient ideas about power and sex, that a woman is conquered in sex (cf. e.g., Ov. *Am.* 2.12 and 1.14), but the idea that a man should also be conquered is more surprising (however, see my previous note): Ovid looks to ancient ideas about male self-mastery and sex: e.g., Williams 2010: 151–70.

[126] Janka 1997: 498–99.

[127] McKeown 1989: 13 ad loc., notes that Ovid describes the elegiac couplet as unequal pair of lines at 2.17.21–22, 3.17–18, 37, *Ars am.* 1.264, *Tr.* 2.220, 3.1.56, *Pont.* 4.5.3, 4.16.11, 36 and compares Hor. *Ars P.* 75: *uersibus impariter iunctis querimonia primum* ("laments were first [composed] with lines joined unequally").

[128] *Domina* ("mistress," 725), and the notion that the male lover should not let his mistress get ahead of him in sexual pleasure (726), hint at the usual elegiac topsy-turvy power-relations and -play, in which elegists present women as having power over them, despite the social reality that the elegists were elite males in a slave-owning society, and their mistresses (if real women) were likely of a much lower social standing, and potentially even slaves or former slaves: see e.g., James 2003: 298n96.

[129] Ovid also hints that the outcome of this sex scene will be an equality that is greater than normal in elegy when he begins the passage by talking of two *amantes*, two desiring subjects (rather than the usual lover and beloved: cf. Sharrock 1994: 27); compare Kamen/ Levin-Richardson 2018 on sexual relations in Rome that are not simply a question of active, penetrating male/ passive, penetrated inferior male or female. On mutual sexual pleasures for male and female, cf. Lucian, *Erot.* 27.

[130] This is the final line Rimell quotes in her reading of the passage; it is always difficult to know how far to go with Ovid, but the answer is usually his own: as far as you can get away with.

[131] Mart. 9.69.1 *cum futuis, Polycharme, soles in fine cacare* ("when you fuck, Polycharmus, you normally shit at orgasm"), Juvenal 7.240–41 *non est leue tot puerorum/ obseruare manus oculosque in fine trementis* ("it's no light matter to keep watch on so many boys, their hands and eyes trembling as they orgasm"); cf. Adams 1982: 143–44 for the vocabulary of "finishing" = orgasm. *Finis* also has this sense in post-classical Latin: *Sat. Sot.* 5 *ad finem*

usque ("all the way to orgasm"; quoted from Forberg 1824: 30). Sharrock 1994: 20 notes that 733 refers "both to the end of the poem and to the erotic *opus* of v. 730."

[132] The Greek τέλος may carry a similar sense; it does not refer explicitly to "orgasm" in extant sources, but is bound up with the idea of marriage as the "completion" of a union – e.g., *AP* (Antipater) 6.276: ἤδη γάρ οἱ ἐπῆλθε γάμου τέλος ("for indeed the endgame of marriage has come"), and Pl. *Sym.* 211e could imply orgasm: πρὸς τέλος ἤδη ἰὼν τῶν ἐρωτικῶν ("coming towards the completion of matters erotic"). More certainly, τέλος is certainly cognate with *meta*; see below.

[133] Janka 1997: 498; Sharrock 1994: 20 nicely notes that for the lover the *meta* is "the goal of love-making," and that *meta* is also a turning post here for the reader/ author as the work continues to book 3 with a new pupil: the female reader.

[134] For *lusus* as specifically sexual play, see e.g., Prop. 1.10.10, 2.32.29, Ov. *Am.* 1.8.86; *TLL* 7.1889.33–52 s.v. *lusus*.

[135] Gibson 2003: 404 ad loc. notes that the phrase is polyvalent and that its meanings include "the finish of sexual play," without spelling out that the finish that Ovid envisages is the orgasm just described.

[136] Rimell 2006: 95–96, Henderson 2006.

[137] Rimell 2006: 93.

[138] As in *Ars* 2, the scene starts with a titillating focus on its own salaciousness (*ulteriora pudet docuisse*, "I am ashamed to have gone further than this in my teaching," 3.769) and then brings in a goddess (Dione, i.e., Venus, 3.769; see Gibson 2003: 390 ad loc.). Other repetitive elements are Ovid's return to a mythical coupling that evokes the Trojan War when illustrating sex (775–76), and the application of martial imagery to sex (786).

[139] Weiberg (forthcoming) makes a compelling argument that female sexual pleasure is frequently suppressed or elided, as Ovid phallocentrically concentrates on male sexual

pleasure, in both the sex scenes of *Ars am.* 2 and 3; while being in many ways convinced, I suggest below that Ovid may not be *quite* so partisan and phallocentric.

[140] Gibson 2003: 387–89 has insightful remarks on Ovid's decorum, including his avoidance of obscene language, and titillating elements, such as the catalogue of sexual positions.

[141] Ovid moves from physical attributes that are clearly seen as attractive to what he presents as flaws to be hidden: e.g., a belly wrinkled by the signs of having given birth (3.785). This recalls Ovid's accusation at *Am.* 2.14.7 that Corinna procured an abortion to avoid such wrinkles, and, taken together with it, might partially explain why Ovid talks at 3.797 of the woman who is unable to take pleasure in sex. Intercourse is not necessarily the consequence-free *lusus* ("play," 3.809) which ends only in an orgasm, for women in the same way that it is for their male partners, in the absence of effective contraception, and given such male attitudes to motherhood's impact on women's attractiveness. Neither this sex scene, nor the one in Book 2, overtly raises the issue of sexual shortcomings in Ovid's male lovers, unless we detect flaws in the man who might come before his lover at 2.724–25, or the (unspoken) failure of the male partner to give pleasure to the woman of 3.797; see further above.

[142] As Brandt 1902: 198 ad loc. notes, Ovid uses similar phrasing to describe female orgasm at *Met.* 9.484 *ut iacui totis resoluta medullis* ("how I lay there, relaxed entirely in my marrows"). Cf. *Ars* 2.683 *odi concubitus, qui non utrumque resoluunt* ("I hate intercourse which does not relax [i.e., bring orgasm to] both parties").

[143] The phrasing *ex aequo* recalls 2.728's *pariter*, as well as 2.682 *quod iuuat, ex aequo femina uirque ferant*. While the man's pleasure may seem secondary here, it is Ovid's major interest in the passage that precedes it: the focus on women's physical attractions that need to be emphasised (or flaws to be disguised) is clearly aimed at producing male pleasure, as Weiberg (forthcoming) analyzes nicely.

[144] Reprising *murmur* (2.273), the combination of *uerba* with *iocum* from 2.724, and the notion of dirty talk from the same line.

[145] Cf. Pichon 1991 [1902], s.v. *blandus*.

[146] This provides a rather different take on duplicitous bodies in elegy, a topic well discussed by Zimmermann Damer 2019: 108–23.

[147] Although it is hard to determine where Ovid finishes a scene, one could read this line as the conclusion to the sex scene "proper"; although 3.805–8 warn women on the related themes that asking for money after sex is a turn off, and that they should make love in the dark to hide blemishes, before Ovid finally declares *lusus habet finem* (809; discussed above).

[148] Cf. Gibson 2003: 402 ad loc.

[149] My interpretation of Ovid on sex here, as at n141, is more positive than those of many—particularly Rimell 2006 and Weiberg (forthcoming)—and I worry somewhat that I am letting him off the hook, not least because the failure to reach the climax of mutual pleasure is explicitly attributed to a failure of the *female* sexual anatomy/performance: *infelix, cui torpet hebes locus ille, puella,/ quo pariter debent femina uirque frui* ("Unlucky the girl for whom that place, from which man and woman ought equally to get enjoyment, is dull and blunt," 799–800). The elegiac *puella* is, as usual, the one who ensures that relationships are unequal and prevents full male sexual satisfaction.

[150] Rimell 2006: 93.

[151] Kinsey et al. 1953: 376 note that, although men reliably achieve orgasm through penetrative vaginal intercourse, many women do not, and that considerate male partners therefore apply manual or oral stimulation so that women can reach orgasm. Although human ideas about sexuality have changed a lot in the millennia that divide us from Ovid, and cultural forces play a massive role in love (see Volk 2006; compare Myerowitz 2006),

physiological responses are not likely to have changed, and Ovid's *usus* may well have led him to observe this phenomenon. That the climax of mutual orgasm is reached/ described at the end of book 2, rather than 3, seems a typically Ovidian joke, insofar as it provides an implicit comment on the excess represented by the very existence of *Ars amatoria* 3.

[152] Typically, Ovid returns to sex scenes yet again in the *Remedia amoris* (which can be read as the true conclusion of the *Ars*), as he considers what men should do to ward off love *medio ueneris … in usu* ("in the midst of love-making," 357); a lengthy and sexually fairly explicit scene of turn-offs in bed ensues, but not until Ovid has expanded on how sex is generically appropriate to elegy (379–80).

[153] Cf. Sharrock 2002: 150: "Much of Ovid's amatory work is infused with an aesthetics of repetition: of material, of style, of himself, and in his characters."

[154] *The Guardian*, Friday 10 June 2016 (last accessed online 5th August 2020).