THE WOMEN OF OVID'S *ARS AMATORIA*: NATURE OR CULTURE?

The women of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* may well impress the readers of this poem as a highly 'unnatural' lot. They mince, pout, and posture through the three books of Ovid's treatise on the lover's art with the calculated elegance and studied poise of dancers in a minuet. Their appearance, however, is deceptive. A closer look exposes the cultivation of these *feminae cultissimae* as a fragile patina, literally only skin deep. In the following essay, we shall consider how and why this can be so.

Before we can begin to penetrate the elegant surface of the women of Ovid's poem it is first necessary to consider the context in which they appear and operate: the poem itself.

Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* is an exposition and celebration of erotic culture, amatory *cultus* which by the late first century at Rome had progressed (at least in some circles) far beyond the inept fumbling of the rustic past, but as yet awaited codification into a handbook of didactic precepts by a master of the art. Enter the *praeceptor.* Drawing on a vast store of personal experience, *usus* (*AA* 1.29),[1] as well as objective observation, this professorial paragon codifies the lover's art in canons which turn on artifice, inhibition, hypocracy, and sublimation.

The *praeceptor's* rules comprise a system for manipulating and transcending the natural erotic impulse, and as such are not only the description of a cultural process but are themselves a cultural product.[2] Although the poet expresses certain reservations about some aspects of

[1] All references to the text of the *Ars Amatoria* are indicated by the siglum *AA* and are according to the edition of E.J. Kenney, ed. *P. Ovidi Nasonis Amores Medicamina Faciei Femineae Ars Amatoria Remedia Amoris* (Oxford 1961; corr. edn. 1965).

[2] The term 'culture' is used throughout this discussion in its broadest sense as "the notion of human consciousness, or .... the products of human consciousness (i.e., systems of thought and technology), by means of which humanity attempts to assert control over nature," Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" in *Women, Culture & Society*, ed. M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford 1974) 72.

culture in his day (*AA* 1.739–54; 2.271–80, 624–40; 3. 129–32, 169–72, 405–12), his *praeceptor* enthusiastically promotes *his* version of culture which he sees as equally antithetical to both crass materialism and rustic crudeness (*AA* 3.121–28). Any search for the primeval *eros* of legend or myth is seen as regression to an often embarrassing past.[3] On the contrary, the ideal lover is a culture hero whose goal is to transcend his natural givens of existence qua lover — the unmediated erotic instinct — by means of the *praeceptor*'s system of thought and technique: "*Et, quod nunc ratio est, impetus ante fuit* (*Rem. Am.* 10)." Love, or at least courtship, is thus set squarely within the context of culture whose project is to bend nature to human will.

Culture is both the product and process of human consciousness. If not always in opposition to nature, it betokens movement away from nature. Whether this movement represents a journey away from a golden age (decline) or toward a better one (progress) has long been subject to debate,[4] but none would deny that culture turns on the particularly human ability to move from being the passive victim of nature to attempting to be nature's master, i.e. from suffering to acting.

The *praeceptor*'s opening analogy makes it clear that as far as he is concerned, the acculturization of love through technique (*ars*) demands motion, initiative, and action:

> arte citae veloque rates remoque moventur,
> arte leves currus: arte regendus Amor.
>
> (*AA* 1.3–4)

[3] This is especially apparent in Ovid's version of the myth of the Sabine women (*AA* 1.101–134) in which the early Romans, unschooled in the *praeceptor*'s art, commit a mass rape the brutality of which is in marked contrast to the mannered seductions prescribed for Ovid's hypothetical students. The same holds true of the many other allusions to mythological figures (e.g. *AA* 1.679–80; 2.185–96; 221–22, 239–42, 381–82) which ostensibly offer the past as a charter for the student lover to follow but in fact reveal a wide gap between the coarseness of the earlier era and the cultivation of the present. Elsewhere the *praeceptor* straightforwardly presents the past as an example *not* to follow (e.g. *AA* 2.561–96; 3.33–42, 107–112, 457–60, 517–24, 685–746) because it falls short of the *cultus* demanded of the contemporary lover.

[4] Eric Havelock, *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics* (New Haven and London 1957) 36–86; Kenneth Reckford, "Some Appearances of the Golden Age," *CJ* 54 (1958) 79–87.

Love like speeding vehicles is dynamic, a form of energy incarnate in matter which must be directed by *ars* in order to prevent it from running amok. Ships and chariots in themselves are merely inert hunks of matter, as is man without the impetus of erotic energy. Love, the abstract force, concerns the *praeceptor* as little as does a puff of wind without a sail to fill, or the power of a steed without a chariot to pull. It is love at work in man, energy at work in matter, which is the *praeceptor*'s concern, and once this has occurred inertia or immobility is no longer an option. Man for better or worse is beyond any passive golden age symbiosis with nature. The *praeceptor*'s students are embarking on an erotic voyage (a metaphor which is consistently developed from the start to the end of the poem),[5] and they require instruction on amatory *cultus*, since passive submission to nature will result at best in aimless drifting, or far worse (as the adjectives *citae* and *leves* seem to portend)[6] in crashing destruction. Although a journey is in itself a neutral concept (we may or may not arrive at a better place than we are at now), the *praeceptor* seems confident that his teachings guarantee a safe and happy conclusion (*AA* 2.11–12; 3.41–42) and that the trip itself, though potentially hazardous is a lot of fun.

Simply stated this means that the *praeceptor*'s instructions work exclusively within the context of culture (we are in motion at the onset, already buffeted by nature on the high seas or open road) and that the process and outcome of culture is given a positive valuation, since the chances of a successful journey (progress) are inestimably better when

[5] *AA* 1.41–42, 409–412; 2.9–10, 337–38, 514, 725–28, 731–32; 3.555–56, 584, 595–96. The same metaphor is used of the poetic journey, i.e. the progress of the poem from start to end (*AA* 1.39–40, 263–64, 771–72; 2.10, 425–34; 3.23, 99–100, 467–68, 500, 747–48, 809–810). E.J. Kenney, "Nequitiae Poeta," in *Ovidiana: Recherches sur Ovide*, ed. N.I. Herescu (Paris 1958) 205–206, sees the use of the progress metaphor for poetry (traditional in didactic poetry) as contributing to the 'irreverence' of the *Ars Amatoria*. However, the use of the *same* metaphor for the progress of both love and poetry goes beyond parody; it associates the lover's voyage with that of the poet and locates love like poetry within the general category of *cultus*. For more detailed analysis see Molly M. Levine, *Et mihi cedet Amor*: Love, Art, and Play in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, (Diss. Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel 1980) 94–144.

[6] Paul Brandt, ed. *P. Ovidi Nasonis de Arte Amatoria Libri Tres* (Leipzig 1902; rpt. Hildesheim 1963) ad loc. notes that the adjectives *citae* (3) and *leves* (4) underline the necessity for control. The swifter the ship, the lighter the chariot, the trickier they are to steer.

nature is manipulated by human culture than when the voyager passively resigns control over his journey to nature.

Women, it has often been observed, generally take a back seat on any cultural odyssey. This occurs because of a general tendency to associate women with nature which it is culture's project to mold, manipulate, subordinate, or transcend. In an article on the subject, S. Ortner suggests several compelling reasons for this phenomenon which I paraphrase briefly here.[7]

There is, first and foremost, the fact of women's biology which destines her to greater involvement with the procreation of the species, the creation of perishable objects doomed to mortality, rather than the more culturally prestigious transcendent objects, art in its widest sense which humanity views as defying nature's limits of mortality.[8] Women's biology, in turn, has generally defined her social role as the caretaker and nurturer of young children who are themselves perceived as closer to nature than the fully acculturated human adult. Woman's work, thus defined, takes place in a domestic context, the home, the private inner space circumscribed by the blood-bond of mother and child, which if not always opposed to 'higher' forms of social organization is at least subsumed by less biological, more abstractly organized social units.

Woman's biology and the nature of the activity to which it has almost universally destined her has also been shown to mold her mode of cognition. Socially determined 'feminine' qualities of particularism, personalism, and concreteness as opposed to 'masculine' objectivity and abstractness lend weight to the traditional association of the female with nature and the male with culture.[9]

This association of women with nature is, of course, a familiar fact of life to students of Classical literature in which the nature/culture polarity is especially conspicuous. One need only recall the female Bacchante raging in the wilds and disrupting the good order of the Greek *polis*,[10]

[7] Ortner (supra n. 2) 73–83.

[8] On this point cf. S. de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949), ed. and trans. H.M. Parshley (N.Y. 1972) 94–97.

[9] Cf. Nancy Chodorow, "Family Structure and Feminine Personality," in *Women, Culture & Society* (supra n. 2) 43–66.

[10] For a good analysis see Charles Segal, "The Menace of Dionysus: Sex Roles and Reversals in Euripides' *Bacchae*," *Arethusa* 11 (1978) 185–202.

the prominent place awarded to the defeat of female Amazons or autochthonous female monsters in the careers of culture heroes such as Heracles and Theseus,[11] and most remarkably perhaps, Aeschylus' *Oresteia* in which the antipodes of nature and culture are sexualized, so that the denial of the female natural principle embodied in the Furies as well as Clytemnestra is seen as necessary for the advance of humanity to a higher masculine stage of civilization.[12]

Aristotle puts the association of the female with the immanent, material and natural as opposed to the transcendent, spiritual, male principle in biological terms. In his work on procreation, Aristotle identifies the male contribution to the embryo as the principle of movement and the form; the female as the body or *materia*, enabling him to conclude that the physical part, the body, comes from the female and the spiritual part, the soul, comes from the male (*Gen. An.* 729a–b, 738b) — but another permutation of the female/nature, male/culture analogy in which nature, the female, is immanent and static, and culture, the male, is transcendent and motile.[13]

This association of women with nature can explain much traditional female symbolism. If culture implies progess, then women are seen as inert; the female circle as opposed to the masculine line.[14] If culture is seen as operating on passive or chaotic nature, the female is matter, the male form.[15] When culture is perceived as the liberation of humanity from threatening nature, the female takes on menacing qualities of engulfment, entrapment, or castration.[16]

At first glance, the women of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* would seem to have little to do with ravening Maenads, steatopyginous mother goddesses, or for that matter with nature itself. Indeed, they seem to belie the almost axiomatic association of women with nature discussed above. On the contrary, the women of Ovid's poem seem as much the

[11] Philip Slater, *The Glory of Hera* (Boston 1968) 370–71, 393.

[12] Froma Zeitlin, "The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the *Oresteia*," *Arethusa* 11 (1978) 149–84.

[13] Cf. Zeitlin (supra n. 12) 169–70.

[14] Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother*[2], trans., Ralph Manheim, Bollingen Series 47 (Princeton 1963) 25, 283.

[15] Neumann (supra, n. 14) 49.

[16] For examples see H.R. Hays, *The Dangerous Sex* (N.Y. 1964) and Wolfgang Lederer, *The Fear of Women* (N.Y. 1968), passim.

products and denizens of a sophisticated urban culture as are their male counterparts, and certainly seem to have a great deal more in common with these urban dandies than they do with a Fury or snake. In Ovid's poem they move within society disrupting it neither from beyond the periphery nor from deep within its core. They are never shown in a maternal or domestic setting, and their hearths, if they have any, are hardly the focal point of their interests or activities in this poem. One might, therefore, legitimately expect that the poet has ranked them together with their male suitors someplace near the top of his cultural continuum, and if we could ask the poet he would probably say that he had done so.

Indeed, the *praeceptor* describes the female players of his amatory games as not only *cultae* (*AA* 3.51), but *cultissimae* (*AA* 1.97), hypercultivated, with only the most esoteric traces of *rusticitas* remaining for their teacher to exorcise. The setting is, after all, Rome at the turn of the first century and, in the *praeceptor*'s own words, "*cultus adest*" (*AA* 3.127), with *rusticitas* but a memory from a crude long gone past (*AA* 3.128). This *cultus* applies equally to both male and female, trumpets the *praeceptor*. His female student is no Andromache clad in stout tunics to welcome a warrior husband, no rustic spouse of a rugged Ajax (*AA* 3.107–112).

The *praeceptor* himself is well aware that the game of love requires two equally cultivated and skilled partners. And in fact, the entire *Ars Amatoria* seems predicated on a setting in which men and women must be full intellectual if not social equals.[17] As the *praeceptor* implies, there is no point to the elaborate stratagems of the male lover if his love object could be coerced, purchased, or required in any way to accept his attentions (*AA* 2.151–68).[18] If this in itself were not sufficient to confirm

[17] Whether or not we accept Ovid's repeated claims in the poem that wives are excluded from his audience (*AA* 1.31–34; 2.57–58, 483–84, cf. *Rem. Am.* 383–86; *Tr.* 2.303–304) is irrelevant here. Neither in the ancient nor modern world has wifehood ever been a guarantee of social or intellectual equality. More to the point is the observation of Hermann Fränkel, *Ovid: A Poet between Two Worlds*, Sather Classical Lectures 18 (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1945) 205 n. 7 that the women of the *Ars Amatoria* like those of Menander's New Comedy are often the intellectual superiors of their male partners although socially far beneath them.

[18] The same point is made for the female student in *AA* 3.585–88.

that these women are *cultae*, there is always the third book of the *Ars Amatoria* addressed expressly to a female audience in which it is clear that the women whom the Ovidian lover pursues are expected to be every bit the equals of their suitors in wit and in their attention to erotic strategems if not in actual physical freedom of movement.[19]

Furthermore, the comic genre makes its own demands. For as George Meredith points out in his "Essay on Comedy", a state of marked social inequality between the sexes is not conducive to comedy, since comedy exhibits men and women in a battle of wits which can only occur when they draw together in social life.[20]

And yet, neither the *praeceptor*'s own testimony, nor the social setting, nor the comic dimension of the poem are sufficient to undo the fact that in the *Ars Amatoria* women are associated with nature rather than culture. Scratch the skin of the most *cultissima* of Ovid's women and we meet a Bacchante in yet another guise.

Indeed, Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* is an especially dramatic demonstration of the durability and persistence of the perception of women as somehow closer to nature than are men, since both the poem and the poet are, on the surface, hardly the places one might expect to find such a notion.

For Ovid, the poet, more than any other major Roman poet, is genuinely interested in women — sufficiently interested not only to write a great deal about women (*Am.*, *AA* 1–2, *Rem. Am.*, *Met.*), but also to address himself directly to an audience of women (*Medic.*, *AA* 3), and even, in the case of the *Heroides*, to put himself into a woman's shoes. Furthermore, the nature of Ovid's interest in women is unique in that he is interested in the *reality* of women, seen as objectively as he, a male poet, could see them. In this, he differs from Catullus, Propertius, and Tibullus who also write a great deal about women, but who are, in fact, much more concerned with themselves than with any realistic portrait of their mistresses. For however much factual identity we may concede to a Lesbia, Cynthia, Delia, or Nemesis, their very pseudonyms belie reality.

[19] Ovid hints at the fact that society circumscribes women's movements and activities in *AA* 3.382 (cf. *Her.* 19.9–16), and social limitations of another kind lie behind the instructions in *AA* 3.611–58.

[20] George Meredith, "Essay on Comedy," in *Comedy*, ed. Wylie Sypher (N.Y. 1956) 3, 15.

These are clearly '*belles dames sans merci*,' women cast into a mythic mold. Paradoxically perhaps, Ovid's blithe rejection of a 'conventional' subjective elegiac relationship with a *domina* (even where he professes to assume such a relationship) enables him to gather empirical evidence, as he portrays generic women, his Corinna, the eternal Kore. When in the *Ars Amatoria* he entirely sheds the role of elegiac lover, the focus is even more exclusively on a useful, realistic, and objective portrait of generic rather than particular males and females in erotic situations. Here no attempt is made to individualize character or to mythologize a given *domina*, as the *praeceptor* distills truisms from observation and from the data of his now defunct amatory career in his avowed aim of applying universal laws to the science of courtship.

The cool detachment and cynical objectivity of the *praeceptor*'s persona, however, disguise the content of his instructions which turn, in fact, not only on the male student's ability to associate women with nature, but also on the female student's perception of herself as more exclusively natural or material than the male. This happens because Ovid's poem is more than a mere exhibition of a male/female game of wits set on an erotic playground. For in his attempt to locate the art of love within a general scheme of *cultus* whose project is to oppose and transcend nature, the poet has superimposed his sparkling portrait of a social setting in which men and women spar as equals onto a view of human history as the progressive advance away from nature and toward culture. Here Ovid follows the traditional orientation in which the male is associated with culture, and the female with nature.

The association of women with nature operates throughout Ovid's poem on manifold and complex levels, using much of the traditional female symbolism outlined above (p. 34). There is, first of all, a syntagmatic dimension in which history is seen as a chain of positive progress. In structuring the first two books of the *Ars Amatoria* about the life history of an imaginary love affair, from the search for a love object (*AA* 1.41–262) to the wooing and winning (*AA* 1.269–770), and then to the long term maintenance of the relationship (Book Two), Ovid traces a progressive linear route for his hypothetical male student who is through these books metaphorically described as on a voyage of love.[21]

[21] Cf. supra n. 5.

Together with the *praeceptor*, the male lover literally moves through the poem from the outer public arena of the fora and gathering places of Rome's smart set (*AA* 1.67–262) to the more cloistered though still public tête à tête (*AA* 1.487–504) to his ultimate destination (reserved for the end of Book Two): the interior space of the lady's boudoir (*AA* 2.703–732).

The conclusion of the *praeceptor*'s instructions to men (the end of Book Two) coincides with the male lover's arrival 'in port', having moved linearly toward this goal along the course which the *praeceptor* has defined.

No similar structure informs the third book of the poem, addressed to women, accounting perhaps for the critics' chagrin at its comparatively disorganized character.[22] Book Three of the poem commences its instructions to women with advice on hairstyles, dress, and cosmetics (*AA* 3.133–280) to be carried out, at the *praeceptor*'s explicit direction, behind the closed doors of the lady's apartments (*AA* 3.209–230). The bulk of the book is restricted to this interior space with but brief sporadic forays imagined over the lady's threshold to set her finished product on display (*AA* 3.387–466). The book concludes with its closing scene set back in her boudoir (*AA* 3.769–808). Thus, the erotic journey of the female student literally ends at the point of its departure. Unlike

[22] M. Pohlenz, *De Ovidi carminibus amatoriis* (Göttingen 1913) 20, calls the third book of the poem "*farrago ... praeceptorum ordine carentium.*" More optimistically F. Wichers, *Quaestiones Ovidianae* (Göttingen 1917) 1–51 discerns a two part division turning on 1) how to be lovable, *AA* 3.101–380; 2) how to handle a lover, *AA* 3.381–808. Fränkel (supra n. 17) 206 disagrees, calling the notion of the progressive stages of a love affair, i.e. (1) how to be attractive; (2) how to get your man; (3) how to keep him, "a secondary, and rather dim, line." Instead, he suggests a division into elementary ("'small' things ... matters easy to understand and master," *AA* 3.99–498) and advanced ("'greater' achievements which require some measure of self control," *AA* 3.499–768) instruction with an introduction (*AA* 3.1–98) and a closing section on "intimacies" (*AA* 3.769–808) appended.

The confusion about structure seems to me to rest with the author rather than with the critics. Since Ovid, as I hope to show, does not conceive of his female student as 'progressing', the 'course' which he set for his male student in the earlier books does not neatly fit his perception of the female as passive or static. When the poet tries to superficially adapt this 'course' to her (cf. John Barsby, *Ovid, Greece & Rome* New Surveys in the Classics 12 [Oxford 1978] 22, who notes the parallel but not the problem) the result is a muddy, somewhat confused structure.

the male lover who is imagined as progressing linearly, the female moves in a circle, i.e. she ends where she has begun. In the context of a poem in which the lover's journey is a microcosm for man's journey away from nature, the circular imagery for the female seriously qualifies if not undercuts her alleged *cultus*.

A second aspect of the *praeceptor*'s association of the female with nature emerges in those frequent passages in which the poem presents erotic culture as part of a universal scheme of *cultus* by likening the activity of the male lover to that of the *cultor* in general, be he farmer, fisherman, or sailor. Granted that a large part of the parodic effect of the poem turns on Ovid's use of georgic imagery in an erotic contect,[23] the effect, nonetheless, is to associate the male lover with culture and the female with nature. The male lover's courtship is like a hunting or fishing expedition, according to the *praeceptor*, in which the prey to be captured is the female.[24] His work is to overcome passive nature (the woman) by the application of human intellect and technique. Like the hunter or fisherman, the lover must actively use his wits in the pursuit.[25]

In the following passage (the first of the specific references to nature in the *Ars Amatoria*) the point is underlined by the cluster of words associated with knowledge (*scit, noti, novit, disce*) juxtaposed to a description of animals and fish in their natural habitats:

> haec tibi non tenues veniet delapsa per auras;
> quaerenda est oculis apta puella tuis.

[23] Ovid's use of georgic imagery in the *Ars Amatoria* has been studied by both Kenney (supra n. 5) and E.W. Leach, "Georgic Imagery in the *Ars Amatoria*," *TAPA* 95 (1964) 142–54.

[24] In *AA* 2.2 the women is specifically called *praeda*. Hunting metaphors are especially common in those parts of the poem concerned with 'catching' a mate, e.g. *AA* 1.89, 253, 263–66, 269–70, 391–94, 765–66, 3.425–28; 554, 591. Leach (supra n. 23) 149 suggests that the effect is "to glance at something predatory in the constitution of society and especially in its erotic customs," but as we shall see below, women are not shown as hunters in the same way as men, and these metaphors, consequently, are used differently of men than they are of women.

[25] See especially *AA* 1.755–66 in which agriculture, hunting, and fishing are likened to the art of love which requires knowledge to suit technique to material; *qui sapit, innumeris moribus aptus erit*, (760). A glance at the *Concordance of Ovid* by Roy J. Deferrari, M. Inviolata Barry, and Martin R.O. McGuire (Washington, D.C. 1939) s.v. *doceo, disco, scio, sapio, erudio, praecipio*, etc. reveals a predictable variety and abundance of words dealing with intelligence, technique, and education.

scit bene venator, cervis ubi retia tendat;
scit bene, qua frendens valle moretur aper;
aucipibus noti frutices; qui sustinet hamos,
novit quae multo pisce natentur aquae:
tu quoque, materiam longo qui quaeris amori,
ante frequens quo sit disce puella loco.

(*AA* 1.43–50)

As in georgic literature, the polarity here is between the order of civilization (which the male *cultor* is expected to apply) and the disorder of nature (represented by the female love object).

Throughout the poem, women are likened to various creatures of the natural world as well as to the earth and sea itself. In a discussion of the georgic imagery in the poem, E.W. Leach enumerates stags, boars, birds, fish, ants, bees, doves, lambs, grasshoppers, heifers, mares, oxen, peacocks, the sea, and the soil, to mention only examples taken from the first book of the poem.[26] The work of the male lover, like that of the farmer, fisherman, or hunter is to tame, capture, and master them. The effect is to fit the lover into a scheme of opposition between nature and culture in which passive nature (the woman) is to be overcome, transformed, and manipulated by the application of amatory *cultus*.

Another manifestation of the association of the female with passive or inert nature occurs in the more narrowly artistic refinement of the polarity between nature and culture into a split between form (culture) and matter (nature). Matter is traditionally seen as external to the artist, and therefore, part of a natural world which must be structured by the form which he imposes.[27] In at least one place in his poem Ovid

[26] Leach (supra n. 23) 147 n. 5. The comparison of women to animals has a long and dishonorable literary history going back to Semonides (Diehl, fragment 7) and Phocylides (Diehl, fragment 2). The famous bee simile in the *Ars Amatoria* (1.95–96) in which the *feminae cultissimae* flock to the games like bees flitting over flowery meadows has a precedent in Hesiod (*Theogony* 592–99) who compares women to drones in a beehive and men to busy bees, as well as in the fragments of Semonides and Phocylides cited above for whom the 'bee women' alone is praiseworthy.

[27] A telling passage in Cicero's *De Inventione* 1.7 likens the *materia* of rhetoric to diseases or wounds (nature) which are treated by the art of the physician (culture):

materiam artis eam dicimus in qua omnis
ars et ea facultas quae conficitur ex arte

explicitly identifies the female as *materia* for the male lover's activity (*AA* 1.49 quoted above, p. 40) and elsewhere refers to her by neuter pronouns (e.g. *quod amare velis, AA* 1.35; cf. *AA* 1.91–92, 175, 741) which reinforce the identification of her with matter.[28] No such expressions occur for the male. It is perhaps with this in mind, that F.W. Lenz in the preface to his edition of the poem, has described the women of the *Ars Amatoria* as "nur Dinge."[29]

Whether matter, inert nature, things, or stuff, the overtly cultivated women of the first two books of the poem are clearly the natural substratum upon which the male *cultor* operates. Nor does the poem leave them at that. For but a hairbreadth away from a view of culture as transforming passive or inert nature is the perception of nature as a threat from which man by virtue of *cultus* may liberate himself.

Accordingly, Book One of the *Ars Amatoria* specifically depicts the female as given to unrestrained passion which may menace civilized society. The violence of the female libido, a familiar theme in classical myth and literature,[30] is illustrated by the *praeceptor*'s long list of mythological female figures (*AA* 1.283–340) who almost to a woman ignored the incest taboo regarded by many anthropologists as the most basic of human principles of social organization.[31] According to the

> versatur. ut si medicinae materiam dicamus
> morbos ac vulnera, quod in his omnis medicina
> versetur, item quibus in rebus
> versatur ars et faculta oratoria, eas res
> materiam artis rhetoricae nominamus.

Ovid himself on one occasion (*Pont.* 4.8.67–72) makes an explicit distinction between the *carmen*, the poem, and the *materia*, its subject matter.

[28] The expression *quod amet* also occurs in the cosmogony, *AA* 2.481.

[29] F.W. Lenz, ed. and trans. *Ovid die Liebeskunst* (Berlin 1969) 10; cf. Leach (supra n. 23) 144 who calls the women of the *AA* "creatures of untamed nature ... the raw materials of love."

[30] See, for example, Aeschylus, *Choephori* 583–638; Hesiod, fragment 275 (Merkelbach and West).

[31] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropolgy*, (1958) trans. C. Jacobson and B. Schoepf (N.Y. 1963) 51. In *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, (1949; rev. ed. 1967) trans. J.H. Bell and J.R. von Sturmer; ed. R. Needham (Boston 1969) 479, Levi-Strauss states that the universal incest prohibition and its corollary, the rule of exogamy, guarantee that the "risk of seeing a biological family become established as a closed system is definitely eliminated; the biological group can no longer stand apart and the bond of alliance with another

praeceptor, the lesson to be learned from this generalization on the female is that any woman can be seduced (*AA* 1.269–70, 343–44); any show of reluctance must be feigned (*AA* 1.345–46; cf. 665–78). Indeed he explicitly asserts that it is the male *cultor* who imposes civilization's normative laws on love:

> parcior in nobis nec tam furiosa libido;
> legitimum finem flamma virilis habet.
>
> (*AA* 1.281–82)

Were it not for the imposition of male *cultus*, the outcome of the unrestrained female libido would be as cosmically disruptive as the reversal of the sun's progress caused by Aerope's incestuous love for her husband's brother:

> Cressa Thyesteo si se abstinuisset amore
> (et quantum est uno posse carere viro!),
> non medium rupisset iter curruque retorto
> Auroram versis Phoebus adisset equis.
>
> (*AA* 1.327–30)

If the reality of male/female encounters does not nicely correspond to this mythic charter, this is merely because women are by nature deceivers (*AA* 1.645–58) and better at it than men (*AA* 1.275–76).[32]

family ensures the dominance of the social over the biological, and of the cultural over the natural."

With the exception of Medea, Ovid's list focuses on female violations of the incest taboo: Byblis, Myrrha, Aerope, Clytemnestra are direct examples; the animal incest of Pasiphae one variant, the love affair of Scylla with her father's enemy another. The three stories of the Potiphar's wife type — Phoenix, Hippolytus, and Phineus — have oedipal implications which make them yet another variant on violations of the incest taboo. The emphasis on women as the perpetrators of incest has the effect of associating them with nature rather than with culture. This association is made explicit in the *Metamorphoses* in which Myrrha argues for the 'naturalness' of society's so-called 'unnatural' loves (10.320–55) and Byblis pleads to her brother for the intensification of the natural blood ties which they already share (9.530–63). In each case the male is either oblivious (Cynras, *Met.* 10. 356–67) or outrightly rejects (Caunus, *Met.* 9. 574–81) the female plea for the natural logic of incest. The female then reverts entirely to untransformed nature, Myrrha to a tree (*Met.* 10.489–502) and Byblis to a fountain (*Met.* 9.663–65).

[32] In Book Three (31–40; 441–60) men, too, are characterized as *fallaces*, but the first instance is a patent attempt at *captatio benevolentiae*, and the second a clearly exceptional case, rather than a generalization on the male nature.

Like the soil (*AA* 1.450; cf. 401) and the sea (*AA* 1.401–402), they are tricky and deceitful, that is no longer merely passive nature, but nature which conspires against man.

The *praeceptor*'s further characterization of the female as avaricious accords well with this view of threatening nature. In Book One, for example, the student lover is cautioned that avarice is intrinsic to the female nature:

> cum bene vitaris, tamen auferet; invenit artem
> femina, qua cupidi carpat amantis opes.
> institor ad dominam veniet discinctus emacem,
> expediet merces teque sedente suas;
> quas illa inspicias, sapere ut videare, rogabit;
> oscula deinde dabit, deinde rogabit emas.
> hoc fore contentam multos iurabit in annos;
> nunc opus esse sibi, nunc bene dicet emi.
> si non esse domi, quos des, causabere nummos,
> littera poscetur, ne didicisse iuvet.
> quid, quasi natali cum poscit munera libo
> et, quotiens opus est, nascitur illa sibi?
> quid, cum mendaci damno maestissima plorat
> elapsusque cava fingitur aure lapis?
> multa rogant utenda dari, data reddere nolunt;
> perdis, et in damno gratia nulla tuo.
> non mihi, sacrilegas meretricum ut persequar artes,
> cum totidem linguis sint satis ora decem.
>
> (*AA* 1.419–36)

The characterization of the female as avaricious is Roman elegy's inheritance from New Comedy and Greek epigram, and elegiac conventions are, of course, the world within which the Ovidian lover operates.[33] In a larger sense, these conventions draw upon the negative

[33] Cf. Ovid *Am.* 1.8.57–62; 1.10; Prop. 2.16; 3.13; Tib. 1.4.52–70; 2.4; also in Lucr. 4.1121–32. For the theme in elegy see S. Lilja, *The Roman Elegists' Attitude to Women* (Helsinki 1965) 143–50. For the tradition in New Comedy and epigram see A.L. Wheeler, "Erotic Teaching in Roman Elegy and the Greek Sources," *CP* (1911) 66 and n. 2.

characterization of the female in Greek myth and literature — a tradition of misogyny as old, at least, as Hesiod and Semonides.[34] Although the portrait of the avaricious female may have a basis in reality (the attempt by the economically dependent female to parlay erotic allure into financial gain), the avaricious female may ultimately be the projection of the male fear of his own *eros* onto the woman who is its object. The greedy female is nature which threatens to confound and destroy. In outwitting female avarice, the male *cultor* subconsciously confronts his own erotic fears objectified. In manipulating the avaricious instincts of his female opposite, the male externalizes his fear of loss by projecting it onto the female (as her threat rather then his fear). He then proceeds to transcend his own nature by manipulating the 'nature' of his female love object.[35]

Admittedly, Ovid's portrait of the avaricious female does not leave her at the level of untransformed nature. The passage quoted above (p. 43, 1.419–36) represents the woman, too, as an *artifex* who uses sophisticated techniques in controlling both her own nature and that of the male in order to gain her own ends. She has learned to manipulate her avaricious nature by exploiting the erotic cupidity of the male. The comedy of the passage turns, in fact, on the *praeceptor*'s rueful acknowledgement of the female as fully the equal of his male student

[34] See supra n. 26. Hesiod *Op* . 373–75 specifically condemns women for exploiting erotic allure with an eye to financial profit:

> Do not let a flaunting woman coax and cozen
> and deceive you; she is after your barn.
> The man who trusts womankind trusts deceivers.
>
> (trans. H.G. Evelyn White, LCL)

[35] The fear of envelopment or castration is translated into financial terms, i.e. loss of oneself = loss of one's wealth.

On male objectification of erotic fears in the figure of the sexually rapacious female see Sigmund Freud, "The Taboo of Virginity (Contributions to the Psychology of Love III)," (1918 [1917]) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, vol. 11 (London 1957) 198–200. The confusion of a sexual threat with an economic threat is compatible with a 'hoarding mentality' in an individual or in a society. Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (London 1971) 298 points out that the Victorian term for the orgasm — to spend — is "a term freighted with economic insecurity and limited resources, perhaps a reflection of capitalist thrift implying that if semen is money (or time or energy) it should be preciously hoarded." The aim of the 'lover' who holds such a view should be to 'get something for nothing,' That is, in fact, the goal which the *praeceptor* explicitly prescribes for his student lover: *'primo sine munere iungi'* (*AA* 1.453).

lover in *ars*. Therein the challenge and the satisfaction if success ensues for his male lover.

The male lover, the *artifex*, is confronted by a fellow practitioner of *ars* (419, 435) who has parlayed her intrinsic avarice into technique of a high and polished order. The lover's vulnerability to the greed of his mistress (*emacem ... emas ... emi* 421, 424, 426) is caused by his own erotic cupidity (*cupidi* 420). He is, in fact, undone in this scene by the superior *ars* of his mistress. Her loss is feigned (*mendaci damno* 431); his is real and without recompense (*in damno gratia nulla tuo* 434).

Elsewhere we are shown that the avarice natural to the female has progressed with the times and is far from a naive or primitive state. The lover may attempt to ingratiate himself by offering gifts which are cheap but well chosen (*AA* 2.261–66), but the *praeceptor*'s wry aside makes it clear that his mistress is hardly a rustic Amaryllis:

> adferat aut uvas aut, quas Amaryllis amabat,
> at nunc, castaneas, non amat illa, nuces.
> (*AA* 2.267–68)[36]

Clever strategist she is, and yet her *ars* rests on a nature which differs profoundly from that of the male. In contrast to the male lover for whom material advantage is not a goal in itself, but a measure of the skill with which he has played his erotic game, for the female, material gain is the goal of the game since avarice is intrinsic to her nature.[37] The representation of the female as basically avaricious identifies her within the nature/culture polarity as nature which threatens to engulf, confound, or destroy the untutored male. It is, as we have seen, a subtly negative permutation of the simple equation of the female with

[36] Cf. Virgil *Ecl.* 2.51–52:
ipse ego cana legam tenera languine mala
castaneasque nuces, mea quas Amaryllis amabat.
Brandt (supra n. 6) ad 267f., notes that the humor of the Ovidian lines turns on Ovid's deliberate and cynical reinterpretation of Virgil's frequentative imperfect (*amabat*) as a past.

[37] Although outright fortune hunting is condemned for both male and female (*AA* 3.441–42, 805–806), the woman's goal is "*ne dederit gratis* (*AA* 1.454), the man's "*primo sine munere iungi* (*AA* 1.453)." This is to say that the female's primary goal is defined as material, the male's as erotic.

untransformed nature or raw material. The activity of the male in outwitting the avaricious female is a struggle against nature translated into capitalistic terms in which loss of one's money becomes loss of one's self.

The first two books of the *Ars Amatoria*, then, can be shown to superimpose the erotic parrying of equally cultivated males and females onto a syntagmatic view of man's history and activity of culture as progress away from nature, and onto a paradigmatic structural opposition between nature and culture. In both cases the female receives her traditional association with nature and the male with culture despite the surface representation of the female as a fellow *artifex* necessitated in part by the requirements of high comedy, and in part by the fact that in order for the male lover's *cultus* to have incentive and meaning he must operate in a relatively cultivated environment, before a cultivated audience, and with a cultivated partner.

What then of the third book of the poem in which Ovid likens his *praeceptor* to Stesichorus bidden recant his slander of the fair Helen (*AA* 3.49–50)?

If by recantation the poet implies that the third book will teach women to cultivate inert, chaotic, or threatening nature in the person of the male, then his comparison is deliberately misleading. On the contrary, the third book reinforces the association of the female with matter or nature by subtly manipulating the instructions of the *praeceptor* on *cultus* to square with his primary perception of women as more natural or material than men.

We have already discussed the 'circular' course of the female's 'voyage' above (pp. 38–39). In addition, the female of Book Three unlike her male counterpart is neither huntswoman nor fisherwoman actively applying *ars* to nature externalized as a passive love object. Even when in active search of an admirer, the female is told to display herself in cunning passivity in the hope of attracting a man. She is a Siren who unmoving draws men to their doom (*AA* 3.311–14), a performer viewed on stage (*AA* 3.349–52) whose goal is to please by her attractiveness (*AA* 3.380, 430, 524), to be desired (*AA* 3.397), and to be appreciated (*AA* 3.400).

Especially interesting is the subtle change which occurs in hunting imagery. For the woman in search of a lover is told to be 'actively

passive'. She is to maneuver herself into a position of prey in order to enable herself to be hunted like a sheep in a fold awaiting the wolf or a bird in a covey exposed to the swoop of an eagle:

> utilis est vobis, formosae, turba, puellae;
> saepe vagos ultra limina ferte pedes.
> ad multas lupa tendit oves, praedetur ut unam,
> et Iovis in multas devolat ales aves:
> se quoque det populo mulier speciosa videndam;
> quem trahat, e multis forsitan unus erit;
> (*AA* 3.417–22)[38]

Elsewhere she is metaphorically described as a baited hook (*AA* 3.425) or a net which ensnares (*AA* 428, 554, 591), metaphors which although taken from a georgic context cleverly move the focus from active hunting or fishing to entrapment through passivity.[39]

When the *praeceptor* generalizes on the nature of the male lover in this book, the male remains the cultivated voyager of love given to such *human* fallacies as romanticism (*AA* 3.579–610), naïveté, gullibility, overeagerness, and vanity (*AA* 3.673–82). Nor has the female changed from the first two books of the poem. Even in the third book, she remains avaricious, intent on exploiting the erotic male for purposes which are strictly material (*AA* 3.529–32).

In fact, even in the third book of the poem and certainly in the first two, the women of the *Ars Amatoria* are not erotic at all. By this I

[38] Apparently, the only difference between the woman 'on the prowl' and the woman who is prey is one of intention since the same simile is used both of the cowering Sabine women (*AA* 1.117–20) and of a wife left vulnerable to the advances of an adulterer by her absent husband (*AA* 2.361–64).

[39] The female who weaves whether fate (Clotho), shrouds (Penelope), or webs (Arachne) is the symbolic expression of what was a fact of feminine reality from Mycenean through Roman times, Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves* (N.Y. 1975) 30, 40, 199–200. Cf. Helen F. North, "The Mare, the Vixen, and the Bee: Sophrosyne as the Virtue of Women in Antiquity," *Illinois Classical Studies* 11 (1977) 41–48. J.J. Bachofen, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right* (1926), trans., Ralph Manheim, Bollingen Series 84 (Princeton 1967) 88 has observed that κτείς (=pudenda) derives from a primary meaning of 'weaver's shuttle, comb', and capture by the enveloping net (e.g. Aesch. *Ag.* 1115, 1125–28, 1382–83, 1492, 1516, 1580–81), therefore, constitutes a peculiarly feminine threat, Slater (supra n. 11) 178.

mean that Ovid in the *Ars Amatoria* is careful to identify male *eros* as not merely natural (in which case it would oppose civilization) but as supernatural; not strictly matter but matter (like sailing ships and racing chariots) translated into creative energy, and therefore, not the antithesis of civilization but its precursor. This *eros* is admittedly liable to catastrophe (therefore the need for *ars*), but is also shown to be amenable to the achievement of civilized goals, of progress.[40] On the contrary, without this *eros* there would be neither poetry nor love nor play — no point to the peculiarly human cultural endeavor which is the subject of the *Ars Amatoria*. This *eros* which Ovid carfully confines to the male lover is subtly divested of strictly material qualities and is identified as both part of nature and the means of escaping the limits of nature. In this sense male *eros* like the wind which propels ships into motion becomes a bridge between nature and culture.

Female *eros*, on the other hand, remains wholly part of nature, wholly material. It is the libido, the unsublimated lust exemplified by Pasiphae and her kind which if permitted would undo the fabric of civilization. Nowhere are the females, in contrast to the males, instructed in transforming *eros* toward cultivated goals. On the contrary, it is assumed that the only possible *cultus* of the female *eros* is *Pudor*, i.e. concealing rather than using *eros* (*AA* 1.275–80, 665–80, 707–712). In the pursuit of a love object the female is passive; in the manipulation of the male once acquired, she is motivated by goals which are not erotic but material. In this sense, the female student of Book Three is not a lover, nor can she ever become one. This is because female *eros* is assumed to be a priori destructive rather than potentially creative and cannot, therefore, play a creative role in culture. The distinction is inevitable when we recall that for the *praeceptor* the female is finite, irrevocably grounded in nature or matter.

The instructions of Book Three further confirm this fact, since the bulk of the *praeceptor*'s advice to women turns not on the female's cultivation of the male, but on the female's cultivation and display of herself. Here women are taught to relate to their bodies, habits,

[40] This is especially apparent in the cosmogony of Book Two (467–88) in which eros softens and mollifies aboriginal man and is the precursor of fixed dwellings and social life (473–78); cf. *Fast.* 4.107–114.

behavior, and bearing as raw material from which every trace of *rusticitas* must be expunged in order for them to meet their male lovers as *artifices* in their own right. This is to say that while amatory *cultus* for the male is the taming and handling of the female, for the female it is, to a great degree, the taming and handling of herself.[41]

Furthermore, the female is assumed to have no qualms about conforming with culture's perception of her as nature or matter, and is, therefore, represented as untroubled by any internal schisms into matter and form or emotion and reason.

"I begin with *cultus* (*AA* 3.101)," proclaims the *praeceptor*, likening the woman's work on *herself* to the cultivation of grapes or the soil (*AA* 3.101–102). "How far does not art go? (*AA* 3.291)," he asks in proper magisterial rhetoric, and continues to elaborate his detailed instructions on decorous laughing, weeping, speaking, and walking (*AA* 3.281–310). Indeed the female's emotions are assumed to be as much a part of her corporeal nature as are her physical attributes: anger, joy, sorrow — all are judged by the *praeceptor* according to strictly aesthetic rather than moral criteria (*AA* 3.237–44, 369–80, 499–524).[42] And so the poem consistently persists in associating the female with nature even and especially in the third book of advice to the *femina cultissima.*

The women of the *Ars Amatoria* may have indeed come a long way, but they have not left nature behind to the degree that their male counterparts have. The overtly egalitarian setting of sophisticated amatory gameplaying is infused with misogynous undertones. For although the association of women with nature is not itself inherently

[41] The contents of Book Three bear this out. Of the 811 lines of this book only 165 are directly concerned with the care and handling of the male (433–98, 525–610, 667–82). The rest deal with female self-cultivation: physical improvement and social graces (99–380), self-display (381–432), being good company (499–524), escaping surveillance (611–67), avoiding rash jealousy (683–746), banquet and bed behavior (747–808). By contrast only 21 lines of Book One (505–524: on dress) and 155 lines of Book Two (113–76: on the cultivation of the mind; 535–600: on repressing jealousy; 601–640: on amatory discretion) deal directly with the control of the male's own body or mind.

A most interesting contrast occurs when the respective instructions on love-making are compared. The male student is instructed on how to make love to the female (2.703–732); the female is taught to disport herself so that she looks good, creates at least an impression of enjoying herself, and avoids social gaffes (3.769–808).

[42] Anger especially is condemned for reasons which are not moral but strictly aesthetic (*AA* 3.503–508).

misogynous it becomes so in any context in which culture is glorified. This is because the value of nature declines in proportion to the positive valuation which is given to culture, the transcendent and ideal.[43] Furthermore, the simple fact of our viewing civilization as a means for transforming ourselves from victim to master of our environment initiates a tension between man and nature in which man no longer in halcyon symbiosis with nature views nature as 'the other' and attributes negative or predatory qualities to it.[44] Since the *Ars Amatoria* sets culture at a high value, the association of women with nature in the poem can hardly be to their credit.

Does all of this make Ovid a misogynist or an antifeminist? In the past the singularity and scope of Ovid's treatment of women has inevitably elicited judgments of the poet's misogyny, philogyny, and more recently his feminism or lack of it. Most critics have awarded him rather high marks for his sympathetic treatment of women. Major critics such as Wilkinson and Fränkel both detect a feminist bias in his work, although Fränkel carefully limits Ovid's 'feminism' to the area of erotic equality.[45] Others less lucidly confuse philogyny with feminism in turning up evidence for the poet's attitude toward women: Ovid, they claim, has spitefully and ungallantly knocked women off the celestial pedestal of elegy and is, therefore, no feminist.[46]

Few would deny Ovid's philogyny, both personal and poetic. In his poetry he clearly likes and sympathizes with women, and the evidence

[43] Thus Bachofen (supra n. 39) 109 can describe the triumph of patriarchy as "the liberation of the spirit from the manifestations of nature" as "spiritual life rises over corporeal existence, and the relation with the lower spheres of existence is restricted to the physical." Cf. Neumann (supra n. 14) 49.

[44] De Beauvoir (supra n. 8) 111 states: "At the moment when man asserts himself as subject and free being, the idea of the Other is dramatic: the existence of the Other is a threat, a danger."

[45] L.P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge 1955) 94; Fränkel (supra n. 17) 58; cf. F.A. Wright, *The Mirror of Venus* (London and N.Y. n.d.) 38; *Three Roman Poets* (N.Y. 1939) 201; S. Lilja (supra n. 33) 251; Hays (supra n. 16) 87; Alba O. Romano, "Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* or the Art of Outmaneuvering the Partner," *Latomus* 31 (1972) 817.

[46] S.G. Owen, ed. and trans. *P. Ovidi Nasonis Tristium Liber Secundus* (Oxford 1924; rpt. Amsterdam 1967) 198; E. De St. Denis, "Le malicieux Ovide," in *Ovidiana* (supra n. 5) 194; cf. De St. Denis, "Ovide Humoriste," *REL* 50 (1972) 63 n. 1.

we have for his personal life indicates that he had a positive and warm relationship with his third wife as well as with Perilla.[47]

Proponents of Ovid's feminism can point to a few passages in which the poet acknowledges that women's activities are limited by social constraints, and most explicitly to those passages in the *Ars Amatoria* in which Ovid as *praeceptor amoris* advocates a kind of sexual equality for women.[48]

Sexual, perhaps, but not truly erotic equality. For Ovid the philogynist and occasional feminist sees women in a way which precludes their functioning as lovers in the sense that he has defined for men. The females of the poem embark on no cultural journey as their male counterparts do. Nor do they attempt to master or structure their environment as do the cultural lover/heroes whom the poem instructs.

However there are two faces to inequality. True to form, this apparent liability in playing the *praeceptor*'s hyper-cultivated games of love has an obverse side which gives to the women of the *Ars Amatoria* their unique and important role. Although both males and females are urged to look upon female as *materia*, the multiplicity of instructions to the female presupposes a mind at work in the disposition of the raw material. Human intelligence is undeniably assumed to exist within 'nature incarnate'. This means that although the women of the poem are repeatedly associated with nature (the other), they are also part of culture (the same), and in fact occupy an intermediary position between these two poles. Depending upon the perspective from which they are viewed, they may appear, therefore, to be either below culture or above it.[49] In the context of the *Ars Amatoria*, this means that the women of

[47] In his letters Ovid addresses his wife with love and concern (e.g. *Tr.* 5.2, 5, 11, 14) and mentions her with affection (e.g. *Tr.* 1.2.37–44, 3.79–102; 4.10.73–74; 5.1.39). His letter to Perilla (*Tr.* 3.7) whom A.L. Wheeler, "Topics from the Life of Ovid," *AJP* 46 (1926) 27–28 identifies as his step-daughter (cf. Wilkinson, [supra n. 45] 345) is a model of warmth, respect, and concern.

[48] On the limits see supra n. 19. On sexual equality see *AA* 2.727–28; 3.793–94; cf. *Am.* 1.10.33–36.

[49] Ortner (supra n. 2) 85 explains the ambiguity as follows: "...we may envision culture ... as a small clearing within the forest of the larger natural system. From this point of view, that which is intermediate between culture and nature is located on the continuous periphery of culture's clearing; and though it may thus appear to stand both above and below (and beside) culture, it is simply outside and around it. We can begin to understand

the poem may often seem to provide an internal check on the *cultus* which the *praeceptor* glorifies. It also accounts for the ambiguous impression made by these women as simultaneously inferior in *cultus* and yet superior *cultores*, for they may appear both beneath the games which the *praeceptor* prescribes and at the same time above them. The seeming handicap of the more 'natural' or 'material' female player turns to an asset when her cultural disenfranchisement enables her to capitalize on the conventions and the illusions, i.e. the ground rules, which the game of culture demands of its players.

One such 'ground rule' is the idea of progress, i.e. that we are actually getting somewhere (hopefully somewhere we want to go) by virtue of *ars* or technique. Because the women of the poem are never shown on a 'culture trip', never make the 'voyage of love', they deal with their lovers who do so from outside of the cultural context, and suggest the limits of culture even while the male lovers act out culture's process and goals. However calculated and directed the *eros* which sets the male on his journey be, he is pathetically vulnerable to manipulation by the acultural female who has no illusions about getting anywhere. Manipulation of the male is a simple matter when the female is impassive, the male propelled by *eros* (*AA* 3.673–74), and the male who is most *cultus* is most vulnerable of all (*AA* 3.681–82). The male *artifex* may have embarked on a voyage of love, but in doing so he becomes a steed who can be directed, ridden, and broken:

> sed neque vector equum, qui nuper sensit habenas,
> comparibus frenis artificemque reget,
> (*AA* 3.555–56)

More revealing, the journey itself may merely be a race with arbitrary starting points and goals following what is in fact a circular path; the race itself run not for the pleasure of the participants but for the spectator in the stands (outside of the games), in this case the mistress who cleverly introduces a rival to spur her chosen steed to greater effort:

then how a single system of cultural thought can often assign to women completely polarized and apparently contradictory meanings, since extremes, as we say, meet. That she often represents both life and death is only the simplest example one could mention."

postmodo rivalem partitaque foedera lecti
sentiat; has artes tolle, senescit amor.
tum bene fortis equus reserato carcere currit,
cum, quos praetereat quosque sequatur, habet.
(*AA* 3.593–96)

Furthermore, because men are seen as more 'acculturated' there is a distinct possibility that for the male lover, the conventions of culture, however arbitrary, may be internalized to the extent that they take on a reality of their own, indeed, that they may become the only true reality. It is for this reason that the *praeceptor* urges women to allow lovers to spin their loving lies. One day these same lovers may actually believe their conventional declarations of love:

saepe tamen vere coepit simulator amare;
saepe, quod incipiens finxerat esse, fuit.
(quo magis, o, faciles imitantibus este, puellae:
fiet amor verus, qui modo falsus erat.)
(*AA* 1.615–18)[50]

No similar possibility is imagined for the female. If, as the *praeceptor* indicates in the same passage, women are all too credulous of declarations of love, it is not because words and forms have any intrinsic reality for the nature-bound female, but for a strictly material reason: every woman's innate faith in her own 'sex appeal':

est tibi agendus amans imitandaque vulnera verbis;
haec tibi quaeratur qualibet arte fides.
nec credi labor est: sibi quaeque videtur amanda;
pessima sit, nulli non sua forma placet.
(*AA* 1.611–14)

Being 'out of the game', (or above it), then, can be turned to the advantage of the females of the poem. It also means that the women of the *Ars Amatoria* may represent an implicit criticism of the *praeceptor*'s unshakable confidence in culture.

[50] Cf. *Rem. Am.* 493–504.

The scene between Calypso and Odysseus is a good example of this as well as earlier points made on the role of the women of the *Ars Amatoria*, and I, therefore, quote it in full.

non formosus erat, sed erat facundus Ulixes,
et tamen aequoreas torsit amore deas.
o quotiens illum doluit properare Calypso
remigioque aptas esse negavit aquas!
haec Troiae casus iterumque iterumque rogabit;
ille referre aliter saepe solebat idem.
litore constiterant; illic quoque pulchra Calypso
exigit Odrysii fata cruenta ducis.
ille levi virga (virgam nam forte tenebat),
quod rogat, in spisso litore pingit opus.
'haec' inquit 'Troia est' (muros in litore fecit),
'hic tibi sit Simois; haec mea castra puta.
campus erat' (campumque facit), 'quem caede Dolonis
sparsimus, Haemonios dum vigil optat equos.
illic Sithonii fuerant tentoria Rhesi;
hac ego sum captis nocte revectus equis —'
pluraque pingebat, subitus cum Pergama fluctus
abstulit et Rhesi cum duce castra suo;
tum dea 'quas' inquit 'fidas tibi credis ituro,
perdiderint undae nomina quanta, vides?'
ergo age, fallaci timide confide figurae,
quisquis es, aut aliquid corpore pluris habe.
(*AA* 2.123–44)

This excursus is ostensibly introduced as a mythological *exemplum* illustrating the *praeceptor*'s instructions to his male students on the importance of cultivating the mind (*AA* 2.111–22). The spirit, according to the *praeceptor*, endures until the pyre, continuing to spellbind long after the body has passed its prime.[51] Odysseus is the *praeceptor*'s

[51] Similar advice is given to women in *Medic.* 43–50 (cf. *Tr.* 3.7.31–44) but, as we might expect, in the *Ars Amatoria* the *bona ingenii* are seen as mere gilding of the lily for women. Although Book Three of the poem encourages women to cultivate literary and artistic accomplishments (*AA* 3.311–52), there is no suggestion that these attractions are expected to endure any longer than physical beauty. On the contrary, Book Three uses the

example of the value of the mind over the body (a major premise of culture). Although he was not beautiful, he charmed by his eloquence (123–24); he was a master of words and an *artifex* of *variatio* (128).[52]

The occasion of departure brings Odysseus to the beach (129). A new variation on the well worn theme of his Trojan exploits emerges from the staff which the hero happens to hold (131–32). Like the male lovers of the *Ars Amatoria* Odysseus is a great talker and a great traveler, always telling lies and always going places.[53] What then of Calypso?

Calypso appears at first to fit the traditional mold of the 'love-sick' female. Like Dido at the banquet table (*Aen.* 4,77–79) she hangs onto her hero's every word.[54] But Calypso is cannier than this stereotype seems to suggest.[55] Her questioning of Odysseus takes the form it does because she knows him for what he is. She wants Odysseus to delay his departure and she temporarily achieves this goal by shrewdly appealing to his artist's vanity. "*Facundus Ulixes*" could hardly resist such an appeal. In the *Remedia Amoris* Circe in a similar situation makes the mistake of delivering a long and impassioned plea (*Rem. Am.* 271–84). This was indeed a tactical error! Odysseus tends to walk out while other people are talking:

> illa loquebatur, navem solvebat Ulixes;
>
> (*Rem. Am.* 285)

Who knows how long Odysseus would have gone on spinning stories which Calypso had obviously heard before (127–28) had not nature intervened in the form of a wave which suddenly washed his drawing away (139–40)? Everything stops: Pergamum and the camp of Rhesus, i.e. history and the artistic representation of history, and more specifically the *ars* (enduring?) of Odysseus which is cut short in the middle.

topos of the ravages of time to persuade women to *carpe diem* while still young and beautiful (*AA* 3.59–82).

[52] *Variatio* would be expected of a skillful speaker by the listener in antiquity; see H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der Literarischen Rhetorik*[2] (Munich 1973) 142 et passim. Cf. the characterization of Odysseus in *Met.* 13.123–27, 382–83.

[53] On the male lover's progress see supra n. 5. For examples of his lies see *AA* 1.631–36; 2.198–202, 296–314, 656–62.

[54] Cf. *Her.* 1.30–36.

[55] Contrast, too, the description of Calypso in Prop. 1.15.9–14 which uses the stereotype of the grief-stricken 'abandoned women.'

Is it not possible, suggests Calypso, that that other product of Odysseus' *ars*, the raft which he has made for his journey, may meet a similar fate at the hands of nature (141–42)? Here is the other side of the cultural odyssey. Following the orientation we have grown to expect of the female, Calypso questions the notion that culture may bend nature to its will, and introduces the idea that whether or not they are temporarily successful, all human odysseys are brought short by the mortality of the voyagers. Because she is seen as closer to nature, the female is shown as less credulous than the male in her cultural optimism. Odysseus' artistic creation is washed away, and yet he will doggedly persist in entrusting his art to the waves once again. Calypso because she is both beneath and above such a game will stay where she is, will never try.

The final couplet of the passage with its didactic *ergo* (143–44) is intended to return the reader to the frame argument on the durability of the spirit. Here too, however, a certain ambiguity about the permanence of art persists, since *figurae* (143) may refer either to the drawing on the sand (*ars*) or corporeal beauty (*natura*) until the author's intention is made clear in the following line (144). *Ars* is more durable than nature, the *praeceptor* has suggested. Within the mythological excursus, there is more than a hint that this idea may be an illusion.

The scene between Calypso and Odysseus, thus, is more complex than a simple illustration of the power of art to fascinate. It shows two polished *artifices* of love maneuvering from their respective poles of nature or culture. Because of her association with nature Calypso is shown as outside of the cultural game, and therefore able to win the day in the erotic byplay by capitalizing on her lover's belief in his own *ars*. Furthermore, Calypso's stance as revealed through the delicate variation of the *ekphrasis* in the drawing on the sand and in the content of her argument leaves a distinct impression that there are limits to *cultus*.

Like the male lover, the *praeceptor*, and the poet himself, Odysseus is embarked on a voyage away from nature and believes that the creations of human consciousness may transcend the limits which nature imposes. This journey may be a dream, and this belief may be an illusion.

Calypso, for better or worse, because she is a woman of the *Ars Amatoria* knows this.

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