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Women Without Faces: Exemplary Control in Ovid's Amores 2

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by

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ABSTRACT

A critical analysis of the second book of Roman poet Ovid's work of erotic elegies, *Amores*. Through a close reading of several crucial poems in book 2 of this work (2.17, 2.4-5, 2.2-3, and 2.7-8) and the application of modern literary and gender theories, such as the idea of gender performativity as proposed by Judith Butler, I argue that the poet implies the closure of erotic elegy as a genre of Roman literature, poising *Amores* as the ultimate gendered product of its genre. This is achieved by the poet through his characterization of himself and his beloved *puella*, which is coloured primarily by his use of mythical *exempla* that are applied to his poetic scenarios to persuade the reader and ensure both the narrator's (the *amator'*s) erotic success and the poetic success of the author. Ovid subverts generic expectations and tropes to show both his literary erudition and to separate himself from his predecessors, allowing him to exert control over his poetics and the *amator*'s *puella*, who, for Ovid, is first and foremost a vaguely characterized poetic construct that enables his poetic success.

PREFACE

This thesis is an original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Brandon Bruce Sonmor.

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Introduction

> *I love my baby, and you know I couldn't live without her, but now I need to make every girl think this song's about her, just to make sure that they spread it like the plague. So, I describe my dream girl as really, really vague...*
>
> Bo Burnham, "Repeat Stuff"

So says American comedian, Bo Burnham, in his aptly named satirical song called "Repeat Stuff," in which he pokes fun at the commercialization of the modern love song and its propensity for rehashing generic and ubiquitous imagery. Burnham is hardly the first to recognize such a trend, but his specific point here about the efficacy of repetition, and particularly, of describing women as "really, really vague," is a device which finds its use in even the oldest of 'love' poetry from two millennia ago. It is a means through which the artist and poet alike can control their audience and dictate a malleable message that suits whatever they might want to hear/read.

Ovid utilizes this same kind of rhetoric in the construction of his *puella*—the beloved amatorial object—in his work of early erotic elegy, *Amores*. His first subversion of elegiac decorum sees Ovid beginning this work delaying the introduction of his *amor* that ought to be his impetus to write, something the other Roman elegists—Tibullus, Propertius, and their precursor, Catullus—do. It is only in the third poem of the first book that Ovid's narrator, hereafter the *amator* or poet-lover, reveals the object of his desire. The purpose of this subversion is summed up nicely by Alison Keith:

> The promise to make his girlfriend famous in his verse is disingenuous, however, since the poet-lover has not yet named her. Indeed, the withheld name invites her interpretation as poetic construct rather than historical person and the poet's movement from contemporary girlfriend to mythological heroines—Io, Leda, and Europa (two of the three also unnamed)—further facilitates such an interpretation.[1]

As a poetic construct, the *amator*'s *puella* serves the same purpose as does Burnham's vague dream girl, giving the author the ability to manipulate his audience's expectations and experience so that he might shape them to suit his own authorial needs. These needs I will discuss shortly, but first there is the point of Ovid's mythical comparison which serves as the main crux of the poet's idea in this poem.

Amores 1.3 introduces the lover's *puella*, a still unnamed elegiac *puella*, and hints toward the kinds of themes that are developed further in book 2 of *Amores,* the subject of my study. In the first few lines of the poem (*Am.* 1.3.1-4), the *amator* invokes Venus in a prayer wishing for his success with his newfound object of desire. He requests of his beloved that she accept his status as an amorous slave for her, "*accipe, per longos tibi qui deserviat annos; / accipe, qui pura norit amare fide!* (Accept him! One who would devote himself to you through long years; / Accept him! He who will know how to love with pure faith!)".[2] And, though the pentameter line seems to show the narrator offering love *to* the *puella*, the phrase is coloured by the sexually euphemistic verb, *norit* (from *nosco,* "to know").[3] The proposed transaction is our first hint that the *amator* has everything to gain and nothing to give as their relationship burgeons, since, regardless, he will attain sexual knowledge of, and access to, this woman. He swears peculiarly by leveraging against his status as a male citizen of equestrian rank in Rome (*Am.* 1.3.7-10) and

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[1] Keith, "Sexuality and Gender" 357.
[2] Ovid, *Amores* 1.3.5-6. The Latin edition of Ovid's *Amores* used throughout is the edition edited by J.C. McKeown: *Amores: Text, Prolegomena and Commentary.* Edited by J.C. McKeown. Francis Cairns, Vol. 1, 1987. All translations are my own.
[3] Adams 190.

invokes the gods as his supporters in the affair, specifically Apollo, the nine Muses, and Love itself (*Am.* 1.3.11-12).[4]

In return, he guarantees the *puella* that she will achieve literary fame, if only she will assent to him using her as his poetic material: "*te mihi materiem felicem in carmina praebe— / provenient causa carmina digna sua* (offer yourself to me as blessed material for songs— / songs worthy of their own cause shall come forth)."[5] This would be the real prize of their romance, the main reason she should want to begin this elegiac relationship. She would become like those mythical figures to whom he compares her—Io, Leda, and Europa—and achieve immortality through the act of reading. The *amator* also must figure himself in the role of Jupiter, who famously captured each of these women and, through what is essentially rape, made them famous. Thus, we see that "the myths he chooses to 'win over' his mistress suggest a paradigm for amatory relations which contradicts completely the image of the lover as 'enslaved' to the woman."[6] What is more, we still do not even know who this girl is supposed to be. The figure of "*puella*," the concept itself, is the author's means of enticing the audience, and thus the possibility of the *puella* is more important than any concrete characterization of a *puella* that Ovid could create.

In this project, I will focus on reading and interpreting book 2 of this work to explore how Ovid's use of myth figures into the larger poetical project of *Amores*, which includes his closure of the elegiac love program as a part of the elegiac "supergenre" that has come to exist in Roman literature since its introduction by Ennius.[7] The *amor* aspect of the *Amores* comes to an

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[4] Ovid, *Amores* 1.3.7-12.
[5] Ovid, *Amores* 1.3.19-20.
[6] Greene, *Erotics* 76.
[7] "elegy," *Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World;* Harrison, *Cambridge Companion to Ovid* 79, supergenre of elegy including love/erotic, didactic, funereal, etc.

end, I argue, largely in book 2 of the work, after Ovid has finished his construction of the elegiac *puella,* who "reified in the extreme, … enters the elegiac text with a body constructed for her by the poet that is in no way her own."[8] And, through his employment and subversion of common elegiac tropes, Ovid fulfills the generic expectations of elegy established by the likes of Tibullus and Propertius before him and reveals that the construct of the *puella*, the poetry itself, has reached its ultimate gendered potential in the world of Augustan Rome.

Whether it be the use of *servitium amoris* or *militia amoris* conventions, the employment of *recusatio* or embracing of *nequitia*, Ovid retains control over the poetry, and its central *puella*, Corinna, through his innovative use of *exempla* that demonstrate multivalent meanings, folding onto one another and ultimately ensuring the success of the poet's endeavour. What that success might be is summarily stated in the poet's address to *Livor* in 1.15:

> *pascitur in vivis Livor; post fata quiescit,*
> *cum suus ex merito quemque tuetur honos.*
> *Ergo etiam cum me supremus adederit ignis,*
> *vivam, parsque mei multa superstes erit.*[9]

> "Envy is nourished on the living; it rests after death, / when, as deserved,
> their own honour protects each person. / Therefore, even when the last
> flame has eaten me up, / I shall live, and a great part of me will survive."

Envy (*Livor*) is for Ovid the ultimate emotion to conquer, the one which represents poetic success, if he can become an *enviable* poet, then that means his poetic prowess and technique are of sufficient greatness for him to possess *fama perennis.*[10] The focal point of Ovid's elegies will then be the reader, and particularly, the influential and learned reader of Ovid's own time, for if

[8] Wyke 116.
[9] Ovid, *Amores* 1.15.39-42.
[10] Ibid., 1.15.8.

he makes such readers envious, then he exhibits a control over his poetry and genre that extends extraneously from the text itself. The masculine control that typifies the *amator*/*puella* relationship is transferred to a relationship between poet and audience as well.

The use of and allusion to myth is ubiquitous in ancient poetry and, as a result, manifests itself in innumerable ways. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, mythology itself takes centre stage, his *Heroides* frames each epistle through the imagined mind of a mythical character, and the didactic *Fasti* explores myth in the context of Roman religion. The elegiac works of Ovid, namely *Ars Amatoria*, *Remedia Amoris,* and his first published work *Amores*, also utilize myth to different extents. Myth is for Ovid a crucial ingredient to poetry, which, as A.J. Boyle states, "was both good to think and to write with."[11] What is it that Ovid is thinking and writing about in the *Amores* when he uses myth?

The backdrop of elegy is itself part of the answer to how and why Ovid uses myth in *Amores.* As a genre, elegy first sprouted out of Greek literature around the 8th century BCE, became associated with epigrammatic inscriptions (often for funerary contexts) in the 6th century BCE, and was later applied to erotic contexts chiefly by the Augustan elegists of the 1st centuries BCE and CE: Propertius, Tibullus, Sulpicia, and, finally, Ovid.[12] They continued to transform and evolve the genre from its earlier uses in Roman literature, having been introduced by Ennius and made popular by the likes of Catullus and Gallus, in a way that reflects the social evolution which Rome was undergoing under the reign of the newly crowned *princeps*, Augustus.

[11] Boyle 356.
[12] "elegy," *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature.*

The poets, particularly in their position as *men* of Augustus' Rome, had to navigate a new kind of political and social dynamic that arose in conjunction with the imperial regime. Augustus monopolized political and military power, destabilizing the *cursus honorum* by having himself as the "first among equals" and denying other men the cultural accension they likely grew up both learning how to participate in and expecting to succeed in. Melanie Racette-Campbell asks the question: "how could a man prove that he was a man when the markers of masculinity had been monopolized by an emperor?"[13] And, for her, the poets of Rome had a unique way to tackle this dilemma. Through a "deliberate performance of disengagement from public and private responsibilities," the poets, Ovid perhaps especially so, were able to use their poetry to construct and protect their masculine gender identities.[14]

The elegiac *puella* arises out of this crisis of masculinity and serves as an inscriptional space, a construction whereupon the poet can render her specific form to control and shape meaning in ways that best suit the identity he seeks to portray. In the case of Ovid and his *Amores*, I argue, the identity, *poeta*, was itself the raison d'être of the author's writing. This control exerted by the poet allows him to protect his masculinity, even while he may disingenuously cast it off in service of that poetry. Whether it be through the tropic use of *servitium amoris,* 'the slavery of love,' or the obfuscatory dichotomy of *militia amoris*, which sometimes sees the poet-lover assuming the role of subservient soldier to love, and other times as a dominating, amatory conqueror, the poet never *really* cedes control. In this way the feminine within his elegy reflects the phallogocentrism he must attempt to uphold, even if its performance is unconventional in the world of Augustan Rome.

[13] Racette-Campbell 3.
[14] Racette-Campbell 125.

Racette-Campbell goes on further to elaborate the performative nature of masculinity in Augustan Rome and does so through the lens of Judith Butler's approach to gender theory.[15] I follow in this method for reading Ovid, recognizing the primacy of performativity in not only Roman culture, but also its literature. In the first chapter of *Bodies That Matter*, Butler outlines how the feminine exists in culture as an "inscriptional space," and demonstrates how phallogocentric ways of thinking use the feminine as a reflective surface "which receives the marks of a masculine signifying act only to give back a (false) reflection and guarantee of phallogocentric self-sufficiency."[16] Roman elegy, written (primarily) by male lovers about the subjection and objectification of their female beloveds, takes this act of signification and inscription and places it, quite literally, onto feminine bodies. In the case of *Amores*, Ovid inscribes upon his *puella* the features of a goddess, using myth as a vehicle to explore this new means of masculine control, all the while as the poet remains subsumed under Augustus' *imperium*.

Many of the mythical women which are used as *exempla* throughout *Amores* could be seen simply as stock figures to represent different themes, and sometimes they are just that. Yet in choosing to use certain women and relating through them certain characteristics and ideas, Ovid makes a conscious decision about the relationship between his poetry—at every level from form to content—and myth. When gods and goddesses figure in the conceits of his love poems, the poet's choice to represent divinities in these differing lights must have produced various effects upon readers in Ovid's own time, as it continues to do today. To sum up this multifaceted usage, I will follow Michael Ullyot's explication of exemplarity:

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[15] See Racette-Campbell 4-5.
[16] Butler 39.

> Exemplarity relies on ahistorical treatments of its subjects, on the belief that narrating them in digestible and emotive parcels is the pathway to persuasion. But exemplarity's objects are always historical, operating in real or fictional conditions removed from exemplarity's subjects.[17]

The mythical figures that Ovid displays, especially the women, are relevant to his work's overall objective, his "persuasion," I argue, is more about arguing for his poetry's success rather than the success of his love affair. And, his narrator uses any means necessary to persuade the reader to his cause, including the entwining of these *exempla* with forensic rhetoric to construct his arguments, utilizing Ovid's background education in law.[18] Thanks to the template that a given mythological or historiographical figure may represent, the digestible delivery of such comparisons creates an elasticity in the kind of emotive responses the poet can anticipate from his audience. They paint a picture on the faceless *puella* to suit the poet's vision of elegiac success. As Matthew Roller explains, situating exemplarity in the context of Roman historiography, such exemplarity assumes that

> the past occupies a space of experience continuous with or homologous to the present, and therefore *lies open to immediate apprehension by present actors*. This homology or continuity the framework that compellingly subsumes and connects past and present is primarily ethical, since the moral values (piety, valor, trustworthiness, prudence, etc.) embodied in past actions are assumed to remain constant and diachronically valid.[19]

Ovid likewise uses exemplarity in his poetry, utilizing such comparisons and allusions for their ability to evoke a response in the reader about the veracity of his poetical achievements. If he can demonstrate how some mythical love affair is homologous to the elegiac situation, he can affirm the validity of the poetic project itself. So, the poet uses myth and, in some cases history, to fashion his *puella* and the persona that best suits his poetic success.

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[17] Ullyot 3.
[18] On Ovid's education, see Volk, *Ovid* 22-24.
[19] Roller 215, emphasis added.

More can be said about the ethical implications of infusing erotic elegy with *exempla*, diffused through the several tropic conceits and rhetorical devices the poet has at his disposal, as this introduces the contemporary cultural dynamic of the *Amores* composition. The newly crowned *princeps,* Augustus, had, around 18-16 BCE, instituted new laws surrounding the criminality of adultery—the very stuff of erotic love elegy—as a part of his programme of cultural and moral reform in the burgeoning empire.[20] One such ramification of this sociopolitical shift is explored by Trevor Fear, who shows the impact such a shift in power had on the culture of the Roman elite specifically. Fear demonstrates that, for the milieu of lyric poets and their audience of elite citizenry, the balance between *otium* and *negotium* (leisure and business) was transformed under the *imperium* of Augustus, and forced new conceptualizations of both masculinity and femininity, which elegy finds itself in prime position to interrogate.[21]

Ovid was, like many other Roman men of similar social status, trained in the legal arts of rhetoric and oration, initially pursuing a career as a lawyer before pivoting to the life of a poet.[22] This background training also provides a meaningful tool for Ovid to both connect to his audience of Roman citizens and craft his own unique approach to exploring the gender dynamics of masculinity and femininity in Rome and within Roman literature. What ends up happening is that Ovid uses the language of Roman law in *Amores* 2 to support a unique way of thinking about these gender dynamics, the elegiac representations of which would otherwise be seen as countercultural and non-traditional in the world of Augustan Rome. Part of the poet's conceit is constructing legal arguments that refamiliarize his audience with his unfamiliar and debased actions in the constructed literary and erotic world of the work. Thus, law plays just as much an

[20] See Berrino 159-160, McGinn 140-215, and Ziogas 2-3 for more information on the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis,* and Zanker 156-162 on Augustus' cultural/moral reforms.
[21] Fear 235-237.
[22] Holzberg 54-55.

important role in determining Ovid's ability to exert control over his poetics as do other social institutions which he must navigate as a Roman man.

The *exempla* of Ovid's *Amores* undeniably play a part in this project, as "its incarnation of mercenary sexual female figures in the text, not only literalizes the metaphor of textual promiscuity and pimping authors, it also uses this imagery more overtly and systematically to seduce its audience and to raise the public profile of the poet".[23] The poetry of Augustan Rome, created as it is in the patron-client social institution, needed to make a name for its author to ensure their social survival and increase their cultural capital. Augustus' status as *princeps* complicates this already nebulous social ritual as, although a patron might expect his poet to augment his own reputation, both patron and client had to keep in mind how that relationship reflected on the emperor too.[24] *Exempla*, as we will see, make for a useful recourse to restabilize erotic elegy's contemptible subject matter. Obviously then, a big part of the poet's project must be presenting himself in such a way as could be found agreeable to not only his patron, but also the emperor Augustus. Another dimension of this is the subjects presented within such poetry, and in the genre of erotic elegy, where the audience expects seedy male lovers and adulterous relations, these subjects—the women represented therein—had to be regulated by the poet dealing with this social dynamic.

To further explain how this gendered control operates in *Amores* 2, I augment Maria Wyke's notion of the *scripta puella*—the written girl—which she uses to describe the metatextual status of the female figure in Propertius, to Ovid's use of a *puella* who is *scribenda*, who *must* be written. This difference involves Ovid's transformation of elegy into a realm of

[23] Fear 221.
[24] For more on poetic patronage in Augustan Rome, see Gold "Patronage and the Elegists: Social Reality or Literary Construction?" 303-310 in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*.

figurativeness beyond the other Latin elegists, using the *puella* primarily as *materia*, as convincingly argued by Ellen Greene.[25] This *materia* is, literally, the poetic subject matter and its characters which serve the poet's goal, just as he himself states it in 1.3 and 1.15 above. Rather than a person, the *puella,* as *materia*, is a commodity that the poet sells to his audience. And, in doing so, he objectifies the *puella* which allows him to privilege his own, masculine position in the narrative.[26] Since Ovid knows well the history of his genre, where he retreads ground and breaks it anew creates the space for his *materia* to find its market, so to speak. The result of Ovid's poetic project is thus the overdetermination of his genre, he uses any means necessary: tropic, linguistic, and mythographic—among others—to demonstrate the full potential and ultimate limits of erotic elegy to his audience.

I will begin by examining *Amores* 2.17 as a kind of model for the way Ovid employs *exempla* to exert ultimate poetic control over form, content, and outcome in his erotic elegy. The *scripta puella* of Ovid, whom he intends to woo through his poetry, is constrained by the poet to the world of figurativeness, never to be actualized as a woman but only ever represented for the audience as his poetry itself.[27] This first examination will begin by demonstrating the poet's control over and construction of the *puella* through his use of mythical *exempla* which are charged with multifaceted meanings that introduce religious, cultural, political, and even legal ramifications into their interpretation. Since Ovid's depiction of mythical scenes, specifically those depicting women and showing their relationship to his poetic world of amatory

[25] Greene, *Erotics* 70: "The speaker produces or publishes his *materia* and fashions or begets a *puella* who will be at the service of his artistic needs."
[26] See Greene, *Erotics* 73-74.
[27] Wyke 59-60.

undertakings, are an indelible part of the poetry's message to the reader, his choice of *exempla* informs and underscores his subject matter at every turn.

In chapter 2, I examine the poems 2.4 and 2.5, and analyze how the legal rhetoric of Ovid augments his use of mythical *exempla.* Recent work has shown the importance of Roman law in Ovid's poetry and particularly for his role as the *amator* of *Amores*. Ioannis Ziogas' work, *Law and Love in Ovid: Courting Justice in the Age of Augustus*, aids my interpretation of Ovid's forensic style. One of Ziogas' main tenets is that "the language of law in Ovid declares the normative force of his art," and he highlights that elegy finds its climax aligning with Augustus' moral and legislative reform.[28] The *amator* first makes a disingenuous defense plea in 2.4 to excuse his overeager and unprejudiced attraction to all kinds of women. This lends itself to a display of hypermasculinity that subverts elegiac expectations through its allusion to and reuse of the other elegiac poets. *Amores* 2.5 then throws this characterization of the *amator* out the window and shows the narrator instead emasculated by the promiscuous behaviour of his beloved, and he must make the case for her guilt as the witness to her crime and become an unwilling prosecutor.

These two poems, showing two opposite faces of the *amator* to the reader, emphasize that our narrator, the poet-lover, is as unreliable as they come. The amator's unabashed insincerity throws the narrative of the poems off base. We cannot help but face the dubiousness with which he has constructed these artificial elegiac scenarios and one of the main ways in which the *amator* weaves this into these poems is through their intertextual threads. Thus, in 2.4 and 2.5,

[28] Ziogas 10, 2.

reference and allusion to Catullus, Propertius, Virgil, and others abound, serving as textual *exempla* which metapoetically illustrate the poet's mastery over his *materia*.

Chapter 3 will deal with the poems 2.2 and 2.3, wherein Ovid utilizes a common elegiac conceit, the *paraclausithyron,* or 'door poem,' in which he pleads with the doorkeeper standing outside his beloved's room to let him in so that he might achieve erotic access to her. This diptych introduces the doorkeeper, Bagoas, who is more fleshed out as a character than the doorkeepers of the other elegists. Thanks to Bagoas' liminal status in his portrayal as a eunuch, the implications of his existence as an object and obstacle to the poet-lover carry immense ramifications to our understanding of the *amator*'s own masculine identity. Ovid once again uses myth as a vehicle to explore such identity, threatening with and comparing the doorkeeper to figures of myth which uphold the *amator*'s erotic agenda.

My fourth chapter addresses a similar peculiarity with another character's involvement in the *amator's* erotic endeavours. In this chapter I analyze poems 2.7 and 2.8, which introduce to the reader a third party in the *amator*'s love affair, the *puella*'s slave hairdresser, Cypassis. The skill of the hairdresser to craft the *puella*'s beauty is a threat to the *amator*'s own ability to sculpt that beauty in his poetry. In this diptych the poet also wields extortive sexual control over Cypassis, confirming his masculine, Roman citizen position within the poem against her status as foreign, slave, and Other. I argue that he highlights her inferior social status while using mythical *exempla* to again raise up his *puella* to establish his creative control over her poetic image.

Poetic *Exempla*, Character, and Control in *Amores* 2.17

A central concept that arises from reading *Amores* 2.17 is that of the *numen* (divine power/godhead). Here, I will demonstrate Ovid's use of mythical *exempla* and elegiac tropes to push his description of the *puella* to divine extremes, portraying her as equal to a goddess. The connotation of the *puella*'s divinity is not necessarily an unusual feature in Roman love poetry, but I argue that Ovid's application of this idea carries a more intentional metapoetic goal than it does for much of the other elegists. After exploring the ways that the poet-lover confers upon his *puella* divine status in 2.17, I will be able to recontextualize several earlier poems in my subsequent chapters.

There are two terms which I connect to one another that tie together this idea of the *puella*'s image and her divinity: *facies* (face/appearance), and *numen.* The former is, as we will see, central to the poet's thesis in 2.17, while the latter remains implicit. *Numen,* however, is found throughout the *Amores* and one example can demonstrate its importance to the relationship between *puella, exempla,* and the *amator's* metapoetical goal. By Book 3 of *Amores*, we can see that the *puella* has become a compelling *numen* in her own right. In 3.11b, the *amator* exclaims he is through with this whole game of love, but it is his *puella*'s divine power which, invariably, brings him back. She controls his elegiac outcome through her "*faciem*" (her appearance, and perhaps even more particularly her face), which is a "*numinis instar* (resemblance of divine power)."[29] But the figure of the poet retains power through his objectification of her appearance, in which "the woman's beauty not only captures a man's attention," here the reader and lover alike, "but renders her his captive property."[30] Her own *numen* is only realized inasmuch as it

[29] Ovid, *Amores* 3.11b.15.
[30] Pandey, "*Caput mundi*" 458.

controls whether the *amator* loves her freely or under constraint, "*tu selige tantum / me quoque velle velis anne coactus amem* (you alone decide / if you want me to want also or if under compulsion should I love),"[31] and even this is contrived to enable the poet's success. In the end, her *facies* and the voice which we might expect to come with it continues to be silenced.

Numen is a term of Roman religion fraught with ambiguity. Its etymology points towards it being connected to heads: the Latin verb, *nuto*, "to nod," and noun *mens,* "mind," and also the Greek verb, *νεύω*, "to nod."[32] Georges Dumézil states of the meaning of *numen* in the Augustan age that

> It is only with the Augustan writers, through the intermediary of a meaning 'divine power,' which is, mathematically speaking, as it were **the integral of the god's particular wishes**, that *numen* becomes first a poetic synonym for 'god,' second the notation for each of the various *prouinciae* which form the complex domain of a god, and third the expression of that which is most mysterious in the unseen world.[33]

Clearly that simple, synonymic meaning of 'god' is at play for Ovid, but we should be aware further of this integral aspect of *numen,* which sees the expression of a deity's wishes as a part of its whole being. Additionally, ancient Latin authors themselves have connected the term to the Greek, *νομος*, "law/custom" and the sixth-century grammarian, Priscian, links the word to the name of Rome's mythical second founder, Numa, who is known as the bringer of religious law to Rome and her people.[34]

All this is to say that I believe Ovid utilizes the Roman cultural designation of this term as relating not only to the deity themselves, but also their will or the expression of their power. In this sense, thanks to its etymological relation to the act of nodding and assent, one should not be

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[31] Ovid, *Amores* 3.11b.17-18.
[32] "*numen*." *A Latin Dictionary.* Lewis & Short.
[33] Dumézil 29, emphasis added.
[34] Deremetz 238; Maltby 416.

surprised by the association Ovid places between *numen* and the *puella*'s head—variably her *facies*, *forma*, or whatever word should best suit a given poem. The power-play between the expression of the *puella*'s *numen*, her "divine will," and the actual realization of that power (or lack thereof), plays perfectly into the poet's elegiac project.

Having learned about the *puella's numen*, the way her face (and appearance overall) serves—to borrow Tacitus' description of the religious phenomenon—as "*effigi[es] numinum*" (an object which holds religious power), our reading of the concept of *facies* must be coloured differently throughout.[35] Ovid, in 2.17 and throughout *Amores*, hides his *puella's* actualization by making her symbolically faceless and filling in the blank image of her *facies* with figures from myth who can offer the poet a similarly open slate onto which he is able to write her. The female *exempla* of *Amores* 2.17 all illustrate Butler's account that:

> the feminine is cast outside the form/matter and universal/particular binarisms. She will be neither the one nor the other, but the permanent and unchangeable condition of both—what can be construed as a nonthematizable materiality. She will be entered, and will give forth a further instance of what enters her, but she will never resemble either the formative principle or that which it creates.[36]

The *puella* sits on the periphery, nonthematizable, because her power, her material *facies*, is only realizable in the poetry of the man who writes her. The outcome of this phenomenon is aptly described by Erica Zimmerman Damer, who states that "the *puella*'s body is then like the vanishing point on the horizon for three-dimensional perspective, always receding from view but essential to the establishment of the elegiac space and genre."[37] Her existence gives forth the poetry which continually fashions her own creation and the poet steps into the role of slave knowing full well that he remains the master.

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[35] Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.10.
[36] Butler 42.
[37] Zimmerman Damer 57.

The premise of *Amores* 2.17 sees the poet complaining that Corinna's lovely appearance has made her boisterous: "*dat facies animos. facie violenta Corinna est* (her face gives her bravado, Corinna has an impetuous face)."[38] Her face represents danger and the potential destruction of the poet-lover's elegiac project, but he cannot help but be a slave to her love and his own desire. In this poem's scenario, the poet is forced to love under constraint, having made himself *"servire puellae*," fulfilling the typical elegiac trope of *servitium amoris*.[39] This culminates in the couplets from lines 11-14, as he exclaims that her face was born for his eyes (line 12), and reasons that, even being inferior, he should be permitted to join with his beloved: "*aptari magnis inferiora licet* (lesser things may be permitted to fit with greater ones)."[40]

He goes on to argue for his position through comparison to several mythical couplings, Odysseus and Calypso, Peleus and Thetis, Numa and Egeria, and Vulcan and Venus (2.17.15-20). The poet thus equates his *puella* to a goddess or a nymph and himself to either a mortal or a divinity of lesser power. Nevertheless, with these comparisons he figures himself exceptional, like a hero, or, at worst, a lame god. This dynamic affects my reading of both the poet's and the *puella*'s agency, and how each different *exemplum* makes elastic the relationship between the *puella*'s *numen*, her *facies*, and the poet's power over her.

First, we can consider Ulysses and the nymph Calypso, with whom he is paired with in the poem's short, comparative catalogue:

> *traditur et nymphe mortalis amore Calypso*
> *capta recusantem detinuisse virum.*[41]

[38] Ovid, *Amores* 2.17.7.
[39] Ibid., 2.17.1
[40] Ovid, *Amores* 2.17.11-14.
[41] Ibid., 2.17.15-16.

> "and, it is said, the nymph captured by love of a mortal, / Calypso, had
> detained a reluctant man."

While Ovid is sure to emphasize how the divine Calypso fell in love with a mortal, he also explains how she detained the "reluctant man," demonstrating the *exemplum*'s appropriateness to the elegiac trope of the *servitium amoris*. Of course, with the mention of Ulysses, Ovid also conjures up the stock characteristics of the epic hero—cunning, intelligence, etc.—and implies his own possession of such attributes, despite his supposed role of slave in the poem's conceit.

There is another layer to this reading which supports the *servitium amoris* trope. If we consider the influence of dramatic comedy on Ovid, then the comparison to Ulysses can be seen also as a statement that the narrator, being a cunning Ulysses, is akin to the stock character of the *dolosus servus* found in the likes of Plautus.[42] The slave figure in Roman comedy stands on the periphery, his clever antics only acceptable on the stage, yet in this façade he controls that very stage and captivates the audience, demonstrating the kind of control that a slave can never have in reality. This performance of slave, of playing the captured man, is also put on by the poet here. In its original performance it is meant to captivate not only the *puella*, but its truer target—which the poet does not fail to repeatedly remind us of throughout the work—the audience of readers whose very act of reading continually grants the poet's wishes for everlasting fame and success.[43]

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[42] cf. Plautus, *Pseudolus* 4.8: "*nimis illic mortalis doctus, nimis vorsutus, nimis malus; /*
superavit dolum Troianum atque Ulixem Pseudolus. (thence the excessively learned mortal man, excessively shrewd man, excessively wicked man; / he conquered the Trojan and Ulyssean trickery, Pseudolus)."
[43] For example, in *Amores* 1.15.

In choosing Ulysses, the poet echoes back to that sentiment of eternal fame and does so by evoking this twofold understanding of the *exemplum* which the hero presents to a Roman audience. He is a figure from legend who is continually contextualized through expression of those trademark characteristics of cunning, intelligence, and control, either in his own epic or in his expression in other genres, and we cannot read him any other way here. Where Ovid's choice in depiction gets more nuanced is in Calypso. While the depiction of Ulysses as desirous for his home and a return to his family can be seen in the language of his being *recusantem*, the emphasis must be placed on *capta* Calypso through the poet's powerful choice to name her here in this couplet and not his hero. So, what can she represent to the poet-lover and his *puella*?

Calypso's name may come from the Greek verb, *καλύπτω*, meaning "to conceal," and she hides the Greek hero in Homer's *Odyssey* and keeps him from his return home, yet she must finally relent and let him go, ultimately failing to conceal him and actualize her very existence.[44] Moreover, by his nature as an epic hero, Calypso could never succeed in containing Ulysses anyway, thus also in this poem, though the poet submits to his *puella*'s *facies*, the implication is that he—as a Ulysses—will nonetheless escape subordination in some, clever way. Though this seems to ultimately place the poet above his *puella*, it must be remembered that for Ulysses to reach that renowned status, to be a hero for the ages, conflicts such as his tumultuous relationship with Calypso are necessary to overcome.[45] But this conflict is fabricated to some extent, and the Homeric echo confirms this for the learned Roman reader.

[44] Homer, *Odyssey* 7.259-266; '*καλύπτω.*' *A Greek–English Lexicon*, Liddell, Scott, & Jones.
[45] Cf., *Odyssey* 7.240-258 and see Boyd, *Ovid's Homer* 199-205 for an explanation of this phenomenon being expressed in Ovid.

The Calypso episode in the *Odyssey* is itself a metanarrative; the eponymous hero acts as the storyteller and narrator of his escapade with Calypso, not unlike an elegiac poet recounting his love affair with his *puella.* As such, what comparison could make a more fitting *exemplum* to the project of the elegiac lover? The poet relies on constructing and narrating his own conflict with his beloved to ultimately achieve elegiac, poetic success, like Ulysses relating his encounter to the Phaeacian court. In the end, the poet turns out to be the one concealing the *puella*, either through comparison to other fleshed out figures, or the silencing of her voice in his poetry, and, as we will see, grants his poetry the eminent position in his narrative.

In the following couplet, the list becomes more compact, showing us two couples in as many lines. These pairs make a bridge between Greek legend and Roman. He starts with Peleus and Thetis, both of whom are unnamed in the poem (Peleus is related by his home of Pthia, and Thetis is recognized only in her identity as a Nereid), then Numa and his mate, Egeria:

> *creditur aequoream Pthio Nereida regi,*
> *Egeriam iusto concubuisse Numae.*[46]

> "it is believed that the Nereid of the calm sea laid with the Pthian king, /
> Egeria with righteous Numa."

Perhaps because of their poetic and cultural fame, in the case of the former and the latter respectively, Ovid gives less space to describe these two pairs. However, their inclusion and the myths of their unions further augment the subtle point about the interplay of power between the poet and his *puella* which the Ulysses-Calypso reference introduced. The fact also that the former pair are explicitly *not* named, while the latter pair are, may hint at the importance the poet

[46] Ovid, *Amores* 2.17.17-18.

places on the reader not only recognizing these figures, but hearing/seeing the signifiers that represent them in the Latin language.

First, the pair of Thetis and Peleus appear here coming off the heels of Thetis' mention in the latter of the problematic pair of abortion poems, 2.14, wherein mythical *exempla* are strewn throughout to tie together the poet's theme of progeneration. In lines 13-14 of that poem, Ovid ironically ponders at once the destruction of Troy through the birth of Achilles:

> *quis Priami fregisset opes, si* ***numen*** *aquarum*
> *iusta recusasset pondera ferre Thetis?*[47]
>
> "Who could have destroyed the powers of Priam, if the godhead of the sea, / Thetis, had refused to bear her righteous burdens?"

Thetis' *numen* must give way to Priam first in 2.14, and to the *regnum* of Peleus in 2.17.18, just as the *puella* folds unto the poet's power, molded by his manipulation of her *facies*. Here, just as in 2.17, the nymph is only knowable by her relationship to a man and, by such a stroke, the poet continually subverts and exposes the reality of the *servitium amoris* situation and where control actually lies.

In 2.14 the poet is arguing against his *puella*'s abortion, using the *exemplum* to demonstrate the powerful potential she holds within. The "burdens" (*pondera*) Thetis is responsible for refer to the unborn Achilles in her womb. Nevertheless, Ovid's choice of vocabulary is telling as to his real motivations. This conceit can be reduced again to the level of poetics: though the character of the poet-lover abhors his *puella*'s dangerous act, he alludes to the idea that, just as a powerful Achilles destroys the *opes* of Priam, so too a child would ruin his

[47] Ovid, *Amores* 2.14.13-14, emphasis added.

own *opus*. Erotic elegy has no inscriptional space for babies save for the poet's—his poems themselves.

This Thetis whom we find in the *Amores* is built from the previously articulated figure found in the Homeric poetic tradition, and is, moreover, articulated perhaps most readily in the Augustan mind by the precedent set in Catullus' poem 64 regarding her wedding to Peleus. Ovid himself also gives a clear picture of Thetis in all her protean malleability in the *Metamorphoses*, where Peleus grasps her and holds onto her as she changes form over and over.[48] In each story the powerful nymph is reduced to her status as a man's spouse, and reading across specifically to the *Metamorphoses* one can see how Peleus analogizes the poet, grabbing hold of Thetis in whichever form she takes and controlling her final representation as his wife. This once again fits perfectly the project of the poet in constructing a *puella* who best suits his poetic goals. The next half of the couplet follows similarly.

Numa appears more often in the work of Greek authors than in that of Latin authors, but in Ovid specifically we see an exception to this.[49] Two different versions of Numa are presented by Ovid, in his *Metamorphoses* and his *Fasti*, but, although each of these presents incongruent facts about the life of Rome's second mythical king, they both demonstrate a congruent image of Numa's character—the pious and thoughtful king. This comes about in the former poem through an encounter with the Greek philosopher, Pythagoras. Alain Deremetz, following Jesper Svenbro, argues that this connects the myths of Rome and Greece etymologically through Numa's nominal origins being related to the Greek term, *νομος*:

[48] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 11.257-265.
[49] Deremetz 234.

> The life of Numa, as it is told by most mythographers (Greek as well as Latin), seems to be an 'etymological' myth (deriving the name of Numa the lawgiver from *nomos*, the Greek word for 'law') composed or invented by a Greek mythographer to illustrate one of the conceptions that the Greeks had of the problematic relationship between law and writing.[50]

The effect of this linguistic connection would not be lost on Ovid, as, I argue, he uses this aural reminiscence in *Amores* 2.17 to allude to a connection between the *numen* of his beloved and the figure of Numa himself—even if through "a simple etymological play."[51] In a poem where the central topic is his beloved's *facies*, and the power she holds over him because of it, Numa, in the very act of being named, alludes to the combined *numen* of the poet constructing the *puella* and the expression of her character, her own 'godhead,' as she is written like law.

As Numa is the king who creates law for Rome, the speaker in 2.17 must be seen as the ruler and maker of the *puella*, furthering the establishment of his actual power even as he seems to subordinate himself throughout the poem. Thus, he solidifies the rules of the genre. This dynamic is complicated through her position as Egeria, and what she represents in the context of the myth to which Ovid alludes. In 4.641-672 of the *Fasti*, the poet describes the mythical origin of a Roman agricultural ritual in which a pregnant cow is sacrificed to the gods so that they might increase the yield of the crops. This comes about when Numa, in trying to solve the hardship of the Roman harvest, is attempting to puzzle out a prophetic dream:

> *… Numa visa revolvit*
> *et secum ambages caecaque iussa refert,*
> *expedit errantem nemori gratissima coniunx*
> *et dixit 'gravidae posceris exta bovis.'*[52]

[50] Derametz 236.
[51] McKeown, vol. 2, 374.
[52] Ovid, *Fasti* 4.667-670.

> "… Numa was pondering the visions / and ruminating on uncertainties and
> blind orders, his most pleasing wife of the grove untangled his confusion
> and said, 'they request the entrails of a pregnant cow'."

Ovid's language here works doubly. The legendary king can be construed as physically and mentally lost. While the command has Numa seemingly going in circles (*revolvit*; *secum… refert*; *errantem*), Egeria of the grove (*nemori*), being also of Numa (*iusto Numae*), and hence, *numen,* can liberate the king from his dilemma and provide him the means to actualize his religious power, creating the Fordicidia ritual.[53]

To continue in the examination of such etymological echoes, Georges Dumézil states that the name, Egeria, could be connected to the Latin verb, "*egerere*," meaning 'to bear out,' and thus connects the nymph's figure to her religious role of a childbirth deity.[54] Egeria's association to Numa sees her as a kind of Diotima, granting him the ability to birth an idea—in this case Roman law and religion—just as the former does for Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*.[55] In such configurations, the woman demonstrates a kind of power that is nevertheless controlled by men, wherein creation and generation are associated to the woman but ultimately produced by the man. Egeria is to 'bear out' the *numen* but, it is in Numa that it comes into being, as is also exemplified in the *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*. From the advent of the abortion narrative in 2.13 and 2.14, an undercurrent theme of Platonic love emerges in the remainder of *Amores'* second book. Here it seems Ovid puts a similar duty on the role of poet as Plato does the philosopher in

[53] "*iusto Numae,*" as in *Amores* 2.17.18 above.
[54] Dumézil, 408.
[55] see Plato, *Symposium* 206b-207a and 209a-212b.

their mission to progenerate ideas and this list in 2.17 reiterates each time—just by allusion to such figures—the creative power the poet controls.

Ovid follows up the linguistically and culturally charged pairing of Numa and Egeria with full-blown divinities in the short list's final exemplum. The list ends with Venus and Vulcan in lines 19-20, and uses the goddess of love and the god of craftsmanship to transition back to subject of the poet's art:

> *Vulcani Venus est, quamvis incude relicta*
> *turpiter obliquo claudicet ille pede;*
> *carminis hoc ipsum genus impar, sed tamen apte*
> *iungitur herous cum breviore modo.*[56]

> "There is Venus for Vulcan, ever so when his anvil is abandoned /
> disgracefully the god limps with his foot awry; / this very type of poetry is
> uneven, but nonetheless fittingly fastens the heroic with the shorter
> meter."

If the learned reader, some high-class Roman man, or woman, had not picked up on the nuance in comparing these pairings to the poet and his *puella*, Ovid states it plainly in this final example. Ovid, ever playful, undercuts the complexity that he was building in this list of *exempla* to turn the attention back to himself, and show once again how the poet retains absolute dominance—over form and matter.[57]

The pairing of Vulcan and Venus is well-trodden mythical ground. As the list begins with Homer so too does it, in some respects, end. It is again in the *Odyssey* where the two are first paired together, in the famed story in which Aphrodite (Venus) cheats on her spouse, Hephaestus

[56] Ovid, *Amores* 2.17.19-22.
[57] Abstract/physical form and poetic form, physical matter and poetic matter.

(Vulcan), with the god of war, Ares (Mars).[58] The *exemplum* of their mythical love affair also reinforces the deities' connection to the emperor, part of whose cultural project saw the worship of Mars and Venus as a vehicle to underscore Augustus' divine and ruling ancestors, Aeneas and Romulus.[59] This connection is precariously charged because of that Homeric, erotic and adulterous antecedent, as

> the three gods thus present us with an unlikely sort of triangle, one that is made literal by the erotic relationships that link Aphrodite to each of the other two. Indeed, when Hephaestus crafts the spiderweblike net that traps the other two gods in bed, the three are quite explicitly triangulated. At the same time, Hephaestus is clearly marginalized by the results of his own craft: forever on the outside, forever looking in.[60]

Thanks in part to Augustan iconography and architecture, beginning perhaps with Julius Caesar's construction of her temple, Venus, during Ovid's time, was most recognizable through her role of *Venus Genetrix*, seemingly removed from the erotic context and the precedent set by Homer's depiction.[61] Mars of course is also given special place in Roman religion because of Augustus, who was responsible for the construction of the Temple of Mars Ultor which overlooked his forum, and Vulcan is left on the outside, just as occurs in Homer.[62] In the Roman (rather, Augustan?) context, Venus, as a kind of *exemplum* of Roman history and culture, is placed firmly in the role of mother—to Aeneas, to Rome, and of course, to the emperor's adoptive Julian clan—rather than being the adulterous concubine to Mars, despite how close to the surface such a connotation inevitably remains.

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[58] See Homer, *Odyssey* 8.266-366.
[59] Zanker 195-201.
[60] Boyd, *Ovid's Homer* 239.
[61] Cf., Lucretius 1.1
[62] Zanker 108.

This almost too perfect elegiac scenario is found elsewhere in Ovid's corpus, but, in 2.17, he opts to show us a Venus faithful to Vulcan, acquiescing to his deformity, just as his preference for the shorter, elegiac poetic foot is portrayed as the poet-lover's shortcoming, unable as he is to leave elegy for the more illustrious genre of epic. Whether or not the Roman reads her in this couplet as representative of that motherly *exemplum*, the poet pushes the focus away from her, as he does to Mars through his omission. Ovid throws himself and his status as poet into the fold of Augustus and Rome to fulfill this triad. Vulcan continues the ploy of subordinate masculinity that the other men in this list at first appear to have, supporting the poet as the *servitium amoris*. Yet the poet finishes by emphasizing Venus' affection for his love poetry, with its one shorter foot akin to Vulcan, showing the poet the kindness which he beseeches from his *puella* in this poem.

Ovid's portrayal of Venus here thus aligns with these prior Roman representations of the goddess—at least in the vacuum of the couplet in which she and Vulcan appear. Yet, separating himself from those antecedents like Vergil and Lucretius, the focus in these particular couplets is placed on Vulcan, following the pattern of the rest of his list which, as we have seen, ultimately demonstrates the control and dominance of the masculine figure. This final pairing comes to represent not only the relationship between the poet and *puella* but carries the profounder connotation of representing the poet as a marginalized Vulcan, bound to the periphery of Roman culture by his craft, yet perhaps, believing himself to have ultimate control there as well as in the elegiac world. Venus, the *exemplum* for Rome itself, is presented as enamored by the craftmanship of Vulcan (*i.e.,* the poet).[63]

[63] By implication then, the omitted Mars must come to symbolize Augustus, who has taken control of Rome through the force of war and has her smitten with his *imperium*.

This ending of the list transitions back to the poet's pleas for his *puella*'s acceptance, and does so using vocabulary reflective of Roman legal language, poignantly following on the heels of his last *exemplum,* of the legal husband and wife, the pair of Vulcan and Venus:

> *tu quoque me, mea lux, in quaslibet accipe leges;*
> *te deceat medio iura dedisse foro*[64]

> "you also accept me, my light, in whichever terms you please; / may it be
> fitting that you have dictated the conditions in the middle of the forum"

The poet exhorts his *puella* to declare their relationship publicly and for her to accept him in the middle of the forum. Thus, he assumes that he has provided strong evidence for their affair and his seemingly subservient position in the relationship through the *exempla* we have just seen. These lines recontextualize the entirety of 2.17: the poet who will gladly serve his *puella* (*servire puellae*), not only should be convicted (*convincar*) as he states in line 2, but perhaps *will* be convicted as he sees it, and rationalizes his use and appropriation of myth to fit into *exempla*, each one more 'legal' than the last, from the affair of Calypso and Odysseus, the arranged marriage of Peleus and Thetis, the familial joining of Egeria as Numa's *coniunx*, and, finally, a paradoxically prototypical Augustan marriage, in the legal pairing of Venus and Vulcan, known as they are for numerous adulterous affairs. And so, by imploring his *puella* to state the claim, he shifts the onus away from the author and onto the poetry which the *puella* represents. If the persuasion here is successful, then the poet need only let his poetry stand to affirm his own affair. By reducing his *puella* to a Venus contained by the craftsman Vulcan, she is left only to acquiesce to what he creates as a sort of legal loophole for their relationship in this poem.

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[64] *Amores*, 2.17.23-24.

That the claim must be stated by his *puella* also impacts the poet's power-play throughout the whole of *Amores*. In 1.15, the poet had insisted that he was done with studying laws:

> *nec me verbosas leges ediscere nec me*
> *ingrato vocem prostituisse foro?*[65]
>
> "neither that I learn by heart wordy laws nor / prostitute my voice to the ungrateful forum"

He states very carefully in the couplet—with deliberately negative word choices—that he is abandoning any sort of legal practice, the kind typical of an equestrian man like Ovid, calling out that he would have prostituted himself in the displeasing or otherwise thankless (*ingrato*) forum. This, of course, is the very thing he beseeches from his *puella* in 2.17. Ovid employs his own liminal cultural status as a poet and reverses it to show that in this new principate, where *otium* abounds, it is a poet like Ovid who is in control of the reader's *otium*.[66] Recontextualized this way, the reader and *puella* alike are carefully reminded of their inferior status, and, as Ziogas explains, "lover and beloved are implicated in an affair that is modeled on the relationship between a lawyer and his client. […] The elegiac *recusatio* defines and reproduces the sociolegal structures it rejects."[67] Even amidst a poem supposing to show the power she possesses through her beauty being lorded over him, the *recusatio* therein demonstrates that the *puella* possesses social power that is, at best, only akin to that of a legal client.

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[65] *Amores* 1.15.5-6.
[66] Fear 238: "If Augustus and the elegists can both be figured as pimps seducing their victims with alluring forms of *otium,* then the acquiescence of Rome in making the elegists and Augustus a success could also be seen as a willingness on the part of the Romans to prostitute themselves in order to obtain such *otium.*"
[67] Ziogas 41.

This brings us to the poem's other concluding facts, that there could be several Corinnas, numerous potential clients for our poet, each vying for the kind of fame the poet bestows upon his true *puella*:

> *non tibi crimen ero, nec quo laetere remoto;*
> *non erit hic nobis infitiandus amor.*
> *sunt mihi pro magno felicia carmina censu,*
> *et multae per me nomen habere volunt;*
> *novi aliquam, quae se circumferat esse Corinnam.*
> *ut fiat, quid non illa dedisse velit?*[68]

> "I will not be a criminal for you, neither should you delight that I am far away; / this love must not be refuted by us. / There are blessed songs for me in place of great wealth, / and many girls wish to have a name through me; / I know another girl, who circulates that she herself is Corinna, / to make it happen, what would that girl not be willing to have given?"

The poet first states he will not be a crime to his *puella*, with the word *crimen* also carrying the context of adultery specifically—an obviously pertinent choice given the overall conceit of Latin love elegy, made more impactful here after the transition from the exemplum of Venus.[69] Neither can *amor* be refuted (*infitiandus*) by them, seeing as the poet has constructed the outcome of his case here so that his exemplary evidence supports it. And, continuing with the legal-speak, the poet opts to compare his blessed songs to great wealth which is also implicated as belonging to a registered citizen using the noun *census*. So, while other girls might act as a Corinna and claim to be her, they have not undergone the legal scrutiny that the poet places on his relationship with his true Corinna, they cannot be afforded the same kind of poetic production without the poet-

[68] Ovid, *Amores* 2.17.25-30.
[69] "*crimen.*" *A Latin Dictionary.* Lewis & Short.

lover's permission. This notion of legal justification will be seen throughout several of the *Amores*' poems and shows the importance that the poet places on enacting such control over the entire elegiac scenario he constructs.

It seems likely that this poetic transmutation of legalese by Ovid is correlative to the introduction of Augustus' *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* around 18-16 BCE, roughly the same time that the *Amores* seems to have been published.[70] While I cannot go so far as to say there is a judgement here by Ovid, negative or positive, about Augustan legal reform and its social and moral implications, it seems obvious enough that he is utilizing his background in law to make a poignant connection to contemporary issues. The poetic 'theme' of law becomes another tool in the poet's repertoire to persuade the audience of his project's importance and success, thus he need not write something other than elegy, as he finally exclaims:

> *Nec nisi tu nostris cantabitur ulla libellis;*
> *ingenio causas tu dabis una meo.*[71]
>
> "And not any except you will be sung of in our little books; / you alone
> will give the reasons for my talent."

If the poet at first alienates himself, as in 1.15.5-6, from his fellow male citizen readers, many of whom would also have been occupied with legal or other adjacent career pursuits in Rome, he then seeks to remind them in 2.17—with his *puella* as his potential mouthpiece—that *his* pursuit is nonetheless a legitimate and legal endeavour. This lends itself to Ziogas' interpretation that "the love poet does not simply 'comment on' the laws of Augustus, but casts himself in the role

[70] Ziogas 2-3.
[71] *Amores* 2.17.33-34.

of the sovereign legislator," so it becomes Ovid who defines the parameters for elegy, *amor*, and the influence of things like physical appearance on the outcome of his work.[72]

The *servus amoris,* trapped by his *puella*'s *facies,* has, in fact, trapped her, only allowing her power in scenarios furthering his poetic achievement, thus continuing the circle that turns the control of that power back onto the poet. The exemplum of Venus, who is supposed to be the progenitor of *amor* and love elegy, the final piece of evidence before the poet's closing argument, is reduced to her legal role of the craftsman god's wife, also representing how the *puella*, whose presence the genre of elegy is supposed to hinge upon, is reduced merely to its object, and must defer to the poet like a wife (*coniunx*) must to a husband under much of the burgeoning marriage legislation seen with Augustus' reforms.

What begins in 2.17 as another variation on the stock elegiac scenario of the *servitium amoris* and the *amator*'s *apologia* for it transforms into a new, tropic conceit—that of the poetic legal case—and sees the poet defending his choice of subject matter, genre, and amatory subservience through the use of mythical *exempla* which together formulate something that we might define today as a precedent-setting case. Instead of the elegiac affair being presented as adulterous, immoral, and illegal, through the *exempla* Ovid presents, he props up the affair as legitimate and legal, at least in the world of his poetic creation, where the poet is all at once judge, juror, and executioner.

While 2.17 is not the first instance of transforming such conventions in the second book of *Amores*, nor the first book for that matter, I believe that it provides a good starting point because Ovid here, as we have seen, shows the reader in both obvious and subtle ways how he

[72] Ziogas 3.

manipulates every facet of his poetic medium, elegy. The *exempla* in 2.17 also make this much more discernable and traceable through the poetic and cultural history that they carry. What becomes evident about this control is how it shows that, in the elegy at hand and the genre at large, the feminine is constituted "as an excluded impropriety, as the improper, the propertyless," which uses the figure of the *puella* to perpetuate the poet's masculine dominance and power.[73] She is wrong for making the poet-lover act like a slave, or wrong if she submits to his advances; in Ovid's construction, the successful elegy poises the *puella* always as potential, and never as actualization.

Ovid's pedantic style in 2.17 illustrates how the elegiac *puella* is faceless. She has no means to actualize herself without the poet's engineering a production of her supposed *facies* through the continual use of *exempla* and scenarios in which the poet-lover indulges only in a masturbatory fantasy love between himself and the girl who is only realized as poetry, between himself and his work. The poetic value of the *puella*'s face, specifically in Ovid's construction of the elegiac object/beloved, is in its very essence the blank slate of potential that it comes to represent.

[73] Butler 38.

Prosecution and Defense: The Forensic Mode of *Amores* 2.4 and 2.5

Next, I will analyze a series of poems in book 2 which flesh out several of the themes we have seen emerge in 2.17. This begins with the pair of poems 2.4 and 5, wherein the poet again utilizes the language of Roman law to justify his poetical endeavour and the elegiac conceits which he manipulates. In 2.4 the poet builds another catalogue of *exempla*—in some ways similar to 2.17's short list—as evidence which shows us that, in fact, just about *any* girl will suffice for the *amator*. Despite this nonchalant and detached approach which the poet takes to pursuing amatory relations, he moves in 2.5 back to the realm of specifics. Here we see the poet develop a stereotypic erotic conceit in which his beloved is discovered having an affair.

Placed and read next to each other, the two poems present a paradoxical persona of the *amator*. How can he be in one stroke so amicable to the idea of pursual for every kind of woman then in the next seem to be moved by such strong emotion for one singular woman? This incongruity signals to the reader the artificiality of the erotic elegy itself, the poet's manipulation of stock poetic scenarios allows him to divert the reader's attention to things beyond the amatory affair, to instead consider the poetic choices in expressing it.

The first layer of subversion in 2.4 can be seen through Ovid's use of poetic intertextuality. This poem has several callouts to his fellow Augustan poets as well as earlier writers that were influential on Ovid and his contemporaries (namely, Catullus and Callimachus). 2.4 begins with a reminder of Ovid's rejection of epic and defense of elegy, with another jab at the opening of Virgil's *Aeneid*:

Non ego mendosos ausim defendere mores
falsaque pro vitiis arma movere meis.[74]

"I dare not defend my faulty morals / and exert false arms for the sake of my vices."

Rather than proceed by using such 'false arms,' our elegist admits his faults here. Nevertheless, the arrangement of line 2 sees the poet literally separate his vices (*pro vitiis*) from himself (*meis*) by the occlusion of false arms. This beginning, however, delays the actual charge the poet claims is laid against him and the subsequent *recusatio* upon which he will elaborate. Instead, the poet opts to begin with a mock judicial *confessio*.[75] In a condensed form, this delay echoes the delay of the start of *Amores*' entire erotic program until 1.3, when the setting of an affair actually begins proper.

Ovid's continual suppression of our generic expectations through such delays reinforces the theme of control which I argue epitomizes book 2 of *Amores*. The next two couplets continue this denial, and instead begin the poet's confession to the still unnamed charge:

confiteor, si quid prodest delicta fateri;
in mea nunc demens crimina fassus eo.
odi, nec possum, cupiens, non esse quod odi:
heu quam, quae studeas ponere, ferre grave est![76]

"I confess, if it helps at all to admit my failures; / admitted insane now I undertake my charges. / I hate, nor am I able, desiring, not to be what I hate; / alas, how serious it is to bear what things you are eager to put down!"

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[74] Ovid, *Amores* 2.4.1-2. Cf., Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.1-2.
[75] McKeown, vol. 3, 67.
[76] *Amores* 2.4.3-6.

The *amator* uses the repetition of these confessing words (*confiteor, fateri, fassus*) in the first couplet to justify his dismayed mental state (*demens*). He thereby continues to postpone any kind of revelation as to what has caused him this grief while he nevertheless begins to plead from an emotional level for his yet undisclosed case.

We learn here only that he is addressing something that has to do with what the *amator* hates, and that he cannot help but *be* what he hates, and it is something he is eager to be rid of (*studeas ponere*).[77] Our only hint inside the poem itself, beside the established generic convention, is that he hates while desiring (*cupiens*). In line 5 Ovid alludes to Catullus' poem 85:

> *Odi et amo. Quare id faciam fortasse requiris?*
> *Nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior*.[78]

> "I hate and I love. Why do I do this, perhaps you ask? / I do not know, but
> I feel it happening and I am tormented."

The succinct exploration of volatile emotion displayed in Catullus' couplet is one of the ways that the Catullan *amator* has set the precedent for the later elegists like Ovid. The "shearing of the self that Catullus articulates" here in his divided statement, "*odi et amo*," is symbolic of the evolution of the elegiac *amator* in Augustan Rome.[79] The dichotomy between love and hate is thus taken up by Ovid, who, in this collected, rationalistic opening of 2.4, opts to only let a glimpse of that desire break through the hate, hence the middle position of *cupiens* and the parallelism of the negatives and reinforcing of his negative emotion, "*odi, nec ... non ... odi*," in the hexameter line 5.

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[77] The choice of *ponere* may also relate to the legal world of Rome, with a meaning more like "to place a case".
[78] Catullus 85.
[79] Miller 33.

As McKeown points out in his commentary, the following lines, 7-8, feature a disruption in usual word order with the location of pronouns *mihi* and *me* that is "untypical of the *Amores*," which could lend itself to the poet's characterization here as confused and distressed.[80] The lines themselves tell us how he does not have control, which is reflected by this befuddling thought structure in the couplet:

> *nam desunt vires ad me mihi iusque regendum;*
> *auferor, ut rapida concita puppis aqua.*[81]
>
> "for strength and law are missing for me, to rule over myself; / I am
>
> carried off, like the ship is by rapid, rushing water."

The poet's choice of diction sees him embodying this judicial defendant persona, in which he rhetorically makes a plea to his audience from *pathos*. The *amator* attempts to gain sympathy from the reader before he is ready to tell us what it is that we ought to sympathize with him for. There is, however, a deception to the narrator's plea, and his artificiality is further propped up by poetic reference with the familiar imagery of rushing water carrying something off as found in Catullus 70.[82]

Finally, in lines 9-10, the poet can no longer hold off on addressing the concern of his confession, and we learn what our poet is talking about here. Although, as Ziogas states, Ovid "simultaneously assumes the voice of a trainee lawyer and an advocate who offer arguments in defence of certain accusations," in this poem, the accusations are withheld until the final pressing

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[80] McKeown, vol. 3, 69.
[81] Ovid, *Amores* 2.4.7-8.
[82] Cf., Catullus 70.3-4: "*sed mulier cupido quod dicit amanti, / in vento et rapida scribere oportet aqua.* (but what a woman says to her desirous lover / ought to be written in the winds and rapid water)." The concept/phrase itself could relate back directly to a Sophoclean line, "*ὅρκους ἐγὼ γυναικὸς εἰς ὕδωρ γράφω* (I write the oaths of a woman on water)" (fr. 811 Radt, qtd. in Heyworth 213). See also McKeown vol. 3, 64-66, for the Propertian precedent of *Amores* 2.4.

moment that they become pertinent to his subject.[83] When it is at last revealed that his desiring *is* the charge,

> *Non est certa meos quae forma invitet amores —*
> *centum sunt causae, cur ego semper amem.*[84]

> "It is not certain what kind of beauty may invite my loves – / There are a hundred reasons why I always love."

the sheer audaciousness with which Ovid presents such a trivial conceit forces us to consider the wider implications of the catalogue that comes to follow in the remainder of the poem. The *centum causae* will be the topic for his defense, and his excuse for continuing in the elegiac mode is wrapped up in this explanation. Once again, as in 2.17, Ovid's choice of vocabulary helps inform us of what it is about love and love elegy that has him continuing to push the genre through these motions of stock scenario and stereotypical characterization and explains how he has upended the typical role of the elegiac lover. We find him here speaking of *quae forma*, which are uncertain, that impel the poet's production—his *amores*. Through such a reading, it is impossible not to read *amores* in line 9 as symbolising his poems themselves, and also then to transfer the meaning of *cur amem* (why I love), to his act of writing (why I *write*).

As in 2.17, the narrator signals us towards the supposed corporeality of his endeavor; its main focus is in the material and somatic realm. This poem goes on to tell us that there is no *forma* that the *amator* does not enjoy, which forces us to consider why it is that his *puella* herself continues to be formless throughout book 2, when it appears from 2.4 that any form will do. The *puella* takes poetic shape from this juncture, but the multiplicity of that form denies her

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[83] Ziogas 33.
[84] Ovid, *Amores* 2.4.9-10.

permeability. What comes to pass in 2.4 is, I posit, the same thing as Wyke describes in the culminative address to Elegia and Tragoedia which begins book 3: "that a catalogue of their physical features functions more importantly as a catalogue of stylistic practices."[85] The idealized *puella* stands in for the ideal poetry, the ideal elegy, and 2.4 pours out an *amplificatio* of *exempla* which navigate a series of cultural, literary, and emotional attachments. Each of these demonstrating how Ovid constructs the *amator* of *Amores* as dominantly controlling the poetical and proverbial fruit of his *amor*.

The catalogue of women's *formae* follows a pattern, starting with descriptions of "types of character (11-16), then talents (17-30), and finally physical qualities (33-46)."[86] The placement of physical attributes as the final piece of evidence in the poet's list lends itself to the notion that when he has told us "*quae **forma** invitet amores,*" he truly cares only for the physical qualities.[87] Yet, in each of the catalogue's parts there are comparisons and allusions to historiography, poetry, and myth, which represent and underscore different ways that the *amator* seeks to use elegy as a means of exemplifying not only his amatory prowess, but his poetic prowess. The description of character types in 2.4 begins in line 11:

> *sive aliqua est oculos in humum deiecta modestos,*
> *uror, et insidiae sunt pudor ille meae;*
> *sive procax aliqua est, capior quia rustica non est*
> *spemque dat in molli mobilis esse toro;*[88]

"Whether it is some girl, casting down her modest eyes on the ground, / I burn, and my snare is that shyness; / Or another is shameless, I am

[85] Wyke 120.
[86] McKeown vol. III, 66.
[87] Ovid, *Amores* 2.4.9, emphasis added.
[88] Ovid, *Amores* 2.4.11-14.

captured because plain she is not / and it gives hope that she is a nimble
girl in a soft bed;"

Before the poet starts his list, he cannot help himself from interjecting in line 12, "*uror*," after only telling us about a woman's modest character. This disruption, the stalling that we have previously seen, continues to uphold this idea that the narrator is overcome by his emotional state. The *amator* continues to pose as the effeminate 'wishy-washy' lover, flipping the Catullan model from the woman onto himself. This mode of indecisiveness is simultaneously and paradoxically the means through which the poet enacts his ploy for poetic control.

As we have seen throughout the beginning of this poem, Ovid makes a point of separating himself from earlier Roman elegists. The impact of this spreads to the sociopolitical evolution of Rome, as Greene expresses: "The flagrant indifference of the *amator* to the moral implications of his amatory practices conveys Ovid's attempt to destroy the myth of the elegiac lover as the upholder of an ideal that is morally superior to the conventional values of Roman society."[89] This first *forma* he presents in lines 11-12 correlate to the conventional morality of Rome, the noun *pudor* certainly evokes the concept of *pudicitia,* a desirable virtue for a Roman woman, especially reinforced by the description of *modestos*. These terms are contrasted with the *procax* alternative in the next couplet, and capped by the adjective, *mollis,* in the pentameter, a prevalently coded word in elegiac vocabulary.[90]

[89] Greene, *Erotics* 94
[90] Cf., Propertius, *Elegies* 2.1.1-4; Greene, "Gender" 246; Kennedy 31-33.

This first example sees the poet bursting the bubble of this poetic conceit in two ways. The reader must recognize the irony implicit in describing what is most likely a prostitute in ways that would be becoming of a woman-citizen, or, conversely, potentially describing a woman-citizen in ways unbecoming of her social status. There is undoubtedly a tongue-in-cheek acknowledgement of the reality of women's lives in Rome here, at least as they might have been perceived by Roman men—not every woman-citizen may have been morally upstanding, nor every prostitute or lower-class, non-citizen especially immoral. Yet, these two couplets fly in the face of the kind of moral image Augustus' Rome sought to generate.

In the final couplet describing character types that the poet is enamoured with, we encounter another reference, this time more explicit, to the larger social world of Rome. The *amator* describes the next kind of girl he likes:

> *aspera si visa est rigidasque imitata Sabinas,*
> *velle sed ex alto dissimulare puto;*[91]

> "If she seemed to be harsh and imitated severe Sabines, / she is willing, I suspect, but conceals it from deep within."

The harsh girl is likened here to one of Sabine descent. This reference is charged with cultural significance, as it hearkens back to the Rape of the Sabines myth. In a Rome where Augustus clamours for the return of a 'golden age' morality and sought religious reform to support it, Ovid keenly reminds us that both the men and women of Rome have always involved themselves in erotic affairs—elegy and adultery alike—and reminds us of the acts of violence against these

[91] Ovid, *Amores* 2.4.15-16.

legendary women.[92] The use of this seemingly simple allusion to the characterization of Sabine women carries with it the wider implications of the kind we have already seen in 2.17, where Ovid plays with the roles of Venus and Hephaestus in his amatory production/construction.

Discussing an excursus on the Sabine myth in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* (1.101-132), Mario Labate explains how Ovid uses the myth to represent the primitive past of Romulus in contrast to the modern and advanced reality of Augustus' Rome, the model of the supposedly exemplary past eventually to be rejected in this work.[93] In the wider realm of Roman elegiac poetry, as Labate states, "the Sabine rape might be considered the origin of sexual freedom within which elegiac love finds its home and its fulfilment."[94] For Ovid, in *Amores* 2.4, one simple characterization of a potential lover unfurls a picture of a woman in Augustan Rome whose existence engenders the deprecation of Augustan moral reform by highlighting its paradoxical attempt to restore Roman values to a supposedly nobler past.

As 2.4 progresses, we see more of these kinds of charged references and, once again, myth is one of the ample wellsprings from which Ovid draws comparison. Before these mythical allusions, and after transitioning into the list of talent types which the *amator* likes, the poet refers to Callimachus in lines 19-20. The point is simple, but important: the girl who prefers him to Callimachus is desirable, and this choice of poet is of course the aesthetic choice, par excellence, for the Augustan elegists. Ovid can imply, without (at least blatant) arrogance, that his poetry is better than this ideal *exemplum*. Such a claim notwithstanding, he makes sure to

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[92] Cf., Sebesta 538: "Integral to this Augustan program was the restoration and honoring of the traditional role and qualities of the Roman woman and her family and household. Augustan ideology expected a proper Roman wife to prove herself a good *custos domi*. Devoting the fertility of her body to her husband and her labors to his household, she was to waste neither the 'wealth' of her fertility nor her energies."
[93] Labate 196-198.
[94] Labate 201.

address the critic in the very next couplet, and illustrates that his desire is not bound by the poetics of others:

> *est etiam quae me vatem et mea carmina culpet:*
> *culpantis cupiam sustinuisse femur.*[95]

> "There is also she who might find fault with me, the poet, and my songs; /
> I should desire to have raised the thigh of the faultfinder."

The vocabulary in this couplet echoes the legal language found earlier, the verb, *culpo* (line 21), would be used to accuse someone of a crime.[96] The alliteration spilling over from the hexameter into the pentameter line also emphasizes these words: the poems, the blaming, and the desiring (*carmina, culpet, culpantis, cupiam*) all tie together the charge which served as this poem's original impetus.[97] We can firmly read *amores* now back onto this utterance of *carmina* and see how any potential *puella* for the poet-lover glides between fiction and reality at any given moment.

As the list continues, the narrator moves to physical qualities in line 33. This does not occur before an *interiectio* about which McKeown notes that "Ovid is wittily misleading us into supposing that the catalogue has reached its end."[98] I contend, however, that beyond misleading the reader about the catalogue's length, the interjection actually signals the shift of his *exempla* to the realm of myth:

> *ut taceam de me, qui causa tangor ab omni,*
> *illic Hippolytum pone, Priapus erit.*[99]

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[95] Ovid, *Amores* 2.4.21-22.
[96] "*culpo*." *A Latin Dictionary,* Lewis & Short.
[97] The forceful act of essentially raping his poem's critic is itself another means through which this couplet communicates with the literary history of the genre, as Ovid surely has a Catullan precedent on his mind when making this statement. Cf., Catullus 15, 16, etc.
[98] McKeown vol. 2, 77-78.
[99] *Amores* 2.4.31-32.

"So that I may be silent about myself, I who am touched by every cause, /

There place Hippolytus, Priapus he will be."

When the narrator brings himself back into the fold of the poem, it is only to tell himself to stop talking about himself. However, he makes a claim through reference to the mythological figures of Hippolytus and Priapus that he is not unique nor is his problem easily remedied. Just as he has described women in dichotomous fashion, albeit with their differences ultimately inconsequential since he loves them all, the two mythical men presented are extremely dichotomous figures, yet blended into sameness by the elegiac scenario. The chaste and celibate Hippolytus contrasts with and becomes a Priapus, excessively virile, masculine, and aggressive, in the presence of a woman (any woman, as it seems). Both represent a different form the elegiac *amator* takes, the former analogous to the effeminate *servus amoris*, and the latter more closely exemplifying the *miles amoris* who seeks to gain sexual triumph over the *puella*.

Ovid's interjection transitions into the next part of the catalogue, but it also shows the same potential thing about Roman men that he has thus far shown for women: that they can possess multiple personality and character traits, that they might do things considered good or bad, that *real* humans cannot fit neatly into poetic categories. In this way he subtly strips the artifice of the poetry, using a vision of a reality to demonstrate the existence of Roman sexuality throughout. "The rhetoric of 'reality'," as Kennedy explains, "is invoked and manipulated to justify another representation, the object of which is in this case the body of a lower-class female," and that is what the catalogue ultimately remains about.[100] The catalogue's 'this or that' binaries conclude with mythological women to remind the reader that, although desire and sexuality are convenient means of art imitating life for the elegiac poet, nonetheless the

[100] Kennedy 5.

representation of the elegiac affair is couched in the world of fantasy. The power is in the hands of the poet to present the *puella* in any shape he chooses.

The next two couplets (lines 33-36) further entrench the reader in this slippage between past and present, between fiction and reality, as they begin to describe the physical characteristics of the next girls the poet could love:

> *tu, quia tam longa es, veteres heroidas aequas*
> *et potes in toto multa iacere toro;*
> *haec habilis brevitate sua est: corrumpor utraque;*
> *conveniunt voto longa brevisque meo.*[101]
>
> "You, because you are so tall, equal ancient heroines / and can fill the entire bed when you lie down; / This one is suitable with her shortness: I am ruined by both; / they both suit my vow, tall and short."

Tall girls are equated to ancient heroines, undoubtedly evoking the images of numerous mythical women to the contemporaneous Roman reader.[102] The length of space given to tall girls is also longer than that given to short girls, the former receives an entire couplet and the latter just half of a hexameter before Ovid wraps up the thought. While this brevity helps make the point about the physical characteristic of short girls, it also shows that Ovid might prefer these mythical heroines, suited as they are toward his poetic medium. And, aside from literal shortness, placed next to the *veteres heroidas*, this comparison makes the contrast, once again, between myth and reality.

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[101] *Amores* 2.4.33-36.

[102] Depending on the 'edited' status of the version of *Amores* we have (see the work's beginning epigram), the poet could also be making a reference to his own work, the *Heroides*, which itself expands upon the character and idea of mythical women and their amatory plights.

The last thing the poet must address before he introduces us to the images of goddesses is how the differing wardrobe of a girl, in lines 37-38, is another desirable characteristic. In discussing their potential closets, the poet finishes describing the bodies of girls, as it were, and moves on to their hair and heads. The transition then in line 39 from dress to hair reflects a culturally connoted preoccupation with the relationship between the two; this is something with which Ovid is acutely familiar and which he discusses throughout his poetic corpus.[103] Hair thus takes a culminating position of desire in the poem, being the final descriptor of *formae*.

Ovid surely recognizes that "to be made up is to invite looking, to draw attention to the face and head, to signify the desire to be seen and admired."[104] Just as Amy Richlin argues of Ovid's *Medicamina Faciei Femineae,* that "the poet is setting up a symbolic opposition between control and cultivation—*cultus,* culture—and the physical nature that is its *materia*, its raw material," here the *materia* is shown to be fashioned into any shape the poet can imagine, beginning with how a woman might dress and of course ending with how they keep their hair.[105] From dress to hair and face (or lack thereof) is the only natural transition in this elegiac conceit.

Again, as in 2.17, Ovid works his way around describing the face, leaving it to the reader's imagination to fill in a suitable *facies*. There is no reference in this catalogue to a face at all, as the poet cannot play with such a powerful object, the *numen,* in a poem in which he places himself in a position of zealousness for *formae* which remain uncertain. Inscribing any one of these with a face would disrupt his control and also ruin his legal defense. The first kind of woman's (indefinite) appearance to be compared occurs in lines 39-40:

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[103] Pandey, "*Caput mundi*" 458-459, 466-469.
[104] Eilberg-Schwartz 2.
[105] Richlin 187; See also Zimmerman Damer 57.

Candida me capiet, capiet me flava puella;
est etiam in fusco grata colore venus.[106]

"A dazzling white one will capture me, a blonde will capture me; / even in a dark colour Venus is pleasing."

Ovid begins by describing colours for a woman's skin, but there is ambiguity as to what these colours refer to—skin tone or hair—created by the use of *flava* which generally refers to hair colour, in contrast with both *candida* and *fusco*, which are more often associated to complexion.[107] Any complexion, however, is appropriate for capturing the elegiac lover, fittingly reminding us of the *servitium amoris* trope and its potential *dominae*. Appropriately, at the end of the elegiac couplet, we find Venus. The *amator* cedes that even with perhaps a darker complexion that goddess would be welcome.[108] Venus is brought into the conceit and signifies the ultimate erotic *domina* in both the sexual sphere and the poetic one. At the metapoetical level, these numerous colours seem to disorient the reader. The poet can be captured by anyone, conventionally attractive or otherwise, and he has the power to turn them into a Venus, nonetheless.

Ovid continues with the next descriptions and removes any ambiguity, undoubtedly talking about women's hair now. The two couplets of lines 41-44 bring us two more mythological *exempla* with which varied hair colours are compared:

seu pendent nivea pulli cervice capilli,
Leda fuit nigra conspicienda coma;
seu flavent, placuit croceis Aurora capillis:
omnibus historiis se meus aptat amor.[109]

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[106] Ovid, *Amores* 2.4.39-40.
[107] McKeown, vol. 3, 80-81.
[108] Dark complexions were generally considered less attractive for a myriad of reasons which I have not the space here to explore, among them, however, the connotation of lower social status. (see McKeown, vol. 3, 80-81)
[109] Ovid, *Amores* 2.4.41-44.

> "If dark-coloured hair falls on a snowy neck, / Leda was worthy of attention with black hair, / If they are golden blonde, Aurora has pleased with saffron strands: / My love adapts itself to all stories."

Ovid's use of alliteration, *cervice capilli,* in line 41, bridges the anatomical journey from neck to hair, his bypassing of face and head metaphorically decapitating the women. As Eilberg-Schwartz states, "removing the female head relieves woman of both identity and voice and reduces her to a mere sexual and reproductive body," and Ovid strips away both voice and identity to be supplanted instead by his ideal aesthetic image.[110] In place of faces we get black and blonde hair, and the reader's imagination is roused by the corresponding mythical figures of Leda and Aurora in lines 42-43 (as well as the literary background they possess). The gerundive, *conspicenda*, in line 42 further emphasizes the necessity with which the poet *must* see this woman, and how we must also *see* the poetry which has created her.

The *amator* cannot wait but another line to switch the focus back entirely onto his poetry, when he says his *amor* (coded as *carmen*) suits "*omnibus historiis*," and blurs the relationship between fiction, reality, and genre, further throwing uncertainty on how we are to have read any of the *puella* 'types' the *amator* has catalogued throughout the poem. Both Leda and Aurora are especially charged references, characters that are spattered throughout the *Amores* (and the rest of Ovid's poetic corpus) and used variously for the elegiac poet to execute his chosen aesthetic. These deities symbolize more than attractive women, they tell us how the poet is attracted to numerous types of poetry, as both Leda and Aurora are found in Homer as well as the Hellenistic lyric poets like Callimachus.[111] This culminates in the penultimate poem of book 2 when Ovid

[110] Eilberg-Schwartz 1.
[111] See, for example, Callimachus, *Aetia* fr. 21 on Eos/Aurora.

contemplates and ultimately rejects a change of genre, as he argues that elegy is itself infused among other genres.[112]

As 2.4 ends, the poet makes a slight move back to reality in the final couplets, reminding us that he used such *exempla* from *historia* to make a legal defense. He refers to women of any age being attractive in the couplet of lines 45-46, and, finally, telling us in the last couplet:

> *denique quas tota quisquam probat Vrbe puellas,*
> *noster in has omnes ambitiosus amor*.[113]
>
> "Lastly, whichever girls anyone is inspecting throughout the entire city, /
>
> our love is favourable towards them all."

Nonetheless, he ends again with "*amor*," in line 48, with its bifurcated meaning made obvious throughout this poem. This time, however, it is directly applied to the women of Rome (the *Vrbs*). As in 2.17, it seems the poet's control is made to extend across Rome, his defense, like his poetry, is all encompassing. We can recall here the poet's purpose expressed in 1.15, and thus are not surprised by his far-reaching ambition.[114] Furthermore, the conclusion of 2.4 sets up the audience's expectations of the forthcoming poem in relation to the metapoetical status of elegy's objects.

Both Sharon James and Ioannis Ziogas note that *Amores* 2.5 is also a companion piece to 1.4, as they both use the banquet setting and represent a similar scene of infidelity, and both poems follow from a Tibullan antecedent, 1.6.[115] According to James, Ovid "found in Tibullus 1.6 a scenario ripe for further exploration and literary exploitation."[116] Neither James nor Ziogas,

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[112] Ovid, *Amores* 2.18.
[113] *Amores* 2.4.47-48.
[114] Ovid, *Amores* 1.15.39-42
[115] James, *Learned Girls* 161; Ziogas 104.
[116] James, *Learned Girls* 165.

however, read 2.5 next to 2.4, which, as discussed above, I claim is similarly generated by such extrapolation from a poetic reference (Propertius, rather than Tibullus, for 2.4). They amply sit next to each other as poems that, beyond exploring two sides of the poet-lover's persona, explore the different sides of Roman elegy, creating a narrative thread which serves to metatextually interrogate the preestablished conventions of the genre. This is something of which James does make note:

> *Amores* 1.4 and 2.5 demonstrate Ovid's close reading of and interaction with his elegiac elder brothers and provide us with a pattern in which he expands on a minor, passing moment in Propertius and Tibullus and reveals it as more significant than it seems—often, in fact, as systemic and generic; he thus often reveals the tunnels undermining elegy's smooth surface.[117]

Having added 2.4 to this list, I will attempt to show the ways that 2.5 complements and augments its previous entry akin to how it connects to both poem 1.4 and the work of the previous elegists. These two poems best taken together as a pair that represent two kinds of paradoxical characterizations of the amator, yet both serve the same goal of highlighting elegy's artificiality and demonstrating the poet's mastery over it and the *puellae* it encapsulates.

Amores 2.5 serves as the obverse of 2.4. Instead of representing himself as needing to defend his own promiscuity and amatorial eclecticism, the poet now brings charges against his *puella* for *her* supposed infidelity. Placed next to one another, and taken at face value, these poems present the narrator's character as incongruously hypocritical. But 2.5 reads as a natural sequel to 2.4, showing the poet as being exactly what he claims to hate in the first half of the previous poem and expanding upon it.[118] The same man who must defend his love and desire for any *puella* shows that he would want them all to himself. If he happened to achieve this, of

[117] James, *Learned Girls* 166.
[118] Ovid, *Amores* 2.4.5-10.

course, it would eliminate the poet-lover's ability to produce erotic elegy, for it strips away one of the main conceits of the genre, the rival lover.[119]

Here again the poet-lover constructs his own failure in a way that actually grants him power and control. Like we have seen before, 2.5, while adapting to a different point of view (that of the jaded, jealous lover), still utilizes mythical *exempla* as part of the poem's main methods of communication. What differs, and what I will analyze in the remainder of this chapter, is how that different point of view presents a colouring to each reference with different sociocultural and sociolegal implications, while still creating the desired outcome of poetic success amid illusive amatorial failure. Ovid's expansion of this otherwise typical elegiac scenario allows him to invite the reader into the fold as if to view the spectacle as a jury sees the trial proceed in court. The evidence that he presents reads like a speech, and it follows a similar structure to one.

Ovid treats this poem like a speech given as testimony in prosecution and he has constructed a scenario where even amatory and legal failure can turn into poetic success. *Amores* 2.5 begins with the poet apostrophizing Cupid, complaining and wishing for death in lines 1-6.[120] After this exclamation, the legal mode is how the poet begins to present his case:

> *o utinam arguerem sic, ut non vincere possem!*
> *me miserum! quare tam bona causa mea est?*[121]
>
> "Oh, that I might prosecute in such a manner that I would not be able to win! / Miserable me! Why is my case so good?

[119] Book 2 of the *Amores* ends with the seeming death of this conceit, as the poet addresses this rival lover who is failing at his job of making the *puella* hard to get. See *Amores* 2.19.1-6.
[120] Ovid *Amores* 2.5.1-6.
[121] Ibid., 2.5.7-8.

The *amator* is confident in his ability to succeed from a legal standpoint, but this time in prosecution rather than defense. Yet, unlike 2.4, in which legal success secures continued amatory (and poetic) success, the poet's plight is inverted: legal success here will instead jeopardize his amatory success. As in 2.4, his state of mind is speciously distressed, signaled clearly by the interjection of "*me miserum*" which begins the couplet's pentameter line and the apostrophe to Cupid and wish for death which began the poem.

As we already know, this is largely a stalling tactic by the *amator*, just like in 2.4, which accompanies his short list of things that are *not* the reason for his *bona causa* in lines 7-8. He continues to stall by generalizing rather than addressing what his *puella* might actually have done, continually demonstrating his supposedly distressed state, and employing a plea to the audience' (readers') *pathos* from lines 9-12:

> *felix, qui quod amat defendere fortiter audit,*
> *cui sua 'non feci' dicere amica potest!*
> *ferreus est nimiumque suo favet ille dolori,*
> *cui petitur victa palma cruenta rea.*[122]
>
> "Happy man, he who bravely dares to defend what he loves, / to whom his girlfriend can say 'I'm not guilty!' / He is steely and excessively encourages his own suffering, / by whom the blood-stained palm of the conquered culprit is sought."

The generalized statements made in each couplet show *exempla* of two men who represent either side of the coin of the poet's own dilemma. He follows the Ciceronian model, taking general examples that demonstrate his specific position and from which the argument can follow.[123] He

[122] Ovid, *Amores* 2.5.9-12
[123] Cicero, *De Oratore* 1.31.

makes sure also to pose them in the forensic mode, as signalled by the use of the verb *defendere*, as well as the "*non feci,*" statement, and finally—and perhaps most importantly for this project—the use of *rea* to describe and objectify this hypothetical conquered woman.[124]

Ziogas notes that "the pentameter ... is predominantly martial until the last word (*rea*) compels the reader to reread it in a legal context."[125] The term, *reus* (here the feminine, *rea*), which describes a legal charge, plaintiff or defendant, or just a criminal, is related as well to the noun *res*, which has as its most basic meaning, a 'thing.'[126] The chiastic structure of the pentameter allows Ovid to emphatically place this word at the end of the couplet, reminding the reader that the *puella* is the perpetrator of some crime, not a victim, despite her bloodied state in this image. The imagery of the bloody hand in line 12 serves as a highly evocative image, not only of violence against the *puella,* but also the palm fronds of victory, alluding to the *amator*'s success in the judicial contest which frames the poem's conceit. In this exemplum it is spun by the *amator* so that victory is a foregone conclusion for the lover, yet it brings him—the victor—suffering, with total disregard to the already affronted and bloodied victim. Thus, he can control the narrative of this 'case,' and "pre-empt the defence's attempt to create ill will against the prosecution."[127]

The poet's eyewitness testimony takes up roughly the next 20 lines of the poem. He explains how he caught his *puella* kissing another man while he himself appeared to be sleeping: "*improba tum vero iungentes oscula vidi*. (then, truly, I saw you both joining shameless

[124] McKeown, vol. 3,
[125] Ziogas 106.
[126] "*reus.*" *A Latin Dictionary*. Lewis & Short.
[127] Ziogas 106.

kisses)."[128] After he presents this piece of evidence, the poet seeks to amplify the criminality of her act by comparing it with an exemplum which moves from reality to mythology:

> *qualia non fratri tulerit germana severo,*
> *sed tulerit cupido mollis amica viro,*
> *qualia credibile est non Phoebo ferre Dianam,*
> *sed Venerem Marti saepe tulisse suo.*[129]

> "Not the kind [of kiss] a sister might offer to her austere brother, / but a tender girlfriend might offer to her desirous man, / Not the kind that Diana believably offers Phoebus, / but that Venus often has offered to her own Mars.

So that he might act rightly as a prosecutor, Ovid continues to use vocabulary here as a means to portray his narrator's attitude, such as the more "elevated" *germana* for sister, as opposed to the more common *soror*.[130] This comes in contrast to the elegiacally charged *mollis amica* in the couplet's pentameter. He demonstrates a faux seriousness in his testimony as the *persona* speaking in the poem's narrative; on the metatextual level, however, the author is cleverly playing with our expectations of this character, especially since we have learned about his own lustful nature in the previous poem. The Roman reader would surely recognize the irony with which the *amator* accuses his *puella* of being a *mollis amica*, literally a delicate concubine, when her relationship with him must also stem from the same practice of prostitution.

The next couplet, lines 27-28, mirrors this stark difference in relationship between siblings and lovers by representing the mythical pairs of Diana and Phoebus, and Venus and Mars. The former pair exemplify the aspect of chasteness and purity—Phoebus Apollo as the

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[128] *Amores* 2.5.13-24.
[129] Ovid, *Amores* 2.25-28.
[130] McKeown, vol. 3, 92.

eternal *ephebus* and his sister, Diana, as an eternal *virgo*—and are the perfect deities to stand parallelly to the adulterous and thus highly elegiac lovers that are Venus and Mars.[131] The adulterous and illegal nature of the latter's relationship is perhaps intentionally overlooked by the *amator* with the marked use of the possessive adjective, *suo*, to describe Mars' relationship to Venus. It is a small stroke to legitimize the affair of the two divinities, the exemplum of which would otherwise undermine the very relationship he seeks, assuming the concubinary status of the *puella*. That she possesses him also alludes to the nature of the poet-lover's status as *servus amoris.* And, of course, it is framed here with Mars who represents the *miles* conceit—both tropes that are suffused throughout this poem. It elsewise frames the poet again as Vulcan, to whom he equates himself in 2.17, but here looking on helplessly at his beloved's adultery, a more popular connotation for the smith-god than that of Venus' happy husband.[132] The exemplum ends up being just as useful to describe the literary work itself as it is to describe the affair represented within it.

After the *amator* finishes presenting his own eyewitness testimony, he recounts the confrontation with his beloved, which shifts both the poem's tone and direction. Despite this shift, the reported speech lends itself to upholding the conceit of a courtroom drama that the poet has established thus far. He begins telling us what he said to his *puella* in line 29:

> *'quid facis?' exclamo, 'quo nunc mea gaudia defers?*
> *iniciam dominas in mea iura manus!*[133]
>
> "'What are you doing?' I exclaim, 'to whom now do you offer my
> delights? / I will lay claim on my rights with dominating hands!"

[131] Cf., McKeown, vol. 3, 93.
[132] Cf. *Amores* 2.17.19-20.
[133] Ovid, *Amores* 2.5.29-30.

Ziogas notes that the phrase "*mea gaudia defers*" has a legal flavour, "recalling claims of inheritance."[134] He also proposes that the poet's exclamation here acts as a the beginning of a *rei vindicatio,* the legal procedure in which a plaintiff demands the return of stolen property.[135] The implication is that either the *puella's* kisses are, and/or her *corpus* itself is, the thing(s) which he is demanding back from her. As Ziogas explains, *vindicatio* usually sees a slave being claimed as property, but this procedure is easily transferred to the elegiac mistress, who very well may be a slave herself.[136]

The pentameter, line 30, is fraught with uncertainty created through the vocabulary the poet uses. Ovid may be utilizing the ambiguity of the verb form of *iniciam*—whether it is a future tense verb in the indicative mood or a present tense verb in the subjunctive mood representing his potential action. This uncertainty illustrates the poet's distraught and emasculated disposition when in the presence of his deceitful *puella*. This distress is further emphasized by the reduplication of the 'in' sound created from this verb and the preposition, *in*, which comes shortly after, as if the poet is stuttering as he confronts the *puella*. The adjectival use of *dominas* creates ambiguity surrounding the role of the *amator* in this conceit. It transfers the previously utilized military imagery in line 12 back into the world of elegy, where this word so often finds its home in describing elegy's *puellae*. Thus, because of this duplicitous meaning, we can also read his hands as part of the tools which he uses to secure erotic success beyond this scenario.

[134] Ziogas 108; see also McKeown, vol. 3, 93.
[135] Ibid., 108.
[136] Ibid., 108.

The elegiacally charged meaning of *domina*—the mistress—is transposed to the hands of the artist, but it demonstrates his control in the production of the elegiac scenarios in which he himself is a character. This overarching representation of the *amator*'s complete power recalls the figure as we see him in 2.4, as his hands are shown to be suitable for all *dominae,* with multiple mistresses potentially as the objects of his wrath.[137] Here he makes sure to tell her that he has the law, *mea iura,* on his side at the end of line 30—peeling apart the elegiac conceit by perhaps injecting his status and thus authority as citizen against that of the non-citizen *puella* here, even if she is also (one of) his *dominae*. This also activates the legal colour of *dominas* in its relation to *dominium*, legal control which he claims over his *puella*.[138] That the poet's hands also relate to his *puella*'s status as *mistress* rather than some other term without the connotations of his power and control such as '*amica*,' or '*puella*,' is telling of this character's attitude toward the woman as he speaks to her here. It also firmly positions himself as the *servus amoris* again, which allows and enables his self-emasculation throughout this confrontation while maintaining full poetic control.[139]

This legal right to his *puella*'s kisses through their private contract of a relationship is extrapolated to her entire person. Her implied status as a 'good' rather than a person is thus the defining factor that enables his legal claims. The couplet of lines 31-32 spells out the nature of their relationship and his ownership:

> *haec tibi sunt mecum, mihi sunt communia tecum.*
> *in bona cur quisquam tertius ista venit?'*[140]

[137] Cf. *Amores* 2.4.47-48.
[138] McKeown, vol. 3, 94.
[139] Cf. Cahoon 296-301.
[140] *Amores* 2.5.31-32.

> "These things are common for you with me, for me they are common with you. / Why has any wretched third-party become entitled to my goods?"

He starts by claiming these (*haec*) kisses are for *her*, cleverly using the chiastic line to demonstrate the shared nature of his property. The third-party has been granted illegal access to them according to the poet. Due to the elegiac background, he maintains it as a crime of stolen property/goods (*bona*) rather than of adultery—which would cause the fantasy of elegy to collapse, pushing itself up against reality in an untenable fashion.[141] This subtle difference in crime is important for the way in which the next part of the poem once again allows the poet to retain control while his amatorial persona seems to lose it.

Ovid's testimony continues, explaining what happens after having confronted his *puella*. Here is the section in the poem where *exempla* again take centre stage in demonstrating the link between his love affair and poetic success. Through the explication of these *exempla,* the power implicit in his *puella*'s *forma* is demonstrated, just as it will be later in 2.17, and it prevents the *amator* from committing an act of violence against her. What brings him to this state is the very sight of her face, the description and comparison of which the poet spends over a dozen lines describing, beginning with explaining the colour that has come over it:

> *haec ego, quaeque dolor linguae dictavit; at illi*
> *conscia purpureus venit in ora pudor,*[142]

> "These things I said, whatever anguish dictated to my tongue; but there / a shameful red spread across her guilty face,"

[141] Cf. Kennedy 17.
[142] Ovid, *Amores* 2.5.33-42.

He weaves together a series of similes switching between myth and reality to vividly paint the colour of *purpureus pudor* which has come over her face as she blushes. The phrase of this 'guilty purple/red' again evokes Roman law, as McKeown points out.[143] And Ovid begins his list with this description, starting with comparing this colour to that of the dawn-sky.

Aurora, the goddess of the dawn, is mentioned by relation to her husband, Tithonus. This image takes the eminent position in the list, and it sees Ovid carefully tiptoeing around any kind of image of his *puella* that would risk overpowering his own importance to her existence (poetic or otherwise):

> *quale coloratum Tithoni coniuge caelum*
> *subrubet, aut sponso visa puella novo;*[144]
>
> "like the sky reddens, coloured by Tithonus' wife, / or like a girl seen by
> her new spouse;"

The dawn sky is thus relegated to being known by her husband. The reader must first think of Tithonus, the mortal man who was forced to age eternally in order to have immortality. The aged and tired Tithonus would be unable to satiate his goddess, which is perhaps the kind of notion the poet is attempting to relate to his own predicament. There are other poems in the *Amores* which demonstrate the *amator's* potential impotence or inability to perform in the bedroom and he subtly reactivates that vulnerability and weakness once again here.[145]

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[143] McKeown, vol. 3, 95.
[144] Ovid, *Amores* 2.5.35-36.
[145] Cf., *Amores* 3.7, where this dilemma becomes the poem's central theme.

Ovid perhaps has in mind, and also intends for his readers to recollect, the same characterization of Aurora (in Greek, Ἕως) as can be seen in the Pseudo-Apollodorian *Library of Mythology,* in which she is described as being punished by Aphrodite to lust for young men after sleeping with Ares.[146] Even if her best known relationship is the legal and seemingly chaste one she shares with Tithonus, some of the myths surrounding Aurora have her amorously pursuing numerous young men, namely Cephalus, Orion, and Cleitus, and her relationship with Tithonus is itself more of a punishment.[147] By framing himself as the old Tithonus in opposition to this slew of other mythical youths, the poet-lover has maintained his legal stance and uses a poignant example that furthers his argument as the accuser. Again, the poet's use of myth operates as a means to preserve poetic control, although it reveals that erotic control is slipping away from the *amator*. Tithonus' plight is brought about by the desire of Aurora, and her character's background of sexual yearning makes the analogy to the *amator*'s promiscuous *puella* even more apt. The *amator*'s beloved shuns their relationship just as Aurora might be interpreted as embarrassingly shutting away the eternally aging and inept Tithonus during the day, as happens in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*.[148]

Aurora, as the embodiment of dawn and the rising of the sun, is in direct contest with the world of elegy, the erotic affairs of which take place principally at nighttime. In book 1 of the *Amores,* Ovid's apostrophic poem to Aurora, 1.13, demonstrates this contrast and frames the goddess as an enemy to his erotic pursuit:

> *Tithono vellem de te narrare liceret:*
> *femina non caelo turpior ulla foret.*
> *illum dum refugis, longo quia grandior aevo,*
> *surgis ad invisas a sene mane rotas;*

[146] Apollodorus 1.4.4.
[147] On Cephalus, see Apollodorus 3.14.3; on Orion, see Homer, *Odyssey* 5.121; on Cleitus, see Homer, *Odyssey* 15.250.
[148] *Homeric Hymn 5: To Aphrodite* 227-238.

at si quem minibus Cephalum complexa teneres,
clamares 'lente currite, Noctis equi!'[149]

"I wish that Tithonus were permitted to talk about you, / there may be no fouler woman in heaven, / while you avoid that man, because he is at a much-advanced age, / you rise up from the old man in the morning to your odious chariot; / but if you were holding someone like Cephalus in your embracing arms, / you would shout 'run slowly, horses of the night!'"

Ovid himself is aware, and has previously made his reader aware, of the implications surrounding the figure of Aurora in *Amores.* His own poem in book 1 sets an antecedent for the *exemplum* as he uses it here. The sympathy we are expected to grant him in 2.5 he has previously demonstrated being shown to Tithonus, so that when the reader makes the association again here, the poet has already crafted his scenario to elicit a response from *pathos* and he controls the poetic outcome of this prosecution to be in his favour.

Ovid also activates intertextual allusions with the other Augustan poets with this *exemplum*, namely Propertius, whose elegiac fragment, 2.18A, describes the love affair between Tithonus and Aurora. The Propertian *amator* is seeking his beloved's unashamed devotion despite their difference in age and is using the Tithonus/Aurora relationship as his *exemplum*.[150] The myth is referenced in Vergil as well, who mentions the relationship in book 1 of his *Georgics*: "*aut ubi pallida surget / Tithoni croceum linquens Aurora cubile*, (or when rises pale Aurora, leaving the saffron bed of Tithonus)," the image Vergil presents is again reminiscent of the *amator*'s situation with his own beloved leaving him as he sleeps.[151] Ovid manipulates all

[149] Ovid, *Amores* 1.13.35-40.
[150] See Propertius 2.18A.7-18.
[151] Vergil, *Georgics* 1.445-446.

these intertextual threads in ways that favour the success of his elegy: more than simply impacting the outcome of Ovid's inner textual plot (the accusation and trial of his faithless beloved), his placement and use of Aurora elevates his external poetic project.

The epic image of the simile, Aurora leaving Tithonus to raise the sun in the sky, is appropriated to the elegiac scenario of the *puella* leaving the bed of her lover. As Gardner elaborates, "The *amator*, while expressing anxieties about his future aging, challenges mortality through the permanence of his art: his alignment with Tithonus … ultimately confirms the power of song to outlive the physical form."[152] What the poet originally presented to us as an erotic tableau, wherein he watches his *puella*'s betrayal, is transformed and elevated by such poetically charged *exempla* to the lofty heights of the epic genre, with the appropriation of the Aurora simile showing that epic and elegy are on the same level. He can only accomplish this by infusing his poetic object, his *puella*, with such power as that of a goddess.

In the pentameter of the following couplet, line 38, the poet once again returns to mythic comparison; in contrast to Aurora, the moon-goddess, Luna, appears. Here the colour of some phenomenon in the night sky is the next kind of colour similar to the *puella's* blush:[153]

> *quale rosae fulgent inter sua lilia mixtae,*
> *aut ubi cantatis Luna laborat equis,*[154]
>
> "like blended roses shining among their lilies / or when Luna (is)
>
> labouring with her enchanted horses,"

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[152] Gardner 5.
[153] Perhaps the crimson red of a 'blood moon' created by a lunar eclipse. The Roman imagination sometimes connected this phenomenon with menstruation. See, for example, Pliny the Elder (*HN* 28.23), who says "*si in defectus lunae solisve congruat vis illa, inremediabilem fieri* (if this female power should issue when the moon or sun is in eclipse, it will cause irremediable harm)." That Ovid may be alluding to such dangerous womanly power here is worth mention.
[154] Ovid, *Amores* 2.5.37-38.

That this colour occurs while the goddess labours with her chariot of horses, exhausted by physical activity, creates an innuendo, aptly mirroring the physical activity the *puella* has been partaking in according to the poet.[155] And, like Aurora, Luna's mythos has important implications for romantic and erotic success/failure. Her best-known lover, Endymion, is cursed with eternal sleep, mirroring the *amator*'s predicament, forced to stand by and watch while he feigns sleep.[156]

The image of the moon goddess can once again be found in Propertius (here as Phoebus' sister, Diana), as he describes her in his poem 2.15. This poem serves as the perfect reference for Ovid's *amator*, as the Propertian poem takes the sight of the *puella* as one of its main themes, "*si nescis, oculi sunt in amore duces* (If you didn't know, the eyes are the leaders in love)."[157] From this proposition Propertius introduces the moon goddess as an *exemplum* (among others) to demonstrate its veracity: *"nudus et Endymion Phoebi cepisse sororem / dicitur et nudae concubuisse deae* (And it is said that naked Endymion captured the sister of Phoebus / and he laid with the naked goddess)."[158] Ovid's *amator* in *Amores* 2.5 places himself as the third-person speaker (*dicitur*) of Propertius's *exemplum*, witnessing his *puella* having been captured by another man. Just as with Tithonus, the implication that he wants to be Endymion, both enables his elegiac role as the *servus amoris* and is part of this continued scheme which sees him subverting his (supposed) subordination to the *puella* as his *domina* by demonstrating to the reader that he is responsible and controls her successful portrayal as a goddess.

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[155] Cf., Virgil, *Georgics* 1.430-431: "*at si virgineum suffuderit ore ruborem, / ventus erit; vento semper rubet aurea Phoebe.* (but if she has flooded her face with a maidenly blush, / there will be wind: with wind golden Phoebe always reddens." And Tibullus 3.4.29-34 who, if nothing else, places the moon in apposition to a maiden's blush.
[156] On Endymion, see Apollonius, *Argonautica* 4.57.
[157] Propertius 2.15.12.
[158] Propertius 2.15.15-16.

Ovid's description of Luna labouring with her enchanted horses certainly anticipates the idea that she races her chariot through the sky to see Endymion, even if he is not here named, just as his *puella* has stolen away to see another man while the *amator* appears to be asleep. Even if Luna's chasing of Endymion (who here also represents the poet-lover) is incongruent with the poet and *puella's* scenario, wherein she is seeking a *new* lover, Ovid uses this *exemplum* to illustrate that the goddess and the *puella* both perform the role of active pursuer, as with the *exemplum* of Aurora, rather than maintaining their passivity and submission to their 'legally bound' relationships. Cast in such a role, the *puella* is also not complying with the generic conventions expected of her within the confines of erotic elegy. The poem thus demonstrates the inversion and collapse of sexual roles in this elegiac relationship, and perhaps with wider implications to that collapse occurring in Roman society at large.

The list ends with the poet explaining how this colour, whatever compares to it, has made her more beautiful than ever before: *"et numquam casu pulchrior illa fuit* (and, as it happened, never was she more beautiful)."[159] The *puella* is able to have the beauty of a goddess, and that beauty on her face is where her power begins and ends. Despite descriptions of his *puella* blushing with a godly and beautiful appearance, when considering the full implications of those comparisons, we can see that the poet uses the figures of Aurora and Luna here to further demonstrate his beloved's infidelity. Both of these *exempla* give the impression that the *puella* is engaging in a breach of the poet-lover's relationship with a younger party. As he makes himself both a Tithonus and an Endymion, the poet-lover divulges his supposed lack of power in the relationship, but where he seems to have lost physical strength, he instead strengthens his case by showing how his *puella* steals herself away—taking his property (her and her kisses) to this third

[159] Ovid, *Amores* 2.5.42

party. As Ziogas states, "the law intrudes into the bedroom, even though—or rather precisely because—sexual intercourse lays claim to autonomy," and if the claim that we see above in lines 31-32 is to be accepted by the jury, then the *puella*'s attempt to achieve erotic autonomy is illegal according to the *amator*.[160]

This brings us to the final point where it *seems* the poet has ceded power, when this beautiful woman's very appearance—the colour of which his *exempla* demonstrate as showing her guilt—prevents the *amator* from exacting his own vengeance by striking her or assaulting her hair in lines 45-48:

> *sicut erant (et erant culti) laniare capillos*
> *et fuit in teneras impetus ire genas.*
> *ut faciem vidi, fortes cecidere lacerti;*
> *defensa est armis nostra puella suis*.[161]

> "Just as it was (and it was dressed) there was an impetus [for me] to tear her hair / and to assault her tender cheeks. / As I saw her face, my strong arms fell: / our girl was defended by her own armour.

As we have seen, the power of her face (*faciem*) acts as a goddess' *numen*, granting her power over the poet-lover. He wants to pull at her hair perhaps because he knows that harming her face is akin to defacing a godly image (and hers is the image that allows his poetry to exist). The state of her hair can be read metonymically as reflecting the state of his poetry; her hair, even though seeming unkempt (*sicut erant*) is still done up (*culti*), so to speak, and is nonetheless erotically and aesthetically pleasing.[162] Like her beauteous hair (and overall appearance), despite this

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[160] Ziogas 74.
[161] Ovid, *Amores* 2.5.45-48
[162] Cf., Pandey "*Caput*" on *Amores* 1.7: "hair again symbolically mediates a power imbalance: it simultaneously marks and masks the literal and structural violence women experience at men's hands … here it is masculine violence … that gives attractive shape to the girl's hair" (465).

precarious situation the *amator* finds himself in, his poetry has nonetheless been cultivated and shaped into a successful and beautiful elegy. Violence against her image would then not only ruin his amatory affair but ruin his poetry too.

Although the *amator* has argued convincingly for his right to control this woman, his inability to dole out the punishment he deems appropriate here makes us aware that his own masculine ineptitude is the impetus for bringing her crime to trial in this poem. Violence and masculine dominance are not open to him if he intends to safeguard his poetic success in crafting this scenario. The pentameter, line 45, is where her defensive arms are—in the foot of the love elegy—even though she displays the kind of godly power normally reserved for the figures in epic poetry.[163] In this way the poet continues to legitimize elegy and this seemingly trifling scenario as being worthy *materia* for his poetic success—even though it represents his amatory failure.

The *amator* of *Amores* further emasculates himself by recognition of his beloved's superior knowledge, and despite having seen her act of faithlessness, in the poem's final lines he admits to not knowing who has taught her, seemingly ceding power to the *puella*:

> *illa nisi in lecto nusquam potuere doceri;*
> *nescioquis pretium grande magister habet.*
>
> "Those [kisses] could have been taught nowhere except in bed; / I know
>
> not what teacher has the great prize/price.

The *amator* has failed as a teacher of love, which is a part of his plight, but, further, having received these newly improved kisses from his *puella*, he cannot be sure to what extent she has

[163] The *armis* in this line also alludes to and contrasts with the opening *arma* in line 1 of Vergil's *Aeneid*. Elegy's strength, its 'arms,' comes from the poet's use and mastery of its different metre in comparison with the martial heroism of epic.

been unfaithful to him. The young male, who is inferred by the poet's *exempla* to be the man he saw her kiss, might not be the same one who has taught her this skill, perhaps his youthful inexperience being the reason. The vocabulary choice of *pretium* to describe these kisses creates further ambiguity in the nature of the elegiac relationship. The word generally refers to the price of a good, which at first would seem to reaffirm the mercantile and legally bound nature of their relationship as his testimony in this poem would argue.[164] However, when we consider that the *amator* here seems to question who has *paid* the 'great price,' the status of the *puella* and her relationship to him is upended. The conceit, without the forensic and legal mode backing it up, is stripped away, revealing the reality of prostitution that would be the basis of such a relationship between a Roman citizen (the poet), and a courtesan (his *puella*).

The *puella*'s face, which controlled him, and her newfound skills, crack the fragile shell of the poetic conceit, just as happens in Tibullus. The *puella* here becomes the active sexual agent and undermines her encoded elegiac role as the pursued. What she pursues is the *pretium* from young men which in turn would grant her some control over her own erotic agency, despite the incongruence this presents for the *amator's* erotic/poetic project. The ending of this poem is entirely unsatisfactory for the audience of erotic elegy, since there is no place for the relationship to go after this contained episode. That is also why the next poem, 2.6, about Corinna's dead pet bird, sees such an abrupt shift in theme and tone, and why 2.4 and 2.5 must be read together as a kind of diptych. Both poems demonstrate Zimmerman Damer's idea that "the poets use the human body as an active contributor to poetic identities to highlight the fragility of social status, the construction of gender, and the inherent vulnerability and ambiguity of stable identity."[165]

[164] Cf. Varro, *ling*. in Maltby 495.
[165] Zimmerman Damer 45.

The *amator,* through his construction of his own ambiguous (yet stable and consistent) identity in these two poems, is able to highlight the ways in which elegy itself compensates for the self-emasculation which it undertakes by continually constructing its poetic objects, namely the bodies of *puellae*, in ways that ultimately grant control back to the poet.

The poet-lover of *Amores* is demonstrably self-conscious about his poetic production, whether or not that is the production of the real author himself, or the persona of the *amator* that is separated from the real Ovid. The distinction matters less than the fact that these two poems show us how the *amator* "is consciously fashioning his speech as a poem and is thus not only <speaking>, but also <has the say>".[166] The legal framework which envelopes 2.4 and 2.5 is the perfect mode for which he can achieve this simultaneity of control in the act of writing and speaking. The recourse to myth as justification for his actions and the demonstration of such *exempla* is thus the fundamental tool used by the poet to demonstrate that control.

Even when confronted by outside pressure like the accusations fabricated for the legal defense of 2.4, or from internal pressure such as the infidelity of the beloved in 2.5, the poet-lover maintains control over the outcome of the elegiac scenario. And, even when there is amatorial failure, either through the façade of hyper-virility he displays in 2.4 or the emasculation that he goes through with the accumulated knowledge of his *puella*'s own 'adultery' in 2.5, he is able to retain poetic control, ultimately turning both of these weaknesses into literary successes. As can be seen in this diptych, the *amator's* weaving of such mythical comparisons between stories of goddesses and his own situation with the *puella* serves as the basis for legitimizing the legality of his actions in the court of love.

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[166] Volk, "*Ille Ego*" 94.

Elegiac Coercion and Mythical Warnings in *Amores* 2.2 and 2.3

In this chapter I will analyze two more poems, *Amores* 2.2 and 2.3. In these poems, the *amator* explores the common generic conceptual space of the *paraclausithyron*—a (typically drunken) song delivered by a young lover to the door that shuts away his beloved—by expanding it to involve another live character, the doorkeeper himself.[167] The doorkeeper serves similarly as the inanimate door, the typical elegiac obstacle between lover and beloved in this style of poem, yet by granting some semblance of personhood to the obstacle, Ovid enables his use, once again, of mythical *exempla*. The poems take shape, first, with his attempt to coerce the doorkeeper Bagoas to aid him, which takes up the majority of 2.2. So that he might accomplish this, the *amator* utilizes mythical *exempla* to demonstrate Bagoas' folly in trying to keep the poet-lover from his *puella* and denying his sexual access to the *puella*. Then, second, he completes the scenario through an exploration of the characterization of this doorkeeper—Bagoas—as a eunuch, the *amator*'s opinions of which fill the contents of 2.3. In exploring the peripheral status of this eunuch, the *amator* reveals his own insecure masculine identity, as an elegiac lover who spurns conventional Roman masculinity, and recontextualizing his previous mythologizing in 2.2.

The act of naming is a powerful one, and Ovid's insertion of a new, named character into his erotic drama is worthy of note, even if the poet gives that character no real agency. While Ovid's Bagoas is made out to be the doorkeeper guarding the *puella*, the name itself activates a historical and literary tradition going back to the time of Alexander the Great. The name Bagoas seems to stem from a tradition of eunuchs among the Persian royal court.[168] The Bagoas that

[167] For more on the *paraclausithyron,* see Copley.
[168] See Chugg 181-182 where he argues that the name may be more of a title than a real personal name, and a list of eunuchs throughout historical record are called 'Bagoas,' including the one named here in the *Amores*.

would perhaps be most familiar to the Roman reader was the famed eunuch in the court of the Persian emperor, Darius III, and later, Alexander the Great. This Bagoas made a name for himself and achieved huge amounts of political power, according to the story told in Diodorus Siculus, through poisoning Darius' political enemies and helping raise him to the throne of Persia.[169] The 'Bagoas' stock-character, lifted from his historiographical context and perhaps most readily related to the examples seen in the story of Alexander the Great, is transposed to Ovid's poem to demonstrate to the reader the difference in class and sexuality that he holds over this slave figure.

Ovid deliberately avoids the most well-known examples of eunuchs in Rome. The Galli were servants of the goddess Magna Mater whose origin is related to the myth of Attis, a myth which had been the subject of Catullus 63 and is treated by Ovid himself in the *Fasti*.[170] In *Amores,* this avoidance must, to some degree, occlude the implications which eunuchs' associations with Attis and the Galli generally conjure for the Roman reader. As Sean Tougher demonstrates, "the Galli play a key role in establishing a negative perception of eunuchs in Rome as wild, feminized, unattractive beings."[171] Ovid cannot, of course, erase those implications entirely, but it is worth asking why he frames this eunuch, one belonging to a different cultural tradition—historiographical as opposed to mythical—as the appropriate literary obstacle that the *amator* must overcome.

He once again retains control over these supposed amatory obstacles by reminding us of the power dynamics that truly exist between him and his characters. Bagoas' characterization here—apparently a foreign slave and eunuch—thus positions him as being other to both the poet

[169] Chugg 180-181.
[170] Ovid, *Fasti* 4.221-246.
[171] Tougher 56.

and reader in three important ways: culturally, socially, and sexually. Ovid relies on this *exemplum* of Bagoas to render the audience's preconceived beliefs about this character's personality. Ovid begins this poem with an address to this doorkeeper:

> *Quem penes est dominam servandi cura, Bagoa,*
> *dum perago tecum pauca, sed apta, vaca.*[172]
>
> "Bagoas, whose duty it is to take care of guarding our mistress, / while I spend with you a small, but fitting, moment, be at leisure."

As McKeown points out, the language used here gives the appearance that the speaker is attempting to be polite and respectful of Bagoas' time and person, however, the irony created by calling what becomes the longest poem in book 2, *'pauca*,' is apparent.[173] The poet disregards the readers' expectations as he seems to set them up here. The pretense of courtesy which Ovid gives us is only that, and he will control Bagoas' time, as well as ours, to fully express his arguments and seek both poetic and amatory success.

When the poet begins his address to Bagoas, he recalls how he saw his *puella* among a group of statues depicting the Danaids, a group of mythical women known for killing their husbands and receiving an eternal punishment alike to the more widely known figures of Sisyphus or Tantalus—the latter also surfaces later in this poem, reinforcing the importance of this subtle initial mythological reference:

> *hesterna vidi spatiantem luce puellam*
> *illa quae Danai porticus agmen habet.*[174]

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[172] Ovid, *Amores* 2.2.1-2.
[173] McKeown, vol. 3, 29-30.
[174] Ovid, *Amores* 2.2.3-4.

> "I saw the girl strolling about by yesterday's light / there at the portico
> which has the procession of Danaids."

The group of Danaids that the *amator* here references are those set up on the portico of the Palatine temple of Apollo. As the story goes, among the Danaids, only one remained loyal to her new husband, while the rest murdered their grooms on their wedding night at the behest of their father, Danaus.[175] The *puella* stands out among this group, framed here as if in the role of Hypermnestra—the one daughter who was loyal to her spouse among the fifty Danaids.[176] She is *spatiantem* (walking about), compared to the statue group which he describes as '*agmen,*' a word that McKeown notes can indicate not only a procession of women but a line of soldiers.[177] According to the Lewis and Short dictionary, it can also relate to a stream of running water.[178] Ovid's choice to use so multiplicitous a word as this allows him to create an intense mental image for the reader, one which changes based on their relationship to the space it describes. The ambiguity of *agmen* lets us imagine these statues representing the Danaids in either of three states – preparing themselves for or beginning to undertake the commanded murders (as if an *agmen* of marching soldiers), or already serving their punishment in the underworld (going on as a procession pouring out an *agmen* of flowing water from their carrying jars).

Presently, for us, it is impossible to know which interpretation of these lost Danaid statues would most accurately reflect the reality of their existence in Augustan Rome.[179] Some clue is given in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, where he describes the statues as depicting the Danaids as

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[175] For more on the myth of the Danaids, see Apollodorus 2.1.4-5.
[176] McKeown, vol. 3, 31.
[177] Ibid.
[178] "*agmen*." *A Latin Dictionary*. Lewis & Short.
[179] See Quenemoen and Papini for hypotheses and potential reconstructions regarding the portico.

they prepare to commit the murders.[180] However, Ovid's own inexact description here in *Amores* implies the validity of all such interpretations. The poetic discourse created by using such an ekphrastic description is more important than the reality of the space it depicts—one which is nevertheless distorted by poetic license anyway. Ovid's word choice does more to underscore his poetry's relationship not just to Augustan physical space, but to Augustan literary space, as this otherwise simple couplet also has intertextual repercussions.

The decision to describe this space, specifically Augustan as it is, enables Ovid to create an intertextual dialogue once again. This contrast between the *puella* and the statues placed in front of her heightens both the aesthetic pleasure of the vignette and its thematic impact, as well as creating dialogue with other Roman elegists, and the spaces of the empire. The same space is written about by Propertius in two fragmentary poems, 2.31 and 2.32, and the well-read Roman would certainly recognize the Propertian echo in Ovid's account. Ovid's description of his *puella* as *spatiantem* parallels the way in which Propertius describes the space of this portico in 2.31-32:

> *tota erat in **spatium** Poenis digesta columnis,*
> *inter quas Danai femina turba senis.*
> *...*
> *hoc utinam **spatiere** loco, quodcumque vacabis,*
> *Cynthia!*[181]

> "The entire (portico) was divided into a **promenade** with Carthaginian columns, / between which (was) the crowd of old Danaus' daughters.
>
> …
>
> I wish that **you would stroll** this place, whensoever you are at leisure, / Cynthia!"

Ovid's *spatientam* ("strolling") *puellam* thus recalls Propertius' description of the same space as a *spatium* (promenade) in which he had wished his *puella* would "stroll" (*spatiere*). For the

[180] Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.73-74.
[181] Propertius 2.31.3-4; 2.32.1-2, emphasis added.

Propertian *amator*, the space is associated with and contrasted to his *puella*'s infidelity, and he goes on to lament the places she frequents instead of spending time with him—all cover stories for her other erotic affairs, according to him.

Ovid's intertextual nod to this poem frames his *puella* as a kind of successor and superior lover to the Propertian precedent. She *is* strolling about the portico, acting in the way the Propertian *amator* can only hope of his *puella*. Metapoetically, Ovid claims that his elegy, his *amor*, is more successful than Propertius' in its ability to fulfill generic expectations. This, again, is a way for the poet to demonstrate the power of his *puella* through the lens of intertextuality. His *amor* (his poetry) should be judged as better because it shows us a generic *exemplum*. It is poetically a success even if it elucidates the ambiguity of his *amator's* own personal erotic success. The obstacle is not the *puella* in this poem, she is reduced back to her first purpose, the goal of the work, and deception will prove again the greatest tool to trick both the inner characters of the work and the participating audience into helping him achieve that goal.[182]

This is also why reading the *puella* into the role of Hypermnestra here makes the most sense. She fits as an *exemplum* of femininity akin to other famous women in Roman myth, and this exemplary status is transferred to the *puella* not for her *pudicitia* or any other such feminine, Roman/Augustan virtue, but she achieves exemplary *poetic* status through comparison to other erotic models like the *puella* presented by Propertius. This comes in contrast to the kinds of virtues espoused by poets of other genres, such as epic, where conventional masculine and feminine virtues abound. The myths depict Hypermnestra like other Roman figures of female

[182] Cf., Greene, *Erotics* 96: "Here the *amator* seems to take pleasure in enumerating the various obstacles standing in the way of his progress with the *puella.* Such objects make love interesting and challenging to the lover and offer him endless possibilities to strike poses and develop clever maneuvers to overcome whatever stands between him and his beloved."

exemplarity, such as Lucretia.[183] This can also be gleaned from Ovid's own treatment of the Hypermnestra character in the 14th letter of *Heroides:*

> *Mittit Hypermestra de tot modo fratribus uni—*
> *cetera nuptarum crimine turba iacet.*
> *clausa domo teneor gravibusque coercita vinclis;*
> *est mihi supplicii causa fuisse piam.*[184]

> "Hypermnestra sends (this) to just one of all her brothers— / the rest lie dead from the crime committed by the throng of brides. / Shut up at home I am held by heavy chains and confined; / the cause of my punishment is that I have been devout."

The strong, chaste woman stands up for her virtue and the loyalty she shows to her husband, even though it ensures her punishment and imprisonment. How ironic, if the feminine virtue of this figure from the heroic and exemplary past—one which would certainly fit in the mould of Augustan moral reform—is transposed in *Amores* 2.2 by the poet onto the *meretrix*, legally and culturally incapable of such marital virtue thanks to her career.[185] These mutable and incongruent identities which the poet gives to his *puella* and her doorkeeper are enabled in this poem by his metapoetic agenda, wherein the poetry itself is supposed to be exemplary of its style and genre.

Whereas Propertius' Cynthia is framed as being a poor adulterer in 2.32, Corinna, her Ovidian counterpart, holds too much power over the Ovidian *amator* to be subject to this scrutiny, so the blame for his failing must shift to her watchman in *Amores* 2.2. If we know that Hypermnestra is punished because she was faithful, "*est mihi supplicii causa fuisse piam* (the

[183] On Lucretia, see Langlands 80-96.
[184] Ovid, *Heroides* 14.1-4.
[185] See also Caston 142: "the elegiac lover's expectations from the beloved resemble the idealistic claims put on Roman epitaphs for a deceased wife. These records show that a woman's chastity and loyalty were the most desirable qualities in a wife."

cause of my punishment is that I have been devout)," then this line of reasoning can also apply to the *puella*. As she herself is hoisted to the realm of *exempla* here—she is faithful in her role as the elegiac mistress—that, in itself, warrants punishment, the punishment of her imprisonment which enables the successful poetic *paraclausithyron* to occur.[186]

The myth of the Danaids which Ovid alludes to in his picture paints a negative *exemplum* that warns Bagoas about how he ought or ought not to act, represented by the image of the Danaids going through their punishment. For Pandey, Ovid's argument is "that the credible appearance of chastity is more important than its actuality," and this entire scenario, along with its variation on the Propertian picture of the Apollonian portico, sees the poet's "elaborate stage directions to the guard satirize Augustus' legislative manipulation of Roman private lives."[187] Moreover, I argue that the poet holds up a mirror to the reader, allowing reflection of these *exempla* to demonstrate their own validity in his literary conceit. The ekphrastic use of these Augustan monuments transforms them into poetic monuments which present themselves to us as the normative model that erotic elegy ought to look like.[188] Corinna is the ultimate *puella,* and the poet-lover must justify his pursual both erotically and literarily in order to demonstrate elegy's ultimate form and grant the genre closure. From here the poet can undertake this specific poem's project of creating the ultimate *paraclausithyron.*[189]

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[186] But, as we have seen in 2.5 for example, the *puella*'s success in her role begins to break down.
[187] Pandey, *Poetics* 116.
[188] Roller 216-217.
[189] Compare what comes in this poem, with its similar scenario, to the more stock version of a *paraclausithyron* Ovid delivers in *Amores* 1.6, the structure and contents of which follow more closely his elegiac and comedic predecessors.

The entire scenario, which undermines such idealized realities by portraying the *puella* as this ideal Roman woman, almost turns the poem into parody. Yet, at least in the mind of the *amator,* the *puella* must surely find herself in a situation like Hypermnestra, locked up against her will. The conceit of the *paraclausithyron*, as a device found mainly in comedic drama, and utilized by other Augustan elegists, demands these absurdities in order to create humour, and this humour serves the poet's play for control of the reader and of the affair within. The generic precedent of this conceit in comedy enables the familiar Roman reader to expect that, although the door may not open for the young man because of his *paraclausithyron*, some fortunate circumstance will surely bring the young lovers together regardless. When we consider the reader-response to this situation, we can then see how the inevitability of this outcome can also aaply to the inevitability of erotic and adulterous affairs in the upper social strata of Rome.

As the poem further develops its *paraclausithyron* conceit, having framed its three players (the poet, doorkeeper, and *puella*) in differing roles, the poet must abide by generic convention and begin his request to Bagoas so that he might be granted the physical and erotic access to his *puella* which he desires. The way that Ovid hopes to achieve this is through threats and coercion. In the poem's fifth couplet, the lover begins his request with an ominous warning. He has heard from another of his *puella*'s servants that she is unable to leave thanks to Bagoas:

> *si sapis, o custos, odium, mihi crede, mereri*
> *desine, quem metuit quisque, perisse cupit.*[190]

"if you are wise, o doorkeeper, trust me, / stop being worthy of hatred.

Whoever dreads someone, desires that they perish."

[190] Ovid, *Amores* 2.2.9-10.

The poet follows up this warning with long-winded words of advice that attempt to persuade Bagoas that the reverse outcome of his dutiful watch can be expected should he not surrender to the *amator* and his mistress' erotic wishes. If he lets her do as she will, only then will he be able to avoid punishment. McKeown notes also that the order of *mihi crede* in line 9*,* as opposed to *crede mihi*, which is more commonly found in the other elegists, could be indicative of a more formal tone to this advice.[191] This becomes more apparent in the next couplet, lines 11-12, which McKeown states parodies a Ciceronian argument and possibly also alludes to a Lucretian one.[192]

This train of thought culminates in lines 39-40 (after some potentially interpolated lines, according to McKeown) when the poet even exclaims that taking the latter course of action, turning a blind eye, will help him increase his wages and buy his freedom:[193]

> *sic tibi semper honos, sic alta peculia crescent.*
> *haec fac, in exiguo tempore liber eris*.[194]

> "thus your esteem [will grow] always, thus your savings will pile high. /
> Do this, in a brief time you will be free."

Although this poem does not so obviously embrace the forensic style that we have seen elsewhere in book 2, the poet still cannot help but frame his warnings as a kind of legal advice when he states that Bagoas might be able to achieve legal manumission by helping the *amator* access the *puella*. This also highlights the true power dynamics of the poem. Bagoas, a slave, paradoxically holds *dominium* over the *puella* despite his social status, and the trifling scenario the *amator* finds himself in is one forced on him by genre, not by a lack of freedom or power—

[191] McKeown vol. 3, 33.
[192] Ibid., 34-35.
[193] Ibid., 37-40.
[194] Ovid, *Amores* 2.2.39-40.

again, like Hypermnestra's virtuous actions which bring her punishment, the imprisonment is because of poetic success, not in spite of it. Bagoas is, after all, no more than the door whose role he here subsumes for the sake of Ovid's subversion and enhancement of the *paraclausithyron.*

After telling him how he can avoid punishment, the poet returns to more direct and threatening statements, using a recourse to mythical *exempla* to get these messages across to Bagoas. Myth, as we have seen, is one of Ovid's most oft used and powerful rhetorical tools. A list of negative *exempla,* beginning in line 41, starts with comparing Bagoas' task as a doorkeeper to other mythical figures:

> *aspicis indicibus nexas per colla catenas;*
> *squalidus orba fide pectora carcer habet.*
> *quaerit aquas in aquis et poma fugacia captat*
> *Tantalus: hoc illi garrula lingua dedit;*
> *dum nimium servat custos Iunonius Io,*
> *ante suos annos occidit; illa dea est*.[195]

"Look at the fastened chains on the necks of the informers; / hearts devoid of trustworthiness have a foul prison, / seeking water in water and grasping at fleeting fruit / was Tantalus: his garrulous tongue gave this [torture] to that man; / while the watchman of Juno guards Io excessively, / he dies before his years; that girl is a goddess."

If the doorkeeper will deceive the *amator*, and subsequently his mistress' true wishes (should their affair be seen as wholly consensual as Ovid would here have us believe), then he is subject first to something nearly as bad as Tantalus' eternal punishment or that of the Danaids that was alluded to in the poem's opening. This first reference in lines 43-44 also contains an interesting parallel to the character of Bagoas as a eunuch. The castrated guard is similar to Tantalus for

[195] Ovid, *Amores* 2.2.41-46.

always having an unfulfillable desire—in this case sexual. It also plays on the slightly less popular version of the myth in which Tanatalus' primary cause of punishment was the crime of spreading the gods' secrets after sharing a banquet with them, essentially telling tales or gossip, which the *amator* warns will be the accusation against Bagoas.[196]

He also refers to Argus, the fallen watchman, who watched Io excessively, causing his premature death (*ante suos annos occidit*). In this *exemplum* we once again see the poet elevate the position of his *puella.* He equates her to Io, who '*dea est,*' and thus ultimately spared Hera's total retribution thanks to her divine status. Unlike the previous *exemplum* of Tantalus, which emphasized the punishment for the crime of snitching, the watchman, Argus, only fails for being constantly vigilant. At first this seems counterintuitive to how the poet's request has thus far shaped up, with its focus on Bagoas' potential punishment. However, it demonstrates a different aspect of Bagoas' relationship to the *puella,* one which emphasizes her ultimate control over his position. The *puella* is constantly represented as possessing similar divine power poetically throughout the *Amores*; hers is a *numen* that enables the poet's continual poetic achievement. So, the reader's expectation is clearly set up to recognize through these *exempla* that Bagoas cannot hope to limit divine power or escape punishment for then committing what must be considered an act of hubris against a goddess. As an obstacle, a living door, Bagoas' only option is punishment unless he relents and 'opens up' for the *amator*.

The poetic choice to transform the door from an object to a person simultaneously makes the *amator'*s beseeching more impactful and more precarious. Unlike Tibullus, who in his own *paraclausithyron*, 1.2, addresses and berates the door directly, or Catullus 67 and Propertius

[196] On this version of the Tantalus myth see Euripides, *Orestes* 1-10 and Apollodorus, *Library* E.2.

1.16, both poems where the narrator speaks from the viewpoint of the door, Ovid must consider the outcome that his actions have upon another living entity. [197] Bagoas is at all times subject to the power of these other players in the love affair, whether it is the equestrian citizen, the *amator* himself, or his *domina,* Corinna. In this sense, the only logical position left for the *amator* is the legal one: he has to make Bagoas think that he is legally culpable should his inaction bring about any harm to his mistress. From that starting point we see how the poet-lover makes Bagoas' primary concern the ramifications of his disloyalty to his mistress on her supposed 'husband,' the man to whom he must ultimately answer in their master/slave relationship. It is the dynamic of this relationship which his counsel addresses throughout lines 47-60.

By line 51, the poet has dropped the formal language with which he approached Bagoas, and now addresses him on a more intimate level, the shift seen in his repetition of "believe me," from earlier at line 9, though this time in the more informal word order:

> *Poena minor merito. nocuit mala lingua duobus;*
> *vir doluit, famae damna puella tulit.*
> *crede mihi, nulli sunt crimina grata marito,*
> *nec quemquam, quamvis audiat, illa iuvant.*[198]

> "The punishment is less than deserved. A bad tongue has harmed doubly; /
> the husband has grieved; the girl has suffered damages to her reputation. /
> Believe me, for no husband are crimes pleasing, / nor for any man,
> whomsoever may hear [them], are these pleasing."

Again, the poet emphasizes that the real crime is that the affair is being verbally exposed, not the adulterous act itself. The potential prattling of Bagoas is what will cause the most harm, to the

[197] Tibullus 1.2.1-10; Propertius 1.16.1-14; Catullus 67.1-14.
[198] Ovid, *Amores* 2.2.49-52

husband's emotional state, as well as the *puella*'s reputation, the latter of which ought to be untouchable as she maintains her status as the elegiac *puella,* on par as she is with a goddess. Elegiacally, Bagoas' silence would also fulfill his role as a door, as is seen in the *paraclausithyron* request of Tibullus, where he asks that the door turn open silently for him.[199]

Continuing with his warnings against Bagoas' tattling, the *amator* echoes his description of Tantalus, whose tongue, as we previously saw, was described as '*garrula.*' In line 60 this epithet is used to describe the doorkeeper, should he perpetrate the crime of snitching on his mistress: "*poenas garrulus iste dabit* (that wretched chatterer will be punished)."[200] The *amator* thus reminds Bagoas of the eternal suffering his potential misdeed (as estimated by the poet-lover, at any rate) will bring him. It is recontextualized by this point in the poem through Bagoas' slave status and his relationship to the *puella* herself—as his mistress—and his master, her husband (or pimp). The reader knows that Bagoas is in no position to disobey both mistress and master, and his status as a voiceless slave would make it difficult to scorn the advice he receives from the *amator*, a male citizen who also possesses more social power thanks to his status. Thus, the doorman is left with no choice but to concede to this argument from the *amator* because he lacks the legal authority to do otherwise.

Having presented to Bagoas, partially through the examples he uses from myth, what will befall the doorkeeper, the rest of the poem reemphasizes this kind of legal argument for why the *amator*'s wishes ought to be granted. Whereas he states that Bagoas will be punished as a criminal if he should snitch about his mistress' activities—punished, in fact, by her own

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[199] Tibullus, 1.2.9-10: "*Ianua, iam pateas uni mihi, victa querelis, / neu furtim verso cardine aperta sones.* (Door, open for me alone, conquered by my complaining, / and with no sound turn stealthily your hinge)."
[200] Ovid, *Amores* 2.2.60.

husband—the poet-lover argues that the two lovers should themselves be trusted because what they are doing is distinctly *not* a crime.[201] This line of thought can be seen in the last 3 couplets of the poem, where he proclaims the innocence of himself and his *puella*:

> *quid dispar certamen inis? tibi verbera victo*
> *assunt, in gremio iudicis illa sedet.*
> *non scelus aggredimur, non ad miscenda coimus*
> *toxica, non stricto fulminat ense manus;*
> *quaerimus ut tuto per te possimus amare:*
> *quid precibus nostris mollius esse potest?*[202]

> "Why begin an inequitable struggle? There are lashes for beating you when you are defeated, / that girl sits in the lap of the judge. / We are not undertaking a crime, we are not coming together for mixing poisons, / my hand does not flash with a drawn sword; / we ask that, through you, we are able to love safely: / what can be milder than our request/prayer?"

The love affair is framed here against certain elegiac tropes through the poet's choice of diction. He dismisses another *certamen* (battle/struggle), a word which can be used to refer to a military engagement, and with it goes the notion that love ought to be a battlefield in this conceit.[203] Bagoas would be fighting a battle he cannot win. The *amator* stresses the fact that it is *not* criminal beginning in line 63 by the use of anastrophe, the negative particle, *non*, emphatically starting all three clauses in this couplet. This also slows down the speed of the thought as a contrast to the highly elided couplet of lines 61-62; this emphatic rhythm creating the effect of heightening the seriousness with which the *amator* makes his case to Bagoas. As the couplet ends, he states that he has no sword with which to fight, again reiterating this idea that the love

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[201] Ovid, *Amores* 2.2.60.
[202] Ibid., 2.2.61-66.
[203] "*certamen*." *A Latin Dictionary*. Lewis & Short.

between him and his *puella* does not conform to a typical *militia amoris.* Since violence is not the *amator's modus operandi*, he desires also that Bagaos, the doorkeeper—the door—should give in without subjecting himself to violence.

As the *paraclausithyron* comes to a close, and the poem ends, the reader and Bagoas alike must be reminded that nothing that may happen is the fault of the lover or his beloved, the scenarios and the threats that have occupied the space of the *amator's* pleas give way to this admission (or lack thereof) of his own role. The ending of the poem reinforces the notion that Bagoas is mainly a door, and as such his job is only to open and close. The agency that seems to hinder the poet-lover in his quest must be removed in order to achieve erotic success. That fact is the justification for the shape of threatening and warnings which his request takes in this poem. Nevertheless, the poet, perhaps deceitfully so, reminds us in line 66 that their request, *precibus nostris,* is an affable thing, but also that it is in accordance with generic convention, nothing could be *milder* (*mollius*). It is the perfect adjective which enables his poetry to fulfill its generic goals.

In the following poem, it is clear that the *amator's* persuasion in the mode of his *paraclausithyron* was not an immediate success. Instead, this short poem expands upon the characterization of the eunuch, whose genderless position sees him as being an incongruent obstacle to the poet's amatory pursuit. According to McKeown, "it is not universally accepted that 2.2 and 3 are separate poems," and their contiguous subject matter may make them better off read together as one.[204] However, the tonal shift that occurs in what has become 2.3 warrants its own, separate discussion from what is found in 2.2 above. The expansion on Bagoas' identity

[204] McKeown, vol. 1, 91.

here shows that he does not pose the same obvious threat to amatory success as does a rival lover, but as we have seen in 2.2, his closeness to the *puella* is still something of which the *amator* is wary.

The poet ends his claims in 2.2 by telling us how his affair is fair, fitting, and *mollis* enough to warrant his erotic and elegiac output. Bagoas' ambiguous sexual status as is explicated in 2.3 poses a threat to the performance of masculine gender and thus threatens the legitimacy of the *amator*'s suitable affair, since it is unclear whether Bagoas can participate, either as a dominating or submissive sexual partner, or even understand the desires of the poet-lover. This apprehension transforms the poem into a mirror for the elegiac lover to reflect on his own poetic role and its gender performance, wittingly or not. In 2.2, the subtle threat presented by this silent character was reduced to that of an object—the door, however, the apprehension surrounding such a figure as a eunuch is baked into Roman cultural DNA, and those anxieties are further explored in *Amores* 2.3:[205]

> *Ei mihi, quod dominam nec vir nec femina servas,*
> *mutua nec Veneris gaudia nosse potes!*
> *qui primus pueris genitalia membra recidit,*
> *vulnera quae fecit debuit ipse pati.*[206]

> "Ah me, that you, neither man nor woman, are guarding my mistress, / and you cannot know the varied joys of Venus! / He who first cut off the reproductive members of boys, / ought himself to suffer the wounds he caused.

[205] See Tougher 55-56.
[206] Ovid, *Amores* 2.3.1-10.

In these first few lines of the poem, we see how this mirror is first held up. The poet bewails the concept of castration and the idea of a eunuch, scorning its perpetrator in lines 3-4. If Ovid is wont to pull from scenes he finds among the other Roman elegists and their predecessors, then nothing perhaps comes so readily to mind regarding the origins of eunuchs as Catullus' exploration of the myth of Attis in his poem 63. The myth relates itself to the origins of the Galli, eunuch priests who played a religious role in the cult of Magna Mater in Rome.[207] Catullus tells us that Attis inflicted the wounds on himself which removed his "*membra*" and the Galli who came after him were supposed to similarly undergo ritualistic castration.[208] Thus, in this mirror scenario that 2.3 shows us, the elegiac lover's origins in self-harm are exposed and the poet's statement in line 4 rings truer than it first appears.

Sean Tougher explores the Roman reception to the Galli, who claim their origins from Attis, stating that the "Roman abhorrence of self-castration, the voluntary renunciation of masculinity that was so central to Roman male identity, must be appreciated, for it informs the revulsion Romans could feel for the Galli."[209] Although Ovid chose to avoid this connection to the Galli in his *paraclausithyron,* the allusive and pejorative exploration of the eunuch's being in 2.3 recalls these mythical origins nonetheless. The subtle distancing from this Catullan antecedent illustrates Barbara Weiden Boyd's point that "Ovid's poetry is virtually never free from parallels, poetic memories, formulaic modes of expression, even specific references; yet at these very points of contact with literary tradition, Ovid breaks free from our expectation."[210] Surely, he recognizes a very Roman response to the eunuch and grabs onto it to make evident

[207] Tougher 51.
[208] Catullus 63.1-5.
[209] Tougher 71.
[210] Boyd, *Literary Loves* 89.

both the intertextual echoes that enable such a reading and the mirroring that it provides for the elegiac lover.[211]

This generic reflection turns his poem from just a dramatic scene, one that concludes the story begun in 2.2, into a metapoetic retrospection on the generic makeup of erotic elegy, full as it is with self-deprecation, self-emasculation, and self-pity – all of which we find in *Amores* as well. Though the Roman familiarity with the Galli is surely at play in Ovid's descriptions, the slave eunuchs of the imperial period as well as the eunuchs found in the Persian royal courts are not self-castrated.[212] Clearly the eunuch of *Amores* 2.2-3*,* as we have been introduced to him here, Bagoas, is not of the same ilk as Attis, belonging to those eunuch followers, the Galli, which are associated with this mythical *exemplum*.

Amores 2.3 elucidates that Bagoas is not only opposition in the physical sense, but also socially, performing a similar gender role to the elegiac lover, as both fail to conform to the societal standard of accepted masculinity. The evolution of Bagoas' opposition through these two poems makes him an *exemplum* not only of an elegiac obstacle, but also as demonstrative of the elegiac *amator* himself. 2.3 thus reveals the reality that the persona of the *amator* is inherently unmasculine. In listing the qualities of manliness which the eunuch cannot fulfill in lines 7-10,

> *non tu natus equo, non fortibus utilis armis,*
> *bellica non dextrae convenit hasta tuae.*
> *ista mares tractent; tu spes depone viriles:*
> *sunt tibi cum domina signa ferenda tua*[213]

[211] An example exists to demonstrate this negative Roman reaction to eunuchs, found in Valerius Maximus' *Memorable Doings and Sayings* 7.7.6.
[212] Cf., Chugg 202.
[213] Ovid, *Amores* 2.3.7-8.

> "You have not been born for a horse, not for using powerful weapons, / a warlike spear is not suited to your right hand. / Let men handle those things; you lay aside your masculine hopes: / your mistress' standards must be carried by you."

the amator inadvertently reveals the same precariousness which the poet's amatory existence adopts. Rather than being able to undertake the appropriate equestrian duties as a Roman male of some higher social status, or to act as a real soldier in war, his only use—like the eunuch—is for the sake of a woman. The innuendo of sexual incompetency and emasculation is pushed even further by Ovid here. The euphemism in line 8 of the eunuch being unable to wield a spear simultaneously enforces the cultural gender expectations of Roman men, equating prowess in war to sexual prowess, and reveals that, in fact, the elegiac lover struggles with achieving either of these as well.[214]

The course of action the poet recommends to Bagoas is one that the *amator* himself can be seen undertaking. In lines 9-10, we see him recommending *militia amoris* in service of Bagoas' mistress, rather than real warfare. He is commanded to "*spes depone viriles,*" to put down his masculine hopes. The choice of diction is also telling here. Describing Bagoas' hopes as *viriles* does double the work as it can be used to describe one's manhood and is a descriptor for citizen status when related to the *toga virilis,* both things which the *amator* knows Bagoas can never attain.[215] All that then remains is for him to pledge his service to another—the *puella*. Despite this dismissal of military life, like a soldier pledging himself to the army of the Roman

[214] This is something that comes up again as *Amores* draws closer to its end, see note 145 above on 3.7.
[215] Cf., Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* 69-70 on *virilitas*: "*Virilitas* (lit. 'manhood', an abstract which became concrete) and *virilia* are common euphemisms for the male organ, but because they usually occur in contexts in which castration is at issue, it is possible that they were often thought of as referring to the testicles."

empire, the elegiac lover and Bagoas both must participate in ways that are subservient to others, and which require new conceptualizations of masculinity that are less individualistic. The three figures of the soldier, poet, and eunuch must embrace a different kind of masculinity than the stereotypical, Roman one to find success in each of their endeavours.

After spending the first ten lines uncovering the nature of this eunuch's character, at least as the *amator* portrays it, including the exposure of the *amator's* reflection therein, he starts to make commands (lines 10-11) to the eunuch. Here, in the second half of the poem, Ovid's narrator returns to attempting to persuade Bagoas to help aid his erotic conquest, as was his agenda in 2.2:

> *hanc imple meritis, huius tibi gratia prosit;*
> *si careas illa, quis tuus usus erit?*
> *est etiam facies, sunt apti lusibus anni;*
> *indigna est pigro forma perire situ.*
> *fallere te potuit, quamvis habeare molestus:*
> *non caret effectu quod voluere duo.*
> *aptius at fuerit precibus temptasse; rogamus,*
> *dum bene ponendi munera tempus habes.*[216]

> "Satisfy her with services, her thankfulness may benefit you; / if you should be deprived of that girl, what will your use be? / There is also her figure (*facies*), her age is suitable for sport; / it is disgraceful to waste her form with lazy neglect. / She could have fooled you, however troublesome you may be: / two with purpose will not be without what they wished for / but it would be more fitting to have tried with our prayers; we ask, / while you have a chance for well placed favours.

[216] Ovid, *Amores* 2.3.11-18.

The second half begins with the *amator* telling Bagoas that he should give *merita* (services/rewards) to his mistress, to garner her *gratia* (grace/thanks).[217] These words are more ambiguous than the threatening and practical advice to the eunuch in 2.2 about how he might legally achieve freedom. The recommendation here is much more subtle and relates to the poet's own means of subsistence. As McKeown notes, the language seen in line 11 echoes the patronage system of poetry at Rome, further supporting this reading of the eunuch as an elegiac mirror to the *amator.*[218]

Line 13 has the *amator* once again reiterating the *potens* of his *puella.* She is, in the elegiac scenario as he has written her, of prime age for these erotic ventures. Both her *facies* and her *forma* are appropriate for his elegiac success. These, as we have seen, will be important ideas expanded upon throughout the progression of book 2. Here, just as occurs later, the poet-lover leverages his *puella*'s constructed poetic power to vie for erotic success. It becomes the responsibility of Bagoas, just as much as it is the poet's, to ensure that this *forma* is made available to both the *amator* and the audience. The poem's final line brings us back to the final message of 2.2, the *amator* considering how he ought to have used their *preces* (prayers/requests) to persuade the doorkeeper; after all, they are *mollis* and thus encapsulating of elegy itself, making his desire to access the *puella* legitimate and, in the world of amatory elegy, *legal*.

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[217] McKeown also notes Booth's idea that the imperative verb, *imple*, could be an innuendo about the eunuch impregnating the *puella*. This of course would invalidate their status as a eunuch, but at the same time brings the character closer to the elegiac lover in a more obvious way than the previous comparisons can. The joke that the eunuch is, in fact, not a eunuch, but a young lover disguised as one in order to gain access to his beloved, is a famous ploy that is used by Terence as the central plot point in his New Comedy play, *Eunuchus.* This famous Roman literary example is also an obvious intertextual reference brought up by this innuendo.
[218] McKeown, vol. 3, 61.

This pair of poems, 2.2 and 2.3, show us many of the concerns that the poet takes up to greater extent as the book progresses. The premise for which the poet explores them is *access*. The *puella* is trapped behind a door when, in a way exemplifying her elegiac status, she ought to be free roaming the Palatine temples as in the beginning of 2.2, and, of course, spending time with the *amator* (and thus with the audience). Bagoas, the eunuch, the other, and the obstacle to the poet-lover's erotic success, serves the purpose of allowing for more poetic success through the evolution of the *paraclausithyron* which Ovid attempts here.

The poetic justifications which the poet's employment of elegiac tropes sought to reinforce are teetering on the brink of collapse—the genre itself appears to crumble under its own weight. If anyone comes out of this conceit as an Attis, a self-castrated man, then it is the *amator*, whose self-castration is figuratively enacted by his participation in the genre of erotic elegy. The shift away from this familiar Roman *exemplum* is itself a telling move on the part of the poet-lover; he has modified his power-play to include arguments that convince the *puella,* Bagoas, and the audience, with his pointed use of mythical *exempla* and recourse to legal rhetoric, that are outside of our expectations. The othered eunuch, Bagoas, is pushed further from the elegiac lover so that he might attempt to separate his own reflection from this character in 2.2. However, the questions that are taken up in 2.3 see the poet analyzing the legitimacy of the eunuch's personhood and justifying his reduction to an object, the door.

A careful reading of 2.3 nonetheless lets us view this reflection and sees the *amator*'s own identity being called into question, thus the frailty of his own legitimacy is exposed, even as he has argued for and continues to argue for it throughout the remainder of *Amores*. Pandey argues even further that these two poems also expose and "satirize Augustus' legislative manipulation of Roman private lives, efforts that did not necessarily restrict behavior behind

closed doors," demonstrating how the *imperium* of Augustus mirrors the control of the *amator* in both "their attempts to control female bodies."[219] These further revelations position the legal-speak of Ovid's work in a Roman world in which all must navigate under the control of Augustus, undermining the very virtues—masculine and feminine—which his moral agenda sought to restore. In the following chapter, another mirror is held up to the poet-lover, but this time it reflects emphatically on the former title of his role, that of the poet, and shows us through the characterization of another subservient character how Ovid develops and exercises his control of elegy in book 2 of *Amores*.

[219] Pandey, *Poetics* 116.

Slaves, Goddesses, and Social Status in *Amores* 2.7 and 2.8

Similarly to 2.2-3, *Amores* 2.7 and 2.8 introduce us to another third-party character, extraneous to the poet's main love affair, this is his *puella*'s hairdresser, Cypassis. This character foils the *amator* metapoetically, being responsible for taking care of the *puella*'s head, making sure it is beautifully crafted to incite and maintain erotic desire, just as is the poet's own task in crafting her image. The poet's admission of his affair with Cypassis can be read on the metapoetical level almost as if he is having an autoerotic affair with himself. The introduction of these subservient characters sees Ovid recontextualizing his erotic relationship(s) and reaffirming his poetic success and control through the use of the power he exercises over them.

Amores 2.3 saw a mirror being held up to the elegiac lover, revealing the unmasculine qualities that hold up the genre. 2.7 and 2.8 do something similar on the metapoetic level. Instead of the lover being reflected by in these poems, it is the poet himself whose artifice is exposed. The diptych that relates the story of Cypassis—importantly, another rare, named character—and her affair with the *amator* shows us that despite her seemingly archetypal status, the *puella*, Corinna, has to occupy a shared sexual space in the world of the *amator*. The mechanisms which generate this metapoetic discourse are the same as we have seen throughout book 2 of *Amores*: intertextuality, legal speech and a forensic mode of operation, mythology, and the interwoven expression of *exempla* created by these different mechanisms to help execute the poet's goal.

Amores 2.2 and 2.3 created the slave figure of Bagoas as a poetic and erotic obstacle—a personified door—as well as a mirror of the elegiac lover himself. In this way, the two poems demonstrate that the generic artifice of elegy demands the *amator* often be his own obstacle. In 2.7 and 2.8 we will see how the poet once again has to generate and fulfill generic expectations through a fabricated simulacrum of conflict which implicates the reader in his struggles and

successes.[220] This time, the goal of that conflict is more focused on its ability to show the poet's ultimate power over his *materia*—a slave girl whose creation doubles as his own.

Intertextuality once again frames this pair of poems. As Ziogas shows, there is a throughline between *Amores* 2.7-8 and a similar narratological arc across several elegies of Propertius where the poet explores the defense and admission of his own guilty two-timing of his *puella,* Cynthia.[221] The condensing of this kind of episode allows Ovid to juxtapose the *puella* to the figure of Cypassis and demonstrate their similarities and differences in the space of these two poems. 2.7 deals with the poet's response to his mistress' accusation that he has cheated, while 2.8 shifts to confronting the third-party in the affair, Cypassis. If the audience should believe the poet-lover's defence in 2.7, then the revelation of his guilt in 2.8 is a shocking destruction of his readers' loyalty. The poet's choice to place this narrative over the span of these two poems, compared to the stretched-out arc of Propertius, shows the confidence he has in his own ability. He manages to both set up his readers' expectations and deliver the story of this affair without compromising his power over them both.

The charge of infidelity which the *amator* takes up in 2.7 requires our narrator to once again bring out his lawyer persona. This means that the poem can once again be read as a kind of defence speech. Several scholars have examined the legal setting which envelopes this diptych in *Amores*. Patricia Watson notes the stylistic formatting of 2.7 as a legal speech:

> Ovid takes up the theme to treat it in a strikingly individual manner: his protestations of innocence are couched in the style of a formal speech in which the defendant answers the arguments of the prosecution. … First, the piece

[220] Cf. Henderson 40: "In <<the case>> of Ovid's *Amores*, we can be sure that the texts are designed to circulate in the privileged world of Roman leisure, as part of a culture which would set Culture – and in particular Literature – apart from the realities of the World-State. This world of *otium*, however disavowed, in reality included its writer and its readers in the very materiality of their literary production and consumption."
[221] Ziogas 114-117.

> abounds in legal terminology … Second, the elegy resembles an *oratio* in its general structure.[222]

This *oratio* structure is similar to what we have explored in the defensive poem 2.4 and it makes perfect sense that our womanizing defendant from 2.4 would return here when his womanizing is exposed to his *puella*.

The first couplet of 2.7 recalls a familiar declaration seen earlier in 2.5, where the poet decries his own success in matters of legal prosecution/defense against his *puella*.[223] The real issue that the lover brings up is the frequency at which these disputes occur—and, as is made obvious here, it happens again synchronically just a few poems after 5:

> *Ergo sufficiam reus in nova crimina semper?*
> *ut vincam, totiens dimicuisse piget.*[224]
>
> "So, will I always be put on trial for new crimes? / even if I win, it grieves
>
> to have fought so many times."

The poet-lover here poses a question to the reader, to himself, and perhaps to his *puella.* The rhetorical nature of this question is debatable. He could really be asking what we think as we read again another dubious elegiac scenario involving adulterous intrigue. Why is the elegiac *amator* always the one accused of a *crimen*? The mirror we saw in 2.3 perhaps holds the answer to this question, as it illustrated the point which we have explored at length thus far: the lover suffers so that the poet may succeed.

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[222] Watson 92.
[223] Ovid, *Amores* 2.5.7-10.
[224] Ovid, *Amores* 2.7.1-2.

Once again, this couplet's use of legal language, as Watson has noted and as is elaborated by Ziogas, and the way in which it creates the scene of another legal trial demonstrates the poet-lover's preoccupation with performance in his poetry.[225] He assumes the persona of a defendant lawyer to plead his case to the audience of readers—even if the addressee of the poem is supposedly the *puella* herself. Part of this involves a strategy we have seen previously: the *amator* delays addressing the current accusation and instead spends the next fourteen lines listing off the things that have brought his *puella*'s ire upon him. He not only multiplies the conflicts synchronically throughout the *Amores*, but also gives us a list sequentially in this poem about his *puella*'s accusations.

This listing tactic is the *amator* stalling, just as he did in 2.4. He will not admit to what crime he has committed until much later in the poem. He first goes over numerous accusations his *puella* has previously made against him through lines 3-16, a series of 'this or that's which, allegedly, have historically left the poet-lover in double bind dilemmas. Between the rhetorical question in line 1 to the end of the couplet in line 16, he leaves out what exactly the crime is that he is now charged with. In line 17, he finally lets us in on his grievance:

> *ecce, novum crimen: sollers ornare Cypassis*
> *obicitur dominae contemerasse torum.*
> *di melius, quam me, si sit peccasse libido,*
> *sordida contemptae sortis amica iuvet!*[226]

> "Look, the new crime: Cypassis, skilled in styling, / is accused of having polluted the bed of her mistress. / May the gods grant me better than, if there was a desire to sin, / that a filthy companion of contemptible fortunes should delight me!"

[225] See Watson 97-98 and Ziogas 117-118.
[226] Ovid, *Amores* 2.7.17-20.

The poet-lover's statement here reframes what our stance ought to be on his opening question as well as the tirade that follows about his *puella's* previous accusations. *He* is not the one who committed a crime, and instead he places the blame on Cypassis. Interestingly, he praises her in his declaration with the Hellenistic style epithet of *sollers ornare*, 'skilled in styling.'[227] More than an exemplary name like what is given to Bagoas, immediately we learn that Cypassis has not just a name, but a trade which she practices for her mistress—not unlike what the poet does for his *puella*, or even for his patron. This epithet offers the first hint how "the stylist's artful governance of her mistress' hair provides a wishful model for the power the narrator wishes to wield over his lover through words and servile intermediaries including her maids."[228] The slave hairdresser is in multiple ways analogous to the poet and her role is demonstrative of the poet's control over his elegiac scenario.

In contrast to this recognition of Cypassis' skill (something which comes up again in 2.8), the remainder of the *amator*'s argument about why he has not cheated on the *puella* revolves around the hairdresser's social status—he would not stoop to sleeping with a slave so destitute as he presents Cypassis as being here:

> *quis veneris famulae conubia liber inire*
> *tergaque complecti verbere secta velit?*
> *adde quod ornandis illa est operata capillis*
> *et tibi per doctas grata ministra manus*:[229]

"What free man would want to enter a union with a slave-girl of Venus /

and to embrace her lashed back? / Add the fact that she labours for the

[227] The use of the infinitive with an adjective in Latin poetry mimics Greek idiom (*Allen and Greenough's Latin Grammar* § 461).
[228] Pandey, "Caput" 460.
[229] Ovid, *Amores* 2.7.21-24.

sake of styling your hair / and through her skilled hands is a beloved

servant to you:"

Underlying the legal defense case is the real idea in Rome that, as a slave, sexual relations did not legally 'count' in the same way that they do among citizens.[230] His choice to label such a union using the term, "*conubia,*" highlights the legal impossibility of the affair, so that his *puella*'s accusations can be further seen as absurd.[231] The couplet also highlights the *amator*'s manipulative powers. The ambiguous attachment of the genitive, *veneris,* in line 21 to either *conubia* or *famulae* overtly suggests the sexual nature of their union in the former case.[232] The latter reading is perhaps better supported due to the line's caesura after *famulae*, and it demonstrates that through all the degradation of Cypassis the *amator* manages to describe the godly nature of his *puella* by calling her a slave of Venus. After all, what better way to disarm his accuser than with flattery? This very ambiguity demonstrates the poet-lover's delicate balancing act between two of his potential readers in the *puella* and Cypassis.

Cypassis thus must also be witness to this defense, and the *amator* continues to give praise to her professional skill as an *ornatrix*, a hairstylist, who aids his *puella*. As McKeown points out, the description of her job using the vocabulary, *operata,* carries connotations of service performed for the sake of a deity.[233] This is propped up by the figuration of Corinna as a goddess, which occurs in the previous line when she is related to a 'Venus,' and as we have seen, is done numerous times with her being equated to several goddesses throughout *Amores*. The physically scarred figure of the slave who works for one so far superior to her is a notion simultaneously commending and undermining of Cypassis' existence, she may possess great

[230] See McGinn 144-145.
[231] McKeown, vol. 3, 153-154.
[232] Adams 188-189.
[233] McKeown, vol. 3, 155.

skill like the poet, but she can only ever hope to serve someone so great rather than achieve anything for herself. This is in contrast to the poet, who is able to create not only skilled poetry, but find success thanks to his position, socially and poetically, as a Roman male.

The last thing to discuss about 2.7 is its final couplet, in which the *amator* ends his defense by swearing an oath to Venus and Cupid. These final lines have the poet revealing what the real 'problem' is with Corinna's accusation:

> *Per Venerem iuro puerique volatilis arcus,*
> *me non admissi criminis esse reum!*[234]
>
> "On Venus I swear, and the bow of the winged boy, / I do not admit that I
> am guilty of crime!"

The poet swears, first and foremost, on the figure of Venus, with whom he has already equated his *puella*. He involves the gods that most obviously relate to his relationship to the *puella* and what he swears may come across as an unserious joke, that he will not admit to being guilty. Whether or not he actually is guilty and he ought to plead that particular fact, is of no real concern.

Ovid's poem can be seen as lighthearted play among elite citizenry, dehumanizing slaves in service of their erotic desires. Ovid also skirts around the problems of adultery that Augustus' laws, such as the *Lex Iulia de Adulteriis Coercendis*, outlined for the populace. The *puella* would have been *infamis* as, at best, a freewoman working as a prostitute, and, unlike a proper Roman wife, relations with her were not comparable to adultery between two married citizens.[235] The real legal issue with which the poet-lover is concerned is the fact that Cypassis is not his property

[234] Ovid, *Amores* 2.7.27-28.
[235] On *infames* see McGinn 194-195.

to play with, but belongs instead to his mistress; and, if we recall his argument in 2.5, the *puella* and her affections *are* his property, would it then follow from that line of argumentation that control of Cypassis is also his by extension? Poem 2.7 raises such questions, foregrounded as they are by what has happened before in *Amores*, but the defensive narrator rejects his guilty verdict and thus denies us any such further exploration in this poem.

The 'play' undertaken by the *amator* here allows him to subvert his mistress' power at the expense of Cypassis' autonomy. Like Bagoas, the slave character is used as a tool by the poet-lover to achieve one or both of his desired outcomes—poetic and erotic. The *amator* paints an intimate picture of Cypassis' rough physical figure which contrasts with her refined skill as an *ornatrix*, the praise for her ability mirrors his own self-demonstrative poetic ability. Yet, Cypassis' inferior physical form ensures she remains under his control, socially and poetically.

I illustrated how the eunuch, Bagoas, in *Amores* 2.2 and 2.3 was a mirror to the amator which exhibited his masculine inadequacy. The slave hairdresser, Cypassis, serves the reverse purpose, as a positive *exemplum* and a mirror of the *poet,* with her ability to craft a beautiful *puella* just like him. While 2.7 is a relatively short and to-the-point defense against his *puella*'s accusation, 2.8 bursts open the deceit that the *amator* has woven in this scenario. If the reader is able to recognize the poet's similarity to the stylist, his attraction to her becomes obvious as it provides an almost masturbatory or autosexual experience where the poet-lover can control the *puella* doubly as he controls both her poetic image and, by having this affair, controls the one responsible for controlling her physical image.

The façade of the defense which the poet undertook in 2.7 is immediately discarded as he shifts his addressee from the *puella* to Cypassis herself in 2.8. Many scholars have examined the trichotomy created by this abrupt shift in the diptych, calling into question by whom Ovid's

words are really meant to be read, the *puella*, Cypassis, or the reader themselves.[236] The relationship between the poet and these three participants creates the opportunity for Ovid to destabilize the verisimilitude of his account. As the poem begins, the *amator* makes his apostrophic address to Cypassis, telling us to whom he now is speaking:

> *Ponendis in mille modos perfecta capillis,*
> *comere sed solas digna, Cypassi, deas,*
> *et mihi iucundo non rustica cognita furto,*
> *apta quidem dominae, sed magis apta mihi,*
> *quis fuit inter nos sociati corporis index?*
> *sensit concubitus unde Corinna tuos?*[237]

> "Accomplished at placing hair in a thousand styles, / but worthy to arrange, Cypassis, only goddesses, / known from deception pleasing to me not to be unsophisticated, / certainly suitable for my mistress, but more suitable for me, / who was the witness of the joined body between us? / Whence did Corinna perceive your unions?"

In the poem's first couplet, Cypassis is once again introduced by an epithet related to her skill and profession. This time, the epithet is stretched to fill the entire space of that couplet. The apposition of the hairdresser at the end of the second line with her worthy clientele, *deas*, elevates the conceit's poetic form to the realm of epic. Perhaps, by placing the goddesses in the pentameter line, the poet is reminding us of the worthy subjects for his own elegiac poetry, the Venuses, which have come up before and will come up again in this very poem.

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[236] See Keith "*Seruitium*" 234-236; Henderson 41-44.
[237] Ovid, *Amores* 2.8.1-6.

The second couplet begins by crashing us down back to the real, as the personal pronoun, *mihi*, reminds us we are reading the private elegy of an erotic poet. His deceptive pleasure (*mihi iucundo … furto*) is Cypassis, whose low social status was the driving force behind his defense in the previous poem. Whereas she was *dominae—for* her mistress—in the previous poem, she is transferred to belonging to the *amator*, as Pandey aptly points out:

> The grammatical transference of Cypassis from *dominae* to *mihi* reenacts the narrator's usurpation of her body. Their covert 'alliance' (*sociati corporis,* 5) renders the mistress herself the victim of both masculine and feminine deceit while playing on the gender-neutral Roman fear of slave insurrection.[238]

If we count Corinna among the readers of *Amores*, the revelation of the *amator*'s manipulation and deceit in this poem presents Cypassis to her as an accomplice as opposed to another victim of the *amator*'s deception. The poetic success of this maneuver relies on the disconnect between Cypassis' actual social status and her presentation here in these two poems as an almost mythical figure, infused as she is with these Homeric-style epithets by Ovid. The expectations which the *amator* has set up for the audience thus far in the diptych would have us believe Cypassis is unworthy of him, and poses no threat to Corinna, since she herself is Cypassis' master. This is upended not only by the anxiety implicit in Cypassis' role as a slave and the revelation of the *amator*'s guilt that 2.8 presents, but also by the extended justification he makes for desiring Cypassis, specifically.

The payoff for this generically allusive introduction comes in the form of more mythical *exempla,* wherein the poet-lover compares his own position to that of the Homeric heroes, Achilles and Agamemnon. This conceit is lifted from a Horatian antecedent, as McKeown notes, and condensed by Ovid to these two couplets, beginning in line 11:[239]

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[238] Pandey, "Caput" 463.
[239] McKeown, vol. 3, 161-162.

*Thessalus ancillae **facie** Briseidos arsit,*
serva Mycenaeo Phoebas amata duci;
nec sum ego Tantalide maior nec maior Achille;
quod decuit reges, cur mihi turpe putem?[240]

"The Thessalian burned for the **figure** of the slave Briseis, / the priestess of Phoebus was loved by the Mycenaean ruler; / neither am I greater than the Tantalide nor am I greater than Achilles; / what was fitting for kings, why should I deem repulsive to me?"

In his description of Achilles' desire, the *amator* emphasises the importance of Briseis' *facies*, with its central position in line 11. This prefigures the importance that the *facies* takes on for Ovid in constructing his *puella* and her divine persona, as we have discussed regarding *Amores* 2.17. The chiastic line not only positions the *facies* at its centre, but uses its Homeric epithets, word order, and structure to highlight the epic undertones of the line, condensing the kind of ring structure often found in Homer to a single line that summarizes (however imprecisely) the impetus of the entire epic poem—Achilles' wrath.[241] In contrast, the pentameter, line 12, places its two actors, the *serva* and the *duci* as far apart from each other as physically possible, being at the start and end of the line, respectively. This perhaps is meant to echo the length of the Trojan war's conflict and how far removed this amatory relationship between the Greek king and Trojan slave is from the action of the epic poem.

The couplet in lines 11 and 12 also makes use of grammatical voice to show the correlation that each example holds with the poetic scenario to which it is being applied. Achilles *actively* burns for Briseis, as the poet is demonstrating his active pursual of Cypassis in 2.8,

[240] Ovid, *Amores* 2.8.11-14, emphasis added.
[241] See Homer, *Iliad* 1.1-6.

while Cassandra is *passively* loved by Agamemnon, which can be read as the role of the *amator*'s relationship with the *puella* in this scenario, as she remains passively his object of love and desire, despite his active sexual pursuit of Cypassis in this poem. Alternatively, we can read these roles more ambiguously, and Corinna might be better suited in the role of Agamemnon, as the *domina* and master of Cypassis and the *servus amoris* that is the poet-lover. Thus, either the *amator* or Cypassis must continue to be passively loved by her throughout this affair. Both options present the *amator* as maintaining his active role in the relationship, and thus, retaining the control. If Corinna is a made to be a passive lover to either character, she instead looks more like another rival lover, such as a complacent husband at the end of book 2 in poem 19. So, if Corinna is a reader like us, perhaps she is being forced to make a choice about whom she continues to give her love to, the *amator* or Cypassis.

While Achilles gets rightly named at the end of line 13, Agamemnon is referred to only by his role and his family. Unlike in the *Iliad*, where he and his brother, Menelaus, are chiefly referred to by the patronymic Atreides (*Ἀτρείδης*), Ovid opts to use the ancestral founder of their family line, Tantalus, for a patronym to refer to Agamemnon.[242] The mythical implications brought about simply by reference to Agamemnon and the 'cursed house of Atreus' are innumerable, yet Ovid chooses to draw attention specifically to Tantalus here, just as he has done in other poems like 2.2. The figure is, as I have previously shown, a fitting *exemplum* of excessive desire which can be transposed to the elegiac setting. If the poet-lover has different readers in mind, such as his own *puella* and Cypassis, who is the poem's direct addressee, then

[242] "*Ἀτρείδης*." in PhiloLogic 4 Greek Concordance. University of Chicago. https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/Greek/query?report=concordance&method=proxy&q=lemma:Ἀτρείδης&start=0&end=0&author=Homer

the implication of the warning changes. Nevertheless, Tantalus' example fits for both readers as a warning from the *amator* that they ought not to be too greedy in their lust for him.

The poet-lover perhaps twists the Homeric narrative to suit his needs, yet, in doing so, he also demonstrates the poetic suitability of these *exempla*. Achilles' desire for Briseis was surely not as crucial a factor for the *Iliad*'s narrative as was the slight to his honour which Agamemnon's seizure of the girl caused him.[243] Nevertheless, it is an apt comparison to make, the slave Briseis and the slave Cypassis, and because of the *amator*'s social status, "he is free, under the law, to violate the bodies of both non-citizen women without fear of legal consequence."[244] He also pairs this image with Agamemnon's own concubine, Cassandra, who was instrumental in the king's death at the hands of his own wife.[245] Alison Keith perfectly sums up the double-edge nature of the *exempla*:

> *Amores* 2.8 offers one of the clearest expressions of *seruitium amoris* and its literary paradoxes, for it simultaneously reduces the elegiac speaker to the amatory slave of a domestic slave in the mythological comparisons (2.8.11–12) and reasserts his social dominance, as a freeborn Roman male, over an enslaved Greek female, in the speaker's enjoyment of a social position equivalent to the kings of Greek mythology (2.8.13–14).[246]

The two relationships and their catastrophic endings make these *exempla* ominous warnings from the poet. Although he appears to be a slave of love, if the *puella* is an Agamemnon, and the poet-lover an Achilles, then the message is that the *puella,* cast instead in the role of rival, ought not to take away his Briseis (Cypassis) and risk incurring his wrath. Thus, the paradox of the poet-

[243] See Homer, *Iliad* 1.175-356.
[244] Wise 75.
[245] See, for example, Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1035-1330.
[246] Keith, "*Seruitium*" 235.

lover's subservience dissolves into a demonstration of his "social dominance," as Keith so aptly says.[247]

The *amator* continues to demonstrate his dominance and ingenuity in navigating this affair as the poem nears its end. At line 17 the poet himself places 2.7 and 2.8 together in a temporal continuum as he refers to the very prayer he makes at the end of the former poem:

> *at quanto, si forte refers, praesentior ipse*
> *per Veneris feci numina magna fidem!*
> *(tu, dea, tu iubeas animi periuria puri*
> *Carpathium tepidos per mare ferre Notos.)*
> *pro quibus officiis pretium mihi dulce repende*
> *concubitus hodie, fusca Cypassi, tuos.*[248]

> "Moreover, if you by chance remember, how much prudence I had / to make an oath on the great godhead of Venus! / (you, goddess, may you give command that the falsehoods of my pure soul / are carried across the Carpathian Sea by warm southerly winds.) / for which services repay the sweet price to me: / your intercourse today, dark Cypassis."

Just as we can see alluded to by the introduction of the word *facies* earlier in the poem, Ovid again finds himself occupied with the form of the head and the inscriptions of power thereupon when he declares his oath being on the *numina* of Venus. He had the presence of mind to create an oath that would persuade Corinna, paralleling the creation of his own poetry. Moreover, by making this oath, he activates both Corinna and Cypassis in the role of reader. If the oath to Venus appeases Corinna, perhaps it is because she finds in it praise for herself by association to

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[247] See also Zimmerman Damer 108, on the role reversal Ovid creates: "Ovid plays on the elegiac conceit of paired lovers in a shared relationship in which the *amator* depends on the other for his continued identification as elegiac speaker. In this case, that erotic pair is the *amator* and the enslaved *ornatrix* interrupted by Corinna, now in the role of rival."

[248] Ovid, *Amores* 2.8.17-22.

this goddess as we have elsewhere seen. Thus, this 'prudent' act by the poet-lover allows him to simultaneously praise the beauty of the boisterous Corinna and the handiwork of Cypassis.[249]

In lines 21-22, the poet-lover treats his defense in the previous poem as if part of a transaction with Cypassis, as made obvious by his request for a repayment (*pretium*) from her for his 'services rendered' (*pro quibus officiis*), which is clearly spelt out as sexual intercourse. Cypassis and the access the *amator* demands from her body here are thus demonstrated to be separate from and devoid of the kind of *cupiditas* that typifies his relationship with his *puella*. Nonetheless, this demand perhaps expects Cypassis once again as one of his readers. In calling her *fusca,* "dark," we can recall the indiscriminate lover of *Amores* 2.4, who would have a Venus "*in fusco colore,*" and perhaps by making her believe she too is a Venus, this comment is there to help manipulate Cypassis so that he gets what he wants.[250]

The poem ends with the *amator* doing something he has done previously to an enslaved character, like Bagoas, the doorkeeper from 2.2-3. He ends his address to Cypassis by threatening her should she decide to give up their affair to Corinna:

> *quod si stulta negas, index ante acta fatebor*
> *et veniam culpae proditor ipse meae,*
> *quoque loco tecum fuerim quotiensque, Cypassi,*
> *narrabo dominae quotque quibusque modis.*[251]

> "but if you stupidly deny, I as witness will confess the deeds done before / and I will come as the accuser of my own guilt, / and where I was with you and how many times, Cypassis, / I will narrate to our mistress, and how much and in what ways."

[249] Recall *Amores* 2.17, "*facie violenta Corinna est*".
[250] *Amores* 2.4.40.
[251] Ovid, *Amores* 2.8.25-28.

The matter-of-fact tone created by his emphasis on his role in this threat—the witness and the perpetrator (*index, proditor*)—both words coloured by their legal significance, shows that he does not fear the kind of retribution Cypassis should. This is also further intensified by the reflexive pronoun, *ipse*, and the possessive adjective, *meae,* at the end of line 26. As Pandey explains, "the final sexual extortion overturns the figurative alliance between *amator* and *ornatrix* as well as the implicit power reversal between hairdresser and mistress," with their alliance shattered, the turn to threatening and coercing Cypassis by the poet-lover reminds her and the reader once again who is in control.[252]

The *amator* also clarifies that his indirect control of Cypassis will result in her direct punishment from her mistress. Since he is a poet, he is able to relate (*narrabo*) the story to his *puella* and create a version of events that will help him achieve his goals, as he has done throughout *Amores*. We readers know by now that these potentials exist, as the poet has, throughout book 2, made a point of crafting these conceits in ways that allow him to exert his complete control over them, whether to enable his erotic success, poetic success, or both. Cypassis, thanks to her social status, has no real agency, neither physically nor poetically and, "despite Cypassis' momentary control over her hair, the mistress wields physical power over her body that the narrator is able to manipulate as an instrument of rape."[253] It is a reminder that the privileged position of the poet, a male Roman citizen and the creator of the poetic *puella*, is in control of the narrative of his erotic adventures, and Cypassis is the one who would suffer at the hands of her mistress, as Cassandra would to Agamemnon, for example.

[252] Pandey "*Caput*," 464.
[253] Pandey "*Caput*," 464.

Taken together, the two poems comprising this Cypassis episode in *Amores* demonstrate to Ovid's audience the mastery the narrator has of manipulation. This begins in his casting of the role, where Cypassis' job as a hairdresser allows the *amator* to compare his own work 'beautifying' the *puella* in his poetry with hers, literally beautifying the head of the *puella*. He exerts control and dominance over this subordinate woman, leaving her without any agency just as he does to the *puella*. The consequences for a Cypassis in Rome, however, are perhaps more dire than they would have been for the high-class courtesan that Corinna typifies. This, because despite her status as a skilled worker, is one of the ways in which the poet-lover leverages his position over Cypassis to illustrate the legitimacy of his poetic project.

Conclusion

On the surface of Ovid's elegies, we see the author inhabit the character of a young playboy who disregards the consequences of his erotic endeavours, even going so far as to employ concepts of Roman law and bend their interpretation to his own benefit. Reading back throughout book 2 of *Amores* sees this kind of power-play enabled by the author's use of *exempla* to legitimize his arguments and actions. However, there is more to *Amores* 2 than just depictions of carnal desire and erotic pursuit. The *puella*'s metapoetical status forces us to reconsider the author's otherwise programmatic elegiac *materia* as intentionally subversive. For Ovid's *amator,* the *puella* must be written (*scribenda*) in order that his author might achieve literary fame and provoke *Livor* to inflict itself upon both his audience and rivals alike. Corinna, a blank space, is both metrically convenient and poetically allusive enough to provide Ovid's poet-lover with the needed inscriptional space to form his ultimate work of erotic elegy.

The figures of mythology already provide the poetic material which give the poet-lover the means to construct his elegiac mistress, but in Ovid's hands, the performance of elegy is transformed beyond that of his predecessors. The myths used in every *exemplum* meld with the poet's arguments to lull the reader into submitting themselves to the poet's control. As John T. Davis states, "Ovid takes the elegists' conventional attitude towards mythology and turns it upside-down."[254] His careful use of *exempla* both heightens his elegiac project to levels of grander genres like epic and by their cogent application to his erotic scenarios, provides the perfect level of separation from those very antecedents. He also utilizes the very laws that are meant to uphold Augustan morality and Roman society to his benefit, as they end up caught in a "slippage between discursive command and its appropriated effect," allowing the *amator* to

[254] Davis 413.

construct his own persona and legitimize the disobedience and degeneracy his poetry exhibits to the reader.[255]

This investigation began with a discussion of *Amores* 2.17 as a poem which provides a template for many of the themes and expressions which Ovid takes up throughout this second book of his elegiac work. Through the analysis of *Amores* 2.17, I have attempted to demonstrate the importance that mythical *exempla* have in achieving the larger goal of the author's poetic project. *Exempla* are useful tools which, as Boyd describes, "illustrate what is both concrete and true; and [their] illustrative function is reinforced by [their] appeal to analogy," and Ovid utilizes them to create and embellish the character of Corinna, the *puella*, with characteristics defined outside of her own existence. [256] These characteristics are, of course, defined in large part by analogy to mythical heroines and goddesses.

The poet-lover/*amator*—the narrator of *Amores*—seeks to demonstrate his mastery of erotic elegy by the creation of the ultimate *puella* in the metapoetical Corinna. His *exempla* elevate this otherwise undefined woman into a divine figure and, by giving to her *forma* a kind of figurative *numen,* all the while dictating the outcomes of his poetic scenarios, the author demonstrates and exercises poetic control that extends all the way to the reader. *Amores* 2.17 is one of the clearest examples of this, in which the pseudo-deification of the *puella* through her identification to figures like Venus aligns with the subconscious elevation of the poet-lover's own status (in this *exemplum* by his affinity to a figure like Vulcan).

I have certainly left gaps in this discussion, as I have analysed only a selection of poems within book 2; others, no less worthy of study, had to be left out because of relevance. I wanted to emphasize first, Ovid's use of mythological *exempla* to make his points and maintain poetic

[255] Butler 122.
[256] Boyd, *Literary Loves* 95.

control, and second, the way in which this, along with other poetic and rhetorical techniques, allowed him to shape and create the figure of a *puella* who remains in the realm of potential so that the reader is forced to yield to the text itself any kind of concrete reading on the sexualization of Ovid's subjects (and objects). For these reasons I chose to interrogate the poems above. I would like to, however, briefly address some of these gaps and leave them as Ovid has done to his *puella,* as blank slates of potential onto which we might further write and inscribe meaning.

The first such poem that bears discussion is 2.18, coming right after 2.17 and taking as its main subject the poet's choice of what to write, and its indissoluble connection between myth and genre. The poem is framed as a letter to Ovid's friend, Macer, and through that connection he is able to bring up epic as part of the conversation, as that is the kind of poetry he says that Macer has been reading.[257] This serves as an opportunity for the author to discuss his genre of erotic elegy, comparing it to the lovers found within epic, and reflecting on his entire oeuvre. This poem is situated as the penultimate of book 2, and, as Ellen Oliensis states, is characterized by "awkward realism," in that it lists off the author's literary endeavours—some of which we can corroborate with Ovid's surviving corpus.[258]

This poem is sandwiched between the final poem of the book, 2.19, which gives another spin on a stock elegiac scenario where the poet-lover addresses a rival lover, and the poetics-driven 2.17, where I began my discussion. Oliensis goes on to argue that the position of 2.18 after the rhetorically motivated 2.17 "restates the problem [from the previous poem] and finds a happier and more persuasive solution."[259] Instead of dealing with the power dynamics between

[257] See *Amores* 2.18.1-6.
[258] Oliensis 41.
[259] Oliensis 44.

the poet-lover and his *puella* metaphorically, this poem directly involves the author's struggle with his own creative project. The resulting transition to 2.19, where Ovid decries his lacklustre rival lover, presents firmly the tension that has been created between the narrator's erotic success and the author's poetic success. According to the *amator* in this poem, his *puella*'s husband has not done a good enough job guarding her from him, and this easy access is extinguishing his desire.[260]

Even more interesting in 2.19 is the way in which the poet-lover recounts several of the scenarios we have read about throughout book 2, when he lists her means for manipulating his desire for her. This ranges from her making the excuse of a headache in lines 11-12 (perhaps the *amator* making an incredibly downplayed allusion to the abortion episode of poems 2.13 and 2.14), to her accusing him of various crimes in lines 13-14 (largely reminiscent of events in 2.4-5 and 2.7-8), then finally describing how she won him back with sweet words and sweeter kisses in lines 15-18 (perhaps again recalling events in 2.5 and justifying his *servitium* as in 2.17). This little catalogue by the poet ends up reading like a checklist of elegiac tropes which he is making sure the reader knows he has rightly performed. It also creates a kind of generic closure, capping off erotic elegy qua elegy and leaving the reader unsure of how *Amores* 3 might continue within the genre.

This self-reference found in 2.19 occurs more throughout book 2, and can be seen prominently in *Amores* 2.12. In a poem which heavily utilizes the conceit of *militia amoris*, the poet-lover finally proclaims himself fully victorious over the obstacles that were previously set up against him (namely, her door, doorkeeper, and husband). These obstacles allude prominently to the Bagoas episode of 2.2-3. In line 15 he declares "*ipse eques, ipse pedes, signifer ipse fui* (I

[260] Ovid, *Amores* 2.19.1-8.

myself was the cavalry, the foot-soldier, *I* was the standard-bearer)" echoing the *signa ferenda* he advises Bagoas to bear for his mistress in 2.2.[261] The decision to actively take up the role of standard-bearer sees the *amator* severing himself from the reflection of the passive eunuch that 2.2-3 represent.

2.12 also sees the *amator* elaborating on his victory through *exempla* once again, and his choice of mythical reference looks back on the poems prior and also foreshadows the serious turn the story takes in *Amores* 2.13-14, wherein the *amator* writes about Corinna's abortion. In lines 9-12 he compares his victory to that of the Trojan war, seemingly putting himself in the role of Achilles as he did previously in *Amores* 2.8.[262] As I briefly discussed, the episode of Corinna's 'ailment' with abortion sees the poet-lover panicking at the potential loss of his *puella*, and therefore the loss of his poetic production.[263] In framing this dilemma through the potentiating power of Thetis to bring forth Achilles and subsequently create the legendary epic myth of Troy, the *amator* selfishly recognizes and thus explains why her death from an abortion would be worse for him than to bear out his child (*i.e.,* his poetry).

The *amator*'s selfish anxiety about this potential premature end to his poetic project reveals the fragility with which his craft is built, since its success relies on persons outside of himself. Nevertheless, by going through and analyzing Ovid's use of *exempla* throughout *Amores* 2, recalling that Corinna "herself may be said to embody the stylistic principles of elegiac verse," due to the ways in which she is described throughout the elegiac collection, we

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[261] *Amores* 2.12.15, 2.2.8.
[262] *Amores* 2.12.13-14: "*Pergama cum caderent bello superata bilustri, / ex tot in Atridis pars quota laudis erat? / at mea seposita est et ab omni milite dissors / Gloria, nec titulum muneris alter habet.* (When Pergamum fell, conquered by war after ten years, / out of so many how much a part of the glory was due to Atrides? / but my glory is reserved and separate from every soldier / and no other has the claim to my prize.)"
[263] See pages 21-25 and 113-114 above.

have to consider how this apparent erotic disaster helps him achieve literary success.[264] The *puella*'s body can only be inscribed upon by the poet, in the Butlerian sense of feminine existence as unactualizable, and as James explicates

> the intersecting narrative lines of love, sex, beauty, and potential destruction all converge on the body of the *puella*, and in so doing they refute the elegiac lover-poet's usual protestations that what he loves about her is her singularity, her mind, her learning, her talent, and so forth.[265]

This reminds us of the 'loves' which fill *Amores* 2.4, any kind of woman, so long as the *amator* gets access, he will be able to turn them from a faceless girl into a *facies numinis*. The *amator*'s special skill lies in this act of inscription, for he elevates the *puella*—any *puella*—to a goddess and refuses to leave himself behind in doing so. It is in her body that comparison finds its home for the erotic elegist. *Amores* 2.4 thus sees Ovid demonstrating this fact through the poem's brazen defense oratory on the charge of his indiscriminate promiscuity.

Finally, what to make of the book's opening poem? Ovid begins again as he does in *Amores* 1.1, in a programmatic manner which outlines the goal of his project. 2.1 reiterates the decision to write elegy that occurs also in 1.1, but, rather than the poet's task seeming to be an infliction that comes from Amor as in 1.1.23-26, it is now as if an order from a general which he must undertake in 2.1.2-3, culminating in the declaration in the poem's final couplet: "*ad mea formosos vultus adhibete, puellae, / carmina, purpureus quae mihi dictat Amor!* (bring your beautiful faces to my songs, girls, / songs which brilliant Amor dictate to me!)."[266] In both cases, the surrounding discussion is foregrounded by mythology. The *amator* makes use of his epic counterparts and refers once again to Homer and the *Iliad* in 2.1. He questions what use there

[264] Keith, "*Corpus Eroticum*" 32.
[265] James, *Learned Girls* 183.
[266] *Amores* 1.1.23-26, 2.1.

would be for an Achilles or Atreides, among others, to this type of poetry. Something which we know from reading on he still finds a purpose for in his elegiac project.[267]

In the end I hope to have shown in this thesis that mythical *exempla* served a greater purpose to the *Amores* 2 than has previously been thought. In the *amator*'s pursuit of *fama perennis*, explicated in the end of book 1, the diachronic concern of the author's immortality is made apparent. Myth provides Ovid with one poetic instrument through which he might attain and retain such relevance, yet this forces him to transform his erotic elegy to incorporate—more greatly than his contemporaries—the figures of myth which are conventionally suited to other genres like epic. Ovid's solution in the *Amores* is to craft the *puella* (and specifically, her physical image) in such a way as to make her a mythical figure. As I have argued, the *puella* of the poems in *Amores* 2 is imbued with a *numen* by the poet-lover which enables the poetic success of this otherwise impossible mission for erotic elegy and inscribes it upon on her otherwise blank face.

[267] See *Amores* 2.1.29-32.

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