

Tempus erit, quo tu, quae nunc excludis amantes,
 Frigida deserta nocte iacebis anus,
 Nec tua frangetur nocturna ianua rixa,
 Sparsa nec inuenies limina mane rosa.
 Quam cito (me miserum!) laxantur corpora rugis,
 Et perit in nitido qui fuit ore color.
 Quasque fuisse tibi canas a virgine iuras,
 Spargentur subito per caput omne comae.
 Anguibus exuitur tenui cum pelle vetustas,
 Nec faciunt cervos cornua iacta senes:
 Nostra sine auxilio fugiunt bona; carpite florem,
 Qui, nisi carptus erit, turpiter ipse cadet.
 Adde, quod et partus faciunt breviora iuventae
 Tempora: continua messe senescit ager.

Ovid Ars 3.69-82

There will be a time when you who now shut lovers out
 Will lie, a cold old woman, the lonely night,
 Nor will your door be rattled by nocturnal strife,
 Nor will you find your threshold sprinkled with roses in the morning.
 How quickly, poor me, bodies are loosened with wrinkles
 And the colour that was on your radiant face perishes.
 The grey hairs which you would swear you have had since maidenhood
 Are suddenly sprinkled all over your head!
 Old age is sloughed off by snakes with their thin skin,
 Nor do stags, casting off their antlers, become old.
 Our charms flee unaided, pluck the flower,
 Which, unless it is plucked, will itself shamefully fall.
 Add to this that giving birth makes youthful times more brief:
 A field grows old with continual sowing.

The passage is part of the prologue to book three of the *Ars Amatoria*. This commentary is aimed at the intermediate student who seeks to understand the poem in context and investigate the poet's style. I have investigated each couplet in turn rather than provide lemmata, as this suits Ovid's style of writing. Gibson (2002) provides a detailed commentary for the advanced scholar.

The poem is in the didactic tradition, Ovid takes on the character of the *praeceptor amoris*: 'me Venus artificem tenero praefecit Amori,' *Ars* 1. 7. and sets out to teach the uninitiated how to love: 'Siquis in hoc artem populo non novit amandi / Hoc legat et lecto carmine doctus amet.' *Ars* 1.1

Ovid's most recent Latin predecessors in the didactic tradition are Lucretius and Virgil. Those poems are in the typical metre for this genre, Hexameter. Ovid, however, has opted

to use the metre of his earlier love poems, elegiac. His unorthodox choice helps to develop the persona as praeceptor not just of love but of love poetry itself.

Principio, quod amare velis, reperire labora,
 Qui nova nunc primum miles in arma venis.
 Proximus huic labor est placitam exorare puellam:
 Tertius, ut longo tempore duret amor.
 Hic modus, haec nostro signabitur area curru:
 Haec erit admissa meta terenda rota

Ars 1. 35-40

The suggestion seems that Ovid's three objectives will be the theme of each book, but we soon find that is not the case. Books 1 and 2 deal with the topics of where to find love, get love and keep love, now Ovid addresses the women.

In book III Ovid claims that his intention is to redress the balance and ensure that the puellae are not left unarmed and vulnerable in the battle of love. There is a tension between the intended reader and the supposed reader of the poem, as although Ovid is addressing the puellae, he is playing a part for a male audience. The advice can be considered tongue in cheek as the reader/listener would be aware of the contrast between the apparent and actual audience.¹

The Georgics extolled the virtues of the rustic life through the genre of didactic², and cultus in the sense of working the land for produce. Although the poem is more nuanced than a simple homage to farming, it does praise the hard work that ensures that the crops grow in their allotted way and the pleasures of carrying out each task at its appointed time in the season. Ovid prefers to praise Rome as a place that allows her inhabitants to develop another type of cultus - the art that is set out by the traditions of elegiac love, as previously seen in the poems of Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius. Poetry itself is a type of cultus, and so is the lifestyle of the lover and the social mores that must be understood to succeed as a lover. The Ars is almost a mock guidebook on how to become this elegiac lover. The topics and set pieces often reflect themes that have appeared in the Amores, which, in their turn, are often adaptations of previous poets' works.

69-72

The poet creates an image of the puella's future when they will no longer be desirable. Ovid is using the trope of the exclusus amator almost verbatim, 'excludis amantes.'³

¹ Lyne (1980) provides a thorough introduction to Ovid's use of irony in the Amores and his place within the tradition of Latin love poetry

² In this respect, the Georgics may be seen as having a more traditional theme, as the oldest surviving source of classical didactic, Hesiod's *Works and Days*, dealt with these themes. Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*, in common with Ovid, has a more novel theme.

³ This theme is fully explored by Copley. (1981).

Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius had already adapted the *paraclausithyron* of Greek lyric, with their own take on the locked out lover. We see Ovid's version in *Amores* 1. 6 where he serenades the *ianitor* in his quest to gain access to the beloved inside the house. His character in that poem leaves his garland and departs frustrated. The rose petals here link this scene to Ovid's earlier work.

In *Ars* 3, Ovid provides further variety on this theme, as the *puella* can only anticipate a future where she will not be courted. Ovid uses the future tense and addresses the *puella* directly in the second person. He creates a contrast between the present situation and the future. This is heightened by the lovers' description using the present participle.

The prologue to this book had promised that Ovid would arm the *puellae*: '*...arma supersunt, / quae tibi dem et turmae Penthesilea tuae.*' *Ars*. 3. 1-2

In this passage there is a sense that Ovid is rather undermining the *puellae* by painting a bleak future so that they may cast aside any inhibitions and do what Ovid would want, manipulating the *puellae* for his/his male pupils' benefit rather than truly preparing them to meet the male pupils equally.

The poem has already set out that Ovid's instruction is not for Roman matrons:

Este procul, vittae tenues, insigne pudoris,
Quaeque tegis medios, instita longa, pedes.
Nos venerem tutam concessaque furta canemus,
Inque meo nullum carmine crimen erit.

Ars. 1 31-34

So this would limit the audience to prostitutes and perhaps free women if Ovid is not to fall foul of laws banning adultery.⁴

The description of the listener as an anus at the end of the line, and its corresponding adjective, *frigida*, at the beginning are prominent, drawing emphasis to the bleak future. *Frigida* is also one complete metrical foot and the *diaeresis* also highlights this word and upsets the expected rhythm.

Nocturna rixa - these words are also used in Propertius's take on this theme, where the door itself laments: *nocturnis potorum saucia rixis* Book 1. poem 16 line 5. This helps place this section of the poem within that tradition.

We also see similar imagery and innuendo in Horace *Odes* 1 25. Horace describes Lydia as an anus whose closed windows are no longer rattled, and her sleep no longer disturbed by young men. Horace's aim in that poem is solely to point out the addressee's inescapable future, whereas Ovid is using old age as a reminder to the *puella* to make the most of the present.

⁴ The love poet's mistress is usually suggested as a married woman. Catullus 51 famously pays homage to Sappho to explore his feelings upon seeing his beloved with another man, presumably her husband. The *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* made adultery illegal.

73-74

Ovid changes from a second person address to a more general description of the woes of ageing. He makes corpora the subject and uses the passive verb laxantur to show that the process is passive and unavoidable regardless of the subject's will. The plural also creates a sense of inevitability as the process is without exception.

The interjection - me miserum - almost shows a sense of solidarity, although it is worth noting that Ovid was unlikely to be a iuvenis himself at the time the poem was published so again this is somewhat ironic. This phrase appears several times in Ovid (e.g. *Amores* 1.14 and 3.11) It supports the interjection quam cito.

Gibson (2002) p116-14 points out that the description of the face as 'nitido' is a neat touch from the author of the medicamina faciei femineae.

75-76

Ovid returns to addressing the puella directly and also makes the addressee's character more a part of the action by anticipating her trying to console herself for the grey hairs becoming more prevalent. The use of the present subjunctive helps set the scene so that an immediate picture of the action is created for the reader/listener.

Gibson. (2002). P117 draws attention here to the use of 'virgine' is this ironic as the puella must be a slave or freedwoman or is it hinting at the audience really being married matrons? The alliteration of the s and c sounds in the pentameter is repetitive and enforces the idea of the grey hairs popping up all over the place.

The passive verb again makes the puella the object at the mercy of the ageing process rather than active, willing participant. The fact that the puella has indeed had grey hairs since her youth shows that she is not the stereotypical flawless beauty, by also subtly making her aware of her imperfections this may put Ovid/his male pupils in a position of superiority.

77-78

Vetustas is the subject of the sentence and is emphasised at the beginning of the line. Ovid takes his examples of those possessing longer lasting youth from the natural world.

The snake comparison is similar to Lucretius's 'vestemque relinquere, ut anguis.' *De Rerum Natura* 3.614. We also see Lucretius compare men with stags 'at ventosa magis cervorum frigida mens est' *De Rerum Natura* 3.299. Lucretius's theme in book III is to argue that death should not be feared, whereas Ovid is parodying this to create a sense of awareness of mortality and decline.

It is also ironic that the animals he uses for his exempla traditionally are associated with virgin goddesses. It seems that the more educated, i.e. Roman men, are the true audience and would be aware of the irony that perhaps having more in common with maidenhood

might be the best way to maintain youthful looks rather than following Ovid's advice after all. This idea is reinforced by lines 81-82 which come as a blunt reminder that if this advice is successful the puella's youthful looks will spoil more quickly.

79-80

The poet switches to the first person plural to address the entire audience and include himself for added emphasis in the ephemeral quality of youth. Ovid states that our good qualities flee without help but then undermines this in the following couplet, as his advice will not provide auxilium but will lead to breviora tempora iuventae.

The line ends with the imperative, 'carpite florem' This is reminiscent of Horace Odes 1.11 carpe diem, except with the ovidian twist of added innuendo, reinforced by the imagery of the unplucked flower wilting provided in line 80. Ovid describes it as shameful to let the flower fall unplucked, although he is exhorting the puellae to participate in activities that are more traditionally shameful.

81-82

We see further use of innuendo in this couplet, where the woman is compared to a worn out field. As Ovid has previously adapted Lucretian style to his more urbane and comedic subject matter, he does the same here with the Georgic imagery. The Roman sense of appreciation for the rustic life harks back to the legendary golden age and is a theme in Roman history, for example, Cincinnatus was seen as a paragon of Roman virtue. Here Ovid is adopting the rustic metaphor for a coarse purpose. He continues with the use of the imperative, in keeping with the didactic style. The enjambment of tempora also upsets the rhythm and balance of the couplet, combined with the heavy use of dactyls the lines have a more speech-like quality. The sudden switch from the poetic and rhythmic carpite florem to this couplet which is more pedestrian in subject and tone is typical of Ovid's style, as is using a grander, epic style for theme that doesn't suit this context, such as the catalogue of sexual positions in lines 771-788

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