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Love without Elegy: The *Remedia amoris* and the Logic of a Genre

The poet is a pretender;
he pretends so well,
he ends up pretending
the pain he really feels is pain.

—Fernando Pessoa

AT A PROMINENT point in the middle of the *Remedia amoris*, Ovid momentarily interrupts his series of therapeutic lessons to make room for a statement of poetics. Such statements are customary in the register of literary polemics. Some evil-minded people had criticized Ovid for his daring teachings in the *Ars amatoria*, and the polemic tradition (of Callimachean origin) requires that the poet, in justifying the literary techniques he has chosen, also attack his critics' envy (v. 389, *livor*) and vaunt his own claims as author, indeed, hope for ever greater successes. Ovid's declaration of principles is inspired by the same general rule that Horace had thought important in his *Ars poetica* (v. 86): *descriptas servare vices operumque colores* (to adhere to the established varieties and styles of works)—respect for the distinctions among the various literary genres and the appropriate use of expressive and stylistic devices. This is a simplified form of the theory of the *prepon*: every genre has its own "competence"; each should do its own job. For the wrath of Achilles, there is

the solemn hexameter of Homer; for the loves of Cydippe, the elegiac distich of Callimachus. Never has stern Andromache played the part of the courtesan Thais, the character who symbolizes Ovid's poetry (the *Amores*, the *Ars*, and now the *Remedia*). Ovid is right: the *Musa proterva* who sings in distichs the free loves of women like Thais is a perfect image for his elegiac intention.

If a text's intention is considered as an active tension between virtuality and its actualization, the literary genre can be well defined as the sign of this intention.¹ A means of signification incorporated into the text to give form and meaning to the discourse and instructions to its reader, the genre is in fact the horizon marking the boundaries of its meaning and delimiting its real possibilities within the system of literary codification.² To become discourse, meaning must necessarily take on a form in which it can manifest itself: it gives itself a recognizable image and thereby establishes a space of understanding with its addressee. Without this form to mark out the coordinates of communicability, meaning would remain wordless—thinkable, perhaps, but devoid of expression. So it is true that the genre behaves like an "invitation to take on a form"; discourse agrees to accept that form and is structured by it. The infinity of an indistinct, uncontrolled discursivity has been sacrificed; in exchange, the text receives a language and a reader.³

But once the world has been cut down in accordance with a partial intention, the genre entices the reader into thinking that this portion is the whole; it will be up to the reader to relocate it within his own cultural experience, giving rise each time to dialectics and questions. By virtue of this process, literary writing, making itself a real linguistic praxis, codifies the reciprocal correspondence of signifiers and signifieds and deposits it in a rhetoric. This rhetoric offers an ideology and a language, that is, a way to reformulate the world by extracting from it only certain contents (which stand for all) and constructing an expression appropriate for such a one-sidedness—a lan-

guage that is selected from all the linguistic possibilities but at the same time one that feels no deprivation, a language delimited but full. As a language, this rhetoric is partial, in both senses of the word, because it is neither "complete" nor "impartial": it is only one part of the world, but it is indifferent to its own relativity; it claims to be complete and total; it believes in its own absoluteness.⁴ It is a limited perspective, but it reduces everything to itself, turns everything into an image of itself.⁵ Modeling the world on its own language, it prohibits the belief that there might be anything else outside of the image of that world it knows how to give.

Every literary genre is obliged to manifest itself by this reduction of the world to a partial field of vision, but the genre of elegy seems to be the most complete realization of such a systematic codification, if only because elegy performs this operation explicitly and consciously, and makes it the very pivot of its poetics. The elegiac poet establishes his identity as diversity, asserts that he is enclosed within part of the world (let us call it love for now) which seems to him to be self-sufficient and to contain in microcosm all that is necessary for a full life. But the "model of the world" that is thereby proposed, if confronted with reality, will turn out to be partial and will clearly reveal its ideological lines of force. This, I would suggest, is still insufficiently understood in much contemporary classical scholarship. Because the formative value of the process I am describing is not always properly recognized, elegy is not always kept distinct from the various modes and forms of love poetry traditional in antiquity (lyric, epigram, idyll, etc.). There is an elegiac ideology that constructs and organizes the text. At the center of this ideological system is located the conception of the lover-poet as a slave—of his beloved, his passion, his incurable weakness, and ultimately his own poetry.⁶ If we agree, therefore, to call an ideology the reduction of the whole to a part, in the case of elegy out of the "totality" of life only the life of love remains feasible. The idea of

servitium amoris marks the borders of this part—borders that cannot be crossed.⁷ Yet even though he is reduced to this restricted space, the poet of love does not feel poor. The rest of the world, from which he has excluded himself, can be recuperated as long as it is properly translated and relocated within the new system of meaning he has chosen to construct. Otherwise, he would be irrevocably sacrificing not only things, persons, values, and cultural models, but also (the lover is a poet) literary themes and subjects, expressive possibilities, ambitions for a different kind of poetry.

Precisely because the ideology defined by *servitium amoris* is systematically pervasive, it can set in motion a genuine process of reformulating the world: it constructs for itself an organic language that works by transcodification, inasmuch as it transvalues from one system to another. Consider, for example, the fundamental exclusion, that of war and its values, set in opposition to the most basic values of elegy. On the level of poetic choices, elegiac Callimacheanism systematically affirms the “light Muse” by refusing the arms and heroes of high epic poetry: “Love is the god of peace.” But the refusal of war pertains only to the system of meaning within which war is inscribed—not only the degradations that the recent past had associated with the idea of war (ambition, careerism, greed), but also the less positive features of the heroic model (cruelty, violence, harshness). The elegy will have room after all for heroism, abnegation, *gloria*, *patientia*—but only for a heroism of love, an almost infinite capacity for enduring sufferings and outrages for love’s sake, an offering up of oneself in the name of love which can go all the way to death.⁸ Indeed, the faithful lover will even be granted *gloria*. As is well known, the genre of elegy delights in “speaking” by drawing upon the metaphorical complex of *militia amoris*: the metaphor (it has been called an antiphrastic metaphor: “I am a soldier of Love, not of Mars”)⁹ is a way to convert (to transcotify) those values for which the elegiac poet would otherwise feel nostalgia.

Let us consider the most obvious constants, the most external features, what the poet would call *materia* . . . *numeris levioribus apta* (matter . . . suited to lighter numbers, *Am.* 1.1.19). Elegy knows only an “irregular” love relation, whose ambience is urban amatory life, that cultured and sophisticated life in which intellectuals, free women, and men of power can figure. Not only is this type of love destined to suffer conflicts and disappointments (the happiness the *domina* affords the poet is always precarious because it has no share in the *vir*’s solid rights), it also entails exclusions and renunciations: the renunciation of a respectable and socially approved life or an advantageous marriage and the acceptance of the *nequitia* of a dissipated existence (*Amor* . . . / . . . *me docuit castas odisse puellas / improbus et nullo vivere consilio* [Cruel love . . . taught me to loathe chaste girls and to live without a plan], *Prop.* 1.1.5–6). Yet the “libertine” choice is not enough by itself to make elegy. From this point of view, the *adulescens* of comedy, who refuses maidens of honor and dowry for the sake of a *meretrix* and who ruins himself in the delights of “Greek” life, already has many features in common with the elegiac lover.¹⁰ Yet the horizon of comedy never coincides with that of a single dramatic character but consists of the play of confrontation between diverse roles and ideologies. It is only in elegy that the poet and the lover coincide: elegy’s horizon becomes drastically restricted and the text ends up seeing only what its protagonist sees. I would suggest that, fundamentally, elegy is born from just this loss of full vision: the greater the closure of the world represented, the greater the effort language must make to reduce to its model all that would remain excluded from it, recuperating and converting it in any way it can.

Scholars have often noted the apparent paradox whereby the elegiac poets, who derived a manifesto of life and poetry from the “Catullan revolution,” end up, like Catullus himself but more so, espousing the fundamental values of the *mos maiorum*.¹¹ Thus, elegy’s need for recuperation induces it to welcome within itself the values of

fides, *pietas*, and *sanctitas*. These poets ask for a matron's simplicity from a free woman and are tempted to prefer mythic or rural purity to the amatory life of high society. But this operation does not make elegy run the danger of losing its statutory identity, since values—ideas and words—can return only if they are susceptible to transformation. The *fides* of elegy is named by a language of love, the chastity requested of Cynthia is not the one a wife and mother austere displays, and so forth. The cultural code that interprets these values relates their meaning to its own system of signification; and each element, by being subordinated to a project, finds new functions, the ones assigned to it by the ideological syntax of the discourse of elegy. In other words, those values elegy recuperates from the universe of the culture (within which it has cut out its own autonomy) cease to be signifieds and become signifiers of different signifieds. But the creation of this new kind of signifieds is a process rather than a result: the act of reinterpretation retains a full awareness of the substantial difference between the text of origin and that of arrival (and synthesizing new meanings is precisely an effect of rhetorical codification). This creates a tension within elegy which is never resolved and those contradictions that make it an unstable and ephemeral literary experience.

The usefulness of my attempt so far to identify this process of restriction of the discursive universe, of recuperations and transplantations and transvaluations as the foundation of the genre of elegy, will be corroborated if it succeeds in explaining an attitude that many people—from the elegiac poets themselves to theoreticians of poetics, to readers ancient and modern—have periodically associated with elegy: the very name of elegy spoke of a poetry of lament.¹² Elegiac love is, above all, suffering and frustration. The moments of satisfaction are mere episodes immediately contradicted by disappointments and bitterness; the very movement of elegy is a wavering between hope and despair, exaltation and despondency.

Even more, the elegiac poet's characteristic gesture is his (vain) attempt to free himself from this painful slavery, and, quite often, the monological form corresponds to an impulse of refusal (a gesture so common that it has earned a name in the philological lexicon: *renuntiatio amoris*).¹³ But the code of elegy also demands that the lover-poet be a patient reluctant to be cured: he loves his suffering not only as the substance but above all as the very condition of his poetry-writing, for to live without the suffering of love would mean that the poet remained wordless, no longer a poet.¹⁴

To be sure, the suffering of love is not a feature exclusive to the genre of elegy. To stay with those poetic forms that scholars have placed in genetic relation with elegy itself, the lover in epigram and the *adulescens* in comedy certainly suffered, but their pains were intimately connected to causes; they were contingently motivated and circumscribed at the various moments of the love relation. The suffering of the elegiac poet, on the other hand, is the occasion for an even greater suffering, one great enough to invest his very life with meaning. What defines elegiac suffering is its lack of proportion. We could say that the epigram's very "measure" and its form, a container open to diverse occasions, served as a limit upon the uncontrolled proliferation of amorous lament, just as in comedy the counterpoint of the different characters (most often the common sense of the slave) sufficed to restore the young man's anguish to plausible proportions.

The elegiac poet's willingness to turn his own unhappiness into an absolute form of life is related to the statutory motives for elegy itself, its self-constitution as a language that is restricted and at the same time ambitious. Anyone who has enclosed himself within a world that is only and wholly love and cannot see beyond this horizon will regard the suffering of love as total and incomprehensible. If he then decides to import into that world elements recuperated from outside (needs otherwise lost, "words" he does not know how to do without), he will

thereby create a condition of permanent discomfort, a tension between irreconcilable rhetorics. The vicissitudes of an amatory relation (a night refused, the mistress's whim or inconstancy) will not only make him suffer for what they are, but will also set off a crisis that threatens the precarious equilibrium of the structure of elegy and disintegrates its artful construction by restoring the transplanted elements to their original context and meaning.

Elegy is this crisis—a crisis that has become discourse. *Fides* and *pudicitia* are not virtues designed for sophisticated free women; they are values that belong to that large part of the world from which elegy has cut itself out, and they constantly threaten to return there. "But then," the poet asks, doubting the operation he has attempted to perform, "what I am seeking was possible only in the purity of myth or in the ideal simplicity of the countryside or in the age when the world was not yet adult." The elegiac poet's constitutional suffering, in short, is the response of a consciousness that discovers the cost of not yielding to a codified fusion of signifiers and signifieds or to the difficulties encountered by anyone unwilling to give up the whole preexisting semantic universe when he generates new discourses in the culture's language.

Love as torment, suffering as the indispensable condition of poetry—these are the correlated thematics of elegiac "closure." But they are also the most unstable elements in the system of which they are part, inasmuch as they bring tensions into it which will inevitably ensnare its very presuppositions. The poet has wagered that nothing exists but love, though love makes him suffer; but this suffering of his is just as large as the space granted to love, as large, in fact, as the whole world. To express this, the lover-poet can only represent his condition as intolerable. And he represents himself even as having decided to escape from it and seek different solutions. This is how, almost paradoxically, the liberation from love, the search for remedies against love, becomes a recurrent theme of elegiac poetry. But the paradox is only apparent. So long

as the system of elegy "holds," the attempt at liberation serves only as a negative proof: it fails, and thereby reaffirms the poet's choice of the world of elegy.

The experience of love as one of suffering is not a discovery of Roman elegy. Rather, it is the generative nucleus of a large set of connotations that the tradition of the literature of love organizes around the metaphor of *eros-nosos*: love-sickness, love-wound, love-madness, love-poison. Roman elegy, as is well known, almost always works on second-hand material, knowingly appropriating it from the treasurehouse of the great Greek erotic tradition; it speaks a common language, but with its own accents. In the case of *eros-nosos*, the figure specific to elegy consists of a particular declension of the paradigm. Love is not only an illness, but also and above all an incurable illness: *Omnis humanos sanat medicina dolores; / solus Amor morbi non amat artificem* (Medicine heals all human pains; / only Love does not love the craftsman of sickness, Prop. 2.1.57f.). Medicine would take away the illness but also the very possibility of writing poetry in the form of elegy, since the form of the elegiac experience consists of the constrictiveness of this indissoluble nexus: sickness plus the refusal to be cured. It is not by accident that Propertius places his successful cure (and his liberation from the painful shackles of *servitium*) at the conclusion of his largest collection of poems, where it signifies at once the real end of his love and his farewell to the genre (3.24.17f.).

That an elegiac poet should entitle one of his works *Remedia amoris* is therefore a flagrant contradiction, a genuine oxymoron for anyone practiced in the language of elegy. Here the cure of love is no longer a codified voluntary gesture, that is, a (programmatically disappointed) move within the strategy of elegy, nor is it even the definitive gesture of a withdrawal from the code (as in Propertius's farewell). Both of these cases, the cure that fails and the cure that succeeds, said in essence the same thing: that it is impossible both to be cured and to continue to write elegy. In the *Remedia*, on the other hand,

the cure is the "monographic" task of a poem in distichs which promises reliable medicines, effective even in the most stubborn and resistant cases.

To explain this revolution, we must go back a few steps. The *Remedia* are in fact the destination of Ovid's work in "interpreting" and revising the code of elegy, which began with the *Amores* (though they are presented as a collection of "subjective elegies" in the manner of Propertius and Tibullus) and was destined to be deposited in a novel literary construction—a didactic poem in distichs—more adequate to the dislocations undergone by the rhetoric of elegy. This process of interpretation and revision is often dissimulated or at least discontinuous on the surface and has not always been grasped with sufficient awareness by Ovid scholars. The *Amores* in particular continue to cause embarrassment, even if few still give credence to the (let us call it Romantic) prejudice that they were virtually a failed version of Propertius's poetry, lacking the original's emotional sincerity and reduced to a school exercise.¹⁵

The philologists' perplexity (sometimes disgust) is merely their response to the composite and impure nature of Ovid's collection of elegies. Ovid presents himself as the fourth poet in the lineage of elegists (*Tristia* 4.10.51 ff.), a true declaration of allegiance confirmed not only by an extremely dense network of intertextual relations but also by his retaining all the fundamental premises of his predecessors' codification. After all, here is poetry that speaks of love in the first person and ostentatiously identifies life and literature;¹⁶ here is a woman who is the center of the love experience (as there had been Lycoris and then Cynthia and then Nemesis and Delia) so that the *Amores* (the title recalled Cornelius Gallus) could be presented as "poems for Corinna"; here then are all the thematic situations of elegy—rivals, quarrels, betrayals, reconciliations, *paraklausithyra*, departures and returns, nights of love, messages and messengers, dinner parties, oaths, illnesses and vows for recovery—every act

or kindness of the servitude of love. Here is everything, or almost everything, that could be expected of elegy; if there is anything to alarm the reader, it is Ovid's insistent ostentatiousness, almost as if this code were being displayed rather than used and wanted above all to speak of itself. As we might have expected, here are the thoroughly elegiac sufferings of the poet in love, his bitterness, his lament for his own inevitable *nequitia* (*Am.* 2.1.1–3): *Hoc quoque composui Paelignis natus aquis, / ille ego nequitiae Naso poeta meae, / hoc quoque iussit Amor* (This too I wrote, I, born among the watery Paeligni, / Ovid, the well-known singer of my own profligacy, / This too was ordered by Love). But above all, here is what scholars unanimously define nowadays as a "playful tone":¹⁷ it can be pervasive and become a composition's structural principle, the application of a mischievous register; or it can take the form of an unexpected punch line that reverses the "traditional" pathos of a group of verses or an entire elegy.¹⁸ But a schematic contrast between playful Ovid and emotional Propertius (and Tibullus) would be a relapse into an old prejudice long since superseded by studies that have demonstrated, in particular, the existence of a *ludibundus* Propertius. And yet there is a certain difference, one that is not only quantitative, in the playfulness of the various poets of Roman elegy.¹⁹ In Propertius, playful attitudes seem to me above all to be produced by an awareness of the paradox whereby a poetry entirely committed to *Erlebnis* and gladly displaying the passionate immediacy of its language discovers that in fact it is heir to an ancient and established tradition. But the poet ends up almost profiting from this difficulty: the conventionality of words and situations—and the smile thereby produced—becomes an effective element of contrast, a foil against which pathos can better show itself, almost the wager of a poet refusing to surrender to the ineffectiveness of words that have been spoken too often.

In Ovid this consciousness goes further: it is no longer merely an "archaeological" consciousness internal to ele-

gy's dialectic (*pathos/lusus*) and functional for its effects, but has become a total awareness of the elegiac code itself, a renunciation of the effective expression of pathos. In the *Amores*, pathos is one element of the code like any other, an element whose conventionality is accepted; it is merely a sign of the language of elegy. Ovid's poetry tries to look at elegy instead of looking with the eyes of elegy. That is, it looks from a vantage point that is external and hence higher than the one normally granted the practitioner of a literary genre (and the elegiac poet in particular, as we said above). In their superficial form, the *Amores* still respect the fundamental norm of elegiac poetry: the only voice that speaks in the text is that of the poet-lover. But whereas earlier he constructed the world of love in an entirely exclusive perspective, in which the point of view and the "values" of other subjects (the *amica*, the rival, the *lena*) were denied expression, now the poet-lover seems capable of some degree of farsightedness. He continues to see love with the eyes of the poet-lover (and for this reason elegy survives), but in fact he is now "impersonating" the role of the elegiac lover, a persona that presupposes and admits as legitimate other personas different from itself, other discursive functions that are different ways of interpreting the amatory world.²⁰ (A scholar like Leo might have smiled with pleasure at seeing Latin elegy end up returning, to a certain extent, to what he had considered its "theatrical" origins.²¹)

The lover of comedy possessed the same nearsightedness that confines the elegist within his world of passion (with the added excesses of caricature), but the discourse of drama contained within itself the antidote: it could represent other voices that upheld a fuller vision of the love relation (one more prudent because less "ideologically" restricted). In this sense comedy, as the space of relativity, was the contrary of elegy, the space of absolutization. Horace, pitiless critic of the furors that will belong to elegy, showed that he had understood this when, in a brilliant transposition of a scene from Terence, he

awarded his sympathy to the wisdom of the slave capable of dominating Eros's alternating rhythms and governing his young master's existential torments.²² Ovid, in the *Amores*, tries to be both wise slave and young master in love at the same time.

The copresence in the elegiac text of such diverse elements creates a tension that menaces the genre's constitution (and elegy will end up being subverted by it). The only device that the text can use to control the incompatibilities it has let in is that of irony. But Ovid's irony does not function as a trope (antiphrastic displacement, an enantiosemic figure that reverses the meaning of individual elegiac statements according to the structure of "denial by affirmation").²³ Instead it is the sign of a critical consciousness that observes the text's formation from outside and reveals its implicit practices. Ovid keeps the traditional elegiac poet-lover alive by separating onto two different textual levels the two functions that earlier had coincided: as lover, he shares the same status as the other elegiac personas; as poet, he possesses the code and takes advantage of this privilege to govern the play of the personas from above.

Ovid, before being the author of elegiac texts, is the addressee of the passionate poetry of Catullus, Gallus, Propertius, and Tibullus. He has listened to their words, learned to understand how the system that programs them is constructed, discovered what contradictions invest it, deconstructed it by finding its necessary relations; now he knows how to reconstruct it in his own way. Ovid's text accepts the genre's conventions; it places itself in a relation of intertextuality, indeed of continuation, with the lineage of elegy—a vista of citations, a mirage of structures that are *déjà vu* and *déjà vécu*. But at the very moment he acquires a superior understanding of the literary characteristics of elegy (the way in which it "works out" reality), Ovid stops, as though he were undecided; he refuses both a simple identification with the traditional model of elegy and any clear repudiation of it. Irony sig-

nals this hesitation between discourses that are incompatible or at least in disaccord.²⁴

Projecting the discourse of elegy in the key of irony entails considerable superficial textual fidelity to the models, but also the most serious infidelities. In a famous elegy from the *Amores* (built very closely upon one of Propertius's), for example, Ovid succeeds so fully in reversing the normal attitude of the poet-lover that he manages to show sympathy and support for a character, the *lena*, who is traditionally the bearer of antielegiac values. The *lena* is his opponent insofar as he is in love and can be appreciated only by someone who, like himself, now shares her status as trustee of erotic *sapientia*: she knows the amatory code and can set herself up as a teacher of it.²⁵ To reach this position on high, the *Standpunkt* of the teacher of love, Ovid completely revises the codified usages of traditional elegy, but with programmatic ambiguity he prefers to disguise himself in forms that are already known and accepted. The repertory of elegy already foresaw that occasionally the lover-poet could teach others, those inexperienced in the love relation, the same norms of behavior and amatory life which governed his own existence; but he could set himself up as a teacher only of his own experience, the restricted experience of someone who knows only his own world and wants others to adapt to it too. Entirely devoid of the teacher's disinterested objectivity, he remains subjectively bound to his own restricted motives as a pursuer of love.²⁶

If Ovid's interpretation of elegy consists precisely of overcoming this restricted subjectivity, it is understandable that the figure of the *praeceptor amoris* (hitherto an occasional phenomenon) will inevitably acquire space within the discourse of elegy and that the lover-poet will even reveal himself capable of teaching disadvantageous truths. The code must be upheld even when it foresees defeat and suffering. To preserve his role in a love that can be fulfilled only by means of suffering or against obstacles and difficulties, the poet is even willing to step out

of that role for a moment to take on someone else's. What he demands, if he is to love in the mode of elegy—let us recall: *nil ego, quod nullo tempore laedat, amo* (I love nothing that never wounds, *Am.* 2.19.8)—is that his counterparts respect the rules of the game; and these are the very same rules that he teaches the girl (a true grammar of actions that are the duty of the elegiac *puella*, who is supposed to dispense shrewdly not only erotic satisfactions but also calculated and seductive erotic disappointments) and the inattentive *vir* who does not take care to guard her. In fact, he is required to make the lovers' furtive meetings more difficult and thereby offer possibilities and occasions for the art of tricks.²⁷

In cases like this, the attitude of the *praeceptor amoris* is charged with decidedly ironic functions far beyond the faint, only slightly playful smile that often accompanies the teachings of love in "subjective" elegy. Here irony is the effect of the impropriety of one role that crosses over into antagonistic ones. Once reflection upon the code has become explicitly metaliterary, it must reveal itself in stolen, exceptional spaces, since it obviously has no space of its own within the code itself. (And it is these illegitimate spaces, these incursions, which feed the current image of a "sacrilegious" Ovid.) Irony is often portrayed as the ingredient that Ovid added in large doses so as to produce all those innovations that make the *Amores* different from earlier collections of elegies. On the contrary, I believe that Ovid's irony is the epiphenomenal outcome of deeper movements, the echo within elegiac language produced by his escape from the powerful closure of the elegiac code; it is the telltale sign of a tension between the "nearsightedness" of someone confined within the enclosed space of subjective elegy and the "farsightedness" of someone who eludes that closure by recognizing its conventionality. Once a metaliterary consciousness has been achieved, it considers the borders that demarcate the language of elegy to be mere rhetorical constraints, codifications of an ideology that claims the status of re-

ality. The addressee of Ovid's irony learns to read, beyond the appearance of elegy, the form of the discourse that has constructed it. Raised to the same level of "competence" as the poet, the addressee of elegy simultaneously acquires the physiognomy of the addressee of didactic poetry, since the text, enriched and jeopardized by its metaliterary function, reveals to him not only its discourse of pathos but also the norms and prescriptions of that discourse, that is, it displays to him its implicit rhetorical code. And irony, at least insofar as it permits the poet to distance himself, lets us recognize here elegy's dual, literally "hypocritical," nature. Elegy reveals itself as an artistic illusion; it lives its own artificial reality and claims instead to be rooted in real life, that is to say, in that form of existence that is made up of lived passions. Thus, irony installs itself within the text as a reflective dialectic and turns its metaliterary possibilities into an effective means for artistic self-representation.²⁸

It has often been said that the *Ars amatoria* is a natural outgrowth of the didactic seeds already contained in the *Amores*; but the significant innovations entailed by the passage from the metaliterary to the didactic should not be overlooked. It is true that, as we have just seen, the metaliterary attitudes of many elegies in the *Amores* have didactic implications; and it is true that there is also a metaliterary component in the teaching of the *Ars*. But the didactic element of the *Ars* corresponds to a type of discourse clearly different from the one we ascribed to the *Amores*: elegiac subjectivity and didactic objectivity, almost like the elements of an emulsion, naturally tend to separate from each other, and they end up depositing a pure didactic form. This simplification means, above, all the dissipation of the ambiguity that had made the poet-lover and the poet-teacher coincide. Now the poet is exclusively a *magister amoris*, and the lover becomes exclusively the recipient of his precepts. Now that the ambiguous complexity of Ovidian elegy has been decanted, the text of the *Ars* is left free of impurities and contradictions. We

suggested earlier that the elegy of the *Amores* responded to its internal contradictions with irony, ready to cast doubt upon the ideology of elegy at the very moment it affirmed it, and that this irony did not provoke the disintegration of the elegiac discourse but, on the contrary, paradoxically enabled the poet to safeguard subjective elegy by simply exhibiting its marked "literariness," by merely collocating it (with its reader's connivance) within the domain of consciously sophisticated languages.

Hence, it is no accident that irony—at least as a sign of a live metaliterary consciousness and as a way of inviting the reader to view with skepticism the code's emotional conventions—ends up becoming noticeably attenuated in the very poem of instruction about love which many would call "the poem of ironic demystification." Now that the poet has renounced the rhetoric of elegy as being ever harder to dissemble and has chosen instead to invest in the form of explicit instruction the farsightedness he has acquired, his irony no longer acts on the inside of the text as the usurpation of improper linguistic functions. What had been usurpation becomes now, in elegiac didactic, the legitimate right (in other respects the duty) of a teacher who has stipulated with the addressee a pact that is no longer ambiguous. His will not be a teaching internal to the rhetoric of elegy, but the complete, panoramic enunciation of a system of amatory behavior in which each of the protagonists must be able to find his or her own relative motives. The actors and actions are those of elegy, but they no longer correspond to its rhetoric made up of "limited" and partial perspectives. This new feature is easily compatible with the possibilities of the didactic poem, a structure traditionally open to receive every material capable of being taught.

But precisely because didactic poetry is like a container indifferent to its intended contents, a gesture according to which the discourse is to be shaped, the recognizability of the didactic mode is entrusted to a series of strong signals that express the text's intention to become

a vehicle for teachings. Hence we find a whole formulary tending to make the relation between teacher and student obvious: assertions of competence, apostrophes and admonitions, and especially the prominence of expressions reducible to language's conative and phatic functions (one must maintain contact with an addressee of whom one asks obedience). Hence, too, the material is carefully organized by being distributed according to an explicit plan adapted to an exhaustive treatment: the discourse is articulated into books and smaller sections, each one designed to illustrate an individual topic (and explicit moves of recapitulation or resumption are not lacking: "We have already seen this and now we shall see that"). In contrast to the imperative and monotonous didactic discourse there are digressions, more or less long, more or less motivated; exempla and excursus become modes of arguing via images or of lingering over descriptions. And it is always upon the principle of "usefulness" that the discourse founds its legitimacy: the student will be able to confirm in practice the value of the precepts imparted to him. To the claim of "usefulness" and "truthfulness" corresponds the tendency of the language of didactic poetry to adopt the form of maxims or to take refuge in proverbs; it thereby becomes not only authoritative but also more memorable. All this, and not only this, is found in full measure in the *Ars amatoria* and in the *Remedia*,²⁹ and the reason is that the poem wants to "play the role" of didactic poetry.

Yet just that element of the didactic mode which for classical literary codification and its system of expectations was not only distinctive but constitutionally primary is lacking; instead of the hexameter, it is the distich that gives form to the teachings of love. This cannot be discounted as a weak signal; it is how Ovid says that his didactic poem has its own unusual characteristics, that it is the fruit of a carefully thought-out experiment. An *ars*, a *techne*, is defined as a systematic collection of rules derived from the observation of empirical reality and im-

plicit technical procedures. To take the example of the *ars oratoria*, Cicero is to be believed when he reflects (*De orat.* 2.32) that the starting point is always in real practice. In the forum some orators speak *temere ac nulla ratione* (blindly and with no method), others *propter consuetudinem aliquem callidius* (more skillfully by a certain habit); the reasons why some speak better and others worse must be sought out, understood (*animadvertere*), and registered (*notare*). Ergo, concludes Cicero, *id qui toto in genere fecit, is si non plane artem, at quasi artem quandam invenerit* (Hence whoever did this over the whole subject discovered, if not quite an art, still almost a kind of art). Analogously, behind the *ars georgica* stands the peasant's daily practice, behind the *ars nautica* the sailor's experience, and so forth. It would be legitimate to expect the *Ars amatoria* to have been extracted from the practical behavior of real lovers, but instead Ovid's teachings are presented as an art applied to materials whose "reality" is that of literary phenomena—not to real lovers, therefore, and their daily strategies, but to those represented in the elegies of Propertius, Tibullus, Ovid himself. In other words, the didactic project of the *Ars amatoria* is directed not so much to things themselves but to a rhetoric that has already organized reality and taken its place. The choice of the distich, precisely because it is so obvious a deviation, signals provocatively the particular nature of Ovid's didactic poem.

But the graft (elegy is now performed in didactic modes) hides an insidious deceit under the operation's apparent naturalness. For the resulting harmony ends up effacing even the memory of all the incompatibilities it had known how to overcome. The statement that the *Ars amatoria* proposes a grammar of elegy creates the expectation that the application of its rules would lead to the correct performance of elegiac love. Yet there is no doubt that a diligent student of Ovid's poem would be very different from the tormented and unhappy lover of elegy. To make itself teachable, elegy has tacitly had to sacrifice

its own nature. The ideology of elegy, in fact, associated love and *furor* in a strict rhetorical bond and, by entrusting erotic passion to the logic of impetuous impulses, denied it the positivity of a stable satisfaction. The rhetoric of *sapienter amare* which governs the whole *Ars amatoria* is thus the exact opposite of real elegy. The didactic principle of the *utile* contradicts in a fundamental point the rhetoric of elegy, which demands that the poet-lover be willing to accept sufferings even to the point of self-injury.³⁰ The *puella* is a *dulce malum*, the lover-poet cannot bear to free himself from her; *aut in amore dolere volo aut audire dolentem, / sive meas lacrimas sive videre tuas*, says Propertius to his beloved in 3.8.23 ff., . . . *in te pax mihi nulla placet* (I want in love either to suffer or to hear you suffering, / to see either my tears or yours . . . in you no peace pleases me). Now we learn instead how to reduce all the moments of a love relation to the strategy of the greatest possible advantage. Even suffering is not excluded, so long as it is reduced to functioning as a means for attaining the *utile*. To gain the favor of the *puella* it will be useful for her suitor to *appear* to be suffering: *est tibi agendus amans imitandaque vulnera verbis* (You must play the lover, and imitate wounds with words, *Ars am.* 1.611).

We touch here upon a crucial aspect of the transformation elegy has undergone: from the ideology of sincerity to that of fiction. Elegy had made authenticity the very form of its discourse; Ovid's didactic poem distrusts sincerity and uncontrollable passions and instead recommends the art of pretending. The lover must play his part like an actor: *est tibi agendus amans*.³¹ Here, it should be noted, "playing the part of a lover" is not a generic formula; it means, literally, putting on the costume of the elegiac lover, that is, of a character whose part is already written in the pages of the elegiac poets. Perhaps we can understand at this point why Ovid should have chosen to maintain in his erotic didactic poem that vital relation with elegy which, we said, is signaled by the use of the distich. The fact is that while Ovid was composing (with

the *Ars*) a real pragmatics of courtship—one necessarily inspired by the didactic principle of effectiveness—he could not forget the importance the pragmatic function had had in the elegiac poet's consciousness. Propertius, Tibullus, Ovid himself, as is well known, had occasionally declared that the primary reason for their writing poetry was to win for the poet the woman's love: *Ad dominam faciles aditus per carmina quaero* (I seek easy approaches to my mistress by means of songs, Tib. 2.4.19). Elegy had to be "useful"; otherwise there was no point in continuing to write it: *Ite procul, Musae, si non prodestis amanti* (Away with you, Muses, if you do not help a lover, Tib. 2.4.15).³²

This is why the *Ars amatoria*'s teachings contain a dense network of references for which almost every single precept has a precedent in the larger text of elegy; the *Ars* is like an ordered summary of situations already seen and words already spoken.³³ In the *Ars*, the enlargement of perspective which permits a complete control of the code and its limits corresponds to the poet-teacher's newly "external" position. His teachings turn out to be less exposed to irony's effects on the whole because they are no longer connected to improper functions, ones usurped occasionally (his discursiveness no longer looks beyond the closure of the code); but they still keep irony's ambiguous implications, which often characterize metaliterary discourse in literature. I mean that an intertextuality like the one that links the *Ars* to the experience of elegy ends up bringing into play two fundamentally contradictory rhetorics, one next to the other. In fact, the didactic discourse's open and farsighted rhetoric affirms itself without letting us forget elegy's myopic rhetoric—indeed, it programmatically reevokes it.

A kind of retrospective irony manifests itself in this display of elegy's code.³⁴ Instead of cracks and fissures in a text which let one catch a glimpse of its inner workings here and there, this discourse "rereads" its own presuppositions with detachment and superior competence and is continuously transparent. This distancing, which is per-

mitted and even guaranteed by didactic *fides* (the teacher's instructions are believable because they are objective and disinterested), engenders so full a competence in the code that its fundamental rules can be rewritten, though with substantial inaccuracy; but it also renders visible, next to the totality of elegy, the intrinsic partiality of the universe constructed by the latter. Elegy's absolute space now accepts the status of relativity. The teacher of love knows well not only the matters of love but also that there are other matters besides love: other worlds, other values, other models, other discourses capable of organizing those values, other literary genres, to which the same kind of legitimacy must be accorded. The presupposition of the *Ars amatoria*'s teachings is that elegy must renounce its ambition to reformulate the world; it usefully abandons its daring attempt to transcodify into its own language values that, strictly speaking, are heterogeneous. The amatory world will thereby gain in awareness and in homogeneity; it will now be able to call itself perfect. Freed from the risk of contradictions, it will show itself to be stable (even if we shall often miss the density and richness of what had been the discourse of elegy). In short, extracting the poetry of love from the ideological form of elegy and restoring it to a vaster axiological universe implies the recognition that the erotic does not necessarily coincide with the discourse of elegy.

If Ovid's teaching constitutes the fulfillment of this simple program (it will turn out that a love without frustrations and sufferings is possible after all), we can add that Ovid does not rest content with an "affirmative" demonstration ("I shall teach you how to love") but also accepts the challenge of a negative proof ("If your love is mistaken, I shall teach you how to free yourselves from it"). For the good teacher, freeing students from the errors to which they have become accustomed is no less important a concern than imparting positive techniques; hence, the corrective exercises of the *Remedium amoris* are added

to the precepts of the *Ars*. Following too mechanically this scheme of interpretation might lead one to view the *Remedia* as a kind of palinode that "undid" (if only as sophistic play) the teachings of the *Ars*.³⁵ To a certain extent, Ovid exposed himself to this misunderstanding when, in the second part of the *Remedia*'s proem (which in reality constitutes its true didactic proem), he emphasized its pedagogic function by juxtaposing two discourses with divergent intentions: *Discite sanari per quem didicistis amare; / una manus vobis vulnus opemque feret* (Learn to be healed from him through whom you learned to love; / one hand will bring you both wound and help, 43–44).³⁶ And again: *Naso legendus erat tum cum didicistis amare; / idem nunc vobis Naso legendus erit* (You should have read Ovid when you learned to love; / you should read the same Ovid now, 71–72).

Perhaps it was precisely in order to avert the risks of such a misunderstanding that the poet had begun with a kind of preamble, a trial before the god of love: first the accusation against the teacher, then his self-defense, and finally his acquittal. The fact that it is Cupid himself who acquits his poet here is not merely an expedient of the lively staging but corresponds to the implicit fundamental motives of Ovid's project. Cupid intervenes as the specific symbol of erotic poetry in the form of elegy, a role sanctioned in the *Amores*' proem (to which the *Remedia*'s proem refers in many significant aspects of both structure and content). It is the title of the new work, incredible and alarming, which provides the occasion; *Remedia amoris* sounds like a genuine declaration of war against Cupid. In effect, the god's anxieties are far from groundless. The distinctions with which the poet argues ("My war is against mistaken love, not against love itself") ought not entirely to appease his interlocutor; or, rather, they can attain this effect only if the god Love renounces forever his role of guarantor and defender of elegiac love or of that form of love (life and poetry) which closed off its horizon in an exasperation of suffering, admon-

ished itself like a sickness, pushed itself to the point of self-destruction, delighted even in thoughts of death. Ovid seems aware that with the *Remedia* he is exhausting the ultimate possibilities of a literary form that might still to some degree be recognizable as elegy; hence, he will never have another opportunity to clarify definitively his poetics of love. Looking back, he can now measure the subversive force of the way in which he had actualized the discourse of elegy; what this definitive rendering of accounts announces in distichs is the end of elegy.

The poet does not, however, feel that he is in contradiction with himself: *nec nova praeteritum Musa retexit opus* (nor has a new Muse unraveled the old work, *Rem.* 12). Instead, he takes advantage of the presence of the god Love to testify that he has always loved, has always written about love, and has taught it, too. Yet he almost seems to say, "Never have I really written elegy (especially starting with the *Ars*); if elegy is for the most part suffering, if it is the poetry of one who *male fert indignae regna puellae* (endures the tyranny of an unworthy girl, v. 15), I have always sought a different elegy. You are a child and only games suit you; the kingdom of Love should know no harshness or torments." Love will continue to rule the space of the amatory life, with its exciting skirmishes that do not hurt too much. If *elegi* really cannot do without lament, they will have to content themselves with the "plaintive" song of a lover singing his nocturnal serenade (v. 36). And the poet does not fail to improvise an improved little grammar of elegy:

Effice nocturna frangatur ianua rixa
 et tegat ornatas multa corona fores;
 fac coeant furtim iuvenes timidaeque puellae
 verbaque dent cauto qualibet arte viro,
 et modo blanditias, rigido, modo iurgia, posti
 dicat et exclusus flebile cantet amans. (31–36)

Cause the door to be broken in the nightly brawl, and the gates to be hid 'neath the decking of many a garland: make

youths and timid girls keep secret tryst, and by whatever art deceive the cautious husband: and let the excluded lover utter now blandishments, now reproaches to the unyielding door-post, and sing in doleful strain.³⁷

The objection Ovid feels he can raise touches the very heart of elegy's poetics. Even if the identification of life and poetry which this form postulates is merely a literary convention, there is a constitutive ambiguity here which not only does not adequately protect literature against life (it does not respect the autonomy of the world of images and words) but does not even save life from the suggestions of literature. "To speak" of sufferings, madness, sickness, and death can be very dangerous when in the real world, the one outside the world of words, there really are people who are suffering to the point of sickness, going mad, and dying. The poetics of elegy, confronted with life, succumbs to its own insidious deceit:

Cur aliquis laqueo collum nodatus amator
 a trabe sublimi triste pendit onus?
 Cur aliquis rigido fodit sua pectora ferro?
 Invidiam caedis, pacis amator, habes.
 Qui, nisi desierit, misero periturus amore est,
 desinat, et nulli funeris auctor eris. (17–22)

Why has some lover cast the noose about his neck, and hung, a sad burden, from a lofty beam? Why has one pierced his breast with the unyielding sword? Lover of peace, thou bearest the reproach of that murder. He who, unless he give o'er, will die of hapless love,—let him give o'er; and thou shalt be the death of none.³⁸

In short, if the poet refuses to resign himself to letting the "tragic" enter into the space of love and the language of erotic poetry, he will necessarily feel himself committed to devising an effective liberation from elegy, its cultural models, and the perceptual codes that condition its experience. The same poet who had already taught readers how to achieve the joys of love was well qualified to take on this task; indeed, he alone could undertake to

find the right medicine, not only by reason of his proven eroticodidactic competence, but above all because his teachings had never impaired his credibility as a teacher by suggesting practices that would have exposed his pupils to the sickness's contagion. That is, the rhetoric that governs the *Remedia amoris* is the same as the one that informed the positive teachings of the *Ars*. Both presuppose the representation of the world of eros from a vantage point high enough to enable both the complicated interlacing of relations within the elegiac-amatory model to be embraced and everything outside it to be seen, so that that model can be given the autonomy that belongs to a space that is reduced and self-satisfied. What distinguishes the *Remedia* from the *Ars* resides in the specific motives of a work that proposes itself as the teaching of a therapy.³⁹ Now the text must make use of the acknowledged partiality of elegy's world so as to indicate the existence and the advantages of other worlds to which lovers can escape and where they can seek refuge and healing. Moreover, each of those worlds—forms of life and culture different from love—can be granted its own validity, a validity that can even be recommended, since the rhetoric of Ovidian elegy (as we have already said) had never pretended to totalitarianism or tried to appropriate to itself all those values of external origin that elegy could not bear to give up.

It is no accident that, after these proems and preambles, the didactic argument of the *Remedia* goes on to attack elegy in one of its fundamental ideological presuppositions: the refusal of the active life, the deliberate choice of *otium desidiosum*.⁴⁰ If *otium*, indolent laxity, nourishes the sickness of love, then the cure must begin with a commitment to the active life: *qui finem quaeris amoris, / (cedit amor rebus) res age, tutus eris* (whoever is seeking an end of love, / [love yields to business] be busy, you will be safe, *Rem.* 143 f.). The teacher takes care to translate this principle into a set of concrete examples of possible useful activities. The medicine he prescribes to the unhappy

lover proposes to him anew all that part of the world which elegy had excluded from its space, from its *nequitia*, when it had circumscribed the literary horizon within which it could enclose itself—above all, the activities of the forum and of war, whose refusal had meant the elegiac poet's renunciation of career and respectability.⁴¹ Then follows agriculture, the Roman gentleman's traditional economic activity, here, however, recommended as a model of life in which the aspects of utility are virtually subordinated to the preponderantly esthetic attractions that a country estate can offer.⁴² And naturally the passion for hunting (and, secondarily, for fishing) must be included among the ways to combat *otium*. The irreconcilable contrast between Diana and Venus is one of those fundamental oppositions registered even in the anthropological code:⁴³ *Saepe recessit / turpiter a Phoebi victa sorore Venus* (Venus has often withdrawn shamefully defeated by Apollo's sister).

Reintegrating the rhetoric of elegiac love into a varied and manifold ideological horizon like that of life in its totality is indeed the basic principle of the art of healing (it already was for the "art of loving"). What had been the elegiac lover now seems no different from a "mask," a character that gives form and voice to a mode of existence entirely functional to the attribute of being a lover. In other words, it now becomes obvious, paradoxically, that poets who had spoken about nothing but themselves and their lives would, in the final analysis, have turned out to be complete strangers to us were it not for a few almost "extratextual" hints (e.g., the *sphragis* of farewell with which Propertius concludes the *Monobiblos*).⁴⁴ Instead, the patient who wishes to be rescued from love must above all renounce being a character, that is, he must remember everything the mask hides. *Lethaeus Amor*—the Love that makes us forget and be healed—appears in a dream to the poet and prescribes to him an unexpected remedy: "Recall your daily troubles and you will forget" (551 ff.). To escape from elegy, one need only recall that

one is really quite an ordinary person: someone who can worry about the installments on a debt about to fall due (561 f.); someone with a strict father (563 f.), or a wife without a dowry (565 f.),⁴⁵ or a fine vineyard that can be damaged by bad weather (567 f.), or a ship that can be wrecked with its cargo (569 f.), or a son who is a soldier or a daughter who has to be married off (571). *Et quis non causas mille doloris habet?* (And who does not have a thousand reasons for anxiety?).

In this series of occupations and preoccupations which serve as a distraction from unhappy love, the ancient reader would have easily recognized some of the themes dearest to the polemics of diatribe: to be healed, the lover will have to concentrate on "external" interests and goods; to assign importance and value to these, he will even have to seek out the anxieties and worries caused by the uncertainty of material things and the accidents of fortune. This project of reeducation is the exact opposite of that search for *autarkeia* in which moralizing philosophical preachers had located the fundamental condition for attaining *tranquillitas animi* and hence happiness. But the *Remedia amoris* do not intend to apply their "reverse cure" to diatribe. Here, too, the real objective is elegy, since it is the elegiac form of love which must be undone and destroyed. If in fact the man sick with love can be saved only by behaving like the *stulti* and *insani* (this is how diatribe defined those wretched people who succumbed to the attractions of false values), the reason is that the ideology of elegy had already claimed that love was able to construct a self-sufficient world whose values would render any other possible good "indifferent" (compared to the force of love, what value can wealth, success, reputation, power have?). The *autarkeia* of eros had presented itself as competitive with philosophical *autarkeia*.⁴⁶ And this is why the liberation from elegy also required that the ideology of diatribe be overthrown.

But diatribe can also function as a therapeutic model for the person suffering from the pains of love, above all

because its prudent counsels are designed to aid the person suffering from false opinions and all those vain desires that afflict people like a real *nosos*. Faced with the sicknesses of the spirit, *sapientia* had gladly offered itself as a genuine medical technique; and diatribe had already identified love as one of the most serious and widespread sicknesses it had to combat.⁴⁷ This was, of course, the love that blinds and dispossesses, which makes people lose their sense of measure and of social proprieties, which—as I have suggested—leads them to madness, self-destruction, and even suicide in certain cases. This *furor* is very much like the elegiac lover's. Against it, diatribe had thought up an effective remedy: to identify exactly that part of love which was natural and necessary. Only this part was to be satisfied; the rest (the fact that the beloved was sophisticated, cultivated, elegant, and also difficult, capricious, fickle, spoiled) were only useless complications and reasons for delighted unhappiness. Love was to be reduced to pure physiology.⁴⁸

There is no doubt that when Horace satirized the follies of love, he was enjoying caricaturing in the spirit of diatribe the elegiac type of lover. For the occasion, Horace freely translated an epigram of Callimachus into Latin verses to provide the refrain dear to these insatiable fools: "Like the hunter who pursues the hare in the snow and does not catch it when it is within reach, so is the lover who says, *Meus est amor huic similis: nam / transvolat in medio posita et fugientia captat* (My love is similar to this: for / it flies over what is easily available and grasps after what flees it)" (*Serm.* 1.2.107 f.). And it is this same epigram of Callimachus that supplies Ovid (in a poem of the *Amores* whose sole purpose is to draw up the code of the perfect amatory relationship) with the motto that can emblematically represent the torment of the elegiac form of love: *quod sequitur, fugio; quod fugit, ipse sequor* (what follows, I flee; what flees, I myself follow, 2.19.36).

But the therapeutic aspects of diatribe's preachings and the new art of escaping from love also agree on

a fundamental principle: that sufferings and hardships arise from a defective perception of reality. Because the *stultus* is blind, he does not see the things of the world for what they really are, and upon this error he constructs his unhappiness. Within this type of error, diatribe had already identified the specific, voluntary blindness that afflicts the lover. If he was to be brought back to a "natural" way of love, he had to be taught to open his eyes to the truth and to look beyond appearances. For anyone wishing to teach people how to be healed from elegiac love, abandoning so well-tested a therapy would not have been prudent. How could Ovid forget that Lucretius had argued against obstructing the cure of love by self-deception, and that he had also polemically satirized the blindness of those who wish not to see spiritual and bodily defects in the persons they love, preferring to hide them behind a large repertoire of gentle nicknames?⁴⁹ So the *Remedies against Love* repeat that lesson; indeed, they increase the therapeutic dosages. Not only will euphemistic self-deceptions be banished ("Open your eyes and call the defects by their real names"), but every real virtue will have to be turned into a defect ("if she is shapely, call her fat; if dark, call her black; if slender, call her skin and bones; if she is not a rustic, say that she is immoral"). This is one of the points in which the Ovid of the *Remedia* seems most explicitly to undo the teachings of his *Ars*. In the *Ars*, the euphemisms of love ("If she is fat, call her shapely") were recommended to anyone who wanted to make himself loved; but that was a technique of courtship, and the risk of slipping into self-deception was merely a corollary the poet scrupulously warned his disciples against (*Ars am.* 2.647 ff.). Both the *Ars* and the *Remedia* treasure the lesson of diatribe for which Lucretius had been the spokesman: lovers are blind to the point of being ridiculous. From this proposition follow two opposite possibilities: if one wishes to show that one is in love, one must accept the consequence of seeming blind and ridiculous (the *Ars*); if one wishes to free oneself from

love, one must open one's eyes wide, and perhaps even see too much (the *Remedia*).

If Ovid were an "orthodox" elegiac poet, there would be reason to accuse him of connivance with diatribe, the traditional enemy of the ideology of elegy. But this surprising agreement is just one more obvious sign of his systematic tendency to overcome the closure of the elegiac code, to relativize its characteristics within a wider horizon of discourse and thus, in the final analysis, to destroy its identity. The *Remedies against Love* present themselves as a cure for those in love, but in fact they function as a remedy against a form of literature.