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## **Serious Humor: Frivolity as a Commentary in Ovid's Amores**

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Serious Humor: Frivolity as a Commentary in Ovid's *Amores*

by

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Undergraduate honors thesis under the direction of

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& Agricultural and Mechanical College  
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For Robert and Lori Ficklin

and

For Dominique, *meae luci*

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## Introduction

The Roman poet Publius Ovidius Naso (43 BCE-17 CE) is widely known today for his virtuosity of style and *perpetua festivitas*, or ‘never-ending humor.’<sup>1</sup> One of Ovid’s books of love elegies, the *Amores*, contains many humorous instances of the sort that characterize Ovid’s poetry.<sup>2</sup> The *Amores* have also contributed to his reputation of being a ‘frivolous’ poet since they are, on the surface, a collection of witty poetry about a young man’s amorous escapades.<sup>3</sup> Underneath this façade, however, Ovid makes serious statements about his own poetry and even about the genre as a whole. Ovid uses humor in the *Amores* not just to write frivolous poetry for its own sake, but to write elegy in such a way that it reveals the insincerity and futility already underlying the genre.<sup>4</sup> Much of the humor in the *Amores* reaches beyond Ovid’s work and undermines elegiac topoi, or ‘commonplaces.’ As a result, Ovid exposes these topoi as the illusions they are and reveals the frivolity not only in his own poetry, but in the elegies of his predecessors, Propertius and Tibullus. The *Amores* thus offer a new reading of Ovid’s predecessors and a new glimpse into the nature of Latin love elegy.

The specific purpose of this paper is to analyze the form and function of three related humorous devices within the *Amores*, namely Ovid’s extensive catalogs, elaborations, and diptychs. With each of these devices, Ovid exaggerates a situation toward one end and then upsets that expectation by means of a sudden reversal at the end of the poem, which Parker calls

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<sup>1</sup> Galinsky (1975) 159 applies this term, which was coined by Cicero as one approach to rhetoric (*De Or.* 2.219), to Ovid. According to Galinsky, the term is useful in that it captures Ovid’s ability to maintain “just the right equilibrium between detached amusement and sympathy.”

<sup>2</sup> Some modern scholars of humor differentiate between wit and humor, e.g. Fleet (1970). Although I believe the distinction does exist in the *Amores*, it is not pertinent to the discussion at hand. In this paper, I will at times use the terms interchangeably.

<sup>3</sup> Luck (1979) 24, among others, describes Ovid as frivolous.

<sup>4</sup> See below for my definitions of the terms “insincerity” and “futility.”

an Ovidian coda.<sup>5</sup> The deception is not at all malicious in intent, but rather a playful approach to Ovid's point. The result is an emphatic build-up and tear-down that reveals a humorous imperfection in the situation. More specifically, the humor in these devices is irony in the sense of the contemporary theory on humor, as defined by F. R. Fleet: "the attempt by inference from exaggeration to bring a person to a recognition of an unsuspected deficiency in him."<sup>6</sup> In other words, Ovid emphasizes an imperfection to indirectly revile it.

When I refer to these imperfections as moments of 'insincerity' or 'futility,' I use the terms cautiously. By 'insincerity,' I am not implying that the literature itself is an insincere expression but rather that there is reason to doubt a surface interpretation of the poem. With this term I am distinguishing between reality and illusion in the world created by the poet. By 'futility,' I am simply referring to an ill-fated persuasion attempt that ends unsuccessfully. The poem as a work of literature is not futile, but the situation within it revolves around a sense of powerlessness. Ovid portrays the fictitious *amator* as insincere and powerless as a driving force behind the humor in this discussion.

My application of the Ovidian coda to humor also requires some preface. While I broaden the original scope of Parker's term, but the central thesis of his argument persists. Parker explains the Ovidian coda as an abrupt reversal in tone at the end of a poem, which includes either a new piece of information or a rewording of previous information that undermines a major aspect of the poem. In other words, the coda results in a revelation that shatters the illusion upon which the poem was built. Parker concludes that Ovid uses this technique to demonstrate the inability of elegy to genuinely depict a situation; Ovid himself emphatically shows how insincere his words can be. Although a few of the poems in my analysis are discussed in Parker's

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<sup>5</sup> Parker (1969) first uses the term "Ovidian coda." For more information on the Ovidian coda, see below.

<sup>6</sup> Fleet (1970) 254.

article, he does not connect the Ovidian coda to humor other than to say that “its purpose is not sheer amusement, not even the amusement of dexterity.”<sup>7</sup> I agree that Ovid does not write only for a laugh, but would like to expand upon this notion. With each of the examples in this paper, I will connect Ovid’s codas to the implications of his humor in order to demonstrate how Ovid shatters more than just the occasional illusion in his own poetry.

In these devices, Ovid also includes subtle phrases that contrast with the expected conclusion and ensure that the humor of the situation does not pass unnoticed. None of these hints are strong enough to upset the illusion individually, but they lead up to the conclusion in such a way that makes the coda more recognizable. The coda is therefore more palatable for the reader but still enough of a surprise to be humorous. The hints themselves are amusing in retrospect due to the reader’s surprise at having missed them. Furthermore, they emphasize which parts of the situation Ovid is reversing. Such signposting is an important indication that Ovid is using his humor for more than a laugh. Many of the subtle contrasts draw upon the imperfection that Ovid is ironically elevating.

The deeper implications of Ovid’s humor reach beyond the *Amores*. Each time he uses one of these devices he alludes to various poems of both Propertius and Tibullus, linking the reading of his poetry to theirs. Thus the *Amores* are a commentary on the elegies of Ovid’s predecessors. Sometimes these allusions are to specific names or places, but oftentimes they are the result of Ovid’s use of elegiac topoi. In fact, many situations in the *Amores* could be considered rather unoriginal: the poet is an excluded lover on a doorstep, attending a dinner at which his rival is present, trapped in the tradition of gift-giving, etc. Each of these situations is prominent in Propertius and/or Tibullus. When Ovid builds his humor upon one or more of these topoi, he ties any implications to other related occurrences. Since the result of Ovid’s humor is

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<sup>7</sup> Parker (1969) 93.

often destructive, Ovid shatters the topoi and creates new readings of his predecessors' poems. The recurring use of this process leads to the emergence of the 'big picture' as it were; elegy is in a way defined by these topoi and, if they are taken away, the genre collapses.

Such conclusions depend on the assumption that Ovid remains detached from his poetry. If Ovid intended for the *Amores* to be read as accounts of his own experiences, the similarities between them and the elegies of Ovid's predecessors would be due to coinciding lifestyles instead of a literary reaction. The protagonist of the *Amores*, the *amator*, is not the voice of Ovid the author but rather his assumed persona.<sup>8</sup> In this paper, I will distinguish author and character and assert that most of the frivolity for which Ovid is known is actually that of his fictional character. Understanding this detachment undermines reading the *Amores* as a straightforward expression of emotion. Therefore there are two levels to the *Amores*: what the *amator* is saying or doing and why, and what Ovid is saying by characterizing the *amator* in this way. By often portraying the *amator* as insincere and his actions as futile, Ovid creates an aura of simulated frivolity. After we analyze both levels in conjunction with the implications of Ovid's humor, it becomes apparent that the mock frivolity of the *Amores* reveals the legitimate frivolity of the elegiac genre.

Before analyzing specific examples of Ovid's humor, it is beneficial to classify it more generally. Ovid teaches his audience how to read the *Amores* by setting precedents from one poem to another, and by identifying each instance we as readers can learn to anticipate some aspects of his humor.<sup>9</sup> As stated above, the devices on which this paper focuses primarily generate ironic humor from disappointed expectations. From a modern philosophical perspective, Ovid's humor in these devices is explained under the Incongruity Theory of Humor. 'The

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<sup>8</sup> Boyd (1997) 139.

<sup>9</sup> Here I refer only to the three devices discussed in this paper. There are many aspects of Ovid's humor that are not nearly as predictable.



incongruous' is "some object of perception or thought that clashes with what we would have expected in a particular set of circumstances."<sup>10</sup>

Modern theories of humor, however, may not account for differences between the Roman mindset and our own. As universal as humor may seem, it is difficult to retrospectively characterize the subtleties of a culture so distant from our own. Fortunately, the debate over sources of humor had long since begun by the time Ovid was composing.<sup>11</sup> From various treatises, we can see that theories of humor similar to the Incongruity Theory were already prominent. The concept of humor from the unexpected occurs as early as Aristotle's *Rhetoric*:

ἔστιν δὲ καὶ τὰ ἀστεῖα τὰ πλεῖστα διὰ μεταφοῶς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ προσεξαπατᾶν:  
μᾶλλον γὰρ γίγνεται δῆλον ὅ τι ἔμαθε παρὰ τὸ ἐναντίως ἔχειν, καὶ ἔοικεν λέγειν ἢ  
ψυχῇ "ὥς ἀληθῶς, ἐγὼ δὲ ἥμαρτον."

Aristotle *Rhetoric* 3.11.6

Most witty sayings exist through metaphor and from deception, for it becomes more apparent to someone that he has learned something when it exists next to its antithesis, and the soul seems to say, "How true it is, but I missed it!"

Although published in the 4th century BCE, this passage highlights two important concepts in Ovid's humor. Firstly, *προσεξαπατᾶν* demonstrates the importance of misleading the audience, which Ovid accomplishes by exaggerating a given situation before employing a coda. Secondly, Aristotle's passage addresses the potential for such a statement to be used in teaching, which seems to be what Ovid is accomplishing. Revealing unrecognized truth by emphasizing its antithesis was viewed as a witty way to convey one's thoughts.

Perhaps even more relevant to Ovid's time is Cicero's *De Oratore*, published in 55 BCE. Cicero, too, offers incongruity as a common source of humor: *Sed scitis esse notissimum ridiculi genus, cum aliud exspectamus, aliud dicitur: hic nobismet ipsis noster error risum movet* ('But you know that the most common type of humor is when we expect one thing and another is said;

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<sup>10</sup> Morreal (1987) 6.

<sup>11</sup> Morreal (1987).

in this case our own error makes us laugh,' Cic. *De Or.* 2.255). This statement is particularly significant due to Cicero's use of the superlative *notissimum* ('most common'). Humor via incongruity had apparently reached quite a level of prominence by the late Roman Republic. In another passage, though, Cicero summarizes humor in a way that uncannily parallels the specific types of humor prevalent in the *Amores*:

exspectionibus enim decipiendis et naturis aliorum inridendis ipsorum ridicule indicandis<sup>12</sup> et similitudine turpioris et dissimulatione et subabsurda dicendo et stulta reprehendendo risus moventur. Itaque imbuendus est is, qui iocose volet dicere, quasi natura quadam apta ad haec genera et moribus, ut ad cuiusque modi genus ridiculi vultus etiam accommodetur.

Cic. *De Or.* 2.289

For laughter is aroused by deceiving expectations, laughing at the nature of others, pointing our own out in ridicule, likeness to something rather base, dissembling, saying rather absurd things, and reproving foolish things. Thus he who wishes to speak humorously must be imbued, so to speak, with a certain nature that is suited to these ways, as well as with manners, so that even his countenance is adapted to each form of amusing manner.

Here, Cicero emphasizes that humor is the result of deceiving expectations by placing it first in his list. Unlike Aristotle, however, Cicero offers several other sources of humor, all of which are also significant in the *Amores*. Ovid, whether by means of his persona (*dissimulatione*), his affinity for exaggeration (*subabsurda dicendo*), or simply by his ability to feign the lifestyle of the elegiac lover (*similitudine turpioris*), exhibits each of these characteristics in his humor. The *Amores* are so saturated with these styles that while Ovid is deceiving expectations, dissembling, etc., he is simultaneously pointing out the nature of elegiac lovers and reprehending their foolishness. Ovid is imbued with Cicero's proposed 'nature' and 'manners' to such an extent that the line between author and persona is at times difficult to discern. Ovid's reputation as a frivolous poet is more a testament to what he was able to accomplish than an unwarranted misinterpretation.

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<sup>12</sup> Some editors place *ipsorum ridicule indicandis* in brackets.

While it is possible, and likely, that Ovid would have read *De Oratore*, it would be difficult to prove. Rather, it is better to draw the more prudent conclusion that both authors were part of the same culture and therefore had similar concepts of how humor functions. The correlation between Cicero's definition and the *Amores* shows intentionality behind Ovid's humor which would be dangerous to assume based only on modern theory. Cicero's passage is evidence that Ovid would have been humorous in his own time for the same reasons which he is today. Thus, my analysis fits the ancient view of humor and its functions.

To explain the implications of Ovid's humor in the *Amores*, I will endeavor to show its presence and function in the three specific humorous devices. First, I will treat Ovid's use of extensive catalogs. Catalogs are staples of ancient poetry and appear in multiple genres. Ovid frequently uses catalogs in the *Amores*, but some are much longer and more descriptive than one would expect due to the individual poems' relative brevity. These 'extensive catalogs' are humorous due to this incongruity in form, but also exhibit a more subtle ironic humor due to their incongruity in function. The extensive catalogs, being long lists of related entries, build up a situation toward an anticipated conclusion. At the end of the poem, however, Ovid introduces a coda which shatters the illusion that the catalog has created. The extensiveness of the catalogs emphasizes the coda by creating a larger contrast between the illusion and the conclusion. The coda allows for an altered reading of the poem, which reveals the frivolity in the situation.

In addition to the catalogs, the *Amores* contain long exaggerated descriptions which I call 'elaborations.' Like the extensive catalogs, these elaborations generate humor via incongruity in form and irony via incongruity in function. Ovid's elaborations differ from his extensive catalogs in that they include multiple descriptions of a situation instead of varied examples. He describes an event and exaggerates the description to the extent that the situation as a whole becomes

absurd. Still, the elaborations lead the poem in a clear direction with a single anticipated conclusion. As in the extensive catalogs, the expectations are upset by a coda and the result is an altered reading of the poem which reveals frivolity in the situation. Again, the extent to which the situation was exaggerated ironically increases the effect of the coda by contrast. Ovid makes his point via its antithesis.

Lastly I will treat Ovid's use of diptychs in the *Amores*. Ovid is seemingly dissatisfied in deceiving his audience's expectations only one poem at a time. In his diptychs, or pairs of poems with closely related subject matter, he separates the development of his humor into two interdependent poems. The result is a longer delay between deception and revelation, which heightens the effect of the retrospective humor. Some of these diptychs include one poem that sets up the expectation followed by a second poem that acts as a coda, but other pairs do not have such a clear distinction. In these other diptychs, the two poems contradict one another and undermine the sincerity of the set. In all of the diptychs, however, the reversal only occurs when the two parts are read together. Each poem can exist apart from the other, but only as a pair do they reveal the extent of the frivolity in the situation.

As I treat each of these devices individually, the overarching implications of Ovid's humor will begin to take shape. Ovid's humor shatters the illusions, or the expectations, that are present in the *Amores* and ironically reveals a deeper seriousness. Its purpose is not merely to amuse, but to comment. As Parker elegantly states, "These are the strategies resorted to by a poet attempting to say something meaningful in an exhausted genre who found, paradoxically, that the only way to write within that tradition was to deny it."<sup>13</sup> Making a choice to be humorous is very different than being its unintentional source; the former is the mark of one who is comedic, and the latter is that of one who is ridiculed. Therefore Ovid is not the frivolous poet which he

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<sup>13</sup> Parker (1969) 96.

appears to be. Instead, I offer that Ovid is seriously humorous; behind the *amator*, a true *persona* ('mask'), lurks a poet that carefully criticizes his own work. With his *Amores*, Ovid displays the frivolity of elegy by masterfully building it up and then playfully undermining its hollow, literary foundation.

## I. Extensive Catalogs

Ovid, as a poet, seems to have been adept in a linear manner of thinking; he could take a single concept and push it to its outermost limits in humorous exaggeration.<sup>14</sup> While it is tempting to write off this aspect of Ovid's style as excessive, the danger comes in viewing this quality of his poetry as an implication of frivolity. The goal of this analysis is not to refute claims of Ovid's excessiveness, but rather to embrace one of its forms, Ovid's use of catalogs, in order to reexamine the implications of the form itself. Far from frivolously, Ovid uses the catalog in his elegies for two reasons: on the one hand he generates humor which draws attention to the passage and ironically emphasizes the futility of the situation; on the other hand, Ovid's catalogs often allude to other elegiac works, particularly those of the other Latin love elegists. When we examine these two reasons together, we begin to see that Ovid is not only using humor to demonstrate the futility of his own elegiac situations, but also those of his contemporaries.

Catalogs are not uncommon in elegy and can be characterized in much the same way as the epic catalog.<sup>15</sup> To borrow Sammons' definition:

A catalog is a list of items which are specified in discrete entries; its entries are formally distinct and arranged in sequence by anaphora or by a simple connective, but are not subordinated to another, and no explicit relation is made between the items except for their shared suitability to the catalogue's specified rubric.<sup>16</sup>

The only aspect not addressed in this definition is a minimum length, which both Kyriakidis and Sammons set at three entries.<sup>17</sup> Ovid's choice to extend these catalogs far beyond the minimum is incongruous with the relative brevity of elegiac poems. Due to both the number of entries and the amount of detail in each entry, Ovid's extensive catalogs can easily be described as "too

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<sup>14</sup> Parker (1969) 95.

<sup>15</sup> Kyriakidis (2007) 124 mentions that "[Ovid's] elegiac works also contain a great number of catalogues."

<sup>16</sup> Sammons (2010) 9.

<sup>17</sup> Kyriakidis (2007) xiii; Sammons (2010) 9. The minimum of three entries becomes more significant in the discussion of *Amores* 1.7 in the following chapter. There Ovid appears to use the same standard as a means of creating false expectations.

long.”<sup>18</sup> His catalogs oftentimes extend through a large portion of the poem or even make up the poem itself, and therefore seem out of place. This incongruity of form is the most obvious type of humor which Ovid generates with his catalogs.

As a whole, the humor in Ovid’s extensive catalogs is the result of him incongruously using multiple aspects of the traditional catalog form. Barney, in his discussion of catalogs in Chaucer, generally summarizes how catalogs can be distorted:

The listed elements may not properly specify the general principle adduced; the principle of the list may seem to shift as the list is extruded; the conclusion drawn from the list (if any) may be irrelevant to its context; *the very production of the list in the circumstances may seem pedantic, incongruously reflective, rhetorically self-conscious, absurdly pompous, crudely self-serving, or otherwise inappropriate to the speaker or the situation; the list may go on too long for its worth*; it may wildly jumble discordant materials.<sup>19</sup>

Through these distortions, Ovid pushes the boundaries of the catalog form in elegiac poetry in a humorous way. Furthermore, Ovid’s extensive catalogs “differ in crucial ways from the world constructed by the poet through his narrative.”<sup>20</sup> This difference manifests in the *Amores* as a separation of author and character which plays into the exposé of futility in the situation.

Catalogs present a set form that allows the *amator* to break from his narrative and expand a single concept. Ovid’s extensive catalogs build upon a stated idea and exaggerate it so that, when the idea inevitably collapses, the fall is intensified and the futility of the situation is humorously emphasized.<sup>21</sup>

Analyzing Ovid’s extensive catalogs in this way is not a new approach to studying catalogs in general and is in fact built upon Sammons’ proposed functions for the Homeric

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<sup>18</sup> Sammons (2010) 9, in establishing his own terminology, states that “all content of the entry not necessary to render it intelligible under the rubric” will be called “elaboration.” Kyriakidis (2007) 125 says of Ovid’s catalogs that “[they are] constructed in a way that almost each example corresponds to an elegiac couplet.” With a full couplet of detail given to each entry, Ovid’s catalogues consist of much of what Sammons calls elaboration.

<sup>19</sup> Barney (1982) 195-196. (my emphasis).

<sup>20</sup> Sammons (2010) 208 says this of Homeric catalogs.

<sup>21</sup> Sammons (2010) 17 discusses the possibility for a catalog to “overwhelm the listener through its extent and exhaustiveness.”

catalog. He claims that the catalog can exist both to reflect the themes of the poem and to allude to contemporaneous poems.<sup>22</sup> Although the catalogs in Ovid's *Amores* appear in a vastly different genre, they perform these same functions. The theme which each extensive catalog reflects is the futility of the elegiac situation and the contemporaneous poems alluded to are those of the other Latin love elegists, Propertius and Tibullus. By using catalogs in this way, Ovid comments on elegy as a whole. Therefore, much as Sammons set out to consider what light Homer's catalogs shed on his view of the epic genre, I am looking to see what light Ovid's catalogs shed on his view of the elegiac genre.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, the manner in which Ovid links his poems to the elegiac tradition is of some importance. The exposed futility is not limited to the *Amores* but can be applied to the elegies of Ovid's predecessors through specific allusions within Ovid's catalogs. The implications can also be applied more generally as a statement about elegy as a genre, due to the frequent occurrence of these extensive catalogs in the *Amores*. Sammons supports the notion that catalogs can serve as platforms for "polemical discourse;"<sup>24</sup> Kyriakidis states that any allusions in a text to previous works should be studied, as "variations are revealed through similarities" and much can be learned about both authors.<sup>25</sup> All of the passages discussed below contain allusions to specific poems by Propertius and/or Tibullus and the notion of futility in Ovid's "variation" comments on those of the others elegists as well. This aspect of humor in the *Amores* reveals that Ovid is more than merely a frivolous poet.

Before beginning, I will make one disclaimer. The humor generated by Ovid's extensive catalogs is in actuality inseparable from the catalogs' implications. Neither humor nor the

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<sup>22</sup> Sammons (2010) 3, 17, 22.

<sup>23</sup> Sammons (2010) 3-4. Sammons 22 also mentions that Homer is "exploring the limits of narrative poetry" through his catalogs.

<sup>24</sup> Sammons (2010) 22.

<sup>25</sup> Kyriakidis (2007) xvi, 3.



implication is purely a ‘cause’ or ‘effect,’ for each draws upon the other; the humor emphasizes the implication, but the implication simultaneously generates humor. In this paper, however, I will designate the humor of an extensive catalog as more of a cause and the sense of frivolity as an effect. I will not discuss how the ultimate implications of the catalogs add to the overall humor of the *Amores*. Furthermore, Ovid’s extensive catalogs are only one facet of the various forms of humor in the *Amores*. Just as it is necessary to view the *Amores* both as a whole and as individual poems, it is necessary to view Ovidian humor both as a whole, in order to truly appreciate how widely it influences the *Amores*, and in its individual forms, in order to identify each form’s specific role.

Arguably the clearest example of Ovid’s extensive catalogs occurs in *Amores* 3.6, in which the *amator* finds himself separated from Corinna by a widening stream. There is neither bridge nor boat to carry him across so the *amator* uses what is at his disposal: his words. As one of Ovid’s elegiac *suasoriae* (‘persuasive speeches’), this poem progresses as the *amator* attempts to persuade the stream to allow safe passage. Within this plea Ovid incorporates a catalog of well-known river deities who have been involved in romantic affairs, which the *amator* offers as precedents for the stream to follow. The extensive catalog covers almost sixty lines of a 106 line poem and includes nine unsubordinated entries. Each entry is in sequence, rarely connected with any conjunction at all, and each fits under the rubric of a river deity loving a girl. The excessive length and reiteration of this catalog are made clear when the list is written out more plainly: the *amator* speaks of Inachus’ love for Melie, Xanthus’ love for Neaera, how Alpheus loved Arethusa, how Peneus loved Creusa, Asopus’ love for Thebe, how Achelous fought for Deianira, Nilus’ love for Euanthe, the myth of Enipeus and Tyro, and how Anio loved Ilia (3.6.25-82).

In this catalog, Ovid also modifies and manipulates some of the myths in order to more

easily fit them into the rubric. As Courtney and Cameron state, three of the *exempla* in this list are Ovidian innovations. The love stories between Xanthus and Neaera, Asopus and Thebe, and Nilus and Euanthe are not found anywhere before this catalog.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, each other entry in this catalog traditionally involves a river lusting after a maiden save one: the myth of Enipeus and Tyro. According to several sources, it was Tyro that pined after Enipeus.<sup>27</sup> None of these sources indicate that Enipeus returned her affection, which illustrates how Ovid is misrepresenting this myth to fit it into this catalog. These four entries, a significant portion of the poem, demonstrate how Ovid is creating a catalog that is as extensive as possible. Ovid seems to be going out of his way to draw attention to the incongruity.

Ovid's inclusion of Enipeus and Tyro is also an example of how Ovid alludes to contemporaneous poems in his extensive catalogs. The myth of Enipeus and Tyro appears twice in the elegies of Propertius, and comparing Ovid's variation to these versions reveals several things: how extensive Ovid's catalog is, how similarly the myth is used between the two elegists, and, most importantly, the difference in the results that the *exempla* produce in their respective poems. Propertius 1.13, a poem explaining how Propertius can recognize that his friend has been overcome with passionate love, presents as the first of only two mythological *exempla* that *non sic Haemonio Salmonida mixtus Enipeo / Taenarius facili pressit amore deus* ('Not thus did the Taenarian god, mixed with Haemonian Enipeus, press the daughter of Salmoneus with love,' Prop. 1.13.21-23). Propertius 3.19, which accuses women of being more driven by lust than men, includes Enipeus and Tyro in a mythological catalog: *testis Thessalico flagrans Salmonis Enipeo, / quae voluit liquido tota subire deo* ('The daughter of Salmoneus as witness, burning for Thessalian Enipeus, who wished to submit wholly to the watery god,' Prop. 3.19.13-14). In

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<sup>26</sup> Courtney (1988) 20-22; Cameron (2004) 263.

<sup>27</sup> Homer, *Odyssey* 11.236-259; Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.90; Propertius, *Elegies* 1.13 and 3.19; Strabo, *Geography* 8.3.32; Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines* 2.8.

Propertius' use of the myth, the catalog contains only seven entries spanning 14 lines.

Firstly, Ovid's use of the myth occurs in a much more extensive list than either of Propertius'. In addition, the uses of the myth are quite similar despite the alteration of Ovid's account. It is the similar usage but intentional misrepresentation of the myth in Ovid's catalog that hints to the allusion. Lastly, the outcome of Propertius 1.13 and 3.19 is in agreement with the speaker's intention behind of the use of the Enipeus and Tyro myths: in Propertius 1.13 his friend is shown to be in love and in Propertius 3.19 women are shown to be lustful. This is not to say that the speaker's arguments are necessarily powerful, but only that he does not undercut his own *exempla*. In *Amores* 3.6, however, this is not the case.

*Amores* 3.6 instead falls from well formulated, persuasive speech into outright hostility before ultimately failing.<sup>28</sup> The extensive catalog comprises the bulk of the persuasive force of the poem and therefore is proven ineffective by the poem's conclusion. The fact that this ineffectiveness follows such an extensive, intentional build up accentuates the sense of futility that the poem ends with. While the failure at the end of the poem is the Ovidian coda, there is a couplet before the extensive catalog even begins that ensures the sense of futility comes across as a major theme, and not a byproduct. After the *amator* wishes that he had Perseus' winged sandals or Ceres' chariot in order to get across the stream without confrontation (13-16), he issues a profound statement: *prodigiosa loquor veterum mendacia vatum; / nec tulit haec umquam nec feret ulla dies* ('I speak of wonders that are the lies of the old poets; no day ever brought them forth and no day ever will,' 17-18). Although this couplet rises out of the *amator*'s situational frustration, it is Ovid's clear profession that his use of mythological *exempla* is futile. Kyriakidis mentions, when discussing a catalog in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, that such a statement: obviously dismisses issues rather than poses them, terminating the catalogue's

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<sup>28</sup> Kyriakidis (2007) 126 n. 18.

process and thus subverting the function and value of the corresponding traditional usage. The listing of names seems to be pointless.<sup>29</sup>

Given that the majority of *Amores* 3.6 consists of mythological references, this profession permeates both the previous lines and the remainder of the poem. Kyriakidis also explains how “the last point raised is stressed by the poet and retained by the reader” when the poet suspends the narrative with a catalog.<sup>30</sup> Lines 17-18 are not quite directly preceding the catalog in this poem, but the obvious connection between them allows the thought to carry through. The catalog of rivers reflects upon this couplet by ironically emphasizing the *amator*’s vain efforts. Although the *amator* understands that he is wasting his time, he still presses on with a lengthy and elaborate case. When this case fails, the *amator* fully demonstrates the futility of the situation.

Finally, combining the theme of futility in Ovid’s catalog of rivers with the allusion to Propertius’ elegies transfers the implications of Ovid’s poem onto the Propertian model. Propertius is known for his frequent use of mythological *exempla*, and Ovid alludes to two instances in Propertius where a similar mythological *exemplum* is being used in at least a short list.<sup>31</sup> Such connections allow Ovid’s portrayal of his own poetry to comment on that of his predecessor as well. By stating the futility of using mythological *exempla* and then emphasizing that futility through an ironic catalog in his own poetry, he is indirectly but powerfully showing the futility of the common convention in Propertian elegy.

This method of ironically emphasizing a concept, only to show its shortcomings and alluding to contemporaries in the process, is also clearly seen in *Amores* 1.4. This poem is the *amator*’s address to Corinna before a dinner party at which her *vir* will be present. Within the

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<sup>29</sup> Kyriakidis (2007) 153.

<sup>30</sup> Kyriakidis (2007) 2-3.

<sup>31</sup> Luck (1979) 122.

address is a long list of commands regarding how Corinna should conduct herself before, during, and even after the event. While this list is briefly interrupted a few times by transitions to new sections, it is still a series of unsubordinated entries with primarily simple connectives. Many of the commands are completely unrelated except for the common rubric of ‘ways to accomplish a secret union,’ which, in the situation, is based upon the assumption that the *amator* has control over the *puella*. This catalog, spanning the vast majority of the poem, is also both extensive and elaborate. As with the catalog in *Amores* 3.6, the excessive reiteration within the catalog draws attention to something deeper.

Several points in this catalog allude to similar lists in both Propertius and Tibullus and a comparison allows us to appreciate how much Ovid expanded the ideas in his variation. In Propertius 3.8 the poet exclaims how glad he is of a fight between himself and Cynthia *nam sine amore gravi femina nulla dolet* (‘for no woman grieves without heavy love,’ 10). In the midst of his elaboration Propertius comments on how he would react if his *puella*, Cynthia, exchanged secret signs with another man:

aut in amore dolere volo aut audire dolentem,  
sive tuas lacrimas sive videre meas,  
tectata superciliis si quando verba remittis,  
aut tua cum digitis scripta silenda notas.  
Propertius 3.8.23-26

I wish either to grieve in love or to hear you grieving,  
to see either your tears or mine,  
if you ever send hidden words with your eyebrows,  
or if you write with your fingers your words that should not be spoken.

In Tibullus 1.6, a poem about how deceptive one of his *puellae*, Delia, has learned to be, the poet warns the husband of a faithless wife not to allow her to act in this way:

neu iuvenes celebret multo sermone caveto  
neve cubet laxo pectus aperta sinu,  
neu te decipiat nutu, digitoque liquorem

ne trahat et mensae ducat in orbe notas.

Tibullus 1.6.17-20

Beware lest she bandy with young men with much speech,  
or recline with a loose gown, having revealed her breasts,  
or deceive you with a nod, and lest she drag the liquid  
on her finger and write notes on the round table.

Both poets make use of the same images and impart to them a sense of dread, for in Propertius' and Tibullus' case the signs are being used against them. In Ovid's catalog, interestingly in the same lines as Tibullus, he instead instructs Corinna to do as Propertius and Tibullus prohibit:

me specta nutusque meos vultumque loquacem;  
excipe furtivas et refer ipsa notas.  
verba superciliis sine voce loquentia dicam;  
verba leges digitis, verba notata mero.

*Amores* 1.4.17-20

Watch me and my nods and my talkative face;  
receive the secret notes and return them yourself.  
I will speak with my eyebrows words that speak without a voice;  
you will read the words from my fingers, words having been written in wine.

Ovid develops the lines of his predecessors even further and weaves them into his more extensive version. In Ovid's variation, he expands the similar second couplets of Propertius and Tibullus into these two couplets while he addresses their unique first couplets in separate passages of *Amores* 1.4. Like Tibullus 1.6.17-18, Ovid's *amator* forbids Corinna to make her breasts available: *nec sinus admittat digitos habilesve papillae* ('and your robe should not admit his fingers to your easily handled breasts,' 37). Similar to Propertius 3.8.23-24, Ovid's *amator* confesses his own tears: *nocte vir includet, lacrimis ego maestus obortis / qua licet, ad saevas prosequar usque fores* ('At night your man will shut the door, I will follow you where it is allowed, sad with many tears having flowed, all the way up to the cruel doors,' 61-62).

The allusions in *Amores* 1.4 to Ovid's predecessors continue with one to Tibullus' confession to the husband:

saepe mero somnum peperit tibi, at ipse bibebam  
sobria supposita pocula victor aqua.  
non ego te laesi prudens: ignosce fatenti:  
iussit Amor. contra quis ferat arma deos?  
Tibullus 1.6.27-30

Often I brought forth sleep for you with wine, but I myself was drinking  
sober cups substituted with water as the victor.  
I did not offend you knowingly: forgive me, confessing:  
Love ordered it. Who would bear arms against the gods?

The lines are once again adapted to Ovid's poem:

vir bibat usque roga—precibus tamen oscula desint!—  
dumque bibit, furtim si potes, adde merum.  
si bene conpositus somno vinoque iacebit,  
consilium nobis resque locusque dabunt.  
*Amores* 1.4.51-54

Ask that your man drink continually—nevertheless may kisses be lacking in your  
prayers!—  
and while he drinks, secretly, if you are able, add pure wine.  
If he will lie, having been well calmed with sleep and wine,  
both the circumstance and the place will give a plan to us.

Ovid's *amator* is still in the malicious mindset from which Tibullus is claiming innocence. Ovid is the only poet of the three discussing these particular events with a positive twist.<sup>32</sup> While Ovid does express fear in *Amores* 1.4 (*Haec tamen adspiciam, sed quae bene pallia celant, / illa mihi caeci causa timoris erunt*, 'These things nevertheless I will look upon, but those which your robes hide well, those things will be a cause of blind fear for me,' 41-42), he does not do so with the sections borrowed from his predecessors. Such a reworking is indicative of Ovid's efforts to stand apart from his predecessors even while borrowing directly from their poetry; he is not rewriting their works, only utilizing them in his own way. In all, Ovid creates a poem that is both similar enough to aid in recollection of the previous works and different enough to demand

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<sup>32</sup> In *Amores* 2.5, however, Ovid does reverse this stance and speaks of these events more like Propertius and Tibullus do. The list in 2.5 is much shorter and not as relevant to this discussion. For more information on diptychs such as 1.4 and 2.5, see chapter 3.

reflection.

The importance of the comparison lies in the poem's ironic reflection of futility which, unlike *Amores* 3.6, is introduced at the end of the poem as opposed to before the catalog.<sup>33</sup> The illusion that is the *amator*'s scheme is shattered as soon as he realizes that, in the end, Corinna is still not his. Saving the realization of defeat until the end of the poem heightens the implications of the catalog.<sup>34</sup> Once again, Ovid's allusions contribute to the theme of futility. Because Ovid alludes to poems in which his contemporaries are lamenting a loss of control over their *puellae*, the *amator*'s failure to control Corinna has deeper implications. Ovid is demonstrating the futility of attempting to control the *puella* in general, a major convention in elegy. The build-up in Ovid's catalog, all under the assumption of ownership, emphasizes the complete lack thereof when the realization of exclusion sets in. With the allusions to both Propertius and Tibullus, Ovid is applying this wide-reaching statement of futility to each of them. The result is a new reading of the former poets' elegies.

In *Amores* 2.4, Ovid again demonstrates futility with an extensive catalog. Ovid, as Propertius and Tibullus had done before him, revels in the beauty of various figures and this time, through the employed catalog, demonstrates the futility of fidelity in elegy. After a brief and likely feigned expression of guilt about being captivated by so many women (1-10), the *amator* launches into an extensive catalog of the types of women that make his love *ambitiosus* ('winding,' 48): he likes modest women, promiscuous women, and austere women (11-16), learned women, unlearned women, women who like his poetry, and women who do not (17-22), soft women and hard women (23-24), women who sing, women who play strings, and women who dance (25-30), tall women and short women (33-36), women poorly clad and women who

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<sup>33</sup> Kyriakidis (2007) 153: The moment in Ovid's elegies where the futility is recognized is similar to Kyriakidis' concept of the "rhetorical question," which he states can occur at either the aperture or closure of a catalog.

<sup>34</sup> Parker (1969) 82-83 discusses this type of sudden realization as a moment where the illusion of hope shatters.



are well-dressed (37-38), fair women and dusky women (39-40), brunettes and blondes (41-43), and finally both young women and old women (45-46).

Likewise, Tibullus composes poems about three separate love interests and a list in Propertius 2.22 is a close parallel to *Amores* 2.4 in that he too admits his own helplessness before the great variety of women in Rome.<sup>35</sup> In Propertius 2.22, however, only the first ten lines of the forty-two line poem explicitly state the variety of women to which he is drawn. The concept of the presence of many women is made clear, but he only gives four individual traits:

sive aliquis molli diducit candida gestu  
bracchia, seu varios incinit ore modos!  
interea nostri quaerunt sibi vulnus ocelli,  
candida non tecto pectore si qua sedet,  
sive vagi crines puris in frontibus errant,  
Indica quos medio vertice gemma tenet.  
Propertius 2.22.5-10

Whether someone spreads white arms in a gentle manner,  
or sings varied strains with her mouth!  
Meanwhile my eyes seek wounds for themselves,  
if some fair girl sits with her chest not covered,  
or if her wandering locks wander on her clean brows,  
which an Indian gem holds in the middle at the top.

Ovid makes more extensive use of the traits which Propertius praises. He repeats the softness of the dancing, although he does transfer the adjective *molli* from the motion of the arms to the turning of the sides (29-30); the fair skin (39); the singing (25-26); the locks of hair hanging over snowy skin, but over her neck rather than brow (41); and also the expensive adornment (38). In addition to these characteristics, Ovid mentions the many other traits listed above so that the catalog in *Amores* 2.4 takes up thirty-six lines of the forty-eight line poem. Ovid has clearly placed more emphasis on this aspect of the poem than his predecessor and alluded to him in the

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<sup>35</sup> McKeown (1998) 64.

process.<sup>36</sup>

As he does in both 3.6 and 1.4, Ovid includes a phrase that reveals the futility of *Amores* 2.4 and in doing so eliminates ambiguity. In the introduction of 2.4, where the *amator* admits his wrong-doing and guilt, he begins by proclaiming: *Non ego mendosos ausim defendere mores / falsaque pro vitiis arma movere meis* ('I would not dare defend my faulty morals and move false arms on behalf of my vices,' 1-2). The *amator*'s morals are faulty because he is consciously abandoning his fidelity to Corinna. By beginning the poem with a mock admission of defeat, Ovid has the *amator* immediately recognizing the futility of his own situation. Thus the elaboration of the counter position, that which revels in the *mendosi mores*, is a humorous and ironic twist that emphasizes the stated futility. The *amator*'s situation is so hopeless that he fully converts and argues for the opposing side.

By momentarily but so suddenly abandoning Corinna, much like his predecessors do with their respective lovers, Ovid is drawing attention to the promiscuity of the elegiac lover. He is in effect emphasizing how futile it is for the elegiac lover to make any claims of fidelity at all. Such claims are extremely prominent in Latin love elegy and central in many elegiac situations. Ovid, through his ironic catalog in *Amores* 2.4, shows the elegiac lover for what he truly is: a lover with no limits and no control. This one example is indicative of how Ovid uses humor to make serious points and that Ovid's use of the catalog is, in the end, similar to Homer's as Sammons describes it. By exaggerating a point to such a degree and then upsetting it, Ovid "holds out the promise of [the catalogs'] fulfillment only to undercut that promise."<sup>37</sup>

These implications are far from frivolous although Ovid's statements of futility are emphasized through such incongruously extensive catalogs. Ovid's humor exists for more than a

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<sup>36</sup> McKeown (1998) 65.

<sup>37</sup> Sammons (2010) 210.

laugh and while the *Amores* are often witty and humorous, they contain a serious level that Ovid brings forth when he sees fit. Furthermore, the catalogs' implications reflect upon not only Ovid's *Amores*, but also the elegies of Propertius and Tibullus due to interwoven allusions. Still, these catalogs are merely one method of accomplishing this seriousness, as they are only one of several forms of Ovid's humor in the *Amores*. Only when all the various aspects of Ovidian humor are brought together can we more fully understand what it is that Ovid accomplished within elegy.

## II. Elaborations

Ovid's extensive elaborations are structurally comparable and functionally similar to his extensive catalogs. They are both lists of simply connected, unsubordinated, discrete entries but where the catalogs contain multiple examples of a certain concept, the elaborations contain multiple descriptions of that concept.<sup>38</sup> As with the catalogs, Kyriakidis' and Sammons' minimum of three entries can also serve as the minimum for Ovid's extensive elaborations.<sup>39</sup> The descriptions in Ovid's extensive elaborations build up a stated situation beyond the expectations set by his predecessors. By surpassing the conventional expectations, both in length and descriptiveness, Ovid again generates humor via incongruity.

In addition to the same types of allusions we have seen in the extensive catalogs, Ovid's elaborations also demonstrate a level of connectedness to Propertius and Tibullus due to his use of specific passages from his predecessors' works. The term 'elaboration' describes both what Ovid is accomplishing in the situation and how these sections relate to the impact of Ovid's humor on Propertius and Tibullus. In the following poems, he seems to have selected sections of his predecessors' elegies which he felt were underworked and proceeded to rework them. Ovid may not describe original situations, but he does describe them far more than they had been before. These concepts are not the broader *topoi* which have already been discussed, but rather small details of the earlier elegists' poetry. Ovid does incorporate various *topoi* in the elaborations, but they are not the heart of the matter.

*Amores* 1.7 is a clear example of one of Ovid's elegies in which he adapts a concept from a predecessor's poetry, expands it to a humorous degree, and shatters an illusion upon which it was built. The *amator* in this poem begins by confessing to a hypothetical friend that he struck

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<sup>38</sup> For Sammons' complete definition of a catalog, see Sammons (2010) 9.

<sup>39</sup> Kyriakidis (2007) xiii; Sammons (2010) 9.

his *puella*:

Adde manus in vincla meas—meruere catenas—  
dum furor omnis abit, siquis amicus ades!  
nam furor in dominam temeraria bracchia movit;  
flet mea vaesana laesa puella manu.  
*Am.* 1.7.1-4

Add bonds onto my hands—they deserved chains—  
Until all madness has gone away, if, any friend, you are present!  
For madness moved my rash arms against my mistress;  
My girl weeps having been struck by my raging hand.

In these opening lines he gives four key points: his hands are guilty, he succumbed to a moment of *furor* ('madness'), he struck her, and she is distressed.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the predominant tone of the poem, at least thus far, is one of guilt, as emphasized by *meruere* in the very first line. After this brief summary of the situation at hand, however, the *amator* breaks from the narrative and begins elaborating.<sup>41</sup> The next 54 lines of the 68-line poem consist of discrete entries, often begun with a simple connective such as *tunc* (5), *Quid?* (7), or *nec* (12). Each of these entries elaborates upon one or more of the four key points above.

In the next couplet, for example, the *amator* exclaims *tunc ego vel caros potui violare parentes / saeve vel in sanctos verbera ferre deos!* ('At that time I was able either to savagely violate my dear parents or to bring lashes against the holy gods!' *Am.* 1.7.5-6). This description does not introduce any new action to the narrative, but instead builds up the previously mentioned *furor*. Afterward, when the *amator* hears the voices of his accusers and the silence of his *puella*, both the *furor* and her distress are reiterated:

Quis mihi non "demens!" quis non mihi "barbare!" dixit?  
ipsa nihil; pavido est lingua retenta metu.  
sed taciti fecere tamen convicia vultus;  
egit me lacrimis ore silente reum.

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<sup>40</sup> McKeown (1989) 165 mentions that Ovid places the guilt on only his hands.

<sup>41</sup> Parker (1969) 84 explains that "the poem is not so much a blow-by-blow description as a series of correlatives for his guilt."

Am. 1.7.19-22

Who did not say to me “madman!” who did not say to me “barbarian!”?  
She said nothing; her tongue was retained by terrified fear.  
But her silent faces nevertheless bore reproaches;  
she indicted me with tears while her face was silent.

Ovid expresses the *furor* here through *demens* and *barbare*, while he again mentions the *puella*’s tears directly. Later still, when the *amator* wishes that his arms had fallen off (28), he once more places the guilt on his hands themselves, especially in that the entry ends with *debita sacrilegae vincla subite manus!* (‘Unholy hands, submit to the deserved bonds’). Thus the elaboration continues through most of the poem.

In the midst of this elaboration, Ovid includes two entries that demonstrate his ability to play with these devices yet avoid breaking the flow of descriptions. These two entries almost develop into their own catalogs, but Ovid seems to knowingly prevent that from happening. Firstly, the *amator* gives two mythological *exempla*, stories of Ajax and Orestes, in an effort to euphemize his *furor*.<sup>42</sup> But he stops here, just short of the minimum of three entries, and questions whether or not such *exempla* are even effective: *ergo ego digestos potui laniare capillos?* (‘Therefore was I able to tear her arranged hair?’ Am. 1.7.11).<sup>43</sup> Thus the two ineffective *exempla* are not a catalog and the set serves as an entry within the elaboration that builds up the concept of *furor*. The *amator* then transitions into a list of mythological women to whom he compares his *puella*’s appearance. In this passage the *amator* does fulfill a catalog’s minimum of three entries by listing Atalanta (13-14), Ariadne (15-16), and Cassandra (17-18) as entries under the stated rubric: *nec dominam motae dedecueret comae. / sic formosa fuit* (‘And the moved locks were not unbecoming for my mistress. She was beautiful thus,’ Am. 1.7.12-13). Ovid begins well, since both Atalanta and Ariadne were beautiful despite their wild tresses. Yet

<sup>42</sup> McKeown (1989) 164 comments on the humor of such a comparison.

<sup>43</sup> Stirrup (1973) 825: “The legend of Orestes permits an antithesis in line 11, connectively stressed by *ergo ego*.”

then Ovid undermines his own use of Cassandra as an *exemplum* by mentioning that her hair was bound: *sic, nisi vittatis quod erat Cassandra capillis, / procubuit templo, casta Minerva, tuo* ('Thus, except that Cassandra was with her hair bound, she sank down in your temple, chaste Minerva.' *Am.* 1.7.12-18).<sup>44</sup> As a result, the entry containing Cassandra does not share suitability to the catalog's rubric: beautiful women with loose hair. Therefore, the catalog intended to praise the *puella*'s beauty falls apart as only two legitimate entries remain; Ovid has intentionally upset his own literary device. The three *exempla* combined then instead function as an entry in the elaboration and the entry as a whole reiterates the only trait that is shared between all three women: distress.

In addition to aiding in Ovid's playful blending of humorous devices, the *amator*'s question in line 11 and his digression in line 17 are the first two points where the sincerity of the poem is undermined. Throughout the poem, the *amator* lifts his guise in a rather straightforward manner. By including instances such as these in a poem expressing shame and regret, he shows that his mind is more on the words than the events they describe. If the *amator* were truly repentant, such superfluity would submit to supplication. Another example occurs in an entry describing the *amator*'s wished-for alternatives to striking his *puella*:

denique, si tumidi ritu torrentis agebar,  
 caecaque me praedam fecerat ira suam,  
 nonne satis fuerat timidae inclamasse puellae,  
 nec nimium rigidas intonuisse minas,  
 aut tunicam a summa diducere turpiter ora  
 ad mediam?—mediae zona tulisset opem.  
*Am.* 1.7.43-48

Finally, if I was being driven in the manner of a swollen torrent,  
 and blind wrath had made me her prey,  
 Had it not been enough to shout at the timid girl,  
 and not thunder the too rigid threats,

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<sup>44</sup> Stirrup (1983) 826; McKeown (1989) 174: "This pedantic and objective qualification of the comparison helps to throw doubt on the sincerity of Ovid's remorse at his violence against his mistress."

or to split her tunic from the highest edge  
to the middle?—her belt would have brought help to the middle.

Here the *amator* seems to be clearly expressing his regret for his actions until the last line. When he should be begging his *puella*'s pardon, he takes a moment to describe the technicalities of dress-tearing. Ovid heightens the effect of the phrase with the polyptoton of *mediam...media*. This moment is yet another digression that breaks the flow of the poem and hints at the insincerity which will soon be revealed.

The elaboration in *Amores* 1.7 comes to a close in line 59, when the *amator* resumes the narrative and reasserts the false expectation of the poem:

tunc ego me primum coepi sentire nocentem—  
sanguis erant lacrimae, quas dabat illa, meus.  
ter tamen ante pedes volui procumbere supplex;  
ter formidatas reppulit illa manus.

*Am.* 1.7.59-62

Then I first began to know I was guilty—  
the tears which she was giving were my blood.  
Nevertheless three times I wished to sink down before her feet as a suppliant;  
three times she repulsed my dreaded hands.

At last, he reveals more of the event as it is unfolding. Appropriately, the guilt has now moved from his hands to himself, he takes responsibility for her tears, and he supplicates her. The *amator* then addresses his *puella* directly and concludes the poem. While the conclusion seems at first to be a form of reconciliation through recompense, the last two lines indicate otherwise:

At tu ne dubita—minuet vindicta dolorem—  
protinus in vultus unguibus ire meos.  
nec nostris oculis nec nostris parce capillis:  
quamlibet infirmas adiuvat ira manus;  
neve mei sceleris tam tristia signa supersint,  
pone recompositas in statione comas!

*Am.* 1.7.63-68

But do not hesitate—your vengeance will lessen my grief—  
to immediately advance upon my face with your nails.



And do not spare my eyes or my hair:  
Wrath aids your hands, however weak they are;  
or, so that such sad signs of my wickedness do not survive,  
Place your rearranged hair in order.

By telling her to fix her hair and hide his transgression, the *amator* contradicts any sense of sincerity left in his plea; he is not expressing regret at all.<sup>45</sup> In the end, Ovid uses a coda to alter the reading of the entire poem.<sup>46</sup> The humor and build-up generated by the elaboration ultimately emphasize this reversal.

The implications of the coda, namely the insincerity of the poet, are not limited to this poem alone. In Tibullus 1.6, the poet similarly mentions his horror at the thought of striking Delia: *non ego te pulsare velim, sed, venerit iste / si furor, optarim non habuisse manus* ('I do not wish to strike you, but if that madness will have come, I would prefer to not have hands,' Tib. 1.6.73-74).<sup>47</sup> This couplet is only a small portion of the 86 line poem, but is an idea that Ovid expands into an entire poem. For example, Ovid expresses all three major aspects of Tibullus' couplet in his opening lines. Twice the *amator* admits that he succumbed to *furor* (2, 3), twice he confesses that he struck his *puella* (3, 4), and most significantly, he places the emphasis on his hands by twice mentioning bindings (1). From the beginning of *Amores* 1.7, Ovid demonstrates where the concept for this poem originated.

The most obvious connection between the two poems, however, is when the *amator* says *ante meos umeris vellem cecidisse lacertos; / utiliter potui parte carere mei* ('I would that my arms had beforehand dropped from my shoulders; profitably I was able to be without that part of myself,' *Am.* 1.7.23-24). Here Ovid has blatantly adapted his predecessor's couplet into the very poem written as a result of the couplet's inspiration. Furthermore, as Kyriakidis states,

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<sup>45</sup> Khan (1966) 880, Stirrup (1973) 824, 831.

<sup>46</sup> Parker (1969) 86-87.

<sup>47</sup> McKeown (1989) 176 makes this connection.

“variations are revealed through similarities,” and the variation between the two couplets is significant in connecting the implications of *Amores* 1.7 to Tibullus 1.6. The key difference between Tibullus’ and Ovid’s versions of this couplet is the point in time in which each poet speaks the lines. Tibullus wishes that he would have no hands, if he ever were to strike Delia. Ovid, in addition to expanding Tibullus’ *manus* (‘hands’) to his own *lacertos* (‘arms’), projects Tibullus’ wish to its logical conclusion; regardless of intent, his arms did not fall off. The *amator* has already struck his *puella* and now retrospectively wishes that he had lost his arms instead. Ovid also uses a form of *volo* in the same central position as in Tibullus’ verse, split into the third and fourth feet, and in doing so focuses on the wish itself; the act of wishing for such things in elegy is insincere, futile, or both.

*Amores* 3.7 unfolds in much the same way: the *amator* issues an opening statement containing the central concepts of the poem and proceeds to elaborate upon them with increasing detail as the poem goes on. The elaboration in 3.7 builds up to a coda that alters the reading of the poem and, through allusions, alters the reading of Propertius 4.8 as well. The poem begins with the *amator* lamenting a moment which every man dreads. He has the girl of his dreams in his arms but suffers an unexpected bout of impotence:

At non formosa est, at non bene culta puella,  
 at, puto, non votis saepe petita meis!  
 hanc tamen in nullos tenui male languidus usus,  
 sed iacui pigro crimen onusque toro;  
 nec potui cupiens, pariter cupiente puella,  
 inguinis effeti parte iuvante frui.

*Am.* 3.7.1-6

But was she not beautiful, but was the girl not well groomed,  
 but, I think, was she not often sought after by my prayers!  
 Nevertheless I, awfully languid, held her for no enjoyments,  
 but I lay as a crime and burden on the lazy bed;  
 And I, desirous, was not able, with her equally desirous,  
 to delight in the pleasurable part of my worn out groin.

Faced with this humiliation, the *amator* embarks to escape the predicament with his dignity intact. Ironically, the *amator* first extensively tears himself down and builds his *puella* up. In the first couplet, for example, he describes her as desirable in three ways: *formosa, bene culta, saepe petita*. In the second couplet, he contrasts her praise by expressing the gravity of his impotence three times: *languidus, crimen onusque*. The first four lines introduce the two key points that serve as the main source of elaboration throughout the poem.

The next 70 lines reiterate her desirability and his inability in varied and humorous ways. The third couplet begins the reiteration of the introduction, but in it the *amator* is already hinting at the intent behind the ironic elaboration. Firstly, by elaborating upon her allure while also emphasizing her desire for him with *pariter cupiente puella*, he indirectly boasts of his skill as a lover. In addition, Ovid's use of *iuvante* is delightfully ambiguous; the *amator* mentions that his 'part' is pleasing, but does not specify to whom. Lastly, the use of *effetus* will become increasingly significant as the poem progresses. With each of these subtle word choices, the *amator* is trying to maintain his image.

The following lines offer multiple examples of the elaboration in *Amores* 3.7. Although the third couplet begins the reiteration, line 7 marks the point where the *amator* begins to elaborate the introduction to a humorous degree. The first four entries (7-12) expand upon the *puella*'s desirability and, although they all come across as his praise for her, they ultimately describe a reason for which the *amator* is proud of seducing the *puella*; the better he can portray her, the more significant his conquest becomes. The next four entries (13-18) elaborate upon the *amator*'s impotence with adjectives such as *segnis* (14), *iners* (15), and *inutile* (15). In these lines the *amator* also exaggerates his condition even further. When he dramatically laments *et non exactum, corpus an umbra forem* ('And it is not clear whether I was a body or a shade,' *Am.*

3.7.16), the elaboration becomes rather absurd. The *amator* at this point comes across as melodramatic and he ponders *a, pudet annorum: quo me iuvenemque virumque? / nec iuvenem nec me sensit amica virum!* ('Ah! There is shame in my age; for what reason am I young and male? My girlfriend felt me neither young nor male!' *Am.* 3.7.19-20). Such elaboration and exaggeration generate the humor that characterizes the poem.

The *amator* does not leave such self-deprecation unanswered, however. Shortly after these exaggerated self-attacks, he reveals the first major indication that the descriptions of his impotence are only an ironic way to emphasize his sexual prowess. The *amator* gives a short account of his recent sexual exploits:

at nuper bis flava Childe, ter candida Pitho,  
ter Libas officio continuata meo est;  
exigere a nobis angusta nocte Corinnam  
me memini numeros sustinuisse novem.  
*Am.* 3.7.23-26

Just recently, blonde haired Childe was joined with my service twice,  
fair Pitho three times, and Libas three times;  
I remember that Corinna demanded from me, and that I sustained,  
nine tallies in one confined night.

While *nuper* in and of itself is nonspecific, the general idea is clear: at some recently passed point, the *amator* was a sexual superstar. While in their immediate context these lines demonstrate the *amator*'s perplexity at his predicament, this passage is still boasting in its purest form. The passage alone may not redeem the *amator* from his current situation, but it begins a trend of indirect boasting that increases as the passage continues. After 33 more lines of further elaborating both his impotence and her desirability, the *amator* once again returns to this notion of how he was before. Here the application is subtle, but equally as important to the conclusion of the poem: *sed neque tum vixi nec vir, ut ante, fui* ('But then I was not alive nor was I a man as I was before,' *Am.* 3.7.60). The insertion of *ut ante* into this line is unnecessary for the

elaboration of his impotence, but key in the *amator*'s redemption.

After three more self-degrading entries (61-66), the *amator* again turns the tables. This statement, however, refers to a time after the events of the poem: *quae nunc, ecce, vigent intempestiva valentque, / nunc opus exposcunt militiamque suam* ('Behold! those which are now untimely strong and powerful, now they demand work and their soldiery!' *Am.* 3.7.67-72). This couplet exists as an aside and, as such, interjects additional details that the *amator* desires the audience to know. In the case at hand, he is making sure that the audience understands how his predicament was only a temporary one. He now uses verbs such as *vigeo* and *valeo* to describe himself which stand in stark contrast to his earlier descriptions. But the moment is brief, and the *amator* resumes the elaboration and hurls further insults at that part of himself.

By this point, the *amator*'s intent behind the poem has been revealed piece by piece and the tone has begun to shift. He slowly replaces the pitiful humiliation with his familiar arrogance. The final ten lines of the poem solidify the change in tone and the final couplets are a coda that completes the reversal. Here, the *amator* directly quotes the words of the *puella* in the aftermath. Her words complete the image begun in the lines above, where the *amator* emphasized his earlier exploits and the strength he had then. She accosts him rather severely:

“quid me ludis?” ait, “quis te, male sane, iubebat  
 invitum nostro ponere membra toro?  
 aut te traiectis Aeaea venefica lanis  
 devovet, aut alio lassus amore venis.”  
*Am.* 3.7.77-80

“Why do you play with me?” she said, “Who ordered you, you who are out of your mind,  
to unwillingly place your limbs on our bed?  
Either an Aeaeian witch, with wool dolls having been pierced,  
curses you, or you come worn out from another love.”

It would appear that the *puella* shares in the *amator*'s ability to withhold an intended point until after a longer build-up. Due to the way that Ovid replaces the notion of magic as a cause with a

second possibility, which he also did earlier in the poem (35), the accusation of previous sexual activity stands as the most probable explanation. With that accusation, moments such as the uses of *effetus* (6), *nuper* (23) and *ut ante* (60) become more significant in the progression of the poem. The *amator* is not *languidus* (3) but rather *lassus* (80) and the difference in these terms redeems his image.

The process of tearing himself down and building up the *puella* ultimately accomplishes the opposite. The extensive use of elaboration to facilitate, and emphasize, this irony demonstrates how Ovid employs humor in his poetry. And as if the *puella*'s accusation is not enough to demonstrate the completed reversal, the final four lines of the poem are a fitting conclusion:

nec mora, desiluit tunica velata soluta—  
et decuit nudos proripuisse pedes!—  
neve suae possent intactam scire ministrae,  
dedecus hoc sumpta dissimulavit aqua.

*Am.* 3.7.81-84

And with no delay, she leapt down wrapped in an unbound tunic—  
and it became her to have dragged her bare feet forth!—  
and so her maids were not able to know she was untouched,  
she concealed this disgrace with drawn water.

Not only does she stumble out of the room, demonstrating a transfer of criticism from the *amator* to the *puella*, she is willing to lie so that her maids do not discover the truth. *Dedecus hoc* is ambiguously directed at either the *amator* or the *puella*, demonstrating how powerful his reputation is; is it the *amator* that truly gains from the rendezvous, or the other way around?

The humor in *Amores* 3.7 does not contain an explicit allusion to Ovid's predecessors, but the notion of revealing one's incompetence is reminiscent of another poem. Propertius finds himself similarly unable to perform in his poem 4.8. Like Ovid he builds up the situation beforehand, but Propertius describes the attractiveness of not one, but two women with whom he

is involved:

Phyllis Aventinae quaedam est vicina Dianae,  
sobria grata parum: cum bibit, omne decet.  
altera Tarpeios est inter Teia lucos,  
candida, sed potae non satis unus erit.  
Prop. 4.8.29-32

There is a certain Phyllis near the Aventine Diana,  
sober she is hardly agreeable; when she drinks, she is altogether lovely.  
There is another, Teia, amongst the Tarpeian groves,  
she is fair, but one man will not be enough for her when she's drunk.

After introducing the two women, Propertius continues to set the scene for what would appear to be his ideal escapade (33-42). The tone of the poem takes a turn, however, as he sets forth his misfortune. Amidst a series of bad omens, he describes his own shortcomings:

me quoque per talos Venerem quaerente secundos  
semper damnosi subsiluire canes.  
cantabant surdo, nudabant pectora caeco:  
Prop. 4.8.45-48

With me also seeking the Venus-throw through favorable dice,  
always the ruinous dogs sprang up.  
They were singing to a deaf man, they were bearing their breasts to a blind man:

Despite the women's efforts, Propertius cannot enjoy their company. Ovid's treatment of this topoi in *Amores* 3.7 brings up a simple fact: Propertius may be unable to enjoy his two companions, but the fact that he is *inter utramque* (Prop. 4.8.36) is more than enough to maintain his image as an accomplished lover. Ovid is showing how Propertius' supposed moment of vulnerability is more a moment of boasting about his sexual exploit. Therefore Ovid reveals Propertius 4.8, despite its dark and grim overtones, as frivolous.

Although Ovid's elaborations seem to become clearer as the *Amores* progresses, they begin early on. *Amores* 1.2 contains a section that shows similar characteristics and works as an elaboration. In this poem, the *amator* succumbs to love (10) and surrenders himself to Cupid

(19), whom he characterizes as a warlike conqueror. Along with his surrender the *amator* gives a detailed description of Cupid's hypothetical triumph (23-48). The description spans exactly half of the poem, contains 14 loosely connected entries, and builds up the given situation beyond anything seen in the works of Propertius or Tibullus. Therefore, Cupid's triumph in *Amores* 1.2, a humorous digression from the *amator*'s submission, can be characterized as an elaboration.

Cupid's triumph, however, does not exist only for humor's sake. The *amator* undermines the sincerity of the elaboration in three places, with the third being the strongest and acting as an Ovidian coda. The humorous grandeur of the situation makes these moments more prominent and leads to a significant reversal. If the overwhelming tone of the poem is one of submission, the description of the triumph should be wholly indicative of Cupid's superiority. Under the guise of surrender, however, the *amator* exerts his superiority and control over Cupid. When the *amator* describes Cupid's *comites*, for example, he makes a verbal attack against Cupid's strength:

blanditiae comites tibi erunt Errorque Furorque,  
adsidue partes turba secuta tuas.  
his tu militibus superas hominesque deosque;  
haec tibi si demas commoda, nudus eris.  
*Am.* 1.2.35-38

Flatteries, Error, and Madness are your allies,  
the crowd having regularly followed your sides.  
With these soldiers you conquer both men and gods;  
if you remove these advantages from yourself, you will be naked.

Although it is reasonable to assume that no triumphant general would amount to much without his army, the statement seems out of place given the *amator*'s position. Despite his disadvantageous stance, he continues to make subtle attacks as the elaboration of the triumph goes on.

The next insult which the *amator* sneaks in is again directed at Cupid's strength. Ovid



begins by fittingly praising Cupid's arrows and their potency:

tunc quoque non paucos, si te bene novimus, ures;  
tunc quoque praeteriens vulnera multa dabis.  
non possunt, licet ipse velis, cessare sagittae;  
*Am. 1.2.43-45*

Then also you will burn not few, if we know you well;  
then also you will give many wounds as you go by.  
Your arrows are not able to cease, even if you should wish it yourself.

Three times Ovid mentions the persistence of Cupid's attacks, but the *amator's* verbal attack on Cupid's strength takes place in the final line. While Cupid is attacking anyone and everyone, he loses the ability to control himself in the process. Ovid even uses the *sagittae* (46) as the subject of the final clause, humorously using grammar to remove any remaining control from Cupid. Once again, the *amator* is hinting at Cupid's powerlessness in the midst of submitting to him.

Still, these attacks are subtle and are only slight digressions from the elaboration of the triumph. The significance of these attacks is not emphasized until the poem is concluded. The final, and most effective, contradiction to the *amator's* tone of submission appears in the final two couplets as a coda. Here the *amator* changes, or rather reveals, his motives behind the poem:

Ergo cum possim sacri pars esse triumphi,  
parce tuas in me perdere, victor, opes!  
adspice cognati felicia Caesaris arma—  
qua vicit, victos protegit ille manu.  
*Am. 1.2.49-52*

Therefore since I am able to be part of the sacred triumph,  
refrain from wasting your powers on me, victor!  
Look to the fortunate arms of your kinsman Caesar—  
with the same hand by which he has conquered, he protects the conquered.

While maintaining a guise of submission and flattery through to the end, the *amator* attempts to persuade Cupid toward his own ends. Ovid's *amator* is not interested in being a slave to Cupid, but in using Cupid to further his own amorous conquests. The entire poem now takes on the

appearance of a flattery-driven *suasoria* and, as such, undermines the sincerity of the *amator*'s elaborate submission.

Multiple aspects of this elaboration can be traced back to the elegies of both Propertius and Tibullus, which demonstrates the poem's connectedness to Ovid's predecessors. Ovid latches on to particular aspects of his predecessors' work and inflates them to the point of absurdity in order to illustrate the humor of the situation. In Propertius 2.12, for example, the poet begins by explaining how aptly Cupid is portrayed. He offers evidence of Cupid as a *puer* ('boy,' 1), draws attention to the appropriateness of his *ventosae alae* ('swift wings,' 5), and then describes his warlike nature much like Ovid does:

et merito hamatis manus est armata sagittis,  
et pharetra ex umero Gnosia utroque iacet:  
ante ferit quoniam, tuti quam cernimus hostem,  
nec quisquam ex illo vulnere sanus abit.

Prop. 2.12.9-12

And deservedly his hand is armed with hooked arrows,  
and the Gnosian quiver lies between each shoulder:  
since he strikes before we, safe, discern the enemy,  
and no one goes away from that wound healthy.

Propertius' sentence builds to a statement of the fact that no one is safe from him, much like *Amores* 1.2.43-45. These lines mark the end Propertius' itemized description of Cupid, however, while Ovid elaborates the point much further. Tibullus also describes Cupid in this way in a small passage in Tibullus 2.5:

pace tua pereant arcus pereantque sagittae,  
Phoebe, modo in terris erret inermis Amor.  
ars bona: sed postquam sumpsit sibi tela Cupido,  
heu heu quam multis ars dedit ista malum!

Tib. 2.5.105-108

In peace may your bow perish and may your arrows perish,  
Phoebus, now so love may wander unarmed in the lands.  
It is a good skill: but after Cupid took up the arms for himself,

Alas, Alas! How that skill has given punishment to many!

Once again the emphasis shifts from Cupid's weaponry to how many people he attacks but not nearly to the extent that it does in Ovid's variation. Ovid, for example, gives three accounts of Cupid's arrows compared with Propertius' and Tibullus' one. Neither Tibullus' description, as only four lines of a 122-line address, nor Propertius' are the ultimate focus of their respective poems. Ovid elaborates these instances to humorously illustrate their frivolity.

Ovid, by alluding to Propertius 2.12 and Tibullus 2.5 in his mock submission, applies the sense of insincerity to their elegies as well. The progression of *Amores* 1.2 shows further similarities to the other two poems. In Propertius 2.12, after the poet has finished describing Cupid, he addresses Cupid directly and makes a plea for mercy:

quid tibi iucundum est siccis habitare medullis?  
si pudor est, alio traice duella tua!  
intactos isto satius temptare veneno:  
non ego, sed tenuis vapulat umbra mea.  
Prop. 2.12.17-20

Why is it pleasing to you to live in my dry bones?  
If shame exists, transfer your wars to another!  
There it is better to try those untouched by the poison.  
It is not I, but my feeble shade that is beaten.

Propertius here combines two pleas into one: "do not fight me" and "fight someone else."

Although the two work toward the same objective, they are still two separate ideas. Ovid modifies this approach when the *amator* says *nil opus est bello—veniam pacemque rogamus; / nec tibi laus armis victus inermis ero* ('There is no need for war—we seek pardon and peace; and there will be no praise for you, having conquered the unarmed with arms,' *Am.* 1.2.21-22). While at first it appears that the *amator*'s supplication is more concise than Propertius', the passage in its context shows otherwise. Ovid's lines 21-22 only utilize the former of Propertius' arguments, "do not fight me." Instead of following his predecessor in directing Cupid elsewhere, he projects

the latter of Propertius' arguments to its conclusion in the remainder of the poem. While Propertius is asking for Cupid to take up a new target, Ovid explains in great detail how Cupid is already a triumphant conqueror. The effect of Ovid's elaboration is thus a general sense of futility in resistance.

A further analysis of Tibullus 2.5 yields a similar effect. The vast majority of Tibullus' poem exalts the young Roman commander Messalinus, Apollo, and the mythological history of Rome. Yet, near the end of the poem, Tibullus transitions briefly to his request regarding Cupid and then to another of his *puellae*, Nemesis (105-112). He even goes as far as to shift his attention from Apollo to a direct address to his *puella* (113-114). The brevity and position of this section result in the appearance of it being "snuck in" like the *amator*'s motives in *Amores* 1.2. Tibullus then rapidly switches his focus back to Messalinus for the conclusion of the poem as a means of covering his tracks and, fittingly, describes a triumph:

praemoneo, vati parce, puella, sacro,  
ut Messalinum celebrem, cum praemia belli  
ante suos currus oppida victa feret,  
ipse gerens laurus: lauro devinctus agresti  
miles "io" magna voce "triumphe" canet.  
Tib. 2.5.114-118

I forewarn! Spare the sacred poet, girl,  
so I may celebrate Messalinus, when the spoils of war  
and conquered towns he will bear before his chariot,  
himself wearing a laurel crown: bound with rustic laurel,  
the soldier with a great voice will sing, "Io triumphe!"

Ovid clearly had this poem in mind when composing *Amores* 1.2, as indicated by the close parallel of his *vulgus* "io" magna voce "triumphe" canet ('the crowd with a great voice will sing, "Io triumphe!'" *Am.* 1.2.34). Ovid simply combined Tibullus' two descriptions, those of Cupid and the triumph, into one poem. As he does with Propertius 2.12, Ovid connects this poem to *Amores* 1.2 in order to reveal the passage's insincerity: although the poem is framed as a

tribute to Messalinus and Apollo, the poet's attention is on Cupid and Nemesis.

Ovid's elaborations thus function as a means of demonstrating serious points via absurd exaggerations. Ovid shows the frivolity in his predecessors' elegies by overstating the very points which he criticizes. In each of Ovid's poems discussed above, the revelation hinges on the false expectation being firmly established and then the clear recognition of the coda at the end. This concise pattern results in an irony that repeats itself in much of Ovid's elegy. The similarities and connections between each of these poems demonstrate the level of variation which Ovid is able to achieve with just this one form of his humor. Although each example above functions in roughly the same manner, they are all individual and unique poems and shed light on varied aspects of the elegiac genre. Ovid, in effect, rewrites several situations found in his predecessor's elegies and crafts them in such a way that they suddenly, and humorously, collapse in on themselves.

### III. Diptychs

Ovid's diptychs, or pairs of interdependent poems, show how Ovid applies his humor on a larger scale. Whereas many poems contain both a humorous build-up and a destructive coda, these poems each take on only one of the two roles. As a rule, the first poem in each pair sets up an expectation and the second poem acts as a sort of coda that alters the reading of the pair. Furthermore, these diptychs allow Ovid to capitalize upon the dramatic tension created by splitting the situation into two parts. He often uses the first poem as a crescendo and ends abruptly at the climax. The unexpected conclusion in the second poem is then more surprising. By splitting the situation into a diptych, Ovid heightens the effect of the humor and thus further emphasizes the reversal. As in his extensive catalogs and elaborations, Ovid connects the connotations of this humor to Propertius and Tibullus, via allusion and the use of elegiac topoi, to reveal a sense of futility in his predecessors' work and in the elegiac genre.

Although the end result of each diptych is the same, they do not all function in the same way. In fact, there are two separate types in the *Amores*: deceptions (1.11-1.12; 2.2-2.3; 2.7-2.8), and contradictions (1.4-2.5; 2.13-2.14; 2.19-3.4).<sup>48</sup> The deceptions are perhaps the most clearly connected, as one leads up to the other. In these diptychs the *amator* exaggerates a claim in a steady crescendo, leaves the claim unresolved at its highest point, and then concludes the situation in a complementary poem where the *amator*'s claim is humorously shown to be untruthful. In the contradictions, the *amator* takes a stance on a particular issue in one poem and then argues the opposing stance in the second poem. His fickleness weakens both arguments and the pair comes across as rather insincere. The order of these diptychs is not as relevant as in the

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<sup>48</sup> In addition to these diptychs, McKeown (1987) 309 offers 2.11-2.12, connected by their relation to Prop. 1.8. This pair does not, however, exhibit the reversal which is a characteristic in all the other diptychs and, as McKeown points out, "the latter poem makes little use of the dramatic setting of the former."

deceptions, since neither poem ‘begins’ where the other ‘leaves off.’ Still, the poem that occurs first instills an expectation in the audience and the second poem, by disappointing that expectation, takes on the role of coda. In both the deceptions and the contradictions, the *amator*’s change in opinion can be due to a shift in either his emotion or his role in the poem. Either way, the result is the same: Ovid demonstrates the *amator*’s frivolity through an abrupt and humorous reversal.

Poems 2.7 and 2.8 are one of Ovid’s diptychs that results in a straightforward deception; both poems mention one of Corinna’s hair dressers by name and are easily connected due to their close proximity.<sup>49</sup> In the first poem, the *amator* addresses Corinna and defends himself against her recent accusations of infidelity with her slave, Cypassis. 2.7 builds in intensity and the *amator*’s defense comes to a climax just before the poem abruptly ends with no closure. He makes a convincing argument but the reader is still not sure whether he is guilty or innocent. Ovid could have left the situation unresolved, like Propertius does in his similar poem 3.15, but he instead adds poem 2.8. In the second poem of this diptych, the *amator* is no longer addressing Corinna, but is now speaking to Cypassis herself. In this poem Ovid reveals that he has indeed slept with her and seeks to do so again. For the audience, the revelation comes as a surprise and the deception of the diptych is humorous because of it.

*Amores* 2.7 is a well-wrought and plausible rebuttal to Corinna which begins *in medias res*, for it seems to follow immediately after her accusation with an exasperated rhetorical question: *Ergo sufficiam reus in nova crimina semper?* (‘Therefore will I always stand as a defendant in new accusations?’ *Am.* 2.7.1). Opening *in medias res* is uncommon in the *Amores*, but Ovid employs it here to spark emotion in the situation.<sup>50</sup> The humor of the diptych depends

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<sup>49</sup> Watson (1983) 91.

<sup>50</sup> McKeown (1998) 147.

largely on the audience believing the *amator*'s defense in 2.7, and the passion behind it is part of the reason it is so convincing. The *amator* continues to express how tiring Corinna's suspicions are and, after half of the poem, finally states his reason for feeling this way. This section, rhetorically speaking, engages the audience's sympathy and fuels the intensity of the case.<sup>51</sup> The *amator* then ends the rant with an exaggerated metaphor:

nunc temere insimulas credendoque omnia frustra  
ipsa vetas iram pondus habere tuam.  
adspice, ut auritus miserandae sortis asellus  
adsiduo domitus verbere lentus eat!  
*Am. 2.7.13-16*

Now you accuse me rashly and, by believing all things in vain,  
you yourself prohibit your anger from having weight.  
look at how the long-eared ass of pitiable lot,  
constantly subdued by blows, moves slowly.

The *amator* ties the dramatic opening into his argument and, in doing so, signals the beginning of the defense proper.<sup>52</sup> The metaphor here breaks the string of exaggerations and the remainder of the poem consists of the *amator*'s itemized points of contest.

After the *amator* turns Corinna's frequent accusations against her, he mentions Cypassis for the first time (17-18) and gives two more reasons for his innocence. The *amator* claims that he, as a free man, would not sleep with a slave (19-22) and then that she, as Corinna's hair dresser, would be sure to betray him (23-26). Each point in 2.7 is stronger than the last, resulting in a crescendo toward his closing statement. He starts by undermining the prosecutor, adds that the action is beneath his morality, and ends by stating the impossibility of initiating the crime with any chance of success at all. So far Ovid makes the *amator* seem innocent, but the conclusion works against him.

The *amator* ends the poem with an oath swearing that he is not guilty: *per Venerem iuro*

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<sup>51</sup> Watson (1983) 92.

<sup>52</sup> Watson (1983) 94-95.



*puerique volatilis arcus, / me non admissi criminis esse reum!* ('I swear by Venus and by the bow of the winged boy that I am not guilty of the charge!' *Am.* 2.7.27-28). While there is nothing wrong with swearing an oath, there is a problem with the deities to whom this one is sworn: "the ἄφοδίστιος ὄρκος was proverbially worthless" and the notion was already a commonplace in Latin love elegy.<sup>53</sup> Even Ovid himself has already mentioned the 'the lover's oath' in *Amores* 1.8.85-86 and goes on to expand upon the concept in poem *Amores* 3.3.<sup>54</sup> While the oath is not strong enough to reverse the reading of the poem in and of itself, it foreshadows the reversal that follows in 2.8. Ending 2.7 with this oath also gives the poem its climatic finish.

The initially gentle tone of poem 2.8 is then a direct contrast to that of 2.7, and the recipient of the poem is already enough to give the reader an idea of what is happening. In the first four lines Ovid reveals not only that the *amator* is now attempting to placate Cypassis with flattery, but that he has already slept with her before:

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?  
*Am.* 2.8.1-5

Perfect at setting hair in a thousand ways,  
 but worthy to arrange that only of goddesses, Cypassis,  
 and recognized by me as not rustic in delightful deception,  
 attached indeed to your mistress, but more attached to me—  
 who was the informer that our bodies have been united?

Even before the undeniable reveal in line 5, the *amator* is acting suspiciously. The similarity between the first couplet in this poem and the opening address to Nape in *Amores* 1.11, discussed below, hints at the *amator*'s manipulative nature and the sexual overtones of the first four lines are nearly enough to expose the secret themselves. The result of this passage is a rapid build-up

<sup>53</sup> McKeown (1998) 156. Cf. Tib.1.4.21-22.

<sup>54</sup> Watson (1983) 96 refers to an oath sworn to Venus as "the lover's oath."

to the shocking, and therefore humorous, reversal of poem 2.7.

The rest of the poem accentuates just how deceptive and manipulative the *amator* is. In the next section of 2.8, the *amator* places the blame of Corinna's discovery on Cypassis. At first he does so mildly by implying his own innocence: *num tamen erubui? num, verbo lapsus in ullo, / furtivae Veneris conscia signa dedi?* ('Yet surely I did not blush? Surely I did not, having slipped in any one word, give guilty signs of our secret love?' *Am.* 2.8.7-8). Then, after trying to placate her, he accuses her more directly: *ut tamen iratos in te defixit ocellos, / vidi te totis erubuisse genis* ('Yet as she fixed her angry eyes on you, I saw that you blushed by means of all of your cheeks,' *Am.* 2.8.15-16). The poem that began as a gentle seduction has turned to another display of the *amator*'s aptitude for self-preservation.

At the end of his redirection of blame, the *amator* returns to the oath with which 2.7 ended. In one last statement to clear his name, he says:

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!  
*Am.* 2.8.17-20

But how much, if by chance you recall, more promptly I myself  
swore by the great powers of Venus!  
You, goddess, may you bid that the warm south wind bear  
the perjuries of a pure mind through the Carpathian sea!

If there were any lingering doubts as to the falsity of the oath before, the *amator* dispels them here. Yet he makes sure to emphasize his *animus purus*, explicitly stating how he hopes Cypassis will see him. Ovid demonstrates the tradition of such oaths in elegy by drawing heavily upon Tibullus 1.4: *nec iurare time: Veneris periuria venti / inrita per terras et freta summa ferunt* ('And do not be afraid to swear: the winds bear the perjuries of Venus in vain through the lands and deep seas,' Tib. 1.4.21-22). Although the ἀφροδίσιος ὄρκος is only a minor topos exploited

in this diptych, it still creates a connection to Ovid's predecessors.

After fully placing the blame on Cypassis, the *amator* has the audacity to continue trying to seduce her (21-22) and, not surprisingly, she refuses (23). In what is arguably the *amator's* most base manipulation in all of the *Amores*, he then blackmails Cypassis for sex:

quod si stulta negas, index anteacta fatebor,  
et veniam culpa proditor ipse meae,  
quoque loco tecum fuerim, quotiensque, Cypassi,  
narrabo dominae, quotque quibusque modis!  
*Am. 2.8.25-28*

But if you foolishly deny, as informer I will confess the things that passed,  
and I myself will come as the traitor of my own guilt;  
and in which place I was with you, and how many times, Cypassis,  
I will tell our mistress, and in how many ways and which ones!

Such a cruel conclusion to the poem only emphasizes the contrast between 2.8 and the sworn innocence of 2.7. Ovid is depicting the *amator* at his worst as a revelation of the insincerity of his defense. Not only has Ovid added an entire poem that humorously reveals the truth of the *amator's* affair with Cypassis, he has done so in such a way that actually goes beyond playfulness. 2.8 is a strong coda for the deception of 2.7.

Based on what Ovid has accomplished in the *Amores* thus far, the reader should come to expect some play on Ovid's predecessors. Indeed, incongruity takes shape when Ovid's diptych is compared to Propertius 3.15. Both make use of the elegiac topos of an affair involving a slave girl. As Ovid's humor in 2.7 and 2.8 question the *amator's* sincerity, the implications of the diptych encourage a skeptical reading of Propertius. In 3.15, Propertius is defending himself against similar accusations, namely that he has had an affair with a slave girl, Lycinna, and he is persuading Cynthia to spare her. Propertius admits that Lycinna had been his first love *ut mihi praetexti pudor est velatus amictus* ('as the shame of my striped garb was covered up,' Prop. 3.15.3), but claims that the relationship has been finished for some time:

tertius (haud multo minus est) cum ducitur annus,  
vix memini nobis verba coisse decem.  
cuncta tuus sepelivit amor, nec femina post te  
ulla dedit collo dulcia vincla meo.

Prop. 3.15.7-10

When the third (it is hardly less by much) year is led by,  
I scarcely remember that ten words have come together for us.  
Your love has buried all things, and no woman after you  
has given any sweet chains to my neck.

Like Ovid's *amator*, Propertius claims innocence, but hints at his own insincerity. There is nothing necessitating Propertius' addition of *haud multo minus est*, yet he chooses to reveal the inconsistency. While the phrase seems innocent enough in the context of the poem, the fact that Propertius mentions it shows that he is stretching the truth to strengthen his case. The abrupt shift in tone that follows this passage adds to this suspicion.

Propertius' actual defense lasts only these first ten lines and the remainder of the 46-line poem is devoted to convincing Cynthia to be merciful with Lycinna. In a manner typical of Propertius, he introduces a mythological *exemplum* as a precedent. The next 22 lines are an account of Dirce's demise which, according to Propertius, was a result of her acting vindictively toward Antiope, following rumors that Antiope slept with Dirce's husband (11-42). To ensure that Cynthia does not miss the point of his story, he plainly states the warning at the conclusion of the poem:

at tu non meritam parcas vexare Lycinnam:  
nescit vestra ruens ira referre pedem.  
fabula nulla tuas de nobis concitet aures:  
te solam et lignis funeris ustus amem.

Prop. 3.15.43-46

But refrain from troubling undeserving Lycinna:  
Your ruinous wrath does not know how to withdraw.  
May no tale about us inflame your ears:  
may I love only you even when burned by the funeral wood.

It is strange enough that Propertius would devote so much of his poetry to defending Lycinna if indeed nothing had happened between them in almost three years. The poem reaches its most suspicious point, though, in the penultimate line, where Propertius bids Cynthia to ignore any further stories of his infidelity. In a skeptical reading of the poem, it would appear that Propertius is only trying to make future exploits even easier.

Reading Propertius 3.15 this way is not impossible without Ovid's diptych, but Ovid's humorous and emphatic reversal of the *amator's* defense encourages questioning Propertius' sincerity in the related situation. The use and expansion of elegiac topoi connect the implications of the *amator's* insincerity to the related poem. As a result of the *amator's* exposé, Propertius' defense comes across as less convincing. By revealing this reading in a diptych, Ovid is able to show, in the first poem, where the situation originates and, in a separate poem, exactly what he changes to emphasize the frivolity.

*Amores* 1.11 and 1.12 are also two of the more clearly connected poems in the *Amores* and, as the first completed pair, are a significant diptych in that they set the precedent for all that follow. Poem 1.11 rises in a steady crescendo toward an anticipated outcome, and poem 1.12 shatters the expectations leaving the *amator's* sincerity in question. The situation at hand is again a reworking of one of Propertius' poems and the way in which Ovid splits the concept into two parts indicates how Ovid is going beyond the scope of Propertius' original; 1.11 ends with roughly the same positive opinion as Propertius 3.23, but the addition of 1.12 introduces the shift and is therefore Ovid's way of taking his predecessor's work a step further.<sup>55</sup> The similarities and differences between this diptych and Propertius 3.23, humorously emphasized by the reversal in *Amores* 1.12, reveal a moment of insincerity in which both poets are elevating minor entities in order to direct attention away from their poetry.

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<sup>55</sup> Baker (1973) 111.

Both *Amores* 1.11 and 1.12 have the same general construction: they begin with an address to one of Corinna's slaves, Nape, who is acting as the *amator's* courier and then transition to a discussion of the *tabellae* ('writing tablets') which carry his message. In the first poem, he praises Nape and the *tabellae* to an exaggerated degree before Nape carries the *amator's* letter to Corinna. In the second poem, his opinion of both the courier and the *tabellae* is abruptly, and humorously, reversed after Corinna's refusal returns. The harsh criticism in 1.12 is an indication of insincerity in the *amator's* praises in 1.11.

In poem 1.11, the *amator* begins with a long flattering address directed to Nape which, in the end, he only uses to further his own agenda:

Colligere incertos et in ordine ponere crines  
docta neque ancillas inter habenda Nape,  
inque ministeriis furtivae cognita noctis  
utilis et dandis ingeniosa notis  
saepe venire ad me dubitantem hortata Corinnam,  
saepe laboranti fida reperta mihi—  
Am 1.11.1-6

Skilled in gathering uncertain locks and placing them in order,  
and not to be regarded amongst the serving girls, Nape,  
and proven in the useful services of the secret night,  
and naturally suited to giving signs,  
having often urged Corinna, hesitating, to come to me,  
often found faithful to me when I am laboring—

Praise of this sort, seemingly high for a slave, continues through roughly the first half of the poem. When the *amator* mentions his *tabellae*, however, he immediately switches focus. The abrupt shift signals the second half of the poem, which consists of the *amator's* thoughts about his *tabellae* and precisely how they should be brought to Corinna (15-22). He ends the poem by predicting how he will honor his *tabellae* after his victory:

non ego victrices lauro redimire tabellas  
nec Veneris media ponere in aede morer.  
subscribam: "VENERI FIDAS SIBI NASO MINISTRAS

DEDICAT, AT NVPER VILE FVISTIS ACER.”

*Am.* 1.11.25-28

I would not delay to garland the conquering tablets with laurel  
nor to place them in the middle of the temple of Venus.  
I will write: “To Venus Naso dedicates his faithful servants,  
but recently you were common maple wood.”

This conclusion misleads the reader into assuming that the *amator* will be successful. The reality, not presented until the beginning of 1.12, drastically upsets this expectation.

At this point the *amator* has no doubt in his letter, but Ovid does give at least one subtle hint that things may not turn out his way. With the *amator*’s commands to Nape in the second half of the poem, Ovid brings out a bit of the *amator*’s insecurity. The way he gives instruction on how to present his poetry comes across as slightly excessive:

vacuae bene redde tabellas,  
verum continuo fac tamen illa legat.  
adspicias oculos mando frontemque legentis;  
e tacito vultu scire futura licet.  
nec mora, perlectis rescribat multa, iubeto;

*Am.* 1.11.15-19

Give the tablets to her well when she is free,  
But nevertheless make it that she reads them immediately.  
Watch her eyes, I order, and her brow while she reads;  
it is allowed to know things about to happen from a silent face.  
And with no delay order that she, having read it through, write many things back;

Not only must Corinna read it when she is free, but she must reply right away, likely before she has a chance to think properly. In this passage, Nape’s influence is built up and, consequently, the *amator*’s confidence in his *tabellae* diminishes. Although the overwhelming expectation is that he will succeed, Ovid does not end the poem without foreshadowing the opposite conclusion.

*Amores* 1.12, functioning as a coda for the diptych, shows how insincere the *amator*’s praise is. The poem begins after the short amount of time in which Nape has returned with the

*tabellae* bearing Corinna's refusal, and the hopeful *tabellae* have returned not *victrices* ('conquering,' 1.11.25), but *tristes* ('sad,' 1.12.2). The first words of the poem are the woeful *Flete meos casus* ('Weep for my misfortunes,' 1.12.1) and the tone does not get any more optimistic from there. The *amator*'s focus is still on Nape and the *tabellae* but, in his misery, his previous flattery and praise turn to criticism and damnation. Just as he does in 1.11, the *amator* addresses Nape early on:

omina sunt aliquid; modo cum discedere vellet,  
ad limen digitos restitit icta Nape.  
missa foras iterum limen transire memento  
cautius atque alte sobria ferre pedem!  
*Am.* 1.12.3-6

Omens are something; just now when she wished to depart,  
she held out having struck her toes on the threshold.  
Having been sent outdoors again, remember to go across the threshold  
more carefully and, sober, to carry your foot highly!

The *amator*, in a moment of humorous elevation, would have us believe that Nape was the cause of Corinna's refusal. His incongruous use of omens in such a trivial matter emphasizes the accusation.<sup>56</sup> In the *amator*'s chastising command that follows, the presumably decent Nape of 1.11 is now a drunk. By reducing Nape to this level, he portrays her as comparable to the vile *lena* ('procuress') Dipsas of *Amores* 1.8.<sup>57</sup> Her connection to such a character will be revisited below. It is apparent, though, that the *amator*'s opinion of Nape is radically different than he feigned in the earlier poem.

After only two couplets the *amator* abruptly switches his attention from Nape to the *tabellae* once again. Apparently the *tabellae*, which were so instrumental in the first poem, are also responsible for the *amator*'s rejection; the *amator* now hates their very wood and wax. To

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<sup>56</sup> McKeown (1987) 325.

<sup>57</sup> Many of the following connections between these poems (including those between *Amores* 1.11, *Amores* 1.12, and Propertius 3.23) are mentioned in McKeown (1987) 308-336. I will indicate any deviations from McKeown's commentary in additional footnotes.



increase the humor of the reversal, Ovid has the *amator* push the concept to ridiculousness: surely the *cera* ('wax') was blood-tinted, Corsican wax poisoned with hemlock (1.12.9-12) and the *tabellae* must have been made by impure hands from cursed wood that was part of an executioner's tree (1.12.15-20). *Inutile lignum*, as a pointed echo of *nuper vile fuistis acer* (1.11.28), is a particularly effective reversal. Seemingly every cause of the *amator*'s failure is revealed and reviled up through the climax.

The intensity of the poem peaks at its conclusion, which is the culmination of the *amator*'s anger:

aptius hae capiant vadimonia garrula cerae,  
 quas aliquis duro cognitor ore legat;  
 inter ephemeridas melius tabulasque iacerent,  
 in quibus absumptas fleret avarus opes.  
 Ergo ego vos rebus duplices pro nomine sensi.  
 auspicii numerus non erat ipse boni.  
 quid precer iratus, nisi vos cariosa senectus  
 rodat, et immundo cera sit alba situ?

*Am.* 1.12.23-30

More aptly would these waxes seize wordy bails,  
 which some attorney reads with a harsh mouth;  
 Better would they lie between daily tablets,  
 in which a miser weeps over his squandered wealth.  
 Therefore I found you two-faced in situations in accordance with your name.  
 The number itself was not of a good omen.  
 What should I, angry, pray, except that rotten old age  
 gnaw at you, and your wax be white with foul neglect?

Ending with a prayer brings the poem full circle in that it completes the reversal reminiscent of the end of 1.11. The comparatives *aptius* and *melius*, although immediately referring to the preceding lines, oppose the expected dedication of the *tabellae* at the end of 1.11.<sup>58</sup> The *fides tabellae* of that dedication are also now described as *duplices*, a pun that the *amator* humorously restates in the following pentameter. Lastly, the final couplet completes the *amator*'s rant by

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<sup>58</sup> McKeown (1987) 334 accounts for *melius* but does not connect *aptius* to the previous poem.

reducing the significance of the *tabellae* down to the same level as Nape. By praying for them to be taken by old age and whiteness, the *amator* compares the *tabellae* to Dipsas. Ovid, by comparing both Nape and the *tabellae* to the same, base character, further links his representations of both.

Thus the abrupt disdain of both Nape and the *tabellae* reveals insincerity in the *amator*'s attitude in the first poem. Then, by means of specific allusions, Ovid ties this reading to Propertius 3.23. In his poem, Propertius behaves in a manner that is similar to the *amator*'s in *Amores* 1.11: he too exaggerates the importance of his *tabellae*. Instead of sending them away as the *amator* does, though, Propertius laments having lost them (1-2). The poem is largely the poet's attempt to reclaim his beloved *tabellae*. He describes them carefully, contrasting their poor appearance with their intrinsic value (3-10) and their memorable uses with the daily things for which he fears they may be used now (11-20). At the end of the poem, Propertius offers a reward for them and orders his slave to post a notice on some pillar (21-24). By and large, the poem seems straightforward.

The opening couplet, however, contains a small inconsistency in the way that Propertius mentions his poetry: *Ergo tam doctae nobis periere tabellae, / scripta quibus pariter tot periere bona!* ('Therefore such learned tablets are lost to us, with which so many good writings are equally lost!' Prop. 3.23.1-2). Although this seems to be common sense, namely that what is written on missing tablets is missing as well, Propertius explicitly states it. The prominence which he gives his poetry is also strange in the context of the poem. Propertius repeats his use of *periere* for both the *tabellae* and the *scripta*, and includes the adverb *pariter* in order to equate his poetry and the *tabellae*. He even emphasizes the loss of his poetry by framing the pentameter with *scripta...bona*. Yet after the single line, Propertius never again directly mentions the

missing poetry. The remainder of the poem is about the *tabellae*.

This oddity is the driving force behind Ovid's diptych. Through several allusions, Ovid shows how the *amator*'s deception is based on Propertius' model and reveals the insincerity of his praise for the *tabellae*. The *amator* makes use of many of Propertius' lines in both *Amores* 1.11 and 1.12 and their application "reveals that Ovid has not only picked up the theme from Propertius, but also, characteristically, gone one better in several respects in his treatment of it."<sup>59</sup> The second half of Propertius' opening line in 3.23, *nobis periere tabellae*, for example, rhythmically relates to the same portion of Ovid's first line in *Amores* 1.12, *tristes rediere tabellae*. At the same point in which the audience is becoming aware that 1.11 and 1.12 are a diptych, they are given a reminder of Propertius' example and a chance to realize how Ovid is pushing the concept further. Further similarities and key differences between the diptych and Propertius' poem indicate how Ovid uses the humor of 1.11 and 1.12 to recall Propertius' elegy.

The most obvious difference is that the reversal of the *amator*'s initial praises contrasts with Propertius' unwavering affections. By turning the *amator*'s flattery into damnation and relating the situation to Propertius' poem, Ovid is showing how changeable Propertius' notions of sentimentality are. Ovid mentions the *fideles tabellae* of Propertius 3.23.9, for example, in *Amores* 1.11.27 but then calls them *duplices* in *Amores* 1.12.27. Such examples demonstrate how Ovid uses similar language but inverts the implications. While Propertius innocently uses *ligna* ('wood,') to describe the *tabellae* (Prop. 3.23.22), lowering their intrinsic value to emphasize their sentimental value, Ovid turns this word to direct criticism when he calls them *funebria ligna* ('funereal wood,' Am. 1.12.7). Likewise, Propertius' cherished memory that the *tabellae* were used by a *puella garrula* ('talkative girl,' Prop. 3.23.17-18) becomes Ovid's hope that they be used for *vadimonia garrula* ('wordy bails,' Am. 1.12.23), which he mentions as part of a cruel

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<sup>59</sup> Baker (1973) 111.

wish. Part of this wish (*Am.* 1.12.25-26) is itself an inversion of one of Propertius' stated fears: *me miserum, his aliquis rationem scribit avarus / et ponit diras inter ephemeridas!* ('Miserable me, some miser writes his account in them and places them amongst his harsh ledgers!' Prop. 3.23.19-20). In each of these examples, Ovid is turning Propertius' words against him to show how frivolous such an exaggeration really is.

Arguably the more important alteration to Propertius' concept is Ovid's addition of the slave girl, Nape. Propertius 3.23 ends with a command to an unnamed slave, also acting as courier, but no further significance is given to the character: *i puer, et citus haec aliqua propone columna, / et dominum Esquiliis scribe habitare tuum* ('go boy, and quickly display these things on some column, and write that your master lives on the Esquiline,' Prop. 3.23.23-24). Ovid expands this insignificant, nameless role into a key character and in doing so gives the clearest indication of how he is exaggerating Propertius' ridiculousness. As if Propertius' praises of the *tabellae* were not frivolous enough, Ovid gives equal attention to the slave who carries them. He connects Nape to the earlier poem both by incorporating her into the reversal and by transferring his predecessor's very first description of the *tabellae* onto her; Ovid's use of *docta...Nape* in the first couplet of 1.11 directly corresponds to the *tam doctae...tabellae* of Propertius' first line. This allusion shows early on how Ovid is modifying his predecessor's poetry to fit his own ends; he expands a single, undeveloped couplet in the original into a prominent feature in his own poetry.

Nape is given further distinction in 1.11 and 1.12 in that she is the first object of the *amator's* focus in both poems. Ovid begins with his innovation and then falls into the more familiar treatment of the *tabellae*. He makes sure not to over emphasize her character, though, and risk diminishing the connection to Propertius 3.23. In 1.11, she is abruptly replaced by the

*tabellae* when the *amator* says *cetera fert blanda cera notata manu / Dum loquor hora fugit* ('the wax written on by my charming hand bears the rest. While I speak, the hour flees,' *Am.* 1.11.14-15) and in the end the *tabellae* receive the honors in place of *docta...utilis...fida* ('learned...useful...faithful') Nape. In 1.12, the *amator* only devotes four of the thirty lines to her. The majority of the diptych is focused on the *tabellae*, as they are the clearest connection to Propertius' poem.

The way the *amator* treats Nape and the *tabellae*, whether positively or negatively, emphasizes the influence that they have over Corinna's decision. In doing so, the *amator* redirects blame away from the more appropriate cause of his rejection: his poetry. One of the important similarities between Ovid's diptych and Propertius 3.23 is that both mention their poetry only once: Propertius in his second line, and the *amator* in his transition to discussion of the *tabellae* in 1.11. Just as Propertius gives momentary prominence to his *scripta...bona*, the *amator* describes his *cera* as *blanda...notata manu*. Nape and the *tabellae*, although the foci of the diptych, are merely peripherals that accent the *amator*'s only care: his charming poetry. The *amator* shifts the focus as a form of self-preservation in the event that the situation does not work out in his favor: both the praise and the blame are directed away from himself.

By the end of 1.12, the only piece of the ensemble that has escaped criticism is his poetry. In this light, the flattery and detail of 1.11 become insecurity and the wrath in 1.12 becomes a deflection of blame; both instances are moments of insincerity. By placing all blame on Nape and the *tabellae* and not criticizing his poetry at all, Ovid points out an alternate reading of Propertius 3.23: Propertius uses 3.23 not to mourn the loss of his *tabellae*, but to praise his good poetry. How else could the *tabellae* already know how to please girls and how to speak eloquent words (Prop. 3.23.5-6) if not for the *bona scripta* within them? In addition, the *tabellae*'s low

intrinsic value only heightens how valuable Propertius' words were, especially since they always brought about good effects (Prop. 3.23.9-10). The majority of the poem, although focused on the *tabellae*, comments more about what is written in them. Ovid takes this, exaggerates it, and reveals it for what it is: insincere and frivolous.

Each of Ovid's imitations of, and digressions from, Propertius' poem connects the readings of the works in specific ways. This particular form of humor in 1.11 and 1.12 is humor based upon Propertius' model and, as the humorous elaboration and coda in the diptych reveals the insincerity of the *amator*, this humor in 1.11 and 1.12 draws attention to the frivolity of Propertius' poem. The *amator* protects his poetry from being implicated in Corinna's refusal by redirecting the focus of the poems, which are deceptions to begin with. Likewise, Propertius disguises praise of his *bona scripta* as a sad, but insincere longing for his cherished *tabellae*.

While the reversal in 1.11 and 1.12 is similar to the one found in 2.7 and 2.8, not all of Ovid's diptychs follow this pattern. In each of the deception diptychs above, for example, Ovid clearly connects the interdependent poems with the use of a common proper name and by placing the poems next to one another. Some of Ovid's diptychs, mostly the 'contradictions,' are not as obvious. Recognition of these diptychs is in part dependent on the earlier diptychs that are more noticeable; once Ovid has taught his audience to expect diptychs in the *Amores*, with diptychs such as 1.11 and 1.12 being placed in the first book, he is then able to employ variations of them for different effects. In one contradiction, poems 2.19 and 3.4, the two poems are not only separated, but in different books.<sup>60</sup>

The separation of these poems plays a significant part in the reversal that takes place. In poem 2.19, the *amator* requests that the husband of his latest love interest guard her more closely. In poem 3.4, he has switched sides entirely and begs that the husband not guard her so

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. *Am.* 1.4 and 2.5.

well after all. This reversal takes place due to a change in the *amator*'s circumstances, namely that the *vir* has taken his advice. By delaying the second poem of the pair as far as the next book, Ovid allows for a more complete transformation of the *amator*'s situation that strengthens the effect of the diptych. In other words, Ovid lets time pass between the beginning and the conclusion. Ovid reverses the *amator*'s opinion as a result of an altered situation rather than showing an intentional deception, but the result of this diptych is much the same as those above; Ovid demonstrates the *amator*'s insincerity.

In lieu of proximity, 2.19 and 3.4 ironically draw their relatedness from the fact that they share a similar argument.<sup>61</sup> In these two *suasoriae*, Ovid uses almost the same points to support contrasting arguments. The *amator* begins 2.19 by directly stating his purpose:

Si tibi non opus est servata, stulte, puella  
at mihi fac serves, quo magis ipse velim!  
quod licet, ingratum est; quod non licet acrius urit.  
ferreus est, siquis, quod sinit alter, amat.  
speremus pariter, pariter metuamus amantes,  
et faciat voto rara repulsa locum.

*Am.* 2.19.1-6

If there is no need for you, fool, to watch over the girl,  
at least make it that you watch over her for me, so that I want her more!  
That which is allowed is not pleasing; that which is not allowed burns more severely.  
He is made of iron if he in any way loves that which another allows.  
Let us hope equally, equally let us fear, we lovers,  
and may an infrequent rebuff make a place for a pledge.

The *amator* simply wants the *vir* to watch over the *puella* so his desire for her will be stronger. Although this stance at first seems counter-productive to the *amator*'s manner of living, he justifies it quite well: with little challenge, there is little reward.

The majority of the poem reiterates this concept in varied ways. For example, while explaining his plight directly to the *puella*, he says *quidlibet eveniat, nocet indulgentia nobis*— /

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<sup>61</sup> Hardy (1923) 263.

*quod sequitur, fugio; quod fugit, ipse sequor* ('Whatever comes about, the indulgence harms me— what follows, I flee; what flees, I myself follow,' *Am.* 2.19.35-36). Afterward, the *amator* strengthens his point by offering Danae and Io as mythological *exempla*:

si numquam Danaen habuisset aenea turris,  
non esset Danae de Iove facta parens;  
dum servat Iuno mutatam cornibus Io,  
facta est, quam fuerat, gratior illa Iovi.  
*Am.* 2.19.27-30

If the bronze tower had never held Danae,  
Danae would not have been made a parent by Jove;  
While Juno protects Io, having been changed by means of horns,  
she was made more pleasing to Jove than she had been.

Here he mentions the two women to emphasize how their protection only made them more desirable. Furthermore, he characterizes the *vir* as *nimum secure* ('too free from care,' *Am.* 2.19.37) and goes so far as to end the poem by relating him to a *leno*:

quid mihi cum facili, quid cum lenone marito?  
corrumpit vitio gaudia nostra suo.  
quin alium, quem tanta iuvat patientia, quaeris?  
me tibi rivalem si iuvat esse, veta!  
*Am.* 2.19.57-60

What is there for me with an easy man, what with a husband who is a pimp?  
He spoils our joys with his fault.  
Why do you not seek another, whom such great endurance pleases?  
If it pleases you that I am your rival, forbid it!

Ending on such a note not only heightens the sense of the leniency which the *vir* evidently shows, but makes it seem as though the *vir* actually wants the *amator* to seduce his wife. By having such accusations remain unanswered, Ovid leaves the situation at its highest point. A short way into Book 3 he picks it back up with its humorous counterpart.

Although the gap between the poems makes the pair more difficult to connect, Ovid does not leave the audience without a clue that it is coming. In addition to the presence of the other



diptychs that have already been concluded in the *Amores*, Ovid incorporates a couplet in 2.19 that foreshadows his predicament in 3.4: *ei mihi, ne monitis torquear ipse meis!* ('Ah me, may I myself not be tortured by my own warnings!' *Am.* 2.19.34). While the use of *torquear* primarily refers to the suffering that he will endure, it also bears the connotations that his circumstances will be 'turned.' Such language anticipates the twisted conclusion to the reversal.

The first couplet of 3.4, which is indicative of the poem's central argument, shows the contrast between the two poems: *Dure vir, inposito tenerae custode puellae / nil agis; ingenio est quaeque tuenda suo* ('Harsh man, with a guardian placed over your tender girl you accomplish nothing; each must be protected by her own nature,' *Am.* 3.4.1-2). Although the reason for the *amator*'s change of heart is not yet apparent, the reversal in his advice is clear. Instead of, or perhaps in addition to, *stulte* the husband is now *dure* and overly protective of his *puella*, a fact that Ovid emphasizes by opposing his use of *dure vir* with *tenerae... puellae*. The *amator* does not explicitly state his purpose in 3.4 until slightly farther into the poem, when he says:

cui peccare licet, peccat minus; ipsa potestas  
 semina nequitiae languidiora facit.  
 desine, crede mihi, vitia irritare vetando;  
 obsequio vinces aptius illa tuo.  
*Am.* 3.4.9-12

She to whom sinning is allowed, sins less; power itself  
 makes the seeds of wickedness rather weak.  
 Cease, believe me, to provoke the faults by forbidding;  
 you will conquer those things more neatly with your compliance.

This advice picks up on, and continues, the final threat of 2.19. There the *amator* threatens that the affair will end unless the *vir* watches over her more carefully; here he says that the affair will end only if the *vir*'s guard lessens. In both instances the *vir* has the capability of producing the same end, but the means by which he can do so have humorously switched.

Several points in poem 3.4 mirror those in 2.19. When the *amator* offers that *Quidquid*

*servatur cupimus magis, ipsaque furem / cura vocat; pauci, quod sinit alter, amant* ('Whatever is protected we desire more, and care itself calls to the thief; few love that which another allows,' *Am.* 3.4.25-26), the couplet is a direct reference to the first two couplets of 2.19, with *quod sinit alter* repeated but in contrasting circumstances. Ovid reverses 2.19.3 in the same way when he uses a similar phrase in 3.4: *nitimur in vetitum semper cupimusque negata* ('We always strive for a forbidden thing and desire things denied' *Am.* 3.4.17). Even Danae makes a reappearance in 3.4: *in thalamum Danae ferro saxoque perennem / quae fuerat virgo tradita, mater erat* ('Danae, who had been handed over as a virgin into the everlasting bedroom of iron and stone, was a mother' *Am.* 3.4.21-22). Instead of emphasizing her desirability as in 2.19, here the *amator* appropriately mentions the fact that her protection was unsuccessful. In each of these instances, along with others, the *amator* uses the concepts from 2.19 to argue against her protection instead of for it. Such close parallelism, typical in rhetorical *suasoriae*, demonstrates intentionality behind the comparison. The result of the diptych is the same fickleness seen in the earlier poems that Ovid uses to show the *amator*'s insincerity. If the same point can be used to support contradictory arguments, Ovid means only to play with the concept to show its frivolity.

Lastly, the conclusion of 3.4 relates to that of 2.19 as well. The primary motif that returns, though not explicitly stated, is the comparison between *vir* and *leno*:

Si sapis, indulge dominae vultusque severos  
 exue, nec rigidi iura tuere viri,  
 et cole quos dederit—multos dabit—uxor amicos.  
 gratia sic minimo magna labore venit;  
 sic poteris iuvenum convivia semper inire  
 et, quae non dederis, multa videre domi.  
*Am.* 3.4.43-48

If you are wise, give in to your mistress and take off  
 the stern countenances, and do not uphold the rights of the stiff husband,  
 and cherish those friends which your wife will have given—she will give many.  
 Thus great favor comes with very little work;

Thus you will always be able to go into the feasts of young men  
and to see many things at home which you will not have given.

Although the *vir* is not directly called a *leno* as in the first poem, the connotations are clear enough; the *amator* is encouraging a man to offer up a woman to others in return for favors, invitations, and gifts. Without using the term itself, though, the insult diminishes.

Up through the poem's conclusion the humorous reversal of 2.19 is detectable. The insincerity generated by this humor is therefore an important feature of the diptych as a whole, and depends upon the topoi exploited here. Specifically, 2.19 and 3.4 are Ovid's novel and witty approach to the topos of the *paraclausithyron*, a situation in which the lover is locked out of his *puella*'s house.<sup>62</sup> At one point in 2.19 the *amator* breaks from advising the *vir* to address the *puella* directly and, in this unique moment, he directly states that the topos is in place:

Tu quoque, quae nostros rapuisti nuper ocellos,  
saepe time insidias, saepe rogata nega;  
et sine me ante tuos proiectum in limine postis  
longa pruinosa frigora nocte pati.  
*Am. 2.19.19-22*

You also, who have recently captured my eyes,  
often fear traps, often deny when asked;  
and allow me, thrown out on the threshold before your doorposts,  
to suffer long frosts in the rimy night.

This topos is the source of the large scale expectation which Ovid upsets with the diptych. The *amator*'s outrageous argument in 2.19 and its humorous reversal in 3.4 are an exaggerated moment of frivolity; the *exclusus amator* ('excluded lover') wants in while the *nimum inclusus amator* ('too much included lover') wants out. Ovid again combines his humor with allusions to both Propertius and Tibullus.

The allusion, however, has slightly different results than those seen thus far; the topos of the *exclusus amator* is actually not the allusion, as we would expect based upon the other poems

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. *Am.* 1.6.

in this analysis. Instead, the more general concept of ridiculousness is what Ovid draws attention to. Both Propertius and Tibullus have a poem in which they take a preposterous stance. Ovid draws upon his predecessors in the very first couplet of *Amores* 2.19, which recalls Tibullus 1.6, in which the poet directly asks the *vir* to be allowed access to the *puella*: *at tu, fallacis coniunx incaute puellae, / me quoque servato, peccet ut illa nihil* ('But you, incautious spouse of a treacherous girl, watch me also, so that she never sins,' Tib. 1.6.15-16). While *Amores* 2.19 exaggerates this single thought in a ridiculous manner, Tibullus goes on to ask that he be appointed as the *puella*'s guardian: *at mihi si credas, illam sequar unus ad aras* ('But if you trust me, I alone will follow her to the altars,' Tib. 1.6.23).<sup>63</sup> For a lover to ask the husband for such a thing, especially amidst confessing all of his crimes (9-14; 25-36), is absolutely insane. Ovid demonstrates this absurdity by emulating it in his own way.

Propertius also expresses a similar concept in a rather strange way. In Propertius 3.8, the poet praises Cynthia for assaulting him the day before, *nam sine amore gravi femina nulla dolet* ('For no woman grieves without heavy love,' Prop. 3.8.10). His masochism leads to a proposed scenario where love cannot exist apart from strife. Two sections in this poem are alluded to in *Amores* 2.19, both of which pick up on the notion that love needs hardship to thrive. Firstly, Propertius asserts that *non est certa fides, quam non in iurgia vertas* ('No faith is certain, which you do not turn to quarrels' Prop. 3.8.19), which is picked up by Ovid in *pinguis amor nimiumque patens in taedia nobis / vertitur et, stomacho dulcis ut esca, nocet* ('A well-fed and too open love turns to weariness for us and harms us, as sweet food harms the stomach,' *Am.* 2.19.25-26). Both poets claim that love should be often put to the test. Propertius likewise states that *odi ego quae numquam pungunt suspiria somnos: / semper in irata pallidus esse velim*, ('I hate sighs which never puncture sleep: I would wish to always be pale because of an angry

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. Tib. 1.6.37.

woman,' Prop. 3.8.27-28), which Ovid draws on in his *nil metuam? per nulla traham suspiria somnos?* ('Shall I fear nothing? Shall I draw no sighs through sleep?' *Am.* 2.19.55). Each of these statements seems counterproductive to the lovers' goal of sleeping with the *puella*, yet both poets justify their claims. Based on the functions of Ovid's other diptychs, it is likely that Ovid exaggerates his situation in part to show how ridiculous Propertius' claims are.

In all of Ovid's diptychs, the moments of the *amator*'s self-indictments and contradictions are carefully wrought passages that humorously state Ovid's points. In these moments, Ovid shatters the illusion of a credible narrator and teaches the audience the reality, or lack thereof, in his elegy. His use of a diptych to convey the same types of thoughts as in the catalogs and elaborations show how varied Ovid's humor is. The closely paired diptychs shed light on those not so closely paired, and the resulting product is a humorously emphasized revelation of frivolity. On the surface, these reversal pairs come across as witty and humorous constructions, but Ovid's use of them is part of why the *Amores* are at once his culminating and destructive additions to the genre of Latin love elegy.

## Conclusion

Upon analyzing examples of Ovid's humor individually, it seems clear how they are related and just what they accomplish. In each of the extensive catalogs, elaborations, and diptychs in the *Amores*, Ovid exaggerates situations that are incongruous with their outcomes and then reveals that he has done so. The inappropriate length of these passages heightens the incongruity, and the unexpected conclusions alter the reading of the work as a whole. The exaggerated tone is thus an illusion meant only to be shattered for the sake of making a statement. Ovid, by intentionally misleading the reader to such an extent, strengthens the reversal and makes his commentary all the more vivid.

The emphatic point in this aspect of Ovid's humor is the moment at which the revelation of incongruity occurs: the coda. Without these reversals, the *Amores* would not have the same effect. The Ovidian coda is the point at which Ovid goes a step further than his predecessors; he takes the underlying humor, that which usually remains undisclosed in Propertius and Tibullus, and makes it apparent. The affair with Cypassis in 2.8, the *amator's* lack of remorse in 1.7, his failure to persuade the river in 3.6, *et cetera* all demonstrate a point where Ovid could have left the outcome ambiguous but chose not to. The Ovidian coda demonstrates Ovid's intention behind making serious statements in a humorous manner.

Ovid often uses incongruity-based humor to draw attention to imperfections in elegy by exaggerating them. Thus the humor in these situations is primarily ironic in nature. Ovid portrays the *amator* as insincere and his actions as futile by explicitly stating when he contradicts himself and accentuating his powerlessness, respectively. The *amator's* characterization as such a base and helpless figure highlights the humor of his very existence. Ovid's frivolity is more the result of this skilled impersonation than a reflection of the author behind the mask. The frivolity

expressed by the *amator* also reaches out from the *Amores* in that Ovid alludes to specific situations in Propertius' and Tibullus' poems that relate to the humorous moments in the *Amores*. He thus links the implications of his humor to the similar moments in their poetry, whether with names, concepts, or topoi. The *Amores* are thus more than an artful reworking of previous themes; they are a commentary.

Ovid reveals the frivolity of the *Amores* in two primary forms: insincerity and futility. The *amator*'s aptitude for deceit on multiple occasions results in a general sense of insincerity in the work. The deception-based diptychs are perhaps the most conspicuous examples, and of them the Cypassis poems are by far the most effective in terms of the genuine surprise generated by the reversal. The skill with which the *amator* refutes Corinna's accusations in 2.7 leads to an emphatic revelation of deception when Ovid disappoints the assertion of innocence in 2.8. Intermittently, in both poems, Ovid's use of concepts that are similar to Propertius 3.15 invites a comparison between his and his predecessor's works. A closer look shows how Ovid has taken Propertius' concept, here his claimed innocence, expanded it and then whimsically indicated the untruth in the matter. Ovid is not pointing fingers at Propertius, but rather laughing at the frivolity of it all.

It stands to reason that Ovid's diptychs would be the clearest examples of insincerity; separating one concept into two poems allows for a more convincing deception. The effect of the false expectation is exponentially increased when it remains through to the end of an entire poem. By the time the conclusion comes about, the audience has likely already accepted the first poem as the end of the situation. Even in the contradictory diptychs, devoting entire poems to contrasting points of view emphasizes the incongruity of doing so. Ovid's diptychs are key components in his ironic humor. Likewise, his catalogs lead to the strongest implications of

futility. Catalogs, as lists of examples, are meant to be authoritative or even persuasive. By using them for the opposite effect, Ovid humorously emphasizes their incongruity.

A clear example of futility in the *Amores* is the catalog of rivers in poem 3.6. The *amator* struggles to sway a stream to his cause but is ultimately unable. The extensive nature of his argument then only heightens the effect of its failure. Moreover, the *amator* admits that his argument is null and void yet inexplicably persists despite his knowledge. Without having the *amator* draw attention to his inability or without having him so emphatically prove it, Ovid runs the risk of his statement passing unnoticed. Ovid creates this paradox so that the *amator* reveals the futility of his own actions in the clearest way possible. Therefore the humor of the situation is not the end result, but a means of commenting on his predecessors' poetry. The *amator's* catalog of rivers in 3.6, by means of intentionally misconstrued allusions to instances in Propertius 1.13 and 3.19, undermines Propertius' frequent use of mythological *exempla*.

Underlying Ovid's statements on these larger concepts are the people, places, and events that, by Ovid's time, have become commonplaces in elegy. These elegiac topoi connect the *Amores* to the tradition of Latin love elegy, and many of Ovid's allusions to his predecessors are made through specific uses of them. These commonplaces create a sense of familiarity and unity that, as they accumulate, begin to form the larger classification of 'genre.' When Ovid uses elegiac topoi in his humor, he broadens the scope of his commentary to the elegiac genre. The *Amores* are thus a humorous glance into the inner workings of elegy as a whole. In order to reveal the state of Latin love elegy as a genre, he wrote it himself.

Ovid is not criticizing his predecessors for writing the way they did, nor is he passing harsh judgment on the genre; he is neither cynic nor satirist. Ovid exaggerates the very aspects of elegy that endear it and, in doing so, more appropriately assumes the role of parodist. Ironically,



Latin love elegy still seems to react quite negatively to Ovid's fun, for no major elegist emerges afterward. In an effort to explain this sudden death of a genre, or fall from prominence, Luck claims that "by trying to infuse new life into this art-form, Ovid destroyed the mystery which Propertius and Tibullus had maintained so jealously; the twilight which they had created could not survive the dazzling fireworks of Ovid." Given the deliberate manner in which Ovid emphasizes his own frivolity and comments on Propertius and Tibullus, I simply cannot agree with the notion that Ovid destroyed his predecessors' sense of mystery in an attempt to resurrect the genre. Rather, in his own playful way, Ovid displays that the genre was being sustained by mere illusions, and in their destruction he reveals how hollow and lifeless it had become. Therefore Ovid does not kill elegy, but rather humorously rewrites it to show us that it was already dead.

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