

STUDIEN ZUR DEUTSCHEN  
LITERATUR

Band 127

Herausgegeben von Wilfried Barner, Richard Brinkmann  
und Conrad Wiedemann



Eric Downing

# Artificial I's

The Self as Artwork in Ovid,  
Kierkegaard, and Thomas Mann



Max Niemeyer Verlag Tübingen 1993

Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

*Downing, Eric:*

Artificial I's : the Self as Artwork in Ovid, Kierkegaard, and Thomas Mann / Eric Downing. – Tübingen : Niemeyer, 1993

(Studien zur deutschen Literatur ; Bd. 127)

NE: GT

ISBN 3-484-18127-3    ISSN 0081-7236

© Max Niemeyer Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, Tübingen 1993

Das Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt. Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des Verlages unzulässig und strafbar. Das gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen, Mikroverfilmungen und die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in elektronischen Systemen.

Printed in Germany.

Satz, Druck und Einband: Allgäuer Zeitungsverlag GmbH, Kempten

# Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introduction . . . . .  | I   |
| Chapter 1: Ovid and the <i>Ars Amatoria</i>                           |     |
| I. The Problem . . . . .  | 6   |
| II. The didactic imitation . . . . .                                  | 15  |
| III. The elegiac imitation . . . . .                                  | 26  |
| IV. Book I and the <i>nullus pulvis</i> principle . . . . .           | 39  |
| V. Book II and the <i>servitium artis</i> . . . . .                   | 48  |
| VI. Book III and the anti-Pygmalion principle . . . . .               | 57  |
| Appendix: <i>Amores</i> III,2 and <i>Ars</i> I, 135–162 . . . . .     | 71  |
| Chapter 2: Kierkegaard and the »Diary of the Seducer«                 |     |
| I. Kierkegaard and the <i>Ars Amatoria</i> . . . . .                  | 75  |
| II. Literary form and personal identity . . . . .                     | 82  |
| III. Johannes' life as literature . . . . .                           | 91  |
| IV. The dialectic of self-fashioning . . . . .                        | 101 |
| V. Cordelia and the anti-Pygmalion principle . . . . .                | 112 |
| Chapter 3: Thomas Mann and the early <i>Felix Krull</i>               |     |
| I. Manolescu in the mirror . . . . .                                  | 128 |
| II. Inheritance and imitation: Goethe in <i>Felix Krull</i> . . . . . | 145 |
| III. Interlude: the new and novel play between . . . . .              | 163 |
| IV. Felix's retrospective life as literature . . . . .                | 169 |
| V. Felix's dialectic of self-fashioning . . . . .                     | 184 |
| VI. Conscription . . . . .  | 196 |
| Chapter 4: Thomas Mann and the late <i>Felix Krull</i>                |     |
| I. »Wiederkehr« . . . . .   | 208 |
| II. »Das zitathafte Leben« . . . . .                                  | 218 |
| Conclusion . . . . .  | 236 |
| Bibliography . . . . .  | 238 |



## Introduction

In his recent study of Nietzsche's aestheticism entitled *Life as Literature*, Alexander Nehamas poses the following question: »How can one achieve the perfect unity and freedom that are primarily possessed by perfect literary characters? How does one become both a literary character who really exists and also that character's very author?«<sup>1</sup> It is a startling question, one that engenders its own questions sooner than answers. Why should one *want* to become a literary character as well as that character's author, instead of simply »who one is«? What happens to someone who takes up the challenge? Does he remain real, or does he become a fiction? or if both, as »a literary character who really exists« suggests, what does the fictionalization do to the reality, the self? And is it really so desirable, so harmless a project as Nehamas' confident formulation suggests? What, rather, are its hidden costs, its secret perils? and even more, its privilege and vaunted freedom?

These are some of the major issues which I explore in this study of three relatively minor works by three major authors: Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, Kierkegaard's »Diary of the Seducer,« and Thomas Mann's *Felix Krull*. All three feature protagonists who are at once seducers, aesthetes, and fiction-making artists, who individually undertake to live »by art,« »poetically« and »im Gleichnis,« and who in doing so all undertake to fashion something of a literary artwork out of the self. Kierkegaard and Ovid also present a variation on the project that I consider for comparative purposes, namely the attempt to fashion a literary artwork out of another, out of the woman who in each case is the object of the protagonist's aesthetic and erotic designs. As we shall see, this variation shares in and in some ways further accentuates many of the ambivalences evident in the collusion of life and literature that the protagonist enacts in his own character.

Since all three works are themselves literary artworks, I also explore a dimension not explicitly included in Nehamas' program, namely the self-conscious interplay between the author's own project of book-making and his character's project of self-making. Each work is a minor masterpiece in the literary mode that Robert Alter describes as »self-conscious fiction«: each calls systematic, even

---

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 195.

ostentatious attention to its condition and operation of literary artifice, and in doing so initiates its own exploration into the often problematic relationship between real-seeming fiction and »reality.«<sup>2</sup> The juxtaposition of these two dimensions, of the author's and the character's literary projects, proves essential to the significance of each in each work. On the one hand, because the obtruded emphasis on the operations of the author's literary fiction in each case fuses with the actual fictional undertaking of its protagonist, each work's deliberately and playfully exposed artifice always remains seriously engaged in issues arising out of real life. On the other hand, because the two projects nonetheless take place in different realms, the test is constantly set as to whether or not the operations of literary fiction-making can be successfully transposed to the other, living sphere: whether what works for literature and literary characters also works for real life and human beings, or whether a tension issuing from the possible incommensurability of life and literature threatens to subvert the protagonist's conflation of the two spheres, even as it sustains the author's own.

There is one more dimension to these three works and their respective interactions of life and literature that I explore. Since in each work the author inserts between his book-making and his character's self-making a first person narrator, I also consider how, at yet another level of the text, the two projects compete and collaborate, as the author makes a self while the self makes a book – of the self.

The first section of the Ovid chapter is designed to introduce most of the formal and thematic features of the literary problem the study as a whole addresses. I would like here simply to preface that introduction with a few general points about both my methodology and my choice of texts. It will be noted that I engage many issues which are of concern to both contemporary literary criticism and theory. The formative influence especially of Robert Alter's *Partial Magic*, Marthe Robert's *The Old and the New*,<sup>3</sup> and Alexander Nehamas' *Life as Literature* is readily and directly evident, that of theorists such as Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, and Ricoeur implicitly and indirectly so. Like Alter and Robert, I am particularly concerned with the »quixotic« task that sets out to test the world and conventions of literature against the world and claims of real life. In fact, the protagonists I discuss could all be described as a specific variant of the Don Quixote figure, insofar as they are all secret Don Quixotes, all secretly turning their lives into literary events. This variant alone sufficiently distinguishes my project from theirs, but that I place at the beginning of my study not Cervantes (as do both Alter and Robert) but rather Ovid also contributes something new, especially insofar as it resets the roots of self-conscious fiction in classical antiquity itself,

---

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Robert Alter, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. x.

<sup>3</sup> Marthe Robert, *The Old and the New: From Don Quixote to Kafka*. tr. Carol Cosman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).



and so indirectly questions some of the basic premises about »modernity« which underlie each of their approaches.

On the other hand, like Nehamas and many other modern theorists, I am especially interested in the ways the »I« can be constructed and deconstructed along the same lines as literary texts, in particular the literary texts in which these »I«s themselves appear. As a result, my analyses of these three texts and their protagonists take place in a context largely fashioned by my readings in contemporary literary theory. If my discussion nonetheless proceeds without explicitly engaging overtly theoretical issues, the reason is that I am interested in the *testing* of these contemporary concerns within specific texts, in the consequences of these issues when they are fleshed out and enacted by the literary imagination of different writers writing in different times and in different literary traditions. Perhaps the best justification for my methodological specificity comes in the surprisingly different and often darker conclusions at which this study arrives from those of, for example, Nehamas' more cleanly theoretical approach. These conclusions are different not only from those of Nehamas, but also for each work considered, providing a range of possibilities to the realization of life as literature such as no single theoretical position could easily anticipate or accommodate.<sup>4</sup>

The texts I have chosen to provide that range belong to widely separated historical and literary-historical contexts. Ovid's *Ars* is a product of the late Augustan period of Roman literature, written in elegiac couplets and drawing on the conventions of both Latin love-elegy and didactic verse. Kierkegaard's »Diary« is a product of the late or even post-Romantic period of nineteenth century Danish and German culture, written in the form of and drawing on the conventions of the prose novella, the diary, and the early epistolary novel. Thomas Mann's *Felix Krull* is a product of both pre-World War I and, in its continuance, post-World War II German culture, written first as a novella exploiting the conventions of the

---

<sup>4</sup> Besides the notably muted engagement with issues of (mostly) French theory, there is an equally notable, and equally muted, engagement with issues of (mostly) Anglo-American theory, namely: with the issues of »improvisation« that are central to Stephen Greenblatt's notions of self-fashioning, and with those of the interplay of literary aesthetics and social ideologies that are central to Terry Eagleton's school of thought. Each of the protagonists I discuss prominently displays the skills and strategies of improvisation, impudently displacing and absorbing the terminology of the reigning value systems of their times in order to subvert those same systems. Cf. Stephen Greenblatt, »The Improvisation of Power,« in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: Form More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 222–254, esp. p. 230. And each work makes clear the connections between the operant literary values and the contemporary social values within which the protagonist moves. See Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford, Cambridge MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), esp. pp. 1–12. If I nonetheless do not overtly pursue these aspects of my protagonists' projects, and instead subordinate them to my concern with personal identity and fiction, this is simply because my own critical interests happen to be so constituted.

»Bildungsroman« and then later expanded to a novel in something closer to the picaresque mode. Despite these diverse origins, however, the works have significant connections which, I think, justify their grouping. This is true in the simple sense that Kierkegaard quotes and borrows fairly consequentially from Ovid's *Ars*; that Mann's earliest notes to *Felix Krull* identify Kierkegaard's »Diary« as a potential model for his own project; or that Kierkegaard's text seems to have had a formative influence on the late *Krull* as well. These more or less explicit connections have all been noted in the secondary literature on Kierkegaard and Mann, respectively, but until this study no one has pursued them in any extensive way.

More importantly, the grouping of these three texts is motivated by the similarity in the literary problem each addresses and by the variety in conclusions to that problem at which each one arrives. All explore the attempt to fashion a literary artwork out of the self, but in each case the specific historical context of both the author and work yields different conceptions of the benevolence of fiction and literary imitation, of the intransigence of the »reality« of the self, and so too of the ultimate reconcilability of the realms of life and literature. An implicit argument that runs throughout this study is that changing conceptions of the nature of personal identity account for a recognizable historical development in the attitudes toward the artificial »I.« Put simply, we can say that in Ovid a strongly classical sense of the natural self undermines efforts at refashioning the »I« by literary strategies. In Kierkegaard, a more Romantic sense of the fragmented, disunified self makes such literary refashioning no longer impossible. In the early *Krull*, a Nietzschean sense of the self as a fictional construct casts literary fashioning into a crucial, paradigmatic role; and in the late *Krull*, a mythical-textual model for the unconscious makes literary imitation and artificial »I«'s unavoidable operations and conditions.<sup>5</sup> It is, then, the specific illumination that the project of the artificial, literary I brings to the problem of personal identity in each work and period, and that the range of possible, historical responses brings to the common theoretical issue of life as literature that provide the initial justification for this study. What follows, I hope, provides more.<sup>6</sup>

Small portions of the book have already appeared, in somewhat different form, as articles. Part of the first chapter was published as »Anti-Pygmalion: The

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps it goes without saying that the artificial »I« fashioned by each protagonist reflects not only the notion of personal identity operant at the time, but also the notion of literary form. Thus in Ovid, the attempt is to construct an elegy-derived self, in Kierkegaard a Romantically »poetic« self, in the early *Krull* »ein romanhaftes Leben« and in the late *Krull* a »mythical« self. Thus, it is not only a different notion of reality that is at stake in each case, but a different notion of fiction as well, and the latter contributes perhaps as much to the eventual success or failure of the collusion as does the former.

<sup>6</sup> No doubt some readers at this point and many more later on will wonder why I neglected to include in this study a discussion of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. I can only plead that the study is long as it is, and urge the reader to keep Nabokov in mind, especially while reading the chapters on the »Diary« and the late *Felix Krull*.

Praeceptor in *Ars Amatoria*, Book 3 « in *Helios* 17,2 (1990), and part of the second as »Ovid's Danish Disciple: Kierkegaard as Reader of the *Ars Amatoria*« in *Pacific Coast Philology* 23,1-2 (1988). I am grateful to the editors and publishers of these journals for their permission to reprint this material in revised and expanded form. I would also like to thank the publishers of the Loeb Classical Library for their permission to use the translations from Ovid: *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, translated by J. H. Mozley and revised by G. P. Goold, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979; and from Ovid: *Heroides and Amores*, translated by Grant Showerman and revised by G. P. Goold, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977.

Special thanks are due to Blake Lee Spahr, William S. Anderson, and especially Richard Brinkmann, whose encouragement and guidance were invaluable throughout this project. I also wish to thank the many friends and colleagues who read parts or all of the manuscript along the way and offered useful advice and criticism: George Avery, Elisabeth Bronfen, Dorrit Cohn, Nancy Daukas, Chris Downing, Margret Guillemin, Robert Holub, Judith Ryan, Charles Segal, Richard Tarrant, Maria Tatar, and Ken Weisinger. Finally, I wish to thank my father, George V. Downing, for his endless help with my computer.

## Chapter 1: Ovid and the *Ars Amatoria*

### I. The Problem

A. S. Hollis has called the *Ars Amatoria* »in every sense the most artificial of Ovid's creations.«<sup>1</sup> The description is primarily pointed at the »glittering surface« of the poem, at its aggressively advertised condition and operation of artifice: at its elaborate labyrinth of ironies and verbal wit; at its parodic juxtaposition of the conventions of didactic verse and love-elegy, whose highly stylized subject-matter assured that the poem »had only a tenuous and intermittent connexion with real life«; and at its invention of a narrative *persona* whose own parody comprises one of the chief delights of the poem.<sup>2</sup> All such ostentatious, even systematic flaunting of the fiction as an authorial construct, set up against a background not of »reality« but rather of literary convention and tradition, has contributed to a characterization of the *Ars* as frivolous, self-indulgent, and merely clever: as a comic tour de force concerned only with cunningly devised verbal designs and deeply uninterested in the serious business of »real life.«<sup>3</sup>

But the *Ars* is »artificial« in another, equally essential sense. It takes as its subject the pursuit of what we can call artificial love, and therein engages its would-be practitioner in a labyrinth of ironies, an exploitation of literary convention and an adoption of performing *personae* in every way analogous to its own, poetic enterprise. For this reason – that the obtruded emphasis on the verbal edifice, the borrowed trappings of literary tradition, etc., fuse so essentially with the actual fictional predicaments and undertakings of the poem's protagonists, with the way they construe and construct their worlds – the poem's deliberately exposed artifice, far from isolating or eliminating it from any serious engagement with issues arising out of »real life,« can be seen as the necessary precondition and reflexive expression of its consequent exploration into the very real and serious, problematic relationship between real-seeming artifice and reality, between literature and life.

---

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Hollis, »*Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*,« in *Ovid*, ed. J. W. Binns, (London, 1973), p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Even by its admirers such as Hollis or R. Durling (see below, note 13).

A central aspect of that exploration into the often precarious interaction between fiction and reality is its concern with the student's attempt – or rather, the praeceptor's attempt through the student, and a significantly different attempt for the male and female student – to fashion something of an elegy-derived, literary artwork out of him- (or her-) self, to regulate his life by the rules and *ratio* of *ars*, to construct an artificial I. It is this aspect of the poem's exploration on which I intend to focus in the following discussion of the interplay between the poet's and his would-be lover's respective enterprises.

\*

The functional identity between the activity of the poet and lover is nothing new to the tradition of Roman elegy, and is of course central to Ovid's immediate predecessor in the genre, Propertius. What is new to Ovid, radically new, is the conception of the kind of art practiced, the aesthetic elements correlative to the erotic condition, and thus, too, the fundamental significance and even soundness of the conflation of the two spheres. For Propertius, one begins with the girl – »*Cynthia prima*« are the first words to his oeuvre – because one begins with love.<sup>4</sup> Love comes as an overwhelming, often violent force, an involuntary obsession »which carries the poet by storm; he has little choice as to whom he falls in love with, and little freedom of manoeuvre once he has succumbed.«<sup>5</sup> Once under the sway of his uncontrollable, controlling passion, he finds himself cut off from traditionally more honorable activities in either the political or military spheres, and likewise from traditionally more honorable modes of poetry such as political panegyric or heroic epic, and confined instead to the infinitely less serious and respectable private sphere, to love and elegy. The same *puella*, or *domina*, dictates his exclusive activity in both spheres, his person in both roles. It is the inescapable dependency of the poet's output on the lover's passion that the identity underscores. Nor, of course, is the identity and dependency only expressed or experienced in such negative, limiting terms. Rather, the passion the beloved inspires, even the beloved herself, becomes the absolutely sufficient source for the poet's inspiration; it guarantees both the sincerity and, in the most meaningful sense of the term, originality of his art. »*Non haec Calliope, non haec mihi cantat Apollo,*« Propertius claims, »*ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit*« (»It is not Calliope nor Apollo who sings to me these songs,/ It is the girl herself who makes my talent«). Cynthia herself provides the poetic impulse, the imaginative drive equally at work in the artist and the lover.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> References to Propertius follow the text of E. A. Butler, *Sexti Properti, Carmina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960). The translations are my own.

<sup>5</sup> Hollis (Binns), p. 94. See also A. W. Allen, »Elegy and the Classical Attitude toward Love: Propertius I,1.« *Yale Classical Studies* 11 (1950) 255–77.

<sup>6</sup> Propertius II,1, 3f. Cf. Tibullus II,5,11ff.; *Heroides* XV, 206. References to Tibullus follow the text of J. P. Postgate, *Tibulli Aliorumque Carminum Libri Tres* (Oxford:

Like Propertius, Ovid in the *Ars* begins with a disclaimer, saying that neither Apollo nor any one of the Muses has taught him his task. But unlike Propertius, no passion or beloved is put forth as the new motivation for his art. Rather, drawing on the language of didactic verse, Ovid substitutes something he calls *usus*:<sup>7</sup>

non ego, Phoebe, datas a te mihi mentiar artes,  
nec nos aerae voce monemur avis,  
nec mihi sunt visae Clio Cliusque sorores  
servanti pecudes vallibus, Ascra, tuis:  
usus opus movet hoc: vati parete perito;  
vera canam: coeptis, mater Amoris, ades. (I,25–30)

I will not falsely claim that my art is your gift, Phoebus, nor am I prompted by the voice of a bird of the air, neither did Clio and Clio's sisters appear to me while I kept flocks in your vale, Ascra: *usus* inspires this work: give ear to an experienced bard; true will be my song: favour my enterprise, mother of Love!

Exactly how »*usus*« is to be understood, and so exactly what is to be taken as the foundation of the praecceptor's art, is a rather slippery subject. The most common translation is »personal experience,« and in some sense this is surely right; but then »personal experience« must first be qualified by contrast with its Propertian precedent. *Usus* as personal experience is not deeply felt, all-controlling passion which inspires and shapes one's poetic output. In fact, the substitution of *usus* for such a passion is indicative of the magister's entire enterprise, which specifically designs to eliminate passion and »personal experience« from the field, or fields, of action. We can even say that, insofar as passion and personal impulse do inspire his »art,« his art fails. Thus in some sense, Ovid reverses – or rather, his praecceptor strives to reverse – the Propertian identity of »personal experience« and poetry, and so too the traditional link between lover and poet.

Rather, *usus* stresses an aspect of experience far more impersonal, even scientific: experience as practice. Vergil uses the word to explain why Jove made uneasy the way of husbandry, »ut varias *usus* meditando extunderet artis« (»so that practice, by taking thought, might [gradually] hammer out diverse arts«). Lucretius likewise uses it to explain the development of man's diverse arts, »*carmina picturas, et daedala signa polire, / usus et impigrae simul experientia mentis/paul-*

---

Oxford University Press, 1915); those to the *Heroides* that of Grant Showerman, *Ovid. Heroides and Amores*, ed. and rev. by G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977). For a detailed discussion of the topos of poetic inspiration among classical poets, see Steele Commager, *The Odes of Horace: A Critical Study*, (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1967), pp. 2–16.

<sup>7</sup> Except where otherwise noted, references to the *Ars Amatoria*, *Remedia Amoris*, and *Amores* follow the text of E. J. Kenney, *P. Ovidi Nasonis, Amores, Medicamina faciei femineae, Ars amatoria, Remedia amoris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961). Translations, with occasional emendations, are taken from J. H. Mozley, *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, ed. and rev. by G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979) and from Grant Showerman, *Heroides and Amores*.

*atim docuit pedetemptim progredientis* («poetry and pictures, artfully wrought polished statues, all these as men progressed gradually step by step were taught by practice and the experiments of an active mind»). And later on in the *Ars*, Ovid uses it to explain the advantage of older women, »*adde, quod est illis operum prudentia maior, solus et artifices qui facit, usus adest*« («Add this, that they have greater acquaintance with their business, and they have practice, which alone makes artists, on their side«).<sup>8</sup> In each case, *usus* is closely linked with protracted efforts, technical mastery, and rational, intellectual deliberation and calculation.<sup>9</sup> For Ovid, then, the basis for his praeceptor's art becomes practice, not passion, technical accomplishment rather than inspired condition.

The notions of technical control and intellectual acuity are also central to Propertius' poetry, indeed to the entire elegiac tradition. From Callimachus on, exacting attention to polished detail and a sovereign control over the literary domain were trademarks of the elegists, and they played a large, albeit conventionalized role in the »Stilkampf« with the writers of voluminous, popular epics. In Propertius and the others, however, these notions are pointedly *not* part of the shared identity of poet and lover. In fact, such control and sovereign deliberation are precisely what the lover lacks.<sup>10</sup> Ovid not only places a renewed and more pronounced emphasis on the technical foundation of art. He also makes this the primary basis for the correlation of lover and poet. Love itself becomes a practice, not a passion, a craft instead of a condition.

This of course radically reformulates the traditional association of the two spheres, and not least in its revision of the order of genesis. We see this in the poem's infamous first couplet:

si quis in hoc artem populo non novit amandi,  
hoc legat et lecto carmine doctus amet.

If anyone among this people knows not the art of loving, let him read my poem, and having read it be skilled in love.

Besides the sudden freedom from the traditional social isolation of the helplessly impassioned elegist, we note also how the couplet begins with the song and only

<sup>8</sup> *Georgics*, I,133; Lucretius V,1452f.; *Ars*, II,675f. References to Virgil follow the text of R. A. B. Mynors, *P. Vergili Maronis, Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); those to Lucretius that of C. Bailey, *Lucreti, De Rerum Natura*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922). Translations, with occasional emendations, are taken from H. R. Fairclough, *Virgil. Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid 1-6* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935) and W. H. D. Rouse and M. F. Smith, *Lucretius. De Rerum Natura*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), respectively.

<sup>9</sup> For technical mastery, cf. *varias artes, daedala polire, artifices*; for rational calculation, cf. *meditando, experientia mentis, prudentia*.

<sup>10</sup> The most programmatic statement of this is Catullus' famous epigram, *odi et amo. quare id faciam, fortasse requiris?/ nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior*. See also A. W. Allen, »Elegy and the Classical Attitude toward Love.«

arrives at the lover, the exact reverse of the Propertian universe, where the love makes the poem. The audacity of the claim is decisive, its promise programmatic. The would-be lover has but to incorporate this book into his person, to substitute its system for his own version of »Propertian« passion, in order for the entire enterprise to be realized. The book becoming a self, the self becoming a book: this is the correlation of life and literature which Ovid's radical revision proposes – the artificial I, the I as artwork.

There is another critical distinction between the kinds of art practiced by Propertius and Ovid's praeceptor. When Propertius invokes and then disclaims the figures of Apollo and the Muse, he does so to underscore the signal originality of his verse. For all his obvious indebtedness to his literary predecessors, Propertius' poetry still purports to travel an »*intacta via*« (»untrudged path«). The unparalleled uniqueness of his work closely corresponds to the unparalleled uniqueness of his passion.<sup>11</sup> But when Ovid invokes and then disclaims the same figures, he does so to underscore not the originality, but rather the *imitativeness* of his verse. For all the indisputable newness of Ovid's *Ars*, it is still essentially founded on the principle of imitation. In fact, making imitation – or perhaps better, intertextual imitation – a primary creative strategy to the poem is one of its major and most far-reaching innovations.<sup>12</sup>

In his invocation and disclaimer of Apollo and the Muses, for example, Ovid not only purposefully imitates Propertius, but also, in both positive and negative form, Callimachus and Hesiod and, less directly, Homer and Vergil as well. That is, he invokes, if only apparently to disclaim, a whole pantheon of prior texts, of other literary invocations *and* disclaimers. And this aggressive advertisement of the conventional artificiality to the invocation introduces a host of considerations essentially alien to Propertius and these other precedents.<sup>13</sup> For them, the invocation was in some sense the guarantee for both the originality and reliability of their opera, for both the directness and sincerity of their utterances. Ovid's imitation undercuts the claims of originality, or rather partially undercuts them, but the effects are no less decisive for being partial. On the one hand, the imitation affects a certain parodic, deliberately devised distance from the pose of its sources, a ludic mobility and autonomy from its claim and profession. On the

<sup>11</sup> Propertius III,1, 18. See also Commager, *The Odes of Horace*, p. 11f.

<sup>12</sup> For an introduction to the role of intertextual imitation in Ovid's poetics, see I. M. Le M. Du Quesnay, »The *Amores*« in *Ovid*, pp. 19–29. He says, for example, »The most complex aspect of Ovid's art in the *Amores* is his imitation of earlier writers. This does not, of course, mean that he slavishly copied his predecessors because he lacked imagination and originality. On the contrary his is a creative imitation: out of the raw materials of the genre, its language, metaphors and themes Ovid created something quite new.« (19).

<sup>13</sup> See R. Durling, »Ovid as *Praeceptor Amoris*,« *CJ*, 53 (1958), reprinted in revised form in *idem*, *The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 26f.



other, it still allows itself to draw upon the authority, the evocative power implanted in the imitated material – for this, too, is part of the mobility afforded by imitation. In any case, the imitation renders the issues of reliability and sincerity fundamentally obsolete. One can hardly even place the speaker, poised as he is between the voices of the prior texts, the re-citer of the prior texts, and the speaker of the new.

Like *usus*, the concept of art as based on imitation also becomes directly translated into the erotic sphere, the ›live‹ sphere. Mimesis, the point of departure for all literary creation, thus becomes part of the subject-matter of the poem itself. The would-be lover's art is also to be essentially founded on the principle of imitation; first and foremost of the ›book‹ itself and its praeceptor's prescriptions, but also through the book of all the conventions of elegiac and ›didactic‹ deportment which the magister himself imitates. And he can thereby promise himself a similar range of mobility, a similar distance from the affections of his literary models, and a similar access to their authoritative, evocative powers.

We can see this shared principle of imitation already at work in the praeceptor's first instructions to his student, immediately following his invocation and then, continuing the didactic imitation, his brief summary of proposed topics:

dum licet et loris passim potes ire solutis,  
elige cui dicas ›tu mihi sola places.‹ (41f.)

While yet you are at liberty and can go at large with loosened rein, choose to whom you will say, ›You alone please me.‹

›*Tu mihi sola places*‹ is of course the conventional claim of the elegiac poet/lover. In fact, the same half-line occurs in Propertius II,7,19, and then again in the pseudo-Tibullan III,19,3. When Propertius and pseudo-Tibullus invoke the expression, they intend to convey the involuntary exclusivity of their attraction, the unshakable enslavement to a single, consuming, and sincere passion. Ovid's praeceptor, however, presents the same line not as an original declaration, but as a decidedly literary *citation*. That is, as with the invocation of the sources of inspiration, he deliberately invokes the prior text(s) and thus conveys the mannered artificiality of the claim. The very act of citation subverts at once the sense of exclusivity and of emotional compulsion; the line is freely and intellectually selected, and effortlessly transferred to another context. Moreover, by presenting the line as a citation, the magister again affects a certain parodic distance from its pose, an autonomy from its profession, even as he avails himself of its original, indelible power.

This time, however, the lover is invited to participate with the poet in the act of imitation and citation. That is, he is invited to cite this literary line himself as his first, representative venture into the praeceptor's *ars*. And in his imitation, his citation, he too is offered an all-important immunity to the affections of his

model. He too approaches the half-line with cool, intellectual calculation, as expedient literary artefact; he too, in its invocation, retains the freedom to select its object (*»elige«*); he too maintains mobility and a secret, insincere distance, even as he avails himself of the line's authentic persuasive power. Of course, the first line of the couplet, especially *»dum licet«*, subversively anticipates another aspect of imitation, the superseding, infectious effect of the imitated material on the imitator himself.<sup>14</sup> For the moment, however, the lover is innocently invited to imitate the poet in his imitation, and thereby share in his self-conscious creation of fictional artifice.

Ovid establishes, then, something of a functional identity between the respective activities of the poet and the would-be lover, primarily secured by the shared reliance on *usus* – sustained efforts, rational calculations, and technical craft – and imitation – artificial stuff, hidden detachment, ludic mobility. The functional identity, moreover, is not merely tacitly suggested, thematically latent but unexplored. Rather, several major imagery systems maintained throughout the poem emphatically insist on the correlation, and draw it to the center of thematic concern. The two most prominent of these are the images of chariot-riding and seafaring. Both are used simultaneously to depict the course of the poem, of the instruction, and of the student's – i.e., the reader's – love affair. As befits their *»didactic«* derivation, both stress the common ground in *usus*, the common commitment to toil and control, and extension through time.<sup>15</sup> Another field of shared semantics, this time deriving from the elegiac tradition, revolves around the terms *iocus* (*»jest«*) and *ludus* (*»play«*). The poetry itself is playful, sportive and intensely unserious; moreover tricky, deceitful and, overall, an act; and the love affair is invited to shape itself in the same image. That is, the terms stress the common ground in *»unreal«* imitation, the common commitment to play and detachment.

So far the parallels, and the evidence that Ovid intends his reader to focus quite carefully on the common conditions and operations of artifice of the poet and student-lover. But one cannot stop here without missing Ovid's main point, what he also intends us to focus on quite carefully: that *»art«* so conceived does not survive its transposition into the erotic, living sphere. What might well make for delightful poetry makes for a disastrous affair when translated into life: the kind of playful games one engages in with words and readers in a fictional world take on entirely new associations and consequences when played with real human lives in a real human world. This is *not* to say, as for instance Durling does, that we are therefore not expected or allowed to make the transposition from an ima-

<sup>14</sup> Cf. I, 615ff.; RA 497ff.

<sup>15</sup> Although ultimately derived from Greek lyric, Ovid's use of these two imagery systems seems clearly to be based on Vergil's in the *Georgics* where, as in the *Arts*, the images are used as a pair. See *Geo.* II, 41ff. and 541ff., also I, 194ff. and 511f.; also IV, 116f.; I, 303, 373, 436.

ginary world of poetic fiction to a real world of genuine life, simply because »if we mistake ... this pretended world for the real world, we lose the effect of the wit [and] the cynical manipulation of others can no longer be treated so lightly«;<sup>16</sup> that we must somehow leave the lover in the poet's sphere, because otherwise the comedy breaks down. Rather, this is the point, that when in this fashion literature becomes life, the comedy does break down and the violation begins. As the magister himself insists, there is nothing quite so violent as people »at play« in their everyday lives (III, 370ff.). In order to perceive this point, we must allow the transposition and admit »reality«; in order for the play of the competing ontologies of fiction and reality to maintain the vigorous to-and-fro energy it requires, we must allow the latter its sufficient vitality. We must, that is, ourselves maintain that curious, stereoscopic optic which perceives both the comic fictional pretence and the disconcerting human violence.<sup>17</sup> This is part of Ovid's radical revision of the Propertian equation of poet and lover, that part that propels him further into taking not literature frivolously, but life seriously. The two spheres are incongruous, incommensurable; in the final analysis, life does not yield to the conventions and practices of literature.

The recognition of the deliberately self-defeating nature of the poem's preceptorial project, of its translation of the codes of art into those of erotic conquest, is not a new one. In one form or another, it has informed the perspective of most modern critics. However, different commentators have stressed different reasons for the failure, each of which emphasizes a slightly different aspect of the poem and a slightly different flaw that the failure flaunts. Some note the *a priori* superfluity of the poem. For example, if all one needs do to strike up an amorous relationship with a woman is ask (I,711), what need for the praeceptor's involved stratagems? and if »in the beginning« men and women managed without any *magister* and without any *ars* (II,479f.), why should anything be any different at present?<sup>18</sup> Others locate the project's weak point in the recalcitrant, uncontrollable character of the very stuff the praeceptor and pupil attempt to legislate, whether that be the *furor* in women, the *vis* (»force«) or *ingenium* in men, the chaotic powers of passion itself, or the prior, undeniable numen of nature as a whole. »Amor« was not meant to be enclosed in a rational framework: and so nature asserts its disruptive forces, subverts the system, and thereby restores its more legitimate rule, which admits chaos, the irrational, the limited, the »human.«<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Durling, pp. 35, 30.

<sup>17</sup> No one has put this point quite so eloquently and succinctly as W. S. Anderson in the introduction to his edition of *Ovid's Metamorphoses, Books 6–10* (Norman, Okla: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972): »What might seem trivial or playful on the surface may barely conceal frightening perspectives into the irrationality of men and the cruelty of the universe« (13).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Durling, p. 29. Cf. also II,703–708.

<sup>19</sup> This has, I think, proved the most fruitful approach, and certainly the one that has

Still others point to contradictions in the system that sabotage it from within, without any need for an external disruption. For example, at one point men are told to brown their bodies by exercising in the Campus Martius (I,513). Some 200 lines later they are advised to appear pale and piteously thin (I,733ff.). Similarly, at one moment men are advised to conceal their outside affairs, even if manifest, while at the next they are urged to disclose them, even if successfully concealed – and even if we grant the magister's claim that different circumstances necessitate different tactics, the ideal of a practice that can be completely taught and governed simply by rigid rules and prescriptions, without personal imaginative input and intuition, seems to show its seams.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, and in some sense combining much of the preceding: some place the blame for the failure squarely on the metaphorical shoulders of the praeceptor, on the failures in his personality which defeat the project from the outset: on his thinly disguised hatred and fear of women, which exposes the motivation for this »art of love« to be »without love,« to be in fact revenge and eventually the naked, ever escalating plays for power of an early Valmont and Merteuil;<sup>21</sup> and on his own ungovernable imaginative sympathy and barbaric jealousy, which seem continually to cause the praeceptor to fail at his own program.<sup>22</sup> Whether we regard these failures as unique pathological perversions of the individual *persona* or as merely exaggerated examples of everyday human, and healthy, tendencies, we cannot help but hesitate when even its own teacher cannot succeed at his system, and moreover suspect that the same flaws that invite his failure might well inform his system, too.<sup>23</sup>

For all the variety these different perspectives present, all share a few fundamental features. First, all emphasize the failure of the *ars* in its failure, in its »not working,« whether the reason for that inadequacy be the poem's superfluity, its inconsistency, the unbridled backlash of nature and human passion, or the seriously, comically flawed personality of the praeceptor himself. Second, especially the latter, more engaged perspectives emphasize the violence inseparable from the chaotic forces of nature and human passion, a violence which eruptively

---

exerted the most widespread influence. Among its major proponents are W. R. Johnson, »The Problem of the Counter-classical Sensibility and Its Critics,« *CSCA* 3 (1970) 123–51; J. M. Fyler, »*Omnia Vincit Amor*: Incongruity and the Limitations of Structure in Ovid's Elegiac Poetry,« *CJ* 66 (1971) 196–203 (reprinted in *Chaucer and Ovid*. [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979], pp. 1–22); E. W. Leach, »Ekphrasis and the Theme of Artistic Failure in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,« *Ramus* 3 (1974) 102–42; and F. Verducci, »The Contest of Rational Libertinism and Imaginative License in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*,« *Pacific Coast Philology* 15,2 (1980) 29–39. My debt to all their work is considerable.

<sup>20</sup> see Durling, p. 40ff.; Verducci, 33.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Emile Rupert, cited by Durling, p. 28 (see n. 13, p. 243).

<sup>22</sup> See Fyler, *Chaucer and Ovid*, p. 21; also Verducci, 37ff.

<sup>23</sup> See Fyler, *Chaucer and Ovid*, p. 16.

exerts itself, whether from within the praeceptor himself or from other sources, against the fundamentally fragile control and order which he, the magister, attempts to impose, and which for better or for worse violates the student and exposes him to a world wherein safety in love (*»tuta venus«*) is an impossible, and demonstrably mistaken, ideal. But while these are surely true insights, and demand prominent display in any discussion of the *Ars*, they nonetheless by and large overlook another basic dimension to the project's »failure,« another basic source for the violence set loose against the pupil in the poem. The failure of the *ars* can also be seen, can perhaps most disconcertingly be seen, in its success, in its adequately achieved substitution of conscious work and artifice for involuntary spontaneity and interiority – in its actual achievement of its boast, *quod nunc ratio est, impetus ante fuit* (*»What before was impulse now is system«*). The automatization and »literalization« of the would-be lover also exert their own brand of violence, dehumanizing violence, on his person. Nature, passion and *vis* by no means hold an exclusive monopoly over violation; *ars* and *cultus*, *usus* and *mimesis* prove equally potent sources as well. And it is this aspect of the project which I would like to emphasize, the violence in its success, in its conception of the self as an artwork, in its creation of an artificial I.

## II. The didactic imitation

Let us begin by looking at the poem's use of the didactic tradition. It is here that the idea and terminology for systematic control are most at home, and here that the opportunities for literary imitation most apparent, and so here, too, that we can most clearly begin to identify the effects that both breed. Again, we need to remember to distinguish between and to compare the poet's and the pupil's involvement with the conventions of the tradition; for again, the interplay between the different orders is very much at issue.

The adoption of the didactic mode has several immediate consequences for the poem. For the poet, it at once provides a project, a plan, and in a curious fashion, a personality as well. The project, the poet's *opus* or *labor*, is encyclopedic and programmatic by nature. He identifies and circumscribes a field of activity or body of knowledge, collects and considers all relevant data and explores their every aspect, and organizes the whole into a coherent, versified schema. As A. S. Hollis says, the challenge is both poetic and scientific. It involves both technical craft in molding the recalcitrant, often literarily preformed material into formal order, and extensive erudition and intellectual facility in encompassing the entire range of the engaged activity.<sup>24</sup> In its way, then, it automatically imposes an undertaking on the poet roughly, or functionally, equivalent to that which the

<sup>24</sup> A. S. Hollis, in *Ovid* (Binns), p. 89f.

poet himself will impose on his audience of readers, who are likewise exhorted to systematize their activity and to attain mastery over their chosen realm in all its conceivable aspects.

At the same time that the adoption of the didactic mode proposes to the poet a project, it also offers him a procedure: for the imitation of its literary conventions provides him with a practical, and sufficiently strict, code of conduct, a technically simple method of invention which nonetheless serves as a supply complex method of expression. The poet has but to imitate an ideal and procedure fixed by tradition and literary convention; his activity and direction will be guided and conducted by the model of prior texts. At its simplest, he is given a language, a style filled with certain formulaic phrases and set rhetorical strategies.<sup>25</sup> Somewhat more complexly, the genre suggests certain structuring principles: a division of the subject-matter into several stages, initially marshalled in a summary of proposed procedures;<sup>26</sup> regrouping points which signal the transition between stages,<sup>27</sup> retardation devices to open up the staged structure somewhat,<sup>28</sup> and perhaps most importantly, the mythical *exempla* and digressions with which the poet punctuates his didactic structure and explores his abstract themes in imagistic and narrative forms.<sup>29</sup> There are also some vaguely general guidelines for points to cover: for example, where to begin, the kinds of requisite skills, the physical and sartorial requirements, the considerations of changing conditions, and so forth.<sup>30</sup> And as we will discuss in a moment, there is also a rich fund of imagery to imitate by analogy, which also helps to organize the »several divisions of (the poet's) topic within a comprehensive structural design.«<sup>31</sup> For now, we need only note that insofar as the prior texts provide a practical model for the guidance of the poet's project, they too are roughly, functionally equivalent to the poet's own text in its role as practical guide for *his* followers' project.

The tradition also, as I said, provides the poet with a narrative *persona*: the seasoned and sagacious *vates* (»sacred bard«) who, slightly pessimistic and yet still suitably benevolent, instructs his ignorant charges in useful skills to their own and society's advantage. Ovid can adopt this *persona*, simulate its mannerisms, ape its tone – and by comically dissociating it from its ideological support, turn it

<sup>25</sup> E.g., formulae such as *adde quod, principio, praeterea, hactenus*, and strategies such as the prescriptive voice (e.g., *quaere, nun age, disce, adspicio, iubebo*) or the rhetorical question/category (e.g., *quid tibi femineos coetus venatibus aptos/ enumerem?*, I,253f.; cf. Geo.II,103ff., 118ff.).

<sup>26</sup> I,35ff.: *principio, proximus, tertius*.

<sup>27</sup> I,263ff., cf. Geo. II,1ff.; II,9ff., 336ff., 425ff., etc.

<sup>28</sup> E.g., I,269ff. and Hollis' note, *ad loc.*, in *Ovid: Ars Amatoria Book I*, ed. A. S. Hollis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>29</sup> Hollis, in *Ovid* (Binns), p. 91. See also E. W. Leach, »Georgic Imagery in the *Ars Amatoria*,« *TAPA* 95 (1964) 150ff.

<sup>30</sup> These points are brought up *ad loc.* by Hollis in his commentary to Book I.

<sup>31</sup> Leach, »Georgic Imagery in the *Ars Amatoria*,« 148f.

against itself. Ovid parodies his adopted didactic, vatic *persona* in two ways. First, he exposes the artificiality of its literary conventions and so robs them of their solemn, sentimental authority.<sup>32</sup> And second, he hybridizes it with features of its elegiacally debased counterpart, the *lena* («bawd») or, alternatively, Priapus figure; of his own literary persona from the *Amores*; and even of his own public *persona* as published poet. We will inevitably have to return to this issue of hybridization and self-impersonation later, when we discuss the pupil's analogous adoption of an elegiac lover's *persona* and embarkment on a similar course of self-impersonation. For now, let us simply note that 1) Ovid borrows not only a project and plan from the didactic tradition, but also a vatic *persona*, which in its way also provides a code of conduct, and that 2) in adopting such a *persona*, he is again roughly, functionally paralleled by his pupil, who is similarly offered a didactically-derived *persona*, or rather *personae*, to assimilate and imitate: the farmer and hunter.

Ovid's major innovation, of course, was to apply the conventions, imagery and traditional authority of didactic verse to the (meter and) *materia* of erotic elegy. The mere juxtaposition of the two genres created numerous modes for mutual parody. One of these is that it allowed Ovid to approach »his frivolous subject with an air of studious gravity.«<sup>33</sup> Hesiod and then Vergil had used the genre to impart solemn instructions to honest farmers; others had used it to dictate precepts for hunting, fishing, and fowling. To the conventional Roman way of thinking, Ovid's application of this genre to erotic endeavors would be altogether startling, not only insofar as love seems so totally unsuited to rational systematization, but also and far more goadingly insofar as it is made to appear »as a worthy and strenuous occupation, like farming or hunting.«<sup>34</sup> Ovid's comic imitation achieves this effect by metaphorically transferring the Vergilian and Hesiodic concepts of *labor* and *cultus*, and the georgic imagery of breaking cattle and horses, tending fields, and so on, to the private, urban, and modern erotic realm. This furthers his parody in two distinct ways, each of which commits a kind of civilly violent assault on conventional Roman sensibilities and traditional didactic solemnity. First, the metaphorical shift displaces the georgic language and activity from a »real« world to a merely figurative one; that is, it reduces them to and treats them as mere literary conventions and so deprives them of the dignity of their actuality and original context. (The »real« world for which they now become a figure is a further and slightly different indignity.) Second, as mentioned, the shift nonetheless still suggests that the two actual activities of farming (etc.) and loving are analogous and analogously serious undertakings – and by extension, that Vergil's and Ovid's literary enterprises are likewise comparable and

<sup>32</sup> see Fyler, p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> Leach, p. 151.

<sup>34</sup> Hollis, *Ars Amatoria: Book I*, p. xvii.

comparably significant. His use of the venatic or military imagery has the same parodic effect. Where the traditional poems move along on a real and engaged level, Ovid's moves along on an unreal and metaphorically disengaged level; and yet at the same time he can impudently maintain the appearance that they are nonetheless similarly noble activities, for both poet and lover.

As subversive as these parodic ploys are, they are still themselves open to a further subversion, to a suspension of the parody, and likewise in two distinct fashions. First, I think there is an important sense in which Ovid does seriously and legitimately assume that his undertaking is every bit as »worthy« and »grave« as those of his predecessors; that the (parodic) presentation of the *labor* and *cultus* of love and the private self brings him as close to what is important to the human condition – even the Roman condition – as, for example, Vergil comes in his (solemn) presentation of the *labor* and *cultus* of farming and the public self (cf. *RA* 395f.).<sup>35</sup> The validity of his claim, however, does not rest on a naive affirmation of his project, on an unreflective embrace of the virtue of love and art entwined. This becomes clear when we examine the second way in which his subversive parody of his didactic predecessors subverts itself.

This happens whenever the metaphorical imagery systems he derives from the »real« worlds of those predecessors exceed their merely innocuous figurative status and cease to function as simple literary metaphors, and begin instead to exert their own evocative powers over the material of the new context. When they do, the very real dissimilarities between the now figurative and now real spheres necessitate a radically different reaction to the poet's equation of the two spheres, because they also occasion radically different effects.

This can most easily be grasped in relation to the poem's venatic imagery, which casts men as hunters and women as wild prey. The more amorous activity is parodically invited to shape itself in this »respectable« image, the less amorous and the more violent it becomes. The very serious and almost inexorable effects of regarding women as hunted animals are mythically exemplified by Cephalus and Procris at the end of Book III, but are no less evident, and far less sympathetically presented, throughout the body of the poem itself. For example, with a dry didactic flourish (*quaeris an*), the praceptor takes up the question as to whether one should seduce – literally »violate« (*violare*) – one's mistress's handmaid in the course of the pursuit. His advice is, »either make no venture or be successful,« and he illustrates his precept with examples drawn from fowling, hunting and fishing:

---

<sup>35</sup> This is a claim tacitly assumed by most proponents of Ovid's counter-classical sensibility (see above), and given perhaps its most emboldened expression by Charles Segal in his article, »Ovid's Orpheus and Augustan Ideology,« *TAPA* 103 (1972) 473–494, and its most extended expression by Molly Myerowitz, *Ovid's Games of Love* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985). Both, however, argue that Ovid's claim to gravity rests upon an affirmation of his fusion of art and love: it is the legitimacy of this view, and not of Ovid's seriousness, which I undertake to challenge.



non avis utiliter viscatis effugit alis,  
 non bene de laxis cassibus exit aper.  
 saucius arrepto piscis teneatur ab hamo:  
 perprime temptatam nec nisi victor abi. (I,391ff.)

The bird cannot make good its escape when once its wings are limed; the boar issues not easily from the entangling nets. Let the fish be held that is wounded from seizing the hook; once you assail her, press the attack, nor depart unless victorious.

This is, we should note, the same triple analogy with which the *praeceptor* had launched the metaphorical correlation of loving and hunting, fowling, and fishing (I,45ff.); the repetition seems designed to underscore the logical consequences of the correlation, or imitation, when it begins to become real. By equating the woman with a bird, a boar or a fish, the would-be lover is provoked into committing an act of uncompromised assault, which is not »like« trapping birds but is in every way »like« violently hurting another real human being. The imitation is no longer playfully parodic, but seriously psychotic: literary pretence gives way to human violence. What Ovid makes us see, I think, is that the violence done to conventional literary sensibilities by the parodist in equating hunting with loving is one thing, but the violence done to real people – both women and men – by equating loving with hunting is another and far more serious thing. In this respect at least, the imitative relationship to the venatic »text« is radically, irresolvably different for poet and lover.

It is, however, the didactic georgic imagery which most pervasively undergoes this slippage from the merely metaphorical into something far more real, and insofar as it carries with it the key concepts of *labor* and *cultus*, it is also the most important to our study. In her groundbreaking article on »Georgic Imagery in the *Ars Amatoria*,« Eleanor Leach establishes some of the central features of this metaphorical shift, and we would do well to examine briefly some of her emphases. Taking the Pasiphae digression in Book I (289–326) as her point of departure, Leach explores the poem's »constant metaphorical equation between the nature and conduct of women and that of animals.« »Women,« she says, »are creatures of untamed nature. They are the raw material of love.« Like Pasiphae herself, and like all the female members of the various species listed in the Lucretian-like cosmogony of Book II (477–88; cf. I,279f.), women are constantly depicted as by nature endowed with savage sexual desires, with a »*furiosa libido*« (I,281). Their wild natures remain unruly and threatening at all times, and so, for example, a man must always beware of provoking their jealousy, when they will show themselves »more violent than the hunted boar, the lioness protecting her cubs or the snake trodden by an unwary foot« (II,378ff.).<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> The metaphorical correlation of women with fields and elements of the plant world, especially prevalent in Book II, although it downplays active violence and stresses instead passive complaisance, still maintains the association with untamed and often recalcitrant raw nature.

With this state of affairs as his acting assumption, a man must attempt, through dedicated *labor* and a proven *modus operandi*, to attain to some sort of mastery over their animal nature, to »cultivate« them, even as refractory oxen are accustomed to the plow and horses taught to endure the rein (I,47ff.). As Leach says, »It is the bounden duty of the *amator* to govern the appetites of nature [in women] and to mold formless material into civilized form.« It is in this respect that the lover comes most, and most seriously, to resemble Vergil's honest farmer, in his *labor* at *cultus*, at improving and governing female nature by means of the *technē* expounded by the praeceptor. It is in this respect, too, that he comes most to resemble the artist, in undertaking to refashion the raw *materia* of female nature by the application of the appropriate *technē*. Leach states this with characteristic succinctness: »Just as the artisan or farmer imposes his skills upon the objects of his trade, so does the lover impose his craft upon the race of women whose natures must be forced into conformity with an orderly system of love.« This imposition, she adds, is the essence of *cultus*.

Thus, Leach concludes, the georgic imagery in the poem exceeds its merely figurative function in two distinct fashions, one in respect to women, one to men, both equally important but opposite in their implications. First, there is the »well-organized pattern of anti-feminist humor« throughout the *Ars*, Book III not excluded (in fact, especially Book III), which debases and dehumanizes women by regarding them as violent animals, stubborn earth, and so on. Second, there is the equally comic, but still serious »glorification of *cultus*« as the »climax of Roman ingenuity,« transferred however from its natural agrarian world to Ovid's own social, urban context. In the one case, the conflation of the two worlds is jarring and demeaning, and much to the disadvantage of Ovid's modern reality. In the other, the conflation is far more harmonious, even elevating, and very much to the advantage of the new sphere.

Leach's analysis does much to underscore the complex interplay at work in Ovid's imitation of Vergil's didactic poem, especially in its foregrounding of the ungovernable natural order that looms out from behind the extended georgic imagery system, and in its identification of two of the poem's major dynamic forces, or orders, as *natura* and *cultus*. She does, however, leave some tricks untaken: mostly minor points which merely extend her argument in directions not fully essential for the support of her topic, but absolutely so for the generation of ours; but some too which partially deconstruct her schema and point toward different conclusions concerning both her topic and ours.

Let us begin with three minor distinctions. First, Leach makes explicit how both the georgic and venatic imagery dehumanize women by regarding them as wild and violent creatures or, at best, as passive and complaisant fields. However, she merely leaves implicit the effects of regarding them as *materia*. The perspective is, as Leach rightly points out, endemic to the *Ars*. One is first instructed to labor to find *quod amare velis* (»what you wish to love,« I,35; cf. 91f.). Then *ma-*