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Bodily Functions and Humor in *Remedia Amoris*

The discussion of ugly sex in Ovid's *Remedia amoris* (399-440) highlights in previously unnoticed ways the male bias both of the elegiac world of the *Ars amatoria* and of the world of Roman satire. Fränkel's condemnation of "this hideous passage" (Ovid [1945] 68) illustrates the general scholarly reluctance to consider its role in reinforcing through content and narrative the gender roles of Roman elegy and the links between elegy and satire. Ovid's hypothetically coeducational curriculum (41-52) is decidedly masculine (Davisson 1996), and this section of the *Remedia*, by focusing on elegy's and satire's misogynist material and by implicating the reader in the process of delight and disgust, clarifies the masculine basis of Ovidian elegiac poetry.

Ovid's first points of advice (407-418) simply recall and reverse material from the *Ars amatoria*. But the suggestions to consider staring at a woman's *obscenae partes* (429) or the bed stains (432) are both new to the *Remedia* and prefaced by an elaborate introduction of narrative enticement: the praceptor asks his student to imagine whether these suggestions will be useful for him, as they have been for others. After these suggestions, Ovid declares that they only work for light-hearted lovers, thus reversing his earlier suggestions of efficacy and toying with his theoretically male readership. The verb *luditis* (433) signals that only here in the advice of the *Remedia* is love thought of as a game: throughout the rest of the *tractatio* it is a serious disease. The *Ars amatoria* saw love as a game with a masculine bias (Myerowitz 1985); the *Remedia* then most clearly reflects the playful world of the *Ars* at the point of its greatest narratological complexity and its most graphically misogynist advice.

The *Remedia* surpasses the *Ars* in its imagery. Only here in his elegiac corpus does Ovid discuss bodily fluids other than blood, sweat, and tears. Likewise, the preceding description of makeup (351-356) is no more detailed than the parallel passages in the *Ars* but much more negative (Richlin 1995). Ovid fills in the missing part of the female body, and it isn't pretty. Genitalia are simply not described in Roman elegy (Richlin 1992), a genre that constructs its ideal *puella* without *pudenda* (Fredrick 1997); here, their only focused appearance in the elegiac corpus is notably apotropaic, like the face of the Medusa.

Ovid maintains elegiac decorum in his vagueness of detail (*membra* 412, *partes* 429). But the vagueness also represents the powerful fear of the unknown; the male reader must imagine what is "down there" in the Bakhtinian lower bodily stratum. Even *reddente obscena* (437) is vague enough to imply either form of evacuation. The reader is repeatedly told to look, but Ovid never explicitly tells us what we see.

This physical emphasis links elegy to a primary focus of satire, the leaky and imperfect body and the condemnation of feminine bodily fluidity (*Arethusa* 31.3 [1998], esp. Reckford 341-344 and Gold 374-376). Irreducible bodily differences between women and men allow Ovid to focus on the frightening, imperfect, and unavoidable aspects of

Roman woman as constructed by the male elegiac poet. Ovid uses satiric misogynist weapons in an elegiac setting.

The satirical ugliness of bathroom and bedroom is all the more peculiar for its placement in the poem: Ovid's self-defense of his erotic elegiac poetry (361-398) separates the two sets of apotropaic advice. Ovid leads us to expect sexy topics and confounds us with disgust; expectations of elegy are confounded by hints of satire.