

The Anatomy of Pleasure in Ovid's *Art of Love*

Subtly but clearly, Ovid's *Art of Love* advocates the independence of sexual joy from childbirth. The final instructions on sexual positions (*Ars* 3.769-808) revolve around a tension between the views of austere moralists who would recommend a certain position as conducive to conception and erotic manuals that recommend sexual *figurae* that give more pleasure. In ancient medicine, female pleasure is almost always discussed in the context of conception (see Laqueur 1990: 43-52; Dean-Jones 1992; 1994: 148-224). A woman's sexual health was closely associated with childbearing (see King 2013; Kazantzidis 2014: 120-3). Virgins who put off marriage and sexually active but barren women suffer from life-threatening diseases (see Plato, *Ti.* 91b-d with Dean-Jones 1992: 76-7; *De uirginum morbis* = 8.466-71 L with Kazantzidis 2014: 120-2). Against the background of ancient medicine, which focused on the relationship between childbirth and female sexuality, Ovid makes pleasure an autonomous goal, further suggesting that childbearing undermines sexual joy, because it makes the female body less attractive. Ovid uses the language and arguments of ancient doctors to deny the instrumentality of orgasm and establish the maximization of shared pleasure as an end in itself (cf. Habinek 1997: 36).

In the context of the pathology of love, the *praeceptor amoris* casts himself as an expert doctor. In ancient medicine and Latin love elegy, *amor* is a disease that needs to be cured. Yet, for the physicians, orgasm is a clinical problem of fertility or infertility. In exemplary reproductive sex, both partners reached orgasm at the same time (see Hippocrates, *On Generation* 4.2 with Laqueur 1990: 48-51). Ovid also emphasizes the importance of mutual orgasm (*Ars* 2.681-3; 727-8; 3.793-4; 799-800), but the goal here is to maximize pleasure (*plena uoluptas*), not have babies. The revolutionary nature of this approach can hardly be overestimated. Against the background of ancient medicine, which drew a close link between female sexuality and fertility, Ovid dissociates a woman's sexual pleasure from conception.

Works Cited

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