**Ovid: *Amores* 1.4**

**Introduction:** Publius Ovidius Naso (c. 43 BCE – 17 CE) was a Roman poet who lived during the same period as Livy and Emperor Augustus. Ovid came from a long distinguished equestrian family and traveled around the Roman Empire studying rhetoric and Greek poetry. He is considered one of the most abundant writers of his period. One of his early works is *Amores* or The Book of Love in which he recounts the love of a man for an unattainable woman. It is unclear if a specific woman was in mind or if this in about generic characteristics of love and therefore acts as a commentary on contemporary Roman society. Below is an excerpt from Book 1, chapter 4 describing a dinner party where the unattainable woman, who will accompany her husband to the event, is provided with instructions by her lover.

While reading the poem consider how the historical context, the Fall of the Republic and the Rise of the Empire and the Augustan reform programs, may have influenced Ovid’s ideas. How does his presentation about love and sex compare to Livy’s? How do you think the genres or the two men’s relationships to those in power have influenced their portrayals of these fundamentals of Roman society?

Your husband shall attend the same banquet as we are:

I pray that it may be your husband’s last meal.

Then am I (as a table companion) merely to gaze at the girl

Whom I adore? Will there be another to relish your touch,

Will you snuggle up close to another and warm his breast?

When he wishes will he place his hand upon your neck?

I cease to marvel, that when the wine is served, the fair girl of Atrax

Compelled the men of double-form to fight;

Neither is the forest my home, nor are my limbs joined to a horse:

Yet I hardly seem able to keep my hands from you.

However, understand what you must do, neither give my words

To the East Wind nor to the warm South to carry away.

Arrive before your husband does; I cannot see what can be done,

If you do arrive before him, but regardless, come before him.

When he lies on the couch, you accompanying him with innocent expression

Must when you sit beside him, touch my foot secretly;

Watch me and my nods and my expressive features:

Catch my furtive signs and you yourself return them.

Words that are spoken without voice, I shall speak with my eyebrows;

You will understand the words traced by my fingers, words written in wine.

When the wantonness of our love comes into your mind,

With tender thumb touch your blushing cheeks;

If you shall complain about me in the silence of your mind,

Your soft hand should hang from the end of your ear;

My dear light, when I do or say things which please you,

Turn your ring round and round your fingers;

Touch the table with your hand, as men in prayer do,

When you pray for many sufferings upon your deserving husband.

You should be wise, and bid him drink himself what he mixes for you;

Quietly ask the boy for what you yourself want:

I shall drink first the cup which you have returned.

And I shall drink from the place where you have drunk.

If by chance he offers you what he has first tasted himself

Refuse food that has been touched by his mouth;

He should not squeeze your neck with his imposed arms with your permission,

Nor lay your mild head on his hard chest,

Nor should the folds [of your dress] or soft nipples admit his fingers;

In particular you do not want to give him any kisses.

If you give him kisses, I shall become a declared lover

And say ‘They are mine’ and throw in my hand [to you].

However I will see these [things], but those which a cloak hides well,

They will be a cause of blind fear to me.

Do not engage your thigh with his thigh nor link with his leg

Nor join your tender foot with his hard foot.

Alas, I fear many things, because I have done many reckless things,

And I myself am tortured by the fear of my own example:

Often a hastened passion for me and my mistress

Has accomplished its sweet effort under a cloak thrown on top.

You will not do this; but so that you will not be thought to have done this,

Remove the knowing cloak from your back.

Ask your husband to continuously drink (though do not add kisses to your entreaties),

And while he is drinking, secretly, if you can, add wine.

If he lies well soothed by sleep and wine,

The situation and the place will give us a plan.

When you rise about to leave for home, and we all rise,

Be mindful that you should go into the middle column of the crowd:

In that column you shall find me or be found [by me];

Whatever [part] of me you can touch there, touch it.

Miserable me! I have advised that which benefits us for a few hours;

I am separated from my mistress when night gives the command.

At night her husband will lock her in; with tears welling up I shall follow

Sadly right up to the cruel door, which is allowed.

Now he will receive kisses, now he will take not only kisses:

That which you secretly give to me, you will give by enforced right.

But give unwillingly (this you can do) and like a forced woman:

Flatteries should be silent and Love should be spiteful

If my prayers fare well, I pray that it will also not please him;

If not so well, certainly then [I pray] nothing may please you.

But nevertheless, whatever fortune follows the night,

Tomorrow deny to me with a firm voice that you gave [anything].

Adapted from: <https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Translation:Amores/1.4> (Accessed 12/11/20)