OVID **AMORES** 1.5

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

In scholarly criticism of *Amores* 1.5 the main area of dispute concerns the question of whether this poem is simply a straightforward description of an occurrence of one afternoon or if there is more to it than that. The question is crucial, since it has an important bearing on the overall interpretation of the elegy.

To turn first to those critics who understand the poem to be no more than a straightforward description, G. Luck considers that the elegy’s purpose is primarily to introduce Corinna, then to show love as ‘pleasure and fulfilment’, rather than ‘longing and unrequited love’, through depicting ‘one brief moment of rapture’ and finally to describe this moment with restraint. Lenz similarly views the poem as an attempt by the poet to give an unimpassioned and restrained description of a real or imaginary situation. G. Williams finds that Ovid’s purpose is to depict vividly a particular situation and his feelings in it, but criticizes him for overdoing it, for trying ‘to convey feeling by exhaustive enumeration’. For instance, in the description of the lighting effect in the poet’s room (4–8) he believes that the second and third parallels (5f.) have the function of assisting the reader ‘to a more complete realization of the exact nature of the light’, but by their addition ‘all mystery is removed’. So too, although he considers it to be an amusing point about Corinna really wanting her dress off (13–16), nevertheless ‘it is overdone and overqualified in four lines’. Finally, he says concerning the depicting of Corinna’s naked charms (17ff.) that ‘it degenerates into mere description prefaced by the general remark guaranteeing over-all quality to start with that there was no fault. A series of points is picked out for especially ecstatic mention and the rest is covered by a blanket phrase.’

Both Lenz and Luck are not unjustified in suggesting that Ovid exercises a certain restraint and refinement in passages where the poem could so easily have developed into pornographic description. But Williams’ criticism is perfectly valid, if one takes the poem as a straightforward description: it may be refined, but it would be overdone also. On this interpretation, then, 1.5 would appear to be a clumsy and bad elegy. Such clumsiness here would be surprising from the poet who shows ingenuity and skill in composition so often elsewhere in the *Amores*. It would also mar nearly half the poem, a poem in which, because of its shortness, there is surely little danger of Ovid relaxing attention and losing control and little justification for padding. Williams’ comments seem to reflect the old idea of Ovid’s penchant for ‘rhetorical’ expansion, an idea which some scholars seem prone to embrace eagerly and uncritically as a ready explanation of too many passages in Ovid. His criticism is valid only in so far as it is accepted within the limitation of the purpose which he and the other two scholars impose.
upon Ovid, and there is another interpretation, which makes this a clever and skilfully composed poem with real point, as one would expect from Ovid. I believe that in fact the piece is a tease, and I am not alone in this belief.

Frécaut and Barsby discern a tease in the first six lines: they claim that the lines delay the revelation of the poet’s real purpose in retiring into his room and creating semi-darkness at the midday hour; only at 7–8, they maintain, does it become clear that in fact a meeting had been planned. Frécaut sees a deception in 2: this line suggests that the poet is not expecting any visitors since he lies ‘medio . . . toro’ and further that he had gone to his bed to rest and ‘il va somnoler, s’endormir peut-être. Nullement . . . il a en fait préparé ainsi sa chambre pour un rendezvous galant (7–8)’. Frécaut maintains that 7–8 foretell ‘l’arrivée imminente de Corinna’. Thus he seems to assume that Corinna is a ‘vereunda puella’ (cf. 7). Barsby, however, prefers to see an extension of the tease in 7–8. On his interpretation apparently 7–8 do make it clear that the poet is awaiting a girl and that a seduction is planned, but also perhaps lead the reader into expecting that the girl will be a ‘vereunda puella’, an expectation which is not fulfilled, since Corinna’s mode of attire and the points of comparison in the two similes (11–12) indicate that she is in fact not a ‘vereunda puella’.

Du Quesnay detects on Ovid’s part an ‘awareness of his audience and . . . playful control of their reactions in 1.5’. He calls the poem ‘the description of the rendezvous with Corinna’, which shows that he, too, believes that a meeting has been arranged and the poet is expecting Corinna. He similarly points to the misleading opening of the poem. But, while in Frécaut’s opinion 2 simply suggests that the poet ‘va somnoler, s’endormir peut-être’, du Quesnay maintains that ‘the midday setting and indication that he is quite alone and not expecting any visitors (1–2) combine to suggest that we are about to witness the poet indulging in erotic daydreams while he takes his siesta. ‘Ecce, Corinna’ introduces sudden realization of his dreams as Corinna stands before him enticing and willing’. On his interpretation 7–8 would appear to be simply an erotic daydream (not indicating a planned meeting), and Corinna’s appearance means that erotic fantasy suddenly gives way to erotic fact and the poet finally reveals the real subject of the poem.

I find none of the above interpretations fully convincing, and none of them, I believe, provides satisfactory answers to questions of paramount importance for a correct understanding of Ovid’s trick in 1–8. These questions concern whether Corinna is a ‘vereunda puella’ or not, whether this is a planned meeting or not, and the function of lines 2 and 7–8.10

Frécaut, as I have pointed out, seems to assume that Corinna is a ‘vereunda puella’. But the ‘vereunda puella’ of Roman society would not have arranged to meet a man in his bedroom; furthermore, as Barsby notes, she would not have attired herself as Corinna does, while the comparisons of 11–12 provide allusions which are hardly appropriate in her case (see running commentary below).

Barsby’s solution to this question of whether Corinna is alluded to in
‘verecundis ... puellis’ (viz. that the reader may perhaps be misled into imagining that it is a ‘verecunda puella’ who is expected) leads us on to the problem of whether or not this is a planned meeting, and his solution fails because it involves a misinterpretation of 7f.

All three of these scholars maintain that the meeting had been planned. Barsby and Frécaut claim that this is made clear in 7f. Du Quesnay seems to deny that this is the function of 7f., but does not provide any alternative evidence for this interpretation. Du Quesnay’s omission is perhaps not surprising, since there are no grounds at all for this assumption to be found elsewhere in the poem; but Barsby and Frécaut seem to be in error, too.

Lines 7-8 simply do not state that a meeting has been planned. There Ovid talks in general terms of ‘verecundis ... puellis’ instead of ‘verecundae ... puellae’, as one might have expected if he was anticipating a meeting. Furthermore, ‘est praebenda’ also has an air of generality about it; the phrase does not imply that the poet has in mind this specific instance. In any case, 2 clearly states that Ovid in the heat of early afternoon has gone to his bed for no other purpose that to rest (‘levanda’) and suggests that he is not awaiting any visitors (‘medio ... toro’; cf. Am. 2.10.18), as one would expect considering the time and temperature (1), which do not provide the normal circumstances in which acts of sexual intimacy take place. Frécaut asserts that 2 is deliberately intended to deceive the reader, but the real justification for this claim is unclear.

All of these difficulties and contradictions disappear if we do not presume to question Ovid’s statement and implications in 2 and do not twist the meaning of 7f. Such an approach provides the following interpretation of the opening teasing. The poet in the heat of early afternoon has retired to his room simply to rest and has created the semi-darkness to help him rest. The examples of 4-6 were probably included by Ovid when he was subsequently portraying the scene, to convey a clear picture of the nature of the light, and, under this cover, to continue the disguise of the real subject of the poem (an unexpected encounter with Corinna) and delay the entrance of his mistress. Lines 7-8 perform the same function, and the erotic turn of thought is not unnatural considering that it is an expert lover and sophisticated love-poet portraying the scene (he is lying on his bed in semi-darkness, circumstances reminiscent, no doubt, of past amatory conquests). The entrance of Corinna in 9 is supposed to come as a complete surprise to the poet. This is cleverly mirrored, since her appearance also takes the reader by surprise. However, 7-8 with the reference to girls and the idea of sex, do in fact act as a bridge to what follows. But here Ovid has been extremely ingenious and skilful. Lines 7-8 might arouse suspicions that the poet is about to portray an amatory incident in this setting, but the reader would dismiss them, remembering the implications of 1-2, and after the references to modesty, timidity and concealment in 7-8 an elegiac mistress would be the last person he would have expected. At 9, however, Corinna enters.

But the tease goes further than this. Both du Quesnay and Connor discern Ovid’s playful control of his audience’s reactions throughout the poem, his
deliberate arousal of the reader’s expectations to a pitch of excitement, only to frustrate him at the climactic point in the action. Indeed, as Connor describes it, the reader is toyed with by the poet, he is carried along and tantalised until the final couplet. These two scholars, however, produce only generalizations where it is necessary to be more specific.

The suddenness of Corinna’s entry has already excited the reader, and in 9–12 her provocative attire and good looks, the very fact that she is in Ovid’s bedroom, and the allusions to beauty and sexual promise contained in the two similes arouse the reader’s expectations.13

In 13–16 the struggle between the two lovers, its shortness and Corinna’s unwillingness to win further excite the reader, as do the detail concerning the thinness of Corinna’s tunic and its removal.

Expectation is heightened even more in 17–23, lines which provide an intimate and expert appraisal of Corinna’s naked charms by the poet, who is clearly aroused, if not carried away with passion. Each point in the list contributes towards arousal in the reader. The description follows a downward movement and towards the end centres around the private parts. But Ovid does not actually mention the private parts and cuts off the description with ‘singula quid referam?’. This omission is restrained, and it also teases the reader. The frustration, however, is only a minor one, and it is soon made up for by the significant progression in 24, where Ovid, having admired Corinna’s charms, now clasps her naked body close to him. The tension at this point is almost unbearable, but Ovid does not provide the hoped-for description of the next logical step, the act of intercourse. Instead, as both Cooper14 and du Quesnay remark, he deliberately frustrates the curiosity of his audience at the climactic point with ‘cetera quis nescit?’ (25), and switches directly to the aftermath of the sex-act.

I hope that the above discussion has shown that, although it is possible to regard the poem as a straightforward description, the interpretation of it as a tease seems more likely and fits better with the characteristics generally in evidence elsewhere in the Amores.

Amores 1.5, it appears, was an innovation in the tradition of Latin love poetry, since, as far as I have observed, none of Ovid’s predecessors devoted a whole poem exclusively to describing a sexual encounter. Although it is true that this theme has been briefly alluded to elsewhere, and Ovid may have found starting-points in the early afternoon setting of Catullus 32 and the erotic action portrayed at the opening of Propertius 2.15, and although, as Barsby and Luck suggest, Greek love poetry may have provided Ovid with minor details such as the ‘tunica rara’,15 the description of Corinna’s beauty16 and the formula ‘cetera quis nescit?’,17 yet clearly extensive originality and elaboration are in evidence here. The poet sets his own stamp on the poem, and it emerges, in my opinion, as a striking instance of Ovidian ingenuity, elegant in structure and style,18 and urbane, sophisticated and humorous in its treatment of the subject. Furthermore, Ovid could easily have descended to pornography here, but his refined
restraint is obvious: he refrains from mentioning Corinna's private parts and from describing their copulation, while in the list of her naked charms, as both Luck and Barsby note, his epithets are sober and reserved. 19

**RUNNING COMMENTARY**

The opening section (1–8) sets the scene, but disguises the real subject of the poem and delays the entrance of Corinna.

Lines 1–2 describe the poet retiring to rest in the early afternoon. 'Aestus' (1), which could refer to the high temperature of that time of day or to the season of the year, conveys the idea that it is hot and is given great emphasis by its position. Thus the word forms part of the disguise of the subject, since the time and temperature do not provide the normal circumstances for sexual intercourse. 20 Some scholars have been troubled by the repetition of 'medius' in 1 and 2. 21 The repetition, however, does not appear awkward to me and may well be a deliberate stylistic feature. It may also have further significance; for it does lay emphasis on the time of day and the poet's position on the bed (which leads one to the conclusion that he is not expecting anybody), and so it seems to contribute to the hoax in 1–8.

In 3 the reader's attention is drawn to the window-shutters, one open, the other closed. Thereafter follow three examples whose primary purpose is to illustrate the semi-darkness in the room created by the half-open window. They perhaps further allude to the presumed coolness of the room 22 and convey the mood prevalent in this setting. 'Silvae' (4) suggests an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity, especially in contrast to the hustle and bustle of city life; 23 and similarly early morning before dawn and dusk, on either side of the working day, were periods of comparative quietness and calm. 24 In addition, the forest does not provide a setting, nor dawn and dusk times, which are generally associated with copulation. 25 In this respect, too, in the opening lines Ovid is effectively concealing the forthcoming action.

The circumstances (the poet has portrayed himself lying on his bed in semi-darkness) provoke an erotic turn of thought (7–8), and for the first, but not the last, time in the poem the poet assumes the role of the expert; he has learned from experience, and the preponderance of spondees in 7 makes his words weighty and solemn. Besides disguising the subject of the poem, 26 7–8 delay Corinna's entry, not only since they make a further point about the semi-darkness, but also because 8 is an elaboration of the thought already conveyed in 7.

Ovid's intention and technique of delaying and disguising well justifies the length and content of this opening section. Nevertheless he has taken pains in these lines to compensate through stylistic devices for what initially might appear to be over-elaboration. 27

In 9–12 the reader is surprised and excited by Corinna's sudden entry into Ovid's room; 28 he is further aroused by her provocatively attired and the allusions to beauty and sexual promise. Rhythm and sound in this section are apt. The dactylic nature of 9–10 underlines the suddenness of Corinna's appearance as
well as the excitement of the poet. Repeated c and d sounds (9f.) perhaps suggest further the breathless excitement of the poet, and the recurring a-sound throughout this section his open-mouthed admiration. Finally, the lovely sound of 1ff. aptly corresponds to Corinna's beauty.

Corinna's appearance in Ovid's bedroom and her dress suggest promiscuity on her part, or a considerable degree of familiarity with the poet (perhaps rather the latter, since it fits with the idea in the opening elegies of Amores I of a gradually progressing affair). Such attire would naturally be sexually provocative. 29 Corinna's 'tunica' is 'recincta' (9), which may be insignificant (apparently this would not be particularly unusual for women), but is probably significant (like the details in the rest of the couplet), to arouse Ovid further, since it is, as Barsby remarks, the first step towards removing the tunic altogether. Although we cannot be sure of the exact state of Corinna's hair alluded to in 10, it is clear that it would be attractive. We are told that it covers her neck (at least) and that it is 'dividua'. This word could refer to a careful parting, 30 or it could mean that the hair simply divides to fall over her shoulders, presumably entirely in its natural state (in view of the absence then of any mention of an elaborate style). 31 Finally, with reference to this couplet, as Barsby points out, but without qualification, there is an allusion to Corinna's beauty in 'candida'. 32

The ideas of good looks and provocation suggested by 9–10 are given greater emphasis in two learned comparisons (11–12). The first concerns Semiramis, who was a monarch famous for her extreme beauty, and 'formosa' (11) provides the primary point of reference. 33 However, Corinna is thereby automatically idealized and elevated as well. The comparison also suggests, as Barsby notes, royal dignity, but in addition, since Semiramis was a mythical Eastern figure, it creates an aura of mystique about Corinna. There may also be the implication that Corinna, too, is renowned and a queen among women; similarly Semiramis' power and success as ruler of a large kingdom perhaps reflects on Corinna’s influence, capabilities, and success in the amatory sphere. 34 Semiramis' entry into the bedroom (like Lais') parallels that of Corinna, 35 and conveys and emphasises the idea of amorous intent 36 already found in 9–10, hinting at the coming action. One tradition had it that Semiramis was a beautiful courtesan prior to her queenly days. 37 Ovid may be alluding to this tradition and Semiramis' former occupation, in which case the comparison might also suggest that Corinna is a woman wise in matters of love and sex.

The second simile involves Lais, the name of two famous Corinthian courtesans of former days. Corinna is thereby elevated to some degree, but nevertheless comparison with a mere courtesan does at first sight appear odd and somewhat of a comedown after the connection with Semiramis. 38 In view of Ovid's portrayal of Corinna in the rest of the poem, the simile must have primarily favourable connotations. The main point of reference lies in the phrase 'multis ... amata ... viris', which implies Corinna's popularity with men, and could thus be construed as a complimentary allusion to her attractiveness and sexiness; there is perhaps in these words a tone of pride on the part of the poet.
that such a woman has chosen to visit him. Both Laises were celebrated throughout Greece for their beauty, and so renown for beauty provides a further point of reference. Comparison with courtesans might imply, as with Semiramis, that Corinna is well-practised in the art of love (again perhaps a pointer to the love-making to come). However, Ovid may be just hinting at the other side of the coin as well and at unfavourable elements such as meretricious behaviour and notoriety. ‘Multis . . . amata viris’, then, could also contain a veiled allusion to promiscuity on Corinna’s part, rivals and jealousy on the poet’s part. So too, there could be a covert suggestion that Corinna is mercenary, since both Laises were intent on gain.\textsuperscript{39}

In 13–16 the struggle between the two lovers, its shortness, Corinna’s feigned resistance and the thinness and removal of the tunic further excite the reader. ‘Deripui tunicam’ provides a sudden and dramatic surprise, and bursts in on the world of romantic allusion of 11–12. The initial dactyls are appropriate in view of the suddenness and speed of the action. Here again is an incident for which the reader is utterly unprepared (cf. Corinna’s entry in 9), for the poet gives no hint that he was considering the action, and, as Barsby notes, since it only takes up two words, it is over almost before the reader is aware of what is happening.

Barsby also draws attention to the point that ‘rara’ (13), as a detail of Corinna’s appearance, might have been expected to occur more naturally in 9, and then comments vaguely that the poet did not want ‘to complete the picture too soon’. Of course, the word does prepare the way for the remark in 14 and the subsequent action, but we may also note that first, in the semi-darkness of the room, only when Corinna came closer would the poet have noticed the diaphanous nature of the ‘tunica’; second, ‘rara’ occurring immediately after ‘deripui tunicam’ indicates the immediate cause of Ovid’s arousal and sudden action; third, he has saved this detail for now as part of the process of increasing excitement.

The phrase ‘nee multum rara nocebat’ has two possible senses: the poet had little difficulty in tearing off the ‘tunica’ because it was thin, or the ‘tunica’, being thin, did not much mar vision of Corinna’s nakedness.\textsuperscript{40} The latter sense suggests that although Corinna’s naked charms were just visible through the ‘rara tunica’, they were still sufficiently well concealed to provoke the poet into ripping off the ‘tunica’ to get a better look.\textsuperscript{41} In either case the phrase suggests amatory expertise on Corinna’s part, whether in wearing a garment that was easy to remove or in wearing one that would provoke Ovid.

Corinna’s unexpected appearance in Ovid’s bedroom and her attire imply an intent to provoke with a view to sexual intimacy. However, in 14, to the excitement of the reader and no doubt the poet, she struggles to keep herself covered by the ‘tunica’ (as Barsby remarks, the imperfect ‘pugnabat’ denotes that she continued to struggle). But, as Ovid humorously reveals in the solemnly intoned words of the urbane expert in 15–16, her resistance was only half-hearted and her submission not unwilling (note the preponderance of spondees in 15–16 and the emphatic positions of ‘nollet’, ‘victa est’ and ‘sua’). Her
resistance, then, was either token or intended to tease, and that it was feigned is further illustrated by the shortness of the struggle. As Barsby notes, ‘non aegre’ (16) suggests not only that Corinna’s submission was not unwilling, but also that she was conquered without difficulty on Ovid’s part.

Barsby also points to the cleverly contrived word-chain in 13–16 (‘deripui tunicam’, ‘pugnabat tunica’, ‘pugnaret . . . vincere nollet’, ‘victa est’). But noticeable also in these lines is the use of what is probably military terminology (‘pugno’, ‘vinco’, ‘proditio’). It is likely that Ovid is cleverly picking up and applying a traditional theme (the description of the affair and its various participants in military terms), and the transference of these terms to the comparatively trivial and light-hearted world of the love-affair to describe an erotic struggle would make them mock-solemn (cf. the spondees in 15–16), thereby increasing the already humorous content of these lines.

In 17–23 Corinna stands naked, and the reader’s excitement rises to a pitch, as the poet, who is clearly moved, if not frantic with passion, provides his appraisal of Corinna’s body. Each detail in the list serves to arouse the reader, and the rarer points are described, the more Corinna’s beauty and perfection will be emphasised, and correspondingly the excitement of the reader increased. Ovid stresses Corinna’s beauty and perfection in other ways, too: the description is introduced by the generalization that her body is without blemish, and the fulness of expression in ‘toto’ and ‘nusquam’, along with their emphatic juxtaposition, underlines this flawlessness; exclamatory adjectives and adverbs introduce each statement, and such repetition not only implies the admiration of the poet, but hammers home the truth of the introductory generalization; there is also the use of complimentary epithets (‘apta premi’ 20, ‘castigato’ and ‘planus’ 21, ‘iuvenale’ 22) and the juxtaposition of ‘castigato’ and ‘planus’, bringing out the pleasing proportions of her body; the mention of breasts again (21), and in close proximity, after devoting one line to them (20), hints at their irresistible attraction; the juxtaposition in ‘vidi tetigique’ (19) implies the compulsion to touch (and the immediacy of the actual touching after seeing) that Corinna’s body evokes in the poet; lastly, the description is terminated with the same idea with which it was introduced, and the emphatic position of ‘nil’, along with the alliterative denial in ‘nil non’ (23), lays final stress on Corinna’s perfection.

In 24 the poet takes his mistress in a close embrace, and the repetition in ‘nudam’ of what is known already conveys his desire for her and denotes a savouring of the moment and her state. But to the frustration of the reader the act of intercourse is not described, and Ovid provides a picture of himself and Corinna resting on the bed after copulation. They are both (‘ambo’) tired and resting, implying an act in which participation was equal, and, in view of the poet’s happy concluding words (26), exhaustion and pleasure mutual. Obviously Ovid enjoyed the experience and hopes for more like it, and the alliteration of m and s in conjunction with the dactylic nature of 26 underlines his buoyant and happy mood.
Lines 25–26 cleverly take us full circle to the beginning of the poem in a pointed ring-structure: there are verbal repetitions from line 1 in 'medii' and 'dies' (26), and the poet is here resting as he originally intended to do, but now as a result of the exertions of sexual intercourse, and now in the company of Corinna.

NOTES

2. She is mentioned for the first time in the *Amores*.
3. For instance, he says of the formula 'cetera quis nescit' (25): "After the breathless praise of her beautiful body which is now exposed he utters a laconic 'The rest who does not know?', thus avoiding any realism which might endanger the equilibrium of the whole. Far from being lascivious for the sake of lasciviousness Ovid believes in a certain restraint."
4. 'Ovids dichtherrisches Ingenium', *Alterium* 13 (1967) 168 ff., a wordy article which makes few points of any real consequence concerning 1.5.
5. Rightly enough Lenz considers irrelevant discussion of whether this situation was real or imaginary. This is a question on which certainty is impossible and which is hardly crucial to the understanding of the poem. Contrast J.M. Fréaut, 'Verité et fiction dans deux poèmes des Amours d'Ovide, 1, 5 et III, 5', *Latomus* 27 (1968) 350ff.
8. *Ovid: Amores* Book 1, Oxford 1973, 67. Barsby, however, is imprecise about the tease in in 7–8, and I can only offer what appears to be the most likely interpretation of what he means by the following: "The function of the first section (1–8) is to set the scene and mood of the poem . . . It is an arresting opening, and the poet plays upon the expectations of the reader by not revealing the purpose of the setting until line 7, where it becomes clear that a seduction is in view. The fourth couplet thus acts as a bridge to the second section of the poem (9–16) . . . The section opens abruptly with the girl’s sudden appearance (9), after which any idea that we may have gathered that it is a *verecunda puella* (7) who is expected is gradually dispelled, first by a process of direct description (9–10) and then by analogy or implication (11–12)."
10. Other scholars (who do not incorporate the element of tease in their interpretations of this poem) have offered similar solutions to these problems: (i) Luck and Rudd (*Lines of Enquiry*, Cambridge 1976, 199 ff.) believe that the poet is expecting Corinna, has planned her seduction and regards her as a ‘verecunda puella’; (ii) Lenz maintains that the poet is not expecting Corinna (2) and that she is a ‘verecunda puella’.
11. It is just possible that 7–8 are the author’s musings at the time, as du Quesnay seems to imply. But there is nothing in the preceding lines to indicate that they have this function, and as such they would here be reported very loosely.
13. The comment of F. Stoessl, *(W.S. 63 (1948) 115) on these two similes betrays superficial study: “sollen ihre Schönheit verdeutlichen—oder vielmehr die erregte Phantasie des Lesers hinhalten”.
15. Cf. *A.P.* 5. 104 (whose date, however, is uncertain).
17. Cf Theoc. *Id.* 2. 142 ff., *A.P.* 5.4, 128.
18. See the running commentary below.
19. For a clearer perception of Ovid’s restraint contrast *A.P.* 5. 36, 60, 132 (private parts), 56, 60 (epithets), 49, 55 (intercourse).
20. Cf. e.g. Catullus 32, which gains part of its impact from the fact that the early afternoon is not a time normally associated with sex.
21. Bentley conjectured ‘sex tamque’ for ‘mediamque’, and Burman ‘vacuo’ or ‘viduo’ for ‘medio’. Rudd (*op. cit.*, 285) says of ‘medio’ that it “provides only a strained and unwanted
link with 'mediam' and adds nothing to the sense'. It has already been argued, however, that 'medio . . . toro' is an important element in the interpretation of the tease in I-8. In view of this point and the discussion that follows in the commentary there seems no real reason to question the unanimous readings of the manuscripts ('mediamque' and 'medio').

22. For the suggestion of coolness cf. e.g. Met. 10. 129 (in the forest); Am. 1.13.7, Virgil G. 3.335f. (in the morning); G. 3.336f. (in the evening).

23. For peacefulness in a country setting cf. e.g. Horace Epod. 2.23-8; for contrast between the peacefulness of rural life and the restlessness of city life cf. e.g. Horace S. 2.6.

24. Cf. Am. 1.13.7 for peace and tranquility of early morning at dawn (note also 13-24, 1.6.65-6; Horace S. 2.6.20f.: the period before dawn is one of rest and sleep, but dawn itself means that mortals must awake to their daily tasks). The worker's day in Rome and in the country ended when it started to grow dark, while at dusk the well-to-do would still be engaged at dinner begun earlier in the afternoon (e.g. Virgil G. 3.335f., 4.433f., Balsdon, Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome, London 1969, 17-55).

25. Cf. e.g. A.A. 2.620ff. (forest), Am. 1.13.8 (for dawn as a time when 'somni pingues (sunt)' even for lovers).

26. See introductory essay above.

27. Note the assonance, alliteration and rhyming final vowels in 2, the alliterative pattern in 3, the repetitive -ent sound in 4-5, assonance and alliteration in 6, internal rhyme and alliteration in 7, the anaphora in 3 and 4f. and the frequent balance and contrast throughout.

28. Especially after the mood of peace and tranquility evoked by 4-8.

29. Cf. A.A. 2.301 (‘astiterit tunicata; moves incendia clama, / sed timida, caveat frigora, voce roga). It is reasonable to assume that Corinna has entered the room wearing only a ‘tunica interior’ (an undergarment), since her ‘tunica’ is apparently the only garment removed before the body is revealed (cf. 13ff.).

30. See OLD s.v. 2. For the attractiveness of a parting cf. e.g. A.A. 2.303, 3.137f.

31. For the appeal of hair in its natural state cf. e.g. Tib. 1.3.91, Prop. 1.3.23, 4.8.52, Ovid Am. 1.7.11ff., 1.14.19ff., 3.14.33, A.A. 3.153ff. Barsby’s assumptions and inferences here about Corinna’s hair are misleading, not least because various hair-styles were popular with elegiac women (cf. A.A. 3.135ff., Balsdon, Roman Women, London 1962, 255ff.).

32. Natives of the Mediterranean lands are olive in complexion, and a fair skin was much admired (e.g. Horace C. 1.19.6, 2.4.3, A.P. 5.246.1-2, 270.3, Propertius 2.3.9f., Ovid Met. 13.789).

33. For Semiramis’ beauty cf. Diod. 2.5.1-2, 2.6.9, 2.20.3.

34. Semiramis was semi-divine (Diod. 2.4.2f.), and then deified (Diod. 2.20.1-2), and a monarch of great renown (Diad. 2.4.1). Later ages marvelled at her heroic and glorious deeds; a female ruler of her accomplishments was a phenomenon (for Semiramis’ reign and deeds cf. Diod. 2.7.2ff., Prop. 3.11.21-77, Curt. 5.1.24, 7.6.20).

35. This parallelism makes it almost certain that ‘thalamos’ means ‘bedroom’.

36. Semiramis, it would appear, was no stranger to sex, since she had two husbands and three children (cf. Diod. 2.5.1, 2.6.9-7.1).

37. Diod. 2.20.3.

38. This would be the case even if Ovid was alluding to the tradition in which Semiramis was a courtesan; for a Roman reader mention of Semiramis might have brought to mind the story of Corinna (cf. Frag. 125 a-b, 767e, Pausanias 2.2.5; for their notoriety cf. Propertius 2.6.1-2, Plutarch Mor. 125 a-b, 767c, Athen. 589b, Pausanias 2.2.5, A.P. 6.1, 20, 9.260; for the throngs of suitors cf. A.P. 6.1, 7.218, Athen. 588e, Plutarch Mor. 767e, Propertius 2.6.1-2; for their mercenary nature cf. Plut. Mor. 125a-b, Athen. 570b-c, 588e, A.P. 7.218.

39. For the beauty of the two Laises cf. Athen. 13.588 d-e, 589b, A.P. 6.1, 18-20, 7.218, Plutarch Mor. 767e, Pausanias 2.2.5; for their notoriety cf. Propertius 2.6.1-2, Plutarch Mor. 125 a-b, 767c, Athen. 589b, Pausanias 2.2.5, A.P. 6.1, 20, 9.260; for the throngs of suitors cf. A.P. 6.1, 7.218, Athen. 588e, Plutarch Mor. 767e, Propertius 2.6.1-2; for their mercenary nature cf. Plut. Mor. 125a-b, Athen. 570b-c, 588e, A.P. 7.218.

40. For the relevant meaning of ‘noceo’ see OLD s.v. 3: “to detract from, impair (a faculty, performance etc.)”. OLD there cites this line of Ovid and interprets: “i.e. was not an obstacle to love”. However, the second interpretation which I have suggested also seems perfectly possible (for this cf. e.g. Lee’s translation (Ovid’s Amores, Oxford 1961): “it didn’t hide much”).


42. Cf. A.A. 1.665f., 675f., 679f., 699f. for the girl who resists yet wishes to be conquered.

43. Three points are made about the struggle: Corinna tried to keep herself covered by the ‘tunica’ (14), she fought as if she did not really want to conquer (15), and she was conquered
by her own betrayal (16). The third point is an elaboration of the second. The briefness of the struggle is suggested by the limited detail concerning it and the fact that it is over in so few lines.


46. On the sense of the ‘castigaus’ here see *OLD* (‘tightly drawn, controlled’) and *ThLL* (‘fére i.q. intensus, convexus’).
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