4. Women's Time in the Remedia Amoris

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While writers of elegy occasionally treat a story within the scope of a single poem (e.g., Prop. 1.20, 3.15, 4.4; Tib. 2.5.19–66; Ov. *Ars* 1.101–32),¹ the overarching love affair to which the poet-lover constantly refers is hardly shaped by a linear sequence of events. Efforts to reconstruct a chronology of the elegiac love affair, especially in the case of Propertius, have met with frustration and failure. A. W. Allen, who soundly refuted attempts to reconstruct a chronology of Propertius’ relationship with Cynthia, concluded that Propertian elegy needs no temporal progression, since it is not concerned to tell a story, but rather “to impart the quality of an experience.”² Paul Veyne has echoed Allen’s arguments by emphasizing the repetitive nature of elegiac situations; in his reading of elegy, poems “repeat their initial conventions or play variations on [them] . . . before and after do not exist, anymore than does duration.”³

Confirming such an estimation is the lexicon of elegy, crowded as it is with terms that essentially connote a lack of forward, and (by implication) temporal, movement:⁴ *mora, inertia,* and *desidia* all mark elegy’s lovers as

1. In accordance with Bal’s terminology, a *fabula* describes a series of chronologically related events; these events are arranged into a *story* whose sequence may be different from that of the *fabula,* and whose arrangement is such that they “can produce the effect desired, be this convincing, moving, disgusting, or aesthetic.” Both *fabula* and *story* should be distinguished from the *narrative text,* i.e., the medium through which the story is told. See Bal (1997), 3–10.
4. A necessary relationship between movement and time was acknowledged in the ancient world, though the exact nature of that relationship was subject to debate Paul Ricoeur, whose work on time and narrative is cited below, summarizes Augustine’s argument on time and movement (especially the movement of the heavenly bodies) in response to Aristotle and Plotinus; see Ricoeur (1984b).
static, especially when compared to those compatriots engaged in military and civic life, such as Tullus, Maecenas, and Messalla (e.g., Prop. 1.6, 1.7, 2.10, 3.9; Tib. 1.1.53–6). The poet-lover regularly complains of obstructions as he defends his lack of progress away from erotic entanglements and toward the realm of res gestae. The conflict between civic expectations and private inclinations is perhaps most commonly voiced in the form of the elegiac recusatio, where the poet-lover denies his ability to tackle historical and military themes, because, at least for the time being, his love for a puella prevents him (cf. Prop. 2.1.1–16, 3.3.15–50, 3.9.35–46; cf. Tib. 2.6.1–12; Ov. Am. 2.1.11–12).

Such a refusal of those activities and literary genres associated with teleological movement, combined with the repetitive nature of elegiac scenarios mentioned by Veyne, would appear to disqualify elegy from status as a narrative text, particularly when the genre is considered in the light of canonical theories of time and narrativity. In Paul Ricoeur’s formulation, for instance, there is an important linear aspect of the emplotment of a narrative; the succession of episodes in a narrative “draws narrative time in the direction of the linear representation of time.” Moreover, a story must be going somewhere, or bear some aspect of “followability,” in order to convey meaning:

To follow a story is to move forward in the midst of contingencies and peripeteia under the guidance of an expectation that finds its fulfillment in the “conclusion” of the story. This conclusion is not logically implied by some previous premises. It gives the story an “end point,” which, in turn, furnishes the point of view from which the story can be perceived as forming a whole. To understand the story is to understand how and why the successive episodes led to this conclusion.

If some end-point allowing us to grasp the “how and why” of successive episodes is what gives a narrative its meaning, or, to use Riceour’s term,

5. Propertius recommends *mora* (delay) to lovers in the first poem of the Monobiblos (1.1.35–36; on the passage, see below, 8; for *mora* as prolonging the elegiac relationship, cf. also 1.8.1–2, 1.13.6; Tib. 1.3.15); P. tries to defend himself against charges of *desidia* at 1.1.2–1 (cf. his response to charges of indolence at 3.11.3: *crininaque ignavi capitis mihi turpia fingis*). Tibullus famously champions the life of *inertia* at 1.1.5 (cf. Prop. 3.7.71–72). For Ovid’s playful corrections of his predecessors’ use of *desidia* and *inertia*, cf. Am. 1.9.31–2, 2.10.19; Ars 2.229; Rem. 139, 780.

6. E.g., Tibullus seeks “slowing delays” (*moras tardas*) when he is called away by Messalla on a military campaign, Tib.1.3.15.


8. Ricoeur (1984b), 66–67; R. relies to an extent on Kermode (1968), for his connection between a story’s conclusion and its power to convey meaning. This is not to say that R. does not acknowledge a distinctly nonlinear process of reception, as his emphasis on the hermeneutic circle demonstrates; see esp. 71–76. See also Simms (2003), 83–86.
allows a “configuration” of the plot, then elegy, in its capacity as a narrative structure, means very little indeed.

At the same time, the poet-lovers of Propertius and Ovid both speak of a time when they will have departed from their _puellae_ and taken up a different sort of poetry (Prop. 3.5.23–48, 4.1.57–70; _Ov. Am._ 3.1.65–70, 3.15.15–20). Propertius, moreover, clearly signals his departure from Cynthia in a bitter farewell poem (Prop. 3.24). David Konstan has described the general shape of events implied in elegiac discourse: “[I]n the last analysis, it falls to the lovers themselves to take a stand against marriage. . . . And the master plot of elegy has as its denouement not the conversion of the status of the beloved to that of a marriageable citizen, but her final rejection on the grounds of inconstancy.” This narrative scheme is certainly plausible, especially if we (like Konstan) are attempting to assimilate elegy with other traditionally narrative forms. The notion that this love-story just might be going somewhere, might possess some end-point that allows us to “configure” its plot, saves it from the meaninglessness it risks in accordance with Ricoeur’s formulation of time and narrative.

How, then, are we able to reconcile the tendency of elegiac poetry to resist linear chronology and at the same time assume a world outside of, and _after_, elegy that operates in linear time? Because elegy quite self-consciously draws a parallel between its subject matter, the _puella_, and its generic conventions, a departure from the genre necessarily entails departure from the beloved. The elegists explicitly distinguish a type of poetry that dwells on the life of love from verse that follows a more narrative and progressive course, such as tragedy or epic (e.g., Prop. 2.1.1–4, 3.3.18–20; _Tib._ 2.5.111–20; _Ov. Am._ 3.1; cf. _Tib._ 2.6.8–12). The speaker’s predictions of departure from his _puella_ and the genre simultaneously suggest that one source of elegy’s resistance to narrativity is found in the role it assigns to women as love objects.

To understand why the _puella_ provides an ideal figure of resistance, by which elegy’s speaker forestalls any venture into more narrative genres, we might turn to Ovid’s _Remedia Amoris_. Ovid’s “remedies” against elegiac love forcefully conclude the often-inconclusive laments of elegy’s poet-lover and clearly illustrate the problematic relationship between time’s linear movement

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9. Tibullus speaks with less certainty about his future endeavors, though he does show interest in taking up nonelegiac subject matter at 2.5.113–18. In the following poem (2.6), he laments his aborted attempt to seek _castra_, probably a reference to composing epic (or at least taking up martial themes).


11. This is especially common in Propertian and Ovidian elegy; cf. Prop. 2.1, 2.10, 2.13, 2.24, 3.3; _Ov. Am._ 1.1, 3.1. Wyke (2002a), esp. 11–77, 115–54.
and the elegiac puella. Conte has argued persuasively for Ovid’s critique of the elegiac code, especially apparent in his didactic works. He describes how the poet’s irony “is the sign of a critical consciousness that observes the text’s formation from outside and reveals its implicit practices.”

Insofar as the Ars and Remedia make explicit the conventions of elegiac discourse, they serve as an ideal introduction to the conventions of time governing the progress (or lack thereof) of the elegiac affair. The Ars resolves the tension arising from the elegiac poet-lover’s simultaneous desire for erotic inertia and his wish to move beyond it by assigning the would-be lover an overtly teleological course. The Remedia aggressively concludes that course for its male pupils, and leaves female pupils to flounder inconclusively in the sort of erotic snares at once reviled and celebrated by the poet-lovers of previous elegy.

This essay argues that the respective positions finally assumed by men and women in Ovid’s Remedia—women suffer confinement and repetition as men make narrative progress—emerge from the temporal properties that determine the movements of male and female pupils in Ovid’s Ars, properties that are themselves a response to the conflicted attitudes expressed in previous love elegy. Such temporal attributes may be explained, in part, by Julia Kristeva’s concept of women’s time: her theory severs the traditional coincidence of space and time, aligning women with the spatial and generative properties of the chora, a designation she appropriates from Plato and uses to describe the locus of a speaking subject’s pre-linguistic drives. Temporality as it does apply to the female subject is described as cyclical, in its accordance with biological rhythms; and, perhaps because of its cyclicity, it is also “monumental,” in that it is all-encompassing, and lacks the outlets that linear movement affords. Kristeva associates masculine subjectivity with “cursive” time, in other words, the time of linear history. Masculine temporality is defined by the same teleological properties that she uses to define symbolic language, insofar as language is considered the enunciation of a sequence of words.

13. The chora is a concept that Kristeva articulates in her doctoral dissertation (1974); Kristeva’s dissertation was translated into English (notably by M. Waller in 1984) as Revolution in Poetic Language. Waller’s translation has since then appeared in various anthologies of Kristeva’s work, including Moi (1986), the text I make use of in this discussion. Kristeva’s essay on women’s time was originally published as “Le temps des femmes” in 33/44: Cahiers de recherche de sciences des textes et documents 5 (Winter 1979). In the present discussion I make frequent use of the English translation of A. Jardine and H. Blake (“Women’s Time”), also included in Moi’s anthology.
14. For the relationship between linear time and symbolic language, see “Women’s Time,” 192. Both are described by Kristeva as characteristics “readily labeled masculine” (qu’on qualifie facilement de masculin), “Les Temps des Femmes,” 8. A qualification may be in order: Kristeva has refused to define woman, other than “that which cannot be represented, that which is not spoken, that which
Kristeva is by no means the first or only thinker to articulate the different experiences of men and women in terms of time and space. Her concept of a “monumental” time that is elided with spatiality and exists above and beyond historical time is indebted to Nietzsche;\(^{15}\) she cites Joyce in commenting on traditional associations of women with generative space, and men with linear time.\(^{16}\) What Kristeva adds to our understanding of these conceptual categories is how those temporal properties used to describe women also contribute to the status of women as marginal to the symbolic order; and she does this by revealing how operations at the linguistic level are relevant to power relations at the ideological level. For our experience of language at the individual level—each one is, in Kristevan terms, a “subject on trial,” or *sujet-en-procès*—cannot but inform the way we view ourselves in communal and global terms.

1. Gender and Time in the *Ars Amatoria*

Before turning to the *praecceptor’s* cures for love, we should consider the male and female lovers whom he has designed in the *Ars Amatoria*. In the *Ars*, male pupils, in contrast to the elegiac poet-lovers of Propertius and Tibullus, are closely associated with a progressive notion of time. Accordingly, Ovid’s *praecceptor* and his successful *amator*, who are cast initially as ships’ captains and chariot drivers, chart a steadily linear course throughout the poem.\(^{17}\)

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\(^{15}\) For differences between Kristeva’s “monumental” temporality and Nietzsche’s use of the term, see Wolfenstein (2000), esp. 113–14.

\(^{16}\) “Women’s Time,” 189–90. For a more recent approach to the metaphorical associations between women and space, as well as those between men and time, see also Shlain (1999). Salzman-Mitchell (2005), esp. 67–116, provides a brief summary of such approaches and links woman’s spatial qualities with her role as a (passive) visual object, and one whose presence retards narrative progress in Ovidian epic.

\(^{17}\) Ovid’s sailing metaphors are particularly relevant here, e.g., *Ars* 1.3–4, 1.771–72, 2.429–432. Cf. also *Rem.* 13–14, 811–812. Ovid assigns these metaphorical roles to his students in part because he has written a didactic poem, and some of the *Ars’* teleological language has been borrowed from Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura* and Vergil’s *Georgics*. On the relationship between the *Georgics* and the *Ars*, see Leach (1964), esp. 150–51. Leach notes the high frequency of *opus*, *labor*, and *via* in both poems. Myerowitz (1985), 79–103 argues that “love’s journey,” also a commonplace in Hellenistic epigram, is the defining topos of the *Ars Amatoria*. While Ovid’s predecessors often use images of physical progress to emphasize the difficult aspects of *eros* (e.g., for love as a difficult sea voyage, *AP* 5.169, 190; cf. *AP* 5.156), Ovid’s use of metaphors related to love’s journey is overwhelmingly
The *praecaptor*, beginning with directives regarding the selection of prey and concluding with optimistic triumphal images, inscribes for his pupils a smoothly consecutive beginning, middle, and end to their love stories. For Kristeva, this is time as it is most often associated with a masculine subject: “time as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding: time as departure, progression and arrival—in other words, the time of history.”

Ovid highlights the relationship between time and conquest in advice (directed to his male audience) regarding the appropriate seasons (*tempora*) for girl hunting (1.399–418), where again the lover is likened to a ship’s captain who must avoid certain ill-omened days (1.400, 402). He also emphasizes the success won through temporal endurance (471–72), claiming that Penelope herself could be overcome through the steady progress of time: *Penelopen ipsam, persta modo, tempore vinces* (477).

Ovid’s *praecaptor* epitomizes the tension between properly timed progress and its antithesis, sluggish delay, in advice regarding the stealthy conquest of a recently rejected *amica*:

\[
\text{sed propera, ne vela cadant auraeque resident;}
\]
\[
\text{ut fragilis glacies, interit ira mora.}
\]

But hasten, lest the sails fall and the winds settle down; just as brittle ice, anger perishes with delay. (1.373–74)

The very delay that might save the elegiac *puella* from erotic conquest threatens the designs of Ovid’s male pupils. At the end of *Ars* 1, we find a similar opposition between masculine haste and feminine delay, here presented as a desirable model of conduct that illustrates the utility of force (*vis*). After raping Deidamia, Achilles hurries back into battle (*properaret*, 701) and leaves behind a victim begging him to stay:

\[
\text{vis ubi nunc illa est? quid blanda voce moraris}
\]
\[
\text{auctorem stupri, Deidamia, tui?}
\]

Where is that force now? Why do you delay the author of your own disgrace, Deidamia? (1.703–4)

As the hero who, after triumphing over Deidamia, hurries off to triumph in

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*positive. Myerowitz also argues that the topos is less suitable to Ovid’s female addressees, since “female eros is a priori destructive” (84).*

the battlefield, Achilles represents an ideal model of conduct that requires the swiftly executed conquest and abandonment of a woman.

On the other hand, Ovid’s female addressees are reminded that delay is their “greatest procuress”: *grata mora venies, maxima lena mora est* (3.752); and the *puella*-in-training is taught that her delayed response to a letter only goads the male *amator* further: *postque brevem rescribe moram: mora semper amantes / incitat* (3.473). Yet it is perhaps because of the female pupil’s reliance on *mora* in her efforts to seduce a lover that she fares so poorly when Ovid reshapes elegiac *topoi* in didactic form.19 Propertius had programmatically introduced delay as part of the elegiac code in the first poem of the *Monobiblos*, *sua quemque moretur / cura* (1.1. 35–6), a reference suggesting that *mora* is an unqualified boon to the lover. And yet the meaning of *mora*, which Pucci explains as an “odd temporality, implying a sort of lingering in view of a future thing or detention from something,” is itself fraught with ambiguity, and can imply the absence of a lover as well as the uninterrupted presence suggested in Propertius’ poem.20

Delay is essentially an act of deferral and,21 as Pucci argues in his discussion of the veiling, silence, and absence of Cynthia in Prop.1.8 and 2.15, such a “putting-off” or detention from erotic fulfillment may be interpreted as an act of seduction. As Cynthia seduces her *amator* by refusing him, so, too, the elegist seduces his reader by promising to divulge but forever delaying (“by a shrewd balance of exposing and covering”) the culmination and denouement of the elegiac affair.22 By appointing *mora* the *puella*’s “greatest procuress,” the *praecceptor* assigns to his female pupils the role not only of detaining erotic fulfillment, but also of slowing narrative progress, a role perhaps suitable for elegy, but no longer appropriate for the teleologically shaped curriculum Ovid’s *praecceptor* hopes to advance.

Other precepts offered to women in the poem confirm the *puella*’s role in deferring the progress of the love affair, and thus deferring the narrative of the love story. Because women are reminded repeatedly of the activities,

19. The problems faced by women in Ovid’s erotodidaxis have been examined largely with a focus on the *Remedia*, though, as the studies of Myerowitz (1985) and Downing suggest (1990), female pupils are denied a viable approach to love in the *Ars* as well. For women in the *Remedia*, see especially Davison (1996), esp. 240-45, who argues that the *exempla* of the *Remedia* reveal that escape from painful love is often impossible or wrought with disastrous consequences, especially for women; for bias against female addressees in Ovidian erotodidaxis, see also Brunelle (1997), esp. 90–107.
20. Pucci (1978), 52–73. For *mora* as an indication of absence, see, e.g., Cynthia’s complaint of “long delays” (*longas moras*) at 1.3.44.
21. As suggested by the primary meaning given at *OLD* s.v. 1: “Time which elapses before an event takes place, loss of time, delay.”
movements, and speech in which they cannot engage, their instruction is largely one of containment rather than expression or action. Downing has argued that the praecceptor’s endorsement of different postures to hide the body’s flaws (3.261–90), as well as his recommendations that women conceal themselves under layers of makeup and hairpieces (cf. 3.129–68, 193–250), bring about the puella’s transformation into a lifeless work of art. Moreover, when the praecceptor does recommend some positive action, rather than negative reaction, the female pupil makes little physical or temporal progress beyond the threshold of her domus. As Myerowitz-Levine has noted, the “course” women chart in the Ars is circular rather than progressive. Book 3 begins with advice on hair, dress, and cosmetics, to be carried out explicitly behind closed doors (claude forem thalami, 3.228), and concludes with advice on sexual intercourse, again focusing our attention on the carefully concealed interior of a woman’s boudoir: nec lucem in thalamos totis admitte fenestris, 3.805.

At this point Kristeva’s concept of women’s time may shed light on the sort of confinement and cyclical course experienced by the praecceptor’s female addressees:

As for time, female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains repetition and eternity from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilization. On the one hand, there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality. . . . On the other hand, and perhaps as a consequence, there is a massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has so little to do with linear time (which passes) that the very word ‘temporality’ hardly fits. (emphasis in original)

Ovid’s third book of the Ars defines the puella’s life in terms of rhythm, repetition, and confinement, spatiotemporal properties whose application to the beloved is provocatively consistent with the experience of female subjectivity that Kristeva outlines (cf. la répétition et l’éternité . . . sans faille et sans fuite). Fictive female readers of the Ars feel the pressures of their own biological rhythms, most obviously in the form of pregnancies to be avoided (3.82–83), though the praecceptor also implies that the inevitable

23. Downing (1990), 239.
failure of those rhythms (3.61–64; cf. 3.77–78) will hasten the processes of physical deterioration (3.69–80). The roles assigned to women are often illustrated through metaphors taken from the markedly seasonal, and thus cyclical, provinces of agriculture and animal husbandry. Ovid’s praeceptor virtually denies them a role in actively pursuing their prey; instead, female addressees are to use passivity to attract a mate.

The puella’s passive condition, confinement, and delaying tactics amount to a kind of stasis—analogous to Kristeva’s “monumental temporality”—that threatens the identity of the male amator by slowing the course of his progress and hindering the activities that define him as a masculine subject. The conversation between Odysseus and Calypso along the seashore at the beginning of Ars 2 (123–44) perhaps best illustrates the different behaviors prescribed for men and women in Ovid’s erotodidactic project. Calypso repeatedly (iterumque iterumque, 127) employs delaying tactics, while Odysseus reviews his heroic deeds, all the time remaining focused on departure. The praeceptor has poised both characters appropriately on the shore (litore constiterant, 129), between the course of history and the stasis of elegiac love. The ocean’s waves, a marker of nature’s own cyclical rhythms, erase the hero’s deeds drawn upon the sand (2.139–40) and enact a momentary triumph for women’s time, but one that fails to alleviate the frustration arising from the irreconcilable natures of the two characters involved. In the Remedia, the tale of Phyllis (591–608) again places a heroine upon the sea shore, but her solitary state both reminds us of how the tale of Ulysses and Calypso must end and more fully explains the disastrous results of interaction between men who need to be moving along and women who want them to stay.

2. Women’s Time in the Remedia Amoris

The momentary delay that allows a semidivine woman such as Calypso and a man like Ulysses to maintain a relationship in the Ars proves most inconvenient for the man in the Remedia who is ready to reenter the world

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27. For Ovid’s use of agricultural imagery and its systematic application to women, see Leach (1964), esp. 150–54.
28. See Myerowitz-Levine (1981–82), 46–47, who notes that women are instructed to be “actively passive.”
30. On the Calypso and Ulysses scene as paradigmatic of the opposition between culture and nature in Ovid’s Ars, see Myerowitz-Levine (1981–82), 54–56.
of linear time and its adjunct game of sexual conquest. While the Remedia is ostensibly addressed to both men and women, most of the praeceptor’s advice is aimed at men managing with difficulty the domination of a cruel or simply unworthy (indigna) mistress (Rem. 15–16). To cure the afflicted, the praeceptor prescribes a rigorous program of activities appropriate for men in public life (forms of negotium, ranging from the political [151–68] to the agricultural [169–212]) and insists upon an emphatic rejection of both leisure, or otium (135–50), and its more threatening alter ego, mora (76–106).

While both sexes attempt to ward off emotional diseases associated with love, Ovid’s exempla reveal a scenario in which men, such as the Greek hero Philoctetes (Rem. 111–15), manage to overcome the infection caused by delay, rejoin the historical flow of time, and help bring the Trojan war to a conclusion. Conversely, women such as Myrrha are left behind to suffer an eternity, entombed in the rigid bark of the Myrrh-tree (Rem. 99–100). As a perverted anagram of amor, mora betrays the linchpin in the praeceptor’s artfully contrived system of conquest.

For the male amator, to delay in love is tantamount to considering it a state of being, rather than an activity or an art that can be practiced and effectively controlled. In the praeceptor’s formulation of love, the very inertia or “artlessness” championed in previous elegy becomes a clear liability.

It is not surprising, then, that mora, as the turning point between love as ars and love as morbus, is a leading cause of illness among lovers in the Remedia:

\[\text{nam mora dat vires: teneras mora percoquit uvas et validas segetes, quae fuit herba, facit.}\]

31. For the praeceptor’s address to both genders, see Rem. 49–50, 813–14. On male bias (in terms of both form and content) in the Remedia, see above, n.17.

32. For Conte (1994c), 61, such advice is a way of opening up the solipsistic generic closure of elegy, or “reintegrating the rhetoric of elegiac love into a varied and manifold ideological horizon.” Fulkerson (2004) argues that, instead, the Remedia complete an inescapable circle of elegiac love, 221–23, noting that most of the advice recommended to the sick amator may be understood metaphorically as the same advice given to the healthy amator in the Ars. Her points about the relationship between the Remedia and the Ars are well taken, though I would agree with Conte that the vita activa espoused in the Remedia contradicts the stance of relative inactivity advocated throughout the larger corpus of elegy (though not necessarily in Ovid’s own Amores; on inertia and desidia, see n.5).

33. For a brief discussion of the elegists’ deployment of mora as an anagram of amor, and Ovid’s use of the same in the Pyramus and Thisbe episode of the Metamorphoses, see Keith (2001), 310.

34. See OLD etym., in + ars, “lacking skill,” 891. Cairns (1979), 28 notes the irony of the Hellenistic poet’s espousal of life without artistic labor. In the Amores, Ovid points to the paradox of the artless poet-lover by noting that saevus amor has interrupted his somnes inertes (Am. 2.10.19).
For delay adds strength: delay ripens the tender grapes and makes what was once young shoots strong crops. (83–84)

principiis obsta; sero medicina paratur, cum mala per longas convaluere moras.

Stand firm from the beginning; treatment is applied too late when troubles have grown strong through long delays. (91–92)

As Myrrha’s fate suggests, women, as well as men, are threatened by mora; and yet the heroine’s transformation into a firmly rooted tree implies that mora is somehow in her very nature. Though delay was integral to the seduction that constantly deferred fulfillment in the elegiac affair, in the Remedia it becomes emblematic of the spatiotemporal problems faced by women when they are written into an ideological context that views stasis, repetition, and delay as liabilities rather than assets.

Here, Kristeva’s link between women and the Platonic chora illuminates Ovid’s own configuration of men and women in the Remedia. Kristeva’s gendering of time emerges from her doctoral dissertation, Revolution in Poetic Language, a study of the prelinguistic forces that motivate language, forces especially evident in the poetry of some modernist writers. In her dissertation, Kristeva argues for a semiotic (le sémiotique) component of language that is grounded in the speaking subject’s biological drives; she locates these drives or “pulsions” in a receptacle she calls the chora. The semiotic pulsions of language operate in a productive tension with language’s symbolic components, those components that constitute the realm of comprehensible signs and signification governed by the linear movements of grammar and syntax. Thus the symbolic is a category Kristeva assimilates to the other teleologically oriented projects—such as the processes of narrative outlined by Ricoeur—characteristic of masculine subjectivity.

At the same time, Kristeva feminizes the semiotic chora in Revolution in Poetic Language, where she follows Plato’s own description in characterizing it as maternel. Perhaps more significantly, in her essay on “Women’s Time,” as she describes a “problematic of space,” Kristeva links woman’s generative properties with those of the chora, properties:

37. For a critique of arguments that Kristeva associates semiotic drives with the feminine, see Moi (1986),165. Moi notes that, since the chora’s pulsions exist prior to the subject’s experience of the Oedipal phase (and corresponding introduction of symbolic language), the semiotic also precedes
. . . which innumerable religions of matriarchal reappearance attribute to woman, and which Plato, recapitulating in his own system the atomists of antiquity, designated by the aporia of the chora, matrix space, nourishing, unnameable, anterior to the One, to God and, consequently defying metaphysics.  

Kristeva’s account of female subjectivity suggests that conceptual categories linking woman with the space of reproduction are to some extent responsible for her position marginal to the symbolic order and to time insofar as time is defined as “project and history.” In Ovid’s poem, women are constantly the spaces left behind, while men move about in time, acting as the very antithesis of delay. Throughout the Remedia, we find men on a careful path of avoidance, while their amicae remain posited in familiar spaces, such as a favorite porticus (627–30) or, more often, her domus, that immobile realm marked by an impassable threshold (785–86), and insulated by a hardened doorkeeper (ianitor) and an equally hard door (postis).

Despite the restrictions on female motility in Ovidian erotodidaxis, however, women are not uniformly static, immobile, or lifeless, but instead have drives and desires, pulsions (in Kristeva’s term) that are to be carefully repressed. Again, we may assume a descriptive model for such behavior in Kristeva’s appropriation of the chora. Like Plato’s chora in the Timaeus (52a–b), Kristeva’s chora designates an inherently unstable entity that suffers regulation and repetition during the language process:

Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body—already involved in the semiotic process—by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are ‘energy’ charges as well as ‘psychical’ marks, articulate what we call the chora: a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated.

sexual difference. On the other hand, Kristeva does speak of the chora in distinctly feminine terms, in part because its drives originate prior to the subject’s recognized break with the maternal body. For the influence of both Freud and Lacan on Kristeva and other French feminist theorists, see Moi (1986), 91–101.

39. Ibid., 193.
40. Ovid’s most extensive description of the door and door keeper is Am. 1.6, but both elements recur throughout his didactic poems, e.g., Ars 2.259–60, 522–25, 635; 3.633–41.
The example of Phyllis (Rem. 591–608), who treads repetitively along the shore (as full of movement as she is regulated), may be understood as illustrating these restricted impulses, for it demonstrates that women who attempt to leave their well-defined spaces don’t get very far, but instead remain stuck—like a skipping record needle—in a groove they are bound to repeat.

The tale of Phyllis’ solitary abandonment is the heroine’s fifth appearance in Ovid’s didactic poetry. While she is consistently depicted as an abandoned woman, her story has been used to explain a recommendation for absence (Ars 2.353), the deceptive nature of men (Ars 3.37–38, 459–60), and the necessity of heeding the praeceptor’s advice (Rem. 55–56). Her insertion at the end of the Remedia constitutes the sort of characteristic repetition of a myth Veyne assigns to elegy. Yet in this instance Ovid draws out her tale so that it becomes one of only three exempla of significant length in the poem. In a work filled with pithy statements and almost obscurely brief references to the mythological tradition, Phyllis’ tale delays the didactic process, a function of exempla Ovid’s praeceptor explicitly confirms: quid moror exemplis? (Rem. 461). Rather than offering only a recondite allusion to her status as a relicta puella, Ovid at last endows her fabula with a story and narrative structure. And yet content fails to mirror form, since Phyllis lacks the very progress through space and the time that her narrative now assumes.

A full understanding of the significance of Phyllis’ story at this point in the Remedia requires us to examine its context, an exhortation to friendship and sociability. In Kristevan terms, the praeceptor is endorsing the sociosymbolic contract, the social order upheld through “language as the fundamental social bond.” As with the examples of Myrrha and Philoctetes, the praeceptor contrasts positive masculine action with negative feminine reaction. He uses the tale of Orestes, encouraged by his comrade Pylades to win back Agamemnon’s kingdom, as a foil to Phyllis’ lonely isolation. Essentially, Orestes reinserts himself within the sociosymbolic contract, where Phyllis fails to do so:

42. Veyne (1988), 117. For Veyne, the mythical exemplum is itself a symptom of elegy’s lack of chronology, since allusions to myth conjure a virtually atemporal realm, “in an ocean of time without measure or form,” 118.

43. See Davisson (1996) on the unusual length of the Circe and Phyllis exempla, and their status as symptomatic of the poem’s tendency to offer advice to women only through negative examples, 243 n.11, 252–53.

44. Ibid., 247.

45. Kristeva, “Women’s Time,” 199. According to Hollis (1989), ad 601, the story of Phyllis’ return to the beach to look for Demophoon probably originated in Callimachus. Hyginus (Fab. 59) also refers to the legend.
Always have around some Pylades, the sort who stood by Orestes: this also is an important use for friendship. What ruined Phyllis, other than the isolated forests? The cause of her death is certain: she was unaccompanied. She used to go about, just as the foreign throng was accustomed to go about, with hair streaming, celebrating triennial rites for Bacchus. (589–94)

Thus Orestes, because he has assumed a place in the sociosymbolic contract, evolves from an exile trapped in time by the dictates of Clytemnestra into a successful hero who slays his mother, reclaims his rightful title, and reestablishes the supremacy of the male parent.  

Phyllis, likened to a bacchant and mourned only by the woods hidden (secretae) beyond the civilized realm, suggests the potential to undermine the sociosymbolic contract by acting out aggression against the male. As a bacchant, her socially marginal position is, in fact, not unlike that of Clytemnestra, whose presence is felt implicitly in the text: both women serve as reminders of how woman’s traditional position outside the realm of men’s time incites their alliance with (often violent) revolutionary movements. Paradoxically, while the simile defines Phyllis as part of a crowd, barbara turba, the very foreign and female status of that crowd is used to reiterate her condition marginal to the symbolic order. The praeceptor arranges his material in a way that contrasts men’s time—linear, heroic, and an integral part of the social contract—with the space of women—foreign, immobile, abandoned, and ultimately alone; in other words, what Kristeva describes as “the unnameable repressed by the social contract.”

Phyllis is indeed “unnameable” insofar as her literally marginal status on the seashore, in harenosa humo (596), designates her as a subject without

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46. For an analysis of gender in the myth of Orestes as well as in Aeschylus’ Oresteia trilogy, see Zeitlin (1978), 149–84. Zeitlin calls attention to the “dysfunction of the social order” (156) resultant from Clytemnestra’s rule and the correction of that dysfunction enacted in the Eumenides.

47. On the symbolic inversion of the Dionysiac ritual, see Keuls (1993), 349–79. Keuls does recognize a conciliatory function in these rites, which “promoted a resolution of antagonism in harmonious family life,” 373.

access to symbolic language. As such she is emblematic of a sexual difference that: “. . . is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract which is the social contract: a difference, then, in the relationship to power, language, and meaning.”49 The social bonds and shared language of Orestes and Pylades allow them to move forward in time, to complete the heroic act of matricide. Because Phyllis lacks such a bond, she has no place in the sociosymbolic contract, and eventually no access to language or the syntactical and linear progress that it enables:

‘perfide Demophoon’ surdas clamabat ad undas,
ruptaque singultu verba loquentis erant.

“Faithless Demophoon,” she kept shouting to the unhearing waves, and her words were broken off in midsentence by a sob. (597–98)

After she cries out the name of her faithless lover, Phyllis’ identity begins to merge with the very sea that bars her access to the social contract. The waves are unhearing (surdas), but also, like Phyllis, unheard.50 The repetitive nature of her actions, marked here and throughout the passage by the imperfect tense (clamabat; cf. ibat 593, spectabat 595, iacebat 596, terebatur 601), mirrors the constant crashing of the waves upon the shore. The heroine’s words are broken by her own incomprehensible sob, or singultus, a word that also suggests the gurgling sounds of water.51 Again, Phyllis’ difficulty with symbolic language may be clarified by Kristeva’s explanation of the semiotic drives: “rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgment, but restrained by a single guarantee: syntax.”52 Because Phyllis has been estranged from the symbolic order and the syntax integral to it,53 her own semiotic rhythms become indistinguishable from the rhythmic repetitions of the ocean.

In her distress, Phyllis treads a curious foot-path, the tangible inscription of her anxiety:

limes erat tenuis, longa subnobilus umbra,
qua tulit illa suos ad mare saepe pedes.

50. For surdas as “unheard,” cf. OLD, s.v. 3–4.
51. For singultus as a reference to the gurgling sounds of water, OLD, s.v. 1a.
53. Kristeva, “Revolution in Poetic Language,” 96 on the relationship between the symbolic and syntax, as well as all linguistic categories.
nona terebatur miserae via: ‘viderit’ inquit,  
et spectat zonam pallida facta suam.

There was a footpath, clouded over by the long shadows, where she often bore her own feet to the sea. The wretched girl wore away nine paths: “He’ll see,” she said and, growing pale, looked down at her belt. (599–602)

As the praeeceptor describes it, this limes marks an effort to escape that is constantly (saepe) thwarted by the ocean. Ovid’s praeeceptor deliberately exploits the ambiguity of the somewhat “clouded” (subnubilus) limes, which as a “footpath” represents a way out, but as a “boundary line” suggests division, isolation, and entrapment. 54 Nine paths she treads before at last looking with resignation at the belt, or zona, around her hips. 55 Curiously, an earlier reference to these paths in the Remedia suggests that, had she lived, Phyllis, trapped in the repetitive enclosure of women’s time, would only tread them more often (saepius) rather than ever escaping her plight (Rem. 55–56).

Our last glimpse of Phyllis leaves her rehearsing and rejecting her plans for suicide, rather than completing them: 56

aspicit et ramos: dubitat refugitque quod audet,  
et timet et digitos ad sua colla refert.

She sees the branches: she hesitates and shrinks back from the deed, and now she fears and brings her hands to her own neck. (603–4)

Here Ovid’s praeeceptor offers another option available to women encountering the difficulties of linear time. Phyllis’ final actions deviate from the revolutionary leanings of Clytemnestra and the mob of bacchants, and instead find common ground with the behavior of those women described by Kristeva who are “more bound to the mother.” These women, when faced with the option of gaining access to the temporal scene, “refuse this role and sullenly hold back, neither speaking nor writing, in a permanent state of expectation, occasionally punctuated by some kind of outburst; a cry, a refusal, ‘hysterical symptoms.’” 57 Rather than granting his heroine the

54. OLD, s.v. 1 for limes as “boundary”; s.v. 3 for limes as “foot-path.”
55. The detail is aetiological, and used to explain the name of the “Nine Roads” on the Strymon, see Henderson (1979), ad loc.
56. Cf. Henderson’s (1979) comment (ad loc.) on the scene: “This is a subtle touch by Ovid, who breaks off his narrative while the girl is still rehearsing the act and steeling herself to perform it.”
teleological closure of suicide, Ovid’s *praecptor* leaves her in a similar state of frantic indecision.

With the (mock-) pathos of direct address (*Sithoni*) and a regrettably unfulfilled wish, the *praecptor* drives his point home. It was Phyllis’ isolation that sealed her fate:

Sithoni, tunc certe vellem non sola fuisses;
non flesset positis Phyllida silva comis.
Phyllidis exemplo nimium secreta timete,
laese vir a domina, laesa puella viro.

Sithonian, then surely I would have wished you were not alone; the forest shedding its leaves would not have wept for Phyllis. By the example of Phyllis, fear excessively secluded places, man wounded by a mistress, girl wounded by a man. (605–9)

Yet the *Remedia*, as well as the *Ars* in its entirety, reminds us repeatedly that women most often exist in isolation, behind locked doors, remaining fixed in time and space. Though women threaten to delay their lovers in this sort of atemporal existence, as Calypso did with Ulysses, they are almost inevitably abandoned. Men, on the other hand, as the ship’s captains in Ovid’s sailing metaphors, are rarely left behind, but are constantly moving forward to rejoin the progress of history and the social contract that accompanies it. As these male pupils move forward, so, too, do their love stories progress and achieve the very “followability” of which Ricoeur speaks.\(^58\)

Thus it appears that while the *praecptor* addresses both men and women, his lessons are not equally applicable. By hinting at the Amazonian sexual equality that posits women well armed in *militia amoris*,\(^59\) the *praecptor* points to the contrast between a mythical unreality where women and men engage one another in linear time and a neatly segregated reality where there is no possibility for a fair “battle of the sexes.” Women are armed only so that they may prove worthy opponents for men in the game of love.\(^60\) Sufficient enticement amounts to a sufficient challenge, but, as the *Remedia* reminds us, that challenge inevitably concludes with the defeat of the woman,

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60. On the game of love in the *Ars* and the *praecptor’s* need to arm men and women equally, see Romano (1972), 814–19.
likened to the sack of a city, and the triumph of her suitor. Ovid has already brought the very different experiences of his male and female lovers (and implicitly their elegiac forerunners) to a painfully logical conclusion in the segregated world of the Heroides, where Phyllis is allowed to speak what she cannot in the Remedia.

The properties that Kristeva attributes to the temporal experiences of women—circularity, repetition, eternity, and a link with the semiotic aspects of language—allow us to understand better why women are so easily defeated when elegy is rewritten as didactic poetry. The puella, at least as she is drawn in the narrow view of her poet-lover, loses her powers to seduce through constant lingering and deferral, when the closed circuit of elegiac love is opened up to a greater world filled with competing ideologies, ideologies that value military and political affairs—as well as the narrative projects that underwrite them—more highly than the life of otium and inertia. With this point in mind, we might consider elegy before it became subject to Ovid’s amusing didacticism, and question how the stories of Cynthia, Delia, Nemesis, and Corinna end, once their poet-lovers leave women’s time for the more historical and epic projects they often promise their readers (cf. Tib. 2.5.113–18; Corp. Tib. 3.7; Prop. 3.5, 4.1; Ov. Am. 3.1, 3.15). Perhaps even more importantly, we might also ask ourselves why our elegists found women’s time so enticing in the first place.

61. Cf. Ars 2.741–44, where the praeceptor likens the puella’s defeat to the sack of a city. See also Cahoon (1988), 293–307. The author examines military metaphors in the Amores to demonstrate that erotic warfare reveals the destructive nature of amor, 294, which commonly casts the male amator as the soldier, while the puella functions as loot (praeda).

62. Her. 2; cf. Spentzou (2003), 99–104, who uses the Kristevan chora to explain the isolated space of the abandoned woman in the Heroides.

63. For elegiac closure, see Conte (1994c), esp. 36–40 and above, n.24.

64. I would especially like to thank Sharon James for encouraging me to participate in the conference at Princeton. I am also grateful to the useful comments of an anonymous reader and to the editors of this volume, whose patience and insight have greatly improved my essay.