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***SPARSIS COMIS, SOLUTIS CAPILLIS:***  
**'LOOSE' HAIR IN OVID'S ELEGIAC POETRY**

RIIKKA HÄLIKKÄ

Descriptions of hair, especially women's hair, appear frequently in Ovid's poetry. The purpose of this paper is to examine descriptions of "loose", "tousled", "unkempt" or "torn" hair (e.g. phrases like *sparsis comis*, *solutis crinibus*, *neglecta coma*, *raptis capillis*) in the context of Ovid's elegiac poetry. In this paper I shall comment on the three most prominent themes in the descriptions of hair: traditional depictions of sorrow or other uncontrolled emotions, ideas about refinement and Romanness, and the tearing of hair in the typically Ovidian amatory settings. The meanings of descriptions of loose hair vary according to associations given by different generic and thematic contexts. The Roman audience of Ovid's poetry was, of course, expected to recall the previous presentations of the material within the tradition and appreciate the novel reading of it offered by the author. Therefore, Ovid's textual strategy informs readers of his literary artifice and emphasises the role of the poet as *artifex* by creating unconventional effects out of conventional material.<sup>1</sup> The question to ask here is not 'what' but rather 'how' do these descriptions mean?

In general, Ovid makes a wide use of cultural meanings attached to hair and their arrangement.<sup>2</sup> Some of these meanings are shared by our modern culture, some of them are distinctively Roman. For instance, the eroticism of letting one's hair fall loose is not, as a modern reader might expect considering the amatory nature of the most Ovidian poetry, a very visible, nor dominant feature in his descriptions of hair.<sup>3</sup> Rather, Ovidian

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<sup>1</sup> See M. Myerowitz, *Ovid's Games of Love*, Detroit 1985, 36. Myerowitz discusses the positive valuation given to artificiality: *artifex* is the creator of culture.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. poem about Corinna's hair in *am.* 1,14. See below.

<sup>3</sup> Compared to, for instance, Apuleius. In his *Metamorphoses*, descriptions of women's hair are usually connected with the erotic. See, for instance, *met.* 2,16–17 (a woman

'discourse of loose hair' seems to aim at subtlety in the choice of context-specific associations. This is partly due to his and his audience's sensitiveness to contemporary Augustan discussion of morality, which included clothing and hairstyles in representation of Romanness and Roman ideals.<sup>4</sup> Ovid's audience was thus equipped to receive a multi-faceted reading of a poetic text.

Self-evidently, most descriptions of loose hair concern women. Any woman (mythological, foreign, aristocratic, captive) in Ovid's poetry is described in terms of the Roman contemporary concepts about gender. Appropriate attending to one's appearance or lack of it communicates a woman's status, at least within Ovid's poetic universe of love. Thus the Ovidian sense for *cultus* is essentially "culture, refinement". This is highlighted in his texts by the opposing term of *rusticitas*, lack of refinement and proper order. While Tibullus and Propertius describe *cultus* as extravagant and expensive adornment of women and lay stress on the financial burden it imposes upon a lover, Ovid's concept of *cultus* differs from that of the other Roman elegists. Ovid places the emphasis on artistry rather than extravagance.<sup>5</sup> The main passage dealing with the female *cultus* is *Ars amatoria* 3, 101–128 beginning with *ordior a cultu* (101) ending with the poet congratulating himself on the felicity of his own time (122–128) : *gratulor: ... quia cultus adest, nec nostros mansit in annos rusticitas, priscis illa superstes avis*.<sup>6</sup> The female adornment is seen as an integral part of the

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prepares for sex by letting her hair fall down); 2,8 (hair as essential for a woman's appearance, unattractiveness of bald women); 2,9 (eroticism of hair)

<sup>4</sup> See K. Galinsky, "Ovid's Metamorphoses and Augustan cultural thematics", in *Ovidian Transformations. Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and its reception*, eds. P. Hardie et al., Cambridge 1999, 103–11. Galinsky, 102, notes that in Ovidian scholarship there has been an unfruitful tendency to read Ovid only in terms of alluding to or deviating from Augustan 'ideology', and warns against this methodological pitfall.

<sup>5</sup> P. Watson, "Ovid and *cultus*: *Ars Amatoria* 3.113–28", *TaPhA* 112 (1982) 237–44, 238f.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Ov. am.* 1,8,26 *dignus corpore cultus abest*. Watson (above, n. 5), 237 n. 2, notes that "it is unclear how far the section on *cultus* extends, since the precepts of behaviour (281–380) might be viewed as a development of the same theme". Myerowitz (above, n. 1), 198–99 n. 2, observes that Ovid's use of the verb *colo* and its derivatives (*cultor*, *cultus*) in the *Ars Amatoria* covers a whole range of meanings from e.g. habitation, agriculture and worship to dress, intellectual pursuits and care of the body. She concludes that "while different shades of meaning of *cultus* doubtless predominate according to context, I see no reason to assume that Ovid intends to exclude the general idea of culture

female *cultus*, though Ovid does not say or imply that the female *cultus* consists only of the arts of make-up and coiffure.<sup>7</sup> However, the hairdo seems to be the most important part of it as Ovid begins his presentation of the *cultus* with different hairstyles in *ars* 3,133–168.

### Women in trouble

Untied, disheveled hair serves as a stock feature for women in trouble in Roman poetry. The notion of one being *sparsis comis* or *dissolutis capillis* or *effusis crinibus*, adequately summarizes both the situation and the psychological state of a character.<sup>8</sup>

This sort of description is especially applied to women of myth. Ovid makes the mythological material from different genres work in terms of Roman culture by visualizing the mythological world and characters as Roman. Their bearing, dress, even rhetoric make them essentially Augustan literary figures, and this, in turn, makes it possible for Ovid to discuss contemporary matters through these characterizations. Sometimes, however, he seems to opt for a different approach, which underlines the fact that much of the mythological material is derived from other, neither contemporary nor Roman, traditions. On these occasions Ovid's stance is often pejorative.

In the *Heroides* the abandoned women almost without exception are said to let their hair loose to demonstrate their grief. Furthermore, abandonment has left many of them exposed in a hostile, even barbaric environment. Without their lovers, they lose their status and their connection with the civilised world. Thus, untied hair simultaneously communicates both their mental state and their status. A woman with *sparsis comis* is a woman without a protector, a prey for beasts.<sup>9</sup> This aspect perhaps attracted

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or civilization from any specific context" (p. 199).

<sup>7</sup> Myerowitz (above, n. 1), 127 notes on the *Ars Amatoria* that "while amatory *cultus* for the male is the taming and the handling of the female, for the female it is, to a great degree, the taming and handling of herself."

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. Levine Myerowitz, in *Off with her Head! The Denial of Women's Identity in myth, religion, and culture*, ed. H. Eilberg *et al.*, Berkeley 1995, 85: "As a signifier, hair operates both metonymically and metaphorically. In its metonymic mode hair stands for the 'whole person'".

<sup>9</sup> E. Greene, "Travesties of Love: Violence and Voyeurism in Ovid Amor. 1,7", *CW* 92 (1999) 409–18, 414 makes an important point, which can be applied to Ovid's female

a moralistic and exemplary reading among the Roman audience (either intended by the author or not), as the women had brought the shame upon themselves by leaving their families and homelands for their lovers. In *Heroides* 10, Ariadne writes to Theseus after he has abandoned her on the island Dia. One of the things signalling her desperate situation is the description of her hair. Ariadne (16), who has found herself left alone, pulls her hair in despair, which is described as already tangled after sleep: *utque erat e somno turbida, rupta coma est*.<sup>10</sup> Later, in lines 47–48, she wanders around the island, her hair resembling that of a Bacchant:<sup>11</sup>

*aut ego diffusis erravi sola capillis  
qualis ab Ogygio concita Baccha deo.*

Finally, a typical image of a grieving woman is *aspice demissos lugentis more capillos* (137).<sup>12</sup> The poem ends with a description of Ariadne's hair (147) which produces a tragicomic effect: all the pulling and tearing of her hair has made them sparse: *hos tibi, qui superant, ostendo maesta capillos*. It is as if too extensive a grief makes Ariadne a laughing stock for the audience.

The descriptions of hair in *Heroides* 10 are commonplace in Roman poetry: hair tousled by sleep or by an amorous encounter, loose hair of the

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characters in general, namely, that "although these women are abused and abandoned by men, it is all worth it because they are 'seen' as beautiful objects of desire and, on the top of that, they receive *fama* as a result of their liaisons with men who abuse and/or degrade them".

<sup>10</sup> See P. Knox, *Ovid: Heroides. Select Epistles*, Cambridge 1995, 167 and 237 for *rupta coma*. The phrase is found in *her.* 3,15 and *met.* 10,722–23.

<sup>11</sup> Ariadne's depiction of herself as resembling a devotee of Bacchus seems to refer to her future as Dionysus's lover. On the future of a mythological character as an intertextual tool see A. Barchiesi "Future Reflexive: Two Modes of Allusion and Ovid's *Heroides*", *HSCP* 95 (1993) 333–65.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ps-Sen. *Oct.* 720–21 *resolutis comis matres Latinae flebiles planctus dabant*; Ov. *her.* 7,69 (Dido) *tristis et effusis sanguinolenta comis*. In Seneca's *Troades* Hecuba urges the chorus to join her in mourning (83–5): *HEC. Fidae casus nostri comites, soluite crinem; per colla fluant maesta capilli*, and 98–100 *CHO. Soluimus omnes lacerum multo funere crinem; coma demissa est libera nodo*. The repetition of the words (*crinem* – *capilli* – *crinem* – *coma*) seems to be echoing Ovid's use of the image of loose hair (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 3,65 *et circum Iliades crinem de more solutae*).

Bacchants, and letting one's hair loose and pulling it in mourning.<sup>13</sup> Ariadne's unkempt hair simultaneously communicates her relationship with Theseus, her despair and sorrow, her sudden placement outside the civilised world and loss of status and, finally, her deranged mental state.<sup>14</sup>

As Ovid promotes love as *cultus*, culture to be learned and mastered, the mythological heroines become in every aspect barbaric as soon as they lose their love. Or, to put it in another way, their failure in the matters of love (that is, their *rusticitas*, since they actually belong to a world that is not Roman) has caused them to lose their lovers.<sup>15</sup> The heroines have doubts about their barbarism, or *rusticitas*: for instance, Penelope fears that she appears *rustica* to Odysseus (*her.* 1,77–78) and by her words (*her.* 12,107) *quae tibi sum nunc barbara facta* Medea claims that she has become a barbarian to Jason since he does not love her anymore.

The depiction of sorrow as a departure from culture and the overlapping of meanings are seen in other parts of the *Heroides*, too. The author<sup>16</sup> of *Heroides* makes Sappho describe to Phaon how she neglects her appearance, since she has lost her love (15,73–78). Disheveled hair, rejection of luxurious dress and jewellery actually signal Sappho's loss of female culture (77–78 *cui colar?... mei cultus*). A woman's effort to attend to her looks is futile, if there is no one (that is, no man) to show herself to.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. *rem.* 593–4 *ibat, ut Edono referens trieterica Baccho ire solet fuis barbara turba comis*. E.g. *Prop.* 1,15,5; 1,15,11; 2,1,7; 2,3,13; 2,8,34; 3,6,9; 3,13,18; 4,8,61; *Tib.* 1,3,8; 1,4,4; 1,8,10; 1,10,62; 3,2,11; *Hor. carm.* 1,12,41; *Verg. Aen.* 3,65; 4,509; 6,48; 7,394.

<sup>14</sup> See *ars* 3,40: Phyllis flees to the woods *depositis comis*. Similarly *rem.* 606. Cf. also *am.* 3,6,55–56 about Ilia: *quo cultus abiere tui? quid sola vagaris, vitta nec evinctas impedit alba comas?* On the other hand, a woman who ties her hair takes the situation in control. An illustrative example, though from a very different genre, is the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*. In 20,5 Perpetua, already tossed by a mad cow and wounded, gets up and asks for a pin to tie her hair *dehinc acu requisita et dispersos capillos infibulavit; non enim decebat martyra sparsis capillis pati, ne in sua gloria plangere videretur*.

<sup>15</sup> Ovid claims in *ars* 3,33–42 that Medea, Ariadne, Phyllis and Dido were all doomed because they did not know the *ars* of love.

<sup>16</sup> Knox (above, n. 10) suggests that *her.* 15, *epistula Sapphus*, is not written by Ovid. See esp. 12–14. The author of the poem nevertheless adopts the Ovidian stance when it comes to representations of loose hair. Also G. Rosati in his article "Sabinus, the *Heroides* and the Poet-Nightingale. Some observations on the Authenticity of the *Epistula Sapphus*", *CQ* 46 (1996) 207–16 asserts that the poem has distinctive Ovidian characteristics in its compositional technique.

Sappho articulates her sorrow through visual signs, and the absence of her lover is communicated by the absence of adornment:

*Ecce, iacent collo sparsi sine lege capilli,  
Nec premit articulos lucida gemma meos.  
veste tegor vili, nullum est in crinibus aurum,  
non Arabum noster dona capillus habet.  
Cui colar infelix, aut cui placuisse laborem?  
ille mei cultus unicus auctor abes.*

Loose hair can also signal a deliberate departure from the civilised world.<sup>17</sup> In performing magical rituals the hair and dress of the witch should be unbound. So Medea in *her.* 6,89 is *passis discincta capillis*. Loose hair in portrayal of Medea both connects her with magical arts and communicates her barbarian origin.<sup>18</sup> Yet Medea mentions in *her.* 12, 155–158 how she restrains herself from tearing her locks in grief, when she witnesses Iason's and Creusa's wedding. Her self-control is the exact opposite of what a reader familiar with stock characterization of Medea would expect. By controlling herself (and her hair) despite her pain she presents herself as powerful and capable of revenge.

### Signs of Romanness

Ovid's idea of *cultus* opposes the traditional view that an ideal Roman woman is adorned only by her virtuous behaviour. As already noted above, one of Ovid's main preoccupations in all his works is to promote the idea of *cultus* as opposed to *rusticitas*. The Ovidian term *cultus* stands for culture as a whole, the practices belonging to the civilized world, while *rusticitas* relates to things that lack refinement and proper order.<sup>19</sup> Ovid discusses

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<sup>17</sup> Seneca seems to adopt this view in *Phaedra* 393–96 where Phaedra orders to untie her hair and let it fall freely as an Amazon's hair as a part of her fantasy of fleeing to the woods to accompany Hippolytus.

<sup>18</sup> See also *her.* 5,113–14; *met.* 7,182–83 and *met.* 7,257–58 *passis Medea capillis bacchantum ritu flagrantis circuit aras*.

<sup>19</sup> Thus Corinna's maid Cypassis, who creates amazing hairdos for her *domina* is described in *am.* 2,8,1–4 as possessing some *cultus* despite her low status: *Ponendis in mille modos perfecta capillis comere sed solas digna Cypassi deas, et mihi iucundo non*



adornment, such as jewellery, coiffure and clothing as an integral part of the female *cultus*.<sup>20</sup> A woman with untied, tousled hair may be categorized either being with or without *cultus* (cf. *neclecta decens*, *am.* 1,14,21). Eventually, the author-lover is the one to pass judgement. In an appropriate situation, a woman can be seen with unkempt hair. In *Ars amatoria* 3,341–32 loose hair to demonstrate sorrow at a funeral is considered attractive:

*funere saepe viri vir quaeritur: ire solutis  
crinibus et fletus non tenuisse decet.*

Though Ovid makes it clear that the appropriate degree of adornment is required, he does not often elaborate the theme of too excessive finery in his works. An exception is *am.* 1,14, where Corinna's hair falls out as a result of too extensive dressing.<sup>21</sup>

Also the idea of what is fashionable influences Ovidian representations of female hair. The instructions for women given in the *Ars amatoria*, which, although it does not belong to the elegiac genre, are perfectly comparable with Ovid's elegies in its subject matter.<sup>22</sup> Undone, natural looking hair suits many women, though there clearly is a distinction between the natural look and negligence:

*huic decet inflatos laxe iacuisse capillos,  
illa sit adstrictis impedienda comis* (*ars* 3,145–46);

*Nec mihi totius numero comprehendere fas est*

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*rustica cognita furto, apta quidem dominae sed magis apta mihi.*

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *ars* 3,107–9 *corpora si veteres non sic coluere puellae, nec veteres cultos sic habuere viros*. Rhetorical skills are an essential part of the male *cultus*, while they do not belong to Ovid's definition of the female *cultus*: *fast.* 4,111–12 *Eloquiumque fuit duram exorare puellam, proque sua causa quisque disertus erat.*

<sup>21</sup> Myerowitz (above, n. 1), 137–140, discusses the idea of appropriateness (*decorum*) in the context of female adornment and notes that "To be successful art must be unobtrusive. Art, claims the *praeceptor*, must seem to be an accident; the finished product must counterfeit chance." (p. 140).

<sup>22</sup> This comparability is probably meant also by J. C. McKeown, *Ovid: Amores. Text and Prolegomena* I, Liverpool 1987, 26 when he mentions that "love-elegy, with its devotion to an idle life of *furtivus amor*, was inevitably at odds with the Augustan programme of social and moral reform and a subsequent work in the same genre, the *Ars Amatoria*, was ultimately to contribute to Ovid's relegation".

*adicit ornatus proxima quaeque dies  
et neglecta decet multas coma: saepe iacere  
hesternam credas, illa repexa modo est. (ars 3,153–54)*

The attractiveness of a seemingly natural hairdo is still achieved through *ars*.<sup>23</sup> This view seems to be present everywhere in Ovid's poetry and it emphasizes the fact that female *cultus* cannot exist apart from the male *cultus*, since products of the male *cultus*, such as Ovid's instructive literary work *Ars Amatoria*, dictate what the female *cultus* entails.

In *Amores* 1,14,19–22 Ovid applies the image of a Bacchant with loose hair to Corinna, who lies on her bed in the morning before her hair is combed. At first it seems that it is only the description of loose hair that draws a parallel between the peaceful image of Corinna, semisupine on her purple couch, and a Bacchant lying on green grass fatigued by the divine frenzy. The elegiac context of the poem informs the reader further: it has been a passionately erotic encounter comparable with the Bacchant fury that has left her hair in disarray:

*saepe etiam nondum digestis mane capillis  
purpureo iacuit semisupina toro;  
tum quoque erat neglecta decens, ut Thracia Bacche,  
cum temere in uiridi gramine lassa iacet.*

Here the distinctively contemporary Roman setting and the barbaric setting are not contrasted, but rather assimilated by means of aesthetic evaluation and visualising depiction offered by the narrator. Corinna's loose hair, which is not yet combed and set, makes it possible to compare her with the un-Roman figure of a Bacchant.

Ovid even applies the analogy of *cultus* and *rusticitas* to the literary genres in *Amores* 3,1,7–14, where personified Elegy and Tragedy are

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<sup>23</sup> E. Downing, "Anti-Pygmalion: The *Praeceptor* in *Ars Amatoria*, Book 3", in *Constructions of the Classical Body* (ed. J. Porter), Ann Arbor 1999, 235–51 proposes an interesting view of how the female *cultus* in Ovid is produced by immobilizing a living woman into statue-like state to please men and notes (p. 238): "Since natural attractiveness is assumed not to be the lot of most women, he devises the dictum *cura dabit faciem* (105): 'care' will shape their features into an acceptable form: *cultus* will prepare them for equally, if otherwise, 'cultured' men. The *praeceptor* illustrates the kind of care and *cultus* he would impose on women with the preliminary precept, '*non sint sine lege capilli*' (133): the arrangement of hair should be carefully regulated by rule."

compared:

*venit odoratos Elegia nexa capillos,  
et puto pes illi longior alter erat.  
forma decens, vestis tenuissima, vultus amantis  
et pedibus vitium causa decoris erat.  
Venit et ingenti violenta Tragoedia passu  
fronte comae torva, palla iacebat humi  
laeva manus sceptrum late regale movebat  
Lydius alta pedum vincla cothurnus erat.*

Elegy is described in terms of an attractive young woman similar to *puellae* in Roman elegy, with an elegant coiffure, while Tragedy with her hair loose on her grim forehead (*fronte comae torva*), regal posture and Lydian footwear appears as distinctively un-Roman and uncontemporary figure, an unfashionable genre even. The personified Elegy's graceful appearance is suited for the subject matter of Ovidian elegy, that is, a sophisticated representation of love and urban life. She attracts the poet both by her looks and by her words. Yet in *am.* 3,9 (the poem on Tibullus's death) the poet urges Elegy to let her hair loose, because the subject matter of the poem is essentially tragic: *flebilis indignos, Elegia, solve capillos!* Coiffured, elegant hair in this context would be unfitting, even offending.

One of the most innovative descriptions of loose hair in Ovid has virtually nothing to do with gender. In the opening lines of *Tristia*, Ovid describes his book:

*Nec fragili geminae poliantur pumice frontes,  
hirsutus sparsis ut videare comis (tr. 1,1,11–12)*

The book is unpolished and unkempt (*hirsutus*) and appears to be *sparsis comis*, 'with its hair loose'. The unusual metaphor conveys two obvious meanings. First, it echoes the main theme of the whole book, the sorrow of exile. The book is described in terms of a grieving woman with loose hair. Second, it refers to Ovid's place of exile, Tomi, as a barbaric, uncivilised place that makes the poet's work barbaric as well.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Loose hair is mentioned in *tr.* 5,10,32; 5,7,18; 5,7,50 (barbarism of the Getans, sorrow). In *tr.* 3,14,25–52, Ovid complains that his poetic *ars* is weakened by his isolation in the barbaric land, away from Rome. This in part explains why he introduces his book as *hirsutus*, without the polish that Roman environment would bestow.

## Between love and hate

In *Amores* 1,7 Ovid describes a lovers' quarrel, which ends up in a violent scene of rape.<sup>25</sup> Elegiac violence (and violence in general) in Ovid is taken further than in the work of his predecessors. The pulling and tearing of Corinna's hair is mentioned repeatedly as a justified action on the part of the lover.<sup>26</sup> The whole scene is constructed as a lovers' game despite Corinna's obvious fear and hurt. Actually, female suffering contributes to the pleasure of the text, as it renders the man powerful, in control, and the *domina* helpless.<sup>27</sup> The narrator remains playful throughout the poem, even his remorse at the end seems a bit ironic. Even the effects of physical violence towards Corinna are seen as ornamental, as adding to her beauty, and thus insisting on the elegiac setting of the poem:

*ergo ego digestos potui laniare capillos?  
nec dominam motae dedecuerere comae  
sic formosa fuit (am. 1,7,11–13)*

As the scene develops further, the *domina* becomes *captiva* with her loose

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Myerowitz (above n. 1), 105–11 discusses the passage and notes that "the creative artist involved in an ongoing struggle with his own crudeness, his own *rusticitas*, finds himself distracted by the *rusticitas* of his environment as he strives to create the poem, the embodiment of all that is *cultus*" (p. 105).

<sup>25</sup> J. V. Morrison "Literary Reference and Generic Transgression in Ovid, *Amores* 1.7.: Lover, Poet, and *Furor*", *Latomus* 51 (1992) 571–589, esp. 577–583, notes that description of loose hair (*motae comae*) connects the elegiac situation of *am.* 1,7 with non-elegiac models. The mistress's disheveled hair is compared to those of Ariadne (echoing Catullus 64) and Cassandra (Verg. *Aen.* 2,403–6) and Atalanta (whose hair is actually not mentioned at all, as also Morrison notes). Morrison's analysis of the Ovidian technique of reference seems convincing. However, he does not elaborate on the meaning of hair, but concludes that "Ovid compares the beauty of his mistress with three mythological heroines" (p. 583).

<sup>26</sup> On elegiac violence, see D. Fredrick, "Reading Broken Skin: Violence in Roman Elegy" in *Roman Sexualities* (eds. J. P. Hallett – M. B. Skinner), Princeton 1997, 172–193. Tibullus 1,10,61–66 suggests that it is not suitable to hit a woman, but it is acceptable to tear her dress, pull her hair (*sit satis ornatus dissoluisse comae*) and make her cry to punish her. Fredrick also analyses Prop. 2,5,21–26 where the poet considers similar acts of violence towards his mistress but finds them (in Fredrick's words) to be "poetically incorrect" (p. 181).

<sup>27</sup> Greene (above n. 9), 411, notes that the poem shows "the pleasure and self-enhancement he derives from subjugating his mistress."

hair and bruised cheeks. The lover treats her like a slave-girl, though reminds his audience in 49–50 that she is free-born (he claws her *ingenuas genas*).

*ante eat effuso tristis captiva capillo,  
si sinerent laesae, candida tota, genae.* (*am.* 1,7,39–40)

*at nunc sustinui raptis a fronte capillis  
ferreus ingenuas ungue notare genas* (*am.* 1,7,49–50)

The narrator starts to feel guilty only when the woman is *exanimis* and silently weeping and trembling.<sup>28</sup> To compensate for his actions, he offers his own face and hair for Corinna to tear. The effect is probably intended as comic to the Roman audience, since the narrator mentions Corinna's weak hands, *infirmas manus*. The poem closes by the narrator's hortation to Corinna to set her hair in order, so there would be no sign of his crime. Tousled, loose hair serves as a sign (Ovid even uses the word *signa*) of male dominance over the woman and woman's submission to his power.

*nec nostris oculis nec nostris parce capillis  
quamlibet infirmas adiuvat ira manus.  
neve mei sceleris tam tristia signa supersint,  
pone recompositas in statione comas.* (*am.* 1,7,65–68)

The shame of being beaten up is projected on the woman, not on the man, even though the last two lines (67–68) might somehow suggest such a reading.<sup>29</sup> The narrator's actual *scelus* in line 67 seems to be a poetic one: he has overstepped the boundary of genres by treating his material (or his *puella*) in discord with the typical elegiac mode.<sup>30</sup> However, Ovid still keeps

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<sup>28</sup> Fredrick (above n. 26), 185–86 discusses the passage (49–58) and notes that the mistress's body is suddenly described as a graceful landscape to restore the erotic emphasis of the narrative. Cf. Myerowitz (above n. 1), 127 "Feminine emotions are assumed to be as much a part of her corporeal nature as are physical attributes and are governed, therefore, by the same rules of aesthetics." This shows in *am.* 2,5,43–46, as the becoming beauty of the mistress's sorrowful appearance placates the poet's anger, and he chooses not to tear her hair and claw her cheeks: *spectabat terram: terram spectare decebat / maesta erat in vultu: maesta decenter erat / sicut erant (et erant culti) laniare capillos / et fuit in teneras impetus ire genas.*

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *am.* 3,4,37: the poet dismisses the punishment of adulterous wives. A husband who hurts his wife is *rusticus*. See also E. Greene, *CPh* 89 (1994) 347.

<sup>30</sup> Morrison (above n. 25) analyses *am.* 1,7 and notes that by using mythological *exempla*

his poem within the bounds of the elegiac world by featuring only a temporary reversal of *servitium amoris*, a lover's pledge to his *puella*. At the end of the poem the "normal" elegiac situation is restored, both by setting Corinna's torn hair in order and by the poet's jocose submission to his mistress's retaliation.

As shown above, the lover can exhibit his power over his *puella* by marking her in one way or another. Tousled hair, bruises and bitemarks exhibit passionate lovemaking, but sometimes also acts of violence towards a woman. It is not important whether these marks are produced as a consequence of mutual consent or not; the point is the fact that a woman is marked, either by her lover or by someone else<sup>31</sup>:

*cur plus quam somno turbatos esse capillos  
collaque conspicio dentis habere notam?* (*am.* 3,14,33–4)

### Concluding remarks

Ovid employs the textual image of loose hair in various descriptions, such as acts of love, violence, sophistication, barbarism, adornment or sorrow. The meanings given to these descriptions overlap and interact in Ovid's texts. Descriptions of loose hair seem to assert male dominance over the female. Ovid's Roman (aristocratic, male) audience took pleasure in the image of a woman with her hair loose, although for the modern reader many of these descriptions seem violent, even brutal. Furthermore, Ovid's descriptions of loose hair are used to communicate his ideas of *cultus*. In the Roman setting the female *cultus* is constantly evaluated and censored by the poet, who in turn invites his readers to do the same. The male *cultus* is seen as a prerequisite for the female *cultus*. In mythological settings descriptions of loose hair communicate the boundary between the civilised world and the barbaric wild.

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to highlight the topos of *furor*, Ovid is able to transgress the generic boundaries (here especially the appropriate subject matter of elegy), which he elsewhere in his poetry has defined as limits for his own *ars* (for example, *am.* 1,1,19–20).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Sen. *Phaedr.* 731–32 *crinis tractus and lacerae comae ut sunt remaneant, facinoris tanti notae*. Phaedra points to her disheveled hair as a proof of her supposed rape by Hippolytus.