Rustic Skepticism and Slow Sensuality. Ovid's *Ars amatoria* and Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*

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Abstract

This text explores the birth of love between the two protagonists of Longus' novel *Daphnis and Chloe* by means of a detailed description of the awakening of their erotic sensuality and progress of the mutual sensory perception of their bodies. This process takes place very slowly before reaching its natural accomplishment due to the inexperience of young people and their 'rusticity'. The way Longus presents the art of love in his story suggests a position, which is similar to that of the academic Skepticism regarding the ability of the senses to provide true knowledge, and suggests as well that in the background of *Daphnis and Chloe* there may be Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, probably with a parodic intention.

Keywords: love, erotic sensuality, ancient novel, Skepticism, Longus, Ovid

Carles Miralles has written a marvellous little book on the ancient novel: *La novela en la antiguedad clasica* (Miralles 1969). In his comments to Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, he argues for a utopian reading of the plot in its insular environment. I would like to offer a complementary approach to the text, focussed on the characters' sentimental growth in the greenery of Lesbos.

Desire aims at desire: the desire of the other person (our beloved) for us. The erotic situation is a dialectical interplay, not a unilateral and unidirectional appropriation. There is a form of narrative thinking in prose, which creates, sets up and frames fictional characters engaged in this kind of more or less playful dialectic. It is the novel.

If we read properly, we can (and we ought to) appreciate not merely a 'sexual symmetry', as David Konstan rightly put it, but a systematic focalization on female emotions, and the female senses.[1] For female characters, as

1. Konstan 2014.

well as for their male counterparts, the intentional *object of* desire — the object *of* which desire is desire — is a hyper-personified body, or an embodied subject, namely the opposite of an objectified person. Embodiment means sentience. Sentience entails intentionality. Embodiment, sentience and intentionality are experienced on both sides of an amorous interaction, both by one of the erotic agents who, more or less clumsily, takes the initiative *and* by the other erotic agent, the one who first receives the signs of desire and, in turn, responds. They are both agents. They are what Andreas Capellanus, a highly influential theorist of love who wrote a treatise *De amore* in the XII century, felicitously called "co-lovers" (*coamantes*). Furthermore, erotic desire aims at touching, kissing, caressing in a mutual exchange of sensuality. Watching a body does not mean possessing/controlling a thing, and the aim of male desire is not necessarily immediate penetration.

The evidence for the argument I intend to make is right there, in the texture of the texts. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to draw attention first and foremost to the interplay of two erotic desires, and to the synesthetic richness of the sensual experience.[2] But there is more. Sensuality, I will argue, is represented disingenuously in *Daphnis and Chloe*.[3] Sensation is both obvious and mysterious, spontaneous and maddeningly resistant to an interpretive explanation. Arousal is both an event that automatically occurs in a body, and a hermeneutical conundrum. Falling in love comes as a surprise and can yield to puzzlement, hesitation and inaction. The human desirable body, so it seems, offers a particular challenge to the senses. Both females and males may freeze in a situation of uncertainty about what to do, but even more fundamentally about what exactly they are beginning to feel. Perceptual insecurity complicates the erotic situation. This philosophical sophistication, therefore, thematises a dilemma: is love a natural and self-evident phenomenon, or is it a matter of recondite technique? Which brings to the fore a question of cultural background, namely the hypothesis that two well-known Roman discourses might be part of the textual layering: Ovid's *Ars amatoria* and the epistemology of Academic skepticism.

2. On the questions raised by the plurality of the senses, see Butler; Purves 2013.
3. Hunter 1983.

MIGHT IT BE THE WATER?

A gradual and faltering discovery of love, Longus' novel can be told first on the side of Chloe: here are the vicissitudes of an incessantly deferred defloration. The young woman is abducted by pirates: risk of rape, but no, her body remains unscathed, her love for Daphnis too. She finally reunites with her beloved and becomes a wife, being still a virgin on the wedding night. The novel exploits to the point of caricature the erotic and narrative resources of the virginal state, which ignites concupiscence and multiplies adventures. As long as Chloe remains intact she becomes more and more attractive: on the wedding night, when sex starts the story stops.

Chloe is the object of Daphnis erotic quest, to be sure. But it is she who first responds to the call of his body. At the beginning of their light-hearted flirting, Daphnis falls into a hole in the ground, a hunter's trap. When he emerges from the ditch, covered in mud and vegetal debris, he decides to take a bath in a *nympheion*. He undresses and washes. Now Chloe stares at him. She looks intently at his features and she even touches his flesh:

> Now his hair was black and abundant (ἡ μὲν κόμη μέλαινα καὶ πολλή), and his body (τὸ σῶμα) all tanned by the sun, insomuch that the one seemed to have taken colour from the shadow of the other. To Chloe who was looking, Daphnis appeared to be beautiful and, since he did not appear beautiful before, she thought that the cause of the beauty was the bath: Ἐδόκει δὲ τῇ Χλόῃ θεωμένῃ καλὸς ὁ Δάφνις, ὅτι δὲ μὴ πρότερον αὐτῇ καλὸς ἐδόκει, τὸ λουτρὸν ἐνόμιζε τοῦ κάλλους αἴτιον. And when she washed his back (τὰ νῶτα) the flesh yielded so softly and gently to her hand, that again and again she furtively touched herself, ὥστε λαθοῦσα ἑαυτῆς ἥψατο πολλάκις, to see if hers were more delicate than his. At sunset, they drove home their flocks, and that night there was but one thing in Chloe's mind, and that was the wish she might see Daphnis bathing again, ὅτι μὴ Δάφνιν ἐπεθύμει λουόμενον ἰδέσθαι πάλιν.[4]

4. Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, I, 13, 2, Καὶ ἐλθὼν ἅμα τῇ Χλόῃ πρὸς τὸ νυμφαῖον τῇ μὲν ἔδωκε καὶ τὸν χιτωνίσκον καὶ τὴν πήραν φυλάττειν, αὐτὸς δὲ τῇ πηγῇ προστὰς τήν τε κόμην καὶ τὸ σῶμα πᾶν ἀπελούετο. 2 Ἦν δὲ ἡ μὲν κόμη μέλαινα καὶ πολλή, τὸ δὲ σῶμα ἐπίκαυτον ἡλίῳ· εἴκασεν ἄν τις αὐτὸ χρώζεσθαι τῇ σκιᾷ τῆς κόμης. Ἐδόκει δὲ τῇ Χλόῃ θεωμένῃ καλὸς ὁ Δάφνις, ὅτι δὲ μὴ πρότερον αὐτῇ καλὸς ἐδόκει, τὸ λουτρὸν ἐνόμιζε τοῦ κάλλους αἴτιον. Καὶ τὰ νῶτα δὲ ἀπολουούσης ἡ σὰρξ καθυπέπιπτε μαλθακή, ὥστε λαθοῦσα ἑαυτῆς ἥψατο πολλάκις, εἰ τρυφερωτέρα εἴη πειρωμένη. 3 Καὶ τότε μὲν - ἐπὶ δυσμαῖς ἦν ὁ ἥλιος - ἀπήλασαν τὰς ἀγέλας οἴκαδε, καὶ ἐπεπόνθει Χλόη περιττὸν οὐδέν, ὅτι μὴ Δάφνιν ἐπεθύμει λουόμενον ἰδέσθαι πάλιν. For a similar chromatic attention to the male body, see Nonnos, *Dionysiaca*, 10, 169-174: 'Bacchos bathed, and the

Confronted with this tableau of male beauty, Chloe experiences indecipherable sensations, disorienting uncertainties, and aesthetic enchantment: the young man in the nude looks like an epiphany. Once again, Chloe is the one who contemplates (θεωμένῃ) Daphnis' anatomy. She is the bearer of the gaze. She is the one who looks intently and thoughtfully at the overall shape, but also lingers on particularly attractive details, one after the other. Her eyes focus on the hair, the skin, the back. She stares. She touches. She compares. She wonders what it might be that renders that male body so beautiful. Water, perhaps?

It should not come as a surprise that novelistic descriptions insist on the male body, not merely the female body. Lykainion, 'seeing' (ὁρῶσα) Daphnis every day, 'felt the desire to take him as a lover, by offering gifts', ἐπεθύμησεν ἐραστὴν κτήσασθαι δώροις δελεάσασα.[5] Like Achilles Tatius' Melite — the daring young woman who sees Clitophon and pursues him until she persuades him to have sex at least once —, Lykainion takes the initiative and leads the game of seduction. She wants an *erastes*, a lover, and it is she who initiates the courtship and succeeds in her project.

THE EYE OF HELEN

We should not believe that women's sexual entrepreneurship is a phenomenon occurring in late antiquity. The desirability of a handsome man in the eyes of a female beholder has a long history. In the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, Aphrodite catches a glimpse of Anchises, and desire seizes her at once.[6] In the *Odyssey*, Calypso desires Odysseus. Until his departure toward Ithaca and his spouse, 'they take pleasure in love, laying with each other' τερπέσθην φιλότητι, παρ᾽ ἀλλήλοισι μένοντες, Odysseus being 'unwilling be-

flowing locks of his dark hair were reddened in the sparkling stream', καὶ ἀστράπτοντι ῥεέθρῳ ἅπλοκα κυανέης ἐρυθαίνετο βόστρυχα χαίτης.

5. Longus, 3, 15, 1-4.

6. *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 53-59: 'And so he [Zeus] put sweet desire in her *thûmos*—desire for Anchises. At that time, he [Anchises] was herding cattle at the steep peaks of Mount Ida, famous for its many springs. To look at him and the way he was shaped was like looking at the immortals. When Aphrodite, lover of smiles, saw him, she fell in love with him. A terrible desire seized her in her *phrenes,* τὸν δὴ ἔπειτα ἰδοῦσα φιλομμειδὴς Ἀφροδίτη ἠράσατ᾽ ἐκπάγλως δὲ κατὰ φρένας ἵμερος εἷλεν. She went to Cyprus, entering her temple fragrant with incense, to Paphos…' (translation by Gregory Nagy)

side the willing nymph', παρ᾽ οὐκ ἐθέλων ἐθελούσῃ.[7] Calypso's keenness is stronger than that of her male lover. Later, on the beach of Scheria, Odysseus emerges from the bushes, suddenly embellished, courtesy of the virgin goddess, Athena. The princess of the Phaeacians, Nausicaa, is enchanted and wishes that he would want to marry her. Odysseus 'went apart and sat down on the shore of the sea, gleaming with beauty and grace; and the girl contemplated him', ἕζετ᾽ ἔπειτ᾽ ἀπάνευθε κιὼν ἐπὶ θῖνα θαλάσσης κάλλεϊ καὶ χάρισι στίλβων. θηεῖτο δὲ κούρη.[8] This contemplation is explicitly amorous: 'Before he seemed to me unseeming (ἀεικέλιος)', she says: 'but now he is like the gods, who hold the vast heaven. If only a man such as he might be called my husband, αἴ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τοιόσδε πόσις κεκλημένος εἴη, dwelling here, and that it might please him to remain here'.[9] At the end of the poem, the same Athena works her magic again, and now Penelope is struck by her husband's beauty. She cannot take her eyes, and her hands, off him. 'Even so welcome (ἀσπαστὸς) to her was her husband, as she gazed upon him, and from his neck she could not let her white arms go', ὣς ἄρα τῇ ἀσπαστὸς ἔην πόσις εἰσοροώσῃ, δειρῆς δ᾽οὔ πω πάμπαν ἀφίετο πήχεε λευκώ.[10] She keeps touching and clinging, watching intently and intensely. Then they make love. And then they talk. 'But when the two had had their fill of the joy of love, they took delight in tales, speaking each to the other.[11] They have both come to the bed of much erotic desire', νῦν δ᾽ ἐπεὶ ἀμφοτέρω πολυήρατον ἱκόμεθε.[12]

Euripides' Phaedra notices Hippolytus and is immediately possessed by a formidable love in her heart, ἰδοῦσα Φαίδρα καρδίαν κατέσχετο ἔρωτι δεινῷ.[13] Hecuba claims that Helen left Menelaus, because she caught the full impact of Paris' brilliant beauty. 'My son was exceptionally distinguished in beauty', ἦν οὑμὸς υἱὸς κάλλος ἐκπρεπέστατος, she claims in *Trojan Women*. 'And when you saw him your mind was made into your Aphrodite', ὁ σὸς δ᾽ ἰδών νιν νοῦς ἐποιήθη Κύπρις, she goes on to say. 'So when you looked at him in barbarous clothes, glittering in gold, your senses utterly forsook you', ὃν εἰσιδοῦσα βαρβάροις ἐσθήμασι χρυσῷ τε λαμπρὸν ἐξεμαργώθης φρένας.[14] In the

7. Od. 5, 155-227.
8. *Ibid*. 5, 236-237.
9. *Ibid*. 5, 242-245.
10. *Ibid*. 23, 239-240.
11. *Ibid*. 23, 301.
12. *Ibid*. 23, 354.
13. Eur., *Hipp.* 27-28.
14. Eur., *Tro.* 987-1002.

Praise of Helen, Gorgias agrees that the physique of the Trojan prince was just irresistible. 'What is there to wonder at, if the eye of Helen, pleased by the body of Alexander, presented to her soul an eager desire and a contest of love? ', εἰ οὖν τῷ τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου σώματι τὸ τῆς Ἑλένης ὄμμα ἡσθὲν προθυμίαν καὶ ἅμιλλαν ἔρωτος τῇ ψυχῇ παρέδωκε, τί θαυμαστόν;.[15] In Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, Medea 'keeps darting flashing glances straight up' at Jason, ἀντία δ᾽ αἰεὶ βάλλεν ὑπ᾽ Αἰσονίδην ἀμαρύγματα, while she overflows with sweet pain in her spirit.[16]

And then we have the women from comedy. They are adulterous and so inclined to enjoy erotic pleasure that, in *Lysistrata*, they hesitate to go on a sex strike in order to force their husbands to stop the war, once they realize that this project requires renouncing the *peos*. Their gaze is represented in action, vis-à-vis an overequipped phallic body. In the *Ecclesiazusae*, women reform the polis by introducing equal opportunity for them to have sex with young men, at any age. We cannot explain away the female erotic eye, on account of a stereotype (the lusty older woman) that would simply reinforce the paradigm of male gaze and predatory sex.[17] The comic caricature amplifies a representation of female spontaneous proclivity toward sex that is pervasive across genres and periods, while involving mortals as well as immortals, older and younger individuals.

This brief survey shows that, in her fascination with Daphnis' spectacular nudity, Chloe is not at all exceptional -- and she is not alone.[18] Ancient women are not blind. There is indeed a female gaze in ancient literature. It is as paradigmatic as the male gaze. And like the male gaze, it raises all sorts of interpretive problems. Textual evidence does not meet the requirements of Laura Mulvey's so-called 'theory' of scopophilia.[19]

15. Gorg., *Hel.*, 19, in Dillon; Gergel 2003, 83.

16. A. R., 3, 287-8. A proper acknowledgment of the female gaze can be found in Cairns 2005, 123-55.

17. On the stereotype of the older woman's lust, see Whitmarsh 2014, 405. Women don't need to be older to fancy handsome men.

18. Chloe is in particularly good company, if we consider the genre of the novel, Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, and Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*. See Goldhill 2001, 154-94.

19. Mulvey 1975, 6-18. I discuss the shortcomings of Mulvey's arguments in «Bodies as intentional objects», in Harich-Schwarzbauer 2021. For a nuanced approach of the "male gaze" to ancient fiction, see Rabinowitz 2013, 195-221.

WHAT DOES CHLOE'S KISS DO TO ME?

Let's now tell the same story from Daphnis' point of view. It will be a tale of the misfortunes of manhood. The young man has reached the age of sexual exuberance. All that medical writers and poets tell us that must happen in his body should lead him straightaway to have sex with beautiful Chloe.[20] And yet he hesitates, he has no idea. When Chloe audaciously kisses him for the first time, a maelstrom of doubts carries him away.

> What on earth does Chloe's kiss do to me?' Τί ποτέ με Χλόης ἐργάζεται φίλημα;. Her lips are tenderer than roses, her mouth is sweeter than a honeycomb, but her kiss is sharper than the sting of a bee, Χείλη μὲν ῥόδων ἁπαλώτερα καὶ στόμακηρίων γλυκύτερον: τὸ δὲ φίλημα κέντρου μελίττης πικρότερον. I have often kissed my kids: I have often kissed newly-born puppies, and the little calf which Dorcon gave me: but this kiss is something new, ἀλλὰ τοῦτο φίλημα καινόν. My pulse beats high: my heart leaps: my soul melts: and yet I wish to kiss again, ἐκπηδᾷ μου τὸ πνεῦμα, ἐξάλλεται ἡ καρδία, τήκεται ἡ ψυχή, καὶ ὅμως πάλιν φιλῆσαι θέλω. 'O bitter victory! O novel disease, the name of which I cannot even tell!', ὦ νόσου καινῆς, ἧς οὐδὲ εἰπεῖν οἶδα τοὔνομα. Can Chloe have tasted poison before she kissed me? Why then did she not die?'[21]

Daphnis may well be very specific and include all of the particulars of his sensations — soft lips, sweet mouth, honeyed flavour, a sting —, but the

20. Arist., *MA* 11. See Sakezles 1998, 139: «Aristotle seems to be thinking of cases such as the heart leaping in fear when one is startled, or the penis becoming erect when a man sees something arousing; such reactions are not sufficient to initiate locomotion, but the person is obviously responding to a perception or image of something that evokes desire, repulsion, fear, etc. As Aristotle said that the image of the pleasant or painful object is necessarily accompanied by heating or chilling *(MA* 8, 701b34-5), such involuntary reactions would involve at least a minimal heating or chilling, therefore a minimal expansion or contraction, and therefore a minimal bodily movement (a jumping when startled, an erection when aroused)». See also Lucretius 4, 1030-1036, on the automatism of arousal. On Aristotle's analogous views on female puberty and sexual maturity, see Arist. *HA*, VII, 581b 11-16. For an overview on puberty in ancient medicine, see Eyben 1972, 677-697.

21. Longus, 3, 18, 1-2, Τί ποτέ με Χλόης ἐργάζεται τὸ φίλημα; Χείλη μὲν ῥόδων ἁπαλώτερα καὶ στόμα κηρίων γλυκύτερον, τὸ δὲ φίλημα κέντρου μελίττης πικρότερον. Πολλάκις ἐφίλησα ἐρίφους, πολλάκις ἐφίλησα σκύλακας ἀρτιγεννήτους καὶ τὸν μόσχον, ὃν ὁ Δόρκων ἐδωρήσατο· ἀλλὰ τοῦτο φίλημα καινόν· ἐκπηδᾷ μου τὸ πνεῦμα, ἐξάλλεται ἡ καρδία, τήκεται ἡ ψυχή, καὶ ὅμως πάλιν φιλῆσαι θέλω. 2 Ὢ νίκης κακῆς· ὦ νόσου καινῆς, ἧς οὐδὲ εἰπεῖν οἶδα τὸ ὄνομα. Ἆρα φαρμάκων ἐγεύσατο ἡ Χλόη μέλλουσά με φιλεῖν; Πῶς οὖν οὐκ ἀπέθανεν;

sum total of his sensorial experience remains a riddle. What he feels is completely *new* to him. The familiar kisses of his furry companions do not help him find a name for what Chloe's mouth does to him. Nature fails to help. A philosophical shepherd, Philetas, tries to lecture him to no avail.[22] Education fails to help. Finally, an experienced woman seduces him, they make love, and then she offers him an explanation of how to make use of his own body. 'Watch out for the first penetration!', she warns, 'Blood will flow'. Left to his own devises, Daphnis would not have had a clue.[23]

NULLO MAGISTRO, ARTE NULLA

These moments of disorientation are responsible for an overstretched narrative arch. Because characters cannot understand what is happening to them, and keep wondering what they could possibly do, they become involved in lengthy, meandering sub-plots that can only go on and on. This strained temporality is self-evident for any reader but should not be taken for granted. In an extended narrative, after all, intercourse might well be consummated and repeated many times — think, for instance, of epic poems such as the *Odyssey*, Nonnos' *Dionysiaca* or Apollonios Rhodius' *Argonautica*. It could occur at the beginning and then become impossible for a long period of misadventures, before resuming at the end, as in Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoé* and Xenophon's *Ephesiaca*.[24] It is a peculiarity of Longus' novel (but also of and Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*) that these intrigues should strategically defer final gratification. And they fill the gap not only with twists and turns (such as wreckages or abductions), but also with missed opportunities and awkward stumbles, in the amorous domain of romance. The idea of an art of love, therefore, becomes crucial in these novels, precisely because sex is not the abrupt acting out of a basic drive, but a bewildering se-

22. *Ibid*. 2, 3, 1. Bowie 1985, 72: «The role is that of *praeceptor amoris*, familiar to us especially from Propertius, whose debt to Philetas is explicit in 3.1.1 "*Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philitae*…" and can be argued for elsewhere. The old man's story is also, naturally, about love: he tells how once in his luxuriant garden, at the witching hour of noon, he had a divine encounter - with a boy who turns out to be Eros himself, who in fleeing and rejecting the old man reminds him how he gave him Amaryllis in his youth, and bids him rejoice that he alone among mortals has in his old age seen the boy Eros». See also Payne 2007.

23. *Ibid*. 3, 18, 1-5.

24. On the structure of the novel, see Clúa Serena 2017, XIX-XXI.

quence of perceptions and feelings to be synthetized and interpreted.[25] Sex does not take care of itself. Does this mean that it is teachable?

This question is not new. From the ἐρωτική τέχνη on which Socrates prides himself in the *Phaedrus*, to the reception of such expertise in the works of later philosophers, including Favorinus of Arles and Maximus of Tyre in the second century CE; from the *praecepta* about amatory behaviour that Tibullus, Propertius and Lucretius scatter in their poetry to Plutarch's *Coniugalia Praecepta* and *Amatorius*, love has long been a matter of advising, teaching, learning, knowing.[26] But it is Ovid's *Ars amatoria* that makes the art of love into an object of theory — a systematic inquiry into how men and women can find love and build relationships that they enjoy. This particular text, I will argue, is very probably in the background of *Daphnis and Chloe*.

The *Ars* offers a meditation about love, as a multidimensional experience that encompasses a variety of aspects: corporeal, emotional, aesthetic, moral, cultural, social and cognitive.[27] A multifaceted theory runs through this extraordinary piece of didactic and narrative thinking in verse. The same complexity extends to the novels. But with a twist. Whereas the Roman *magister* plays on two registers — the narration of tragic loves (especially in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Heroides*), and the straightforward teaching of what we should do to avoid tragedy (in the *Amores*, the *Ars amatoria* and the *Remedia amoris*) —, the novels attribute to their own protagonists a mix of instinctual ineptitude, sensorial dumbness and experimental skepticism. Nature lets them down. Their art of

25. Allusions to an art of love in Longus' novel can be found in EDWARDS, 1997, 239-248. On the theme of an 'amorous education' in Xenophon's *Ephesiaca*, see LAPLACE 1994, 440-479. The language is explicit: there is a τέχνη (1, 2, 1; 1, 2, 9) that Eros himself has to find, in order to make Habrocomes fall in love with Antheia. This is not exactly the same art of love we encounter (present or absent) in Longus.

26. Pl., *Phdr.* 257a. See DILLON 1994, 387-392: «We find a mention of an 'art of love' (ἐρωτική τέχνη) - the Greek original of *ars amatoria* - in Plato's *Phaedrus*, at 257a, in the course of Socrates' ironic final pray at the close of his 'palinode', where he prays to Eros not to deprive him of "the ἐρωτική τέχνη which you bestowed upon me", but here the phrase does not refer anything very technical - simply the 'feel' for love that Socrates prides himself having. For the scholastic minds of later Platonists, however, such a reference to naturally be taken, in the light of subsequent developments in the Hellenistic era, refer to something systematic». Dillon discusses Proclus and other neo-Platonic philosophers who comment on Plato's *Alcibiades*. He also mentions Stoic titles of lost works on ἐρωτική τέχνη. I should add, and emphasize, that Favorinus of Arles and Maxim of Tyre wrote about Socrates' ἐρωτική τέχνη, in the second century CE. On *praecepta* about love in Latin literature, see WHEELER 1910, 28-40.

27. For a wide range of contemporary interpretations of the *Ars amatoria*, see GIBSON; GREEN; SHARROCK 2006.

love is but a cartoonish exaggeration of the Ovidian lesson: they wait (but they wait too long); they doubt (but they push their uncertainty to the extreme).

I have argued in *Sex and Sensuality in the Ancient World* (2008) that Longus offers a parody of the scenarios of the state of nature to be found in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* and Ovid's *Ars amatoria.*[28] In the French version of the same book, *Sexe et sensualité. La culture érotique des anciens* (2011), I have further developed this conjecture.[29] The hypothesis that the authors of ancient Greek novels might have been aware of Roman poetry, and in particular of the *Ars amatoria*, seemed to be plausible to me, although, to my knowledge, it was not commonly taken into consideration among scholars of the novelistic genre.[30] Helen Morales had briefly mentioned an intertextual resonance, in her own book on *Vision and Narrative in Achilles Tatius'* Leucippe and Clitophon (2004), while commenting on the role of Clinias as Clitophon's erotic mentor.[31] Attention to an Ovidian background for the Greek novels is

28. Sissa 2008, 193.

29. Sissa 2011, 261-266.

30. But see Di Marco 2006, 479-497; Hubbard 2006, 499-513 («I wish to argue, on the contrary, that Longus must have been familiar with the *Eclogues* of Virgil and that Virgil's work was central to his thorough sentimentalization of the pastoral world.»); Tilg 2010, 271 on Virgil's *Aeneid* as a model for Chariton, and a good discussion of «an old postulate that Greek writers did not take creative inspiration from Roman literature». See also Howard 2009, this study does not focus on the *Ars amatoria*, but argues that: «The depiction of Lykaneion as a hunter and Daphnis as the prey is the crucial issue in this passage. This inverts the normative male-female separation in the courting process in which it is the man who chases the women—witness Ovid's hunting metaphor in *ars* I.45-46. The Ovidian references continue throughout the Lykaneion episode. Peppered throughout his *Metamorphoses* are references to women hunting and stalking men. Both Echo (3.370-374) and Procris (7.838-843) stalk their beloveds (Narcissus and Cephalus, respectively) before meeting unkind ends» (33). The language of "stalking" is unnecessarily sanctimonious, but the parallels are interesting. In the *Metamorphoses* (7, 12) Medea does wonder at her own novel feelings. This study also pays attention to the theme of art: «The final point of coincidence between the works can be seen in each author's use of art. Throughout the *Metamorphoses* and *Daphnis and Chloe* something the reader is constantly confronted with artistic imagery. I argue that Longus views Ovid as something of a kindred spirit with the use of artistic language and makes use of the Ovidian suffusion of art in literature to layer his own text in the colors and imagery of the narrative wall-painting» (3).

31. Morales 2004, 152-156;185: «Clitophon puts into practice the advice which Ovid gives in a*rs* (1, 219-28), namely to spend his time describing foreign marvels…». Foucault 1984, 208-210, made a passing allusion to the *Remedies to love*, XXX : « Le monde de la femme est trompeur parce que c'est un monde secret. …. Voulez-vous, disait Ovide, vous déprendre d'une passion ? Regardez d'un peu plus près le corps de votre maîtresse (Ov., *rem.* 345-348) », ou encore : « Je te conseille de faire ouvrir toutes les fenêtres et à la clarté du jour de noter

now gaining traction thanks to the work of Romain Brethes, especially on Achilles Tatius.[32] Let me expand my previous discussion of one crucial point of contact between Ovid and Longus: the invention of love.

Lucretius' and Ovid's pre-civilized nature is indeed a pastoral environment, but one projected in a remote past: a primordial forest.[33] According to Lucretius, the goddess Venus joined the very first lovers through reciprocal desire, male libido or simple gifts of fruit.[34] This naturalness fits Lucretius' account of puberty and the emergence of sexual desire in any individual. *Haec Venus est nobis*![35]

According to Ovid, it is pleasure itself (*voluptas*) that softened the souls of those primeval humans. A man and a woman just run into each other (*constiterant uno femina virque loco*). What they had to do, they knew at once and all by themselves -- "with no teacher" (*nullo magistro*), the poet insists, "with no art" (*arte nulla*).[36] The tableau of this uncomplicated physicality, worthy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's state of nature, then continues with a depiction of fish, snakes and other terrestrial animals who happily mate. It is a euphoric activity (*laeta*; *sua gaudia*).[37]

In the *Ars amatoria*, natural human beings figure out how to have sex, like any other living creature. By doubling Venus with *voluptas*, namely pleasure itself, Ovid outsmarts Lucretius at his own Epicurean game. The discovery of sex happens by chance, for the lovers meet like atoms entering into a collision. The poet casts himself as a *magister* of love, to be sure, but his own instructions become necessary much later in the history of humankind, namely in the urban world of Rome, where his lessons have to refine a process of civilization that natural voluptuousness had originally initiated in the wilderness. It is the same kind of pleasure, Naso explains at the end of this primitivist picture, that brings agreement and reconciliation to modern lovers. So, go ahead! *Ergo, age*! Always make love after a fight ![38] Art and nature cooperate. *Voluptas* and the *magister* agree.

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toutes les imperfections de sa forme ». Après l'amour, « noter dans ton esprit chaque défaut de son corps, et tenir tes yeux toujours fixés sur ses imperfections (411-418) ».

32. Brethes 2017, 133-148.
33. On the pastoral environment of the state of nature, see Gale 1994, 135.
34. Lucr., 5, 962-965.
35. *Ibid*. 4, 1037-1208; 1057.
36. Ov., *ars* II, 477-480.
37. *Ibid*. 481-89.
38. *Ibid*. 489.

Now, Longus seems to engage playfully with this representation of a nature that, according to Ovid, is spontaneous and educational all together. For Longus, nature is neither. In *Sexe et sexualité,* I had made this argument about the plot of the novel, but I would now add that Longus seems to echo *literally* this Ovidian passage. He describes Chloe's first kiss to Daphnis: 'In a leap she kissed him — an untutored and artless kiss, ἀδίδακτον μὲν καὶ ἄτεχνον, but one utterly capable of heating a soul'.[39] The kiss is untaught, ἀδίδακτον, and technically wanting, ἄτεχνον. Longus seems to translate into Greek the Latin words *nullo didicere magistro,* ἀδίδακτον, and *arte nulla,* ἄτεχνον.[40]

RUSTICITAS, NON PUDOR

Chloe's kiss is powerful enough to trouble the soul but, in Longus' romance, arousal does not go anywhere. Daphnis is stuck. He cannot extrapolate. He does not seem to wish to know more, or to go further. This sudden stop appears to be puzzling not merely on account of our own sense of humour, but against the background of a tradition of thought about love. As Miller Krause has shown, Greek and Roman fiction revisits a sequence of 'five steps of love', *quinque lineae* or *quinque gradus amoris*, which appears already in Plato's *Phaedrus* (255e).[41] These are: to see, to touch, to kiss, to lie together (and 'to speak' should be added at the beginning). Now Ovid makes of the first kiss a test for a man's disposition to love. 'Whoever has received kisses, *oscula qui sumpsit*', Ovid explains in the *Ars amatoria*, 'if he fails to receive, *sumere,* the rest, deserves to lose also what has been given *quae data sunt*. After kisses, how far was that young man from the full gratification of his desire?' 'To me', the poet concludes, 'that was rusticity rather than respect' *Ei mihi, rusticitas, non pudor ille fuit* .[42]

39. Longus, 1, 17, 1. I borrow the translation of Trzaskoma 2007, 353. Trzaskoma argues that Chloe's kiss produces heat.

40. *Ibid*. 1, 17, 1. Οὐκέθ ᾗ ἡ Χλόη περιέμεινεν, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ἡσθεῖσα τῷ ἐγκωμίῳ, τὰ δὲ πάλαι ποθοῦσα φιλῆσαι Δάφνιν, ἀναπηδήσασα αὐτὸν ἐφίλησεν, ἀδίδακτον μὲν καὶ ἄτεχνον, πάνυ δὲ ψυχὴν θερμᾶναι δυνάμενον.

41. Krause 2014, 55-85.

42. Ov., *ars* 1,669-671:*Oscula qui sumpsit/, si non et cetera sumet,/Haec quoque, quae data sunt, perdere dignus erit./Quantum defuerat pleno post oscula voto? Ei mihi, rusticitas, non pudor ille fuit.* On *pudor*, see Langlands 2006.

Longus' novel lingers precisely on this *rusticitas*. Daphnis, the country boy, receives an unexpected kiss from Chloe — notice the emphasis on his being on the receiving side —, but then remains oblivious to the steps of erotic progression. He just does not get it. In what seems to be gentle mockery, the entire novel undermines the confidence in the spontaneous generation of eroticism and, at the same time, in the success of any theoretical teaching. On the one hand, beyond the first uncouth kiss, pleasure fails to accomplish its didactic and civilizing mission. In an unspoiled environment where they might re-enact the origin of love, Longus' shepherds are so 'rustic' (in Ovid's language) that they have nowhere to go. They are so 'green' that they cannot even learn how to copulate from the nonhuman animals that do so under their very eyes. On the other, not even a seasoned *praeceptor* of love such as Philetas seems to be able properly to coach the two youths.[43] Although Krause does not comment on Daphnis' failure to benefit from Chloe's osculation, he argues that Philetas tries to teach Daphnis three steps, namely to kiss, φίλημα, to embrace, περιβολὴ, and to lie together, συγκατακλιθῆναι, but to no avail.[44] In bucolic Lesbos, the male body does not know how to behave; a philosophical lecture will not be sufficient; a visual example will not inspire. Neither art nor nature help the shepherds to love. Only a skilful, cunning, adulterous woman will impart to Daphnis a practical lesson. It is intercourse that teaches intercourse.

Lykainion ultimately succeeds. And yet at the very moment when she has taken Daphnis step by step from kissing to arousal; at the very moment when 'she realizes that he is capable of acting and that he is swollen with desire', μαθοῦσα ἐνεργεῖν δυνάμενον καὶ σφριγῶντα; at the very moment when she is leading the way by 'sliding artistically under the boy's body', αὐτὴν δὲ ὑποστορέσασα ἐντέχνως -- well, ultimately 'it is nature itself that teaches what else remains to be done', αὐτὴ γὰρ ἡ φύσις λοιπὸν ἐπαίδευσε τὸ πρακτέον.[45] All of a sudden, Greco-Roman nature can do the trick! But at this point we are way into the novel; we have been reading about many aborted advances, and it has to be in these unromantic circumstances that Ovid's agents of love, τέχνη and φύσις — finally — cooperate. Once again, it seems that Longus echoes

43. Zeitlin 2009, 101, notes that Achilles Tatius and Longus, «both are preoccupied with the origin and nature of love, both feature an erotic teacher who gives indoctrination into the mechanics and metaphysics of sexual pleasure as a guide to life».

44. Longus, 2, 7, 7. Krause 2014, 75-76. On Philetas' Platonic lesson: Whitmarsh 2005, 145-148; Cusset 2012, 117-132; Herrmann 2007, 205-230.

45. Longus, 3, 18, 4.

Ovid's language: 'What to do, they learned by themselves, without learning from a teacher; Venus accomplished the sweet deed with no art', *Quid facerent, ipsi nullo didicere magistro / Arte Venus nulla dulce peregit opus*.

Φύσις' belated awakening is incongruous. If it had to be 'nature itself', αὐτὴ γὰρ ἡ φύσις, that sets into motion Daphnis' body, why did not nature act by itself, namely automatically, from the very beginning, at the sight of Chloe's body? Why this conceited irony vis-à-vis art, as we have seen, *as well as* nature? It is difficult to second-guess Longus' authorial intentions, but we can easily notice that, as a matter of fact, the text of *Daphnis and Chloe* follows a storyline, in which the sexual act and, more precisely, heterosexual coition has to occur in the aftermath of multiple, complicated adventures and misadventures, twists and turns, setbacks and rebounds that constantly interrupt and restart the pursuit of gratification. Female virginity, if not complete chastity, is preserved until the genital and conjugal denouement. Defloration within marriage is the end of the story. Up to a point, even young males seem to be able to abstain from sex. Daphnis contemplates Chloe asleep, for instance, but refrains from touching her. Rape is not in order.[46] This striking feature of the ancient novel led Michel Foucault to write that Achilles Tatius' novel was an 'odyssey of two virginities'.[47] Simon Goldhill has thematised this defining feature of the genre.[48] Tim Whitmarsh sees the 'relocation' of marriage at the end of the plots as one of the distinctive features of Longus and Achilles Tatius.[49] We all agree with this.[50]

The point I would like to make is that it is not merely sexual abstention, but also sexual *incompetence* — with its goofy attempts, false starts, and frustrating failures — that keeps awake the anticipation of both the characters and the readers. It is erotic ineptitude, not respect and self-control, that

46. In contrast, see Nonnos, *Dyonisia*.

47. Foucault 1984, 265 : « Ainsi se déroule le roman d'Achille Tatius — une sorte d'odyssée de la double virginité. Virginité exposée, assaillie, suspectée, calomniée, sauvegardée — sauf un petit accroc honorable que Clitophon s'est permis —, justifiée et authentifiée enfin dans une sorte d'ordalie divine qui permet de proclamer à propos de la jeune fille : "elle est restée jusqu'à ce jour telle qu'elle était lorsqu'elle a quitté sa ville natale ; c'est un mérite pour elle d'être restée vierge au milieu des pirates et d'avoir tenu bon contre le pire (VIII, 5) ". Et parlant de lui-même Clitophon peut dire lui aussi de façon symétrique : "S'il existe une virginité masculine, je l'ai conservée moi aussi" (*Ibid.* V, 20 ; cf. également VI, 16) ».

48. Goldhill 1995.

49. Whitmarsh 2011, 70.

50. Although Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* and Xenophon's *Ephesiaca* place the reunion of a married couple at the end of the story. Chastity replaces virginity.

creates suspense. As if Longus were taking Ovid literally, he creates an environment of *rusticitas*, not *pudor*. He imagines a possible world where a young man would be unworthy of the impromptu kisses he is lucky to have received. In a reversal of the Ovidian synergy of the extemporaneous inspiration of pleasure and the urban art of love, Longus makes of that young man a naïve and seemingly unteachable lover. And Chloe too is at a loss.

While Erwin Rohde denounced Longus' erotic scenes that fall short of gratification as showing the 'abominable hypocritical refinement', «abscheuliche muckerhaftes Raffinement», typical of a Sophist, we should acknowledge (without endorsing the sanctimonious indignation, perhaps) that the time of the novel is the time of sensuality.[51] Timid, tactful, tentative, halting approaches delay full vaginal intercourse until the very end of the narration. Sensuality is slow sex. It is also maladroit sex. Now, maladroitness contributes to the duration of interminable preliminaries by complicating the erotic situation with an epistemic, rather than moral, challenge. Rusticity is a matter of uncertainty and indecision, doubts and qualms. Useless lovers keep botching their loves. Contrary to Ovid's primordial couples, Longus' characters are unable to figure out how to act, they don't know what to do. *Sine arte* and *sine magistro*, they do not have a clue and, even with the help of a mentor, they still remain clueless. Their own bodies are not a situation or an apparatus, open to possibilities they might guess and put to the test. They cannot even know for sure what it is that they perceive and feel.

They seem to be doomed to a manner of skepticism.

PERCEPTUAL INSECURITY

Longus' novel alerts us to an epistemology of sensuality. Let us take a step back. If both Chloe and Daphnis can be so slow-witted, what kind of knowledge, what kind of perception does sensuality imply? The senses are imprecise, vague, and even deceptive. Vision in particular is far from being enlightening, truthful and trustworthy. Daphnis needs to be passionately kissed finally to notice Chloe's body, as if for the first time. His haptic and gustative sensations are a maddening conundrum. Soft (like roses). Sweet (like honey). Prickly (like a bee). What could this possibly be?[52] Eyes wide-

51. Rohde 1914, 549.
52. Longus, 3, 18, 1-2.

open, Chloe perceives colours, limbs and features, but without knowing what it is that she is seeing. At a loss, she goes on to feel Daphnis' flesh with her hands, and she compares the boy's soft tissues with her own: their respective skins are equally smooth. She touches, and she is touched. Still, this tactile exploration fails to deliver a comprehensive understanding of Daphnis' body: it seems to be beautiful to her, Ἐδόκει δὲ τῇ Χλόῃ θεωμένῃ καλὸς ὁ Δάφνις, but this is merely her instantaneous, novel impression. The cause of beauty, τὸ τοῦ κάλλους αἴτιον, remains a mystery.[53]

A cloud of perceptual insecurity hovers over this pastoral romance. The bewilderment of eyes, the fumbling of lips and hands set the stage for a synaesthetic experience which, far from being exciting, rich and cumulative, is rather confusing, mystifying and, ultimately, paralyzing. This emphatically amplified clumsiness can hardly be reduced to an androcentric 'scopic regime, in which the gaze is consumptive, possessive and intrusive'.[54] The gaze is inept. As Froma Zeitlin put it, both Longus and Achilles Tatius transform «a romantic story into a sort of test site for approaching theoretical questions about perception and cognition through the focalising lens of *eros*».[55] «The desiring eyes, Zeitlin argues, arouses a wish to know about the world». Eros is indeed thought-provoking. But those desiring eyes wander idly, aimlessly and even blindly, so to speak, onto unreadable bodies.

The text pays calculated attention to multiple senses: touch, taste, audition. And the narration lingers on the epistemic powers of sensuality — but it does so with a wicked gusto for its mistakes, missteps and fiascos. The immediate reception of all these cockups is laughter. Novels in general are meant to be funny.[56] In the case of Chloe and Daphnis, the potential for facetious amusement relies specifically on the manifold incongruousness of the characters' naiveté. Their simplicity clashes with a number of culturally significant expectations.

Firstly, the possible world of pastoral fiction is ready made for extemporaneous sex. This particular novel, on the contrary, upsets what an educated, contemporary reader was used to envision in an idyllic, rural and woody habitat. No other landscape could ever be more propitious to seduction, or

53. The question of how to synthesize disparate perceptions is raised in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. I have discussed this in Sissa 2017, 150-166.

54. Morales 2004, 24; Goldhill 2001, 154-94.

55. Zeitlin 2017.

56. Brethes 2007.

rape, than one of shrubberies, bushes, grottos, springs, and meadows, especially when Nymphs were in the picture. Hellenistic poetry and Roman elegy had abundantly fostered such expectations. In contrast, Lesbos' greenery remains stubbornly uninspiring. The comic response springs out of the absurdity of a nature that, *pace* Theocritus, Lucretius and Ovid, does not even come up with a physiological, self-evident sexual reaction.

Secondly, the Greek and Roman cultural and philosophical history of sexuality makes of erotic desire *per se* the quintessentially *automatic* response to physical beauty. This is a common place, from Anchises, the ancestor of all lucky shepherds who, in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, leaps into action in front of the goddess of love, to Aristotle's explanations of the mechanics of male erection.[57] Automatism is usually the problem with sex: arousal just happens. In this respect the novel is doubly ironic.

Unexpectedly for a pastoral ambiance, the novel indulges in the portrayal of a stock character of Old Comedy: the stupid person.[58] 'What is *that*?' This is a question worthy of the character usually called Inlaw, in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*. Confronted with perceptions that do not fit one another —in this case the anatomical and sartorial features of Agathon's androgynous body—, a simpleminded internal viewer becomes confused, and loudly speculates about what it is, exactly, that he is seeing. In the theatrical situation the spectators see the object of befuddlement: Agathon, in his puzzling attire. At the same time, they watch how a caricature of the down-to-earth Athenian plays the befuddled viewer on stage. Inlaw gawks fixedly at a living enigma, with a thick, sluggish, dense stare. He does not get it. We laugh less at Agathon's appearance than at Inlaw's rustic gaze. Daphnis and Chloe, in their own stylized countryside, also look silly. Daphnis in particular comes across as a sort of disembodied, obtuse anti-Priapus.[59] He only responds to a rehearsal of heterosexual coition.

And finally, against the background of a cultural history of love, Chloe sounds like a failed Platonic character. When she mulls on what it might be that makes Daphnis look beautiful, it is difficult not to think about a Platonic souvenir. In the *Republic*, Socrates tells Glaucon that an ἐρωτικός ἀνήρ —and

57. See *supra*, note 20.

58. McCail 2002, XVIII-XX argues for a thematic resonnance with the *Ecclesiazusae* although, in his view, Longus preferred Menander's gentle humour to Aristophanes' 'ferocious satire'. Longus is disingenuously gentle, I am afraid.

59. Once again, we could think of Ov., *am.* 2,4, where the poet alludes to his sexual availability in front of a variety of women.

Glaucon is precisely that kind of man— is eager to call καλὸς any boy who might catch his attention, on account of a simple detail, such as a fine profile or a skin tone. Socrates makes him realize that what truly moves him and what he really likes is only one thing: the boys' youth.[60] A distinctive trait, a 'partial object', be it a nose or a hue, sets each of those boys apart, but a common quality, juvenile beauty, shines through multiple incarnations. In the *Symposium*, Diotima theorizes the transition from the habit to reiterate indefinitely the adjective καλὸς, to the ability to discern Κάλλος in itself. This is why *eros* is conducive to philosophy: desire happens unprompted to the young men whom Socrates meets in the streets of Athens. They do not need to be taught that first lesson. Quite the opposite! Their aesthetic sensibility is so alert that anything captures their attention. And their responsiveness opens up the chance of ascending, with Socrates' guidance, from the level of mere perception — this is beautiful, this is beautiful, this is beautiful — to the inference that there must be a concept, Beauty. Erotic desire is both spontaneous and transferable. Moreover, Chloe seems not to master in the least the 'art of love', ἐρωτική τέχνη that Eros himself was gracious enough to give to Socrates, as he acknowledges in the *Phaedrus*.[61] Mentioned at the end of the palinode of love, this art seems precisely to involve the ability to see Beauty, who is the only visible Form, shine through beautiful bodies.

In Longus' disingenuous countryside, Chloe proves unable to set foot on Plato's metaphorical ladder or to 'remember' her vision of Κάλλος: she can only go as far as to attribute an adjective, καλὸς, to Daphnis' individual body, of which she catches a glimpse in a suddenly revealing situation — when he emerges naked, from a shadowy source. Neither Socrates nor Diotima are there, in the Romanesque cave, to educate her sight and initiate her to the awareness that Daphnis is beautiful on account of Beauty. Alas, she can-

60. Pl., *R.* 5, 474d-e. Périllié 2015, paragraph 8, emphasizes the meaning of '*erôtikos*': «Dans cette unique occurrence de *R.* 5, 474d, nous avons affaire, de la part de Socrate, à une réplique bien évidemment chargée d'ironie. Glaucon, qui est pleinement reconnu comme *erôtikos anèr*, semble avoir oublié sa propre nature. Et Socrate de la lui rappeler. Au vu de cette qualification globale très concrète, très empirique, il apparaît que l'*erôtikos anèr* n'est pas simplement l'homme amoureux — à savoir l'homme qui se trouve momentanément sous l'emprise de l'amour — mais qualifie la nature d'un homme qui est porté à l'amour, ici en particulier l'amour de jeunes garçons qui sont, comme le dit le texte, "dans l'éclat de leur jeunesse". En d'autres termes, cette expression prise dans son contexte indique une constance, une continuité, une qualité qui s'inscrivent dans la durée. Nous sommes autorisés en cela à parler d'une nature…».

61. Pl., *Phdr.* 257a.

not see beyond material circumstances.[62] She is struck, and she is stuck, but not for want of trying: 'It might be the bath,' she surmises. How charming!

To emphasize the debacle of *eros* allows us better to understand the comic potential of a post-Platonic erotic experience. It also helps us appreciate the irony of a post-Ovidian nature, one in which an untutored 'and artless kiss', ἀδίδακτον μὲν καὶ ἄτεχνον, generates nothing but perplexity. In Ovid's Latin, as we have seen, a sexual activity *nullo magistro* and *arte nulla* sets in motion the invention of love. In the novel, in contrast, the doubts prompted by erotic situations prove disabling for irretrievably rustic lovers.

HOC DULCE, HOC BENE OLENS, HOC ASPERUM

This anxiety resonates with the neo-Academic philosophy of knowledge, which circulated in Rome in the first century BCE. We can take a glimpse at its principles, in Cicero's dialogues known as the *Academica*. Plato's Athenian school, the Academy, had taken a skeptical turn with its fifth director, Arcesilaus (fourth-third century BCE). The Academy remained committed to a skeptical interpretation of Socrates' method until the leadership of Philo of Larissa, who moved to Rome in the first century BCE. We can talk, therefore, of an Academic skepticism. Although this line of thought cannot be confused with Pyrrhonean skepticism, it contains a radical diffidence vis-à-vis the possibility of knowledge and the truthfulness of perception. It is this philosophical language that can reasonably be placed in the background of Lucretius who refutes skeptical views about the senses in *De rerum natura*, and Ovid who redeems uncertainty in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Ars amatoria*, as we shall see in a moment.

The core of Academic skepticism is the following: the senses are narrow, minds are weak, life is short. 'Truth', these philosophers say, 'is profoundly concealed', *in profundi veritatem esse demersa*. 'All things are surrounded by obscurity', *omnia tenebris circumfusa*.[63] Since truth does not declare itself self-evidently, we ought to suspend our belief about perceptions. We ought to endure doubt and even ignorance. Hasty assent causes mistakes. Arcesilaus claimed that 'nothing was uglier than to rush in giving consent and ap-

62. Beauty can be described as a fluid, poured on a body. See Od., 5, on Athena pouring *charis* and gold on Odysseus' shoulders.

63. Cicero, *ac.* 1, 44 (translation by Rackham, occasionally modified).

proval to a knowledge and a perception', *neque hoc quicquam esse turpius quam cognitioni et perceptioni assensionem approbationemque praecurrere*. Much better 'to hold back in all occasions, and to curb our boldness from any slip' *cohibereque semper et ab omni lapsu continere temeritatem*.[64] Arcesilaus argued for this prudence, for "the mere habit of giving assent appears to be dangerous and slippery", *ipsa consuetudo adsentiendi periculosa esse videtur et lubrica*. Let the sage (*sapiens*) withhold his assent, in order to avoid 'falling headfirst' -- as *praeceps* means --, i.e. precipitating, 'if he may have gone forward', *ne praecipitet si temere processerit.* Truth and falsehood are so similar that 'the *sapiens* must not throw himself into a place that is dangerously full of precipices', *ut tam in praecipitem locum non debeat se sapiens committere*.[65]

The major premise of this epistemic caution is that the senses are not reliable. Against such a strong defiance, Lucullus, the friendly antagonist of Cicero in the *Academica,* replies that each sensory organ is perfectly competent. Furthermore, we have the ability to 'bring together', *comprehendere*, their specific information with our *animus*.

> That is white, this is sweet, that is a song, this smells good. This is rough. We comprehend these qualities with our mind, not with the senses. 'That is a horse, that is a dog', *illud est album, hoc dulce, canorum illud, hoc bene olens. Hoc asperum. Animo iam haec tenemus conprehensa non sensibus. Ille deinceps equus est, ille canis* .[66]

We are able to know. Lucretius too, in *De rerum natura*, had reclaimed the absolute trustworthiness of the senses. In contrast and, I have argued elsewhere, in response to Lucretius, Ovid composes a fictional world, where people could not possibly navigate except by making sure that their 'assent was kept suspended', *assensio sustineretur* .[67]

The challenge of skepticism resurfaces in the second century CE, in the cultural climate that we call 'second sophistic'.[68] The teaching of rhetoric and the public performance of display eloquence, especially praise, became ex-

64. *Ibid*. 1, 45.
65. Cic., *ac.* 2 (*Lucullus*), 21, 68.
66. Cic., *ac.* 2 (*Lucullus*), 7, 21.
67. *Ibidem*. I have discussed Ovid's response to Lucretius in Sissa 2008; Sissa 2010; Sissa 2019.
68. I have discussed Ovid's response to Lucretius anti-skepticism in Sissa 2008; Sissa 2010.

tremely important. The practice of lecturing could rely upon epistemological presuppositions about the compatibility of contradictory statements, the suspiciousness of any dogmatic claim and, therefore, the need to suspend belief. Favorinus of Arles, who lived in Rome, travelled to Greece, experienced a period of exile, lectured extensively and wrote a considerable body of works largely lost for us, represents a revival of Academic skepticism in the second century CE.[69]

This is the background of Longus' novel, *Daphnis and Chloe*. Let us remember Daphnis grappling with the enigma of Chloe's kiss: lips tenderer than roses, mouth sweeter than a honeycomb, the sting of a bee, χείλη μὲν ῥόδων ἁπαλώτερα καὶ στόμακηρίων γλυκύτερον: τὸ δὲ φίλημα κέντρου μελίττης πικρότερον.[70] Likewise, Chloe is lost in her multiple sensations: black hair, tanned skin, soft flesh, ἡ μὲν κόμη μέλαινα καὶ πολλή, τὸ δὲ σῶμα ἐπίκαυτον ἡλίῳ… ἡ σὰρξ μαλθακή.[71] How to gather together, how to comprehend these heteroclite data? Lucullus' confidence in our synthetizing *animus* seems to be far too optimistic.

PERCEPTUAL INSECURITY AGAIN

The resonance of the novel with Academic skepticism is worthy of attention. But, since we have placed *Daphnis and Chloe* in comparison with Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, let us take a closer look at how this very particular art of love embraces the tenebrous confusion that, according to the Academic skeptics, circumfuses our perceptual experience. Let us also see how this hedonistic erotodidactic marshals a sort of 'suspension of desire'. The world is

69. Bett 2017, 645-658 offers a synthetic view of the remarkable revival of Academic skepticism in the second century CE. Since the tradition of Academic skepticism and the skeptical Academy as an institution had been dead for centuries, Bett argues, «it is somewhat surprising to find that several people in the second century CE seem to have treated the thought of the Academy, and especially the skeptical Academy, as a live option» (646). These people are Galen and Epictetus who engage polemically with the skeptical Academy, and Plutarch who was a friend and a mentor of Favorinus. Favorinus would deserve attention in the context of our arguments about an art of love, for a lost work on 'Socrates' erotic art' was attributed to him. Maximus of Tyre also wrote a few *Dissertations* on this topic. See: Campos Daroca 2014, 99-119; Scognamilo 1997.

70. Longus, 3, 18, 1-2.

71. *Ibid*. 1, 13, 2.

instable and uncertain.[72] We must learn to make the best of its elusive fluidity. The poet thinks deeply, although narratively, and writes in a truly philosophical voice.[73] It is this voice that we can hear (with a parodic twist, as we have seen) in the novel by Longus the Sophist, when erotic sensuality showcases the crippling anxiety of comprehending.

First of all, in Ovid's world, metamorphosis presupposes a liquid ontology. It brings hybrids into existence. The epistemic consequence of the fluidity of the cosmos is the 'poetics of illusion', so inspiringly studied by Philipp Hardie.[74] Knowledge is elusive. Perceptions are unsure. Things could always be different from what we see. That is a horse: really? How can we be sure? In the *Metamorphoses*, a poem about 'new bodies' (*nova corpora*), Io, the girl made into a heifer, keeps trying to speak as she used to do. A cow might be more than just a cow. Better to abstain from eating bovine meat! I see a deer running in a wood. A pack of dogs are eager to devour it. But what if this tender prey were also a young man? And what about this rock, this constellation, this spring, this oak, this poplar, this spider, this nightingale or this spiralling snake? Who might lurk there, notwithstanding that nonhuman body? Ovid creates a profusion of situations where tragic mistakes might, and actually do, happen. *Cuncta fluunt*, everything is in flux, and this contributes to a climate of pervasive uncertainty.[75] Since transformation affects shapes, it is particularly troubling for the eyes: what looks like a plant, a nonhuman animal, a river, a star or a stone might invisibly be also something different, or, more uncannily, some*one* different. Ovid theorizes through his fluent narration a systematic distrust for what is immediately apparent. While revealing the human biography of many nonhuman creatures, the *Metamorphoses* feed our sense of anxiety. Is that a horse? Is that a dog? Good questions!

Love is no exception. Erotic life is especially infused with change. Love ebbs and flows. Our desire fluctuates, as the other person's desire comes and goes. We only perceive details, and our perceptions are subjected to adjustments. But the erotodidactic project supposes that we can indeed educate little Amor. Which means that, by reading the poem, we can educate our-

72. The fluidity of the metamorphic world lies at the center of Calvino 1979, VII-XVI; Calvino 1991, 36-49. See also Rosati 1983; Gardini, 2017, has especially argued for the 'dogma of uncertainty', as the unifying line of thought that runs through Ovid's works.

73. I have examined Ovid's liquid ontology in Sissa 2008; Sissa 2010.

74. Hardie 2006, 123-142; Hardie 2002.

75. I have discussed this in Sissa 2019.

selves. We can harness the changeability of the erotic situation to our desire. This is how love becomes a matter of *art* as opposed to *chance*. We are in charge. Our resources are shape-shifting, language and time.

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In the *Ars Amatoria*, our love life is in flux, but we can learn how to make changes. It is we, not the gods, who perform the metamorphosis. The art of love is itself an art of seducing and self-fashioning. If I am a man interested in women, let me adjust mimetically to each of them, like the Homeric metamorphic god, Proteus. He could dissolve into water, 'now being a tree, now a lion, now a bristling boar', *nunc leo, nunc arbor, nunc erit hirtus aper*.[76] If I am a woman interested in men, let me acquire the *figura* that will trick them.[77]

Moreover, through language, we can always make believe what we wish, and will probably end up believing what we say. I see a tiny teeny woman: let me use generous adjectives in order to make her into a more attractive person. I can transform her in a supple creature (*habilis*), simply by saying that she looks like that! I can work the same magic by making a woman who is *turgida* into a full figure (*plena*).[78] Compliments, praise and poetry are essential to a magisterial courtship, for one may attenuate a beloved's defects, by using flattering words, *nominibus mollire licet mala*.[79] I may well exaggerate my appreciation of her features, but my own lies will *become* true. In time, 'a love that was false will become true', *fiet amor verus qui modum falsus erat*.[80] Love is compatible with lies, those we tell our lovers, and those they tell us. If you call at your mistress' door and you are told that she is not at home, but perhaps you catch a glimpse of her, 'just believe that she is gone out, and what you have seen is not true!', *isse foras, ac falsa videre puta* .[81] Let the serv-

76. Ov., *ars* 1, 759-761.
77. *Ibid*. 3, 771-789.
78. *Ibid*. 2, 641-662. For a different angle on the project of the *Ars amatoria* as a rhetorical prowess, consisting of the ability to stage the clash of opposing arguments, see DURLING 1958. This reading implies that Ovid is not serious, which would require a more detailed discussion.
79. Ov., a*rs* 1, 613-6. See also 2, 657.
80. *Ibid*. 1, 616.
81. *Ibid*. 2, 521-522.

ant's words prevail upon your visual observation. The eyes should not have the last word.

In the *Ars amatoria*, trust in optical verifications is misplaced; to check *de visu* on one's lover is a mistake. If you are jealous and cannot wait to read her correspondence: do not touch those tablets![82] More generally, to bring everything into full light is useless, counter-productive, and anti-erotic. Ovid's theory of love presupposes a systematic abhorrence for straightforward truthfulness, transparency, evidence and physical light. Eroticism flourishes in the dark: when you are in bed, do not open the windows![83] Civilized love-making calls for nocturnal obscurity or, at least, for penumbra: 'If not darkness, at least we look for a sort of opaque cloud, and for something less than bright light', *Et si non tenebras, at quiddam nubis opacae/ quaerimus, atque aliquid luce patente minus* .[84] The master of love warns men that a dining room is usually not well lit, and wine probably blurs their vision. 'There, do not believe too much a fallacious lamp, *fallax lucerna*!', he recommends. 'Wine and the night are bad for the assessment of beauty'.[85] But then he advises women that they should arrive late to a dinner party, and stroll elegantly, at the light of a lamp. 'Although you are ugly, you will look beautiful to people who are drinking, and night itself will cover your flaws'.[86]

Ovid's persistent praise of dimness tells us that love is actually alien to panoramic vision and full visibility. Although the gaze is conducive to desire, the eyes have to play a remarkably discreet role. Sensual pleasures are plural. Caresses and intercourse involve the entire body. Consistently, in erotic situations, sight is not the most reliable, veridical, univocal of the senses. It is not even the most erotic. Imagination becomes a precious resource in the art of love, because I can supplement my perceptions with words and fantasies. If I can transform a 'bloated' person, *turgida*, into a 'full figure', *plena*, just because I say so, it means that my eyes don't have any clout.[87] All this presupposes that the testimony of the senses, far from being self-explanatory,

82. *Ibid*. 2, 539-44; 2, 595 (in the context of the playful narrative of Mars and Venus' adultery, its malicious revelation by the Sun, and Vulcan's spectacular revenge).

83. *Ibid*. 3, 807-8. In contrast, one ought to open the windows, in order to scrutinize the flaws of a woman one must stop loving. See *rem.*, 411-2; 417-8.

84. *Ibid*. 2, 616.

85. Ov., *ars* 1, 245-6, *Hic tu fallaci nimium ne crede lucernae / iudicio formae noxque merumque nocent*.

86. *Ibid*. 3, 753-4.

87. *Ibid*. 2, 661.

certain and unequivocal, is relative, plastic and malleable. Love challenges our perception. And yet love is possible, on the condition that we embrace uncertainty, and play with it. You doubt? Keep doubting!

The art of love is a technique of skeptical chiaroscuro.

IAMQUE MORAS MALE FERT

Skepticism undermines trust in the evidence of what is perceived, calls for time to try to ascertain what seems to be the case, but first and foremost invites us simply to suspend a hasty assent to impressions, sensations, and information. One must never jump to conclusions. One must abstain from leaps of faith. One has to wait.

Now, the ability to wait, and to endure waiting, is the secret of Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, which is all about refraining from impetuousness, roughness and brutality. The art of love deals with the right dosage of tactile pressure, starting from situations in which one catches a glimpse of an attractive person, is moved by desire, and wants either to lay hands, or place their lips, or both, on that seemingly beautiful body. But never in a rush! In the *Metamorphoses*, the poet offers variations on the tempo of desire. Poetic writing tries to capture the 'time of desire', argues Giampiero Rosati. Desire is the pursuit of an intentional object, a movement that the poet carefully tries to represent, for instance, in the episodes of Apollo running after Daphne and Alpheus after Arethusa. The 'time of desire' is a tension towards a new situation, exactly like a process of metamorphosis, which is an interval of fluidity in motion, oriented toward a new body.[88]

In the *Ars Amatoria*, I would add, we learn that a smart lover has to find the right timing, good distance and proper speed. Some go too fast. The rough raptors of the Sabine virgins look fixedly at the young women, and then grab them forcibly.[89] Tereus stares at his sister-in-law, Philomela, is taken by desire and touches her in anticipation, *praecontrectat*, imagines how to seduce her, before attacking her. He can hardly bear to wait, *iamque moras male fert*.[90] These predatory men represent the very opposite of the modern urban lover. A Roman young man must learn to use his finger tips and his

88. Rosati 2009, 235-245.
89. Ov., *ars* 1, 109 – 116.
90. Ov., *met.* 455-619.

entire body, delicately to make contact with a woman seated at the circus.[91] His erotic imagination is always tactile, for he admires the sensuality of a supple, dancing body and, even when he sees a rigid woman, he wishes that 'she could be softer, at the contact with a man' *poterit tacto mollior esse viro*. Does a woman despise his poetry? He would wish to 'embrace her thigh', *cupiam sustinuisse femur*. Does she sing well? He would like to kiss her, immediately.[92] But, in the meantime, he does not. Once again, desire must not be acted out hastily. The gaze must not be an instrument of aggression.

The art of love is all about replacing sexual assault with active patience. It is by making dates, paying visits, giving presents, offering compliments, composing poetry that we pursue not our beloved, but her or his desire for us. In Jean-Paul Sartre's words, 'To love is, in essence, the project of making oneself loved'.[93] In Ovid's terms, to keep people wait for an appropriate amount of time is the supreme matchmaker, *mora maxima lena est*. Waiting always excites the lovers, *mora semper amantes incitat*.[94] Hastiness is anti-erotic. It makes you grab instead of caressing, or bite instead of kissing. Kisses are the opposite of bites. Courtship is a balancing act of perseverance and discretion. We *wait* for the other person's desire.

The *ars amatoria* is an art of conjuring up the other's desire by putting to work language, uncertainty, and time. It is an art of speaking, doubting and waiting. It is a fearless way of slowly taking control of the erotic event.

NE CITO CREDIDERIS!

Ovid may well fail to theorize the skeptical attitude required by a metamorphic world in explicit epistemological terms.[95] Nevertheless, stories of optical illusion and sensory deception convey his views of the unreliability

91. *Ibid*. 135 – 170.

92. Ov., *am.* 2, 4, 21 – 30.

93. SARTRE 1943, 415.

94. Ov., *ars* 3, 752 and 731; 3, 473-474. Slow motion is good in love-making, but one has to find the right rythm: 1, 718, 731. To keep the beloved wait is good, but it is safe if it is for a short period of time *sed mora tuta brevis*: 2, 357. Change of perceptions of the beloved over time: 2, 654.

95. Apuleius of Madauros does so at the beginning of in his own *Metamorphoses* in prose (2, 1-2). Apuleius draws the epistemic consequences of the awareness that everything might be a metamorphic hybrid.

of the senses, especially vision, and the danger of believing too fast. Ovid's lessons on the hazard of 'running ahead of oneself', *praecurrere*, namely of believing too hastily in what one perceives, are incorporated into the poetic narration itself, and generate didactic recommendations. The episode of Cephalus and Procris exemplifies this precept.

Let us look at this eloquent story. Procris and Cephalus love each other passionately, but a malicious person instills a suspicion into the apprehensive ears of the young woman: her husband, while hunting in the forest, is actually pursuing a certain 'Aura'.[96] Now, the reader knows, and Procris should know, that Cephalus is entirely devoted to her. But 'love is a credulous thing'. So, Procris feels that she must double-check those disturbing reports. In order to spy on Cephalus, she sets off to the woods, hides in the bushes, but in so doing, she makes a misleading noise. Cephalus believing that there must be a prey for him, shoots, and kills her. In the *Art amatoria*, Ovid offers this narrative as an 'example', *exemplum* of the vanity not of feeling jealousy (which is inevitable), but of giving an over-hasty credit to hearsay. 'You shall not believe quickly!', *Nec cito credideris*! 'Of how pernicious it is to believe quickly, Procris will stand as an example, and not a light one!', *Quantum cito credere laedat / exemplum vobis non leve Procris erit*.[97] Procris' first mistake is her impatience. She is unable to bear her own uncertainty, as an intelligent lover ought to do. She does not take the time to think. Her second exemplary error is the illusion that autopsy will resolve ambiguous situations. Only by seeing in person, she believes, will she know what is going on. But her eyes will fail her. She notices the imprint of a body where the grass is somehow flattened, *vidit ut oppressa vestigia corporis herba*. From this observation she promptly infers that this must be a trace of Cephalus' infidelity. It is not. But she is now in a state of extreme agitation. 'Her breast throbs in trepidation, while her heart quivers', *pulsantur trepidi corde micante sinus*.[98] She hides anguished, *anxia.*[99] Love, being uncertain, troubles the chests, *incertus pectora versat amor*.[100] She expects that Aura will soon come, and that the couple's shameful acts will be there for her to see, with her own eyes, *oculis probra videnda tuis*.[101] This will never happen. When Cephalus calls out 'Breeze!',

96. Ov., *ars* 3, 699-700.
97. Ov., *ars* 3, 685-6.
98. *Ibid*. 721-2.
99. *Ibid*. 727.
100. *Ibid*. 718.
101. *Ibid*. 715-6. The Authorial voice addresses Procris, hence '*tuis*'.

aura, together with a notorious wind, Zephyrus, Procris finally disambiguates the misleading word. There is no woman. Aura is just a word — which means 'thin air'. She is delighted at the discovery of her mistake, *error*.[102] What pushed her to believe, *putare,* was the place itself, the name and the clue, *locus*, *nomen*, *index*, and above all her own apprehension, 'for the mind always believes to be what it fears', *et quia mens semper quod timet, esse putat* .[103]

Sight did not help, after all, but only made Procris' misapprehension worse. Sight is also responsible for Cephalus' own false impression: when Procris jumps out of the bushes, he grabs his bow with youthful impulsiveness, 'thinking that he has seen an animal', *ille feram vidisse ratus*.[104] Whereas in the *Art of Love*, Procris is a testimonial to precipitation and thoughtlessness, in the *Metamorphoses*, he admits that she is capable of skepticism, albeit insufficiently.[105] As soon as she hears about Cephalus' appeals to 'Aura', Procris begins anxiously 'to doubt and to hope to be wrong', *dubitat speratque falli*. Like a skeptic, she suspends her belief: more precisely, she 'refuses to trust the clue', *indicioque fidem negat*. But, unlike a really good skeptic, she cannot resist the wish to make sure: she will not condemn her husband, she announces, 'unless she sees for herself', *nisi viderit ipsa*.[106] Her suspension of belief falls short. She cannot help: she has to become an eyewitness. Her confidence in the idealized power of vision sets a limit to a healthy diffidence vis-à-vis the sense organs. Her tragic death shows that lovers should cope with vagueness. Light is the enemy of love.

102. *Ibid*. 729-31.

103. *Ibid*. 719-20.

104. *Ibid*. 733.

105. Johnson 1999, 135, translates Cephalus' motto *credula res amor est* (*met.* 7, 826) as 'love is not skeptical', but he does not pursue the hypothesis that philosophical skepticism might be at work, in Ovid's poem, and in this particular episode. Ziolkowski 2005, 37, discusses Ezra Pound's awareness that Ovid was a skeptic. Pound describes Ovid as 'urbane, skeptical, a Roman of the city', and he quotes the typically skeptical claim that it is useful that the gods should exist, therefore we should believe, *puto*, that they exist (*ars* 1, 635)

106. Ov., *met.* 7, 831-34.

CONCLUSION

We have started by observing that the title characters of Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* spend what seems to be an inordinate amount of time wandering at what is happening to them, in the event of erotic arousal. Perceptions of the other's body and of one's own feelings are not self-evident. The novel focalizes on the youths' paralyzing perplexity to the point of making it incongruous. We have placed these scenes in the context of cultural expectations about sexuality. But since uncertainty causes sexual incompetence, we have also argued that this focalization raises the question of how we learn to make love. Is it thanks to τέχνη or φύσις? This is a question about the very possibility of an art of love. Now, when we think of an art of love, we cannot help remembering Ovid's *Ars amatoria*. Textual evidence has allowed us to make a strong hypothesis about Longus' engagement with this paradigmatic text. This is not merely a matter of literary sources, nor an intriguing intertext. A theory of love is at stake. Ovid trusts the felicitous cooperation of nature and art. Longus seems to reverse this trust. Ovid reconciles primordial sex and urban love. Longus seems to amplify the hopeless *rusticitas* of a lover who is not up to love. Ovid theorizes how a *sapiens* lover can take his — and her — time and use it to their advantage. Longus offers interminable *arrêts sur image*, snapshots of ineptitude. Ovid, in sum, teaches you how to surf on the liquid ontology of a metamorphic world, and enjoy yourself. You cultivate a manner of skepticism, in order to be a true Epicurean. In contrast, Longus' pastoral Lesbos is a place where young people are too green to count on nature or even benefit from instruction. It is intercourse that teaches intercourse.

The result sounds like a parody of Ovid.

But there is more to say. We should connect Ovid's thinking to a contemporary epistemological meditation: Academic skepticism. In Ovid's poems, we can observe a real affinity with this kind of skepticism -- and this is relevant to love. The senses prove especially weak and misleading in the experience of sensuality. Love is a perceptual minefield, an ordeal of confusion. But the purpose of the *ars amatoria* is to teach the readers to take up the challenge, to their own advantage. They can learn how to conjure the beloved's desire, through the best use of metamorphosis, language and time. A body seems big? Make it into a majestic physique! Your compliments will generate your own admiration. Your perception will change, keep talking! We make love in time, which means that we make love come into being, in slow motion. Don't rush! The ability to wait is essential to the very defini-

tion of love. Now, the same ability is essential to make the best of knowledge. We come to know over time, because truth fails to manifest itself at once, and can remain forever elusive. Suspension of belief protects you from the fatal impetuosity of the will to know. Don't jump, heads-first, to conclusions! When knowledge applies to love, then patience becomes doubly essential. Don't believe hastily! Procris shows you why. Moreover, the art of waiting allows the light-handed tactfulness that separates a rapist from an urban lover. Don't grab! Don't bite! Wait and see!

Fair enough, but how long? The educated Roman lover finds the best moment. Tereus the barbarian and the crude Roman males of yesteryear go too fast. Daphnis and Chloe abound in perplexed, paralysing uncertainty. Soft skin, delicious flavour, nice colours. What is this? Honeyed, stingy lips. What is that? Longus, I would conclude, shows what happens in the possible world of *rusticitas*. There we wait, and wait, and wait…

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