

Ovid's *Amores* 1.4-24

July 7, 2024

Entry for the 2024 Omnibus Sam Hood Translation Prize hosted by the Classical Association. It was my first time translating Latin with no help at all, just relying on grammar charts and dictionaries. I have no idea whether it's accurate or not, but it's fun (though the translation is a little clunky, looking back).

<https://classicalassociation.org/events/2024-omnibus-sam-hood-translation-prize/>

Vir tuus est epulas nobis aditurus easdem—

Ultima coena tuo sit, precor, illa viro!

Ergo ego dilectam tantum conviva puellam

Adspiciam? tangi quem iuvet, alter erit,

Alteriusque sinus apte subiecta fovebis?

Iniciet collo, cum volet, ille manum?

Desino mirari, posito quod candida vino

Atracis ambiguos traxit in arma viros.

Nec mihi silvas domus, nec equo mea membra

cohaerent—

Your husband will assail the same feast with us—

That last meal it shall be, I pray, for this man of yours!

Then am I a guest, to look upon the girl so beloved?

Another there will be, whom it may please to be
touched—

*And aptly forced under, will you keep warm the folds of
another?*

When he wishes, Will he throw his hand upon your neck?

I cease to marvel, that with wine having been struck

The shining daughter of Atrax dragged half-formed men
to arms.

Neither the forest home to me, nor do my limbs cling
from a horse—

Vix a te videor posse tenere manus! 10

Quae tibi sint facienda tamen cognosce, nec Euris

Da mea nec tepidis verba ferenda Notis!

Ante veni, quam vir— nec quid, si veneris ante,

Possit agi video; sed tamen ante veni.

Cum premet ille torum, vultu comes ipsa modesto 15

Ibis, ut accumbas—clam mihi tange pedem!

Me specta nutusque meos vultumque loquacem;

Excipe furtivas et refer ipsa notas.

Verba superciliis sine voce loquentia dicam;

Verba leges digitis, verba notata mero. 20

Cum tibi succurret Veneris lascivia nostrae,

purpureas tenero pollice tange genas.

Siquid erit, de me tacita quod mente queraris,

Pendeat extrema mollis ab aure manus.

Scarcely from you I seem able to keep my hands!

Recognize, however, what must be done to you,

give my carrying words not to Eurus nor warm Notus!

Come before your husband—why, if you come first,

I do not see what can be done; but still, come first.

When he presses that bed—You will approach, the

companion herself with a modest face,

so that you lie besides—silently touch my

(hoof)

foot!

Observe me and my nods and my talkative face;

Receive secret signals and send them yourself.

Spoken words I shall give, by brows without voice;

You shall read words from fingers, words struck with

wine.

When the jape of our Love comes to you,

Touch rosy cheeks with a gentle thumb.

If there will be anything of me which you may protest

with a silent mind,

Let a soft hand hang from your outer ear.

Some Notes

This poem makes more sense considering that marriages in Ancient Rome were more like business contracts than anything else, especially in the nobility. Affairs and such weren't legally or morally accepted, but they were bound to happen.

As always, word order in poetry is a nightmare to translate.

Line 1: **epulas**—"banquet," "feast." Looks like they're of high social class.

Line 7: **posito** and **vino** — possible ablative absolute. I used "with the wine having been struck" to emphasize the battle-like nature of the scene (the wine is "struck" just as a drum or fire would be struck).

Line 8: **Atracis** — "of Atrax," or "daughter of Atrax." Centaurs attempted to abduct Atrax's daughter Hippodamia at her wedding.

Line 8: **Atracis...traxit** — "the daughter of Atrax dragged..." It's interesting how Ovid reverses the roles. The centaurs physically tried to drag Hippodamia off, but here she's dragging them "to arms." Might be a playful way for Ovid to show his inability to resist love, just like the centaurs.

Lines 9-10: Two conflicting voices in the poem? I tried to emphasize that in my translation by separating them with italics.

Lines 13-4: Almost nervous, or hasty.

Line 16: Translation is quite on the nose here, but I wanted to play with the centaur voice a bit.

Line 17: **vultumque loquacem** — "and my talkative face." I think it's a nice description.

Line 19: **Verba...loquentia** ("spoken words") given by **superciliis sine voce** ("brows without voice").

Line 20: **verba notata mero** — "words written with wine." The wine makes another appearance (previously line 7). It acts as a signal here too, so I tried to recycle the translation of "struck."

Line 21: **Veneris...nostrae** — metonymy, "our Venus" or "our love."