

Is Bestiality Worse than Genderbending? Pasiphae and the Problem of Chasing Tail like a Man  
in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* 1.289-326

At first blush, Pasiphae's mythological exemplum (*Ars Am.* 1.289-326) fits quite well alongside the other women who suffer from an overactive sex-drive (*furiosa libido* 281). It is unusual in the work for two reasons, though: its great length, and that the means by which Pasiphae prosecutes her lust runs parallel to the advice given to men in the *Ars Am.*. Pasiphae provides a twisted test case for the efficacy of the advice Ovid gives to men. This paper will expose the parallels and explore the implications of Pasiphae's inappropriate techniques for pursuing an inappropriate romance.

The first section of this paper will lay out how Pasiphae's actions mirror those of Ovid's ideal male lover. For example, she brings gifts that are cheap but appear dear (and coming from rustic origin) (1.229-30; similar advice given to men at 1.347, 1.443 and 2.267), performs unaccustomed labor for her beloved (1.197; advice to men: 2.211-16, 2.227, 2.233), follows the herd aimlessly (1.301, advice to men: 1.485-505) and pretends to engage in worship with an ulterior motive (1.319, advice to men: 2.321-2). The narrator even chastises Pasiphae for caring too much about her appearance (1.304-8, advice to men: 1.505-24, especially 523-4). Each element of advice just listed does not overlap with advice given to women, and indeed runs athwart of much of it. A reason for Pasiphae's consonance with Ovid's male lover-aspirants is likely that her exemplum appears in a book explicitly addressed to men, but this is not the whole story.

The second section will ask, if Pasiphae functions like a case study, what does that mean in the broader scope of masculine advice? We will address two implications. First, Ovid may choose to employ Pasiphae to demonstrate how his techniques work well regardless of the

gender of the suitor. We will touch upon other times Ovid presents an equivalence of masculine and feminine passion, an equivalence under-recognized in contemporary scholarship but present in some ancient erotic discourse. Although the emotional intensity is represented as roughly the same between the sexes in a relationship, an asymmetrical power dynamic is nonetheless present in its prosecution. Second, Pasiphae demonstrates the dangers of pursuing passions passionately. Any man who loses detachment and chases his love too assiduously runs the risk of a monstrous outcome. This is more than a sly wink about the advice he gives throughout the *Ars Am.* and *Rem. Am.*: in a work that overtly presents techniques for the acquisition of love and sex, it covertly presents the dangers of using them.