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Marlowe's Ovid: The "Elegies" in the Marlowe Canon

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Introduction: “Small things with greater may be copulate”: Marlowe the Ovidian

Marlowe’s rendition of “aptari magnis inferiorea licet” (Am. 2.17.14) in my title demonstrates his subtle apprehension and multiplex reanimation of his predecessor’s signature concept, *ars*, in his translation of the *Amores, All Ovids Elegies* (D4 / 2.17.14). In the classical text, Ovid’s narrator has long since ironically identified himself as precisely the thing he says he is not in the third poem of the sequence, that amusingly inept circus-rider of love, the *desultor Amoris* (Am. 1.3.15).¹ Here, in a later utterance, he modulates his general lament about masculine susceptibility to the overrated charms of vain womankind to a specific complaint addressed to the elusive and narcissistic object of desire herself, the pseudonymous Corinna, with the claim that a lesser being may be joined to one greater, for the mutual satisfaction of both parties. One who reads intra-textually in either the ancient or early modern version of the sequence with this line in mind may recognize the speaker’s uncanny habit of making double-edged statements that redound ironically on him. The desultor so often voices his perception of his superiority to Corinna elsewhere in the *Amores* that he may be betraying this very tendency here. He believes that he, rather than she, is “magnis,” though he, with characteristic pedantry, buttresses his point with several examples, in this case a “mythological brocade” of overpowering goddesses enrapturing yet ennobling the men they enslave: Calypso and Ulysses, Thetis and Peleus, Venus and Vulcan.² His transformative skill as *poeta*, he implies, signifies that he is the divine one, creator and maker, his subject merely the vessel, the weaker one at that.

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¹ Marlowe does not translate this construction in the *Elegies*, rendering the line: “I loue but one, and hir I loue change neuer” (E3 / 1.3.15). For an analysis of the idea of persona in Ovid, see Katharina Volk, “Ille ego: (Mis)Reading Ovid’s Elegiac Persona,” *Antike und Abendland* 51 (2005): 83-96.

² F. S. Boas describes Ovid’s “profuse” use of such a device. In his landmark study of Marlowe, he demonstrates the importance of the Elegies in a general way that in spite of its errors in translation, “its counterbalancing merits and its importance in Marlowe’s development have not been sufficiently recognized.” See Christopher Marlowe: A Biographical and Critical Study (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940), 44, 30, 29-42.
In the sourcetext and translation in both its forms, the fragmentary *Certaine of Ovids Elegies* as well as the relatively complete *All* version, the youthful and inexperienced speaker frequently shows such pronounced imperviousness to the implications of his statements. The ironies of a statement such as “Thou fightst against me vsing mine owne verse” (*AOE* D6 / 3.1.38) reverberate endlessly. The sponsoring poet implies in his droll authorial distance that it is, for example, presumptuous of the cuckolding desultor to blame this married woman for the feelings he projects onto her. Marlowe preserves this irony and improvises on this customary dynamic of love poetry that Ovid helped engender in the *Amores*, a sturdily rooted trunk that sprouted various branches: troubadour *cansos*, *La vita nuova*, the *Rime sparse*, the lyric output of the Pléiade, and the poetry of Sidney, Spenser, and their successors in the seventeenth century such as Donne, Carew, and Waller, as well as the *Elegies* itself. This pseudo-sonnet-sequence valorizes and parodies such venerable poetical traditions dependent on the idea of the resentful *amans* who reveals more about himself than he realizes in his attempt to decipher his *domina* who is so incomprehensible to him. Diction in the English line in the first sentence of the chapter partially illustrates this concept. Though the adjective “copulate” is not an exact equivalent to the infinitive “aptari,” it constitutes a clever substitution, its sardonic sexual edge in the tradition of the *magister et praeceptor Amoris* (master and teacher of Love) as Ovid was often known to medieval and early modern readers from his persona in the *Ars amatoria*.³ “Small things with greater may be copulate” can also be understood as an allegory of imitation and authorship.

Marlowe reveals his desire to be joined to Ovid as he modestly understates his own worth. Yet in

³ It could be observed that “copulate” is rare as an adjective. Yet the noun is not infrequent, and Shakespeare uses it in the very play in which he pays tribute to Marlowe, *As You Like It*, in Touchstone’s line, “I presse in heere sir, amongst the rest of the Country copulatius” (*AYL* 5.4.56), cited in *OED* (copulative n. B. 4): “Used humorously of persons about to be coupled in marriage. Obs.” Though it is tempting in the current instance to detect a strong pun on “copulate,” as an adjective in Marlowe’s time it has no sexual meaning whatsoever: “Connected, coupled; conjoined, united” (copulate, adj. and n.). *OED* lists its first historical example of the verb as “To unite in sexual congress” (v. 3 intr.) from 1632, when it began, as most such terms do, as a euphemism.
the very act of writing these seven words, encompassing translation, imitation, and improvisation, he competes with his predecessor, whose presence manifests itself in his other works, especially his plays. For this reason and many others, the Elegies is an essential text for apprehending Marlowe’s poetical sensibility, though probably one of his least studied for its own sake, with the exceptions of the Manwood Elegy and Lucans First Booke. In his desultor’s “I speake old Poets wonderfull inuentions” (AOE E2v / 3.5.17), he would seem to enunciating his own method.

No definitive reason for Marlowe’s choice of the Amores for translation can be assumed, in spite of some recent and appealing arguments by Patrick Cheney, Ian Frederick Moulton, and Georgia E. Brown. This first-person sequence of poems, similar to those of the earlier Latin neoteric elegists Gallus, Propertius, and Tibullus, recounts an adulterous relationship with a rich and unhappily married woman, Corinna, who, for these intertwined reasons, is spectacularly unfaithful to her vir, or husband. In his guise of praeceptor Amoris, Ovid boasts in the Ars, his comic guide to seduction that complements this preceding text, that though her name was

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4 Georgia E. Brown: “Our appreciation of Marlowe’s poems is not only hampered by our narrow understanding of the classical ideal, we also prefer texts that confirm our values of individualism, distinction, and authenticity of voice. We denigrate texts . . . which are translations or imitations because they supposedly lack originality, and conform to collaborative models of production which we are only just beginning to appreciate.” See “Marlowe’s Poems and Classicism,” in The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe, ed. Patrick Cheney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 106. She discusses Ovidian influence in Marlowe in other ways in Redefining Elizabethan Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 102-77. Marjorie Garber explains the metaphor of writing and revision in the corpus: “Patterns of intertextual reference, texts ‘deconstructing’ or undoing other texts, and authors asserting competing authority recur throughout Marlowe’s plays.” See “‘Here’s nothing writ’: Scribe, Script, and Circumspection in Marlowe’s Plays,” Theatre Journal 38 (1984): 301; 301-20.

pseudonymous, he made her famous. Therefore, his later disavowal in his exile poetry, the
Tristia, that these erotic works were autobiographical has struck some readers as unconvincing, a
de profundis from his forced exile on the Black Sea. Marlowe does not seem to have been aware of these biographical complications or to have understood how they had informed the perceptions of his predecessors in their reception of Ovid as well as his own. Also, the social, sexual, and moral milieu of the Amores would be just as difficult to recreate for a writer of the sixteenth century as it would be for anyone contemplating such an undertaking in the twenty-first. There is no precise equivalent in Elizabethan literary culture for the Roman elegiac convention in which the lover begs a eunuch guarding his master’s door to allow entry for the purpose of having a go at the lady of the house surreptitiously, or for asking quarter from a cruel Cupid who leads a triumphal procession celebrating the lover’s humiliating downfall, only

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6 I.e., “et multi, quae sit nostra Corinna, rogant” (AA 3.538) [and many ask who my Corinna might be]. Numerous passages in the Tristia attempt to be self-exculpatory, e.g., “non ego mordaci destrinxi carmine quemquam, / nec meus ullius crimina versus habet” (2.563-64) [I have never injured anyone with a satirical poem, my verse contains charges against no one]. This passage probably refers to the Amores: “ad leve rursus opus, iuvenalia carmina, veni, / et falsa movi pectus amore meum. / non equidem vellem” (339-41) [I returned once more to my light task, the songs of youth, disturbing my heart with false love. Would that I had not]. Ovid argues that his other erotic poetry, such as the Ars, could not possibly have been harmful: “neque me nuptae didicerunt furtu magistro, / quodque parum novit, nemo docere potest. / sic ego delicias et mollia carmina feci, / strinxerit ut nomen fabula nulla meum” (2.347-50) [no brides have learned deceptions through my teaching; nobody can teach that of which he knows too little. I have written trifles and tender verses but in such fashion that no scandal has ever touched my name].

7 Early modern English readers could have read about Ovid’s mysterious “carmen et error” (Tr. 2.207) in a number of places, such as Thomas Cooper’s Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae (London: H. Wykes, 1565): “The cause of his exile is uncertain, saving some suppose it was for abusing Julia, daughter of the emperor Augustus, although the pretense of the emperor was for the making of the booke of the crafte of loue, wherby yonge myndes myght be styred to wantonnes. He lyved at the tyme when Christ our sauiour was conuersant with vs here on earth” (N3). Thomas Underdowne’s headnote to his translation of the Ibis is similar but also contains the brief passage from late antiquity that is the source of the Ovid-Julia legend: “The cause of his exile is uncertain, sayinge some suppose it was for abusesynge Julia, daughter of Caesar, which he wrote many wanton Elegies, vnder the name of Corinna, as Sidonius plainly affirmeth. ‘et te carmina per libidinosa / notum, Naso tener, Tomosque missum, / quondam Caesareae nimirum tellus, / ficto nomine subditum Corinnae’ [And gentle Naso, you were notorious for lascivious poetry, and exiled to Tomis, once excessively enamored of the daughter of Caesar, known secretly under the fictitious name of Corinna]. See Ouid his ineuctiae against Ibis, Translated into English méeter (London: Thomas East and Henry Middleton, 1569), Avii. Sidonius Apollinaris (430-79), later canonized as St. Sidonius, included this passage in his Carmina (23.158-61). Ovid was banished in 8 CE, as was Julia, who was Augustus’s granddaughter, not his daughter. The confusion arose because Julia’s mother had the same name, and was exiled for the same reason nine years earlier (1 BCE): adultery and fornication. For a close reading of the evidence, see Ronald Syme, History in Ovid (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 215-19.
approximations. Freudian or Lacanian psychosexual paradigms cannot be projected back onto Ovid and his translator as facilely as some may wish they could be. No indisputable date of composition for the *Elegies* can be assumed, either. Most scholars think of this work as juvenilia, a production at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge or earlier, at the King’s School in Canterbury, though it could have been the last thing Marlowe wrote before his (inevitably invoked) visit to Elinor Bull’s residence in Deptford.

These recent studies by my three named predecessors indicate a transformation in critical thinking about the *Elegies*, one that modulates earlier opinions that seemed unconcerned with its possible worth as poetry and contemptuous of the very idea, tending instead toward complex bibliographic issues. A maverick commentator from this previous era, J. B. Steane, shrewdly observed of some followers of this trend: “Charges of incompetence and immaturity have so crabbed the approach that one feels a frowning countenance to be expected of the discriminating reader throughout. For myself, I find it impossible to maintain beyond a few lines.” This pre-existing critical tradition, the alleged incompetence of the translator, is epitomized by one of Marlowe’s most justly celebrated twentieth-century editors, who devotes not one but two substantial essays to the topic of his blunders. She says: “One begins to question the efficacy of the Elizabethan education system when an Archbishop Parker scholar can make such elementary mistakes.” In this, she may have been prompted by an earlier editor whose footnotes—relentlessly and obsessively—detail such errors.8

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9 Roma Gill, “Snakes Leape by Verse,” in *Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Brian Morris (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), 133-50; 137. Her other essay on the subject is “Marlowe and the Art of Translation” in “A Poet and a Filthy Play-maker”: *New Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Kenneth Friedenreich, Roma Gill, and Constance Kuriyama (New York: AMS Press, 1988), 327-42. Her edition is *All Ovid’s Elegies, Lucan’s First Booke, Dido Queene of Carthage, Hero and Leander* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987). L. C. Martin’s *Marlowe’s Poems* (London: Methuen, 1931) explains that “In the present edition the attempt has been made to show not only when but, so far as possible, how Marlowe went astray” in translation, which the editor asserts was occasioned by the “line-for-line” method, or metaphorase, “which may go some way to account for the gaucheries of grammar and verse-making.” Yet he posits
I offer a methodology that differs from these dual critical traditions but depends on both nonetheless. I propose to use the *Elegies* as a way to read Marlowe, with four principles in mind. First, in spite of the considerable differences of this text from the rest of his canon, there is some relation to it, as well. His reconstituted Ovidian speaker echoes the vaunting of Tamburlaine, the intellectual arpeggios of Faustus, the scheming and perfidy of Gaveston and Mortimer, the emotional devastation of Edward and Isabella, and the metaphorical calisthenics of Leander and Neptune as they attempt to seduce their prey. Second, the *Elegies* reflects the influence of Erasmian humanist pedagogy according to Richard Mulcaster’s *The First Part of the Elementarie* (1582) and Roger Ascham’s *The scholemaster* (1570), especially the complementary concepts of *imitatio* and *aemulatio*: “This *Imitatio* is *dissimilis materiei similis tractatio*; and also, *similis materiei dissimilis tractatio*, as Virgill folowed Homer.” Its gaffes, including the most egregious, suggest that Marlowe, like many other early modern readers of classical literature, consulted (and may have been led astray by) a commentary. Third, this

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10 I.e., dissimilar in subject matter but similar in treatment, and vice versa. Though Ascham defines *imitatio* as “a facultie to expresse liuelie and perfitelie that example which ye go about to folow,” one may also work variations: “This he altereth and changeth, either in propertie of wordes, in forme of sentence, in substance of the matter, or in one or other conuenient circumstance of the authors present purpose.” See *The scholemaster* (London: John Daye, 1570), sigs. 47, 45v, 47v, respectively. For Mulcaster, see *The First Part of the Elementarie Which Entreateth Chiefly of the right writing of our English Tung* (London: Thomas Vautrollier, 1582).

11 Although Martin and MacLure both speculate that this is true, only the more recent work of Pearcy makes specific connections between a commentary, that of Dominicus Marius Niger Venetus (Basel, 1543-50), and Marlowe’s readings. See “Marlowe, Dominicus Niger, and Ovid’s *Amores,*” *Notes and Queries* 27 (1980): 315-18. Cheney and Strier repeat some of his findings but then in their running commentary read Niger very closely against some of the “mistakes” for which Martin and Gill prosecute Marlowe, with results that are valuable for scholarship on the *Elegies*. Martin posits editions with commentary printed at Basel (1568) and that of Philip Plantin at Antwerp (1575), but without any examples or close reading (*Marlowe’s Poems*, 16). Actually, many fulsomely annotated Continental editions were available to early modern readers, e.g., Bartholomew Merula on the erotic poetry (Venice, 1494); Raphael Regius on the *Metamorphoses* (Venice, 1497); Jacobus Micyllus’s vigorous revision of these two editions with further commentary in addition to Niger’s (Basel, 1543); Georgius Sabinus (Cambridge, 1584). See
much reprinted text was the standard English *Amores* until the Glorious Revolution, part of the larger phenomenon of pan-European Renaissance Ovidianism and its most pronounced London manifestation, the frenetic book trade of the 1590s. Thomas Vautrollier was given a ten-year patent to publish the works in Latin in 1574. Virtually the entire canon was rendered into English twice over before 1630.\(^\text{12}\) Fourth, as I argued in a previous study, it is truly similar enough to a sonnet sequence to suggest that it participates in the genre, at least vicariously: a series of love poems ostensibly about or to a woman, with the writer serving as his own chief subject, along with the *ars poetica*. Accordingly, the *Amores* could be said to have informed the concept of the sonnet sequence itself, since it served as an important influence on lyric poetry from the earliest troubadours to *La vita nuova* and the *Rime sparse*, which both revise and Christianize Ovid’s foundational work. This, then, may well be the best explanation for Marlowe’s choice of text for translation, this series of elegiac meditations in narrative form as adjunct to Du Bellay’s *L’Olive*, Ronsard’s *Sonnets pour Hélène*, Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella*, Daniel’s *Delia*, Drayton’s *Idea*, and eventually, *Shake-speares Sonnets*.\(^\text{13}\)

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\(^\text{13}\) For the idea of the *Amores* as a proto-sonnet sequence, especially for Dante and Petrarch, see my *Harmful Eloquence: Ovid’s *Amores* from Antiquity to Shakespeare* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 91, 116-19. For an extended discussion of the *Elegies* as participatory in the sonnet genre, and its likely influence on Shakespeare, see 133-53. Stephen Orgel puts it eloquently: “this is Marlowe’s sonnet sequence, the psychomachia of a poet-lover whose love is both his creation and his ultimate monomania, frustration, and despair.” See his edition, *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Poems and Translations* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 233. John
To identify the exact nature of Marlowe’s inheritance from his ancient predecessor has proven to be a fittingly elusive critical enterprise, given Ovid’s Protean nature. Matthew Proser has detected elements of what he calls the “classic Ovidian spirit” in the plays and poetry. These include “urbanity, wit, satiric impulse, and, of course, eroticism, along with mythological interest, lyricism, shapeliness, and a peculiar combination of emotional sophistication and clarity,” all essentially related to the master’s “practice of structural control.”

I think that these observations are solid and should be kept in mind. I consider it my task to explain Marlowe’s Ovidianism somewhat differently by determining exactly how translating the Amores into the Elegies profited him as a writer, a kind of literary archaeology that would aid in the understanding of why he may have commenced such an undertaking in the first place. Hence my title, which may seem somewhat disingenuous. Although the Amores was certainly not the only Ovid that Marlowe considered his own, it was the Ovid that we can prove that he actually knew, since he indubitably made it his own by translating it into English as the Elegies.

I

The translation appeared at the apex of early modern European Ovidianism. This cultural phenomenon included painting, sculpture, poetry, and drama informed by Metamorphoses-oriented mythological matter; humanist debate about the poet’s fitness for inclusion in programs of education; the establishment of important editions of the opera, from the two editiones principes of 1471 (i.e., Andreas, Rome; Puteolanus, Bologna) to the three-volume Second Aldine in 1515-16 (Naugerius, Venice); and, in a somewhat peculiar development, the translation into

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English of virtually all the works between the ascent of Elizabeth and the Interregnum, from Arthur Golding’s *Metamorphoses* (1567) to John Sherburne’s *Heroides* (1639). This pan-Renaissance enthusiasm for Ovid represents an extension of the obsession with him manifest in medieval culture, reflected in the thousands of fragmentary quotations from his works in writers such as Isidore of Seville, manuscripts of poetry and philosophy, and collections such as the *Anthologia Latina*. Pedagogues demonstrated his utility in the schoolroom in their *accessus ad auctores* and other educational texts. Writers as diverse as Prudentius, Martianus Capella, the anonymous authors of *De vetula*, the *Ovide moralisé* and the *Ovidius moralizatus*, Andreas Capellanus in *De amore*, and Jean de Meun in *La roman de la rose* parodied, recast, and Christianized the *Metamorphoses* and other parts of the corpus, just as tapestry-makers, painters, and sculptors did.

Marlowe’s rendition of the *Amores* is one of the myriad texts, translations, and commentaries devoted to Ovid that helped constitute six hundred especially productive years of imitation and emulation of this *auctor*, from the Latin poetry of late antiquity to the twelfth-century allegorical *integumenta* to the seventeenth-century statuary of Bernini and the poetry of Waller and Milton. His sixteenth-century version of the desultor, a being with an identifiable,

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distinct, and pungent personality, may reflect the emergent early modern idea of the individual, perhaps more defined and less corporate than the medieval conception of *humanum genus*.\(^\text{17}\) His reanimation and recasting of this nuanced persona with closed couplets and contemporary idiom suggests competition with as well as homage to the ancient author, a distance felt across time in which the past is truly past, as in Petrarch’s letters to Cicero and Vergil, such epistolary activity similarly involving presumption as well as praise. Marlowe’s transformation of this Ovidian speaker into a callow Elizabethan gallant who accompanies John Davies’s fools and clowns in his satirical *Epigrammes*, the text bound with both versions of the *Elegies* and allegedly printed in Holland, is analogous to the many examples of *aemulatio* in this extended *aetas Ovidiana*, from Guillaume IX to writers from his own time.\(^\text{18}\) These include Shakespeare’s parodic evocation of the *Metamorphoses* in *Titus Andronicus* (1594) and *Venus and Adonis* (1593), Jonson’s use of Ovid himself as a character in *Poetaster* (1601), and Chapman’s apparent critique of the sensibility of the *magister* in *Ovid’s Banquet of Sense* (1595).\(^\text{19}\) The *Elegies*, then, was very much of its own era as well as for all time.

Ovid’s immensely variegated reception across time naturally constructed his reputation in Marlowe’s formative years. Poststructuralist theory has destabilized formerly fixed notions of what constitutes these interrelated, multiplex entities so that our perception of how our forebears actually regarded the two authors must remain opaque. Although plenty of testimony exists to the effect that medieval and early modern readers considered Ovid to be wanton, immoral, and

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\(^\text{19}\) Raymond B. Waddington asserts that *Ovid’s Banquet of Sense* satirizes the fashion for the erotic epyllion and “ridicules the image of the erotic Ovid by making him protagonist of a seduction poem.” He thinks that Chapman’s continuation presents the “correct” type of Ovid, favoring the *Metamorphoses* over the *Amores*. See *The Mind’s Empire: Myth and Form in George Chapman’s Narrative Poems* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1974), 156.
amoral, it is nevertheless true that a substantial number of others from the time period thought of him as infallible on matters that would seem to us to be incongruent with what we think we know about him—such as morality. For example, Thomas Winter (1604) cites lines from the *Amores* to begin and end his translation of the Huguenot Guillaume Du Bartas’s *La Sepmaine; ou, Creation du monde*. George Abbott, Professor of Divinity and Master of University College, Oxford, refers to Ovid as “effeminate” in a sermon devoted to Jonah (1600), but then quotes him, expertly, seventeen times in the same document as an unassailable authority on Scriptural matters. The Welsh divine Gervase Babington seems unafraid to reconstitute lines that he does not appear to use in the proper context, in this case a commentary on Genesis (1592). He illustrates the precept that it is wise to moderate anger by delay with an anecdote devoted to St. Ambrose, who counseled the Emperor Theodosius to create a law postponing executions for thirty days to avoid injustice, “to the ende, that if anger had anye way made the judgment too sharpe, this respite and tyme, myght againe moderate it accordying vnto iustice. For *vt fragilis glacies, interit ira mora* [AA 1.374]. As Ire in time doth melt away, so time makes anger to decay.” However, Ovid’s line from the *Ars* seems divorced from such a godly purpose. It encourages a prospective lover to enlist a maid to arouse her lady’s anger at him so that his attempt to appease her after an appropriate interval will make him seem earnest in love and therefore all the more effective in seducing her.\(^{20}\) Christianizing this notorious manual of seduction seems to have been a custom of that country, since the manuscript informally known as “St. Dunstan’s Classbook,” dating from the ninth century, includes three didactic religious

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\(^{20}\) For Winter, see *The third dayes creation, By that most excellent, learned, and diuine poet, William, Lord Bartas* (London: Printed by Richard Field for Thomas Clerke, 1604), tp, 32. The lines from the *Amores* are 3.9.17, 3.9.28, 1.10.61. Du Bartas’s poem was better known by its English title, *Divine Weeks*, courtesy of Winter’s competing translator Joshua Sylvester. For Babington, see *Certaine plaine, briefe, and comfortable notes vpon everie chapter of Genesis* (London: Printed for Thomas Charde, 1592), fols. 138-138v. For Abbott, see *An exposition vpon the prophet Ionah Contained in certaine sermons, preached in S. Maries church in Oxford* (London: Richard Field, 1600), 57.
texts bound together with the first book of the *Ars*, annotated with Welsh glosses. The Ovid that Marlowe inherited, then, may not have been considered quite as scandalous in his time as we may think, certainly an integral part of the humanist curriculum he experienced at King’s along with his illustrious classmates such as the future Bishop of Salisbury, a kinsman of the First Folio commendatory poet Leonard Digges, John Lyly’s younger brother, and the grandson of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Such schooling was fueled by its Ascham-infused Erasmian concepts about imitation, emulation, and translation that provided the pedagogical superstructure that underlies so many poetical monuments in early modern English literature. The practice was never simply a matter of learning a metaphrastic type of translation in which a student should adhere to a word-for-word method, but much more dense and allusive and complex, one that encouraged great creativity, to immerse oneself completely in the grammar and poetics of an author, and emerge not as a verbatim copy of him or some type of mascot, but very much as one’s own poet. The assertion “To move from prose to verse it was necessary only to juggle the words around” mischaracterizes this essential part of Marlowe’s education, not just at King’s, but at Corpus Christi.

23 See Lee T. Pearcy, *The Mediated Muse: English Translations of Ovid, 1560-1700* (Hampden, CT: Archon Books, 1984), 5. A statement on the next page actually invalidates the very assertion the author tries to support: “If we know the original or consult it, then the translation creates in our mind a constant tension as we attempt, in couplet after couplet, to reconcile expectation with performance, the Ovid we know with the Ovid Marlowe gives us” (6). Pearcy’s subtle and brilliant analysis clarifies Marlowe’s originality and Ovidianism in his approximation of the master’s effects, especially in his creation of sententiae and deft use of the caesura. More so than Golding, he achieved “tightness, balance, a sense of one word placed to weigh against another. His translation imitates this quality throughout and becomes Ovidian though it does not copy Ovid at every line or in every feature” and is “the
The *Amores* was part of this learning, just as it was for the troubadours, philosophers, theologians, and schoolmasters who cited or emulated this text in the centuries preceding the sixteenth, from the poets of the *Anthologia Latina* to François Villon. Marlowe could have first encountered and then developed an affectionately proprietary interest in it while engaging himself in the Erasmian pedagogical technique known as *copia* in compiling his commonplace book, as Ascham and Mulcaster had recommended. Students in the humanist schoolroom at King’s or Cambridge copied, translated, emulated and annotated various *flores*, choice quotations from ancient authors like Ovid, in what was an intensely creative and therefore invigorating compositional experience. So, an especially rich and allusive passage in a Marlowe play or poem based on a line adapted from the *Amores* itself (1.13.40), such as Faustus’s “O lente, lente, currite noctis equi” (*DF* H2*/ 5.2.77*), just as cleverly wrenched from its original context as the passages cited above, probably reflects a practice that the author followed, just as Spenser had, from his earliest studies. On Spenser’s education, see Colin Burrow, “Spenser and Classical Traditions,” and Richard Rambuss, “Spenser’s Life and Career,” both in *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, ed. Andrew Hadfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 220 and 16-18, respectively. On M’s ed., see Constance Brown Kuriyama, *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 9-73, 178.

Brinsley suggests that the object should be fluidity and ease: “Take *Flores Poëtarum*, and in every Common place make choice of Ouid’s verses, or if you find any other which be pleasant and easie: and making sure, that your Schollers know not the verses aforesaid, use to dictate vnto them as you did in prose. Cause also so many as you would have to learne together, to set downe the English as you dictate. Secondly, to give you, and to write downe all the words in Latine *verbatim*, or Grammatically. Thirdly, having just the same words, let them trie which of them can soonerst turne them into the order of a verse: which they will presently do, being trained vp in the use of the translations; which is the same in Effect. And then lastly, reade them ouer the verses of Ouid, that they may see that themselves haue made the very same; or wherein they missed: this shall much incourage and assure them.” Though at first one’s goal should be “euer to kepe the very phrase of the Poet, there or in other places,” eventually the student should “expresse the whole matter of their Author in their owne verse, and euery circumstance, with all significant Metaphors, and other tropes and phrases, so much as they can.” See *Ludus literarius: Or, The Grammar Schoole* (London: Printed by Felix Kyngston for Richard Meighen, 1627), 192-94.
quote the *Amores* with the same frequency as the *Metamorphoses, Tristia, or Heroides*, the explanation that this relative underrepresentation can be attributed to its notorious status as forbidden reading—which would account for its attractiveness to Marlowe as a translation project, as well as its ensuing inclusion in the Bishops’s Ban of 1599—is not entirely credible. This youthful work, known as *Ovidius sine titulo* in the early Middle Ages, attends to subjects such as abortion, impotence, adultery, and fornication, anticipating most all the Seven Deadly Sins. Yet early readers did not necessarily consider the desultor who narrates the elegies with such vaunting and hypocrisy to be a surrogate for the author, or that Ovid was advocating such behavior, since they also knew he repeatedly emphasizes the distinction between his poetry (jocund) and life (chaste), and believed him, as William Fowldes (1603), deriding the notion that he was merely wanton: “For though his Muse was wanton, as he playned, / Yet Ouid life was chaste, and neuer stayned.”

Just as Winter, Abbott, and Babington saw nothing amiss in recasting the erotic wisdom of the *Ars* as support for Christian authority, others used the *Amores* in this fashion also. Hugh Kinder’s translation of Levinius Lemnius’s ethical treatise, *The sanctuarie of saluation, helmet of health, and mirrour of modestie and good maners* (1592), features a rendition of *Amores* 1.9 into poulter’s measure to buttress the claim that old men should moderate their desires and abstain from sexual activity, preceded by this learned gloss:

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26 See Fowldes, *The strange, wonderfull, and blody battel betweene Frogs and Mise* (London: Printed by S. S. for John Bayly, 1603), B3v. Ovid was himself the originator of this jocund-chaste dichotomy, much imitated and quoted by Robert Herrick and others: “crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostro—/ vita verecunda est, Musa iocosa mea—” (*Tr.* 2.353-54) [I assure you, my character differs from my verse (my life is moral, my muse is gay)]. The misconception that the *Amores* was somehow forbidden seems to have originated with Eric Jacobsen, *Translation: A Traditional Craft* (Copenhagen: Gyldendanske Boghandel-Nordisk Forlag, 1958). On the contrary, it was one of the most imitated and essential texts in western culture. The troubadours, Dante, Petrarch, Mantuan, Shakespeare, and Donne all owe an obvious debt, as does Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* 3.9 and even Milton, who echoes the *Amores* freely in his own Latin elegies (1.17-24, 3.2, 4.1-4).
most chiefly in olde age, inordinate lusts must be re strayned, and the entrie into luxurie stopped, which as it is shamefull for youth: so, as Cicero saith, it is most filthy and unseemly for olde age. For as in warre and in the campe souldiers haue neede of strength, haue neede of nimblenesse, haue neede of valiauntnesse to suffer and indure labour and trauayle: euen so in loue and in accomplishing the pleasures thereof, strength is requisite to sustaine the labours of the night, to overcome and abolish the tediousnesse of matrimonie, to beare and abide the conditions of a malapert wife, of an imperious and stately dame. Wherefore neither warre nor loue is meete for olde men, because either of them caryeth with it many troubles, griefes, and inconueniences, for the which olde age is ouer weake, and an vnequall match and vnmeete to indure them.  

This is the opposite of Ovid’s apparent intention for the poem’s bracing first lines, designed to demonstrate his desultor’s arrogance in boasti ng of his sexual prowess, which argues that a true lover should persist in chasing women just as a soldier worth the salt should pursue war. The unseemly desires of elderly gentlemen is surely a secondary concern, though their inability to sustain the labors of the night in order to abolish the tedium of marriage is nevertheless a condition to be lamented, a point supported by Ovid’s elegiac sequence, which implies that it was not necessarily forbidden reading to clergymen and their parishoners. The Venetian monk Dominicus Marius Niger would not have otherwise bothered to write an extensive and

27 The sanctuarie of saluation, helmet of health, and mirroure of modestie and good maners wherein is contained an exhortation vnto the institution of Christian, vertuous, honest, and laudable life, very behouefull, holsome and fruitfull both to highest and lowest degrees of men, tr. by Hugh Kinder (London: Hugh Singleton, [1592]), 81. The translation of 1.9: “All louers play the souldiers part, and Cupid hath his campe: / O Atticus beleue mee well, all louers play this part. / A man that able is for warre, his age is meete for lust: / Old men for warres both vnfit are, and loue forsake they must.”
encyclopedically fulsome commentary on the *Amores* that was often reprinted, adapted, and openly consulted by readers throughout the sixteenth century, including Marlowe.\(^{28}\)

What do some of Marlowe’s contemporaries have to say about the *Amores*? His theatrical collaborator Thomas Nashe quotes it more than any other Ovidian text in his works, including the *Metamorphoses*, in an astonishing variety of contexts in his many prose treatises, without much concern for its allegedly forbidden nature, though he provides the appropriate boilerplate in his *de rigueur* disclaimer on the utility of erotic poetry in *The Anatomie of Absurditie* (1589):

> I woulde not hue any man imagine, that in praysing of Poetry, I endeuour to approue Virgils vnchast Priapus, or Ouids obscenitie. I commend their witte, not their wantonnes, their learning, not their lust: yet euen as the Bee out of the bitterest flowers, and sharpest thistles gathers honey, so out of the filthiest Fables, may profitable knowledge be sucked and selected. Neuertheless tender youth ought to bee restrained for a time from the reading of such ribauldrie, least chewing ouer wantonlie the eares of this Summer Corne, they be choaked with the haune before they can come at the kernell.\(^{29}\)

For an author who wrote *The Choise of Valentines* (c. 1594) and happily circulated this gleefully pornographic poem in manuscript under its other name, *Nashe His Dildo*, this seems to be quite a remarkable statement. His sense of humor is rarely absent from his writings. His benevolent Summer castigates Winter in *Summers Last Will and Testament* (1600), “Let none beleue thee, that will euer thriue,” for making frosty observations such as this: “Whoredome hath Ouid to

\(^{28}\) Prior to his *Mediated Muse*, Pearcy published a brief yet important article that proves Marlowe used the heavily-annotated humanist *P. Ovidii Nasonis Poetae Sulmonensis Opera Quae Vocantur Amatoria* (Basle: Joannem Hervagium, 1549), edited by Jacob Micyllus and containing commentary by the Venetian Dominicus Marius Niger that extracted from his critical edition of the *Amores, Amorum libri tres, de Medicamine Faciei Libellus et Nux* (1518). See “Marlowe, Dominicus Niger, and Ovid’s *Amores.*” *Notes and Queries* n.s. 27 (1980): 315-18.

vphold her throne, / And Aretine of late in Italie.” Nashe may have also wanted us to notice Winter’s hypocrisy, since later in the same speech, he uses the Amores, which surely helped the magister Amoris uphold whoredom’s throne, as a moral exemplum.30 Two other divergent examples should suffice to demonstrate the unreliability of twenty-first-century allegations that early moderns found amatory verse indecent or unsuitable for reading. A poem attributed to Robert Greene (1592), the acerbic condemner of Shakespeare and other playwrights such as Marlowe, discusses “the vanitie of wanton writings” in tetrameter couplets, but describes the magister Amoris as “Quaint” (i.e., skilled, clever, crafty) and “Chiepest Poet of his time,” one who “chaunted all of loue,” much “Of faire Corinna and her hew” and their relationship:

How they loued and how they greed,
And how in fancy they did speed.
His Elegies were wanton all,
Telling of loues pleasings thrall, [sic]
And cause he would the Poet seeme,
That best of Venus lawes could deeme.

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30 See A pleasant comedie, called Summers last will and testament (London: By Simon Stafford, for Walter Burre, 1600), G4 and G2\(^v\), respectively. In his judgment on Ovid, Winter quotes Amores 3.8.25-26:
Naso, that could speake nothing but pure verse,
And had more wit then words to vttre it,
And words and choise as euer Poet had,
Cride and exclamde in bitter agonie,
When knowledge had corrupted his chaste mind,
Discite qui sapitis non haec qua scimus inertes,
Sed trepidae acies, & fera bella sequi.
You that be wise, and euer meane to thriue,
O studie not these toyes we sluggards vse,
But follow armes, and waite on barbarous warres. (G3-G3\(^v\)).
Anthony Ossa-Richardson says of Nashe’s multiplex quotation of Ovid generally: “we discover in these quotations a disruption of tenor and vehicle, related to the distortion of signs found elsewhere in the work,” and “we find the Roman author often deliberately misquoted, and his words existing at a peculiar distance from their original meanings.” See “Ovid and the ‘Free Play with Signs’ in Thomas Nashe’s The Unfortunate Traveller,” Modern Language Review 101 (2006): 953; 945-56.
Though this version of Greene seems to be uncharacteristically moralistic, the lines do not necessarily condemn this incarnation of Ovid. They simply explain why his “Elegies” were in their entirety “wanton” (rebellious, undisciplined, not necessarily just lewd). This speaker, or the author who created him, agrees with the sentiments attributed to the same Augustus who banished Ovid, “as he said, so thinke I,” that poetry exists “To shew precepts to make men wise,” and “Tis shame and sinne then for good wits, / To shew their skill in wanton fits,” a quality that the surviving works credited to Greene exhibit in overplus. For a second example, the critic William Webbe, in his Discourse of English Poetrie (1586), has clearly read the objections of the moralists and naysayers such as Stephen Gosson to plays and verse that delight as well as move and teach and uses the very example of the erotic Ovid, whom he praises as “a most learned, and exquisite Poet,” to confound them. Though his poetry besides the Metamorphoses and Fasti may “tend to the vayne delights of loue and dalliance . . . yet surely are mixed with much good counsayle and profitable lessons.” Therefore, if the ill and vndecenct prouocations, whereof some vnbridled witts take occasion by the reading of laciuious Poemes, bee obieceted: such as are Ouids loue Bookes and Elegies, Tibullus, Catullus, and Martials workes, with the Comedies for the most part of Plautus and Terence: I thinke it easily aunswered. For though it may not iustlie be denied, that these works are indeede very Poetrie, yet that Poetrie in them is not the essentiall or formall matter or cause of the hurt therein might be

31 Theater historians have often lamented the uses to which Greene has been put in the last two centuries, especially to serve the agenda of a critic or scholar who wishes to assert something polemical about Elizabethan drama, popular culture, or Shakespeare. See the excellent introduction, “Re-imagining Robert Greene,” by Kirk Melnikoff and Edward Gieskes, in their collection of essays, Writing Robert Greene: Essays on England’s First Notorious Professional Writer (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 1-24. For the poem, see “Greenes Ode, of the vanitie of wanton writings,” in Greenes vision written at the instant of his death ([By E. Allde] for Thomas Newman, [1592]), B2-B2v. The primary meaning of “wanton” according to OED (wanton, adj. A.1.a) was “Undisciplined, ungoverned; not amenable to control, unmanageable, rebellious,” and in the secondary sense (A.2.a) “Lascivious, unchaste, lewd. Also, in milder sense, given to amorous dalliance.”
affirmed, and although that reason should come short, yet this might be sufficient, that the workes themselues doo not corrupt, but the abuse of the vsers, who, vndamaging their owne dispositions by reading the discoueries of vices, resemble foolish folke, who comming into a Garden without anie choise or circumspectio[n] tread downe the fairest flowers and wilfullie thrust their fingers among the nettles.32

This anticipates Nashe’s sentences from the Anatomie, but the argument was hardly new at the end of the sixteenth century, since it is almost exactly the same justification that schoolmasters used from Carolingian times through the Reformation for reading profane texts along with the sacred, including the Ovidius sine titulo, which a twelfth-century commentator writing an introduction for students explained was intended to give pleasure, but which pertains primarily to ethics, uncannily similar to Kinder’s use cited above.33 The poetry causes no identifiable “hurt,” nor does it “corrupt,” but is instead misused by the “abuse of the vsers” who damage “their owne dispositions.” This subtly echoes Ovid’s own explanation of the differences between a writer’s art and life, and though he or she may devote the latter to the former, the two entities can never be exactly the same. Therefore, as Webbe observes, “Ouid, in his most wanton Bookes of loue and the remedies thereof, hath very many pithie and wise sentences, which a heedefull Reader may marke and chose out from the other stuffe.” Should we then assume that many of his readers agreed, perhaps Marlowe among them, as Babington and Abbott obviously did, or instead thought of this as special pleading, or that the Amores needed special justification to be read?

The Ars itself is much more graphic, and at the same time was immensely popular as a school

32 A Discourse of English Poetrie. Together, with the Authors iudgment, touching the reformation of our English Verse (London: John Charlewood for Robert Walley, 1586), C", Cii, Diii-Diiii, respectively.
text, from St. Dunstan’s Classbook to the Wynkyn de Worde production, *The flores of Ovyde de arte amandi with theyr englysshe afore them* (1513), which selects some of the master’s choicest erotica for use as a teaching tool. Ovid’s comically didactic treatise actually seems to endorse all the behaviors that the desultor exhibits in the *Amores*, but the latter was hardly a forbidden book.  

It should also be remembered that Marlowe renders the *Amores* into the *Elegies* when Elizabethan conceptions of this poetical form and genre were especially flexible, reflective of a larger 1590’s poetical trend for speakers to appear dramatic, to be cynical and sarcastic, and to appear obscure, this development part of a larger pan-European movement. The Florentine Luigi Almanni (1495-1556) may have been the first vernacular elegist as part of the revival of the literary form in the Renaissance, eros-oriented, with mistresses and emotional pyrotechnics. Sir John Harington’s liberal quotations and imitations of lines from the *Ars amatoria* and *Amores* in his translation of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* (1591) helped make Ovid’s erotic poetry familiar to English readers, such as the concluding commentary to Book 4 that cites the first line of *Amores* 1.9 to explain its allegory: “Militat omnis amans & habet sua castra Cupido. / All louers warriers are, and Cupid hath his campe.” In some instances, he seems to be echoing Marlowe’s translation. Nashe and Donne tried the new form in *The Choise of Valentines* (c. 1594) and the *Elegies* (c. 1598) respectively, and three verse collections alone published in the year of Marlowe’s death (1593) also prominently feature elegies: Thomas Lodge’s *Phyllis Honoured with Sonnets, Elegies, and Amorous Delights*, Barnabe Barnes’s *Parthenophil and Parthenope*,

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34 For more evidence that the *Amores* was not forbidden reading even in the Middle Ages, see “Ovid in Translation in Medieval Europe,” in *Übersetzung: Ein internationales Handbuch zur Übersetzungsforshung*, 2 vols., ed. by Harald Kittel et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 1: 1325-26; 1311-28.

35 *Orlando furioso in English heroic verse* (London: Richard Field, 1591), 30. Harington’s translation of the middle of Ariosto’s canto 7, stanza 14, “large her brest, / Two Iuory apples seemed there to grow, / Tender and smooth, and fittest to be prest” (50), may owe something to Marlowe’s “How apt her breasts were to be prest by me” (*AOE* AS 5 / 1.5.20). See H. Klein, “Das weibliche Portrait in der Versdichtung der englischen Renaissance,” PhD diss. (University of Munich, 1969), 345.
and Giles Fletcher’s Licía. Shakespeare’s appropriately-named Proteus, Ovid’s favorite god, in Two Gentlemen of Verona (1591-92) refers to this poetical fashion and invokes the Amores convention of the amans complaining outside the residence of the domina: “your dire-lamenting Elegies, / Visit by night your Ladies chamber-window / With some sweet Consort” (3.2.81-3). In this case, the poetical genre and its convention of histrionic emotional display would appear to be satirized, albeit gently, by a playwright who read Marlowe’s translation and emulated his Ovidianism throughout his poetical and dramatic career.

Laurie Maguire has rightly observed that Marlowe was best known in print as an Ovidian poet. I would add that he generated his own association with his ancient predecessor by his rendition of the Amores and then his subtle quotation and reprocessing of this translation in his plays and in Hero, along with other allusions and imitations. However, the earliest critical commentary that links the two writers is difficult to pinpoint. Thomas Nashe, the alleged co-author of Dido, Queene of Carthage, supplies a passage from the All text (Cv / 2.3.3-4) about castration in a paragraph criticizing those who “gelt religion or Church-liuings” in The Unfortunate Traveller (1594). He therefore confers the status of an authority on his departed

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36 Alan Armstrong observes that the Elizabethan conception of the elegiac genre was highly flexible, demonstrating the 1590’s penchant for poetic speakers to take dramatic stances in which they are cynical, sarcastic, and obscure. The Ovidian personae in Donne’s Elegies “not only define themselves as deviants from ethical norms, but also expect their audiences to see the logical fallacies of their self-justifying arguments, as they themselves do.” Unlike Propertius’s, those in the Ovidian mode “are self-conscious, omniscient speakers, who themselves recognize and intend their reflexive irony.” See “The Apprenticeship of John Donne: Ovid and the Elegies,” English Literary History 44 (1977): 421, 424, 426; 419-42. An early, useful discussion of English elegiacs is provided by Robert Ellrodt, Les Poètes métaphysiques anglais 3 vols. (Paris: J. Corti, 1960), 3:191, 326-8. For Proteus in Renaissance, see A. Bartlett Giamatti, “Proteus Unbound: Some Versions of the Sea God in the Renaissance,” in The Disciplines of Criticism, ed. Peter Demetz, Thomas Greene, and Lowry Nelson, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 437-75.

37 “Marlovian Texts and Authorship,” in “Marlovian Texts and Authorship,” in The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe, ed. Cheney, 47. See also Roe: “Marlowe is probably the quintessential Ovidian poet among his contemporaries for reasons which are both compelling and yet a little disquieting. He reproduces Ovid’s remarkable imaginative scope, and he revels in his freedom to do pretty much as he likes in his poem. Metamorphosis for him means mercurial inventiveness” (“Ovid ‘renascent,’” 42).

38 “Who first depriude yong boies of their best part, / With selfe same wounds he gaue he ought to smart.” See Works, ed. McKerrow, 2:238.
colleague, whose couplet serves as the medium for transmitting ancient wisdom to readers who had no Latin in lines that Nashe could have just as easily rendered into English himself. He makes another possible allusion in *The Anatomie of Absurditie* (1589), which echoes the traditional wisdom about the utility of texts whose themes are not always wholesome: “they that couet to picke more precious knowledge out of Poets amorous *Elegies*, must haue a discerning knowledge, before they can aspire to the perfection of their desired knowledge.”

Surely Marlowe would have preferred these tacit tributes over the nasty portrait of him, courtesy of Thomas Beard (1597), as an atheistical “barking dogge” through whose “nostrils” the Lord had justly “put” His Almighty “hooke,” or Greene’s condescending inference (1592) that he was merely the creator of theatrical blowhards such as that tinhorn “Tamburlan,” who enjoyed “daring God out of heaven.”

Allusions to the *Elegies* or to Marlowe’s Ovidianism seem to have begun in earnest in the early seventeenth century. The first quarto of *The Merchant of Venice* (1600) features Portia making direct reference to either *Certaine* or *All*, the moon sleeping with Endymion (B5-B5v / 1.13.43). Jonson’s *Poetaster* (1601-02) includes a rendition of *Amores* 1.15, on Envy, that differs

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39 *Anatomie*, Ciii. Since “Elegies” is formatted in roman type in the blackletter text as a proper name such as a book title, it may refer to Marlowe’s translation, which would date its first mention as very early. It is also possible that he refers to Ovid, since Webbe’s example above suggests that *Elegies* and *Amores* were interchangeable titles. No English book before 1589 uses “elegies” in its title, and only Gascoigne’s *The Steele Glas* (1576) and Spenser’s *Daphnaïda* (1591) feature “elegie,” but in the sense familiar to moderns, a death poem. *OED* (elegy n.2) provides the definition as Marlowe and his contemporaries knew it: “Vaguely used in wider sense, app. originally including all the species of poetry for which Greek and Latin poets adopted their elegiac metre.” However, in this dictionary’s earliest historical example, Jaques’s sardonic comment on Orlando’s poetical efforts affixed to trees, “Elegies,” in *As You Like It*, c. 1616, is clearly wrong, since the citation from Webbe above is 1586, and Nashe is 1589.

40 For Beard, see *The theatre of Gods iudgements* (London: Adam Islip, 1597), 147. For Greene, see *Perimedes the blacke-smith* (London: John Wolfe for Edward White, 1588), A3. Cheney suggests that Beard’s seemingly offhand comment that Marlowe was “by profession a scholar” is interesting because it maintains that he was a scholar and professed himself to be such. He “was a scholar, a playwright, and a poet—not a playwright and then a poet.” See *Marlowe’s Republican Authorship: Lucan, Liberty, and the Sublime* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 261-62. In “Marlowe and the Art of Translation,” Gill writes that Marlowe shows himself “an Autolycus amongst authors—the snapper-up of unconsidered trifles,” that is, a scholar. He is perhaps, like the Musaeus from whom he ingests *Hero, grammatikos*: an expert scholar, teacher, and translator, with great knowledge of poetics and rhetoric (338).
very little from Marlowe’s, and which the All editor includes for what appears to be
collection’s sake (B7-B7°). The utterance frames the entire play and its issues, since its
character Ovid seems at times to represent the playwright’s projection of Marlowe or criticism of
him, just as Chapman’s own Nasonical caricature appears to serve as a type of burlesqued
Marlovian figure in Ovid’s Banquet of Sense (1595). Sir John Harington’s rendition of Amores
2.4 into quatrains, “Ovid’s Confession,” may have been written as early as 1593 and seems to
revise or respond to the version in the Elegies. The tragedy sometimes attributed to John
Marston, The Insatiate Countess (1613), quotes and reprocesses a dozen lines from three of the
All poems, as R. W. Dent discovered in the middle of the last century. It is alleged that the two
writers “meet” in the second edition of The Anatomy of Melancholy (1624), although the verb
may represent something of an overstatement. Robert Burton uses lines from Hero as analogous
to short passages from the Metamorphoses and the Amores. Aston Cokaine’s blank verse and

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41 Marlowe was strongly identified with Ovid in the 1590’s. See John Huntington, Ambition, Rank, and Poetry in
1590s England (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 200), 130. Portia’s knowing reference to Marlowe’s Ovid in
Merchant (5.1.120) is, according to Boas, coincidental rather than a deliberate borrowing (Christopher Marlowe,
30). In his edition of the play, Tom Cain identifies Ovid’s language of parting from Julia as Marlovian in its
exuberance, and his closing epigraph as Marlovian-Chapmanesque. It is possible that this dramatic work enacts
Jonson’s rejection of the Ovidianism of the 1590’s for the more socially engaged Horatian model of the early
seventeenth century. See Poetaster, ed. Cain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 19-23. See also
and the Classics: The Ovid-Plot in Poetaster,” English Literary Renaissance 8 (1978): 296-311; James D. Mulhill,
“Jonson’s Poetaster and the Ovidian Debate,” Studies in English Literature 1500-1900 22 (1982): 240-55; Victoria
Moul, “Ben Jonson’s Poetaster: Classical Tradition and the Location of Cultural Authority,” Translation and

42 An alternate title of the poem is “To lyve in lust I make not my professyon,” and the British Museum manuscript
copy is headed with “Ovids confession translated into English for generall Norris 1593.” It was first published in
Harington’s 1618 Epigrams (2.85) and then reprinted in 1625 and 1633-34. See Ruth Hughey, ed., The Arundel
Harington Manuscript of Tudor Poetry, 2 vols. (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1960), 1:253-54,
2:350-52.

43 In his otherwise excellent study, Fred Tromly claims that the two writers “meet” in Burton, but this is inaccurate.
See Playing with Desire: Christopher Marlowe and the Art of Tantalization (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,
1998), 207. The Anatomy cites Hero and the Amores but never together or in any parallel fashion. See The Anatomy
of Melancholy, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Printed by John Lichfield and James Short for Henry Cripps, 1624) for the
quotations from Hero (372-73, 385) and the Amores (379). Marston’s Insatiate Countess (1613) quotes All Ovids
Élegies and reprocesses the lines in a similar way to Burton that suggests a later reading, i.e., Élegies 1.8.43 and
113-14; 2.9.29-34 and 37-38; and 3.2.33-34. See R. W. Dent, “Ovid, Marlowe, and The Insatiate Countess,” Notes
prose *The Tragedy of Ovid* (1662), published the year before the first *Doctor Faustus* revival on the Restoration stage (1663), reconfigures some motifs from the *Amores* that may reflect an ersatz reception of Marlowe’s translation. An immensely repentant Ovid, a “Noble Poet” who has “Subdued his Passions, and is now become, / As rigid in his behaviour, as the gravest / Of all the ancient Philosophers” reveals his innocence of the “error” for which he was legendarily banished, an affair with Augustus’s granddaughter Julia. He reverses the famous tag from the *Tristia* (2.207), “if I were faulty, / It was an Error in me, not a Crime,” with a twist: “For if I ere enjoy’d her, it was through / Her craft; I taking her to be another.” Cokaine intriguingly reconstitutes Cypassis, Corinna’s hairdresser (*Am.* 2.7, 2.8), into a bawd who aids in the play’s marriage plot and who sounds suspiciously like the old woman who defames the desultor to his married mistress (1.8): “were not Ovid timerous hee’d confess, / He Julia veild under Corinna’s Name.” This sympathetic version of the *auctor*, “great Virgils Equal” who “dies here of a broken Heart” may be Marlowe-infused, although that would be difficult to ascertain, however appealing an idea it may be.  

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries disapproved strongly of the *Elegies*, in keeping with this era’s distrust of their author, and it is not until the twentieth century that the translation, much like his other works, emerges from the darkness of misguided critical moralism. Thomas Warton’s magisterial history of English verse (1781) decries the poems because they “convey the obscenities of the brothel in elegant language” and “are seldom tinctured with the sentiments of a serious and melancholy love.” In his landmark edition of Marlowe (1850), the great

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44 Page references for the preceding quotations are taken from *The Tragedy of Ovid* (London: Printed for Philip Stevens, 1662), 32, 87, 29, 138, 136, respectively.
Shakespearean editor Alexander Dyce suggests about the *Elegies* and the man who wrote it, “one is almost tempted to believe it was never intended by him to meet the eye of the world, but was made, merely as a literary exercise,” as if he were a somewhat dewy pre-Romantic poet such as Thomas Chatterton or Thomas Gray. A. C. Bradley (1880) remarks of the text’s burning by the Bishops, “it would have been no loss to the world if all the copies had perished.”

A. C. Swinburne’s sweeping statement (1908) deserves to be quoted in full because of its virulence:

> Had every copy of Marlowe’s boyish version or perversion of Ovid’s *Elegies* deservedly perished in the flames to which it was judicially condemned by the sentence of a brace of prelates, it is possible that an occasional bookworm, it is certain that no poetical student, would have deplored its destruction, if its demerits—hardly relieved, as his first competent editor has happily remarked, by the occasional incidence of a fine and felicitous couplet—could in that case have been imagined.

This is an ironic judgment from a writer whom Oscar Wilde described as “a braggart in the matter of vice, who had done everything he could to convince his fellow citizens of his

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45 Warton: “The E{LEGIES} of Ovid, which convey the obscenities of the brothel in elegant language, but are seldom tinctured with the sentiments of a serious and melancholy love, were translated by Christopher Marlowe below mentioned, and printed at Middleburgh without date. The book was ordered to be burnt at Stationers hall, in 1599, by command of the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London.” See *The History of English Poetry, from the Close of the Eleventh to the Commencement of the Eighteenth Century*, 4 vols. (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, 1774-81), 3:420. Dyce is critical but does not describe the translation as an unfit text: “This version of the *Amores*, taken altogether, does so little credit either to Marlowe’s skill as a translator or to his scholarship, that one is almost tempted to believe it was never intended by him to meet the eye of the world, but was made, merely as a literary exercise, at an early period of life, when classical studies chiefly engaged his attention. We look in vain for the graces of Ovid. . . . I doubt if more can be said in praise of this version than that it is occasionally spirited and flowing.” See *Works*, 3 vols., ed. Dyce (London: William Pickering, 1850), 1:xlv. Bradley: “The translation of Ovid’s *Amores* was burnt on account of its indecency in 1599, and it would have been no loss to the world if all the copies had perished. The interest of these translations is mainly historical. They testify to the passion for classical poetry, and in particular to that special fondness for Ovid of which the literature of the time affords many other proofs. The study of Virgil and Ovid was a far less mixed good for poetry than that of Seneca and Plautus; and it is perhaps worth noticing that Marlowe, who felt the charm of classical amatory verse, and whose knowledge of Virgil is shown in his Queen Dido, should have been the man who, more than any other, secured the theatre from the dominion of inferior classical dramas.” See “Christopher Marlowe,” in *The English Poets, Selections with Critical Introductions by Various Writers and a General Introduction by Matthew Arnold*, 4 vols., ed. Thomas Humphrey Ward (London: Macmillan, 1880), 1:415; 411-26.
homosexuality and bestiality, without being in the slightest degree a homosexual or a bestializer.”

Perhaps because of C. F. Tucker Brooke’s detailed attention to the text in his landmark edition of Marlowe (1910) and the accompanying work of the philologists and annotators who were his contemporaries, as well as a change in mores characteristic of this time period, Una Ellis-Fermor (1927) could write:

Yet the *Elegies* only express a part of what might have been in Marlowe’s mind at this time, for the country into which they lead him is untouched by that fine, clear wind of thought which inspires *Tamburlaine*, the first work of his independent growth. In the Elegies of Ovid he found part of what he sought—a full and irresponsible love of life—just as in his other early translation, the first book of the *Pharsalia*, he found a partial expression of his thirst for sovereignty and love of arms. But it is possible that, in the ardour of first discovery he over-estimated the completeness of the agreement between Ovid’s poetry and his own need.

Certain it is that when he had finished the *Elegies* he laid the theme aside and wrote nothing else in that spirit.

One may object to the facile psychologizing and accompanying biographical speculations in this excerpt. Yet the critic’s lack of disapproval, her implied acceptance of the unbridled sensuality of both translation and sourcetext is quite apparent, comprising its own “fine, clear wind of thought.” She finds no reason to excuse or explain the subject matter or to condemn the author.

And in the idea that there was no “completeness of the agreement” between the sixteenth-century writer and his ancient predecessor’s work, Marlowe is clearly identified by a critic, perhaps for

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46 This splendid anecdote attributed to Wilde was recorded by Edmond de Goncourt in a journal entry for 21 April 1883. See *Pages from the Goncourt Journals*, tr. Robert Baldick (New York: New York Review of Books Classics, 2006), 284. For Swinburne, see *The Age of Shakespeare* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1908), 12.

47 *Christopher Marlowe* (London: Methuen, 1927), 11.
the first time, as a truly Ovidian poet. Fifteen years later, F. S. Boas saw nothing amiss in such an equation or with the divergence from traditional morality: “We are probably doing the youthful Marlowe no wrong when we find, in part, an illustration of a similar academic ‘rake’s progress’ in his choice of the Amores for rendering into English verse.”

The philologists and the bibliographers dominated study of the Elegies in the first seventy-five years of the twentieth century, with the examination of parallel passages and speculation about printers and dates and possible editors, all of which established a foundation for serious theoretical and literary analysis of Marlowe’s Ovidianism and habits of translation. This is to say that the critical site devoted to Marlowe as a writer so indebted to this illustrious predecessor began where virtually all other such classical-modern conjunctions have germinated: in academic tracts, notes, and short articles from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In these writings, there is generally no attempt at synthesis or coherent analysis, simply passages that are said to inform or emanate from one another, set in type side by side. William Lyon Phelps (1912) found echoes of Ex Ponto and Tristia in Tamburlaine, Douglas Bush (1929, 1932) detected traces of the Elegies in Hero, and Mary Masterson Wills (1937) suggested that the corpus reflects knowledge of George Turberville’s rendition of the Heroides (1567). There are similar studies by T. W. Baldwin (1942, 1944), Donald Baker (1959), and as previously mentioned, Dent (1963).

48 Boas makes an intriguing analogy that he does not quite connect or explain. In his second year at Corpus Christi, Cambridge (1581), Marlowe would have taken courses in dialectic featuring Ovid, and could have seen the St. John’s College productions of The Pilgrimage to Parnassus at the same university. In the play, the characters Philomusus and Studiosus pass through lands of Logic and Rhetoric and are “beguiled” by Amoretto, the voluptuary, in order to “pervert poetry into the instrument of sensual passion,” in Boas’s phrase. “We are probably doing the youthful Marlowe no wrong when we find, in part, an illustration of a similar academic ‘rake’s progress’ in his choice of the Amores for rendering into English verse.” See Christopher Marlowe, 31.

49 Boas observes that it would be a mistake to assume that the Heroides translation was merely an “undiluted series of erotic imaginations. It is in part, an antiquarian and mythological handbook.” Ovid was known to be learned, as Turberville had said in his dedicatory epistle. See Christopher Marlowe, 31. For Phelps, see Christopher Marlowe (Cincinnati: American Book Company, 1912), 407, 412, 414, 422. For Bush and Dent, see n. 43. For Wills, see n.
establish a printing chronology and a pattern of editorial recension in their detailed bibliographical studies.  

Ian Frederick Moulton (1998, 2000) speculates about the cultural anxieties that the *Elegies* may have aroused that occasioned its inclusion in the Bishops’ Ban. He argues that it seems to “raise potentially troubling issues of sexual power and masculine gender identity,” namely, that the tendency of Marlowe’s desultor to enthrall himself with women engages with a general (and irrational) early modern fear about the debilitating effects of heterosexual desire, to the extent of unmanning the state and its military might. More than the *Amores* itself, this translation “celebrates effeminacy and argues for the pleasures of subjection. It is better, the volume suggests, to be a captive of pleasure than a conqueror of men,” especially the “impotence elegy” (3.6) that equates the supposed effeminate nature of love poetry with sexual dysfunction. It is possible that the text “may thus be interpreted as advocating seriously what *Hero and Leander* advocates laughingly: that the blurring and shifting of gender boundaries is desirable and the loss of traditional masculine gender identity is a price worth paying in sensual delight.”

I add to my predecessor’s impressive number of references a familiar one that he does not include. E. K. provides an apposite definition in his notes to the January eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calender*. Even “pæderastice,” sex with boys, is preferable to “gynerastice, that is

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51 See Before Pornography, 104. Moulton’s attention to *Certeine* is of special interest to me, and his arguments are essential to my framing of my own concerning the *Elegies* in my first chapter.
the loue which enflameth men with lust toward woman kind.” Moulton’s thesis attributes more importance and cachet to Marlowe’s translation, in this case *Certaine*, than seems warranted, but it is still worthwhile and should be considered along with other important recent studies.

Granted, it is a natural critical activity to relate our own obsession with sexuality, sexual preference, homophobia, and gynophobia to what we may perceive as a similar tendency in an earlier era. Elizabethans routinely performed the same act of backward projection, such as Marlowe’s reconfiguration of Ovid’s young Roman roué into a gallant from his own milieu. However, trans-epochal speculation of this type is always a dicey proposition, since we cannot reconstruct the mindset of an entire culture with any certainty, especially about private psychological matters, about which early moderns appear to have been just as confused as we are now. For example, it seems a stretch to insist that the authorities especially objected to the aforementioned impotence poem (3.6) because they perceived its graphic description of sexual dysfunction to be, like the rest of the *Elegies*, an endorsement or celebration of cultural effeminacy, moral laxity, and masculine “softness.” It could be said that the translation itself invalidates such a claim for several reasons. First, the sheer effrontery of the poem’s focus on the penis could be perceived as aggression of a truly masculine kind. Second, Marlowe and Ovid heighten this effect by a rarely noticed irony. Though the desultor laments his past limpidity, he addresses most of his complaint to his member that is presently and maddeningly erect in a most untimely fashion as he speaks:

Now when he should not iette, he boults vpright,

And craues his taske, and seekes to be at sight.

Lie down with shame, and see thou stirre no more,

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52 *The shepheardes calender conteyning twelve aeglogues proportionable to the twelue monethes* (London: Hugh Singleton, 1579), fol. 2v.
Seeing thou wouldst deceiue me as before. (AOE E5 / 3.6.67-70)

Third, we are literally forced to look at the epitome of masculinity in its most basic form. Fourth, the work’s utter success as poetry surely portrays the opposite of impotence. Its very existence represents a veritable erection of priapic proportions, quite appropriate to the subject matter. And finally, it is just as likely that Marlowe and Ovid before him are epitomizing the idiocy of the boastful desultor astonished to discover that he cannot perform at will as he claims.

It is probably not accidental that as Ovid’s own reputation crested in the twentieth century, Marlowe’s stock as a poet in the same mode who emulated him also rose considerably. Just as Hermann Frankel (1945), L. P. Wilkinson (1955), Brooks Otis (1966), and Ronald Syme (1978) championed a classical writer whom the nineteenth century did not always seem to take seriously or esteem, commentators such as William Keach (1977) and S. Clark Hulse (1981), along with the aforementioned triad of Cheney, Brown, and Moulton, analyze his influence on his early modern heir and celebrate it. The work of Heather James (2006, 2009) has been particularly instructive in this sense, especially her political reading of Marlowe’s Ovidian inheritance as demonstrated in the *Elegies* itself.

Dympna Callaghan argues for Ovid’s presence in the Manwood elegy, arguably Marlowe’s last poem, in the most important essay published to date on his Latinity (2010). As it

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happens, he frequently cites tags from ancient writers and the Vulgate. Alfred Dorrinck (1907) notes that Marlowe quotes Ovid three times, the Amores once in Faustus and a line each from the Heroides and Metamorphoses in Edward II. However, he imitates and emulates his ancient predecessor much, much more, in countless ways, which creates a proportional conundrum. Although his relatively modest surviving opus of seven plays, two translations, an epyllion, and a few short poems would seem to be dwarfed by the enormous shadow of Ovid’s massive output, the prospect of narrowing and streamlining one’s critical focus when considering the two writers together is daunting because the influence seems so pervasive in all Marlowe’s works. Attempting to account, for example, for all the echoes, imitation, or emulation of the Metamorphoses in just Hero, not to mention the whole corpus, is a fool’s errand. Therefore, I argue that it would be more productive to relate Marlowe’s translations of the Amores, the Ovid that he demonstrates to us that he knew most intimately, to the rest of his works, and that such comparison can be accomplished without distorting our view of them, of him, or of the auctor whom he esteemed so very much as his plays demonstrate. Truly, the Metamorphoses is full of high drama, low comedy, and every type of anamorphic distortion and rhetorical excrescence in the original and in Arthur Golding’s English translation, and its many examples of “dramatic” speech can be seen in Shakespeare’s plays especially. However, Marlowe’s rendering of the Amores into the Elegies in the voice of the desultor compelled him to learn an extremely important technique that he would need to master as a professional playwright in the London

55 For Callaghan, see “Marlowe’s Last Poem: Elegiac Aesthetics and the Epitaph on Sir Roger Manwood,” in Christopher Marlowe the Craftsman, ed. Sarah K. Scott and M. L. Stapleton (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 159-78. For Dorrinck, see Die lateinischen Zitate in den Dramen der wichtigsten Vorgänger Shakespeares (Strassburg: Druck von M.D. Schauberg, 1907), 18. The references, discussed at greater length in subsequent chapters, are Am. 1.13.40 in Faustus; Her. 7.187 and Met. 6.195 in Edward II. Marlowe quotes Vergil, Terence, and Seneca, as well as the Vulgate, more often than Ovid.
theaters: creating the illusion, in poetical form, of a human being speaking to others, and to himself or to an audience in soliloquy.  

III

Patrick Cheney’s landmark *Marlowe’s Counterfeit Profession* (1997) almost singlehandedly created a serious critical site for the study of Ovidian influence in the author’s canon, so its importance cannot be overestimated. The beginning of the book, and in some ways its entire thesis, depends on a multiplex reading of the *Elegies* that is close as well as generic, one of the first not concerned with bibliography or translation. Therefore, anyone writing on the subject must confront its challenging ideas. Cheney theorizes that Marlowe conceived “a complex, multi-genre idea of a literary career, in direct professional rivalry with England’s great national poet, in order to pen a poetics of counter-nationhood,” that he self-consciously constructed an “Ovidian” professional model for himself, a threefold progression from amatory elegy to tragedy to epic, in determined opposition to the tripartite “Vergilian” *cursus*, from pastoral to the *Aeneid*, that Spenser is said by some to have followed. Furthermore, “because Ovid dramatizes an ‘Ovidian career idea’ in the very document that Marlowe himself translates,” the *Amores*, this early modern work enacts precisely the same plan as the ancient text in its

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57 Judith Weil remarks on the timing and “energetic pace” of the soliloquies of Marlowe’s characters. Their delivery tends to prevent “an immediate critical response” from the audience and are deceitfully persuasive because of their many metaphors, “particularly suited to stirring the spleen and staying the brain” in the way that George Puttenham describes in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589). Also, “the deliberate hypocrisy of his villains contains self-deception.” Though she does not mention Ovid, these observations fit the desultor very well, also, and are therefore eminently useful to my own arguments about Marlowe’s rhetorical inheritance in his act of translation. See Weil, *Christopher Marlowe: Merlin’s Prophet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 14 and 101.

58 For the quotation and following material, see *Marlowe’s Counterfeit Profession*, 4 and 7. According to Cheney, Marlowe’s scheme “collapses the Virgilian triad into pastoral and epic, eliding the georgic; he scrambles the sacred generic order, putting epic before pastoral; he minimizes the high ring of poetic fame designed to valorize the poet of Empire.” He is therefore counter-Spenserian since “he is identifying with Ovid, and he is critiquing ‘the Virgil of England.’” (8). Cheney also argues that Ovid had his own counter-Vergilian agenda and therefore “could have found Ovid replacing the Virgilian triad of genres (pastoral, georgic, and epic) with an Ovidian triad: amatory poetry, tragedy, and epic.” Cheney also identifies several of the Amores as “programmatic poems” about poetry, genre, and careerism (1.1, 2.1, 2.18, 3.1, and 3.15) that “highlight the drama of Ovid’s turn from elegy to the ‘area maior’ (III.xv.18) of tragedy and epic.” See *Marlowe’s Counterfeit Profession*, 14. Weil:
execution. According to Cheney, then, the counter-Vergilian-Spenserian schedule, resulted in this pattern: the *Elegies* and “Passionate Shepherd,” love poetry; *Doctor Faustus, Dido, Tamburlaine, Massacre, The Jew of Malta*, and *Edward II*, all tragedies that emulate and overgo both Ovid and Spenser, who both either attempted to write in the genre and failed or whose effort has been lost to history; *Lucans First Book* and *Hero and Leander*, epic (premature) in the mode of the *Metamorphoses* and *The Faerie Queene*. Subsequently, virtually everyone who investigates Ovid in Marlowe praises Cheney’s book or accepts its tenets uncritically. Some reviewers considered the thesis overdetermined and schematic. Neither approach to this important work of criticism seems justified at this juncture.

Indeed, the study assumes a certain chronology for the Marlowe canon that does not exist, a point that a theater historian would argue almost immediately, since the dates of quartos or performances, and the notations in Philip Henslowe’s diary or contemporary accounts of a play that might be *Tamburlaine*, for example, cannot be fixed beyond dispute. Just as we may

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59 For the quotation, see Marlowe's *Counterfeit Profession*, 10. “Quite literally, Marlowe’s career begins where Ovid’s did, since Marlowe inaugurates his career by translating Ovid’s inaugural poem. As our discussion has anticipated, Marlowe, in his translation of the Virgilian distich in Amores I.xv, reinscribes the Virgilian progression from pastoral to epic in Renaissance terms and contextualizes his (mis-)translation as a counter to Spenser’s self-presentation.” (10–11). In his successful undertaking of composing tragedy, Marlowe overgoes Ovid by writing the sort that his predecessor would have, and also outdoes Spenser, who had also hoped to work in the same kind of form (89). To Cheney, Ovidian tragedy is the “tragic ideology inscribed in Ovidian myths of daring, contestation, and rivalry” (90).

60 Some reviewers were troubled by Cheney’s over-riding thesis, which is dependent on a chronology that cannot be ascertained, given the indeterminacy of performance and publication of the works themselves. Others found fault with the classification of *Hero and Leander* as epic, the sheer lack of evidence that Ovid actually finished a tragedy devoted to Medea, or the critic’s dating of various works such as *Faustus*. Lisa Hopkins “Points . . . recur with something of the relentlessness of a monomania, essentially because for Cheney, every aspect of Marlowe’s writing works to underpin the great central truth that Marlowe presents himself as an Ovidian alternative to Spenser’s Virgilian self-presentation as ‘the New Poet’” for the sake of counter-nationhood. See her review in *Early Modern Literary Studies* 5.1 (1999): 11. For other important reviews, see Thomas Cartelli’s in *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 13 (2001): 254–59, and Richard A. McCabe’s in *Review of English Studies* 50 (1999): 230–31. Claude J. Summers, “Cheney never faces up to the inherent unlikelihood of any poet stringently limiting himself to so schematic a career schedule. Writers may sketch career paths in their youth, but they rarely foresee the contingencies that actually shape careers.” Also, “the adoption of a career path based on genre is not likely to be enforced so rigorously as Cheney suggests.” Therefore, “the book suffers from a thesis that is overdetermined and overly extended. Its typology of intertextuality becomes increasingly less convincing the more it is invoked. It finally stretches credulity to argue that all of Marlowe’s works are single-mindedly metadiscursive and self-reflexive and that every echo of Spenser is motivated by professional rivalry.” See his review in *Modern Philology* 98 (2001): 463–67.
not be able to ascertain, for instance, that *Hero* was a late composition, we have no evidence that the *Elegies* was an early work. Cheney does not distinguish between the *Certaine* or *All* versions, an oversight that might not influence his generic model but would affect the idea of reception, since we would need to know which iteration subsequent writers actually read and by which they could have been influenced. He also maintains the familiar and perhaps anachronistic modern dichotomy between the racy, sensuous Ovid and staid, conservative Vergil, whereas early modern writers such as Marlowe tended to see the opposite paradigms when it suited them just as their medieval forebears had. Aeneas, one should remember, is not entirely straitlaced, all too ready to murder the world’s most beautiful woman until his mother prevents him, and happy to fornicate in a cave with a gorgeous and willing queen, also, bizarrely, at his mother’s behest, albeit supernaturally. Ovid’s constant authorial undermining of his libidinous and naive desultor in the *Amores*, in the manner of a puppeteer jerking the strings of his marionette, could be seen as an affirmation of the prerogative of the very ruling class that the young man attempts to violate in his trysts with the patrician Corinna, as Marlowe nicely renders it: “If loftie titles cannot make me thine, / That am descended but of knightly line” (*COE* E3 / 1.3.7-8). None of this was lost on Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, or Marlowe. Cheney’s “could have” and “maybe” quickly harden into certainty about one who planned works that “in fact form a career pattern which conforms to the Ovidian model.” A curmudgeon from a department of classical studies who wished to disturb the thesis might note that the calendar poem, the *Fasti*, does not seem to be included in a meaningful way in Cheney’s paradigm, and that the “lost” tragedy *Medea* may not actually have been written in the first place, in spite of the existence of what is considered to be its single surviving line. A she or he studying English or comparative literature could observe that *Edward II*, *Tamburlaine*, and *The Jew of Malta* are not entirely tragedies, and
that if Marlowe’s move to this genre demonstrates that he “radically rewrites the Ovidian cursus for Western culture,” to claim he had done so because Ovid “had failed to write it,” i.e., Medea, represents circular reasoning. Can we really say that Lucan and Hero are epic? The program laid out for both Vergil and Ovid sounds suspiciously like that of the doctoral candidate composing a PhD thesis, or the three-part process of that degree in an American university, with coursework, examinations, and a dissertation, rather than reflecting the stature to which Cheney claims Marlowe wished to elevate himself, in which he used the “English Machiavellian movement” to “advance his literary authority as a writer of tragedy in early modern culture.”

Yet, at the same time, it is not impossible to create a serviceable chronology for the Marlowe canon, or at least one that assumes that the Elegies were apprentice or student work. Why not? The subsequent plays and poetry sometimes quote the translation or work variations on its themes in a way that suggests it preceded everything else. And, for that matter, my study posits that both All and Certaine of Ovids Elegies certainly could have functioned as preparation for a career in the theater, writing speeches and creating characters, as well as the life of a poet turning lines, and himself with them, on the anvil of the Muses. Elizabethan pedagogues and schoolmasters praise Vergil unreservedly, Ovid less so, and no one ever suggested to the censorious Bishops that the any part of this Augustan poet’s opus, the homoerotic Eclogues, be part of any Ban and the subsequent auto da fe, contemplated feminicide and speleological fornication aside. Paradigms do not need to be rigid, or to include every work by the writers in question, or to discount tragic patterns in related plays that are not necessarily tragedies.

61 For the quotations, see Marlowe’s Counterfeit Profession, 10 and 11, 12, respectively. To be fair, Cheney posits the possibility that Medea was a red herring in Ovid’s career (42). He also admits three important things that undermine his own argument. First, the Elegies does not reproduce in translation the very passage in the Amores (2.18.13-14) that would have best supported his thesis that Marlowe actually and consciously inherited a theory of tragedy from Ovid. Second, the autobiographical Tristia 4.10 seems mum on the concept of cursus and even cuts the “area maior phase out of his literary career.” Third, Ovid himself says in Tristia 5.7.25-30 that he composed nothing for the theater.
Marlowe was not Harry Levin’s overreacher, Richard Baines’s blasphemer, or the transgressive and violent playwright whose dabbling in espionage, necromancy, tobacco, and boys resulted in a predictable fate approaching Dantean *contrapasso*, just short of what his Edward II suffers in his final moments. Yet he was probably the daring writer Cheney so effectively analyzes, one who believed in emulation as well as imitation and who sought to overmaster Vergil, Ovid, and Spenser in making tragedies that these three predecessors could not have composed, and who thought of himself as an innovator who reconceived the epic as amusing amatory epyllion or violent historical poetry. A playwright and poet from the early modern period could well have had a plan of study, composition, and publication, just like a doctoral student hoping to grow up into a professor who engages in these three same activities at a more advanced professional level of production. Cheney’s idea that Marlowe “could have found his own commitment to secrecy and counterfeiting in Ovid, who repeatedly emphasizes the individual’s need for deception, in matters of love as well as in art,” seems indisputable, one that I had myself previously advanced about the influence of the *auctor* on the erotic poetry of the West and its practitioners, such as Marlowe and Shakespeare. I argue that the *Elegies* represents more than a planned first step in a career as an Ovidian poet, more than an apprenticeship for a certain kind of vocation such as playwright. For Marlowe, it constituted an essential act of poetic composition, translation, and scholarship, since the material over which he labored so intently never quite left him, and the peculiar Ovidian tincture of his *Amores*, along with the *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides* he knew so well, remains discernible in his subsequent work.

IV

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62 For Cheney, see *Marlowe’s Counterfeit Profession*, 60. For my earlier discussion of the matter, see *Harmful Eloquence*, 1-37 and 133-53.
I see four tendencies in Marlowe’s work that demonstrate the freedom his inheritance granted him and its considerable benefits. What did it allow him to do? First, it helped him begin an Ovidian career, as Cheney puts it, and the translation may have exemplified the first phase of such a *cursus*. More important, perhaps, is that the activity allowed Marlowe to teach himself to write poetry in the first place by emulating his culture’s premier poet, every bit as eminent as Vergil, and to immerse himself in Ovid’s rhetoric, humor, and wit. He could also fulfill a need he appears to have had to be subversively innovative in the act of rendering this text into English for the first time. Second, he could submit himself to a truly challenging task, the discipline of turning Latin elegiacs into rhyming distichs in iambic pentameter, and thereby inventing the effective closed couplet in English as he learned to create his own poetical voice. Third, as a translator, he could experiment with variations on his sourcetext by deciding whether he preferred what Dryden would later describe or metaphrase and paraphrase, or if such distinctions mattered to him. Whether they did or not, he could decide whether the commentary he used to help him, that of Dominicus Marius Niger in the Mycellus edition of 1549, offered advice that was worth heeding. Fourth, the translation ultimately helped prepare Marlowe for a career as a playwright, if it was apprentice work as most commentators have surmised, or to keep him engaged, if fashioning the *Elegies* was a parallel to dramatic writing or an opportunity to extend himself in a new way. It helped teach him to write soliloquies and to inhabit and develop in his rendition of the desultor what would later be referred to as a character, a recognizable simulacrum of a human being. So many hours spent with this Ovidian person are apparent in the many figures in the canon who resemble him: Barabas, the narrator of *Hero*, Gaveston, Edward, Mortimer Junior, some of the speakers in *Massacre* and *Dido*, and Tamburlaine himself. Since these concepts are germane and essential to my argument, I will return to them frequently in the
course of this study, in more detail in the first chapter, on the *Elegies*, and then as motifs in my analyses of individual plays.

In the progress of my research into both poets, I was often struck by how often piquant critical observations about Ovid’s works applied just as legitimately to Marlowe’s. These mutually illuminating concepts have certainly enhanced my understanding of both writers and inform my book. In the introduction to their landmark edition of *Edward II*, H. B. Charlton and R. D. Waller define Marlowe’s “characteristic” sensibility as a “complete detachment from ordinary human sympathies,” a touch of overstatement that nevertheless seems true of his classical predecessor at times. Similarly, Karl Galinsky’s description of the master’s emotional disengagement from the fates of his characters in the *Metamorphoses* could be said to underlie some aspects of *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*: “People may suffer, experience the most unusual passions, and reach an impasse that begs for some profound discussion, but . . . such an exploration” does not “materialize.” And D. J. Palmer’s analysis of fused Machiavellian and Ovidian elements in the plays especially relates to Marlowe’s conception of the desultor’s mindset in the *Elegies*, since that speaker is certainly a Machiavel in love.

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63 Respectively, *Edward II*, ed. Charlton and Waller (London: Methuen, 1931), 56; and Gallinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 263. Charlton and Waller: “It has always been less obvious that he was less apt in the interplay of character and in the consistent unfolding of situations than he was in the exposition of emotional states and aims. He was a master of the more violent states of feeling, in which there is no thought which is not also an emotion.” Not even Faustus’s speeches “have any marked intellectual quality,” and he and Tamburlaine “desire and suffer; they do not think. Marlowe studies passionate possession in situ as Browning studies intellectual self-consciousness” (59).

I do not believe that Marlowe and Ovid were quite as emotionally detached from the sufferings of their creations as my predecessors have claimed. Indeed, the very lack of authorial intervention or commentary in their works—or, worse, what appears to be evil humor, inhuman objectivity or downright jocularity therein—comprises its own type of powerful, if tacit condemnation of human depravity. One might even detect an implied desire for the implementation of traditional morality in these dramatic milieux in which happy marriage, fidelity, decency, empathy, justice, and effective kingship are laughably nonexistent. The Ovidian motifs or methodologies that Marlowe inherited from his experience as translator of the *Amores* and applied to his plays and epyllion are, in my reading, most often these. Almost always, the author is a master puppeteer who undermines his subject speaker, whether the narrator of the *Elegies* or a character in a play. Sometimes, the guiding playwright is an Ovidian archpoet who manifests himself in the subversion of traditional theatrical modes in the very construction of dramatic action. More often, the Marlowe canon features a blowhard seducer and rogue like the desultor, full of megalomania and hyperbole. Accordingly, various characters, like Ovid’s narrator, incriminate themselves by their obvious dissimulations, amorality, misogyny, and disorderly sexuality, an extreme form of negative self-definition that resembles Mannerism. Several passages in the *Elegies* often epitomize what seems to be a theme in a given dramatic work, just as lines from *Faustus, Edward,* and their fellows seem to “say” the translation. Similarly, a scene in a play sometimes recreates or reconfigures an incident from the *Elegies* in a way that approaches tableau, most frequently in the form of an opening soliloquy that partakes

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65 In *The Marlovian World Picture* (Mouton: The Hague, 1974), W. L. Godshalk takes an extreme version of the opposite position on Marlowe: “His vision is radical in its criticism, conservative in its nature. He is never a preacher, but always a seer, and his moral vision of the insanely aggressive world is turned into art” (37). Unlike Shakespeare’s optimism in plays such as *The Tempest,* “Marlowe’s vision is a world of human evil” that he approaches “with the savage indignation of Swift,” and the plays end “with evil conquering evil” (223).
heavily of the opening poem of the *Amores*, in which the desultor is introduced to us, that prototype of the medieval Vice. These are, then, some of Marlowe’s Ovidian poetics.

V

Again, an accurate chronology of Marlowe’s compositions cannot be established, so it seemed judicious to me to avoid creating an argument dependent on a specious theory of authorial development based on speculative chronology. I chose instead to follow, after a fashion, the neutral example that Mark Thornton Burnett judiciously established for his edition of the canon, one that sets the works in order of actual publication. These dates comprise the sequence in which print culture received the plays and poetry, beginning with *Tamburlaine* in 1590 and ending with *The Jew of Malta* in 1633. The two undated works are exceptions to my predecessor’s method. I discuss *Massacre* after *Edward II* and before *Hero* since R. Carter Hailey has recently ascertained its hitherto unknown year of print as 1596, based on his study of the edition’s paper. The other is of course the *Elegies*, which I discuss in my first chapter by obvious necessity, given my focus. Along with establishing further parameters of possible influence than I discuss in this Introduction, I examine *Certaine* and *All* as entities analogous to a sonnet sequence, engage with previous criticism that accounts for Marlowe’s translation, and analyze what rendering the *Amores* into English allowed him to accomplish, especially as a maker of dramatic texts. My second section is devoted to the two *Tamburlaine* plays, since the hero seems to owe much to the desultor in his vaunting and ranting, and many uncanny correspondences exist between the translation and this twofold theatrical pageant so important to the history of English theater. The overt sexuality of the *Elegies* is sublimated but not entirely repressed therein, simply dissipated. We can also see how the author’s work with couplets helped

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teach him how to write blank verse and to create a theory of rhetoric for drama, even its failures for a kind of protagonist whom Marlowe frequently undermines just as Ovid sabotages his speaker. Both writers seem to use women to demonstrate how insensitive their heroes are, and the concept of love’s war reverberates from elegy to history.

My next three chapters account for the subtle Ovidian patterning in rhetoric and dramatic construction in *Dido, Edward,* and *Massacre.* Since Ovid’s distillation of Vergil’s epic into his own (*Met.* 13.623-14.582) comprises tribute rather than desecration, I argue that Marlowe’s tragedy should be understood as homage to his two ancient forebears, especially when it seems parodic. Comparable dynamics animate *Dido* and the *Elegies:* prurient gazes; an author undermining his speakers; and statements in one text that illuminate the other, especially the concept of “the sower of love” for one and all. Similarly, the fecundity of such interchanges between the translation and *Edward* suggests that the playwright relied heavily on his English *Amores* for realizing his vision of his tormented king’s milieu, especially in the conception of character, tableau, and metaphor. Like Gaveston, Ovid’s amoral lover and his fellows discredit themselves further with every subsequent aside or soliloquy, since these modes themselves re-emphasize the falsity of the original attempt at ingratiation with the reader or spectator. Also, his history play contains two of the three quotations from the Latin Ovid in his canon, both highly ironic as one would expect. Like dynamics inform *Massacre,* which the fragmentary and unfinished nature of its text cannot conceal: the recreation of tableaux from the *Elegies* in the play; embedded Ovidian commentary about writing and writers; violence, grotesquerie, and humor; and, intriguingly, the bizarre nature of the action replicates the equally peripatetic mental processes of the desultor, as if he were writing the play itself.
Hero, Faustus, and The Jew of Malta replicate and intensify some of these effects, which I discuss in my last three chapters. The form of the epyllion is itself Ovidian, and Marlowe was surely indebted to the Metamorphoses as well as the two Heroides epistles devoted to his famous lovers in conceiving his narrative. Yet the Elegies is also important to understanding the genesis of Hero. Marlowe quotes his erotic translation in his amorous narrative poem, each outlining a similar psychology of desire in their narratives so marked by fissures and gaps. My main concern in this section is to build on the work of my predecessors about the most significant editorial intervention in Hero besides the additions by George Chapman and Henry Petowe, the transposition of a crucial passage concerning the lovers’ consummation. Like some before me, I believe that the original 798-line Blount quarto of 1598, without sestiads, represents what is most authentically Marlovian in the surviving text. My argument differs from theirs because I demonstrate that the Elegies itself explains why we should read the epyllion as it appears in this earliest form. The texts share a component of human sexuality that was apparently nothing new to Ovid and Marlowe, but that the learned perpetrator of the transposition in Hero did not seem to understand, and who edited accordingly. Faustus is, as it happens, the only play in which Marlowe specifically mentions Ovid and that quotes the Latin Amores, most appropriate for my purposes of comparison, since the magus bears a curious resemblance to his elegiac predecessor. Both seek to enjoy similar delights, and like Marlowe’s other plays, lines from the translation and this tragedy tend to “say” each other. Faustus’s frequent use of the word “art” corresponds roughly to the ars of the Amores-Elegies that the master tries so hard to deploy. The Ovidian distancing effect that creates a discrepancy between the creating author and the resulting character also seems to be in operation, as well. I find it curious that sometimes the desultor resembles the morality character from which Faustus is descended, just as the necromancer
sounds oddly like his classical predecessor who wants nothing more than to chase women. One could say that both are in pursuit of arcane, occult knowledge. Finally, Barabas in *The Jew of Malta* is one of the most intense manifestations of the desultor in the Marlowe canon, which, if this was the playwright’s final work, would make eminent sense. This protagonist’s Ovidianism was most clear to seventeenth-century writers and theregoers, and the marked change in tone between the two halves of his play could be explained as characteristic of the Latin *auctor*. Some recent interpretations of Barabas fit the desultor, also, especially Arthur Lindley’s observation that Marlowe’s characters are obnoxious to an astonishing degree and with astonishing frequency. The similarities between the two suggest a possible line of transmission that informs the other desultor-like characters in the canon: outsider, fomenter of social disorder, embodiment of theatricality, playwright-surrogate for Marlowe, manic nature, relish in misdeeds, eroticism, amorality, autoincrimination, authorial distancing and sabotage, the similarity of first soliloquies to *Elegies* 1.1, occasional misogyny, and *ars adeo arte latet sua*: art concealing art.

67 “The Unbeing of the Overreacher,” 1.