“Marlowe’s First Ovid: Certaine of Ovids Elegies.”

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Marlowe’s First Ovid:  *Certaine of Ovids Elegies*

M. L. Stapleton

Marlowe’s translation of Ovid’s *Amores* is probably his least studied text, with the possible exception of *Lucans first booke* (1600), his rendition of the *Pharsalia*.¹ Neither of its two versions, *All or Certaine of Ovids Elegies* (c. 1599), conforms to the concept of the author that mid-twentieth-century criticism and recent popular biography often promulgate, based on reception of the more celebrated *Doctor Faustus, Edward II, Tamburlaine*, and *Hero and Leander*. That is, he was an over-reacher who had the rotten luck to be murdered before he could blossom in his purported careers as a spy, rival to Shakespeare, writer of erotic *epyllia*, and maker of innovative blank verse tragedies for the stage. For this reason, some words of introduction are in order.

It is not entirely clear why Marlowe should have chosen the *Amores* for translation. This first-person sequence of poems, similar to those of the earlier 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 *praecceptor Amoris* (teacher of Love), Ovid boasts in the *Ars amatoria*, his comic guide to seduction that complements this preceding text, that even though her name was 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.² Marlowe does not seem to have been aware

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¹ *Lucans first booke translated line for line, by Chr. Marlow* (London: Printed by P. Short, 1600).

² “et multi, quae sit nostra Corinna, rogant” (*Ars amatoria* 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
of these biographical complications or to have understood how they had informed the perceptions of previous readers and translators, the very reception, of Ovid.\(^3\) Also, the *Amores* quedquam, / 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 lev rursus opus, iuvenalia carmina, veni, / et falso 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 furta 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]. Texts of the Latin poetry follow (and translations in square brackets are based on) the Loeb editions: *Heroides and Amores*, tr. Grant Showerman, 2nd ed. rev. G. P. Goold (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); *Tristia [and] Ex Ponto*, tr. Arthur Leslie Wheeler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924, rpt. 1985); *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, tr. J. H. Mozley, 2nd ed. rev. G. P. Goold (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

\(^3\) 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 vncertaine, savynge some suppose it was for abusynge Iulia, daughter of the emperour Augustus, although the pretence of the emperour was for the makynge 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 convoysaunt with vs here on earth” (N3r). 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 banishment is vncertayn, but most men thinke, & I am of that opinion also, that it was for vsing too familiarly Iulia, Augustus his daughter, who of hir selfe too much enclined to lasciviousnes, vtnto whô 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 nimis puellae, / 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...
treats a number of subjects that do not tend to serve as major themes in *Faustus*, *Tamburlaine*, *Edward II*, and *Hero*: vibrant, bed-breaking heterosexuality perpetrated in the afternoon; happily recounted fornication and cuckoldry trumped by infidelity practiced against this same fornicator and cuckold; tumescence foiled by fiendish impotence, countered by peevish and untimely re-tumescence and ejaculation, which results in harrowing feminine complaint; a blazon that describes an extremely naked woman (except for one important part). Conversely, the translation does not concern itself with Guises or Ganymedes, pretty lambs, pampered jades, or poisoned baby nuns, a thousand ships, true love’s blood, antic hay, tobacco, or boys, though it surely contains a fool.

Therefore, criticism of the *Elegies*, unconcerned with its possible worth as poetry, has instead tended toward the bibliographic or sometimes even contemptuous and pedantic. J. B. Steane observed: “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.” Yet even now, nearly a half-century later, a review of the most recent version of Marlowe’s non-dramatic output devotes itself almost entirely to its sole critical tradition, the alleged incompetence of the translator, to which one of his most celebrated twentieth-century editors devotes not one but two long essays.

secretly under the fictitious name of Corinna). See Ouid his inuectiue 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.

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 was certainly prompted by an even earlier editor whose almost every footnote—relentlessly and obsessively—details such errors.5

This is a pity, because Marlowe’s translation deserves serious study, and the following topics would bear further exploration. First, in spite of its considerable differences 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 and the emotional devastation of Edward and Eleanor, 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 twinned concepts of imitatio and aemulatio: “This Imitatio is dissimilis

materiei similis tractatio; and also, similis materiei dissimilis tractatio, as Virgill folowed Homer. 

Its blunders, 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 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

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6 I.e., dissimilar in subject matter but similar in treatment, and vice versa. Though Ascham defines imitatio as “a facultie to expresse liuelie and perfitele 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, on in one or other conuenient circumstance of the authors present purpose.” See The scholemaster or plaine and perfite way of teachyng children, to vnderstand, write, and speake, the Latin tong but specially purposed for the priuate brynging vp of youth in ientlemen and noble mens houses, and commodious also for all such, as haue forgot the Latin tonge (London: John Daye, 1570), 47r, 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).

7 Although Martin and MacLure both speculate that this is true, only the more recent work of Lee T. 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 (Basel, 1543); Georgius Sabinus (Cambridge, 1584). See also Ann Moss, Ovid in Renaissance France: A Survey of the Latin Editions of Ovid and Commentaries Printed in France before 1600 (London: Warburg Institute, 1982).
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. Fourth, it is 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 in the west from the earliest troubadours onward to Dante’s *La vita nuova* and Petrarch’s *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-speare Sonnets*.

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9 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
The detailed bibliographic studies are intertwined with issues of censorship. There were two early, separate, undated, and surreptitious printings of the Elegies, bound together with Sir John Davies’ Epigrammes, and with shared title pages and continuous signatures, the place of publication allegedly Middleburgh, just across the Channel in Holland, a city with a substantial English population, but more likely London. The first edition, Certaine of Ovids Elegies, follows 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.

the *Epigrammes*, and contains a selection of ten translations from the *Amores*.\(^{11}\) This was entered in the Stationers’ Register on 1 June 1599 as a book jointly condemned, along with many others, by Bishop Bancroft and Archbishop Whitgift, “Daveys Epigrams, with Marlowes Elegies,” one to be burned by the common hangman, part of the “Bishops’ Ban.” The second, *All Ovids Elegies*, is a complete rendition of the *Amores* as the Renaissance knew it, and precedes the same forty-eight *Epigrammes*.\(^ {12}\) It is more likely that Davies’s poems were the cause of the ecclesiastical censure, not Marlowe’s, the edict against such publications in effect, which may explain why the response of the editor of the collection was to enlarge and move the Ovidian text to the front. Then again, no truly satisfactory explanation has been offered as to why someone would bother with two arrangements of these translations by a writer who appears to have been safely dead for at least six years. For readers who wished to enjoy Ovid in English or favored works designed to arouse the prurient interest, there were many other choices.

\(^{11}\) Respectively, *Amores* 1.1., 1.3, 1.5, 3.13 (i.e., 14), 2.15, 1.13, 2.4, 2.10, 3.6 (i.e., 7), 1.2. The discrepancy in numbering the elegies in Book 3 arises from the scholarly controversy concerning 3.5, sometimes titled *Somnium Ovidii*, “Ovid’s Dream,” which strikes most editors as apocryphal or spurious—perhaps a clever Latin troubadour’s anachronistic reanimation of Ovid as the purveyor of a Romanesque dream-vision—but who tend to include it in the canon nevertheless.

\(^{12}\) The Certaine text is in *Epigrammes and Elegies, By I. D. and C. M.* (At Middleborough: n.p., n.d.). All references to this material follow this edition, with signature numbers in parentheses. The more complete version of the *Amores* is *All Ovids Elegies: 3. Bookes, By C. M. Epigrams by J. D.* (At Middlebourgh: n.p., n.d.). For the phrase condemning *Epigrammes and Elegies*, see Arber, 3: 677. For a more accessible list of the condemned books, see McCabe, 188.
To my knowledge, the Certaine text has generated no critical activity, compared with the minuscule attention that All Ovids Elegies has received.\textsuperscript{13} Although it would be natural to privilege All because its relative completeness corresponds to our notions of worthiness for study, the earlier censured and burned edition, of which there are only three known copies, provides its own interest.\textsuperscript{14} Its placement after the Epigrammes seems to have been deliberate, as does the compiler’s choice of ten elegies, so that the translation of a classical work follows the imitation of one, and the re-ordering of the Amores heavily emphasizes the speaker’s habit of undercutting and contradicting himself, a type of authorial undermining much more pronounced and complex in Ovid’s own text. For example, the Certaine compiler follows Amores 1.5, titled Corinnae concubitus even in the earliest incunabula, an account of the lovers’ initial consummation (literally, “Copulation with Corinna”), with 3.13, Ad amicam si peccatura est, vt occultè peccet (“To the beloved who, if she will be fornicating, should do so secretly”). This is the speaker’s angry criticism of her humiliating tendency to take other lovers more attentive, skilled, and interesting than himself, without the anodyne that even a modicum of discretion might provide—and, worst of all, whose poetry she prefers to his own. This, in turn, appropriately precedes the translation of 2.15, Ad inuidos, quod fama poetarum sit perennis (“To Envy, because the fame of poets is everlasting”).\textsuperscript{15} The impression the speaker leaves is that only


\textsuperscript{14} The three copies are in the British Library, the Huntington, and the Pforzheimer Collection. See Pollard and Redgrave, 2:201. For the very slight differences between them, see Bowers, “Early Editions.”

\textsuperscript{15} E.g., most of the same poem titles (used in the earliest medieval manuscripts), precede each Amores elegy in the Barnaba Celsano edition of Ovid in the Folger Shakespeare Library (Venice: Hermann Lichtenstein, 1480), INC 0122, copy 1. Corinnae concubitus is the title for 1.5 also.
a supernatural force, such as the cosmic malignity of envy against poets, could have caused such an unfortunate result as Corinna’s faithlessness, not his own shallowness and lack of character—or deficient technique.

Ovid’s lover, whom I call the desultor Amoris, or circus-rider of love, exemplifies in Marlowe’s translation many of the foibles decried in the less celebrated preceding text.\textsuperscript{16} Davies’s Martialian-Jonsonian epigrams are short, witty, pithy, with a satirical edge, as the end of the first defines the form: it “taxeth vnder a particular name, / A generall vice that merites publike blame” (A3). Accordingly, most of their titles begin with the conventional Latin In, whose double meaning is “against” as well as “about,” a signal of attack. So each tightly-wound little poem consists of a wry observation on a distinctive social foible, offensive enough, it seems, to have resulted in official censorship: a beautiful young woman farting in public; a certain Kate, who boasts that her “pleasures place like a buffe ierkin lasteth”; four couples who go away for a hedonistic pansexual weekend but whose ill will toward each other nearly results in eight homicides, related, if you will, in the unlikely form of an English sonnet; a man who can only be aroused by sadomasochism, the epigram ambiguous as to whether he is the recipient or the wielder of the scourge; a fastidious fop who insists on the best and cleanest seat in the theater yet who is quite indiscriminate in his choice of whores, whose indifferent feminine hygiene only serves as goad to his appetites. Marlowe’s speaker seems to be one of these satirical objects

\textsuperscript{16} I coined this term based on Amores 1.3.15, “non sum desultor Amoris” [I am no circus-rider of love]. See Harmful Eloquence, 11. In spite of this protestation to the contrary, this clownish sexual epithet describes Ovid’s speaker perfectly. Marlowe does not translate this phrase in the Elegies, rendering it instead: “I loue but one, and hir I loue change neuer” (E3).
come to life, every bit as foolish in his reversals and contradictions as any of Davies’s clownish *bons vivants*, exemplified in the definition, “A gull is he which seemes, and is not wise” (A3v).

“Flie merry Muse,” the first three words of the *Epigrammes* (A3), sets the tone for both collections, as does the epithet “idle Muse” that begins the forty-eighth. The ten *Amores* reconstituted into the *Certaine* text approximate a merry and idle comedy of sorts, as well. Respectively, the *desultor* challenges Cupid (1.1), promises his undying fidelity to Corinna (1.3) and boasts about her eagerness to shed her clothes as a sudden means of seduction, then evaluates each of her womanly parts, quite gauchely, in the aforementioned blazon (1.5); berates her for infidelity (3.13/14) and crafts an apostrophe to Envy itself (2.15); implores Aurora to hold herself back so that he may enjoy his married lady further, the prototype for many a troubadour *aubade*, or dawn song (1.13); admits his own hypocrisy and tendency to jump from mount to mount, in accordance with the word *desultor* (2.4), hoping he might enjoy a truly happy death in the arms of at least two women, singly or simultaneously (2.10); bewails a sudden attack of impotence, and, as one might predict, blames Corinna before berating his own *membrum non virile* (3.6/7), then ends up sleeping alone, quite deservedly (1.2), no gentleman, he.

One or more of the *Epigrammes* predicts each of these *Elegies*. “Meditations of a Gull” (*Ep. 47*) applies not only to Davies’s subject, but as the ambiguous genitive in the title implies, to the speaker also, a device worthy of Ovid himself. The person pilloried does not ponder conflicts with the Spanish, Scots, French, and Irish, “But he doth seriouslie bethinke him whethere / Of the guld people he be more esteemde, / For his long cloake, or for his great blacke feather, / By which each gull is now a gallant deemde” (D3). One could make exactly the same point about the observer as well as the observed, who concentrates on this sort of triviality rather than the Duke of Alba, Queen of Scots, Huguenots, or Hugh O’Neill. Still, the *desultor* could be one of
Davies’s objects of satire, heavily cloaked and befeathered, who in *Elegies* 2.10 cannot make up his mind about which of two women is rich, beautiful, and, most important, desperate and stupid enough to deceive into bed with him: “Venus, why doublest thou my endless smart? / Was not one wench inought to greeue my heart?” (F4). He epitomizes Davies’s generic gallant, who “speakes not one wise word throughout the yeare” (A3v).

Two *Epigrammes* especially complement the obsessively and transparently mendacious character of Marlowe’s Ovidian speaker in the *Certaine* text. The first, devoted to one Fuscus (*Ep. 39*), fulfills the definition of the madman. He repeatedly performs the same action while expecting a different outcome, and is astonished when the results are always identical. Free and happy, nevertheless, “in the course of life that hee doth leade, / Hees like a horse which turning round a mill, / Doth alwaies in the selfesame circle treade” (D). The second (*Ep. 9*), whose subject bears Bacchus’s surname Liber, “doth vaunt how chastely he hath liude.” Proud that he “hath foure only swiuide” in “7 yeeres and more” in town, “A maide, a wife, a widow, and a whore,” the epigrammist observes that his subject has thus “swiude all women kinde” (B) and is as a result far from chaste. Nor could Liber (or his evoker) be accused of reverence, empathy, or respect for those of the same gender as his mother. Accordingly, two of Marlowe’s rearranged and joined elegies, 1.3 and 2.4, suggest that the *desultor* fulfills this same moronically cyclical pattern. In the first, the persona boasts that he has lived chastely and is therefore fit company for the amorous Corinna, his “spotlesse life” privileging him to vow eternal fidelity in adultery, an ironic echo of Leander’s words to Hero (cf. ll. 207-08 of that poem): “Accept him that will serue thee all his youth, / Accept him that will loue with spotlesse truth” (E3). In the second, one of Marlowe’s best imitations as well as most accurate translations of Ovid, the speaker contradicts this self-serving pronouncement with a version of the Catullan *odi et amo*: “Heere I display my
lewd and loose behauiour, / I loathe, yet after that I loathe, I runne” (F3). And he too, resembling Fuscus, is the horse turning in the mill, treading in the selfsame circle: “A yong wench pleaseth, and an old is good, / This for her looks, that for her woman-hood” (F3v). Surely he would appreciate the quartet of amorous ladies, Gella, Lesbia, Thais, and Rodope (Ep. 5), whose ardor could only have been heightened by their failed pansexual weekend. He might even enjoy the flatulent Leuca (Ep. 14) who, having fled successfully from her company and her faux pas, forces herself to return to the gathering to retrieve a forgotten yet essential item: “And when she would haue said, this is my gloue, / My fart (quoth she)” (B2). She is deadly, but not silent.

Several Epigrammes satirize sexual tomfoolery like that of the naïve desultor, whose erotic self-delusion and misogyny Marlowe emphasizes, again, by the pairing of like elegies. Davies presents the stupidity of Rufus (Ep. 3), the courtier at the theater, who will not sit with the hoi polloi, but who prefers the “common stews and brothels of the towne.” Indeed, “why should Rufus in his pride abhorre / A common seate that loues a common whore” (A4)? (I can think of no reason.) Similarly, Faustus (Ep. 7), he of the uncannily Marlovian name, “not lord, nor knight, nor wise, nor old,” happily rides everywhere he pleases: the playhouse, the boats, S. Paul’s, and especially to the “house of bawderie,” yet “so often” that “shortly he will quite forget to go” a-whoring (B), presumably addled by the French (or Italian, or Spanish) Disease. The Certaine editor creates an analogous sense of ridiculous inevitability by pairing Corinnae concubitus, 1.5, with 3.13, in which the speaker berates her for her indiscretions with other, better men. Embarrassing exclamations such as “walke as a puritaine, / And I shall thinke you chaste[,] do what you can, / Slippe still, onely denie it when tis done” (E4) simply make flaccid the priapic braggadocio of “I clingd her naked bodie, downe she fell” (E3v), which sounds painful at best for the enchanted fair. (Corinna concubita cum viribus multis would be a good
subtitle for 3.13.) The yoking of *Amores* 2.10 and 3.6/7 duplicates this pattern and recalls Davies’s image of Rufus’s horse treading in the circle as the second poem undercuts the first, even by the ironic repetition of the word “droop.” In the former, the *desultor* evokes *le petit mort* with his hopeful statement, “when I die, would I might droope with doing, / And in the midst thereof, set my soule going” (F4v). He, obviously new to intimate relations with the opposite sex, implies that saddling himself with two of its members would not be quite enough for him or them. Wickedly, the compiler’s next choice is the infamous impotence elegy (3.6/7), *Quod ab amica receptus cum ea coire non potuit conqueritur* (“He complains bitterly that he withdrew from his beloved because he was unable to copulate with her”). “Euen as he led his life, so did he die” (F4v), the last line of 2.10, then reverberates in a number of ways, in both senses of “die.” The commendable feat that both recalls 1.5 and alludes to Catullus 32, “Corinna craude it in a summers night, / And nine sweete bouts had we before day light” (Gr), cannot now be performed, and perhaps no longer even represents a consummation devoutly to be wished.17

17 Catullus implores the fair Ipsitilla, “iube ad te veniam meridiatum” [order me to come to you in the afternoon], adds “neu tibi lubeat foras abire” [it would not be agreeable for you to go outside], and then promises, “sed domi maneas paresque nobis / novem continuas futusiones” [but if you stay inside we can have sex nine times continuously] (32.3, 6, 7-8). See *Catulli Veronensis Liber*, ed. Werner Eisenhut (Leipzig: Teubner, 1983), 22. Ovid’s afternoon *delicias* in 1.5 also owes something to this poem, although in that elegy, Corinna is the seducer. The choice of the number nine, “the magnified sacred three” (Lat. *novem*), by Catullus and Ovid was surely not accidental, since it has been considered lucky for five thousand years, associated with fertility and gestation, pregnancy and successful childbirth, and therefore perfection and final limits. See Annemarie Schimmel, *The Mystery of Numbers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 164-79. *Amores* 3.6/7 has many imitators, from Maximianus in late antiquity (c. 550 CE) to Nashe’s *Chose of Valentines* and Rochester’s “The Imperfect Enjoyment.”
In spite of the pair’s considerable efforts, “like one dead it lay, / Drouping more than a Rose puld yesterday” (G2)—the dysfunctional thing appropriately described with a neuter pronoun, in extreme counterpoint to the grotesquely hyperfunctional anatomy of “buff ierkin” Kate (Ep. 8).

A further bit of grim humor may be that this poem recounting this lamentable circumstance is the longest in Certaine, while the one recollecting an afternoon’s horizontal refreshment is, just as appropriately, the shortest.

Still, the disillusionment, disappointment, and naïveté of the desultor are almost touching, in counterpoint to the contemptible gulls whom Davies evokes in his pungent poetical sketches. The compiler’s shrewd decision to end the Certaine text with Amores 1.2, the speaker’s lament at his richly deserved nocturnal seclusion, forms an appropriate conclusion, the adjectives in the opening line providing an ironic simulacrum of the Ovidian mentula nunc languida, nunc rigida: “What makes my bed seem hard seeing it is soft?” (G2v). His self-sabotaging behavior in the previous nine poems implicitly explains his solitude, and his utterances are unwittingly self-revelatory, a type of autoincrimination, like that of the narrator of Sir Thomas Wyatt’s “They flee from me.” (What sane woman would not?) The compiler’s rearrangement of the elegies is especially effective in this instance, namely, using this second poem in the Amores as the conclusion of the Certaine text. The fey admission of the desultor to Cupid that he has conquered him and thus deserves the indignity of being led in triumph is comic so early in the sequence, indicative of his ingenuousness about the motivations of married women for seeking his company: “Loe I confesse, I am thy captiue I, / And hold my conquered hands for thee to tie”; “I lately cought, will haue a new made wound, / And captiue like be manacled and bound” (G3). Obviously, Ovid’s own callow young man cannot yet know what this means. He has not lived enough yet. However, these same sentiments in the Certaine arrangement, expressed after
the harrowing experiences recounted in the previous nine poems of the reordered and foreshortened translation—the speaker’s vows of fidelity, admissions of dubiety and faithlessness; caddish vaunting about his coercion of, and thus not realizing his responsibility for, a woman’s physical, emotional, and social vulnerability; confessions of impotence and the complementary rejection—sound more like despair. They anticipate Shakespeare’s defeated and self-flagellating Will in the last four words of the Sonnets, he who has surely lived enough to know what the very sounds of terms such as “captiue,” “conquered,” “caught,” “wound,” and “bound” can signify, which he relates in an allusion some might find profane: “water cooles not loue” (154.14); “Muche water can not quenche loue, nether can the floods drowne it” (Song of Songs 8.7).

The editor of *Epigrammes and Elegies* uses another device to unify the collection, omitted from the *All* volume, either a single jagged composition made up of a sonnet and two sets of couplets or three separate poems: perhaps reason, spirit, and appetite. He attributes it to one “Ignoto” (i.e., ignorant, ignoble, unknown, obscure), a moniker of false modesty similar to the “Immeritô” that Spenser uses in *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579). The material subtly alludes to and appears to sabotage both Davies’s and Marlowe’s verses.\(^{18}\)

Lines from the opening sonnet echo Davies’s sarcastic humor and predict Marlowe’s romantic cynicism: “I loue thee not for sacred chastitie, / Who loues for that?” The following passage would seem to answer this rhetorical question (i.e., in the present volume, absolutely no

\(^{18}\)This is hardly an unusual move. As Robert Darcy observes in the following essay, “Marston and Marlowe’s *Cursus,*” the editor of *The Metamorphosis of Pigmalions Image* and *Certaine Satyres* (1598) bifurcates these two works with the declamatory “The Author in Praise of the Precedent Poem,” which repudiates the foregoing epyllion and commends the satirical compositions that follow.
one). The desultor, or one like him, measures a woman’s true value by the degree of her compliance, aesthetic as well as physical: “I . . . / leape with pleasure when those lips of thine, / Giue musicall and gracefull vterrance, / To some (by thee made happy) Poets line” (D4). Then, the next poem essentially undresses its predecessor, addressing the same woman in either a modulated or an entirely different voice: “I cannot whine in puling Elegies, / Incombing Cupid with sad obsequies, / I am not fashiond for these amorous times, / To court thy beawtie with lasciuious rimes.” Right, as one would say, on the money. Not just elegies, but the text of the truncated Elegies itself to follow on the facing page (E1) is indeed puling and contains no shortage of whining, generically and specifically. The iconoclastic speaker does not mean “amorous times” as a complimentary epithet, and like Ovid’s own praeceptor in the Ars, understands that the true purpose of amatory verse, whether written to women or recited by them, is “for their mirth, and for their lechery” (A4v), as Davies puts it. Ignoto may be unknown, but he is neither ignorant nor in any way an observer of current trends in courtship: “I cannot dally, caper, daunce, and sing, / Oyling my saint with supple sonnetting.” In this latter phrase, he implies that the contemptible poetry aimed at women is phallic, yet even worse, artificially so. A poet who understands this about sonnets, that their serviceable suppleness is merely a substitute, is not plagued with E. K. calls “gynerastice.” His conclusion to his second composition explains how he thinks these amorous times should be redefined altogether: “Not I by God, but

19 Since “pæderastice” involves love between men that is not physical, e.g. Socrates’s love is “not Alyc ybiades person, but hys soule,” his “owne selve,” it is “much to be præferred before gynerastice, that is the loue whiche enflameth men with lust toward womankind.” See The shepheardes calender conteyning twelue aeglogues proportionable to the twelue moneths (London: Printed by Hugh Singleton, 1579), fol. 2v.
shall I tell thee roundly, / Harke in thine eare, Zoundes I can ( ) thee soundly” (D4v). Only the real thing, it seems, will suffice.

With that missing word, indicated by the empty parentheses in the text, this unknown versifier would also describe filling a different gap symbolized both by that part Ovid omits in *Elegies* 1.5 and by the typographical device itself, and explain—precisely—why Petrarch and his woes should be long deceased. (But he knows they are not, and never will be.) And in the meantime, since Ignoto actually offers to do something soundly, he may as well be truly himself in the doing of it. “Sweete wench! I loue thee, yet I will not sue, / Or shew my loue as muskie Courtiers doe,” he exclaims in the beginning of the third poem, and admonishes his “Well featurde lass” that he shall not “glory that I am thy seruile Asse.” Though he is unafraid to say, plainly, “thou knowest I loue thee deare,” he will not meanly boast or lewdly design, in the manner of the Ovidian speaker to follow, or otherwise pile Pelion on Ossa, perhaps for the sake of his teeth: “Nor for thy loue wil I once gnash a brick.” And, unlike any of Davies’s dolts so mercilessly vivisected beforehand, he will strive “by the chappes of hell to doe thee good,” to the extent that “I’le freely spend my thrise decocted blood” (D4v).²⁰ He is passionate. He is real. He cares.

However, Ignoto is also excruciatingly frank as he thus comments on the greater poets, as well as their foolish characters, who have got him surrounded. Perhaps it compelled the editor of

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²⁰ The mysterious adjective appears in *OED* (decocted *v.*7. *ppl.a*): “To boil as to extract the soluble parts or principles; to prepare a decoction of.” The present line is quoted and identifies Marlowe, unjustifiably, as Ignoto. Although it is tempting to read the phrase “to spend blood” as sexual because of the verb, the meaning of “to spend” as “ejaculation” is intransitive, and *OED* records no historical example before 1662 (*spend* *v.*1.15.c). Shakespeare’s use of “spend” tends to mean “spill,” e.g., “To royallize his blood, I spent mine owne” (*Richard III* 1.3.125).
All Ovids Elegies to exclude him, which would explain his absence from that volume, and ensure that he remain, in all senses of the word, Ignoto. The amorous times he despises tend to prefer those like Davies’s Quintus (Ep. 4), a man who epitomizes courtly dancing skill, but who is idiotically unchivalrous in his addresses to women: “on a time he callld his Mistris whore, / And thought with that sweete word to win her loue.” If only “had his tongue like to his feete bin taught” (A4). The age also allows for sadomasochistic Francus (Ep. 33), who can only find “solace with his whore” by “whipping of the wench,” the participial phrase mimetic in its lack of clarity as to who wields the “rods,” the mystery only deepened by the epigrammist’s “I enuie him not, but wish I had the powre, / To make my selfe his wench but one halfe howre” (C3).

Such ambiguity anticipates the muddled tone in the series of paired elegies to follow. Does Marlowe’s desultor compel the cruelties he endures by his own insensitivity, in effect flagellating himself? A later poem on the fumblemouthed Crassus (Ep. 37) similarly evokes those who show their love as musky Ovidian courtiers do: “his lies are not perniti ous lies, / But pleasant fictions, hurtfull vnto none / But to himselfe, for no man counts him wise” (C4).

Similarly, a statement by Sir John’s Priscus (Ep. 31) serves as an emblem for the cartoon characters who fill the volume: “at this time my selfe I doe not know” (C2v). Ignoto might also say that it describes the authors themselves, as well as writers in general. For both he and this bit of dilapidated wisdom gleefully wrenched from its proper context in the ancient world—a comic distortion and reversal of the Delphic oracle—nicely join the epigrammist and the elegist, the imitator and the translator, Davies and Marlowe, the living and the dead.