

Marlowe's Ovid: The Elegies in the Marlowe Canon. M. L. Stapleton.
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While Ovid's legacy in Renaissance England is often constantly explored, M. L. Stapleton persistently maps out the specific reception of the notorious *Amores* (or *Ovidius sine titulo*) in *Marlowe's Ovid*, after his *Harmful Eloquence: Ovid's Amores from Antiquity to Shakespeare* (1996). Marlowe provides the first (and much reprinted) "complete English rendition of the *Amores*" (6n12). There are two editions carefully explored throughout the volume: the relatively complete (forty-eight poems) *All Ovids Elegies* (presumably written in the 1580s, circulated in manuscript, published ca. 1603), and *Certaine of Ovids Elegies* (ten *Amores*), bound with Sir J. Davies's *Epigrammes*, published in 1599 (then banned and censored). Bibliographical matters (Marlowe's source is the heavily annotated *P. Ovidii Nasonis . . . Amatoria* [Basle, 1549], edited by Jacob Micyllus, with a commentary by Dominicus Niger [13n.8]), and vexed issues of technical errors in the translation are addressed and quickly dispatched.

Stapleton concentrates on Marlowe's Ovidian translation (placed as juvenilia) as a "formative intertext" to understand and "explain Marlowe's Ovidianism . . . by determining exactly how translating the *Amores* into the *Elegies* profited him as a writer," thereby providing "a kind of literary archaeology" for Marlovian writing (7). This study in *imitatio* and *aemulatio*, inherent to the Erasmian pedagogy, sets the *Elegies* in contrast with and in parallel to Marlowe's dramatic and poetic works.

The intriguing premise, already explored in his previous book — that Ovid as Naso is the *desultor amoris*, a satirical and fickle narrator undermining his own reliability while competing with his elegiac predecessors (Tibullus, Propertius) — is articulated with Marlowe's literary self: this persona is picked up by Marlowe as a translator to develop his compositional and poetical technique. Ovid is seen as a mentor for shaping a literary career while also providing underlying elements structuring the whole canon. The *desultor's* voice questions the influence Ovid/Naso has on Marlowe, not so much by direct quotes, but rather through affinities: Ovid is not just a *praeceptor amoris* but also a part of the humanist curriculum.

Carefully placing the *Elegies* in the wider context of Ovidian translations in the Renaissance, Stapleton argues that they influenced the sonnet-sequence form and acted as proto-model for other elegiac meditations. Yet, in chapter 1, he moves on to discuss the *Elegies'* complex structure as potentially dramatic, thus accounting for their histrionic

dimension — an analysis endorsed by classicists. The poetical text unveils self-deconstructing, satirical dimensions in a form of erotic vaudeville.

Appraising Ovidian formative affinities in Marlowe's writing, the order of the last seven chapters follows that of publication (except for the two undated plays, *The Massacre at Paris* and *Edward II*, and understandably for his translation of the *Pharsalia*, only referred to passim but indexed). Chapter 2 deals with the two parts of *Tamburlaine* to point out "unexpected correspondences" (59) between the translation and the play in poetical and compositional matters: the dramatic model is influenced by the poetic one since Tamburlaine, as a character, is undermined by Marlowe as "Ovid sabotages his speaker with his words." In a perceptive subpart, he develops how Zenocrate is given an "attractiveness superior to the eroticized female subjects of Ovid" (58), while "the playwright uses [her] to demonstrate Tamburlaine's distinctive form of insensitivity just as Ovid heightens this tendency in the *desultor* most emphatically with Corinna as subject" (71). Linking these structural parallelisms by dint of in-depth textual analyses makes the case for a telling *imitatio*; in chapters 3, 4, and 5, "subtle Ovidian patterning in rhetoric and dramatic construction in *Dido*, *Edward II*, [and] *Massacre*" (32) is studied; thus *Dido* is read as homage to and parody of Virgil and Ovid through the role of the author undermining his speakers, the image of "prurient gazes," and the interchanges between translations. Chapter 6 discusses sexuality in *Hero and Leander* to define the epyllion as a refashioning of "erotic elegy and its conventions" (184). Chapters 7 and 8 analyze Ovidian ironies in *Doctor Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta*.

This informative, carefully documented study fully engages with contemporary Marlovian scholarship to bring a fresh perspective to the field of Renaissance Ovidian studies and the role of translation, providing a vivid and thought-provoking book.

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