

Ovid, Death and Transfiguration

Edited by

JOSEPH FARRELL

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DAMIEN P. NELIS &

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Ovid, Death and Transfiguration

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Reviving the Dead: Ovid in Early Modern England

Emma Buckley

1 Introduction

Metempsychosis, transfiguration, immortality on the lips of others: this is not just the stuff of Ovid's poetry, but also a potent metaphor for translation and poetic succession in the Renaissance, as works of Classical literature were brought back to life again in a consciously colonizing process of translation, commentary, imitation and emulation. In this paper I look at the way two literary pioneers of early modern England, Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) and Ben Jonson (1572–1637), imbricate themselves with Ovid via close translation of his first assertion of poetic immortality, *Amores* 1.15. I shall argue that, far from investing the Ovidian *amator* with the kind of dynamic overreach typical of Marlowe and the anti-heroes of his mature dramaturgy, the poet-lover we find in the first edition of Marlowe's *Elegies*—in an excerpted selection recreated from the first complete translation of the *Amores* in English—brings the amatory *ego* “back to life” only to condemn him to permanent, frustrated imprisonment in the experience of elegy. The paper then focuses on the afterlife of Marlowe's translation of *Amores* 1.15, absorbed within Ben Jonson's “comical satire” *Poetaster*. Jonson goes even further in transforming Ovid, first reducing him to the humiliating caricature of *amor*-obsessed *adulescens* (in counterpoint with the “true” poets of the play, Virgil and Horace), then investing him with a distinctly late Elizabethan voice and ejecting him from Rome and the play alike. I conclude, however, by returning again to three versions of *Amores* 1.15, Ovid's original, Marlowe's, and Jonson's, and I suggest that in the end the relationships between a poet and his work, art and life, physical and literary essence, adumbrate and supplement, rather than diminish, Ovid's own complicated approach to literary immortality. While both Jonson and Marlowe have been labeled as over-reachers and over-writers, in the shared enterprise of *Amores* 1.15 they offer a model of collaborative revision rather than competition and erasure that confers upon Ovid true immortality in the face of censorious authority, both in antiquity and far beyond.

2 Framing Ovid's Amores: Marlowe's Ovidian Poet-Lover

One of the most famous pioneers of English translation was Christopher Marlowe, whose bold and sophisticated *Lucans first Booke* has been hailed as a watershed moment for English literary culture, not just in its empathetic revitalization of the *Bellum Civile*, but also in its formative status as English poetry: a combination of past and present that does not just bring Lucan back to life but also re-animates him within a distinctly Marlovian persona.¹ The poet who so brilliantly re-animates Lucan had already, however, much earlier in his career, attempted another daring resurrection: Ovid in his *Amores*.² In its way, this project could be considered just as daunting, for Marlowe was undertaking the first full-scale effort to translate the *Amores* into English. And while this was a text that was obviously well known, in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance it was only obliquely acknowledged in comparison with Ovid's other works, which—including the *Tristia*—were standard school textbooks.³ Indeed, in its first published manifestation, a ten-poem collection entitled *Certaine of Ovids Elegies*, apparently printed in the Low Countries, Marlowe's Ovid was very nearly killed off entirely. For this collection was one half of a volume that also contained the satires of Sir John Davies, and it was therefore included in the list of banned books subjected to public immolation as a result of the "Bishops' Ban" of 1599.⁴

Still, Marlowe's work did escape the fire, and his larger translation work, *All Ovids Elegies*, also survived in several editions.⁵ But this collection has not

-
- 1 See Steane 1964, 269–271 on this "kinship of rare closeness" (257); Hooley 2008, 243–260; Cheney 2009.
 - 2 While there are difficulties with the dating of the editions of Marlowe's *Elegies*, which were all published posthumously (see below), it is generally accepted that these translations were part of Marlowe's juvenilia, and probably composed while he was still a student at Cambridge in the mid-1580s: see Gill 1987, 4–12.
 - 3 On the role of Ovid's other works in school curricula, see especially (for the medieval period) Alton and Wormell 1960, 21–38; Hexter 1986. On Shakespeare, Ovid and the early modern humanist curriculum, see especially Bate 1993 and Enterline 2012. For some Elizabethan discomfort with the presence of Ovid, see Keilen 2014, 238. While the *Amores* clearly had a considerable impact on love poetry, especially the sonnet sequence, through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, Marlowe's is the first complete translation: see Stapleton 1996. This is not to suggest, however, that the *Amores* was itself a "forbidden" text: see Stapleton 2014a, esp. 10–13.
 - 4 In purported response to the threat of "effemizing erotic writing," the Bishops' Ban of 1599 banned satires and epigrams altogether; histories and plays needed a state license. See Hansen 2017, 1–18; Moulton 2000 (esp. 103–114 on Marlowe's *Elegies*).
 - 5 On the tangled publication history of *Certain of Ovids Elegies* and *All Ovids Elegies*, see Bullen 1885, vol. 3, 104; Gill 1987, 4–12.

received the same acclaim as Marlowe's Lucan. Partly this has been a result of perceived deficiencies in what has been termed an apprentice work. His sloppy attention to the Latin and over-dependence on the explicatory commentary of Dominicus Niger has been deplored by, among others, Roma Gill, the editor of the Oxford edition of Marlowe's early work.⁶ In addition, it has been pointed out that the *Amores* have left much less of a trace on Marlowe's mature works than Ovid's other poetry, which is obsessively quoted and re-modelled elsewhere, most obviously in his late erotic-epyllion Hero and Leander.⁷

Before turning to Marlowe's version of Ovid's first work, however, it is worth briefly rehearsing the modern critical context for the *Amores* themselves. Readers have long been challenged by the narrative framing of this work and the complex, interrelated personalities constituted by Ovidian "self-conscious fiction."⁸ Katerina Volk has sketched the critical history of response to the Ovidian elegiac *ego* in an effort to outline the dangers in uncoupling the "weak" persona of the *amator* of *Amores* from the "strong" *poeta* of its programmatic elegies,⁹ while more recently Ellen Oliensis has returned to the "insoluble conundrum" of the elegiac *ego* of the *Amores*, "poised between the first and third persons, at once an author for us to look with and a character for us to look at," urging us to reconsider the erotopoetics as well as the metapoetics of Ovid's first work.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the dominant trend of 20th-century scholarship has been to tease out fault-lines between autobiography and persona, celebrating the author's deconstruction of elegiac *ego* over and over: a demolition job so neat, in fact, that Ovid effectively kills off the genre itself.¹¹ To take Niklas Holzberg's model as example, the *Amores* are an elegiac erotic novel, creating not just a *scripta puella* in the form of Corinna, but also a *scriptus amator*, a fictional lover and the mimesis of a love affair.¹² From the beginning, Ovid has an eye on the

6 See Gill 1968, 137; Gill 1988, 327–342; MacLure 1968, xxxii; Pearcy 1984, 4–29; Edmondson 2010, 173–191; Mann 2013, 110–122.

7 See e.g. Brown 2004, 106–126. A recent attempt to redress the balance by Stapleton 2014a, in the first monograph study devoted to Marlowe and Ovid's *Amores*, has attempted to use *All Ovids Elegies* as a key to understanding Marlowe's own later work, adopting a similar approach to that of Cheney 2009 on Lucan and Marlowe, claiming, for example, that the amatory cunning or theatrical bombast of a Tamburlaine, Faustus or Guise can also be traced back to Marlowe's early engagement with *Amores*.

8 The term comes from Downing 1993, who borrows it from Alter 1975. For further reflections on Ovidian body and text beyond *Amores*, see especially Farrell 1999. For an in-depth look at Ovidian "biofiction," see Goldschmidt 2019.

9 Volk 2005, esp. 92–96.

10 Oliensis 2019, esp. 14–53 (the citation is from p. 36).

11 See especially Boyd 1997; Weinlich 1999; Bretzigheimer 2001; Holzberg 2002.

12 Holzberg 2002, 46–47 lays out the following: the *amator*, at the hands of the *poeta*-in-

horizon beyond elegy, expressed through conspicuous gestures to his work in higher genres, and predicated on the conceit that the *Amores* we are reading are themselves a second edition.¹³

Issues of authorial identity are an equal headache for Marlowe's work. There are six extant editions of Marlowe's Ovidian elegy, all posthumously published and lacking many of the paratextual features early modern books display to help in matters of dating, printing and publishing. The first two (the "Isham" and "Bindley" editions) contain only ten poems, entitled *Certaine of Ovids Elegies* (and commonly abbreviated as *COE*): they follow (separated by a bridging series of three poems headed "IGNOTO"), forty-eight epigrams of John Davies. A third, more comprehensive collection (the "Mason" edition), which puts Marlowe's translation first and boasts in its title *All Ovids Elegies: 3 Bookes*, was published c. 1603.¹⁴ But if questions remain about the transmission of the *Elegies* and Marlowe's own hand in their revisions, what is not at stake is the claim Marlowe is making when he brings Ovid back to life. In what has now become a standard reading of the Marlovian canon, Patrick Cheney has argued that when Marlowe translates Ovid, he is conscious of the opportunity the *Amores* (and, more broadly, the template of Ovid's literary career) offers to an ambitious, counter-cultural poet aiming at poetic immortality.¹⁵ For Cheney, it is in particular Marlowe's translation of *Amores* 1.15, Ovid's own first studied consideration of his continuing life in literary history, that signals Marlowe's nascent commitment to a subversively Ovidian poetic immortality.

control, participates in a plot which programmatically opens with a startling poetic *ego*: not elegist but frustrated epicist. Lamenting the task of elegy enforced upon him and his enslavement to Cupid, the poet reluctantly accepts the role of *amator* and finds a *puella* to love; after suffering various setbacks, he achieves conquest of the *puella*; and finally, the poet-lover concludes by predicting his immortal fame as love poet. Cf. Boyd 1997, 132–164.

13 Cf. *Am.* 1.15, 2.18, 3.15 with Harrison 2002, 79–64; cf. Tarrant 2002, 15–18. On Ovid's games with revision see Martelli 2013. On Ovid's claims to immortality after *Amores*, see most recently (on the *Metamorphoses*) Torres-Murciano 2016, 269–289; on the *Tristia*, Ingleheart 2015, 286–300.

14 There is no date on any of these editions, though most date *COE* to c. 1599; while *COE* claim "Middleborough" as their print origin, this was a common fiction to enable unlicensed books to be sold. For more on the dating of the earliest editions, see Gill and Krueger 1971, 242–249 and Bowers 1972, 149–172. While Gill and Krueger and Bowers are in agreement that *COE* were excerpted and rearranged from a full set of translations in manuscript form, they differ about the priority of the two *COE* editions. Gill 1987, 9–10 conjectures that the Bindley version is based on a draft of the *Elegies*, while a more polished version (revised, Gill speculates, by Marlowe himself) served as the source of the Isham and Mason texts.

15 Cheney 1997.

We have, then, not just the apprentice work of a poet learning his trade, but also a knowing reanimation of Ovid's poetic voice in the service of his own, Marlovian, projected literary career.

If Marlowe aspires to be Ovid, however, the critics have noticed an inevitable transformation in the "Ovid" we first see in his translation of *Amores*. For Georgia Brown, the poet-lover of *All Ovids Elegies* is "no ordinary romantic hero, but a man who is bitter, disloyal, violent, sarcastic, and over-sexed, as well as adoring, witty, and passionate," while the *Elegies* themselves constitute the first evidence of Marlowe's obsession with transformation, rhetoric, and transgressive sexuality. For M.L. Stapleton, Marlowe's Ovid is "a callow Elizabethan gallant who accompanies John Davies's fools and clowns." And for Jenny Mann, the very effeminacy of the *Elegies* becomes fruitful ground for a new "idea of masculinity characterized by subjection rather than empowerment."¹⁶ This tendency to transform Ovid, is, however, nowhere more marked than in the reframing of the elegies, and in particular in the placement of *Amores* 1.15 in the earliest published edition of the Marlovian Ovid, in *Certaine of Ovids Elegies*.¹⁷ Ian Moulton has identified a significant structural reordering in Marlowe's revived Ovidian amatory voice, the way in which *Amores* 1.15 does not now frame the first book in concert with 1.1, bracketing the love affair with reflections on poetic life and identity; instead, he notes that *Certaine of Ovids Elegies* has a bipartite structure, in which the first five poems "ascend" in celebration of poetic and amatory achievement, only to descend as the lover's grip on his puella begins to unravel.

This pattern—with distinct shades of the relationship sketched earlier—offers another plot for the lover, then, though one that is far less triumphant. The poet-lover of *COE* starts well enough, with *Amores* 1.1's challenge to Cupid, the incipit of the amatory *ego* and the promise of fidelity to the *puella* at 1.3, and with erotic conquest via 1.5; but this is followed by 3.14, the revelation of his girl's infidelity and his request that she cover up her unfaithfulness. There follows the centerpiece of the ten-poem sequence, 1.15, Ovid's hymn to his own poetic

16 Brown 2004, 110; Stapleton 2014a, 8; Mann 2015, 51.

17 The order of *Certaine of Ovids Elegies* (each headed with its original place in the Ovidian corpus): 1.1 (*Quemadmodum a Cupidine, pro bell. amoris scribere coactus sit*), 1.3 (*Ad amicam*), 1.5 (*Corinnae concubitus*), 3.13 [in modern editions, 3.14] (*ad amicam si pecatura est, ut occulte peccet*), 2.15 [a mistake—actually 1.15] (*Ad inuidos, quod fama Poetarum sit perennis*), 1.13 (*Ad auroram ne properet*), 2.4 (*Quod amet mulieres, Cuiuscunque formae fiant*), 2.10 (*Ad Graecinum quod eodem tempore duas amet*), 3.6 [in modern editions, 3.7] (*Quod ab amica receptus cum ea coire non potuit conqueritur*). It is unlikely that Marlowe himself was responsible for the reordering; see Moulton 2000, 105; Stapleton 2014a also assumes a "compiler."

immortality; and then the “descent,” comprising *Amores* 1.13’s failed request to Aurora to hold back the dawn so that the amator can love longer; the admission of sexual appetite out of control (2.4); the confession that the *amator* is trapped by love for two women, accompanied by the boastful claim that he can satisfy both (2.10); the anti-climactic penultimate poem of the sequence, on impotence (3.7); and the final new conclusion of 1.2 for this Marlovian-Ovidian hybrid: the lover trapped in Cupid’s triumph without even a *puella* to his name.¹⁸

Moulton sees political danger in this compositional reordering in the Marlovian Ovid, the creation of a lover-poet who questions masculine gender identity and instead “celebrates effeminacy and argues for the pleasures of subjection,” precisely the kind of transgressive thinking that might attract the moralizing censure of the Bishops’ Ban.¹⁹ Whether political subversion was on the compiler’s mind or not, what does seem striking here is the way in which the reordering and reframing of the *Amores* creates an entirely different Marlovian-Ovidian amator, one that takes away the ironic distance conferred by the “separating” function of 1.1 and 1.15. Instead, we have a novelistic plot that still begins with 1.1 but can only conclude with the anti-climax of 1.2, imprisoning the elegiac *ego* within an inescapable and never ending autobiographical fiction, and condemned to perpetual submission to love. The inclusion of 3.14 before 1.15 in this new order adds insult to injury: now 1.5 looks like the briefest of conquests, while 3.14’s concentration on the *puella*’s infidelity and on the lover’s plea that his girl maintain the fiction that she is faithful, even if she is not, lays bare the new truth of this Marlovian-Ovidian love poetry, one that makes infidelity and failure the basis for literary immortality, rather than triumphant conquest.²⁰ In sum, such selection and reordering offers its own reinterpretation of the poetic prowess of the new Marlovian-Ovidian *ego*: a pointedly souring and ironic one that reduces and imprisons the Marlovian *amator* within the corpus of elegy, even as it brings the poetry of Ovid back to life.

This does not mean, however, that the composer of *COE* is not aware of the interdependence of Ovid *poeta* and Ovid *amator*, nor of the imbrication

18 Moulton 2000, 103–114.

19 Cf. Moulton 2000, 104. See Stapleton 2014a, 39–44 for a different approach, which sees the failed lover of *COE* as an appropriate companion to the “Gulls” already skewered in Davies’ *Epigrams*, and as an exemplary warning against (rather than celebration of) desire.

20 On Ovid’s blurring of the terms *nequitia* and *vitium* to cover both infidelity and the subject-matter of elegy already in the *Amores*, see Keith 1994, esp. 38.

of the voices of Marlowe and Ovid here. Indeed, it is precisely his awareness of the game playing already in Ovid's *Amores*, the game to remodel an ever inventive but repetitious Ovidian voice, whose status as poeta is always in counterpoint with (the mimesis of) the "biographical" *amator*, that gives power to his creation. With this Marlovian-Ovidian *amator* marooned amidst the wreckage of his amatory endeavors, there is now something ironic in the way he claims poetic immortality through *Amores* 1.15, for the "life" conferred—that of the submissive amator at this conclusion to these new *Elegies*—is one that re-embodies both Marlowe and Ovid in altered form. It has become a commonplace of Marlowe studies that the mature poet-dramatist Marlowe, who has modeled his literary self on Ovid, is an "overreacher" equal to and implicated in his own characters.²¹ In his first published outing, however such vaulting ambition has been cut down to size, absorbed within a biographical narrative of elegiac and erotic failure: his downfall has been assured before he has had the chance to overreach.

3 Putting the *Amator* on Stage: Ben Jonson's *Poetaster* (1601)

If *Certaine of Ovids Elegies* reduces the immortal Ovidian *ego* to mere lovesick *amator*, Ben Jonson takes this conceit and runs away with it in his satirical play *Poetaster*, introducing the action with Ovid himself, before banishing him from the stage (and Rome) and before the plot of the larger play has been resolved. In this intensely topical play, which forms part of the *poetomachia* or War of the Theatres of 1599–1601, the character of Horace clearly embodies Jonson himself, squaring up to his contemporary critical foes Marston and Dekker (thinly disguised on stage as Crispinus and Demetrius). *Poetaster* is itself a complex web of translation and citation, performance and reperformance, in which ancient and modern sources mingle, join voice and sometimes argue and speak over each other.²² In this dramatic universe, however, presided over by the just Augustus, the attempt to bring Horace low with malicious misinterpretation and the accusation of treason fails, and with a quite literal

21 On the implication of Marlowe with his characters see e.g. 1980, 193–221, esp. 220–221; for critique of the tendency, Shepherd 2000, 102–115.

22 It is in fact, as Victoria Moul puts it, 'a play composed of and about translation' (2012, 136); Miriam Jacobson (2014, 38) encourages us to read *Poetaster* as "a dramatic *ars poetica*." Jackson 2014 counts references and allusions to over seventy writers and many more sources, ancient and modern, in the text. On the specific translation of Ovid, Horace, and Vergil within the play, see especially Koslow 2006 and Moul 2014.

poetic justice, the play ends with the malicious Crispinus being forced to vomit forth a stream of his own deplorable vocabulary in a striking performance of the word embodied.²³

Poetaster thus articulates a fall from grace for bad poets, in counterpoint to the virtuous and useful “counsellors to the prince,” Virgil and Horace.²⁴ It utilizes the palimpsestic potential of ancient Rome to reflect not just on Jonson’s own literary and social milieu, but also to argue out on stage the ethical value of the self-critical “good” poet and his entitlement to what Jonson calls, in another context, “legitimate fame.”²⁵ But what is less clear is the role of Ovid within what otherwise looks like a balanced celebration of virtue and denunciation of vice. For, pre-empting the Aristophanic mode of this broader political satire, we find the first act of *Poetaster* offering us instead New Comedy, opening with Ovid as *adulescens*, mooning over his poetry rather than studying the law as he ought to be doing, reluctantly aided and abetted by his slave Luscus, who warns of the *durus pater*’s imminent arrival:

OVID “Then, when this body falls in funeral fire,
My name shall live, and my best part aspire.”

It shall go so.

[Enter] LUSCUS.

LUSCUS Young master, Master Ovid, do you hear? God sa’ me! Away with your songs and sonnets and on with your gown and cap, quickly—here, here—[*He hands Ovid the garments.*] Your father will be a man of this room presently. Come—nay, nay, nay, nay, be brief. [*He takes Ovid’s poem.*] These verses, too, a poison on ’em, I cannot abide ’em, they make me ready to cast, by the banks of Helicon. Nay, look what a rascally untoward thing this poetry is; I could tear ’em now.²⁶

Luscus’ desire to vomit provides neat ring composition with the emetics with which the play will close, but does nothing to deter the Ovid on stage, who, instead of donning the garb of the contemporary Inns of Court student, decides

23 On the shared theme of corruption and malicious informing in *Sejanus* and *Poetaster*, see especially Bowers 2007 and Loxley 2018.

24 On this contemporary clash of personalities and literary critical sensibilities, see Jackson 2014, “Introduction.”

25 Jonson, *Epigram* 17.3 (“To the Learned Critic”). For more on the ethics of Jonson on literary criticism, see Russell 2012. “Comical satire” is Jonson’s own description: see Jackson 2014, “Introduction.” On these issues in *Poetaster*, see especially Koslow 2006.

26 I use Jackson 2014, based on the 1602 Quarto edition.

to revise his morning's work (*Amores* 1.15, as the opening words of the play have foreshadowed, lines 41–42, above): while Luscus, leaving Ovid to what he calls “poetical fancies and furies” (1.1.32), exits, giving the young poet the chance to concentrate on reforming “the hasty errors of our morning muse” (*Poetaster* 1.1.37–44, 72–78):²⁷

Envy, why twitt'st thou me my time's spent ill
 And call'st my verse fruits of an idle quill?
 Or that, unlike the line from whence I sprung,
 War's dusty honours I pursue not young?
 Or that I study not the tedious laws
 And prostitute my voice in every cause?
 Thy scope is mortal, mine immortal, fame,
 Which through the world shall ever chant my name.

...

Kneel hinds to trash; me let bright Phoebus swell
 With cups full flowing from the muses' well.
 Frost-fearing myrtle shall impale my head,
 And of sad lovers I'll be often read.
 Envy the living, not the dead, doth bite,
 For after death all men receive their right.
 Then, when this body falls in funeral fire,
 My name shall live, and my best part aspire.

This Jonsonian “Ovid’s” claim to eternal fame is clearly closely modeled on Marlowe’s translation, performatively embodying the “start” to Ovid’s collection: once again we find the poet practicing his craft, though he is further on than the poet of *Amores* 1.1. However, any lofty sense of the immortal value of poetry is immediately undercut, as Ovid’s father turns up in time to hear the last lines of the recitation and offer his own outraged rejoinder (1.2.1–7):

OVID SENIOR [*To his son*] Your name shall live indeed, sir; you say true; but how infamously, how scorned and contemned in the eyes and ears of the best and gravest Romans, that you think not on; you never so much as dream of that. Are these the fruits of all my travail and expenses? Is this the scope and aim of thy studies? Are these the hopeful courses where-

27 A marginal note references the text: “Ovid. Lib. 1. Amo. Ele. 15.” For more on the translation, see below.

with I have so long flattered my expectation from thee? Verses? Poetry?
Ovid, whom I thought to see the pleader, become Ovid the play-maker?

The fun here, for an audience that knows its Ovid, is the pointed manner in which Ovid Senior pithily throws the words of his son back in his face. In the process he cuts this obviously “Marlovian” Ovid back down to size, to abashed *adulescens* reduced to the scope of law studies rather than the *opus* of eternal fame. He even promises him in classic *senex iratus* fashion a funeral pyre if he dares to continue his literary career, in a neat riposte to Ovid’s own boast of avoiding funeral fire. This is an argument—in the “real life” of the play—that Ovid’s father wins, and Junior meekly agrees to knuckle down to his law studies again, admittedly with limited success, as he cannot help but reform the tenets of law into elegiac pentameter.²⁸

If Jonson has recreated an Ovid-as-Marlowe at the outset of his play, imprisoned within Ovidian biography, his further appearances in *Poetaster* are devoted to deconstruction of this conglomerate figure. Almost immediately Ovid is even more hopelessly compromised, as (prompted by Tibullus) he responds to the thought of meeting his beloved Julia, daughter of Augustus, with elegiac encomium.²⁹ Acknowledging that his passion for her carries the danger of losing his own “self,” Ovid considers his love, together with the return to poetry, necessary to celebrate his *puella*, a risk worth taking (1.3.44–57):

TIBULLUS Publius, thou’lt lose thyself.
OVID Oh, in no labyrinth can I safelier err
Than when I lose myself in praising her.
Hence, law, and welcome, muses! Though not rich,
Yet are you pleasing; let’s be reconciled
And now made one. Henceforth I promise faith,
And all my serious hours to spend with you—
With you, whose music striketh on my heart
And with bewitching tones steals forth my spirit

28 TIBULLUS: “If thrice in field a man vanquish his foe, / ’Tis after in his choice to serve, or no. / How now, Ovid! Law-cases in verse?” (1.3.5–7). For more on the explicit use of Ovid’s own autobiography to cast this conversation with Tibullus and depict Ovid Senior in 1.2, see Jackson 2014 ad 1.3.8 (drawing on *Trist.* 4.10.21–26), and Cain 1996 ad 1.3.1 (drawing on *Trist.* 4.10.51–52), 5–6. Shapiro 1991 40–42 argues that this father-son relationship refracts an Oedipal relationship between Jonson and Marlowe.

29 For an overview of 17th-century approaches to explanations of Ovid’s exile and the question of his relationship with the elder Julia, see Taylor 2013, 44–83 and below.

In Julia's name. Fair Julia! Julia's love
 Shall be a law, and that sweet law I'll study:
 The law and art of sacred Julia's love;
 All other objects will but abjects prove.

TIBULLUS Come, we shall have thee as passionate as Propertius anon.

Once again part of Jonson's art lies in the way that biography and literature merge on stage, as the final line (which alludes to Propertius' grief for the recent "death" of Cynthia) makes clear.³⁰ But there are signs that Ovid is losing himself in other ways in this exchange. The ironically detached "Ovid" of *Amores* is conspicuously *not* the downtrodden lover of the Propertian *Elegies*, and while *Poetaster* has paraded its close relationship with *Amores* and *Tristia* in character-Ovid's words earlier, the language in which he speaks of his Julia here is consciously appropriative of the register of late Elizabethan love poetry, rather than of 1st-century CE Ovidian elegy (*Poetaster* 1.3.36–44):

Julia, the gem and jewel of my soul,
 That takes her honours from the golden sky,
 As beauty doth all lustre from her eye.
 The air respire the pure Elysian sweets
 In which she breathes, and from her looks descend
 The glories of the summer. Heaven she is,
 Praised in herself above all praise, and he
 Which hears her speak would swear the tuneful orbs
 Turned in his zenith only.

Heaven in the *Amores* is reserved for Ovid's own poetic ambitions, not for praise of his mistress; the Ovid of antiquity is never in doubt about his control over his creation, and never so ingenuously in thrall to it, as character-Ovid is here.³¹ When this Ovid employs the cosmic imagery and celestial register of the Elizabethan sonnet to praise his lover, rather than the earthier register of Ovid's

30 The play is anachronistically chockfull of love poets, including Gallus, built from Ovid's autobiographical *Trist.* 4.10. For more on Ovidian biography see Myers 2014.

31 See e.g. *Amores* 3.12, where praise of Corinna's beauty comes with the undercutting merger of her "salability" as lover and book (*Fallimur, an nostris innotuit illa libellis? / sic erit—ingenio prostitit illa meo. / et merito! quid enim formae praeconia feci? / vendibilis culpa facta puella mea est*, "Am I deceived, or has she become famous through my poetry? So it will be—she's on sale because of my genius. And it serves me right! Didn't I advertise her looks? It's my fault that the girl's been made sellable," *Am.* 3.12.7–10). I use the text and translation of Showerman and Goold, 1977.

physical descriptions of Corinna, we find that the comic *adulescens* of this play is now embodying the Elizabethan prodigal, an “Ovidian amateur” not just in the mold of Marlowe, but of a whole group of late Elizabethan elegists.³²

Any happy denouement of this comic plot, infused with a distinctly Elizabethan erotic sensibility, is irrevocably thwarted when another *senex iratus*—the emperor Augustus—enters in the middle of Act 4, and discovers the elegiac poets and their lovers enjoying a “banquet of the gods” fancy-dress party, a banquet that structurally and allusively is again irresistibly Marlovian in its reimagining of the banquet of Dido, Queen of Carthage.³³ One minute Ovid-as-Jupiter is mock-ordering that the “beautiful and wanton Julia” (4.5.177) be sacrificed; the next, Augustus’ truly Jovian wrath fills the stage, and this *pater durus* very nearly commits murder (as the marginal stage-direction puts it, “He offers to kill his daughter”), only being prevented by the interventions of Maecenas and Horace. Augustus’ terrifying anger has several targets: the impious profanation of the gods, which he links to all the elegists’ “profanation” of the name of poet (4.6.1–45); Ovid’s specific, social and “violent” wrong in wooing Julia (4.6.51–57); and a more deep-set degradation of the connection between knowledge and virtue, exposed in Ovid’s lack of understanding of his ethical obligations as poet (4.6.61–71):

There is no bounty to be showed to such
As have no real goodness.

...

This shows their knowledge is mere ignorance;
Their far-fetched dignity of soul, a fancy;
And all their square pretext of gravity
A mere vainglory.

32 See Helgerson 1976 for the seminal discussion of these “rebellious” poets of Elizabethan counter-culture; he there already conflates Ovid and Marlowe, terming him an “Ovidian amateur” (110–113). See also Keach 1977. Jonson’s “gem and jewel of my soul” may have been inspired by Samuel Daniel’s *Cleopatra*: “This precious Gem, the chiefest that I haue, / The iewell of my soule I value most” (Daniel 1594, sig. L5^r); for the flavor of encomium, compare e.g. Sidney’s *Astrophel and Stella* sonnet sequence: “CVpid because thou shin’st in Stellas eyes, / That from her lookes thy dimnesse nowe scapes free: / That those lips swelde so full of thee they be. / That sweet breath maketh oft the flames to rise, / That in her brest thy pap well sugred lyes, / That grace euen makes thy gracious wrongs; that she, / What word so ere shee speakes, perswades for thee: / That her cleere voice, lifteth the Sunne to Skyes.” (Sydney 1591, 5).

33 As Moul 2012, 159–165 has shown, providing detailed analysis of this scene (and further echoes in *Poetaster* Act 5).

Before he exits the play forever, however, Ovid is offered one last chance to speak, both in soliloquy (4.8, 4.9.97–109) and in conversation with Julia; and now Jonson offers us yet more extended and complicated fusion of ancient biography and Elizabethan elegiac poetics. His final meeting with Julia combines the stage-setting of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* balcony scene with Ovid's own testimony of his farewell to his wife in *Tristia* 1.3, and also introduces another completely distinct "Ovid" of the late Elizabethan age, the voyeuristic pseudo-philosopher of George Chapman's *Ovid's Banquet of Sense* (1595), who upturns the hierarchy of Marsilio Ficino's meditations on divine love to celebrate the earthly pleasures of physical attraction.³⁴ In Jonson's (parodically) earnest conversation between Ovid and Julia—one that appeals once again to the celestial, refracts against the magical, and even envisages the court with feminine pronouns in a manner that must recall Elizabeth, not Augustus—we now find scarcely a trace of the quintessential Ovid of antiquity, or the language of the Ovidian corpus: a striking divagation from the obsessive translation practices of *Poetaster*.³⁵ Rather, Jonson's Ovid has now become an amalgam and representative of what Daniel D. Moss has called the "Ovidian vogue," a living embodiment of Ovidianizing early modern erotics, underpinned by the creative misreading of Neoplatonic ideation of the interchange of spirit and body in the attainment of intellectual and metaphysical love.³⁶ And as this Ovid charts the loss of his own body, now condemned to walk "like a heartless ghost" when separated from Julia (*Poetaster* 4.8.24), Jonson does not just eject "Ovid" from his play, but also an entire body of Ovidianizing literature, unfit to occupy the same play-space as the virtuous satire of Horaces, ancient and early modern.³⁷

34 The reminiscence of George Chapman (1559–1634) has been noted since Cain 1996, 20–21 ad 4.9, 4.9.71, 80–89; Moul 2012, 160–161; Jackson, 2014 ad 4.9.11–14, 45–47, 68–70. For more on *Ovid's Banquet of Sense*, see especially Gless 1979 and Moss 2014. On Ficino's (1433–1499) influence on Chapman, see Clucas 2002.

35 See especially *Poetaster* 4.8.1–18, 4.9.32–41; contrast Ovid's much more skeptical treatment of love in e.g. *Am.*1.8, 1.14 and 3.7. On the interconnection of court poetry, magic and Neoplatonic accounts of love, see Culianu 1987, especially 28–58, and Hanegraaff 2008, 175–207.

36 Moss 2014. Cf. Julia's response: "I come, my Ovid; take me in thine arms / And let me breathe my soul into thy breast!" (*Poetaster* 4.9.25–26). Cf. Hanegraaff 2008, 175–183; Vasoli 1997–2006; Jayne 1952. Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* had already played with precisely the same kind of physical burlesquing of divine love, in Leander's discussion of the role of virtue and physical attraction in his attempts to woo Hero (though she, un-Julia-like, makes some effort to resist): cf. especially lines 167–176, 508–552.

37 Cf. Cain 1996, 23: "[t]he Ovid being rejected is as much the Ovid of the 1590s in England as the historical Ovid of Augustan Rome."

4 Transfiguring Ovid

It may seem, then, that Jonson offers an amplified continuation of the costs of Marlowe's refiguration of Ovid as lewd and effeminate *amator*: re-embodied in *Poetaster* as figure for a whole corpus of morally compromised verse, when Ovid is expelled from Rome, he takes an entire literary milieu with him. It would be tempting, then, to read Jonson's *Poetaster* as a pointed merging of literary criticism with power politics, the bringing together of the successful exercise of power, interpretation and authority, both temporal and poetic, in Jonson-Horace's successful defense of his own work and rejection of Ovid-Marlowe.³⁸ Yet, as has often been noted, real discomfort with Ovid's fate within the work remains, not least because the play provides its own internal complications and even critique of Ovid's fate.³⁹ Indeed, it is the character Horace, most closely associated with Jonson himself, who provides most sympathetic commentary on Ovid's destiny, intervening with Maecenas to prevent actual violence against the emperor's daughter, and categorizing the banquet not as threat to social order but simply as "innocent mirth / And harmless pleasures, bred of noble wit" (4.7.38–39). Reflecting on Ovid's fate, Horace finds a more potent enemy in *Poetaster*, and reserves real blame for the informer Lupus, who in his view truly undermines imperial safety and authority (4.7.39–49):⁴⁰

Away, I loathe thy presence! Such as thou,
They are the moths and scarabs of a state,
The bane of empires, and the dregs of courts;
Who, to endear themselves to any employment,
Care not whose fame they blast, whose life they endanger;
And under a disguised and cobweb mask
Of love unto their sovereign, vomit forth
Their own prodigious malice; and pretending
To be the props and columns of his safety,
The guard unto his person and his peace,
Disturb it most with their false lapwing cries.

38 On the history of Jonson's "rejection" of Ovid and Marlowe (with important qualifying and counter arguments), see James 2014 and Stapleton 2014b.

39 For critique of over-simplistic moralizing readings of Ovid, see Sinfield 2000, 75–89; Moul 2012; Loxley 2018, 144–149.

40 Cf. Maecenas at 4.7.53–56: "Princes that will but hear or give access / To such officious spies can ne'er be safe: / They take in poison with an open ear, / And, free from danger, become slaves to fear."

Though Augustus makes it quite clear that Ovid's punishment is merited by his social misconduct (4.6.47–57),⁴¹ Horace's condemnation of the role of malicious misinterpretation re-frames the Ovidian banquet, the target of Augustus' larger wrath at a "counterfeit" world, as a satirically innocent activity: the far greater risk is an imperial society in thrall to informers and spies. The risk of falling into such a tyrannical society, one that will come to be explored more fully in Jonson's 1603 *Sejanus*, is however once again in prospect when in Act 5 the informer Lupus returns, this time gaining entrance with information concerning "the life of Caesar" (5.3.17–22), and accusing both Horace and Maecenas of "dangerous, seditious libel" (5.3.35). Yet now Lupus' attempts to spin Horace's work as treason come to nothing. Caesar, dismissing the charges as "quotidian clamours" (5.3.113), orders Asinius Lupus to receive a punishment appropriate to both his crime and his name, the "larger ears" of a modern-day Midas; and Horace, drawing on *Odes* 3.3, gets to proclaim the security and independence of the just artist (5.3.49–54):⁴²

A just man cannot fear, thou foolish tribune;
 Not though the malice of traducing tongues,
 The open vastness of a tyrant's ear,
 The senseless rigour of the wrested laws,
 Or the red eyes of strained authority
 Should in a point meet all to take his life.
 His innocence is armour 'gainst all these.⁴³

41 "If you think gods but feigned, and virtue painted, / Know, we sustain an actual residence; / And with the title of an emperor / Retain his spirit and imperial power; / By which— [To Ovid] in imposition too remiss, / Licentious Naso, for thy violent wrong / In soothing the declined affections / Of our base daughter—we exile thy feet / From all approach to our imperial court, / On pain of death, and thy misgotten love / Commit to patronage of iron doors, / Since her soft-hearted sire cannot contain her" (4.6.47–57). As Jackson 2014 *Poetaster* notes ad loc., Jonson responds here to *Tristia* 2.133–136, where Ovid recalls that Augustus' angry words (*tristibus ... verbis*, 2.133) were worthy of an emperor, and that though his judgement was severe and threatening (*immitte minaxque*, 2.135), the punishment was also mild (*lene*, 2.136).

42 "'Tis not the wholesome, sharp morality / Or modest anger of a satiric spirit / That hurts or wounds the body of a state, / But the sinister application / Of the malicious, ignorant, and base / Interpreter, who will distort and strain / The general scope and purpose of an author / To his particular and private spleen" (spoken by Virgil, 5.3.117–124).

43 Cain 1996 and Jackson 2014 ad loc. note the allusion to Horace, *Odes* 3.3.1–8: *IUSTUM, & tenacem propositi virum, / Non civium ardor prava iubentium, / Non vultus instantis tyranni / Mente quatit solida, neque Auster / Dux inquieti turbidus Adriae, / Nec fulminantis magna Iovis manus. / Si fractus illabatur orbis, / Impavidum ferient ruinae*, "The just man who holds

Others have noticed the peculiar pressure Jonson places on Augustus' characterization in the complex doubling of Acts 4 and 5, and have even detected worrying correspondences between the socially disruptive behavior of Ovid in Act 4 and Augustus himself in Act 5.⁴⁴ What seems just as striking, however, is the way in which the willingness of Augustus to listen to Horace's defense in Act 5 brings into starker relief the *lack* of opportunity given to Ovid to defend himself in arraignment in Act 4. While the play's edict of banishment and Ovid's departure are built out of the biography of Ovid's exilic poetry, the Elizabethan erotics of Ovid's soliloquizing leave no room in *Poetaster* for Ovid to offer the defense, contextualization of guilt, and lamentation of malicious misinterpretation that are the obsessive elements of Ovid's self-justification in his post-exilic poetry.⁴⁵

On the one hand, this is perfectly natural: *Poetaster* stages Ovid's crime, playing out on stage an error such that Jonson's poet could not, even if he were given further space in the text, assert *crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostri / vita verecunda est, Musa iocosa mihi* ("Trust me, my behavior differs from my verse: my life is chaste, my Muse playful," *Trist.* 2.353–354). But given the play's obsession with malicious misinterpretation, the relationship of poetry to virtue, and the potential damage to the body politic and the person of the monarch arising from *interpretatio prava*, the very absence of Ovid's own rejection of malicious interpretation in his exile poetry is striking. The absence is all the more jarring given that *Poetaster* begins by programmatically summoning just such an Ovidian figure of malicious detraction, a personification of Envy determined

fast to his resolve / is not shaken in the firmness of his mind by the passion / of citizens demanding some injustice / or by the threatening tyrant's frown, not by the wind / of the south, rebellious king of the restless Adriatic, / or by the mighty lightning-wielding hand of Jupiter. / Should the round world break and fall around him, its ruins will strike him unafraid." I quote from the same edition as Jonson, Spilimberg 1584, slightly modernized, and the translation of West 2002.)

44 See e.g. Platz 1973, who identifies two different Augustuses; in Act 4 an "actual" monarch, in Act 5 an idealized, "Augustinian," utopian ruler. Moul 2012, 160–165 further notes uncomfortable correspondences between the Ovidian/Marlovian Jupiter of Act 4's banquet and Augustus' own Marlovian-Jovian behavior in Act 5: the monarch is now happy to upturn social hierarchy and even fate itself in honoring Virgil ("The course of heaven and fate itself in this / Will Caesar cross, much more all worldly custom," 5.2.35–37; cf. *DQC* 1.1.29 and Jupiter (to Ganymede): "Controule proud Fate, and cut the thred of time"). A further undermining structural issue is that the obvious source for a human "banquet of the gods" was infamously modeled by Augustus himself in his youth, at least according to gossip (*in fabulis*: Suetonius, *Life of Augustus* 70). Cf. also Boehrer 1997, 42–46.

45 See especially Williams 1994, 154–209; Barchiesi 1997, 13–34; Gibson 1999, 19–37; Myers 2014; Casali 2016.

to “damn the author” and “beslime his fame,” who has an opening declaration that makes a distinctly Ovidian attack on Jonson’s own work and life (prologue 19–26):⁴⁶

Nor would I you should look for other looks,
 Gesture, or compliment from me than what
 Th’infected bulk of Envy can afford—
 For I am risse here with a covetous hope
 To blast your pleasures and destroy your sports
 With wrestings, comments, applications,
 Spy-like suggestions, privy whisperings,
 And thousand such promoting sleights as these.

The sentiments of this personification re-echo within the play proper in Act 5. Virgil, reciting his description of the Envy-like *Fama* of the *Aeneid*, “As covetous of tales and lies ... / As prodigal of truth” (5.2.96–97 = *Aen.* 4.188), is interrupted by informers, and responds by pointedly condemning the malicious interpreter (5.3.117–124):

’Tis not the wholesome, sharp morality
 Or modest anger of a satiric spirit
 That hurts or wounds the body of a state,
 But the sinister application
 Of the malicious, ignorant, and base
 Interpreter, who will distort and strain
 The general scope and purpose of an author
 To his particular and private spleen.

As the commentators note, here Virgil adopts the programmatic pre-emptive defense of the poet Martial against *interpretatio prava: absit a iocorum nostrorum simplicitate malignus interpres* (“Let the malicious interpreter keep away

46 Jackson, *Poetaster*, ad loc. notes other contemporary literary depictions of Envy, and the influence of Senecan tragedy; I would add that Jonson’s stress on Envy’s affinity for darkness (1–4, 11–13), her snaky costume (5–10), the many puns on vision and seeing, and the conceptual play on Envy’s “infected bulk” make this creature particularly Ovidian (cf. *Met.* 2.760–785, esp. 768–770, 779–780, 784–785). On *invidere-Invidia*, and Ovid’s engagement with the tradition of literary *aemulatio*, see Keith 1992, 117–134. On the important role of Envy in Jonson’s play (as in *Am.* 1.15, Envy serves as character and prologue), as well as his work more broadly, see Meskill 2009, especially 94–97.

from my innocent jokes,” 1 pref. 9–10).⁴⁷ But this speech also informs Jonson’s own determination to avoid not just Ovidian “Envy” but also the Ovidian fate of the transgressive artist, for *Poetaster* is further bolstered by paratextual materials that defend the play pre-emptively against the perils of malicious application. And here too Jonson’s Classical source is not Ovid, but Martial. The title-page declares *et mihi de nullo fama rubore placet* (“I do not desire celebrity from anybody’s blush,” Jonson 1602, A1^r), not just a statement of the harmlessness of the “comical satire” about to be staged, but also, as readers of Martial know, part of the ancient satirist’s own programmatic declaration of safety via appeal to imperial authority (7.12.1–4):

Sic me fronte legat dominus, Faustine, serena
 excipiatque meos qua solet aure iocos,
 ut mea nec iuste quos odit pagina laesit
 et mihi de nullo fama rubore placet.

So may our Lord read me with unfurrowed brow, Faustinus, and catch my jests with his accustomed ear, as my page has never harmed even those it justly hates, nor do I desire celebrity from anybody’s blush.⁴⁸

That this is a carefully chosen and programmatic “steering” for interpretation becomes clearer when Jonson’s instruction to the reader (*Ad Lectorem*, Jonson 1602 A1^v) is simply the conclusion to that epigram (7.12.9–12):⁴⁹

Ludimus innocuis verbis, hoc iuro potentis
 per Genium Famae Castalidumque gregem:

47 Jackson, *Poetaster*, 2014 notes the correspondence. For Martial I use the edition and translation of Shackleton Bailey 1993.

48 This epigram recalls the programmatic 1.4: *Contigeris nostros, Caesar, si forte libellos, / terrarum dominum pone supercilium. / consuevere iocos vestri quoque ferre triumphi, / materiam dictis nec pudet esse ducem. / qua Thymelen spectas derisoremque Latinum, / illa fronte precor carmina nostra legas. / innocuos censura potest permittere lusus: / lasciva est nobis pagina, vita proba* (“Caesar, if you happen to light upon my little books, put aside the frown that rules the world. Even the triumphs of Emperors are wont to tolerate jests, and a warlord is not ashamed to be matter for a quip. Read my verses, I beg, with the expression with which you watch Thymele and jesting Latinus. A censor can permit harmless jollity. My page is wanton, but my life is virtuous.”). On Martial’s Ovidianism, see Hinds 2007; on Martial’s configuration of Ovidian life, death and fame, Rimell 2008, 51–93.

49 Modern editions (and some early modern) print *ludimus innocui: scis hoc bene: iuro potentis / per genium Famae Castaliumque gregem*, (“I sport harmlessly, you know that well. I swear it by the genius of potent Fame and the Castalian troop,” 7.12.9–10).

Perque tuas aures, magni mihi numinis instar,
lector, inhumana liber ab Invidia.

I sport harmlessly, I swear it, by the Genius of potent Fame and the Castalian troop: and by your ears, reader free from heartless jealousy, a mighty divinity to me.

If all this were not enough, *Poetaster* ends with a concentrated rearticulation of these themes: final words from Caesar, declaring that “Envy will dwell where there is want of merit, / Though the deserving man should crack his spirit” (5.3.553–554); a song scorning detraction; and with another tag from Martial: *Rumpatur, quisquis rumpitur invidia* (“Whosoever is bursting with envy, let him burst,” 9.97.12).

Jonson’s programmatic appeal to Martial in the face of a threatening Ovidian “Envy” could be read as a final act of rejection: a rejection of Ovidian immortality, of a contemporary Ovidian “poetics,” and a rejection of any similar exilic fate though a conspicuous appeal to pre-emptive justification rather than post-exilic lamentation. But from another perspective, Jonson’s anxiety about malign interpretation both in and out of the drama “proper,” and his blurring of bounds between authorial and character *personae*, only succeeds in drawing Jonson closer to Ovid. After all, the claims of “innocence” and “harmlessness” applied by *Poetaster*’s Horace in the play to Ovid (4.7.38–39), and invoked in his own defense (5.3.49–54), are the key Jonson himself offers to reading the play in his prefatory materials, as well as a repeated refrain in his work more broadly.⁵⁰ And as Jonson well knew, Martial’s own careful negotiation with absolute authority was built out of the dangerous example and the allusive context of Ovid’s exilic poetry, while his meditations on the dangers of plagiarism, misattribution and misinterpretation were deeply informed by the post hoc rationalizations deployed in Ovid’s exilic works.⁵¹ Read through Martial,

50 See especially *Sejanus*, which reimagines a world in which “No innocence is safe, where power contests” (4.1.40–41), together with a preface that stresses his own political innocence. In another collocation of Ovid and Martial, Jonson prefaces his 1616 folio version of *Poetaster* with a letter to Richard Martin, in which he writes, “SIR, A thankefull man owes a courtesie euer: the vnthankefull, but when he needes it. To make mine owne marke appeare, and shew by which of these seales I am known, I send you this peece of what may lue. of mine [cf. *Am.* 1.15.41, *parsque mei ... superestes erit*]; for whose innocence, as for the Authors, you were once a noble and timely vndertaker, to the greatest Iustice of this kingdome ...”

51 See especially Rimell 2008, 69–82 for Martial’s use of Ovid’s exilic poetry to structure his own bibliographic ego; more generally Williams 2002; Hinds 2007.

then, there is a curious meta-literary pre-echo in Jonson's expulsion of Ovid: even as the play embodies the faults of Ovid's vita, then casts him out completely, Ovid's poetic defense against malign misinterpretation, now revised as pre-emptive justification, palimpsestically guides *Poetaster*.

Jonson's efforts to avoid an "Ovidian fate" were not theoretical. In his common-place book *Discoveries*, part of his 1641 *Collected Works*, and what Swinburne termed Jonson's "mental autobiography," Jonson reflected in a section entitled *De Innocentia* on the danger he too faced from "men's malice," accusers who "were driven, for want of crimes, to use invention, which was found slander" (*Discoveries*, 950–955).⁵² Jonson was recalling his 1597 imprisonment for his part in the composition and acting of the satirical comedy *The Isle of Dogs* as well as other confrontations with political authority:⁵³ a summons to the Privy Council on charges of popery and treason brought by the Earl of Northampton after *Sejanus*' first performance in 1603, and in 1605 another term of imprisonment for his part in the writing of the satire *Eastward Ho!*⁵⁴ The Jonson of *Discoveries* frames this experience in terms reminiscent of the Horace of *Poetaster*, under attack from "hired and mercenary impudence"; and, like Horace, he felt his political danger came from malicious interpretation (*Discoveries*, 965–969):

Nay, they would offer to urge mine own writings against me, but by pieces, which was an excellent way of malice: as if any man's context might not seem dangerous and offensive, if that which was knit to what went before were defrauded of his beginning, or that things by themselves uttered might not seem subject to calumny, which read entire would appear most free.

52 Swinburne 1889, 137, quoted by Hutson 2014, "Introduction."

53 On the play, its political context, and its possible role in the Privy Council's decision to shut down the London theatres, see Donaldson 2014, "Introduction." All copies of the text were suppressed, its main author, Thomas Nashe, escaped London, and Jonson, together with two other actors, was confined in Marshalsea Prison in Southwark and interrogated by the Privy Council, which was under the impression that the play contained "very seditious & sclanderous matter" and that its players deserved punishment for "theire leude and mutynous behavior" (National Archive, *Privy Council Register for the Reign of Elizabeth*, PC 2/22, 345–346; cited from the edition of Giddens and Lees-Jeffries 2014, LR10).

54 See Ayres 1999, 16–22 for its possible topical application to the Raleigh trial of 1605 or the 1603 Essex rebellion; Worden 1994, 77–78. In 1628 he was again summoned, in the wake of the murder of the Duke of Buckingham. On *Eastward Ho!* see Gossett and Kay 2014, "Introduction": though Raleigh was sentenced to have his ears and nose cut, the sentence was not carried out in the end.

It is all the more striking, then, that *Poetaster*—not just the play determined to expel Ovid and a “Marlovian” Ovidianizing poetics, but also defensive to the point of paranoia about misinterpretation and the dangers arising from malicious envy—should offer a full recitation not just of *Amores* 1.15, but of what is recognizably Marlowe’s *Elegy* 1.15, itself a poem subjected to the censoring pen of the 1599 Bishop’s Ban and one that, addressed to Livor, forges a direct relationship with the authorial peril exposed by Envy in the Prologue.⁵⁵ Moreover, while some have seen Jonson as a revisionist “overwriter” of Marlowe, offering merely “corrective” translation, there is no question that what we have here is not effacement or “overwriting” of Marlowe, but rather a sophisticated merger of poetic voices,⁵⁶ in which Jonson’s decision to revive not just Ovid’s *Amores* but this *Elegy* of Marlowe is a statement of commitment to the immortality of poetry in the face of censorship and the literal threat of immolation. There are certainly many alterations in Jonson’s piece.⁵⁷ Indeed, Joseph Loewenstein sees a near-explicit nod to this at lines 23–24, in which Ovid claims that Lucretius will live until the universe dies in language that more explicitly recalls fiery ekpyrosis: “Then shall Lucretius’ lofty numbers die / When earth and seas in fire and flames shall fry” (1.1.59–60).⁵⁸ The text of *Amores* 1.15, then, itself a poem about poetry and joining a fraternity of poets, serves to bring Ovid, Marlowe, and Jonson together, not or not only in a relationship of antagonistic overwriting, but also in a spirit of collaboration.

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- 55 Indeed the 1602 Quarto positively invites self-identification, as the Envy of the Prologue, named as “Livor” (sig. A2r) gives way to the declaration against Envy in the voice of Ovid himself. An “Apologetical Dialogue” appended to the play, which placed Jonson amidst his books in his study, Ovid-like, was censored at the time of the printing of the first quarto; it was later included in the 1616 folio. See Russell 2012 for more on this “Dialogue,” and on *Poetaster*’s prologue and its topical relevance, see Bowers 1972, 158–164.
- 56 On the history of scholarship regarding the relationship of the two poems, see Moul 2012, 136–139; Stapleton 2014b, 16–17. On Jonson’s sensitivity to plagiarism and his denunciations of it in *Poetaster* and elsewhere, see Loewenstein 2002, 104–132.
- 57 Of course some of Jonson’s changes are clearly prompted by the desire to correct misunderstandings; others offer more literal translation of Ovid, in line with Jonson’s preferred “plain style.” Herford and Simpson 1950, 538–540 count thirty-two changes, to which Jackson 2014 ad *Poetaster* 1.1.45 adds five more: factual corrections include the specification of Accius, whom Marlowe misidentified as M. Accius Plautus in line 19, and the correction of proper names (e.g. Argo for Argos, 22); more literal translations include changes in tense (11, 15), voice (26), and diction (4, 28).
- 58 Contrast Marlowe’s “Lofty Lucretius shall live that hour, / That Nature shall dissolve this earthly bower,” 24–25; see Loewenstein 1999. Dominicus Niger’s commentary (1549, 281) suggests that Lucretius was thinking that fire would be the cause of the end of the world.

Furthermore, what Jonson brings is recognition of the need to invest in and re-perform Ovid's and Marlowe's work, a statement that itself is a reassertion of the power of poetry in the face of authority. See, for example, Jonson's transformation of *Amores* 1.15.20, a declaration in Ovid that the poets Ennius and Accius will never lack a name (*Casurum nullo tempore nomen habent*), transformed in Marlowe's "Are both in Fames eternal legend writ," and re-worked in Jonson's "A fresh applause in every age shall gain."⁵⁹ Finally, Jonson makes another significant change that addresses poetry's relationship with authority in his treatment of *Amores* 1.15.33–34: *Cedant carminibus reges, regumque triumphi: / Cedat et auriferi ripa beata Tagi*. Where Marlowe is hesitant, closely attending to the subjunctive mood, ("To verse let Kings give place, and Kingly shows, / And banks o'er which gold-bearing Tagus flows"), Jonson is less correct, but more confident, when he writes "Kings shall give place to it, and kingly shows, / The banks o'er which gold-bearing Tagus flows" (*Poetaster* 1.1.69–70). Such confidence is surely not misplaced, since in the very act of translation he puts poetry above kings, resurrecting Marlowe's banned verse.⁶⁰

This collaborative impulse converges in the final lines of *Amores* 1.15 (35–42). In one sense it is possible and indeed enticing to see in the final lines of Marlowe and Jonson an attempt to "break free" of the Ovidian source text, for the last, most famous, most quintessentially Ovidian lines, to which he himself returns time and again, are refracted in pointedly different ways in Marlowe and Jonson:

vilia miretur vulgus: mihi flavus Apollo
 pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua.
 sustineamque coma metuentem frigora myrtum:
 atque ita sollicito multus amante legar.
 pascitur in vivis livor, post fata quiescit:
 tunc suus ex merito quemque tuetur honor.
 ergo etiam, cum me supremus adusserit ignis,
 vivam: parsque mei magna superestes erit.

59 Compare too "The Frost-drad myrtle shall impale my head, / And of sad lovers I'll be often read" (a closer translation of *Am.*1.15.37–38 *Sustineamque coma metuentem frigora myrtum: / Atque ita sollicito multus amante legar*) with Marlowe's "About my head be quiuering Mirtle wound, / And in sad louers heads let me be found."

60 Compare "Thy scope is mortal, mine immortal fame, / Which through the world shall ever chant my name" (*Poetaster* 1.1.44–45, Jonson's rendering of *Amores* 1.15.7–8 *Mortale est, quod quaeris, opus. mihi fama perennis / Quaeritur, in toto semper ut orbe canar*) with Marlowe's "Thy scope is mortall, mine eternall fame, / That all the world might euer chaunt my name."

Faire *Phoebus* leade me to the *Muses* springs.
 About my head be quiuering Mirtle wound,
 And in sad louers heads let me be found.
 The liuing, not the dead can envie bite,
 For after death all men receiue their right:
 Then though death rackes my bones in funerall fier,
 Ile liue, and as he puls me downe, mount higher.

MARLOWE, *Elegy* 1.15,36–42, Isham edition

Kneel hinds to trash; me let bright Phoebus swell
 With cups full flowing from the muses' well.
 The frost-drad myrtle shall impale my head,
 And of sad lovers I'll be often read.
 Envy the living, not the dead, doth bite,
 For after death all men receive their right.
 Then, when this body falls in funeral fire,
 My name shall live, and my best part aspire.

JONSON, *Poetaster*, 1.1.71–78

Marlowe's interest in the sensory, physical, and amatory self continues to make itself known, but now it does translate into the metaphorical and poetic. In charged lines which imagine the raking flames of the funeral fire, it is not just the "great" part of him that survives, but the "whole" body, which escapes bodily constraints, not merely to "live" but even to "mount higher." This is language that seems designed to provoke anticipation of the overreaching figures with whom Marlowe himself has so often been conflated (cf. *Doctor Faustus*, scene 14, line 74: [Faustus] "O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?"). Jonson's personal interests are also plain: his dismissal of those who kneel to "trash" echoes in the play proper, finding resonance in Horace's despair at being unable to escape Crispinus' "lewd solecisms and worded trash" (*Poetaster* 3.1.87) and Virgil's condemnation of the "barking wits" who "with their beggarly and barren trash / Tickle base, vulgar ears in their despite" (5.3.328–330). But again Jonson, recognizing the physical costs of literary mortality, shifts the conceit, not wanting to be found and to be, but rather to *be read* and to live on *as a name*: "I'll be often read. ... Then, when this body falls in funeral fire, / My name shall live, and my best part aspire:" (1.1.74, 78–79).⁶¹

61 Cf. Loewenstein 1999, who notes the influence of Marlowe on Jonson here and concludes (p. 109): "We could say that the couplet is written in the middle voice."

Once again this might hint at Jonson's own complex individualist poetics—not just a display of erudition in his use of Latin-inflected “aspire,” but indicative of a far more sustained and intense interest in literary being and an obsession with the power of the name (sharing Ovid's obsession but also a preoccupation of his *Epigrams*, which obsessively play on the notion of name as metonymy for poem). They also pre-echo his translation of his great master Horace, and the advice of the *Ars poetica* to speak in your own voice: advice he renders as “Take, therefore, you that write, a subject fit / Vnto your strength, and long be turning it: / Prove you're your shoulders will or will not beare”⁶² And it boldly insists on the notion of performance to make immortality. But in the end I wonder whether Marlowe and Jonson are also, even as they make the *Amores* their own, simply responding to the appetite for revision and reinterpretation that powers Ovid's quest for immortality within the *Amores* and causes such regret in his exilic corpus—a supple, multi-faceted attempt to live forever not simply by reiterated declarations of poetic survival, but also a creatively adaptive literary form which has already offered us multiple and different “Ovids”—Ovid the elegist, *amator*, *poeta*, poem and *nomen*: Ovids amenable to revision, reinterpretation, reinscription. When Marlowe says “I'll live,” and Jonson “My name shall live,” it is still Ovid who proves himself a survivor beyond death.

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62 *Horace His Art of Poetry* 1640, B2^r, lines 55–57 in Butler et al. 2014.

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