

Translations of Ovid and Lucan

Le Poète se fait voyant par un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens.

[The poet makes himself a seer through a lengthy, enormous, and deliberate derangement of the senses.]

--Arthur Rimbaud, letter to Paul Demeny, 15 May 1871

This remarkable observation has resonated in literary culture for numerous reasons.¹ It has served as a kind of miniature manifesto for moderns who have wished to see themselves as visionaries or their gifts as supernal, be they of the tribe of T. S. Eliot or of a more adventuresome, Surrealist sort. Its exuberance is poignant concerning potential when Rimbaud's later fate is considered. He died at thirty-seven, like Mozart, but stopped writing at twenty, the age at which his predecessor was just hitting his stride, musically speaking. His expression of self-inflicted sensory derangement for poetical purposes is bracingly original and, at the same time, adolescent in its self-dramatization, and this for good reason. He was all of sixteen when he composed his missive to Demeny explaining his artistic suffering during his season in hell in 1871, approximately Marlowe's age on entering Corpus Christi, Cambridge, as an Archbishop Parker scholar in 1580. Though the playwright may not have taken himself quite as seriously as his nineteenth-century counterpart did, an epithet such as "flattering skie" (*Luc* 528) partakes of the same synesthesia as Rimbaud's drunken boat, "Le Bateau ivre."

Critics have theorized that Marlowe undertook his translations almost simultaneously during his time at university: *Lucans First Booke* (1600), an English version of the initial book of the *Pharsalia*, and *All Ovids Elegies* (c. 1599), the first relatively complete rendition of the *Amores* into any modern language.² Yet the divergence between them would suggest the opposite case, the former alleged to be more accomplished, and therefore a later production. No matter. That they are so unlike is significant precisely because they were produced by the same author who was younger than Rimbaud when he met his fate, comprising differences vast enough to suggest a "dérèglement" of sensibility as well as of "tous les sens." Traditionally, commentators have

¹ *Lettres du voyant (13 et 15 mai 1871) et La Voyance avant Rimbaud*, edited with commentary by Gérald Schaeffer and Marc Eigeldinger (Geneva: Droz, 1975), 163. Rimbaud's birthday was 20 October 1854. Seth Adam Whidden: "faced with Rimbaud's poetic project the reader is meant to employ a multitude of possibilities . . . and to consider them all, thereby celebrating a refusal of traditional logic preferring precision and unity of thought." See *Leaving Parnassus: The Lyric Subject in Verlaine and Rimbaud* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 129.

² All textual references from the plays and poetry are taken from the earliest printed editions and reproduced in the original spelling, e.g., *All Ovids Elegies: 3. Bookes, By C. M. Epigrams by J. D.* (Middleburgh: n.p., n.d.); *Lucans First Booke Translated Line for Line* (London: P. Short, 1600); *The Tragedie of Dido Queene of Carthage: Played by the Children of her Maiesties Chappell* (London: Printed for Thomas Woodcocke, 1594). For convenience's sake, all modern numeration for book, act, scene, and line references to Marlowe's plays and poetry follow the editions of Mark Thornton Burnett: *The Complete Plays* (London: J. M. Dent, 1999) and *The Complete Poems* (London: J. M. Dent, 2000).

neglected *Lucan* and the *Elegies* or criticized both as inferior productions, though the re-evaluations courtesy of Patrick Cheney, Ian Frederick Moulton, and Georgia E. Brown have helped change this dynamic.³ At the same time, these emulations of Latin authors have been poorly integrated into our comprehension of the author's dramatic canon, their interrelationship hardly explored. My contention is that this has been an oversight. Marlowe's subtly skilled renditions of his ancient predecessors are entirely characteristic of him and therefore illuminate our understanding of his other creations.

The studied differences in conception and texture between the translations suggest not dichotomy but complementarity. *Lucan* calls attention to its own importance with its elevated tone and its invocation of epic conventions. The poem forces one to read slowly in order to understand the syntax overflowing its measure by enjambment as it is poured into the blank verse. Marlowe creates labored effects with sound in innocuous constructions such as "You would haue thought their houses had bin fierd / Or dropping-ripe, ready to fall with Ruine" (*Luc* 490-91). Here, long "i" sounds, coupled with the heavy alliteration of "r" that marks the heavy caesura between "ripe" and "ready" and links itself to the governing concept, "Ruine," ensure that the lines cannot be spoken aloud rapidly, mimetic of the description of slowly collapsing residences whose blazing sections drop like fiery fruit. In contrast, the *Elegies* is deceptively superficial, as the critical tradition of scolding Marlowe for bad English, worse Latin, and bathos would attest.⁴ This apparent lightness allows or invites a rapid scan of the verse which constantly impels itself forward, driven by the relentless rhyme in the

³ Cheney's monumental work on Lucan and Ovid established Marlowe as a committed republican in politics who consciously followed a counter-Vergilian, anti-Spenserian, and proto-Ovidian cursus in his authorial career. See *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) and *Marlowe's Republican Authorship: Lucan, Liberty, and the Sublime* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). For Brown's most concentrated study of the interrelation of Marlowe's politics, views of gender and sexuality, and appropriation of Latin literary culture, see "Marlowe's Poems and Classicism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 106-26. Moulton theorizes that the *Elegies* came under the Bishops' interdiction because they believed that the text celebrates men's sexual thralldom to women, which would effeminize them and weaken the state itself. See "Printed Abroad and Uncastrated: Marlowe's *Elegies* with Davies' *Epigrams*," in *Marlowe, History, and Sexuality: New Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Paul Whitfield White (New York: AMS Press, 1998), 77-90. For an extensive critical history of the *Elegies*, see M. L. Stapleton, "Marlowe's First Ovid: *Certaine of Ovids Elegies*," in *Christopher Marlowe the Craftsman: Lives, Stage, and Page*, ed. Sarah K. Scott and M. L. Stapleton (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 137-48. For an account of recent reception of *Lucan*, see Cheney, "'Defend his freedom 'gainst a monarchy': Marlowe's Republican Authorship," in *Textual Conversations in the Renaissance: Ethics, Authors, Technologies*, ed. Zachary Lesser and Benedict S. Robinson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 34-37; 27-44.

⁴ Roma Gill evaluates Marlowe's translation skills, sometimes negatively, in her important essays "Marlowe, Lucan, and Sulpitius," *Review of English Studies* 24 (1973): 401-13, and "Snakes Leape by Verse," in *Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Brian Morris (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), 133-50. L. C. Martin's edition, *Marlowe's Poems* (London: Methuen, 1931), meticulously documents translation errors in its running commentary on the *Elegies*. The more benign, less judgmental tradition is exemplified by Millar MacLure's edition, *The Poems* (London: Methuen, 1968), as he reevaluates Marlowe and Martin. J. B. Steane, *Marlowe: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 280-301, comprises the first attempt in essay form to read the *Elegies* as poetry without condemning Marlowe's Latin.

couplets. The effect of haste might tempt us to ignore the poetry's depth and complexity so that it repays repeated study to see what we have missed as the momentum of the chiming distichs might lull us into complacency. A couplet that describes the desultor's conundrum, his inability to stop loving the mistress who is as unfaithful to him as he is to her, also heightens its meaning with sound as well as repetitious diction: "Ile hate, if I can; if not, loue gainst my will: / Bulles hate the yoake, yet what they hate haue still" (*AOE* 3.10.35-36). The colloquial monosyllables contribute to the insouciant effect and rapidity in the closed couplet. Its unbalanced antithesis of "loue" and "hate," the latter term repeated three times in this short space, emphasizes the idea of self-loathing, also heightened by the matching rhyme of "will" and "still." Or, as the concept would be later expressed by a celebrated contemporary, had, having, and in quest to have, extreme.

Art provides another instructive type of comparison. A nineteenth-century painterly analogue to *Lucan* would be van Gogh, with his vivid colors and thick daubs and whorls slathered on by the palette knife, a consciously labored production. For the *Elegies*, my equally anachronistic parallel would be Fragonard, the considerable draftsmanship and convergence of lines obscured by the rosy flesh, pastoral settings, and silky garments whose rustle can almost be heard on viewing the canvases. Though the *Pharsalia* is, like the *Amores*, a classical sourcetext, Marlowe in his rendering of it into English hearkens back to a poetics he could hardly have known, the alliterative, Anglo-Saxon native tradition with its lines spavined by the medial caesura, the flinty consonants buttressed by long vowels to create *chevaux de frise* of sound. His Ovidian prosody, more continental than its counterpart, features a discriminating and subtle interplay of long and short vowels in its closed couplets.

The narrators differ in a manner that suggests the edges of their respective texts align with one another. In *Lucan*, the omniscient speaker does not invite one to doubt him or to be conscious of his presence as an entity, nor do the self-interested characters who posture and project, and who thereby may deceive one into belief in their pronouncements. The *desultor Amoris* ("circus-rider of love") whom Marlowe reconfigures as an London gallant comprises, in himself, the entirety of the Ovidian elegiac enterprise. The early modern poet, like the classical master he imitates, compels the reader or listener to view his persona as our unreliable guide to his disorderly erotic world, with his constant reversals, shifts, and lies. Except for Caesar's vision of a mourning Rome, *Lucan* is basically womanless, unconcerned with relationships and love whereas the *Elegies* features a veritable sorority, Corinna, her sisters, and their adulterously amorous lives. So the Elizabethan writer dialectically imitates his sourcetexts, competing with his *auctores* and making their ancient utterances his own. Taken together, the *Lucan* and Ovid appear to be extremes deliberately lacking a mean, created by one who

intends to dazzle the senses and perpetrate a confusion of sensibilities. Or, perhaps, the plays themselves, partaking as they do of the heaviness of one and the airiness of the other, form a contiguous mean between the *Pharsalia* and the *Elegies*.

I

Marlowe's translations provide ghostly echoes of concepts that surface in his plays, as if the form in which he rendered Lucan or Ovid into English stayed in his mind as he conceived of a Barabas or a Guise. Our ignorance of the chronology of his compositions makes it impossible to determine which expressions in a given text might have influenced those of another, if at all. Yet this type of intertextuality resonates in *Lucans First Booke*. Passages that appear mundane in that milieu exfoliate into wider meanings if read in light of a particular dramatic offering of the stage. For instance, Marlowe mentions "Gaynimedee" as the god who "would renew Deucalions flood" (*Luc* 652) though the Latin text clearly reads "Deucalioneos fudisset Aquarius imbres" [Aquarius would have poured down such rains as Deucalion saw].⁵ One wonders why he was thinking of the cupbearer so prominent in the opening scene of his *Dido*, since his choice makes little sense in context. An aphorism in the translation, "Dominion cannot suffer partnership" (*Luc* 93), typifies one of that play's major conflicts as it applies to the struggles between Dido and Aeneas, Iarbas and Dido, Venus and Juno. It is admittedly of general provenance, like another phrase, "Captaines emulous of each others glory" (*Luc* 120). Still, both underscore other rivalries in the corpus, such as that between Mortimer Junior and the king in *Edward II* and Henri III and the Guise in *Massacre*. For that matter, the first four words of *Lucan*, "Wars worse than ciuill" (1), encapsulate the horrors that Marlowe portrays in his realization of internecine strife in France's *guerres de religion* and in early fourteenth-century England. Also, either part of *Tamburlaine* could have yielded "Now Babilon, (proud through our spoile) should stoop" and "Scythia and wilde Armenia had bin yoakt" (*Luc* 10, 19), since both formulations could have been uttered by that pageant's eponymous hero in his vaunting and bluster. Even *The Jew of Malta* makes an appearance in this unlikely locus. Another construct from the *Pharsalia*, "Vestalemque chorum ducit vittata sacerdos" [a priestess with a fillet on her brows leads a band of Vestals], becomes "the Nunnes / And their valid Matron" (*Luc* 596-97), reminiscent of the group of young women at whose demise Barabas rejoices as the bells toll so sweetly in his hearing, though one of the poisoned novices is his blameless daughter.⁶ These descriptions of angst-ridden Rome evoke the greed of the Maltese Christians that helped harden the moneylender in his inflexibly nihilistic position: "we grew licencious

⁵ *Lucan*, 2 vols., trans. J D. Duff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 1:50-51.

⁶ *Lucan*, 1:46-47.

and rude” and “Men tooke delight in Iewels, houses, plate” (*Luc* 162, 164). Though such apparent intertextual allusions might be coincidental, they still suggest an artist whose motifs remain fixed in his consciousness.

In various instances, this interconnectedness between a translation and a dramatic composition seems mutual, so that one phrase exemplifies not just the text in which it appears but the other as well, and so completely that the idea expressed could serve as a veritable statement of theme for both. This phenomenon occurs in the love-obsessed *Elegies* and in *Dido*. Iarbas, for instance, imagines to himself that his erotic prowess will defrost the heart and loins of the queen he desires although, unknown to him, those presiding goddesses of love and marriage have long since ensured that this communion is impossible. He expects to “make loue drunken with thy sweete desire” (*Dido* 3.3.75). That is, he flatters himself that he will either enjoy consummation with Dido while he is inebriated into a tantric frenzy by his own lust, or that this overweening urge for the woman he adores could make the very god of love, Cupid, drunk. Such megalomania and myopia could not describe the *desultor Amoris* more completely in his quest to flesh his will in the spoil of Corinna’s honor. And his ultimate expression of self-definition, “I cannot rule my selfe, but where loue please” (*AOE* 2.4.7), surely applies to the Carthaginian queen who immolates herself out of sight of her departing beloved as he deserts her in order to pursue *patria* rather than *amor*. For that matter, the following declaration may be more evocative of *Dido* and the *Elegies* than characteristic of the proto-epic in which it appears. Lalius expresses his martial devotion to Caesar but its enunciation befits the desultor and Dido: “Loue ouer-rules my will, I must obey thee” (*Luc* 373).

True to Marlowe’s wicked sense of humor, sometimes he explicitly posits a relationship between Ovid and a dramatic text of his that simply does not obtain. Tamburlaine becomes hysterical at the deathbed of his fair Zenocrate. For the first and only time in either of the plays named after him, he demonstrates a concern for another besides himself, though this instance also serves as an opportunity to ease his heart by exercising his rhetorical prowess. “*Homers Iliads*,” he asserts, would have praised his dying consort rather than Helen, “in euery line.” Also, against all expectation, those “wanton Poets” of Rome would have performed the same substitution had they “gazde a while on her.” Therefore, “Nor *Lesbia* nor *Corinna* had been named,” but his spouse would have served instead as “argument / Of every Epigram or Eligie” that they wrote (*2Tam* 2.4.89, 90, 91, 93-95). Here is a clear allusion to the *Amores* that Marlowe translated as the *Elegies*, as well as to Catullus, and the tribute could not be less fitting or flattering. Corinna and Lesbia are two of the most promiscuous women in Latin literature. And Zenocrate could never be mistaken for a femme fatale, an object of erotic desire, or the counterpart of a capricious sonnet lady.

Other elements concatenate from *Lucan* in the Marlowe corpus. The epic narrator says of Caesar that he will “mount the sunnes flame bearing charriot” (*Luc* 48). This reference to Phaeton or Apollo suggests the ceaselessly hubristic nature of various overreaching protagonists: Faustus, the Guise, Barabas, Gaveston, Mortimer Junior, Tamburlaine. Similarly, most of these disaster-prone figures, “Predestinate to ruine,” could be described by the apostrophe to Rome, “thy selfe art cause of all these euils,” since their minds, like the dictator’s, become “vnsetled” (251, 84, 264) as they self-destruct. In this way, few phrases summarize Tamburlaine and his canonical brethren more than these: “First conquer all the earth, then turne thy force / Against thy selfe” (22-23). And the momentum might carry the concept another way, intertextually speaking. The Scythian’s insistent statement of unwitting self-defintion at having the caged Bajazeth starve himself to death describes practically everyone in the Marlowe canon, including the Caesar of *Lucan*: “This is my minde, and I will haue it so” (*ITam* 4.2.91). This is how Faustus sells his soul, the Guise persists in his evil plots, and Mortimer Junior cuckolds his king and then has him murdered.

Marlowe the dramatist reconfigures various elegiac conventions from his English *Amores*. For example, his Prologue to *I Tamburlaine* provides a notoriously succinct statement of how the new type of stage business he offers will benefit audiences accustomed to tomfoolery: “From iygging vaines of riming mother wits, / And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay, / Weele lead you to the stately tent of War” (*ITam* Pro.1-3). This enunciation of method is related to the desultor’s similarly audacious meditation on genre to commence the *Amores / Elegies*, “I meane to sing of armes, / Choosing a subiect fit for feirse alarmes” (*AOE* 1.1.5-6), a position that he momentarily reverses by admitting that he would happily rhyme about love, since indolence is more agreeable to his temperament and conducive to the seductions he plans: “Fare well sterne warre, for blunter Poets meet” (32). Something approaching tableau occurs in *The Massacre at Paris*, that fragment rife with violence, grim humor, and sexual danger. Henri III’s minion, Mugeroun, who has been cuckolding the Guise, visits that nobleman in order to murder him at his king’s directive. Yet an anonymous soldier who knows about the infidelity decides to confront the royal favorite on his entrance to the household. He assumes that the intruder has come to sate his appetite for the Duchess: “Sir, to you sir, that dares make the Duke a cuckolde, And vse a counterfeit key to his priuie Chamber doore” (*MP* 19.1-2). Soon after, the loyal guardian strikes, enacting *contrapasso* against an enemy in this Ovidian parody of the act he has been performing with the lady of the house, albeit using technology unknown to antiquity: “*He shootes at him and killes him.*” In this episode, Marlowe reprocesses a motif from the *Amores* and neoteric elegy generally in his emulative manner. This soldier’s confrontation of Henri’s favorite resembles the conventional stance of a eunuch employed by a

husband such as Corinna's who guards both types of "priue Chamber doore" from the desultor and his ilk, they who tend to plead: "shut me not out therefore: / Night goes away: I pray thee ope the dore" (*AOE* 1.6.47-48) The Soldier's menacing bawdry suggests how a *ianitor* might have responded to such an intruder's entreaties to abjure the responsibility that his master has assigned him, the answer that Ovid never provides but that Marlowe feels compelled to supply. No French doors shall be opened this night.

II

Translating the *Amores* and *Pharsalia* allowed Marlowe to develop or refine skills that served him well in his profession of making theatrical rhetoric. The two texts feature modes analogous to dramatic speech such as vivid description meant to persuade as well as the soliloquy. His schoolmasters and colleagues would have recognized both *auctores* as excellent choices for that purpose. Thomas Lodge's rhetorical question, "Who liketh not of the promptnes of *Ouid*?" helps explain the congeniality of that ancient author to the stage, his wit fueling his verbal facility.⁷ Commentators from F. S. Boas to Heather James have noted the same phenomenon.⁸ This combination of genres can be applied structurally, as well. Each of the three books of the *Amores* resembles an act in a play, perhaps intended as a discrete section that links to its successor to create a sustained impression, with interlocking and symmetrical motifs that repeat elements for ironic effect. Also, several elegies comprise short interludes in themselves: the allegorical battle between Elegy and Tragedy for the desultor's attention (*Am.* 3.1); the protagonist's eavesdropping on a conversation between Corinna and her ersatz duenna Dipsas about his behavior (1.8); the interactions of Venus, Cupid, and the disorderly mourning of Tibullus's mistresses Nemesis and Delia at the funeral of that beloved *poeta* (3.9). Rendering forty-eight of the forty-nine *Amores* into English taught Marlowe to create the dialogue, character, action, and consciousness associated with playing. He learned to craft soliloquies that featured recognizably human emotions and motivations and that approximated colloquial discourse. He makes his sourcetext sound like his own, as in the desultor's obsessive, monosyllabic directive to Corinna, "There will I find thee, or be found by thee, / There touch what euer thou canst touch of mee" (*AOE* 1.4.57-58). His Ovidian speaker's dominant modes of dissimulation, overconfidence, and autoincrimination embody what he terms "my ambitious ranging mind" (2.2.48). These qualities apply to

⁷ Lodge's treatise is commonly known as *Defense of Poetry, Music, and Stage Plays* (1579) and is most easily accessed in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. G. Gregory Smith, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), 1:61-86. In the same passage (70), he quotes a famous Ovidian line that Lyly, *Endymion*, and Sidney, *Defense*, use to epitomize verbal facility: "Quicquid conabar dicere versus erat" [everything I tried to say was poetry] (*Tristia* 4.10.26).

⁸ Boas: "It was fortunate for Marlowe that his genius, in its plastic stage, went through the discipline involved in seeking to reproduce the technique of one of the most highly accomplished poetic craftsmen of the ancient world" in translating the *Amores*. See *Christopher Marlowe*, 46. James writes that Marlowe "lavishes Ovidian sensuality and significance on his dramatic characters." See "The Poet's Toys: Christopher Marlowe and the Liberties of Erotic Elegy," *Modern Language Review* 67 (2006): 103-27.

Gaveston, Barabas, Dido, and Tamburlaine, among others. Marlowe, then, could have considered Ovid's text a guidebook for writing drama.

Since virtually each of the *Elegies* functions as an extended aside or a soliloquy, the playwright had manifold opportunities to meditate on how this principle might apply as he translated. The faithless lover of the *Elegies*, in what constitutes an unwieldy yet recognizable theatrical aside, implicitly congratulates himself as he reveals that his declaration to Corinna at the beginning of the sequence was utterly false: "Accept him that will loue with spotlesse truth" (*AOE* 1.3.6). He is not merely amoral but self-consciously and joyously immoral:

Let one wench cloy me with sweete loues delight
 If one can doote, if not, two euey night.
 Though I am slender, I haue store of pith
 Nor want I strength, but weight to presse her with.
 Pleasure addes fuell to my lust-full fire
 I pay them home with that they most desire. (2.10.21-26)

In boasting about his modicum of sexual stamina, technique, prowess, and knowledge, the desultor creates a bog of ironies into which he is doomed to blunder and eventually sink.⁹ He will prove himself impotent, naive, unskilled, and ignorant about sexuality, women, and human relationships, all of which an auditor or reader might immediately intuit. Although virtually any disseminating soliloquy in the Marlowe canon could serve as parallel, Barabas's extended opening statement in *The Jew of Malta* is most Ovidian in this way, his comic reversals more immediate in his blindness to his own transparency. For example, in describing the prospect of a Turkish invasion, he enjoys sounding patriotic, yet in a recognizably hyperbolic way: "Why let 'em come, so they come not to warre; / Or let 'em warre, so we be conquerors. / [*Aside*] Nay, let 'em combat, conquer, and kill all, / So they spare me, my daughter, and my wealth" (*JM* 1.1.149-52). He lets us know with just one word how much he relishes the way that mendacity subtly accomplished benefits him: "If any thing shall there concerne our state / Assure your selues I'll look vnto [*aside*] my selfe" (171-72). The moneylender's corrosive cynicism about the culture that tolerates him in spite of its hatred of and distrust for him has its parallel in the Ovidian lover's pathetic misogyny and pathological self-aggrandizement.

⁹ Mary E. Smith's observation about the characters in *Dido* applies usefully here and elsewhere in the Marlowe canon: "Whatever element of the personality Marlowe allows to predominate at any one moment, it is likely to be enmeshed in a spidery web of ironies which mock and deprecate and tend to turn their subject into a caricature of a hero." See *Love Kindling Fire: A Study of Christopher Marlowe's "The Tragedy of Dido Queen of Carthage,"* Salzburg Studies in English Literature (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, University of Salzburg, 1977), 14.

As in the previous instance with Barabas, Marlowe features an initial oration by a major character who shows his perfidy as he ruminates on a given topic in the Ovidian mode. In *Edward II*, Gaveston is a type of the desultor as Machiavel, a pose that he reveals in his initial soliloquy and in his interactions with the three poor men. He couches his first expression of love for Edward in terms of self-interest: “What greater blisse can hap to *Gaueston*, / Then liue and be the fauorit of a king? (*E2* 1.1.4-5). As Richard Rowland has observed, his term to describe his personal relationship with his sovereign is “fauorit,” the same that Marlowe uses to translate “puer” from the *Amores* in the *Elegies*, a word resonant with erotic as well as political meaning, resembling the desultor’s self-description in his preferred subject matter in the second half of the distich: “the fittest matter for a wanton wit” (*AOE* 1.1.23-24).¹⁰ This deceitful, non-altruistic tendency continues in Gaveston’s paeon to “The king, vpon whose bosome let me die, / And with the world be still at enmitie” (*E2* 1.1.14-15). His couplet embodies the play’s view of him, his sexual bond protection from and hostility to a world that despises him as a parasite and exploiter of his monarch, who truly loves him nonetheless. Next, the rider, traveler, and soldier confront Gaveston and ask him for employment. It is appropriate that he responds to the most unstable of the three, the traveler, in a mode reminiscent of the desultor and his shenanigans at a public banquet when he encourages Corinna to gull her husband with winks and nods and the surreptitious mingling of feet (*AOE* 1.4). The minion tells her who wanders, “thou wouldst do well / To waite at my trencher, & tell me lies at dinner time, / And as I like your discoursing, ile haue you” (*E2* 1.1.30-32). When Gaveston dismisses the soldier with the phrase “I haue no warre, and therefore sir be gone” (35), it evokes the Ovidian concept of love as war: “Doubtfull is warre and loue, the vanquisht rise / And who thou neuer think’st should fall, downe lies” (*AOE* 1.9.29-30). His shallowness and insincerity are in the desultor’s mode, and rife with irony: “*Tanti*: Ile fanne [fawn] first on the winde, / That glaunceth at my lips and flieth away” (*E2* 1.1.22-23). He reveals that his word and his words themselves are meaningless, that he is overconfident, and that he is unaware of the mighty wind that will soon blow him away in the form of Mortimer Junior and the hostile barons because of the conflict that his “love” helps bring about.

Certainly, the narrative form of *Lucan* tends not to feature or require the soliloquy, but Marlowe’s translation process allowed him to practice writing a type of discourse no less important for the theater: persuasive rhetoric, in this text, of a brutal and graphic nature tending toward the hyperbolic. A speaker may be

¹⁰ See *Edward II*, ed. Rowland (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 91. Also: “In Gaveston’s appeal lies the challenge of *Edward the Second*. In part this is because he is attractive for qualities which run counter to conventional morality: his intelligence and political cunning are the stuff of amoral Machiavellian *virtù* rather than Christian virtue.” See *Edward II*, 2nd ed., ed. Martin Wiggins and Robert Lindsey (London: Methuen, 1997), xxii.

no more reliable or unbiased than the desultor, yet in the context of a given tragedy, he might wax more credible than his elegiac counterpart in the attempt to convince hearers of his authority:

A brood of barbarous *Tygars* hauing lapt
 The blood of many a heard, whilst with their dams
 They kennel'd in *Hircania* euermore
 Will rage and pray: so *Pompey* thou hauing lickt
 Warme goare from *Syllas* sword art yet athirst,
 Iawes, flesh, with blood continue murderous. (*Luc* 327-32)

Though “Th’vnstable people” are “restrain’d” by their love of Rome and their veneration of their *penates* and *lares*, eventually “wars loue / And *Cæsars* awe dasht all,” well exemplified by the future dictator’s vivid conceit in urging his audience to combat. Pompey is no tiger and is unlikely to have licked anything from a martial instrument, yet this *suasoria* hits its target with patterns of associated vowels and consonants: “blood” (twice), “brood,” “barbarous”; “Warme goare,” “sword,” “*Syllas*,” “athirst.” One can almost smell the iron carnage on the killing floor. Each line in the previous passage is thereby interlaced with at least one other by violence. And, *Cæsar dixit*: who would not believe him? Marlowe uses the same technique in comparatively reduced form for dramatic purposes:

The monster that hath drunk a sea of blood
 And yet gapes still for more to quench his thirst,
 Our Turkish swords shall headlong send to hell,
 And that vile carcass drawn by warlike kings
 The fowls shall eat. (*2Tam* 5.2.13-17)

Soon to encounter Tamburlaine before Babylon, the king of Amasia assures Bajazeth’s merciless son Callapine that the grotesque suicide of both his parents, who brained themselves against the bars of their cages, shall not go unavenged. The particulars of this gore-encrusted vaunting, worthy of the hero himself, are no more likely to be implemented than Caesar’s claims about Pompey’s savagery could possibly be validated. Accordingly, it is not revealed whether the conqueror’s enemies succeeded in desecrating his corpse or if they experienced the disappointing news that a natural death cheated them of their vengeance. Yet the speaker’s patterns help reinforce his authority by linking his key ideas: the short “u” of “drunk” and “blood”; the “k” of “carcass” and “kings”; the long “e” of “sea” and “eat”; the aspirates of “headlong” and “hell.” Passion and irrationality rather

than malice or falsehood fuel the exaggeration in both examples. And, thanks to Lucan and, to a lesser extent, Ovid, Amasia sounds amazing.

III

Yet Marlowe appears to delight in creating the opposite effect. In more intensified examples of the phenomenon that the desultor, Barabas, and Gaveston manifest above, he undermines his speakers at the moment they express themselves, no matter how authoritative their tone or how well their sounds echo their sense. This subtle maintenance of an ironic distance between the creating playwright and his characters could have been learned in translating the *Amores*, and, to a lesser extent, the *Pharsalia*, since Ovid invites us to observe the gulf between the lover's inflated opinion of himself and reality, such as it is. Like Mortimer Junior, Isabella, Faustus, Mugeroun, and others populating the dramatic part of the canon, the young roué reanimated from antiquity provides the equivalent of a master class in dubiety, autoincrimination, dissimulation, amorality, misogyny, disorderly sexuality, and negative self-definition. To some, Marlowe's authorial sensibility may appear disinterested to the point of cruelty so that he appears emotionally disengaged from his characters, yet to others he is a stern moralist engaged in grim or macabre satire, or an Erasmian ironist exposing folly.¹¹ Such contradictory conclusions are not just understandable but justifiable.

However, Marlowe's suggestion that the heavens will keep to their course despite the gesticulations and hysteria of a theologian who suffers damnation because of his faulty humanism, an abandoned queen who turns adulterous and homicidal, and French aristocrats crazed by vendettas does not signify a lack of empathy. Rather, such moments testify to his kinship with those "old Masters" who were "never wrong" in their understanding of the "human position" of suffering, as Auden puts it in "Musée des Beaux Arts," his reflection inspired by Breughel's *The Fall of Icarus*. Truly, "the dogs go on with their doggy life."¹² The Gravediggers whom Hamlet observes have no true feeling of their business provide a notable Shakespearean example of this phenomenon. It surely arouses pathos that the hero will soon discover to his horror that the charnel pit they excavate is meant for Ophelia, whom he does not know has drowned. Yet it is of no less significance that the two men who perform manual labor in the churchyard will continue in their profession for the rest of the week, as well. Indeed, doggy lives will go on as overreachers encounter hot pokers or hell's mouth. This perspective occurs in the *Amores*, also, when the desultor decides to bid "Tender loues Mother" goodbye: "Both loues to whom my heart long time did yeeld, / Your golden ensignes pluckt out of my field" (3.14.1, 15-16). He

¹¹ H. B. Charlton and R. D. Waller define Marlowe's "characteristic" sensibility as a "complete detachment from ordinary human sympathies," *Edward II*, ed. Charlton and Waller (London: Methuen, 1931), 56.

¹² For "Musée," see *Another Time: Poems by W. H. Auden* (New York: Random House, 1940), 34.

discovers how easily Corinna and her nameless successor can replace him in their affections as well as in their beds, happy to oblige others when they “ope the two leau’d booke” (*AOE* 3.13.44). The universe remains undisturbed. Similarly, in another example of tableau, Pembroke and Arundel are happy to discharge their hysterical prisoner, Gaveston, to the care of their retainers so that he can be dispatched at Cobham at dawn. More important to Pembroke is his fear that his wife will be angry with him if she discovers that he has been so near their home without paying his marital debt: “We that haue prettie wenches to our wiues, / Sir, must not come so neare and balke their lips” (*E2* 2.5.100-01). He knows what is good for him: *si uxor laeta, vita laeta est*.

Such ambiguous authorial sabotage occurs in *Lucan* as well as in the *Elegies* and the tragedies, with its touch of bemusement. Marlowe’s version of the epic narrator describes the foolish Pompey as blinded by his own vanity. His egotism creates the delusional sense of security that will destroy him:

being popular sought by liberal gifts,
To gaine the light vnstable commons loue,
And ioyed to heare his *Theaters* applause;
He liu’d secure boasting his former deeds,
And thought his name sufficient to vphold him. (*Luc* 132-36)

That the caesura breaks the meter between “secure” and “boasting” emphasizes in its prosodic turbulence the very fault that will undo him. Even the name of the prosodic device that divides the line alludes to the man who will bring this downfall about. In contrast, his still-living foe is described in the terms of a stellar apotheosis, “may’st thou shine and no cloud dim thee,” and more: “Thou *Cæsar* at this instant art my God” (59, 63). The striking simile for this hero, “Like to a Lyon of scortcht desart Affricke,” who heaves up his crest, raises his tail, and angrily attacks the hunter who has just pierced his side with a “light Iauelin” (208-14), could not be more laudatory. At the same time, this epic narrator’s hyperbolic language implies that Caesar actually holds this impossibly high opinion of himself, and that his hubris will meet its antidote on the Ides when the equivalent of more than one javelin will find its mark. Accordingly, more Marlovian in its subversiveness is that the fleeing account of Pompey applies to Caesar also, who strove for plebeian popularity, loved to hear himself praised, thought of his name as an entitlement, and boasted himself to death, just as Barabas does as he plunges from the scaffold he has erected into the boiling cauldron below.

A few of the most pungent instances of Marlowe’s undermining of his speakers concern an unexpected subject for one whose themes and milieux are avowedly masculine: women, with a wider application. This may

also have an Ovidian origin. For example, after many instances of what might be called inadvertent autoincrimination, the desultor surprises us with an unlikely admission of his own louche character at the midpoint of the *Elegies*. Although this is knowledge that his audience surely possesses by this juncture, he now expresses an awareness of his “vices being many,” prepared to reveal himself as fully as he thinks he is able: “Heere I display my lewd and loose behauour” (*AOE* 2.4.2, 4). He chases women for no reason at all: “If she be learn’d, then for her skill I craue her, / If not, because shees simple I would haue her” (17-18). Barabas shows a similarly droll understanding of his own perfidy, although he would never describe it as vice. There is another factor to consider here, as well. Just as the young lover justifies his deeds against womankind by blaming their allegedly deceitful nature, his Maltese doppelganger faults the culture that oppresses him, albeit not without reason, which accounts for this notorious set of precepts for Ithamore’s benefit:

be thou voyd of these affections,
Compassion, loue, vaine hope, and hartlesse feare;
Be mou’d at nothing, see thou pittie none,
But to thy self smile when the Christians moane. (*JM* 2.3.173-76)

This obsessive villainy becomes a kind of mindless compulsion, similar to the youth’s amoral seductions in the *Elegies*. The madness inherent in “I loathe, yet after that I loathe, I runne” and “I cannot rule my selfe, but where loue please” (*AOE* 2.4.5, 7) corresponds to Barabas’s increasingly unhinged hatred and mindless greed, which both fuel the momentum that destroys him. In a variation on this concept, Tamburlaine’s obsessive praise of his captive consort demonstrates virtually nothing about his love for her because it is an emotion he is incapable of experiencing. “Her state and person wants no pomp you see” and “Then sit thou downe diuine *Zenocrate*” (*ITam* 5.1.486-96, 507-35) are for his own benefit and self-aggrandizement, like his later histrionics at her deathbed. As Sara Munson Deats argues, the play suppresses the feminine. *Zenocrate* can avoid slavery only if she allows her captor to enslave her, may only express her feminine nature if she allows him to define it for her, which in turn would undermine her only real agency, the rhetorical.¹³ This is the ethos of the *Elegies* in

¹³ Deats shows how Tamburlaine seeks to create himself through rejection of the feminine. He “strives to fashion himself as the heroic masculine ideal by repudiating the feminine principle and extricating the feminine qualities within himself.” See *Sex, Gender, and Desire in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 136-44. To Pam Whitfield, no play demonstrates “the suppression of the feminine” like *Tamburlaine* in its relation to “the construction of the masculine.” Also, “the fall and failure of *Zenocrate*” and the “destruction of the feminine other’s voice and volition” parallels Tamburlaine’s rise. See “‘Divine *Zenocrate*,’ ‘Wretched *Zenocrate*’: Female Speech and Disempowerment in *Tamburlaine I*,” *Renaissance Papers* (2000): 87; 87-98. Mary Stripling argues, “women have a destabilizing effect” on the hero. See “Tamburlaine’s Domestic Threat,” in *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England*, ed. Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 211; 211-24. Along similar lines, Mark Thornton Burnett argues that Tamburlaine “aestheticizes” *Zenocrate* “to rob her of a meaningful sexuality,”

the desultor's attitude to Corinna, which couplets such as these emphasize: "I guide, and souldiour wunne the field and weare her, / I was both horse-man, foote-man, standard bearer" (*AOE* 2.12.13-14). These facile, insincere expressions foretell Zenocrate's plight as one compelled to love. Both men evoke their women with words so that they may better repress them. Corinna, at least, escapes. There are those less fortunate. In 2 *Tamburlaine*, Theridamas, determined to engage in lovemaking with the grieving widow Olympia, allows himself to be deterred by a ludicrous device of her expedient invention. Since she has anointed her throat with a magic potion, she says, she can therefore prevent a sword's incursion and urges him to try her. Just before he accepts the challenge, the oafish seducer uses Tamburlaine's rhetoric of obstreperousness:

Nay Lady, then if nothing will preuaile,
 Ile vse some other means to make you yeeld,
 I must and wil be pleasde, and you shall yeeld:
 Come to the tent againe. (*2Tam* 4.2.50-54)

This is simply an accelerated version of the desultor's plea to Corinna with its implied menace: "Ile liue with thee, and die, or thou shalt greiue" (*AOE* 1.3.18). Surely Olympia's solution is not what Theridamas had in mind when he assaulted her with his brutal love language in this bizarre *liebestodt*. She gulls him into slitting her throat, her suicide accomplished by the coercion of her witless murderer. One penetration and consummation supplants and thus prevents another, a truly Ovidian maneuver on Marlowe's part in his authorial sabotage.

IV

Marlowe clearly reveled in his the special effects of his native tongue just as Lucan and Ovid did in theirs: striking verbiage in unexpected or odd combinations and metaphor that occasionally borders on synesthesia. This trans-epochal similarity is not coincidental. His renditions of the *Pharsalia* and *Amores* informed his own compositions and constitute their authors' legacy to him in this intricate way. Phrases and epithets such as "iangling minds," "houshold gods / Sweate teares," and "ominous birds / Defil'd the day" (*Luc* 521, 534-5, 556-57) conflate senses and functions, and attribute human actions to inanimate objects or animals. Marlowe reconfigures such constructions in at key moments, with an aesthetic that approaches Mannerism and with a sensibility that evokes both his classical masters. For example, Aeneas accounts for Dido's ardent emotional response as his fleet prepares to depart from Carthage for Latium:

Dido casts her eyes like anchors out,
 To stay my Fleete from loosing forth the Bay.

placing her in "an environment of frosty inaccessibility" that comprises an act of appropriation or colonization." See "*Tamburlaine* and the Body," *Criticism* 33 (1991): 34; 31-47.

Come backe, come backe, I hear her crye a farre,
 And let me linke [thy] bodie to my lips,
 That tyed together by the striuing tongues,
 We may may as one saile into *Italy*. (*Dido* 4.3.25-30)

The passage belies the idea that he longs to desert his paramour, since it portrays him as enjoying the notion that she might want him in that intimate way, which his disapproving friend Achates implies in his fear that “wanton motions of alluring eyes” might “Effeminate our mindes inured to warre” (35-36). Another apparent incongruity is that it also features unusually supple figurative language uncharacteristic of Marlowe’s deliberately muted, prosaic version of Vergil’s protagonist. As with the example from *Lucan*, the collision of logic and sense, the human and inanimate, compels attention. Ardent eyes become not Petrarchan suns or stars but anchors that can commandeer an entire fleet from its destined departure. Lips create another type of attachment to form a distorted picture of what one woman hopes her passion can accomplish. Once she and her love are joined, their tongues can bind them together in the erotic congress she so desires, and en route to an undisclosed destination by water, perhaps on a barge resembling a burnished throne. Again, the taciturn Trojan hero, whose divine mother has not inflicted the disease of Amor upon him as she has with Dido, literally speaks her Ovidian dialect of love with Lucanic effects. This testifies to its mind-jangling power, which Marlowe underscores with metaphor.

Both Lucan and Ovid revel in the physically grotesque, a motif congenial to Marlowe that exemplifies his grim humor and his *memento mori* sensibility, one that complements his wry perspective that resembles Breughel’s for his everyday people who blithely go on with their lives as Icarus disappears, unnoticed and unlamented, into the sea. The atrocities that the dramatist portrays have a symbolic purpose, as if he were an Elizabethan Bosch. Their bizarreness and outlandishness echo in the poetry that he translates, though in a general way. Ovid’s material of this sort concerns sex and reproduction. Corinna’s Dipsas knows “what with Mares ranck humour may be done” (*AOE* 1.8.8) for aphrodisiacal purposes, however smelly. Perhaps such knowledge creates too much success, since this desired behavior bears unwanted fruit. The desultor’s unhappily married lady friend does not wish to bear children and therefore attempts to perform an abortion on herself. Not only does she submit to the peril of the procedure and steel herself for its possible consequences, she must endure the hectoring of the young lover himself, who observes with his characteristic tactlessness, “Oft dyes she that her paunch-wrapt childe hath slaine” (2.14.38), and, furthermore, attributes a motivation of vanity to Corinna that cannot be verified: “Because thy belly should rough wrinckles lacke, / Wilt thou thy wombe-

inclosed off-spring wracke?" (2.14.7-8). The language of battle implicitly informs these gynecological observations. Lucan realizes his nightmare of war in the diction of grotesquerie. "Intombe my sword within my brothers bowels; / Or fathers throate; or womens groning wombe" (*Luc* 377-78) echoes the desultor's vision of Corinna's drastic solution to her problem pregnancy. In a comparable section that Marlowe must have labored over, he describes the unpropitious sacrifice by the Etrurian augur Arruns on Caesar's behalf: "a dead blacknesse / Ranne through the bloud, that turn'd it all to gelly, / And stain'd the bowels with darke lothsome spots, / The liver swell'd with filth," and "gaping," then "Squis'd matter through the cal" (617-20, 624). Though these are the entrails of a diseased bull squeezing or squishing, this stomach-turning observation describes war's ultimate result, the decay and putrefaction of bodies, mostly human. This is what battlefields tend to be like.

How does Marlowe the dramatist, then, utilize his classical predecessors' evocation of the corruptible body? *The Massacre at Paris*, unsurprisingly, provides one particularly piquant Lucanic-Ovidian example. Of the text's several barbarities, the forces of Catherine and the Guise perpetrate one of the worst, the St. Bartholomew's Day murder of the Huguenot Admiral Coligny. It is made all the more terrible by two members of the Catholic mob who claim with considerable jocularity that they cannot decide what to do with the corpse as they drag it onstage for our delectation. Burning him "for an heretick," they joke, would merely "infect the fire, and the fire the aire, and so we shall be poysoned with him." Throwing his remains into the Seine would produce a similar effect, corrupting the water, the fish, "and by the fish our selues when we eate them." They then decide to "hang him heere vpon this tree" (*MP* 11.2-11) with considerable derision in a way that evokes the *Crucifixio Christi* from the York mystery cycle. This medieval effect is heightened as the two nobles observe the mangled remains hung for display, with more insensitivity than the desultor expresses to Corinna about her dilemma. They mock what is left of "our lusty Admirall" who "becomes the place so well" yet they observe "thair's not very sweet" and suggest the same expedient that their two predecessors did: throw him in a ditch (13-14, 16-18). These couplets from the elegy for Tibullus that Marlowe translated could constitute a type of commentary on this scene: "Outrageous death profanes all holy things / And on all creatures obscure darkness brings" (*AOE* 3.8.19-20); "When bad fates take good men, I am forbod, / By secreat thoughts to thinke there is a god" (35-36). Yet Marlowe allows us to supply such sentiments if we wish rather than including a character to voice them as commentary. He attempts to outdo his masters by transmuting their putrid matter into dramatic form.

Marlowe surely read François Hotman's inflammatory account of the further desecration of Coligny's remains, an event that made Philip II laugh aloud with delight.¹⁴ "How meanst thou that?" we might ask of the revelers who butcher the Admiral so that he must have resembled the bull's liver in *Lucan* or the aborted fetus in the *Elegies*, just as Henri III inquires of Mugeroun's atrocity two scenes later, "*He cuts of the Cutpurse eare, for cutting of the gold buttons off his cloake*" (MP 14.30-31). How, truly? The minion's droll comment to the unfortunate criminal, "Come sir, giue me my buttons and heers your eare" (33), is his answer. It does not make sense, just as one might observe that the king does not think that this is a good trade. The physical violence of the mutilation, a skill that any highly trained executioner or soldier should have been able to master, may distract the theatrical patron or scholar at study from a larger meaning. Perhaps someone is not listening, or fails to hear, such as the perpetrator himself, or the scene's implicit target, ourselves. *Memento mori, vanitas vanitatum*.

Marlowe uses the verb "see" 373 times.¹⁵ An implied invitation to indulge the gaze in his many descriptions and in his references to eyes bespeaks his love of visuals that prefigures the cinema. The development of this skill could have begun in his labors over *Lucan* and *Ovid*. His epic narrator's portrait of the hero's terror at his vision of a mourning Rome helps us see as well as feel his psychology: "this spectacle / Stroake *Cæsars* hart with feare, his hayre stooode vp, / And faintnes numm'd his steps there on the brincke" (*Luc* 194-6). It is difficult not to think of Faustus looking up at the firmament and observing Christ's blood streaming there for everyone but him, ironic since fright was strangely absent from his mind during his initial incantations that caused devils such as Mephistopheles to appear. The effects of civil war in *Lucan* are portrayed apocalyptically, also:

Confused stars shal meete, celestiaall fire
 Fleete on the flouds, the earth shoulder the sea,
 Affording it not shoare, and *Phæbe's* waine,
 Chace *Phæbus* and inrag'd affect his place,

¹⁴ Hotman: "a certain Italian of Gōzagues band, cut off the Admirals head, and sent it preserued with spices to Rome to the Pope and the Cardinall of Loraine. Other cut off his hands, and other his secret partes. Then the common labourers and rascals three dayes together dragged the dead body thus mangled and betrayed with bloud and filth, through the streetes, and afterwarde drewe it out of the toune to the common gallowes, and hanged it vp with a rope by the feete." See *A true and plaine report of the furious outrages of Fraunce & the horrible and shameful slaughter of Chastillion the admirall* (London: Henry Bynneman, 1573), lvii. In Henry Kamen's account, the French ambassador reported that after Philip heard the news, "He began to laugh, with signs of extreme pleasure and satisfaction." See *Philip of Spain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 141.

¹⁵ See *A Concordance to the Plays, Poems, and Translations of Christopher Marlowe*, Robert J. Fehrenbach, Lea Ann Boone, and Mario A. Di Cesare, eds. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 730-32, 1058-9, 1076, 1115.

And striue to shine by day, and ful of strife

Disolue the engins of the broken world.

All great things crush themselues. (*Luc* 75-81)

How will the end of the world and the reign of Chaos look? Perhaps like the hero's vision of heaven and hell in the *Faustus* B-text: "Mountaines and Hills, come, come, and fall on me / And hie me from the heauy wrath of heauen" (*DFb* 5.2.162-63). In the *Lucan* quotation, the native tradition is again in the ascendant and aids the optical sense with sounds of rumbling, crashing, and exploding, the eighteen sibilant consonants hissing, the medial caesura breaking each line in half just as the earth crumbles and dissolves. And the aphorism that concludes the quotation again bespeaks the fate of virtually every protagonist in the canon: the great indeed crush themselves. In the Ovidian rather than the Lucanic mode, Marlowe invokes the faculty of sight itself rather than creating a word picture, or he actually omits the thing that ought to be described to make us strain to conceive it for ourselves. The effect is largely comic and appropriately erotic, expressed with the requisite confusion of a man chasing women. The lover in the *Elegies* voices his amorous irrationality by projecting his jealousy onto his nameless mistress's clothing in the form of a transferred epithet: "Enuious garments so good legges to hide, / The more thou look'st, the more the gowne enuide" (*AOE* 3.2.27-28). One might observe that it is the desultor, not the woman's *stola*, that is "Enuious," since he appears to be addressing himself in the second person as he forces us to imagine how soft and shapely her legs must be, jealous that the garment embraces what he cannot. Ovid's more pronounced instance of this authorial coyness, the siesta in which he creates a prehistoric blazon to describe Corinna's gradual disrobing and downward exposure of her bodily charms, tellingly omits the object of his quest, the proverbial center of the world: "To leaue the rest all lik'd me passing well" (1.5.22-23). Marlowe, courtesy of his roguish Ovidian narrator, reconstitutes this device in *Hero and Leander* in two notorious instances: the elaborate digression on the encounter between Mercury and the Country Maid as they tumble in the grass: "he often strayd / Beyond the bounds of shame, in being bold / To eie those parts, which no eie should behold"; and this speaker's ultimate refusal to describe what he terms Hero's "orchard of *Th'esperides*" because this "fruit none rightly can describe, but hee / That puls or shakes it from the golden tree" (*HL* 405-08; 782-84). The author's surrogate drolly pretends to criticize the messenger god for eyeing his fill and then cloaks the thing itself in an inexact horticultural-mythological metaphor. At the same time, the teller of this tale makes the reader participate in the ultimate act of visual invasiveness by compelling him or her to visualize the very thing his description puckishly withholds. We are voyeurs whether we want to be or not.

V

In a nod to medieval and early modern tradition, Marlowe crafts statements that emblemize the texts in which they occur. In other, related instances, he expresses himself in a vivid manner that comprises a type of artistic signature, just as Rimbaud does in the nineteenth century. Such passages “say” him as a writer, implicitly exhibiting his implementation of the general symbolic statement courtesy of the Delphic oracle, γνώθι σεαυτόν, i.e., *nosce teipsum* (or *te ipsum*). These devices occur in the translations and appear to be those in which Lucan and Ovid “sign” themselves in their poetics of self-expression. There would be no better way for Marlowe to emulate his classical predecessors than to engage in this type of dialectical imitation—in the very act of rendering them into English, no less. He could reproduce these effects elsewhere in his canon, and as his elaborate cadences of sound and interlacing of puns would attest, he worked hard in this area. Lucan’s stunning simile comparing Caesar to a lightning strike provides an example:

So thunder which the wind teares from the cloudes,
 With cracke of riuen ayre and hideous sound,
 Filling the world, leapes out and throwes forth fire,
 Affrights poore fearefull men, and blasts their eyes
 With ouerthwarting flames, and raging shoots
 Alongst the ayre and not resisting it
 Falls, and returnes, and shiuers where it lights. (*Luc* 152-58)

Marlowe simultaneously engages in literary self-portraiture as he competes with Lucan’s Latin style at its most volcanic.¹⁶ His portrayal of the spectacular event is meant to impress, with his prosody and diction emphasizing sights and sounds. The alliterative trochees, “Filling” and “Falls,” the strong caesura in the first line between “wind” and “teares” evoking the sudden gap that gusts in the thunderheads, and the sheer propulsion implicit in the hissing sibilants and crackling plosives of “leapes” and “blasts” underscores this prodigious moment of “hideous sound.” Here stands Marlowe the overreacher as well, along with his blazing protagonists and his epic

¹⁶ Qualiter expressum ventis per nubilia fulmen
 Aetheris impulsu sonitu mundique fragore
 Emicuit rupitque diem populosque paventes
 Terruit obliqua praestringens lumina flamma;
 In sua templa furit, nullaque exire vetante
 Materia magnamque cadens magnamque revertens
 Dat stragem late sparsosque recolligit ignes. (1.151-57)

[Even so the lightning is driven forth by wind through the clouds: with noise of the smitten heaven and crashing of the firmament it flashes out and cracks the daylight sky, striking fear and terror into mankind and dazzling the eye with slanting flame. It rushes to its appointed quarter of the sky; nor can any solid matter forbid its free course, but both falling and returning it spreads destruction far and wide and gathers again its scattered fires.] See *Lucan*, ed. Duff, 1:14-15.

predecessor, blasting from the heavens to the ground and ricocheting back again. The four awkwardly thundering syllables of his unlikely word “ouerthwarting” evokes how the “fire” from the sky rives the air as it “lights” then dazzles the “eyes” at the ends of two lines. It is apocalyptic, as in many expressions of like intensity that attack the senses in the plays, but which at first glance may not look similar, such as the B-text *Faustus* vision of damnation courtesy of the desultor-like Bad Angel. He describes for his doomed auditor the “vaste perpetuall torture-house” of the underworld in fiery visuals and vivid sounds, where he will see “the Furies tossing damned soules, / On burning forkes: their bodies broyle in lead. / There are liue quarters broyling on the coles, / That ner’e can die” (*DFb* 5.2.128-31). The playwright transforms Lucan’s self-defining figure of the *fulmina* into an image that symbolizes him as a poet, a barbecue of horrors realized with a touch of humor, buttressed by liquid “r” and alliterative “b” that sound like meat searing and broiling over an open fire, the blood and fat dripping into the embers. Felipe Segundo, that collector of Bosch’s, would have been proud to have hung such a picture of hellfire in his Escorial: violent, visceral, unforgettable.¹⁷ *Marlowe ego sum*.

Such an exemplary sample of the *Pharsalia* translated and then reconfigured for artistic self-definition finds its counterpart in the *Amores* that Marlowe reanimates for a similar purpose. The contrasting impression is, as usual, deceptively superficial and comic but just as well realized as the exercise in Lucanic epic sublimity. The author accomplishes the requisite effect with no more profound a tool than a ribald pun, such as the desultor’s “with priuate hands acquainted” as a part of “loues art” (*AOE* 2.18.16, 18), the pun on *queynte* an ideal way for the translator to demonstrate his own proficiency in the master’s *ars amandi*. Similarly, Marlowe defines himself as an Ovidian poet in a predictable venue, his amorous epyllion, when Leander “in plain termes (yet cunningly) he crau’d it” (*HL* 555), the adverb also a quibble on the woman’s part, whose unmentionable essence is masterfully and amusingly realized in the knowing use of the neuter pronoun in “crau’d it,” and then repeated at the ends of the next three lines to make two couplets: “haue it,” “put him by it,” and “most nigh it” (555-58). Hero’s “it” rhymes only with itself, appropriate since nothing matters more to the young lover in his quest. And why should it not?

A more elaborate instance of emulative Ovidian self-portraiture via translation and transformation occurs in the animal figure of the horse, one of the master’s signatures that evokes the human drive to mate. Marlowe experienced it slightly in Lucan also, when Curio stirs up Caesar by inspiring him to war as one who “Was so incenst as are Eloius steedes / With clamors: who though lockt and chaine in stalls, / Souse downe the

¹⁷ “Most of the Bosch’s were hung in the Escorial, though several were to be found in the Prado. . . . The Flemish artist’s primitive style, and his obvious moralising, seem to have been the aspects which appealed to the king.” See Kamen, *Philip*, 192.

wals, and make a passage forth” (*Luc* 293-96). This is the power, but not the glory. For this latter quality, Marlowe’s desultor explains to a hapless husband why it is useless to restrain his lovely wife from her alleged amorous instincts: “I saw a horse against the bitte stiffe-neckt, / Like lightning go, his strugling mouth being checkt. / When he perceiud the reines let slacke, he stayde, / And on his loose mane the loose bridle laide” (*AOE* 3.4.13-16). This completely insincere counsel disguises the speaker’s agenda, that he does not wish to help the prospective cuckold avoid his fate, but to deceive him into fulfilling it without his knowledge.

Marlowe’s consonants here excel for him, the difficult-to-enunciate “g” of “against” striking awkwardly against the “b” of “bitte” and “st” and “kt” of “stiffe-neckt,” very much like trying to restrain a recalcitrant mount. In turn, the internal rhymes and sibilants of “reines,” “slacke,” and “stayde,” joined with the liquids of “loose,” “bridle,” and “laide,” signify in their agreement and harmony the same qualities the desultor promises the husband that a permissive attitude to his wife, the mare, will produce in her. Similarly, and with noticeable complementarity, Leander quests for his Hero and her “it” in a like conceit:

For as a hote prowde horse highly disdaines,
 To haue his head control’d, but breakes the raines,
 Spits fourth the ringled bit, and with his houes,
 Checkes the submissiue ground: so hee that loues. (*HL* 625-28)

Marlowe reprocesses, retrenches, and reanimates the figure so that the Ovidian original and his own early modern version mate, metaphorically. Here, as with the example from antiquity, the sound and meaning resemble the impulsive actions of a stallion for his female equine counterpart. Consonants such as “p,” “d,” hard “c,” “b,” and “g” say what “hee that loues” is really all about in their sounds approximating hooves stamping on the ground. The bemused tone and simplicity of the matching passages communicate that men and women pursue each other as part of a natural process: it is time to reproduce. And the couplet is as essential to Marlowe’s Ovidian effect as the blank verse is to his *aemulatio* of Lucan. Its inherent pairing of two lines suggests the couples trying to conjoin in this Elizabethan Sestos and Rome but who, curiously, in spite of the deceptive concord of sounds, fail to do precisely that: couple.

Words, phrases, and motifs ricochet between *Lucan*, the *Elegies*, and the plays. As an essential and integral part of Marlowe’s canon, his translations, in spite of their apparent differences from his dramatic output as well as from one another, represent less a derangement of his authorial sensibility than its capaciousness and amorphousness. This ability to encompass opposites and contradictions allowed for the unlikely congeniality of the epic and erotic modes to the poetry that he was trying to teach himself to write. Therefore, his use of

dramatic irony to sabotage the credibility of those such as Mortimer Junior can be traced directly to the proto-soliloquies and *suasoriae* in the Ovid and Lucan that he rendered into English. Though Marlowe, like his antique predecessors, might seem indifferent to the fates to which he submits his characters, this effect is more representative of the bemused, seasoned gaze of an Old Master, one whose vision allows for the exigencies of human behavior and experience. Such an artistic perspective is not without humor or sympathy, though it may occasionally appear repulsive or macabre, courtesy of the *Pharsalia* and *Amores* made into English blank verse and couplets, respectively. The poetry that he translated encouraged him to develop his own style as he emulated his predecessors, enjoying the rendition of matter that epitomized their technique as well as his own. This is obvious in the realization of the the tragic and epic, “Vnder great burdens fals are euer greeuous” (*Luc* 71), and the comic and amorous: “Hees happie who loues mutuall skirmish slayes” (*AOE* 2.10.29), as well. Throughout, Marlowe demonstrates an obvious relish for his language’s special effects, most notably of sound, which remains, for us, a love that falleth never away.

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