

The Nose Plays: Ovid in *The Jew of Malta*

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his visage (or vizard) like the artificiall Jewe of *Maltaes* nose.

--William Rowley, *The Search for Money* (1609)

Ouiddius Naso was the man. And why in deed *Naso*, but for smelling out the odifererous flowers of fancy? the ierkes of inuention[;] imitarie is nothing.

--*Love's Labour's Lost* (1598)

These two passages, published a decade apart, one famous and the other hopelessly obscure, may validate Patrick Cheney's observation that an "Ovidian gene" helped generate the appendage that Edward Alleyn wore to identify himself as Barabas. They also explain in some ways how it "plays," to borrow an eminently useful phrase from the Steven Soderberg film *Ocean's Thirteen* (2007).¹ Rowley's satirical image of the moneylender suggests that London audiences would have remembered such a proboscis (far from lithe, as that epithet goes), evocative of Ithamore's phrase to describe his master, a "Bottle-nos'd knave" (*JM* F2 / 3.3.10).² And Shakespeare's Holofernes the Pedant, in his typical fashion of getting things exactly wrong—"imitarie," or

¹ In the film, Linus Caldwell (Matt Damon), in his disguise as Lenny Pepperidge, adopts an enormous false nose as part of a larger stratagem to gull the deserving by their own greed, which is strangely analogous to Barabas's own methods. Linus uses the phrase in my foretitle in the form of a question to ensure the veracity of the device. For Cheney, see *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 141. To him, Barabas is "a figure for the comedy of Ovidian tragedy," and in his opening soliloquy "a highly successful Ovidian artist: the English Renaissance playwright-prince" (142). For Rowley, see *A Search for Money, Or The Lamentable Complaint for the Losse of the Wandring Knight, Monsieur L'Argent* (London: Joseph Hunt, 1609), 12. For Shakespeare, see *A pleasant conceited comedie called, Loues labors lost* (London: W.W. for Cuthbert Burby, 1598), sig. E2 (4.2.138-41).

² All quotations from Marlowe's play are taken from *The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta* (London: Printed for I. B. for Nicholas Vavasour, 1633). Signature numbers refer to this edition. Act, scene, and line numbers follow the notation in *The Complete Plays*, ed. Mark Thornton Burnett (London: Dent, 1999). For the two other references to Barabas's nose, see E2 / 2.3.178 and G2^v / 4.1.24.

imitatio, as Elizabethan schoolboys were made to understand the concept, could not be more essential to *invenio*—identifies how sixteenth-century readers knew the great Roman poet by both metonymy (the Nose) and synecdoche (that part representing the whole). He was truly “the man” himself, smelling things out, poetically speaking, in this most elemental sense for his monumental compositions: *iamque opus exegi*. I propose to draw these elements together under a related concept known to the principals across a millennium and a half, *aemulatio*, a type of authorial competition with eminent predecessors.³ More specifically, in his humorous amorality, Barabas embodies the Ovidian persona with whom his creator was the most intimately acquainted, the glib, delusional, and self-aggrandizing young lover in the *Amores* whose hundreds of lines he translated into English as the *Elegies*. The ancient author’s role in *The Jew of Malta* is one way in which the nose “plays,” besides its service as a prop for the protagonist’s stereotypical ethnicity. In this case, “imitarie” was everything for Marlowe, as critics too innumerable to count, armed with this very passage from *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, observe that it was for Shakespeare.

Those who write about Marlowe’s Ovidianism have traditionally confined their analysis to the discursive and descriptive passages in *Hero and Leander* that emulate the *Metamorphoses*. Some work variations on Cheney’s storied thesis, that the corpus reveals a truly “counterfeit profession,” a disguised intention to conduct a literary career as a counter-Vergilian, counter-Spenserian poet and playwright, such as Georgia Brown, who holds that this conception of Ovid demands that he be “reinterpreted” as a “catalyst for cultural change in the 1590’s” beyond the political and into the private, erotic realm. With these exceptions, what has curiously received

³ For the standard work on the subject, see George W. Pigman III, “Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 33 (1980): 1-32; and Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

short shrift in criticism is the most pronounced intersection of the two authors, the *Amores* translation in both its forms: the truncated *Certaine of Ovids Elegies* that the Bishops' Ban indexed and burned as part of its attack on satirical publications in 1599, and the relatively complete *All Ovids Elegies*. A small body of work exists about either text, most of which concerns either bibliography or mistakes in rendering the Latin elegiacs accurately into idiomatic English couplets.⁴ I contend, therefore, that those of us studying the subject have in some sense missed the point, and that in this underrated translation's recesses one may find the beginnings of Marlowe's conception of individual voice and rhetorical habits that his various tragic personae tend to exhibit, among them Barabas, and that this process demonstrates one way that he, to invoke Heather James's phrase, "lavishes Ovidian sensuality and significance on his dramatic characters."⁵

It is unsurprising that a young writer such as Marlowe Englished the *Amores* during the great vogue for sonnets and translations of Ovid in the 1580's and 90's, and that in both his

⁴ For the critical tradition that faults the verbal inaccuracies in translation, see Roma Gill, "Snakes Leape by Verse," in *Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Brian Morris (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), 133-50; and "Marlowe and the Art of Translation," in "A Poet and a Filthy Play-maker": *New Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Kenneth Friedenreich, Roma Gill, and Constance Kuriyama (New York: AMS Press, 1988), 327-42. L. C. Martin's *Marlowe's Poems* (London: Methuen, 1931) painstakingly details the errors Marlowe makes. Millar MacLure is more generous: "one who sets himself to translate Latin elegiacs into closed English pentameter couplets is not engaged in the diversion of an idle hour, and Marlowe carries it off with remarkable success." See *The Poems: Christopher Marlowe* (London: Methuen, 1968), xxxii. For the actions of the Bishops in 1599, see Richard A. McCabe, "Elizabethan Satire and the Bishops' Ban of 1599," *Yearbook of English Studies* 11 (1981): 188-93. For Brown, see *Redefining Elizabethan Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 36. Cheney pays great attention to the *Elegies* in an early section of *Counterfeit Profession* (25-68) but makes much different use of this text than I do.

⁵ See "The Poet's Toys: Christopher Marlowe and the Liberties of Erotic Elegy," *Modern Language Review* 67 (2006): 103-27. I would also extend her intriguing argument to the rest of the opus, that the inherent sense in the *Elegies* of poetical compositions as "toyed" demonstrates its author's inheritance of the Ovidian concept of *ioca* (games, play), a subversive habit of mind (124).

rendition and the original it influenced his peers—Shakespeare, Drayton, Daniel—who practiced the form and revered the great Naso, just as they tended to enjoy, as parallel texts, the Latin *Metamorphoses* and Arthur Golding’s metaphrase of it into fourteeners. This set of neoteric elegies comprises the only extended set of meditative and love-oriented poems with a clear narrative framework from antiquity widely known to medieval and early modern readers. The resemblance to a sonnet sequence and the uncanny replication of some of its conventions (e.g., the detailed portrayal of the speaker’s troubled mind and obsessive focus on one woman as addressee or subject, with the unabashed evocation of feeling) in *La vita nuova*, the *Rime sparse*, and their many successors argue that it was foundational for such storied lyric productions.⁶

Yet Marlowe’s translation, a multiplex variation on a sonnet sequence that also established him as an interpreter of one of the three Roman poets, along with Horace and Vergil, who so influenced Elizabethan writers, probably also served as his literal staging ground for the development of the soliloquy, which would reach its apogee in Faustus and Hamlet. His *Elegies* rendition preserves the familiar shifts and turns in voice, mood, and feeling in the *Amores*, their imitation of a mind at work and in conflict with itself. In the process, he prepares himself for his creation of Gaveston, Mephistophiles, and Dido. Ovid’s speaker, who unconsciously epitomizes himself as the *desultor Amoris* (*Am.* 1.3.15), or circus-rider of love jumping from mount to mount, reveals his character and motivations gradually in the larger pattern of the text and more subtly within individual elegies. None of this seems to have been lost on the apprentice playwright and ersatz classicist, who realized this clownish Roman youth as a type of self-deluded gallant whom one might find in *Every Man in His Humour* or *Bartholomew Fair* some

⁶ Gallus (whose works were lost), Propertius, and Tibullus were also known, but not as widely disseminated as Ovid was. For the formative effect of the *Amores* on the concept of the sonnet sequence, see my *Harmful Eloquence: Ovid’s “Amores” from Antiquity to Shakespeare* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 91, 116-19.

years later, just as *The Jew of Malta* may have served as an important precursor for Jonson's understanding of city comedy, as Sarah K. Scott explains.⁷

I

Barabas's Ovidian contours seem to have been recognized as early as the seventeenth century. Whoever wrote the prologues and epilogues printed as prefatory verse to the 1633 quarto, perhaps Thomas Heywood, praises Alleyn for his skill in evoking the very characteristics of Marlowe's antagonistic creation that happen to epitomize the dissembling persona that he cultivated in his *Elegies*. Even forty years after his death, someone wished to foreground these dimensions of the protagonist and his play, which may have reflected contemporary reception: reading, playgoing, and acting.⁸ "The Prologue Spoken at Court" naturally emphasizes Barabas's perfidy as well as the current production's assumed fidelity to the playwright's intentions by use of a simple adverb: "you shall find him still, / In all his projects, a sound Macheuill; / And that's his character" (JM A4). Indeed, the "character" of this Italian stage-devil remains the same, both continually and at the present time, like that of the *desultor* in both nature and duration. Accordingly, in "The Prologue to the Stage, at the Cocke-pit," Alleyn, "peerelesse" as an actor, was a veritable "Proteus for shapes, and Roscius for a tongue, / So could he speak, so vary" (A4^v). If Heywood indeed authored these lines, he would have been well aware of their Ovidian resonance, now linked to Barabas and Machiavel to boot. As a translator of the *Ars amatoria* and probably also the *Remedia Amoris*, he surely knew that Proteus the changeable sea divinity was

⁷ For Scott, see "The Jew of Malta and the Development of City Comedy: 'The Mean Passage of a History,'" in *Christopher Marlowe the Craftsman: Lives, Stage, and Page*, ed. Sarah K. Scott and M. L. Stapleton (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 91-108. For Marlowe's influence on Jonson, see, for example, T. S. Eliot, "Ben Jonson," in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1920), 95-111.

⁸ In the Epistle to Thomas Hammon that begins Q1633, Heywood implies that he wrote them: "As I vsher'd it unto the Court, and presented it to the Cock-pit, with these Prologues and Epilogues here inserted" (A3).

the signature god of the *auctor*, appearing repeatedly in his works as an emblem of the masterfully deceptive lover.⁹ Similarly, the Cockpit Epilogue begins with another image associating Alleyn with the ever-variegating Ovid: “*In Graving, with Pigmalion, to contend . . . Must be disgrace: our actor did not so, / He onely aym’d to go, but not out-goe*” (A4^v). Along with Daedalus, the maker of mazes with their analogues to complex narratives that would later be called romances, Pygmalion is another type of the *artifex* from the *Metamorphoses*, in this case of truly anamorphic artistry in matters devoted to love. So, in a subtle way, the Barabas that seventeenth-century audiences experienced, including Charles and Henrietta Maria, may have possessed a lineage that at least some playgoers recognized as deviously Ovidian. Even the apparently innocuous concluding couplet of the Court Epilogue evades responsibility for the ensuing play by attributing its words to a speaker who is a construction, as opposed to the author himself: “*if aught here offend your eare or sight, / We onely Act, and Speake what others write*” (A4). This is precisely how Ovid distinguishes his personal character from his literary productions in the *Tristia* and defends himself, a practice he began in the concluding elegy of the *Amores* as he disavows the preceding material, which Marlowe renders, “Nor am I by such wanton toyes defamde” (AOE F3^v / 3.14.4).¹⁰ He could be speaking Machevil’s prologue in

⁹ For Proteus, see, for example, *Met.* 8.731, 11.221, 11.255, 13.918. For Heywood’s translations of Ovid’s erotic works, see my *Thomas Heywood’s “Art of Love”: The First Complete English Translation of Ovid’s “Ars Amatoria”* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); and “A Remedy for Heywood?” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 43 (2001): 74-115.

¹⁰ All references to Marlowe’s translation are taken from *All Ovids Elegies: 3 Bookes. By C. M. Elegies by J.D.* (Middlebrough: n.p., n.d.). Signatures refer to this edition. Book, elegy, and line numbers follow the notation first established by C. F. Tucker Brooke, ed., *The Works of Christopher Marlowe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910). Numerous passages in the *Tristia* attempt to be self-exculpatory, e.g., “neque me nuptae didicerunt furta magistro, / quodque parum novit, nemo docere potest. / sic ego delicias et mollia carmina feci, / strinxerit ut nomen fabula nulla meum” (2.347-50) [no brides have learned deceptions through my teaching; nobody can teach that of which he knows too little. I have written trifles and tender verses but in such

which this incarnation of Old Nick relates himself to Barabas: “Grace him as he deserues, / And let him not be entertain’d the worse / Because he fauours me” (*JM B^v* / Pro.33-35).

Twentieth-century critics who sought to justify what they believed to be a radical change in tone in the play after the first two acts never considered that Marlowe’s early work in translation gave him invaluable experience with a text left to posterity so complex in its mood and feeling as the *Amores*. T. S. Eliot, Una Ellis-Fermor, Muriel C. Bradbrook, and Paul H. Kocher explored and debated the notion of the farcical or sought to establish the unity of *The Jew of Malta* in the wake of this generic assumption. How could a dramatic tale that seems to begin as revenge tragedy devolve into a travesty of this form, replete with glibly imagined elements such as the poisoning of nuns, filicide, and falling into a trap of one’s own design?¹¹ My answer is, simply put: read Ovid. The intertwining of savagery and humor in the *Metamorphoses* creates many such tonal shifts. Are readers supposed to empathize with a divine rapist and discount the terror of his victim, who then involuntarily transforms into a tree that is sacred to him? Or a daughter whose lust for her father is expressed in a soliloquy that arouses more than mild amusement, as well as pity and terror? Similarly, the *Amores* that Marlowe renders as the *Elegies* features what could be described as wild mood swings, a kind of poetical bipolarity. For example, angry derision of the eunuch, Bagoas, who guards Corinna’s door from intruders such as the lover (2.3) precedes another in which this speaker admits his general

fashion that no scandal has ever touched my name]. Text and translation: *Tristia [and] Ex Ponto*, tr. Arthur Leslie Wheeler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924, rpt. 1985), 80-81.

¹¹ Respectively: Ellis-Fermor, *Christopher Marlowe* (London: Methuen, 1927), 89-102; Eliot, “Notes on the Blank Verse of Christopher Marlowe,” in *The Sacred Wood*, 86-94; Bradbrook, *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 155-59; Kocher, *Christopher Marlowe: A Study of His Thought, Learning, and Character* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946), 285-89. See also M. M. Mahood, *Poetry and Humanism* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1950), 74-81; and Nan C. Carpenter, “Infinite Riches: A Note on Marlovian Unity,” *Notes and Queries* 194 (1951): 50-52.

perfidy (2.4), followed by an antifeminist screed that criticizes Corinna by suspecting her of the same behavior (2.5), which is in turn followed by a poem devoted to a dead parrot (2.6). And the elegy in which the speaker laments his impotence and even addresses his recalcitrant member as the offending party (3.6), replete with clashing tonal movements, is itself a veritable paradigm of this technique. Barabas's behavior and actions are similarly, and usefully, disjunctive.

Marlowe's lover in the *Elegies* embodies some more recent thematic interpretations of Barabas and his milieu that explain or ameliorate his stereotypical ethnicity by contending that he serves as surrogate for the Elizabethan debate about Machiavellianism, embodies his play's self-conscious theatricality, or represents social anxieties about outsiders in English culture. The deceitful youth's fatuous claim to Corinna that he lives a "spotlesse life" and that "her I loue, change neuer" (*AOE* A3^v / 1.3.13, 15) corresponds in part to Howard S. Babb's thesis that *The Jew of Malta* explores and critiques "policy," the political parallel to the rogue male ethos that Ovid presents. This figure also anticipates the composite Barabas (Machiavel, anti-Semitic devil, morality Vice) that David Bevington and N. W. Bawcutt excavate in their dramaturgical archaeology, since the youth's interrelated adultery and misogyny—e.g., "a wench is a perpetuall euill" (C3 / 2.5.4)—comprising an attack on marriage, invites and promulgates in microcosm such societal disorder as an "underhanded, scheming, anti-Christian villain" may leave in his wake, as Catherine Minishull puts it in her related study. William Hamlin's contention that Barabas is self-deluded about the amorality he seems to champion also describes the shifts and evasions of the boastful *Elegies* persona who suggests that he still hopes for the very fidelity in a woman that his own behavior would appear to discourage: "I haue beene wanton, therefore am perplext, / And with mistrust of the like measure vext" (*A4*^v / 1.4.45-46). In this figure who expresses his alienation as a poet in a culture that values "a rich chuffe" over verse, the making

of which included “Wit was some-times more pretious then gold” (E5^v / 3.7.9, 3), Marlowe anticipates the outsider perspective of his play’s protagonist that James Shapiro interprets as coded social anxiety about the Strangers, the Dutch and Flemish immigrants who flooded the London labor market in the late sixteenth century, or that corresponds to the perpetually alone Barabas whom Ian McAdam argues is a representation of the playwright’s personal angst about his sexuality and what is “sodomitical.”¹² In these several ways, then, Marlowe’s Ovidianism serves as adjunct to three centuries of analysis and reception of what is arguably his most controversial work, and can help expand and enhance our understanding of its critical traditions.

II

What specific ligatures can be detected between play, character, poem, and speaker? Marlowe underscores Barabas’s *Amores*-Ovidian lineage with his modulations in rhetorical patterns and his unbridled delight in deceiving all those around him as he executes his comic revenge. Several of the translated *Elegies* could serve as examples of this developmental stage in the playwright’s conception of dissimulative dramatic speech. Yet the poem labeled “*Quod amet mulieres, Cuiuscunque formae sint*” (That he loves women, no matter what their looks may be)

¹² Babb claims that the play “explores a single set of issues: religious hypocrisy and governmental expedience as they are informed by a pervasive lust for wealth.” See “Policy in Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*,” *English Literary History* 24 (1957): 86; 85-94. Respectively: Bawcutt, “Machiavelli and Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*,” *Renaissance Drama* n.s. 3 (1970): 3-49; Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of the Tudor Period* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 222-23; Minshull, “Marlowe’s ‘Sound Machevill,’” *Renaissance Drama* n.s. 13 (1982): 53; 35-53; Hamlin, “Misbelief, False Profession, and *The Jew of Malta*,” in *Placing the Plays of Christopher Marlowe: Fresh Cultural Contexts*, ed. Sara M. Deats and Robert A. Logan (Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 125-34; McAdam, “Carnal Identity in *The Jew of Malta*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 26 (1996): 46-74; Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 184. On the metatheatrics of the play, see Sara M. Deats and Lisa S. Starks, “‘So neatly plotted, and so well perform’d’: Villain as Playwright in Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*,” *Theatre Journal* 44 (1992): 375-89; Thomas Cartelli, “Endless Play: The False Starts of Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*,” in “*A Poet and a Filthy Play-maker*,” ed. Friedenreich et al., 117-28.

seems particularly suggestive of the origins of his Maltese protagonist and his ilk, though at first glance their similarity is not apparent.¹³ After many instances of what might be called inadvertent autoincrimination, the lover surprises us with an unlikely admission of his own louche character at the midpoint of the work. Although this is knowledge that his audience has possessed for some time, 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 behaiour” (*AOE C2 / 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” (*C2^v / 2.4.17-18*). Barabas shows a similarly bemused 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 some of his deeds against womankind by blaming their allegedly deceitful nature, his dramatic successor faults the culture that oppresses him, albeit not without reason, which accounts in some respects 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 E2 / 2.3.173-76*)

¹³ This elegy, a rendition of *Amores* 2.4., shows up both in the truncated and banned *Certaine of Ovids Elegies* (F3-F3^v) as well as *All Ovids Elegies* (C2-C2^v), which may attest to its popularity. Another connection between the poem and the play: one of Barabas’s devices, when he approaches Ithamore and Bellamira to find out if they mean to betray him, “*Enter Barabas with a Lute, disguis’d*” (*JM H4 / 4.4.sd34*), may have taken its genesis from one of the lover’s examples of women who arouse him: “Or if one touch the Lute with arte and cunning / Who wold not loue those hands for their swift running?” (*AOE C2^v / 27-28*). Marlowe’s protagonist touches the instrument with enough art and cunning to deceive his enemies. The lover disguises his love for the female lutanist, which is certainly feigned.

This obsessive villainy becomes a kind of mindless compulsion, similar to the youth in the *Elegies* and his amoral skirt-chasing. “I loathe, yet after that I loathe, I runne” and “I cannot rule my selfe, but where loue please” (*AOE C2 / 2.4.5, 7*) correspond to Barabas’s increasingly unhinged hatred and mindless greed, which both fuel the momentum that leads him to the scaffold by which he tumbles into the boiling cauldron. The bravura passage that features the frenetic duet with Abigail in which he assures her that his cursing of her for taking her vows are mere dissembling, replete with asides about where to find the riches that Ferneze and his minions have not already requisitioned (*JM D / 1.2.355-65*), proves prophetic and ironic, given her subsequent demise and his consistent amorality:

Seduced Daughter, *Goe forget not.* *Aside to her.* (*D / 359*)

Running after what one loathes in the manner of the Ovidian youth is the nonpareil of perversity, a tendency that Marlowe illustrates by linking such disparate elements in the same line. The daughter’s fate suggests that her father lies to her here as well, though she obeys him and does not forget, paragon of filial duty as she is, unaware that he has in a sense seduced her and cares for nothing but money. For both Barabas and the lover, malevolence and a lack of self-control strengthen and even sustain one another. The two of them also demonstrate an awareness of, and curious respect for, conventional morality by their happy violation of it. They “deepely can dissemble” (*AOE C2 / 16*). Similarly, Abigail hears from her father:

as good dissemble that thou neuer mean’st

As first meane truth, and then dissemble it;

A counterfet profession is better

Than vnseene hypocrisie. (*JM C4 / 1.2.292-95*)

In the ocean of generally warped logic that is *The Jew of Malta*, this makes sense. It is better to be forthright about one's own corruption—even to embrace it—than attempting to fool oneself and others that one is not innately depraved. As Ithamore later warns Bellamira about his master, “The meaning has a meaning” (I / 4.4.91), unaware, naturally, that this phrase epitomizes her blandishments to him as well as Barabas's exquisite dissembling. In the same spirit, *Elegies* 2.4 concludes with an epithet that describes its speaker perfectly: “Nay what is she that any *Roman* loues / But my ambitious ranging minde approues” (AOE C2^v / 47-48). Not only does it recall Harry Levin's venerable conception of the overreacher for Marlowe's dramatic protagonists and include the lover in their notorious company, but it is how his usurer would describe himself if he were given to such interiority and self-reflection as his amorous predecessor, to his credit, demonstrates.¹⁴

At times, in spite of their apparent disparity, *The Jew of Malta* and the *Elegies* echo within each other's foundational chambers, though the erotic element does not seem as pronounced in the play as it does in Marlowe's other works. Yet there are moments. When Lodowick objects to a certain pair of wandering eyes, “Good *Barabas* glance not at our holy Nuns,” the drolly ironic reply, considering its underlying psychopathic intent, resonates in the amorous fashion as well: “No, but I doe it through a burning zeale” (*JM* D4^v / 2.3.87-88). Barabas thinks of the novices not only as revenge fodder but as sexual beings and looks at them this way so obviously that even this exceedingly doltish and unobservant scion of a governor notices. The little referential forays into fornication continue, Ithamore memorably gulled by Bellamira, and culminate in Barabas's famous declaration about the dead wench in another

¹⁴ Levin thinks one should accept the play “as an artistic whole, noting its ambiguities and tensions,” and relates Barabas to other overreachers in Marlowe, similarly undone by their own schemes. See *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 75.

country—one that the young Eliot so cherished that he used it as the epigraph for the allusively titled “Portrait of a Lady” in his first poetical collection (1917).¹⁵ Mathias’s risible appraisal of Abigail sounds like something the *desultor Amoris* would say if he lived in medieval or early modern England and his Corinna were the object of desire in a work informed by Ovidian *fin’ Amors*:

Tut, she were fitter for a tale of loue
 Than to be tired out with Orisons:
 And better would she farre become a bed,
 Embraced in a friendly louers armes,
 Then rise at midnight to a solemne masse. (*JM D*^v / 1.2.369-73)

Predictable puns abound (“fit,” “tale,” “tired out,” “rise”) that can be found almost anywhere in the *Elegies*, and it is not difficult to detect a palimpsest of *fabliau* with an *Amores* heritage. This novice, in the libertine’s estimation, would indeed be put to better use as what we would call a sexual object, just as his ancient counterpart remarks about all women, young and old: “No where can they be taught but in the bed” (*AOE C4* / 2.5.61). Conversely, though the young swain of the *Elegies* agonizes continually over his married lady and her friends and learns, the hard way, how truly unimportant he is to them, he frets almost as much about matters fiduciary. One elegy, the very poem that follows the anguished complaint about his untimely flaccidity in the lists with Corinna (3.6 and 3.7), is all about money and sounds like something Barabas might utter if he spoke in couplets and possessed a social conscience:

Gold from the earth in steade of fruits we pluck,
 Souldiours by bloud to be inricht haue lucke.

¹⁵ See *Prufrock and Other Observations* (London: Complete Press, 1917), 17.

Courts shut the poore out; wealth giues estimation,

Thence growes the Iudge, and knight of reputation. (*AOE* E6 / 3.7. 53-56)

The speaker only launches into this apparent jeremiad against those who would oppress the downtrodden for the sake of seeming to generalize beyond his own selfish concerns, which always come first. He mentions “Souldiours” because Corinna took one of this newly-moneyed class for her latest lover as a replacement for him, perhaps because of his bedroom dysfunction. He invokes “the poore” because, as the poem explains at length, poets such as himself tend not to be rewarded with gold for their considerable efforts. This Sulmonian parvenu in his gate-crashing of patrician Roman society could surely relate to Barabas’s fifth observation in his opening soliloquy: “The needy groome that neuer fingred groat, / Would make a miracle of thus much coyne” (*B^v* / 1.1.12-13). Both Marlovian overreachers end up alone, to some extent because of both money and sex, and tumble into boiling cauldrons of their own making. Though one’s demise is literal and the other’s merely figurative, it is hard to say which one of them suffers more, or longer.

III

Though *The Jew of Malta* allegedly bifurcates itself between the tragic and the farcical after Act 2, a careful reading suggests that the Barabas who establishes his character and motives in the play’s first scene never really changes except to become even more himself, which the rest of the text bears out. I contend that Marlowe’s evocation of the part of his protagonist’s literary ancestry rooted in the classical past remains similarly consistent. An apparent enjoyment of wrongdoing that masks a deep sense of alienation, a conflict that necessitates a duplicity so indelible that even his amorality is not quite as pronounced as he boasts, also describes the Ovidian lover in the *Elegies*. Their rapaciousness, one for women and one for money, is of a

piece. That both figures as a result of these characteristics tend to make statements that redound ironically upon them would appear almost predictable. Let us see how Marlowe's translation helps connect, if not exactly reconcile, the two halves of his play.

Barabas's comic relish of his own misdeeds constitutes another Ovidian feature of his dramatic personality that the 1633 quarto emphasizes by the many asides included in the text, some quite nuanced, providing direction to any actor, perhaps a feature preserved from Marlowe's own time for the audiences at the Cockpit and at court.¹⁶ The character pitches most of these stagey side-comments at the audience for what he seems to think is its benefit so that it can commiserate or even collude with him, as Shakespeare's Richard Crookback and Iago will later. 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 work as he translated. Barabas enjoys sounding patriotic 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 B3^v* / 1.1.149-52). Sometimes, he lets us know with just one word that he not only lies but enjoys 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" (*B4* / 1.1.171-72). The faithless lover of the *Elegies*, in what constitutes a somewhat gigantic aside, seems greatly pleased with himself as he reveals that his declaration to Corinna at the beginning of our time with him is simply balderdash: "Accept him that will loue with spotlesse truth" (*AOE A3^v* / 1.3.6). He is not merely amoral but self-consciously and joyously immoral:

¹⁶ Virtually all the asides in Q1633 are in the margins, in accordance with seventeenth-century printing house practice. For more analysis of these, see Scott, "*The Jew of Malta* and the Development of City Comedy," 100.

Let one wench cloy me with sweete loues delight

If one can doote, if not, two euery 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. (C7 / 2.10.21-26)

The moneylender's corrosive cynicism about the culture that tolerates him in spite of its hatred of and distrust for him has its analogue in the lover's similar, almost despairing misogyny. Whatever Roman women or the good citizens of Malta "most desire," both of Marlowe's speakers plan to provide it in ways that their victims could not possibly have foretold. That this tendency in Barabas only accelerates as he accomplishes his schemes, chuckling bitterly away, also has its analogue in the *Elegies*. To choose lines or passages from the second half of the play to illustrate the point is not a difficult prospect, only which would be most appropriate. "How sweet the Bels ring, now the Nuns are dead" (*JM G2 / 4.1.2*) seems best, since it adds pleasure to his Ovidian lustful fire, in this case, for his revenge. The message is: admire me.

This enthusiastic enjoyment of wrongdoing for its own sake arises from a sense of alienation from surroundings and culture that both Barabas and the Ovidian lover use to justify more perfidy. Why should the Maltese not be victimized by their own greed? "Who hateth me but for my happinesse? / Or who is honour'd now but for his wealth?" (*JM B3 / 1.1.111-12*). Since this phrase occurs in the moneylender's first speech, it appears to function, like so much else in this soliloquy, as an expression of theme. The young man in the *Elegies* expresses a similarly bitter sense of distance from the society that rejects him, but for the opposite reason from the protagonist he precedes. He has no money: "See a rich chuffe whose wounds great

wealth inferr'd / For bloudshed k[ni]ghted, before me preferr'd" (*AOE* E5^v / 3.7.9-10). This is how he rationalizes his faithlessness to Corinna, which he tells her plainly: "Ask'st why I chaunge? because thou crau'st reward: / This cause hath thee from pleasing me debard" (B2^v / 1.10.11-12). Why should he be faithful to someone who is concerned only with "reward," or capital? Surely she should be grateful that one of such a promising poetical bent wishes to make love to her. At the same time, as honest with himself about his own dishonesty as Barabas is, the youth knows that the women he pursues will lie to him, as well: "But me let crafty damsells words deceiue, / Great ioyes by hope I inly shall conceiue" (C6^v / 2.9.43-44). Such cynicism would have been a useful tonic for Ithamore with Bellamira. The lover could probably not express his estrangement and isolation any more clearly than "Nothing I loue, that at all times auailles me" (D5 / 2.19.8). Barabas loves nothing also, which sustains him. He despises his fellow members of his own ethnic group as they bend to the Christians: "See the simplicitie of these base slaues, / Who for the villaines haue no wit themselues" (*JM* C3 / 1.2.218-19). That his enemies have tried to obliterate him is no cause for despair or suicide: "No, I will liue; nor loath I this my life"; "I'le rouse my senses, and awake my selfe" (C4 / 1.2.267, 271). The speech that has offended so many readers and theatergoers, beginning "We Iewes can fawn like Spaniels when we please" (D4 / 2.3.20-29), is meant to express precisely such self-reliance as a result of the profound alienation, surely a survival instinct, that its speaker feels. As he fantasizes how his enemies might "starue vpon a stall," he relishes the idea of desecrating the "offring-Bason" that his own congregation would pass around in a humanitarian gesture: "Euen for charity I may spit intoo't." There is no sense of *caritas* for the speaker of the *Elegies*, either.

This conflict for the young lover and Barabas—socio-cultural estrangement in turbulent tandem with bravado *cum* braggadocio—forms a paradigm of duality that determines their

dominant characteristic absolutely, duplicity. Why should the moneylender not ask two questions such as these in his first scene? “now how stands the wind? / Into what corner peeres my Halcions bill?” (*JM* B2 / 1.1.38-39). Neither seems entirely rhetorical. His mention of the “bill” may be yet another example of how the nose (or the Nose) plays, and his utterance evokes a lack of free will as well as its operation. He may spy into any corner he likes, yet the wind determines his direction of inquiry as he fulfills his role as halcyon, the calm associated with the mythical bird another drolly ironic authorial touch, a misnomer for one of such volatility.¹⁷ This speaker would call down confusion on one and all, ascertaining first that his interests are protected:

How ere the world goe, I’le make sure for one,

And seeke in time to intercept the worst,

Warily garding that which I ha got.

Ego mihimet sum semper proximus.

Why let ’em enter, let ’em take the Towne. (*B4* / 1.1.185-89)

Even more than everyone else, he is indeed always nearest to himself, a phrase that the playwright happily borrows from Terence and that in turn Jonson will use many years later to similarly felicitous effect.¹⁸ If Geoffrey Whitney would have taken this as an apothegm from

¹⁷ The conventional Latin motto for the halcyon (kingfisher) was “Ex pace ubertas” [prosperity is the result of peace]. Andrea Alciati (also Alciato) provides the standard emblem in *Livret des Emblemes* (Paris: Chrestien Wechel, 1536), C8^v.

¹⁸ The original source of this information is Lane Cooper, review of *The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy*, by Clarence Valentine Boyer, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 15 (1916): 451n10; 443-51. See also Morris P. Tilley, “Proverbs and Proverbial Allusions in Marlowe,” *Modern Language Notes* 50 (1935): 351; 347-55. Both cite the same two passages from Jonson, *Cynthia’s Revels* (5.7.29): “as every one is neerest to himselfe”; and *Sejanus* (4.2.9-10): “the thoughts borne nearest / Unto our selves, move swiftest still, and dearest.” Tilley later identifies the locus classicus in Terence, *Andria* (635) 4.1.11: “heu, proximus sum egomet

which to create a full-fledged emblem in his great work of that name, published the year before *Tamburlaine* was probably performed, the engraving may have looked something like Ovid's *desultor Amoris*, whose aggressive duality, which the precocious Marlowe expertly preserves in his translation, foretells Barabas's dissembling and amoral bifurcation.¹⁹ Virtually every elegy contains some instance of similar duplicity, happily and brazenly rationalized, but two examples deserve special mention. In one poem early in the first book, the youth, addressing Corinna, proposes to dally with her in front of her unsuspecting husband, using secret signs such as surreptitious foot contact and writing cryptic messages on the table in wine. Should she ignore him or attend to her *vir* in a way that violates the lover's sense of entitlement, he warns, "If thou giuest kisses, I shall all disclose, / Say they are mine, and hands on thee impose" (AOE A4^v / 1.4.39-40). Similarly, in the next book of the *Elegies*, he denies that he is sleeping with her maid and hairdresser, Cypassis: "My selfe vnguilty of this crime I knowe" (C5^v / 2.7.28). Yet no sooner is this last line of that poem delivered than the next elegy immediately establishes that this denial is a lie, since he threatens the *ancilla* with the same exposure with which he attempted to intimidate her mistress: "If thou deniest foole, Ile our deeds expresse, / And as a traitour mine owne fault confesse" (C6 / 2.8.25-26). He will betray those women who do not give themselves to him exclusively to those who can do them the most harm. He too is always nearest to himself—close enough, it seems, so that he is unaware of his own repellent nature. Similarly, the

mihi." [alas, I am nearest to myself indeed]. See *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), N57.

¹⁹ *A Choice of Emblemes and Other Devises* (Leiden: Christopher Plantyn, 1586). Whitney's emblem of the fox on ice, one who outsmarts himself, might be most apposite: "Nullus dolus contra casum." [no craft against chance] "this foxe, on Ice: / Doth shewe, no subtill crafte will serue, / When Chaunce doth throwe the dice" (22). *Tamburlaine* has often been dated from the Philip Gawdy letter, dated 16 November 1587, about a terrible accident in what seems to have been a performance of that play. See E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), 2:135.

twofaced Barabas does not always seem to be aware that some of his most important utterances in the rest of the play are often inherently depraved in their dualism, such as his imperative to the uncomprehending Abigail about Lodowick: “*Dissemble, sweare, protest, vow to loue him*” (*JM E2^v / 2.3.234*); his directive to himself on that same swain and Ithamore: “like a cunning spirit feigne some lye, / Till I haue set ’em both at enmitie” (*F / 388-89*); and his admission to the audience, worthy of the Machiavel of the play’s prologue, about seeming to follow both the Turks and the Maltese: “Thus loving neither, will I liue with both, / Making a profit of my policie; / And he from whom my most aduantage comes, / Shall be my friend” (*I4 / 5.2.111-14*). One could not get much nearer to oneself, a horrifying perspective in this case, equivalent to his description of Lodowick: “the slaue looks like a hogs cheek new sindg’d” (*D4 / 2.3.42-43*).

Both characters, poetical and dramatic, cherish their amorality that arises from their duplicity, puffed up with something like pride at its efficacy. Yet each betrays a conventionally moral sensibility. Barabas berates his thieving Christian neighbors for the immorality that underlies what he considers to be the tenets of a misguided, intolerant religion: “bring you Scripture to confirm your wrongs? / Preach me not out of my possessions. / Some Iewes are wicked, as all Christians are” (*JM C^v / 1.2.114-16*). The imperative that begins the second line mimetically alliterates with the final noun and underscores what their reasons for sermonizing truly are. He prepares us for this specific charge by his generalization in the previous scene’s opening soliloquy: “I can see no fruits in all their faith, / But malice, falshood, and excessive pride.” The mention of these stock vices, straight from Central Casting, at least for a morality play, implies that he knows perfectly well what such sins are, and that since his enemies have committed them, he is conscious that a state of grace exists for those who have not. Another implication of this statement is that he himself has lived, or has attempted to live, in such a state.

In the same vein, “Happily some haplesse man hath conscience, / And for his conscience liues in beggery” (*JM B3* / 1.1.115-16, 118-19), clearly shows an understanding of what conscience is. In deriding the pious ascetics as fools, the sheer heat and emotion of his statement may signify that he has a touch of guilt for the less fortunate who do not know the joys of counting infinite riches in a little room. He has possessed, at least at one time, a sense of *fas* and *nefas*. He can distinguish between degrees of offense in ways that are not entirely advantageous to him. Covetousness (his honestly sinful impetus for acquiring his fortune) shrinks away from outright larceny (the monstrously hypocritical Maltese appropriation of his wealth): “take not from me then, / For that is theft; and if you rob me thus, / I must be forc’d to steale and compasse more” (*C2* / 1.2.128-30). The young lover of the *Elegies* engages in similar logical contortions strangely dependent on an innate moral sense, even as his true motive is to obscure his own faithlessness. Annoyed with Corinna’s “rash accusing” and “vaine belief” that he wants to fornicate with her hairdresser (which he does, wishes on the way proving effects), he says, impatiently, “Would I were culpable of some offence, / They that deserue paine, beare’t with patience” (*AOE* 2.7.13, 11-12). He understands—and respects—the general concept of “offence” well enough to articulate an idea of guilt, that one can “deserue paine” and endure it according to a pseudo-Protestant ideal. This special knowledge, the idea of culpability, also leads him to assert his incapability to commit a crime such as adultery, as he assures the very husband he intends to cuckold in spite of his alertness to this unthinkable possibility: “Nor canst by watching keepe her minde from sinne. / All being shut out, th’adulterer is within” (*AOE E^v* / 3.4.7-8). It is as if the amorous Ovidian gallant and Barabas lament that they live in a world in which such corruption compels them to be as they are, and to do as they may. As Marlowe’s moneylender retorts to Ferneze’s assertion that he has had “nought but right,” anticipating Bassanio’s later retort to

Shylock: “Your extreme right does me exceeding wrong” (*JM C2* / 1.2.155-56). “It’s no sinne to deceiue a Christian” (*E4* / 2.3.314) indeed, at least one such as this.²⁰

Yet neither figure could be considered a moralist in his own right and thereby a proto-Jonsonian satiric scourge who serves as authorial surrogate. Both are too sociopathic for this, and besides, their statements that resemble normative prescriptions redound most ironically against them, perhaps the deepest bond they share. Much of what they say could be used as evidence to convict them—in ways that even they could understand. The lover explains that women’s incorrigibility means, “No where can they be taught but in the bed” (*AOE C4* / 2.5.61), though his lack of success in this area suggests that his erotic pedagogy has failed both them and him, and that he lacks the proper knowledge to engage in teaching or fornicating because of his own utter imperviousness to learning from experience or observation. He boasts in each book of the *Elegies* of his success with the woman most frequently named therein, but then Ovid-Marlowe immediately discredits him. “Conquer’d *Corinna* in my bosome layes” (*C8^v* / 2.12.2) results, it seems, in a pregnancy so untimely and unwanted that “rashly her wombes burthen she casts out” (*D* / 2.13.1), an immediate self-inflicted abortion. Later, the speaker’s insolent assertion to her husband, “stolne pleasure is sweet play” (*E2* / 3.4.31), finds its counterpoint in his own inability to perform and enjoy either, “Yet could I not cast anckor where I meant” (*E4* / 3.6.6). His final comeuppance is to discover himself in the same position as the man he has so enjoyed cuckolding, put aside for another, asking *Corinna* as the scorned husband must have, “canst thou him in thy white armes embrace?” (*E5^v* / 3.7.11). Yes, she can.

If this young lover could have starred in his very own theatrical entertainment, he may have sounded just as *Barabas* does, whose statements Marlowe just as relentlessly undermines.

²⁰ “To do a great right, do a little wrong” (*The Merchant of Venice* 4.1.215).

He says to himself: “search this secret out. / Summon thy senses, call thy wits togethre: / These silly men mistake the matter cleane” (*JM* B4 / 1.1.176-78). Yet he too is silly, and his mistakes guarantee he will be clean found out. Though he professes his love for Abigail, his classical analogy meant to express this affection foretells her fate, almost risibly: “one sole Daughter, whom I hold as deare / As *Agamemnon* did his *Iphigen*” (B3^v / 1.1.136-37). It can at least be said of the Greek epic hero that he was able to justify this terrible sacrifice as an act unwillingly undertaken for the common good, and then had the decency to perish at the hands of his own adulterous wife as she accomplished her revenge. None of these extenuating factors can be applied to Barabas. “*Enter with a Hammar aboue, very busie*” (K / 5.4.sd), Marlowe’s hilarious stage direction that precedes his protagonist’s great downfall, proves to be symbolic as well as literal, with its image of his feverish and enthusiastic construction of his own ruin even as he believes he builds a snare for someone else. His statement to the carpenters a few lines later, continuing the metaphor of building, is truly its own trap door that leads to an extremity of heat pinching him with intolerable pangs: “Leaue nothing loose, all leueld to my mind. / Why now I see that you haue Art indeed” (K / 5.4.3-4).

Art, indeed. Marlowe employs the term, analogous to the *ars* of the *magister*—skill, craft, and guile—over fifty times in the canon, including the *Elegies*, embodied by the approving description of Pygmalion in the *Metamorphoses*, “ars adeo latet arte sua” (10.252) [So did his art conceal his art], which in turn epitomizes the technique of both poets.²¹ Therefore, one part of Brown’s thesis about Ovid as catalyst for change in Elizabethan literary culture cited at the outset, that writers such as Shakespeare and Lodge “repeatedly invoked” Ovid “to provide the

²¹ See Charles Crawford, *The Marlowe Concordance*, 3 vols. (Louvain: Uystpruyst, 1911-13), 1:70. Text and translation, *Metamorphoses*, tr. Frank Justus Miller, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 2: 82-83.

classical sanction for self-proclaimed modernity,” is not true of Marlowe.²² He did not need to refer explicitly to his classical predecessor since he was reanimating him instead in the theater and on the page, and sometimes, as in our present example, in both places at once, demonstrating how completely Naso was the Man. For instance, the passage from *The Jew of Malta* that so amused the youthful Eliot has a certain Ovidian resonance:

Bernadine: Thou has committed—

Barabas. Fornication? but that was in another Country:

And besides, the Wench is dead. (G2^v / 4.1.43-45)

This demonstrates the same verbal facility that the *desultor Amoris* frequently shows, as well as the tendency that Ovid himself reveals in the voice of his exile poetry to make excuses for his past behavior, as one whose sins are very much in the past. Yet Barabas’s comment to Ithamore might as well have been made to the speaker in the *Elegies*: “make account of me / As of thy fellow; we are villaines both” (E2^v / 2.3.218-20). And in a complementary fashion, the Elizabethan circus-rider of love could have returned the compliment to his canonical brother boiling away in a pot in Malta. The Nose plays for both.

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²² *Redefining Elizabethan Literature*, 36.