

*Ovid's odi et amo and its presence in the poetry of Ausiàs March**

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In 1985 Lola Badia published an important article, in which she reassessed the presence of Ovid in the poetry of Ausiàs March: despite the admitted difficulty in finding conclusive parallels, Badia concluded that Ovidian echoes were too tantalizing to be dismissed.¹ More recently, Jaume Torró has contributed two more articles on the topic. For him, Ausiàs March's self-presentation as a master of love cannot be understood without reference to Ovid's pose as a *praeceptor amoris* (particularly in *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris*).² Resuming Badia's insight, Torró has also connected March's verse with Ovid's poetry of exile.³ I should like to examine a further aspect of this Ovidian connection: the *odi et amo* theme and its presence in March's poems 116 and 119.

The antithesis 'odi et amo' opens the most celebrated epigram by Catullus (85.1). In other poems related to 85 he reflected on the effect of Lesbia's infidelity, and twice concluded (72.5–8, 75.3–4) that he was both compelled to keep loving her (the Latin verb is 'amare') and stop liking her (now the phrase is 'bene uelle'). In 72.5–8 he states:

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¹ Lola Badia, 'El Ovidio exiliado en Ausiàs March', in *Estudios románicos dedicados al prof. Andrés Soria Ortega* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1985), I, pp. 267–72. A shorter and revised version of this article was later included in Lola Badia, *Tradició i modernitat als segles XIV i XV: estudis de cultura literària i lectures d'Ausiàs March* (València & Barcelona: Institut Universitari de Filologia Valenciana & Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1993), pp. 197–200.

² Jaume Torró, 'Ausiàs March no va viure en temps d'Ovidi', in *Estudis de Filologia Catalana: dotze anys de l'Institut de Llengua i Cultura Catalanes, secció Francesc Eiximenis*, ed. Pep Valsalobre & August Rafanell (Barcelona: Universitat de Girona & Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1999), pp. 175–99.

³ Jaume Torró, 'Pròlegs al cançoner d'Ausiàs March: Ovidi exiliat', in *Actes del XIIIè Col·loqui Internacional de Llengua i Literatura Catalanes (Universitat de Girona, 9–12 de setembre de 2003)*, ed. Sadurní Martí, Miriam Cabré, Francesc Feliu, Narcís Iglesias & David Prats (Barcelona: AILLC & Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, in press), III.

Nunc te cognoui; quare etsi impensius uror,
multo mi tamen es vilior et levior.
Qui potis est? inquis. Quod amantem iniuria talis
cogit amare magis, sed bene velle minus.⁴

Ovid expanded on such a contradiction in a double elegy (*Amores*, bk III, 11a–b) addressed to another promiscuous woman (Corinna, presumably).

In 11a Ovid tells that he has endured much and for a long time ('*Multa diuque tuli*'), and that he now wishes to withdraw from base love ('*turpis amor*').⁵ He then recalls her infidelity, particularly the occasion in which he remained locked out from her rooms, like a slave, while knowing that she was inside embracing God knows who; moreover, he witnessed her lover coming out exhausted because of their sexual exertions, and, for further humiliation, on leaving the lover saw the poet as well (ll. 9–15).⁶ To this version of the *exclusus amator* elegiac topos, Ovid adds Corinna's many devious ways: her lies, her public flirting, her pretending that she was ill (ll. 21–26). Finally, the poet asserts his decision to depart from her: '*quaere alium pro me qui uelit ista pati*' ('seek another in my stead who can submit to them', l. 28), '*non ego sum stultus, ut ante fui*' ('I am not now the fool I was!', l. 32).

⁴ *Carmina*, ed. Henricus Bardon (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1973). R.O.A.M. Lyne, *The Latin Love Poets: From Catullus to Horace* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 39, renders the passage thus: 'Now I know you. Wherefore, although I burn more fiercely, | you are much cheaper, more paltry in my estimation. | 'How can that be?', you say. Because such injustice | compels a lover to love more, to feel the warmth of true affection less.'

⁵ I follow E. J. Kenney's edition of *Amores* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961): '*Multa diuque tuli; uitiis patientia uicta est: | cede fatigato pectore, turpis amor.*' (ll. 1–2) [...] '*perfer et obdura: dolor hic tibi proderit olim: | saepe tulit lassus sucus amarus opem.*' (ll. 7–8) ('Much have I endured and for a long time; my [*cor.* your] wrongs have overcome my patience. Withdraw from my tired-out breast, base love! [...] Persist, and endure! this smart will some day bring thee good; oft has bitter potion brought help to the languishing'; trans. Grant Showerman & G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, 41).

⁶ '*ergo ego sustinui, foribus tam saepe repulsus, | ingenuum dura ponere corpus humo? | ergo ego nesciocui, quem tu complexa tenebas, | excubui clausam seruus ut ante domum? | uidi, cum foribus lassus prodiret amator | inualidum referens emeritumque latus; | hoc tamen est leuius quam quod sum uisus ab illo: | eueniat nostris hostibus ille pudor.*' (ll. 9–16) ('Can it be I have endured it—to be so oft repulsed from your doors, and to lay my body down, a free born man, on the hard ground? Can it be that, for some no one you held in your embrace, I have lain, like a slave keeping vigil, before your tight-closed home? I have seen when the lover came forth from your doors fatigued, with frame exhausted and weak from love's campaign; yet this is a slighter thing than being seen by him—may shame like that befall my enemies!'; trans. Showerman & Goold).

In post-Troubadour poetry this piece would have been the equivalent of a *maldit*, or rather a *comiat-maldit* ('farewell maledictory poem'), that is, the genre in which the poet found room to denounce the wrongs inflicted upon him by some woman to whom he had formerly been attached.⁷ Ferocious attacks were in order, as in March's poem 42, where Na Montboí is exposed as a whore for having cheaply sold her 'cors lleig' to a short-sighted merchant, amongst others, and is cruelly abused on account of her 'pèls fora mida' ('enormous hairs').⁸ In other words, the promiscuous lady could also figure in courtly poetry, though in the context of a merciless, often misogynous satire, which had little to do with Ovid's verse. To him the beloved is still desirable, as we will see in the second part of his elegy (11b) and as we already know from Catullus' distinction between desire ('amare') and true affection ('bene uelle'). Ovid focuses on the detail of her tricks rather than on verbal abuse, and it is this narrative by a jealous lover what may have made Ovid's double elegy akin to medieval prose sentimental fiction.

In this realm of tragic love, we would indeed find a woman who betrays her lover in the fashion of, say, Lesbia or Corinna, as it has been pointed out remarking on Joan Roís de Corella's *Tragèdia de Caldesa* (1458).⁹ Such insight can be substantiated if we keep in mind Ovid's depiction of the *exclusus amator*, which seems to inspire some elements of Corella's narrative. The first-person narrator tells us of a 'crim de tant sobreabundant lletgea' ('crime of immeasurable baseness', ll. 15–16).¹⁰ He went to pay a visit to his beloved and she prayed him to wait in a room, which she did not forget to

⁷ For a collection of *maldits*, see Robert Archer & Isabel de Riquer, *Contra las mujeres: poemas medievales de escarnio y vituperio* (Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1998).

⁸ Ausiàs March, *Poesies*, ed. Pere Bohigas, revised by Amadeu-J. Soberanas & Noemí Espinàs, *Els Nostres Clàssics*, B19 (Barcelona: Barcino, 2000), pp. 163–64.

⁹ Badia, *Tradició*, pp. 78–79.

¹⁰ I quote from the critical edition by Francisco Rico, 'Imágenes del Prerrenacimiento español: Joan Roís de Corella y la *Tragèdia de Caldesa*', in *Estudios de literatura española y francesa, siglos XVI y XVII: homenaje a Horst Baader*, ed. Frauke Gewecke (Frankfurt: Klaus Dieter Vervueg, 1984), pp. 15–27. For a commentary on Corella's piece, see also Lola Badia, *De Bernat Metge a Joan Roís de Corella: estudis sobre la cultura literària de la tardor medieval catalana* (Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1988), pp. 145–80; Badia, *Tradició*, pp. 73–91; and Jaume Turró, 'El mite de Caldesa: Corella al *Jardinet d'orats*', *Atalaya*, 7 (1996), 103–16.

lock. He spent there most of the day up to the moment when, through a small window looking onto the yard, he noticed a keeper who was telling whoever asked for the lady (customers, presumably) that she was fully busy. At sunset Corella saw Caldesa leaving her rooms and embracing the lover who had been inside all along; to crown it all, the narrator witnessed, and even heard, the lovers' farewell kissing and her last words ('Adéu sies, manyeta!'), which convey a vulgar intimacy that suits such a relationship with a rather common man.¹¹ Whereas Ovid sees Corinna's lover fatigued, Corella sees Caldesa with a blushing, hot face that gave away the pleasurable battle in which they had been engaged.¹²

To find stimuli from Ovid in sentimental fiction does not come as a surprise, let alone in the case of Corella, who was perhaps the most Latinate of all fifteenth-century writers in Catalan. Yet it is worth stressing that the plot of Corella's *Tragèdia* goes beyond the mere betrayal by a medieval *demi-mondaine* of sorts. After she has apologized in some self-deprecating and otherwise magnificent lines, Corella is left struggling with conflicting thoughts ('los contrasts que ma dolorosa pensa combatien'), to the extent that he would only be content were it possible to divide Caldesa in two halves: her intellect for him, her promiscuous will for the nasty lover —*bene uelle* for him, *amare* for the other, to rephrase it in Catullian words.¹³ Now we have the theme

¹¹ 'los meus plorosos ulls mereixqueren veure la tant estimada donzella, que, partint-se de una cambra, gest, paraules, abraçar, ab altres mostres de amor extrema, de honestat enemigues, a un enamorat presentà la figura [...] E, per cas de més adverssa fortuna mia, lo darrer comiat al terme de ma hoÿda arribà: 'Adéu sies, manyeta!', tancant la darrera síl·laba un desonest besar' ('my tearfilled eyes were [at last] vouchsafed a glimpse of my beloved girl as she was leaving her chamber, and with looks, expressions, embraces, and other displays of extreme affection, which are incompatible with decorum, took her leave of an admirer [...] And to compound my misfortune, my ears caught her parting words: 'So long, sweetheart!', cut short by a lewd kiss', ll. 60-68). Later on, Corella states that the lover was 'en estrem no conforme al delicament de tan tendra donzella' ('was utterly unfit for such a refined and exquisite young lady', ll. 83-84).

¹² 'Ab la freda aygua assajà apartar de la sua afable cara la color e calor que en la no sangonosa, mas plaent batalla de Venus pres havia' ('With cold water she tried to dampen dawn the flush and the warmth with which that pleasurable, rather than bloody, engagement on the battlefield of Venus had suffused her adorable face', ll. 76-78).

¹³ 'O, quant estimara beure de l'aygua del riu Letes [...] E fóra més alegre, aquesta bella senyora en parts de singular partida, la sua gentil persona ab tan subtil enteniment fos la part mia, e la sua falla e moble

complete: betrayal and inner struggle. To see it fully developed we must consider the second part of Ovid's piece. Its reflection in the poetry of Ausiàs March may prove that he took to the root of the Latin theme.

At first glance 11b would seem a recantation of 11a. In fact, it unfolds a nuanced reaction to Corinna's both deceitful and seductive ways. For ease of reference, I reproduce it in full from Kenney's edition (my italics):

LVCTANTVR pectusque leue *in contraria* tendunt
hac *amor*, hac *odium*; sed, puto, uincit amor.
odero, si potero; si non, *inuitus amabo*: 35
nec iuga taurus amat; quae tamen odit, habet.
nequitiam fugio, fugientem *forma* reducit;
auersor morum crimina, corpus amo.
sic ego nec sine te nec tecum uiuere possum
et uideor uoti nescius esse mei. 40
aut formosa fores minus aut minus inproba uellem:
non facit ad mores tam bona forma malos.
facta merent odium, facies exorat amorem:
me miserum, *uitiis plus ualet illa suis*.
parce per o lecti socialia iura, per omnes 45
qui dant fallendos se tibi saepe deos,
perque *tuam faciem*, magni mihi numinis instar,
perque *tuos oculos, qui rapuere meos*.
quicquid eris, mea semper eris; tu selige tantum,
me quoque uelle uelis anne coactus amem. 50
lintea dem potius uentisque ferentibus utar
et quam, si nolim, cogar amare, uelim.¹⁴

voluntat, de falssa estima guiada, çercàs un cos lleig i diforme, en part de aquell qui indignament la havia tractada!' ('Oh, if only I could drink from the waters of Lethe! [...] I should have been quite content if this fair lady could be split into two halves: if the subtle intellect of her noble person had fallen into my lot, and her weak and fickle will, led on by a wrong judgement, had been attracted to a foul and deformed creature, like the man who had behaved so ignobly towards her!', ll. 142-47).

¹⁴ Barry Taylor has kindly provided a translation into English of the French version by Henri Bornecque in the Budé series (which seems to me the most adequate to the present purpose):

'I feel my inconstant heart pulled between love and hate which do battle; but, I believe, love will win the day. I will hate, if I can; if not, I will love, but in spite of myself. The ox does not love the yoke either; he bears what he hates nonetheless. I flee her perfidy; while I flee, her beauty calls me back. I abhor the defects of your soul and I love your body. Thus I can neither live without you nor with you and I myself do not know what I desire. I would wish you either less beautiful or less perverse. Your behaviour deserves hatred, your face calls for love. Alas! It is more powerful than its vices!

Spare me, I ask by the rights of this bed which we shared, by all the gods, who often give you the opportunity to deceive them, by your face, which is for me a powerful divinity, by your eyes, which have captivated mine! Whatever you are, you will always be my beloved; merely choose if you want me to love you willingly or under coercion. But I would sooner spread my sails to favourable winds than be forced to wish to love you against my will.'

The poet's heart, he says, is torn apart by contrary ('in contraria'), struggling ('Luctantur') passions, that is, 'amor' and 'odium'. Love seems to have the upper hand, and thus the poet loves unwilling ('inuitus amabo'). On the one hand, he flies from baseness ('nequitiam') and is repelled by her wicked behaviour ('morum crimina'); on the other, her beauty and her body ('forma' and 'corpus') attract him: 'Thus I can neither live without you nor with you', he concludes in l. 39. The dilemma is crystal-clear: her deeds ('facta') are hateful, her face ('facies') wins his love; in the end, 'plus ualet illa' than her misdeeds. Once the poet has stated this fact, he explains the means why which her power has been exerted, including her face or visage ('tuam faciem') and her eyes ('tuos oculos'), which took his ('qui rapuere meos'). The last lines refer to the forceful nature of his love ('cogar amare'), which reminds us again of Catullus (cf. 'cogit amare' in 72.8), while opening up the way for a more hopeful love by choice.

March's poems 116 and 119 can be compared to this outline. Both poems belong in a poetic cycle signed 'Amor, Amor', and share a pattern of versification: 12 to 14 ten-line stanzas followed by a final distich (instead of the usual *octaves* with a four-line envoi).¹⁵ They both explain a case of forceful love ('per fer contrast a *Amor, qui tant me força*. | *Ira*, yo't prech que lo meu cor m'esforça', 116.2–3).¹⁶ And they both coincide in the key-term *contrari*: 'Axí com só compost de molts contraris, | ma voluntat e l'apetit són varis', concludes 116.149–50, whereas 119.1–4 starts: 'Maleyt lo jorn que'm fo donada vida, | puix tant so vist en mos volers contrari; | yo só aquell qui'l pensament he vari | e voluntat del tot desahunida.'¹⁷

¹⁵ I am quoting them from March, *Poesies*, pp. 427–32 and 445–49, respectively.

¹⁶ 'to stand up to Love, who drives me so hard. | Hate, I pray, make my heart stronger'. Italics are always mine.

¹⁷ 'As I am made out of contrary elements, | my will and my appetite are diverse'; 'I curse the day life was bestowed on me, | since I am so contradictory in my appetites; | I am someone who has conflicting thoughts | and a completely disunited will'.

The main reason for such a *contrarietas* is, like in Ovid's 11b (cf. 'in contraria'), the struggle between 'amor' and 'odium'. Indeed, 'Amor' and 'Ira' are the main characters in poem 116 right from the start (see again ll. 2–3), and such inner struggle, says March, has been endured for a long time: 'Tant com en mi és e fon soportable | de contrastar e vençre la batalla, | yo he complit, *dins mi sentint baralla*' (116.11–13; cf. 'Luctantur' and, in 11a, 'Multa diuque tuli').¹⁸ Of course, the culprit, like in Ovid's 11a, is 'turpis amor'; March states: 'com no m'esforç contra'l *desig horrible* | que'm ve d'Amor' [...] 'e per aquest desig *am y ahire*' (116.6–7 and 16), *odi et amo*.¹⁹ Likewise, poem 119 affirms that '*Ab desgrat am e avorreixch ensemble*' [...] 'Avorriment ab Amor en mi foren, | mas ab desalt ensemps en mi lavoren' (ll. 5 and 9–10).²⁰ We may notice that March not only considers the *odi et amo* theme but also its underlying reality: 'inuitus amabo' said Ovid; 'Ab desgrat am', seems to repeat March. This should suffice to place poems 116 and 119 within the general framework of Ovid's double elegy, that is, what we may term as a literary *topos*.

But, I believe, the parallel can be taken into further detail. Ovid's *persona* was repelled ('aversor') by Corinna's 'mores crimina' and her hateful 'facta'; likewise, March rejects her beloved's base deeds, learnt by experience: 'No vull son bé e tinch-ne al cor plaga | de *leig fet nou e de legea antiga*' (119.27–28).²¹ At the same time, Ovid was attracted by Corinna's 'forma' (beauty) and 'corpus' (body or physical appearance), by her 'facies' (face or visage), which accounts for the conclusion in 11b: 'uitiis plus ualet illa suis', her beautiful outward appearance overcomes her vices. Again, as if he were echoing Ovid, March explains that he is attracted by the woman's apparent beauty,

¹⁸ 'As long as I have been able | to withstand and win the battle, | I have fought, feeling the struggle within me'.

¹⁹ 'I am not really fighting such base desire | which comes from Love' [...] 'and because of it I love and hate'.

²⁰ 'Unwillingly, I love and hate at the same time' [...] 'Hatred and love were formerly within me, | but now disgust has joined them in their task'.

²¹ 'I do not truly love her, and my heart is wounded | by both her new misdeeds and her former ones'.

although her base deeds are always present: ‘en hora·m ve que son leig m’és bellea, | mas per tostemps de sos fets he ferea’ (119.39–40).²² Finally, we must observe that Ovid refers to *facies* and *oculi* as the means why which Corinna has seduced him. In similar fashion, March is tricked into loving by both her ‘gest’ and her eyes: ‘un gest mostrant dona ficta honesta’ (116.115) and ‘Lo gest dels ulls e de aquells la forma | fet han en mi passió molt estranya’ (116.121–22; cf. 119.47–48).²³ Through this way, she has imposed upon the poet’s imagination an indivisible impression, however delusory: ‘per l’apetit que tot per carn se guanya | ab altre molt que d’opinió·s forma; | e d’aquest és lo tot d’ella l’objecte, | no sol lo cors, mas tota ensemps presa’ (116.123–26; cf. 119.81–90).²⁴ In short: her ‘gest’ overcomes the poet’s awareness of her misdeeds, as in Ovid’s ‘uitiis plus ualet illa suis’.

Needless to say, March’s poetry is updating Ovid to the medieval mind; in consequence, a full understanding of the scholastic technicalities of his verse requires attention to medieval psychology science.²⁵ All the same, the presence of *Amores*, bk III,11a-b seems necessary in the background of March’s *inventio*, and not only because of the *odi et amo* theme, or the parallels I have so far outlined. I feel that the crux of the matter is the woman with whom those poems deal —the kind of woman with whom Catullus was in love (*amare*) but for whom he had ceased to feel true affection (*bene uelle*), in the same way as March is subject to a ‘passió molt estranya’, although he

²² ‘at times her baseness seems to me like beauty, | but at all times I am appalled by her misdeeds’.

²³ ‘the demeanour of a woman who pretends to be virtuous’, ‘the expression in her eyes and their *forma* | have brought about in me a strange obsession’. The medieval term *gest* often refers to facial expression or even general countenance, always involving movement, as shown in this case by the phrase ‘lo gest dels ulls’; perhaps the best general equivalent would be ‘demeanour’ or ‘mien’. Here ‘forma’ is a scholastic term which refers to the *species* abstracted from the object perceived.

²⁴ ‘through the appetite that involves the flesh alone | and the appetite that is aroused by [false] opinion; | the object of this appetite is her entire person, | not just her body, but the perception of her as a whole’.

²⁵ I attempted to do so in ‘Aristotle for the Layman: Sense Perception in the Poetry of Ausiàs March’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 59 (1996), 48–60.

bluntly asserts that he does not feel true affection for her beloved: ‘No vull son bé’ (see again 119.27–28).²⁶

From Catullus to Ovid, elegiac poetry reported the ups and downs of a relationship with an unreliable woman, quite often described as if she were a *demi-mondaine*. This type of woman could hardly be adapted to the archetypal lady of courtly poetry, as she was portrayed in Troubadour lyric as a feudal lord (*midons*), and her relationship with the troubadour was accordingly judged as a matter of praise, value and loyalty. The unfolding of Italian lyric took the lady a rung above in the ladder, even to spiritual heights. On the other hand, as I have already pointed out, in March’s time there were genres, such as the *maldit*, in which the poet found room to debase the woman’s behaviour, or to criticize the foolishness of love.²⁷ But, to the best of my knowledge, courtly poets found little room in the medieval tradition to state the unwilling passion for an unfaithful lover.²⁸ This seems to be the domain of Catullus and his elegiac followers, and this is the domain of March’s poems 116 and 119.

Thus the poet longs for her beloved’s physical presence (‘desig de veure sa persona’, 116.72), but when she looks at him he cannot help thinking of those who have already been given such a look and have felt her love: ‘car ymagín que altre l’ à sentida, | la su·amor e son esguart benigne, | e yo he vist aquell bo e maligne’ (116.75–77).²⁹ More specifically, he adds: ‘e tant com més en ella yo·m delite, | pensant que tal fèu ab altre, despite’ (116.79–80).³⁰ March’s jealousy seems justified, if we recall ‘un gest

²⁶ March is clearly distinguishing the present ‘passió’ from virtuous love, which he had defined as ‘Aquell·amor que es diu voluntat bona’ (45.25).

²⁷ See, for instance, ‘En mals poders, enques en mal loch’, which was also addressed to ‘Amors, amors’, in Martí de Riquer & Lola Badia, ed., *Les poesies de Jordi de Sant Jordi: cavaller valencià del segle XV* (València: Tres i Quatre, 1984), pp. 179–87.

²⁸ Corella’s *Tragèdia de Caldesa* points to the same direction: when dealing with a woman of easy virtue, the narrator could only keep on loving her if her intellect were cut from her will and her body.

²⁹ ‘for I recall in my imagination that someone else has experienced | her love and her tender glances, | and I have seen that they can be either good or ill-intentioned’.

³⁰ ‘and the more I delight in her | the more I feel resentment, thinking that she has behaved like this with someone else’.

mostrant dona ficta honesta' (116.115), and other hints at her behaviour ('yo fuy amat, e no tant com pensava': 'I was loved, though not as much as I first thought', 116.89); or, in poem 119, the lines I have repeatedly quoted: 'No vull son bé e tinch-ne al cor plaga | de leig fet nou e de legea antiga'' (ll. 27–28). In this passage the term *lleig* refers to base, sexual love, as it always does in March's vocabulary. For instance, praising the noble Dona Teresa d'Híxar in spiritual terms, he had stated: 'Tan gran delit tot hom entenent ha | e occupat se troba'n vós entendre, | que lo desig del cors no's pot estendre | a leig voler, ans com a mort està' (23.37–40).³¹ But in poems 116 and 119, he was writing on a kind of love that made its way from the woman's eyes, via 'l'apetit que tot per carn se guanya' (116.123), all the way up to the deceiving imagination. I would suggest that this is why March's literary memory searched for Ovid, the poet who had described both *turpis amor* and its unavoidable effect —an essentially non-courtly topic.

Ovid was part of school reading for any student who had gone past the *auctores minores*. Corella had been trained in theology; in consequence no one doubts his ability to translate and adapt Latin texts. In the case of March, or other accomplished fifteenth-century writers such as Joanot Martorell, their likely command of Latin is often neglected on the grounds that they were courtly knights and had not attended a grammar school. An important corpus of translations into Catalan would then account for their second-hand knowledge of classical texts. However, friar Antoni Canals, a Dominican who specialized in translations for the nobility, once advised his readers that 'hom deu llegir llibres aprovats, no pas llibres vans [...], ni llibres provocatius a cobejança, així com *Llibres De amors, Llibres De art de amar, Ovidi De vetula*'.³² This is a clear

³¹ 'Every man of understanding feels such great delight and becomes so absorbed by his efforts to understand you, that the inclination of the body is unable to turn into a base desire, and does not even stir' (trans. Robert Archer, in his *Ausiàs March: A Key Anthology* (Sheffield: The Anglo-Catalan Society, 1992), p. 43).

³² I quote Canal's preface to his version of Pseudo-Bernard of Clairvaux, *Liber de modo bene vivendi ad sororem*, as printed in Próspero de Bofarull y Mascaró, *Documentos literarios en antigua lengua catalana*

reference to a set of Ovidian texts; neither *Amores* nor *Ars amatoria* were ever translated into medieval Catalan, and yet their presence was felt as a threat. I am inclined to give March the benefit of the doubt, and think that he had read some ‘llibres provocatius a cobejança’, perhaps including Ovid’s double elegy on the *odi et amo* theme.

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