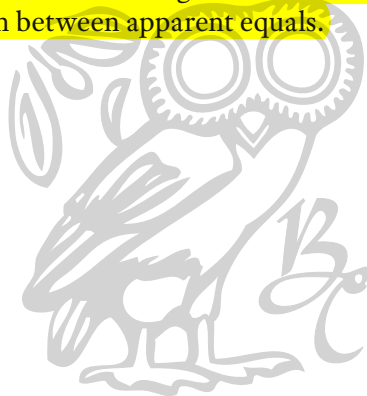


AMORES I. 1

This short poem introduces the entire *Amores*. Ovid begins by saying that, although he had attempted an epic poem, he soon discovered he could not write about wars and heroes in dactylic hexameter (the meter traditionally used for epic verses), because Cupid had stolen one metrical foot from the second line. This mischief turned his epic into elegy. (See the Appendix of Metrical Terms for examples of epic and elegiac meter.) The poet rebukes Cupid for meddling in a realm that does not belong to him. To give weight to his argument against such interference, the poet points out how inappropriate it would be for Venus and Minerva, or Ceres and Diana, to exchange roles, as Cupid has done with the poet. Ovid then adds that, as he has no lover, he has no subject for love elegy. This defiance of the god leads to a surprising consequence: Cupid fires an arrow into the poet that suddenly and dramatically transforms him into both a lover and a love poet. Ovid ends by bidding farewell to epic poetry.

This poem is a humorous and ironic justification of Ovid's decision to write elegy rather than epic. Ovid cleverly pretends that he has been forced into this choice and imagines the scene as a real event with a real conversation between apparent equals.



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