2
Sexual Poetry

Vertues or vices theame to thee all one is:
Who loves chaste life, there's *Lucrece* for a Teacher:
Who list read lust there's *Venus* and *Adonis*,
True modell of a most lascivious leatcher.[1]

I

Late in 1589, Thomas Lodge published his poem *Scillaes Metamorphosis: Enterlaced with the unfortunate love of Glaucus*. In so doing, he established a new poetic genre, the witty mythological love-poem dressed in the manner of Ovid but translated into an English setting (Glaucus complains from the river Isis near Oxford). Following in Lodge's wake, Marlowe wrote *Hero and Leander* and Shakespeare *Venus and Adonis*—to judge by frequency of allusions to the former and reprintings of the latter, two of the most popular poems of the age. *Hero and Leander* is based more on the late Alexandrian poet Musaeus than on the exchange of letters between these two famous lovers in the *Heroides*, but in technique the poem is pure Ovid, with its rhetorical persuasions to love and its embedded narratives of gods whose sexual appetites are ample and polymorphous (Neptune entwines himself around Leander, Mercury tumbles a country maid). Hero is (oxymoronically) Venus' nun and Leander meets her at a festival of Adonis; Shakespeare picks up from this and retells the metamorphic narrative of the goddess and her mortal boy—a story which serves to explain the perverse nature of sexual love.

In the prose dedication to the first edition of his translation, Arthur Golding wrote that the myths of the *Metamorphoses* were 'outwardly moste pleasant tales and delectable histories', but that they were

[1] Thomas Freeman, *Runne and a Great Cast*, the second part of *Rubbe, and a Great Cast* (London, 1614), epigram 92.

'fraughted inwardlye with most piththie instructions and wholsome examples'.[2] As was shown in the last chapter, Golding, with not inconsiderable ingenuity, peeled off the narrative skin and found hidden 'inner' moral meanings in the text. He thus contrived to make Ovid sound at least a little like the other major author whom he translated into English: John Calvin. Lodge's poem, by contrast, sets out to enjoy Ovid's poetry of passion, as the Roman poet did himself. Lessons may be learnt from this world of desire and metamorphosis, but they are lessons about the games and the anguish of love. The examples are *not* wholesome, the instruction is not moralistic. Lodge and his successors show how love is; they don't moralize about how behaviour should be. Golding's argument is that if you give in to passion, you will suffer, whereas the argument of late Elizabethan Ovidianism often seems to be that however you behave, whether you rein in your passion or not, love will make you suffer. Hero and Leander embrace love and end up dead. Adonis rejects love and ends up dead. In Lodge's poem, first Glaucus woos a reluctant Scilla, then Cupid fires an arrow that stops up his wound and cures him of his love; but Cupid also fires at Scilla, so she is in turn afflicted and tries to seduce a now reluctant Glaucus. Cupid, the blind, diminutive, and illegitimate child of Venus, is very literally a contrary little bastard, as Shakespeare's Rosalind knows—'that same wicked bastard of Venus, that was begot of thought, conceived of spleen, and born of madness, that blind rascally boy that abuses everyone's eyes because his own are out'.[3]

But these poems cannot be described as tragedies of love. That is partly because, as in Ovid, metamorphosis lets the characters off the hook: they are arrested in the moment of intense emotion and released into a vital, vibrant, colourful world of anthropomorphic nature. And it is also, pre-eminently, because the poet is ultimately more interested in the beginnings than the ends of love. Marlowe's poem breaks off at the consummation and does not bother with the death. The primary focus is upon the psychological causes of love—what is it that the lover desires?—and the linguistic arts with which the love-object is pursued. Lodge in *Scillaes Metamorphosis*, Marlowe in *Hero and Leander*, and Shakespeare in *Venus and Adonis*, devote most

[2] *The Fyrst Fower Bookes of P Ovidius Nasos Worke, intitled Metamorphosis, translated oute of Latin into Englishe meter by Arthur Golding Gent.* (London, 1565), dedication to Leicester, dated Dec. 1564.

[3] *As You Like It*, IV. i. 201–4.

of their attention to the arguments of the characters, in particular to the topos of the persuasion to love. The pleasure for the Elizabethan reader resides in the cunning rhetoric; Shakespeare was above all known as a sweet, witty, mellifluous, honey-tongued writer.

The skill of the writers of erotic narrative poetry manifested itself in their way of combining two Ovids: the witty preceptor of love, the poet of arguing one's way into bed, as in the *Amores* and the *Ars Amatoria*, is brought together with the weaver of 'interlaced' mythological tales of metamorphosis. Thus Leander makes use of an argument from the *Amores* about how a woman's sexual treasure (her virginity) should, like all wealth, be used instead of hoarded, and Venus follows the speaker of the *Ars Amatoria* in pointing to a randy horse as an example of how natural it is to accept love.[4] In the terms of William Keach, the best modern reader of the genre, Ovid's irony is combined with his pathos—his witty detachment and his emotional intensity are fused.[5] Love is acknowledged to be confusing and painful, but desire is also revealed to be comic and undignified. 'Perverse it shall be where it shows most toward', says Venus in her curse on love (1157): contrariness is the key.

It is easy to share the cultivated Elizabethan reader's delight in the conceits of the genre. The resourceful Venus has many a memorable example:

> I'll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer.
> Feed where thou wilt, on mountains or in dale;
> Graze on my lips, and if those hills be dry,
> Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie.
> (231–4)

Ovid tells the story of Venus and Adonis in less than a hundred lines, Shakespeare in more than a thousand: the classical text provides a narrative framework into which the Elizabethan writer inserts elaborate arguments, thus demonstrating his own rhetorical skills. Because the persuasions given to the characters are the major interpolations into the source, critical readings tend to concentrate on

[4] *Hero and Leander*, i. 231–40 is a translation and expansion of *Amores*, 1. viii. 51–3 (also trans. by Marlowe in his *Ovid's Elegies*). Venus on the palfrey (385–96) borrows from *Ars Am.* i. 277–80. The topos from the *Amores* of using, not hoarding, beauty is also adapted by Shakespeare in the third quatrain of Sonnet 9.

[5] See Keach, *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives: Irony and Pathos in the Ovidian Poetry of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and their Contemporaries* (New Brunswick, NJ, and Hassocks, 1977).

them.[6] But it will be the contention of the first half of this chapter that within Shakespeare's poem there are signals that we must consider the Ovidian source-text to be much broader than the seventy or so lines of direct material. Golding's outward/inward distinction works differently in Shakespeare's reading of Ovid: whilst the moral translator claimed to find meaning 'inwardlye' but in fact imposed it from outside the text, the creative imitator interprets his source narrative partly by means of other narratives that lie both outside and inside, around and within, it. Surrounding the text is a distinctly unwholesome context.

When Shakespeare read Book Ten of the *Metamorphoses*, the first thing he was told about Adonis was that he was the 'misbegotten chyld' of the union between Myrrha and her father, Cinyras (Golding, x. 577). At the same time, he would have learnt that the lovely boy was born not from his mother's womb, but by the splitting open through Lucina's agency of the tree into which his mother had been metamorphosed.[7] Incest and a kind of posthumous caesarean section—a bizarre birth like that of Marvell's 'Unfortunate Lover'—initiate the reader into a world of unorthodox swervings of gender and generation.

Ovid's story of Venus and Adonis is narrated by Orpheus as part of his long lament to the trees and wild animals after his loss of Eurydice. The Orphic section of the *Metamorphoses* begins with a series of tales of homosexual love. Orpheus says that after losing his Eurydice he shunned all love of woman and turned to boys instead:

> And *Orphye* . . . did utterly eschew
> The womankynd. . . .
> . . . . . .
> He also taught the *Thracian* folke a stewes of Males too make
> And of the flowring pryme of boayes the pleasure for too take.
> (x. 87–92)

Orpheus is the patron saint of homosexuality, or, more specifically, of pederasty. Among the trees to which he sings is the cypress, etiologized as the metamorphosed form of a boy loved by Apollo, Cyparissus, who erroneously killed a tame stag whom he loved and

[6] See e.g. the rhetorically oriented reading of the poem by Heather Dubrow in her fine *Captive Victors: Shakespeare's Narrative Poems and Sonnets* (Ithaca, NY, 1987).

[7] Should we think forward to Ariel's rebirth from a tree through Prospero's agency in *The Tempest* and thence to the other strange rebirths of that play, such as Prospero's extraordinary image of his own labour on the sea-voyage?

consequently resolved to die himself, asking as a last boon that he should be allowed to mourn for ever. He is thus 'sad cypress'—there is a resonance forward in Shakespeare's career, to the figuration of love's sorrows in *Twelfth Night*, where, as with Ovid's Orphic narration, the context is homoerotic, Orsino's desire for Cesario echoing Apollo's for Cyparissus. More locally, there is a prefiguration of and variation on Adonis: both boys are loved by gods, while one slays and the other is slain by accident.

Cyparissus homoeroticizes the audience of Orpheus. The singer himself then picks up the motif: he tells of Ganymede, loved by Jove (and impersonated, we may add, by the gender-bending Rosalind of Lodge and Shakespeare), then of Hyacinth, loved by Apollo. The latter is a second prefiguration of Adonis, in that he loves hunting. He is inadvertently killed by Apollo's discus while sporting with him; the flower that grows from his blood has Apollo's lament ('AI AI') inscribed upon it—as with Venus and Adonis, the story ends with the creation from the beloved boy's blood of a plant that is also a signifier of grief. George Sandys's commentary speaks of 'an afflicted ingemination, charactred in the leaves', a phrase nicely catching the two key elements which the story shares with that of Adonis: floral inscription and repetition (the story is retold with each year's new growth).[8]

Orpheus' argument that homoerotic desire is licensed by the precedent of the gods is of considerable importance for Elizabethan poetry, which is so frequently polymorphous in its sexual orientation. Heterosexuality and homosexuality are anachronistic concepts here: Marlowe and Shakespeare, the latter most notably but by no means exclusively in the Sonnets, take delight in lovely boys one moment and females the next. In the theatre, the embrace between a male and a female character may bring with it a *frisson* of the homoerotic, in that it is an embrace between two male actors—this was of course one reason for 'puritan' hostility to the stage. Despite the astringent laws against sodomy in Elizabethan England, the poetry of the age is unapologetic in its celebration of the charms of teenage boys.[9]

For Ovid's Orpheus, 'unnatural' desire is to be found elsewhere, not in homosexuality but in the examples cited in the next section of Book

[8] Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished*, 359.

[9] On this whole area, see Bruce Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England* (Chicago, 1991), esp. its treatment (ch. 6) of Elizabethan versions of the Ganymede/minion.

Ten: the Propoetides, the first prostitutes; Pygmalion, who makes love to his statue; and Myrrha, who falls in love with her father. Elizabethan and Jacobean interest in sexual 'beastliness' found a focus in these stories, as may be seen from the titles of Marston's *Metamorphosis of Pigmalions Image* (1598) and William Barksted's *Myrrha, the Mother of Adonis; or Lustes Prodegies* (1607). The final act of the *The Winter's Tale* is exceptional in its way of reworking the Pygmalion story without any implication of beastliness or, in Paulina's term, unlawfulness. The traditional moralization of Book Ten is summarized by Golding in the epistle prefixed to his 1567 translation:

> The tenth booke cheefly dooth containe one kynd of argument,
> Reproving most prodigious lusts of such as have bene bent
> Too incest most unnaturall.
>
> (Epistle, 213–15)

But the intentions of Ovid's Orpheus are not quite this simple: he sings with a lighter touch ('leviore lyra')[10] of the delights as well as the dire consequences of sexuality. And in so far as Orpheus' songs are an apology for homoeroticism, the moralizing Golding is forced to read the text against the grain.

Even in the case of incest, Ovid is more interested in exploring the lover's mental state than condemning her. Myrrha may resort to a bestial comparison ('animals commit incest, so why shouldn't humans?'), but she is revealed to be a tortured victim of desire, as she lies restlessly at night:

> Shee wisshes and shee wotes not what too doo, nor how too gin.
> And like as when a mightye tree with axes heawed rownd,
> Now reedye with a strype or twaine to lye uppon the grownd,
> Uncerteine is which way to fall and tottreth every way:
> Even so her mynd with dowtfull wound effeebled then did stray
> Now heere now there uncerteinely, and tooke of bothe encreace.
>
> (x. 419–24)

This kind of representation of the mind under the stress of conflicting emotions is Ovid's prime gift to the Elizabethan narrative poets. Like their master, Marlowe and Shakespeare as poets are psychopathologists rather than moralists. Where the moral interpreter Golding assumes that metamorphosis is a punishment for sexual unnatural-

[10] *Metamorphoses*, x. 152.

ness, the poets are more interested in causes than effects, in explanations than judgements.

As so often in the *Metamorphoses*, a festival in honour of a god provides the occasion for resolution of the Myrrha story; rather as the 'holiday' moment in Shakespearian comedy precipitates transformative action, the festival's interruption of the quotidian provides the impulse which causes the tottering tree to fall. With characteristic Ovidian irony, the festival in question is that of Ceres, goddess of fertility—in these circumstances, foison is the last thing Myrrha needs. Sandys's commentary reminds the Renaissance reader of the distance between Myrrha and Ceres, to whose worship 'none were admitted that were either uncleane, or whose consciences accused them of any secret crime'.[11] Cinyras' wife goes off to celebrate this distinctively female festival, leaving him alone in his bed for nine nights; a nurse offers to provide him with comfort in the form of a girl who loves him. She gives a false name, but says that the 'pretye lasse' is Myrrha's age; she escorts her to the bedroom in the dark and father makes love to daughter, ignorant of her identity. Ovid observes the behaviour of the lovers with his usual perspicuity and irony: 'by chaunce as in respect of yeeres | He daughter did hir call, and shee him father' (x. 536–7). An older man and a young girl in bed together are always at some level father and daughter; here Cinyras describes the relationship metonymically when it is in fact biological. The encounter ends with his 'cursed seede in [her] wicked womb' (538). Adonis is the fruit of that seed.

The Venus and Adonis story must be seen in the broader context of the Orphic series of narratives concerning destructive passion, female desire—Book Ten teems with aggressive female wooers—and homoerotic charm. Venus the lover is also Venus the mother: 'Hot, faint, and weary with her hard embracing . . . like the froward infant stilled with dandling, | He now obeys' (559–63); 'Like a milch doe whose dwelling dugs do ache, | Hasting to feed her fawn hid in some brake' (875–6). Such juxtapositions of sexuality and parenting suggest that Adonis is forced to re-enact, with gender and generational roles reversed, his mother's incestuous affair.

The contextual pressure of Myrrha is signalled by Shakespeare's two explicit allusions to Adonis' mother. As part of her argument that the lovely boy should accept love, Venus says:

[11] *Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished*, 363.

> Art thou obdurate, flinty, hard as steel?
> Nay, more than flint, for stone at rain relenteth.
> Art thou a woman's son, and canst not feel
> What 'tis to love, how want of love tormenteth?
> O, had thy mother borne so hard a mind,
> She had not brought forth thee, but died unkind.
> (199–204)

She suggests that he somehow owes it to his mother's experience of love to experience love himself. In the light of Book Ten, it is a richly ironic suggestion: Myrrha found that love 'tormented' as much as—more than—'want of love' did. The 'mind' that she bore was not exactly a seemly model; the child 'brought forth' by her, the fruit of incest, would have been better unborn. She would have 'died unkind' if she hadn't loved a man and thus borne a child, says Venus—but it would have been better if she had died untouched by her own kind, her kin. In the incestuous bed she was a little more than kin and more than kind. As for Venus' phrase 'died unkind', ironically it was only in death that Myrrha achieved a kind of kindness or softness. She is metamorphosed into the 'weeping' myrrh tree, oozing drops that signify her repentance.

Later, Venus addresses the sun: 'There lives a son [i.e. Adonis] that sucked an earthly mother | May lend thee light, as thou dost lend to other' (863–4). The sun/son pun invokes Adonis' mother for a second time. Again the irony rebounds on Venus: Myrrha never did suckle Adonis, since he was born from the tree after her death. Instead, Venus herself eventually becomes a surrogate mother, suckling Adonis—she ends the poem with his flower in her breast, imaged as the 'cradle' in which she 'rock[s]' him (1185–6). Adonis' life begins with a father and daughter in bed together, and ends with sexual desire for him being sublimated into an image of a mother by the bed of her baby son. For Ovid, Venus' love for Adonis is the direct consequence of Myrrha's illicit desire: 'Dame *Venus* fell in love with him: wherby | He did revenge the outrage of his mothers villanye' (x. 604–5). Venus is held responsible for Myrrha's love, since she is the goddess of love, even in its illicit forms, and she is punished by being smitten with unrequited love herself.

The Myrrha story, then, provides an ironic, darkening pre-text for the tale of Venus and Adonis, which points to the perverse origins of desire. A second parallel narrative occupies a position as what might be called an *in-text*. When Ovid's Venus advises Adonis not to hunt

the boar, she tells a story to support her case. Embedded within Orpheus' tale of Venus and Adonis is Venus' tale of Atalanta, a girl who has been told by an oracle that if she takes a husband she will die. Being a fast runner, she repels her suitors by saying that they must race her: if they win she will be the prize, if they lose they will die. Like Adonis, Atalanta is an image of the self in flight: 'nec tamen effugies teque ipsa viva carebis'—'you will be separated from your self and yet be alive' (x. 566). The youthful Hippomenes initially scorns men who are willing to risk their lives in a race for a girl, but when Atalanta strips off to run, he is won over by her beauty—'the which was like too myne, | Or rather (if that thou wert made a woman) like too thyne' (x. 674–5) explains Venus, taking the opportunity to dwell on Adonis' female charm, which is further echoed in Hippomenes' 'maydens countenance' (742). Atalanta promptly falls in love herself: suddenly she is uncertain whether she wants to win or lose this race. Golding's translation is flat-footed at this point; a modern version catches more concisely Ovid's exquisite account of Atalanta's attempt to rationalize her faltering:

> It's not his beauty
> That touches me (though that could touch me too);
> But he is still a boy; it's not himself
> That moves me but his tender years, his youth.
> Think of his courage, unafraid of death.[12]

The parenthesis is a wonderfully revealing moment. His beauty has of course touched her. As with Myrrha, the mind is pulled in conflicting directions, love induces weakness, and then a disastrous mistake is made—the oracle is disregarded.

Hippomenes, being in love, invokes the assistance of the love-god Venus. She assists him by throwing three golden apples at strategic moments during the race, causing Atalanta to go off course and pick them up. Hippomenes thus wins both the race and her. Venus points the moral:

> Thinkst thou I was not woorthy thanks, *Adonis*, thinkest thow
> I earned not that he too mee should frankincence allow?
> But he forgetfull, neyther thanks nor frankincence did give.
> By meanes where of too sooden wrath he justly did me drive.
> (x. 798–801)

[12] A. D. Melville's World's Classics trans. (Oxford, 1987) of *Metamorphoses*, x. 614–16.

She accordingly turns against the young lovers, determining to have her revenge and make an example of them. She inflames them to sexual desire while they are in the temple of Cybele; they defile it by making love there, and Cybele transforms them into lions.

Ostensibly, Venus tells Adonis this story in order to persuade him not to go hunting dangerous beasts like lions and boars. But it's not really a tale warning against wild animals; it is Venus saying 'don't rile me', 'do as I say, I'm a powerful woman'. The key moment is the one where she addresses Adonis directly, demanding that he assent to her claim that she deserved a thank-offering and was justified in taking revenge when not given one. She tells the story to demonstrate her power. But the song is still that of Orpheus—it is a narrative within a narrative, creating the kind of multiple perspective allowed for by the Shakespearian play within a play. For Orpheus, the story is another warning against love: Atalanta submitted to desire and no good came of it. So Venus is saying to Adonis 'do not resist love', while simultaneously Orpheus is saying to his audience 'resist love'. The Orphic context undercuts Venus' rhetoric. The story is being *used* by both characters; narratives about love, Ovid seems to be saying, are never disinterested. The narrator always has ulterior motives, is always driven by his or her own desires.

I have described the embedded Atalanta narrative at some length because of a striking fact about the structure of Ovid's Venus and Adonis. Forty lines are devoted to Venus falling in love with Adonis, then one hundred and forty-seven lines to Venus telling her admonitory tale, and finally thirty-two to Venus' departure and Adonis' being gored by the boar and metamorphosed. The discourse of Venus thus occupies twice as much space as the story's action. It may thus be seen that the narrative of Atalanta fulfils the role in Ovid that Venus' rhetorical persuasions to love do in Shakespeare. Shakespeare's Venusian discourse—the traditional *carpe diem* arguments of the male lover put into the mouth of the aggressive female wooer—is engendered by Adonis' active resistance to love, a resistance which is the major alteration to the source. Ovid's Adonis likes hunting, but does not object to love on principle as Shakespeare's does. Like all good imitators, Shakespeare enters into the same arena as his model, but does his own turn there. His version is very much his own, as Ovid's is his, in that the *Metamorphoses* do not lean particularly on the older versions of the Venus and Adonis story, such as that of Theocritus. In Ovid, Atalanta goes against the advice of the

oracle in falling for Hippomenes; in Shakespeare, Adonis goes against the advice of Venus in hunting the boar. Atalanta's death results from the way that she does not resist love, Adonis' from the way that he does resist it. Put the two stories together and one reaches the irresistible conclusion that whichever way you turn love will destroy you. It is essentially something out of your control, a force that drives you rather than vice versa.

In both Ovid and Shakespeare the story ends with the death of Adonis, described as a pattern which will be repeated perpetually. This sense of inevitable future repetition is what gives the story its mythic, archetypal quality. One tradition of interpretation thus comes to read the story as a vegetation myth: Abraham Fraunce, in a mythography published the year before *Venus and Adonis*, interpreted Adonis as the sun, Venus as the upper hemisphere of the earth, and the boar as winter.[13] Ovid and Shakespeare do not take their interpretations in this direction; they are not interested in external nature so much as the nature of sexual desire. In Ovid, Venus creates the anemone from Adonis' blood as a 'remembrance' (Golding, x. 848) of her suffering. The passing of the seasons will be a figuration of love's sorrows; the flower symbolizes the transience of beauty and the vulnerability of desire. *Venus and Adonis* moves towards an etiology of love's anguish: 'Since thou art dead, lo, here I prophesy | Sorrow on love hereafter shall attend' (1135–6). Ovid closes Book Ten with an image of the flower blasted by the wind and shed all too soon; so too, according to Shakespeare's Venus, love will 'Bud, and be blasted, in a breathing-while' (1142). Adonis' flower is the purple of the blood from which it springs, the colour a reminder of the violence and death that will attend on love. Shakespeare's Venus then plucks it: 'She crops the stalk, and in the breach appears | Green-dropping sap, which she compares to tears' (1175–6). This comparison between liquid drops falling from vegetable matter and tears reintroduces Myrrha, whose guilt and sorrow are symbolized by the gum that drops from the Arabian tree into which she is metamorphosed. ' "Poor flower," quoth [Venus], "this was thy father's guise— | Sweet issue of a more sweet-smelling sire" ' (1177–8). It is an adroit variation: where Ovid begins his tale with Adonis as a son issuing from a tree, Shakespeare ends his with a

[13] Fraunce, *The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yvychurch* (London, 1592), p. 45[v].

flower issuing from Adonis, who thus becomes a father. Shakespeare's Venus acts out an extraordinary family romance. By imaging her lover as a father, she makes herself into the mother and the flower into the fruit of their union. But the logic of the imagery dictates that the flower is her sexual partner as well as her child, for it clearly substitutes for Adonis himself—she comforts herself with the thought that it is a love-token, which she can continually kiss. The fusion of lover and mother in the context of vegetative imagery makes Venus into Myrrha once again. It is as if, having slept with her father, the girl is now sleeping with her son.

In the next and last stanza, Venus flies off to Paphos, the site of her principal temple on Cyprus. The naming of the place takes the mythologically literate reader back to Orpheus' narrative in Book Ten, for Cyprus is the location of the stories of the Propoetides, Pygmalion, and Myrrha, the figures associated with Venus and with the rapacious female sexuality that Orpheus uses to justify his misogyny. Ovid explicitly states that the name Paphos derives from the child of the union between Pygmalion and his statue; Paphos in turn produces Cinyras, who, thanks to the incestuous union with Myrrha, is both father and grandfather of Adonis. Golding and Sandys took Paphos to be a boy ('a Sun that *Paphus* hyght'—Golding, x. 323), presumably because most Greek words ending in -os become in Latin the masculine -us. Sixteenth-century editions tended to follow the manuscript variant 'quo' (masculine) for 'qua' (feminine) in Ovid's line 'Illa Paphon genuit, de qua tenet insula nomen' (x. 297—'she [the statue] bore Paphos, from whom the island takes its name'), despite the fact that the next line makes the child feminine: 'Editus hac ille est' ('he [Cinyras] was borne by *her*'). Ovid *could* be deliberately confusing the gender—that would be in accordance with the sexual ambiguity of Book Ten—but it is more likely that 'qua' is the correct reading and a girl is intended. The Renaissance, however, stuck to the masculinized name Paphus: Marston ends his *Metamorphosis of Pigmalions Image* with the lines 'Paphus was got: of whom in after age | Cyprus was Paphos call'd, and evermore | Those Ilandars do Venus name adore.'[14] Whatever the gender, the identification of Venus with Paphos further embroils her in the incest plot.

If we are alert to the signals in *Venus and Adonis* that activate the

[14] Stanza 39, text from *Elizabethan Minor Epics*, ed. Elizabeth Story Donno (New York and London, 1963).

other parts of Book Ten of the *Metamorphoses*, it becomes quite clear that this is a poem about transgressive sexuality. And since it is supposed to be an etiology of sexual love—the goddess of love's own experience of desire sets the tone for everybody else's—there is a strong implication that sexual love is always at some level transgressive of the norms laid down by Church and State. The broader Ovidian context reveals two persistent characteristics of sexual desire: it is bound up first with the polymorphous perversity of family romance and second with a dissolution of the conventional barriers of gender, for in these stories women take the active role usually given to men and young men always look like girls. The first characteristic is an essentially destructive one, associated above all with the Myrrha pre-text. The second, which is partly a function of Orpheus' conversion to homosexuality, is also potentially destructive—as may be seen from the fate of the singer at the beginning of Book Eleven. Orpheus' narratives may charm rocks and trees and birds, but they cut no ice with a horde of Thracian women who descend on him in bacchic fury and tear him to pieces in punishment for his attitude to their sex.

The girlish-boy motif also takes the reader to other parts of the *Metamorphoses*. Adonis is one of Ovid's many beautiful young men on the threshold of sexual maturity; like the sixteen-year-old Narcissus, 'he seemde to stande beetwene the state of man and Lad' (iii. 438). Shakespeare's Venus herself makes the link, first in her persuasion to love—'Is thine own heart to thine own face affected? . . . Narcissus so himself himself forsook, | And died to kiss his shadow in the brook' (157–62)—and again in her final lament to the flower, 'To grow unto himself was his desire' (1180). Coppélia Kahn sees this association as the key to the poem: 'In Adonis, Shakespeare depicts not only a narcissistic character for whom eros is a threat to the self, but also a boy who regards women as a threat to his masculinity. But the real threat is internal, and comes from his very urge to defend against eros.'[15] Narcissism, then, is another aspect of destructive sexuality in *Venus and Adonis*. What is it that the lover desires? If not her parent, like Myrrha, then himself, like Narcissus—it is not a happy prognosis.

But Echo never gets near Narcissus; the physical interplay between a desiring female and a resistant male, the poem's body-contact,

[15] *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1981), 33.

derives from neither the tale of Adonis nor that of Narcissus but another Ovidian narrative, that of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus.[16] Golding moralized the fate of Hermaphroditus as a warning against effeminacy (Epistle, 116), but Shakespeare, I would suggest, read it very differently. If the quasi-incestuous aspects of *Venus and Adonis* are derived primarily from Book Ten of the *Metamorphoses* and the self-consuming absorption of Adonis from Narcissus, the poem's playfulness and delicate eroticism, its enjoyment of sexuality and the dissolution of gender barriers, owe much to the Hermaphroditus tale in Book Four.

The nymph Salmacis' wooing of the coy youth Hermaphroditus is a bravura performance, in which the norms of seduction poetry are systematically reversed. It is the boy who blushes and looks more sexually desirable as a result, the boy who has a perfectly formed body resembling a work of art (swimming in the translucent water, he looks like an ivory figure encased in glass), the girl who hides in a bush and watches the object of desire undress to bathe. In both Ovid and the Elizabethans the prurient gaze usually rests on the female, on the gradual stripping of Diana, Arethusa, and the rest; but here the tease is for the benefit of the reader (female or male) who likes fresh-limbed boys:

> and by and by amid
> The flattring waves he dippes his feete, no more but first the sole
> And to the ancles afterward both feete he plungeth whole.
> And for to make the matter short, he tooke so great delight
> In cooleness of the pleasant spring, that streight he stripped quight
> His garments from his tender skin.
>
> (iv. 421–6)

And in the scene of aquatic love-making, it is the male breast that is reached for ('And willde he nillde he with hir handes she toucht his naked brest'—446), the female who presses down 'with all hir weight' (458). Salmacis ultimately achieves total intercourse with

[16] This story has long been recognized as a supplementary source for *Venus and Adonis*: see e.g. Bullough, i. 161–3. Most interestingly, sonnets 4 and 6 of *The Passionate Pilgrim*, possibly attributable to Shakespeare, also fuse Venus' wooing of Adonis with Salmacis' spying on the bathing Hermaphroditus. In the last line of sonnet 4, Adonis is described as 'froward', Golding's epithet for Hermaphroditus (iv. 459). Compare the Actaeon/Adonis fusion in the induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, cited in Ch. 4, below.

her object of desire (notice how the force which effects the union is 'hir hugging and hir grasping'):

> The bodies of them twaine
> Were mixt and joyned both in one. To both them did remaine
> One countnance. Like as if a man should in one barke beholde
> Two twigges both growing into one and still togither holde:
> Even so when through hir hugging and hir grasping of the tother
> The members of them mingled were and fastned both togither,
> They were not any lenger two: but (as it were) a toy
> Of double shape: Ye could not say it was a perfect boy,
> Nor perfect wench: it seemed both and none of both to beene.
> (iv. 462–70)

At one level the story is meant as an etiology of the Hermaphrodite. Hermaphroditus gets the last word—just as he, not Salmacis, gets to keep his name—and the final image is of enfeeblement, of the waters in which the union took place having the power to convert a man into a half-man ('semivir'—iv. 386). This is the basis of Golding's moralization in terms of effeminacy. The description of interpenetration, however, with its wonder-filled sense of total coition, suggests not halving of strength but doubling of perfection. As so frequently in Ovid, the moment of wild passion paradoxically seems to outlast the subsequent stasis. This, we feel, is an image of how sex should be.

So it was that the Renaissance did not always read the hermaphrodite as a transgressive abomination. An alternative interpretation made it into an image of the complete union and interpenetration that Donne strives for in 'The Extasie'; as one modern commentator puts it, 'the *form* of the hermaphrodite was uniquely that of perfect love because it alone imaged that mystical union wherein the two sexes became one self-sufficient sex that contains both'.[17] He/she represents the re-creation of the original unitary gender imagined by Aristophanes in his account of the origins of love in Plato's *Symposium*. The paradox of the hermaphrodite is even more condensed than Stephen Greenblatt supposes: in his essay

[17] A. R. Cirillo, 'The Fair Hermaphrodite: Love-Union in the Poetry of Donne and Spenser', *SEL* ix (1969), 81–95 (p. 94). Cirillo here cites the *Lezzioni* of Benedetto Varchi (Venice, 1561). For a more complex and less affirmative reading of the hermaphrodite in *The Faerie Queene*, see Lauren Silberman, 'The Hermaphrodite and the Metamorphosis of Spenserian Allegory', *ELR* xvii (1987), 207–23. See also Gayle Whittier, 'The Sublime Androgyne Motif in Three Shakespearean Works', *JMRS* xix (1989), 185–210, esp. on the youth as 'master-mistress' in Sonnet 20.

'Fiction and Friction', he argues that the discourses of hermaphroditism and 'normal sexuality' are 'the same discourse, for the knowledge that enables one to understand the monstrous conjunction in one individual of the male and female sexes is the identical knowledge that enables one to understand the normal experience of sexual pleasure';[18] Greenblatt's 'the identical knowledge' depends on Michel Foucault's notion of discourses containing their own opposites, whereas in the positive Renaissance reading of Ovid the figure of the hermaphrodite is more directly an image of the normal experience of sexual pleasure. Spenser used the figure thus when describing the passionate union of Amoret and Scudamour in the 1590 ending of *The Faerie Queene*:

> No word they spake, nor earthly thing they felt,
> But like two senceles stocks in long embracement dwelt.

(This is Ovid's image of the two twigs growing into one.)

> Had ye them seene, ye would have surely thought,
> That they had beene that faire *Hermaphrodite*.[19]

The story which provides the ideal image of union between a man and a woman is one in which the initial desire for that union stems from the woman. Women in both Ovidian and Elizabethan poetry usually have to be seduced and hence to some degree coerced—the dividing-line between the verbal coercion of rhetoric and the physical one of rape is thin, as Shakespeare shows in *The Rape of Lucrece* and the Countess of Salisbury scenes in *Edward III*. Salmacis and Hermaphroditus is a rare example of a union that is not tainted by the exercising of male power. It might be described as the nearest thing available in a patriarchal culture to a myth of sexual equality.

All this may seem at some remove from *Venus and Adonis*: surely the point there is that coitus is not achieved. Granted, Shakespeare derives the style of Adonis' behaviour from Hermaphroditus and the 'woman on top' position from Salmacis, but there the resemblance ends. The nymph's love for her boy is never aggressive to the point of grotesquerie, as the goddess's is in, for example, the stanza concerning her kisses:

[18] Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Oxford, 1988), 77.

[19] *The Faerie Queene*, bk. 3, canto xii, stanzas 45–6, in the 1590 edn., quoted from the edn. of A. C. Hamilton (London, 1977).

> Even as an empty eagle, sharp by fast,
> Tires with her beak on feathers, flesh, and bone,
> Shaking her wings, devouring all in haste
> Till either gorge be stuffed or prey be gone,
> Even so she kissed his brow, his cheek, his chin,
> And where she ends she doth anew begin.
> (55–60)

But perhaps the difference is the point. The resemblance of Adonis to Hermaphroditus is denoted by his beauty, his blushing, and his petulance. The reader who recognizes those marks will perceive Adonis' *potential* to participate in an ideal Salmacian/Hermaphroditic union. But such a union never takes place—coitus only occurs in the form of parodic variations, as Adonis is nuzzled by the boar[20] and Venus cradles the flower—because the partners are not equals. An oppressive power-relation has to exist: after all, this is a goddess dealing with a mortal. Shakespeare has some fun inverting the traditional power structure—Venus' problem is that she can't actually rape Adonis, as Jove rapes Danaë, Neptune Theophane, and Apollo Isse—but in the end the poem shows that a sexual relationship based on coercion is doomed. The inequality is highlighted by the difference in age of the two characters; one function of the allusions to Adonis' mother is to suggest that the sexual dealings of partners of greatly unequal age are bound at some level to replicate the archetypal relationship based on an unequal power-structure, incest between a parent and a child.

Venus and Adonis is a disturbing poem in that violent death takes the place of the unfulfilled Salmacian/Hermaphroditic potential. But stylistically it is a poem that bubbles along in the manner more of the story it's not telling than of the one that it is. Of the later poems in the genre, the one that is closest to it is not Barksted's prurient *Myrrha, the Mother of Adonis; or Lustes Prodegies*, but Beaumont's scintillating *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, a narrative full of youthful energy and unabashed sexuality, of 'lovers sweet delight'.[21] In the address which prefaces the poem, Beaumont expresses the hope that it will enable

[20] The image of the boar kissing Adonis (1114) is traditional to the story (it is to be found in Theocritus, a Latin epigram by Minturno, and elsewhere—see Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition*, 140 n.), but in Shakespeare it adds to the flavour of bestial, violent sexuality. Ovid's Calydonian boar (Golding, viii. 376–82, esp. the bristles) lies behind the description of the beast.

[21] *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* (1602, attributed to Beaumont in edn. of 1640), l. 254, quoted from *Elizabethan Minor Epics*.

the male reader to dissolve his sexual identity and himself 'turne halfe-mayd'. Salmacis and Hermaphroditus achieve oneness because they are of the same age and the same kind (a naiad and a boy who has been nursed by naiads), as well as because the girl has attributes that are traditionally seen as male and the boy ones that are traditionally female. Their union is an enduring reminder of the creative potential of sexuality. By incorporating the tone of their tale, its lightness of touch and its delight in the charm of androgyny, Shakespeare makes his poem into a celebration of sexuality even as it is a disturbing exposure of the dark underside of desire. As Bruce Smith perceives, the effect is a kind of polymorphous liberation:

> In their androgyny, finally, figures like Leander, Adonis, and Hermaphroditus embody, quite literally, the ambiguities of sexual desire in English Renaissance culture and the ambivalences of homosexual desire in particular. They represent, not an exclusive sexual taste, but an *inclusive* one. To use the categories of our own day, these poems are bi-sexual fantasies. The temporary freedom they grant to sexual desire allows it to flow out in all directions, towards all the sexual objects that beckon in the romantic landscape.[22]

This inclusiveness, extending even to the sexualization of the landscape, is one of Ovid's prime gifts to late Elizabethan culture.

II

Venus doesn't metamorphose herself into the boar in the manner of Jupiter becoming an animal in order to rape a mortal girl. The story is about frustration rather than violation because a woman can't rape a man. The tone is set not by the spilling of blood towards the end, but by the earlier sequences in which the violence is playful and nobody really gets hurt: 'Backward she pushed him, as she would be thrust' (41). For much of *Venus and Adonis*, sexual desire is a source of comedy, whereas Shakespeare's second narrative poem is unquestionably tragic because Tarquin does rape Lucrece. The story of sexual pursuit is replayed in a darker key; having made a comic spectacle of the rapacious goddess, Shakespeare makes a tragic spectacle of the

[22] Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England*, 136. Leander's androgynous charm is manifested in the way in which he is fondled by Neptune, who mistakes him for Ganymede, as he swims the Hellespont on his way to Hero's bedroom.

raped emblem of chastity. The two poems are opposite sides of the same coin, as may be seen from their structural resemblance: in each, an ardent suitor attempts to gain the reluctant object of her/his sexual desire by means of rhetorical persuasion, fails, and indirectly or directly precipitates the death of the object of desire. The difference between the two works is that Adonis dies with his chastity intact—he is only metaphorically raped by the boar—while Lucrece stabs herself because she has been ravished. But both poems are centrally interested in the way in which, as in Ovid's *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*, linguistic art is instrumental in the pursuit of sexual satisfaction. *The Rape of Lucrece* is not only Shakespeare's most sustained imitation, it is also a supreme example of Renaissance *copia*.

As Shakespeare followed the prescription for *copia* by expanding Ovid's seventy-odd lines of Venus and Adonis narrative into a poem of just under twelve hundred lines, so he expanded the seventy-three lines of the Lucrece story into nearly two thousand. As with *Venus and Adonis*, the most significant expansions are those that invest the characters with linguistic arts: in particular, three extended discourses are introduced, namely Tarquin's inward disquisition as to whether he should carry through his desire, the disputation between the two characters in the bedroom, and Lucrece's formal complaint after the rape. The complaint gave Shakespeare the opportunity to fuse his classical material with a popular vernacular form, the lyrical lament of the (frequently female) victim who has been deserted by a lover or otherwise abused. This genre, which reaches back to the *Heroides* and the *Tristia*, had a rich medieval pedigree and a storehouse of examples in the *Mirror for Magistrates*.[23] It was probably from Samuel Daniel's 1592 'Complaint of Rosamond' that Shakespeare derived the seven-line 'rime-royal' stanza form which makes the movement of his second narrative poem so conspicuously more rounded and less crisp than that of the hexameters of the *Metamorphoses* or the elegiac couplets of Ovid's other works. The complaint seeks to give a voice to the women who are the victims of history: it is the mode of Queen Margaret in her *Heroides*-like farewell

[23] For the tradition of complaint, see John Kerrigan's *Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and 'Female Complaint': A Critical Anthology* (Oxford, 1991). I cite the *Tristia* as well as the *Heroides*, which are traditionally thought of as the Ur-Complaints, because of the process whereby the lamenting voices which Ovid gives to the deserted heroines in the epistles he wrote early in his career are reiterated in his own voice in the poems of exile. Thus one of the strongest precedents for Lucrece's extended anaphoric complaint to Time is *Tristia*, IV. vi. 1–18.

to the Duke of Suffolk in *2 Henry VI* ('even now be gone! | O, go not yet'—III. ii. 356–7). It is also the voice of the team of lamenting women in *Richard III*.

A further mark of Shakespeare's copiousness in *Lucrece* is his use of material from other versions of the Lucrece story: thus, while he closely followed the line of the action as it unfolded in Ovid's *Fasti*, he incorporated a number of details from Livy's *History of Rome*. It was easy for him to do this, since sixteenth-century editions of the *Fasti* included commentaries with cross-references; in a magisterial analysis, T. W. Baldwin has shown that all the details in the poem which are derived from Livy and not Ovid would have been available in the commentary by Paulus Marsus in Shakespeare's copy of Ovid.[24] But the fact that Shakespeare's main source was the poet's rather than the historian's version is a first indication that he was not primarily interested in the political significance of the story.

As in *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare's principal interest is the psychology of desire. The moment in Ovid from which he begins is that when Tarquin catches sexual fire. A longish quotation from the Latin is needed here in order to show how Shakespeare built on not merely a narrative and a psychology, but also a rhetoric:

> interea iuvenis furiales regius ignis
> concipit et caeco raptus amore fuit.
> forma placet niveusque color flavique capilli,
> quique aderat nulla factus ab arte decor;
> verba placent et vox, et quod corrumpere non est,
> quoque minor spes est, hoc magis ille cupit.
> iam dederat cantus lucis praenuntius ales,
> cum referunt iuvenes in sua castra pedem.
> carpitur adtonitos absentis imagine sensus
> ille. recordanti plura magisque placent:
> 'sic sedit, sic culta fuit, sic stamina nevit,

[24] See Baldwin, *On the Literary Genetics of Shakspere's Poems and Sonnets* (Urbana, Ill., 1950), 97–153. My account of Shakespeare's compositional process in *Lucrece* builds on Baldwin's invaluable groundwork; his contention that Shakespeare used an annotated edn. of the *Fasti*, perhaps that published in Basle in 1550, is wholly persuasive. According to Baldwin, although the poem could have been written with Ovid and Marsus' notes alone, the argument prefixed to it seems to make use of Livy's original text, Painter's translation of it in *The Pallace of Pleasure* (1566), and Cooper's standard Latin *Thesaurus*. The argument thus appears to differ from the poem in its use of source-material as well as in its content (the argument includes but the poem omits the visit to Rome by all the principal men of the army, in which Lucrece is discovered virtuously spinning among her maids while all the other wives are out revelling and disporting).

neglectae collo sic iacuere comae,
hos habuit voltus, haec illi verba fuerunt,
hic color, haec facies, hic decor oris erat.'
ut solet a magno fluctus languescere flatu,
sed tamen a vento, qui fuit, unda tumet,
sic, quamvis aberat placitae praesentia formae,
quem dederat praesens forma, manebat amor.
ardet et iniusti stimulis agitatus amoris
comparat indigno vimque dolumque toro.
'exitus in dubio est: audebimus ultima!' dixit,
'viderit! audentes forsque deusque iuvat.
cepimus audendo Gabios quoque.'

Meantime the royal youth caught fire and fury, and transported by blind love he raved. Her figure pleased him, and that snowy hue, that yellow hair, and artless grace; pleasing, too, her words and voice and virtue incorruptible; and the less hope he had, the hotter his desire. Now had the bird, the herald of the dawn, uttered his chant, when the young men retraced their steps to camp. Meantime the image of his absent love preyed on his senses crazed. In memory's light more fair and fair she grew. ''Twas thus she sat, 'twas thus she dressed, 'twas thus she spun the threads, 'twas thus her tresses careless lay upon her neck; that was her look, these were her words, that was her colour, that her form, and that her lovely face.' As after a great gale the surge subsides, and yet the billow heaves, lashed by the wind now fallen, so, though absent now that winsome form and far away, the love which by its presence it had struck into his heart remained. He burned, and, goaded by the pricks of an unrighteous love, he plotted violence and guile against an innocent bed. 'The issue is in doubt. We'll dare the utmost,' said he. 'Let her look to it! God and fortune help the daring. By daring we captured Gabii too.'[25]

This passage is like Shakespeare's poem—or rather the first half of Shakespeare's poem—in miniature. It is driven by ardour. As 'ignis' ('fire') and 'ardet' ('he burned') are key words here, so Shakespeare from his first stanza onward plays persistently on Tarquin's heat:

From the besieged Ardea all in post,
Borne by the trustless wings of false desire,
Lust-breathèd Tarquin leaves the Roman host
And to Collatium bears the lightless fire
Which, in pale embers hid, lurks to aspire
And girdle with embracing flames the waist
Of Collatine's fair love, Lucrece the chaste.
(1–7)

[25] *Fasti*, ii. 761–83, with J. G. Frazer's Loeb trans., adapted.

The first line seems to introduce a pun that Ovid could well have made but didn't: the city which the Romans happen to be besieging is *Ard*ea and its name prepares the reader for Tarquin's sexual *ard*our.

Shakespeare further complicates Ovid on the matter of colour. Red is of course the colour of Tarquin's hot desire. In the Latin, white is the colour of Lucrece's purity ('niveusque color', 'and her snowy complexion'), but in Shakespeare that white mingles with the red of beauty's blushes, so that the two colours wage heraldic war in Lucrece's face ('Argued by beauty's red and virtue's white'—65), somehow contaminating Lucrece with Tarquin's colour. What Shakespeare has found here is a physical emblem for Ovid's sense that nothing provokes desire more than antithesis. The more artless Lucrece is ('aderat nulla factus ab arte decor'), the more Tarquin wishes to exercise the arts of love upon her; the very fact that she has not dressed her hair seductively, that it falls carelessly ('neglectae') on her neck, makes him all the more hot to seduce her. In Shakespeare, 'Her hair like golden threads played with her breath— | O modest wantons, wanton modesty!' (400–1): the oxymoron in the second line of this comes to the core of the poem's depiction of Tarquin's antithetical desire. Shakespeare learnt his oxymoronic rhetoric from Ovid: the Latin text frequently plays on words, as when Tarquin enters Collatinus' house 'hostis ut hospes' (787), 'an enemy as a guest'; *Lucrece* in turn is full of puns like 'for his prey to pray he doth begin' (342).

But the play of linguistic contraries is not just ornament, for it figures the psychology of contrariness. In the long passage quoted above, Tarquin's desire increases in proportion to Lucrece's unattainability; the point is embodied in the antithetical structure of the line 'quoque *minor* spes est, hoc *magis* ille cupit'—the less the hope, the more the desire. This is one of the many respects in which Shakespeare follows Ovid even as he differs from him. In the passage quoted, Ovid's Tarquin is taking fire at the sight and then the memory of Lucrece's beauty. Shakespeare omits this first visit to Rome, in which Tarquin, Collatinus, and their comrades travel together; he proceeds straight from Collatine's indiscreet verbal 'unlocking' or 'publishing' of Lucrece's beauty to Tarquin's solitary lust-breathing rush to Rome. Tarquin is smitten before he has actually seen Lucrece. In effect, Shakespeare has transformed the line 'quoque minor spes est, hoc magis ille cupit' into the main source of Tarquin's desire. He is turned on and driven to Lucrece's bed not so much by the report of her

beauty as by the very thing which gives him no hope of obtaining her, the image of her exemplary chastity. The word itself is enough to fire him up: 'Haply that name of chaste unhapp'ly set | This bateless edge on his keen appetite' (8–9). His lust is also bound up with the dynamics of power: the idea of her loyalty to her husband provokes envy and the thought that 'meaner men' should not be entitled to possess anything which he, the king's son, lacks (39–42). Tarquin is an image of the same thing as Angelo in *Measure for Measure*: a man who is made very excited by the thought of purity and whose dominant social position gives him (he thinks) a freedom to satisfy his desires without paying a price.

Shakespeare's extended exploration of Tarquin's state of mind is developed from a few brief hints in Ovid. Sometimes the imitation is of a fairly routine nature. For example, the technique of comparing desire to a force of nature (the image of the storm and its aftermath in the passage quoted above) is merely used in passing ('No cloudy show of stormy blust'ring weather | Doth yet in his fair welkin once appear | Till sable night . . .'—115–17). Again, Ovid's stock image of Tarquin as wolf and Lucrece as lamb (800) is improvised upon in equally stock figures of wolf, lamb, and foreboding owl (165–7).[26] But more often, there is an injection of verbal energy of the sort that delighted Elizabethan readers. Ovid's 'surgit' (793, 'he rises'), for Tarquin getting up in the middle of the night, becomes a lively, alliterative 'And now this lustful lord leapt from his bed' (169). And the sword ('et aurata vagina liberat ensem'—'and from the gilded scabbard he draws his sword', 793) is wittily made into both a source of physical light and a pretext for mental darkness in that the wielding of it anticipates the rape:

> His falchion on a flint he softly smiteth,
> That from the cold stone sparks of fire do fly,
> Whereat a waxen torch forthwith he lighteth,
> Which must be lodestar to his lustful eye,
> And to the flame thus speaks advisedly:

[26] These images occur in the stanza 'Now stole upon the time the dead of night . . .' (162–8) which is a formal *chronographia* expanded from Ovid's 'Nox erat et tota lumina nulla domo' (792, 'it was night and there was no light in the whole house') and incorporating details from the textbook *chronographia* of the moment when Virgil's Dido resolves on suicide ('Nox erat, et placidum carpebant fessa soporem | corpora per terras . . .', *Aeneid*, iv. 522 ff., 'It was night, and over the earth weary creatures were tasting peaceful slumber').

> 'As from this cold flint I enforced this fire,
> So Lucrece must I force to my desire.'
> (176–82)

There is a certain labour about Tarquin's spelling out of the 'As . . . so' formulation; Ovid invests his single line with a sexual charge in much more economic fashion ('surgit' has phallic overtones and 'vagina' does not only suggest a scabbard).[27] The sharper part of Shakespeare's expansion is the lighting of the torch; in a correlative image a little later, this same torch will be almost extinguished by the wind which tries to stay Tarquin's steps and then reignited by his own hot breath (314–15). Such attention to the mundane matter of the means by which the rapist sees his way through the dark house is a mark of Shakespeare the dramatist: it is no coincidence that he reimagined this stealthy pacing to the bedroom in his great theatrical night-pieces, Macbeth as withered murder *en route* to Duncan's chamber 'With Tarquin's ravishing strides' (II. i. 55) and Iachimo emerging from the trunk in Imogen's bedroom with the words, 'Our Tarquin thus | Did softly press the rushes ere he wakened | The chastity he wounded' (*Cymb.* II. ii. 12–14, superbly written lines which will be discussed in Chapter 6).

Lucrece is not a dramatic poem in the dynamic sense—it is interested in the action of language, not a language of action—but it shares with the Shakespearian drama a taste for interior monologue. Ovid's Tarquin hesitates for a moment before resolving to go forward: 'exitus in dubio est' ('the issue is in doubt'). Shakespeare's stops in his tracks 'And in his inward mind he doth debate' (185) for twelve whole stanzas. Although this has the effect of retarding the action, it opens up the character of Tarquin, allowing the reader to get inside his mind, to see the 'disputation | 'Tween frozen conscience and hot-burning will' (246–7). This is a dry run for the soliloquies of Angelo and Macbeth.

Once in the bedroom, Shakespeare continues in his mode of *copia*. When Ovid's Tarquin recollected Lucrece's beauty, he accumulated images of her in a pattern of repetition: 'sic sedit, sic culta fuit, sic stamina nevit . . . hic color, haec facies, hic decor oris erat' (771–4, quoted above). For Ovid's brief phrases, Shakespeare substitutes whole descriptive stanzas in the manner of the blazon: 'Her lily hand

[27] John Kerrigan would defend the 'labour' of Tarquin's 'spelling out' in Shakespeare on the grounds that the work of interpretation—of spelling out—is very much the matter of the poem: see his article, 'Keats and *Lucrece*', *ShS* xli (1989), 103–18, esp. pp. 106–7, 115.

. . . Her hair like golden threads . . . Her breasts like ivory globes . . . Her azure veins, her alabaster skin, | Her coral lips, her snow-white dimpled chin' (386–420).

The stanza on the breasts is the most striking expansion. Ovid has a single and painfully tactile couplet: 'effugiat? positis urgentur pectora palmis, | tunc primum externa pectora tacta manu' (803–4, 'could she flee? [No,] his hands pressed heavily on her breasts, her breasts which then for the first time felt the touch of a strange hand'). A lot of work is done by a very few words here. A sense of suffocation is established by the way that the pressure on the breasts prevents Lucrece from moving; there is a parallel with the horrible moment in Shakespeare when Tarquin silences his victim by stuffing her 'nightly linen' in her mouth (680–1). 'Urgentur' powerfully catches the rapist's frenzied pressure, and the second line suggests something of how the rape is a double violation because it is like a second loss of virginity—it is not strictly true that Tarquin is the first stranger to touch Lucrece's breasts, for presumably Collatinus did so when he first made love to his wife, but the point here is that because his was a lover's touch his hand did not seem external and invasive as Tarquin's does. Shakespeare sacrifices the economy for the sake of a more explicit reference to Collatine and his prior possession of his wife's body:

> Her breasts like ivory globes circled with blue,
> A pair of maiden worlds unconquerèd,
> Save of their lord no bearing yoke they knew,
> And him by oath they truly honourèd.
> These worlds in Tarquin new ambition bred,
> Who like a foul usurper went about
> From this fair throne to heave the owner out.
> (407–13)

The conceit of the breasts as globes may be borrowed from Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*,[28] but the twist in the couplet has a powerful resonance in the context of *Lucrece* as a whole. A blazon is a mapping of the woman's body and mapping is a means of control; Tarquin is like an ambitious Elizabethan adventurer setting out to conquer the virgin land of the New World, so that it can be mapped and appear on

[28] 'For though the rising iv'ry mount he scal'd, | Which is with azure circling lines empal'd, | Much like a globe (a globe may I term this, | By which love sails to regions full of bliss)' (ii. 273–6).

the globe emblazoned with a name denoting the queen (Virginia). But he has no intention of giving his conquest over to a higher power in the manner of, say, Ralegh returning from Guiana; he wants the 'maiden worlds' for himself and that entails displacing the rightful owner (there is no proto-feminist questioning of Collatine's right of possession: Lucrece is yoked to him by the oath of marriage). Ironically, the man of royal blood usurps the throne of the commoner; this inversion prepares the way for the end of the poem, where the final consequence of the rape is played through as the Tarquins are heaved off their throne and the Roman republic is established.

It is because loss of empire is the ultimate cost which Tarquin pays for his conquest—the military metaphors are all-pervasive—that the victory is a defeat. Ovid states this in another of his highly economic couplets, immediately after the rape and before the dawn: 'quid, victor, gaudes? haec te victoria perdet. | heu quanto regnis nox stetit una tuis!' (811–12, 'why, victor, do you rejoice? this victory will ruin you. Alas [for you], how much one night has cost you—your kingdom!'). 'Haec te victoria perdet' brings the oxymoronic structure to a climax. Tarquin's gain is his family's loss; Lucrece's loss is Rome's gain—she is the sacrificial victim required for the bringing of a new political order. But Shakespeare does not give prominence to this idea of Lucrece as a republican martyr, which is what she so often became when the story was retold.[29]

The *Fasti* is Ovid's most 'official' poem; it tells the public story of Rome's civic traditions and the calendrical rites which commemorate key events in the city's history. The story of Tarquin and Lucrece is entered on 24 February, the date on which the city celebrated the *Regifugium* ('flight of the king'). Shakespeare's poem, on the other hand, is more interested in desire than in politics; it implicitly endorses Sir Philip Sidney's argument that poetry can transcend the particularities of history. In accordance with his innovative emphasis on Tarquin's psychology, Shakespeare withholds the political conse-

[29] For a feminist argument that rape is made the price for the establishment of a republic, pursued in relation to both classical Rome and Italian Renaissance humanism, see Stephanie H. Jed, *Chaste Thinking: The Rape of Lucretia and the Birth of Humanism* (Bloomington, Ind., 1989). But it seems to me that the argument will not work for Shakespeare's less obviously republican version of the story. Indeed, Ian Donaldson argues that certain images in the poem, far from being republican, suggest a 'discreet political counter-attack': the simile of Tarquin as 'a foul usurper' is an irony at his expense—it makes him into a deposer of himself—but the irony depends on a deep respect for kingship and a sense of the heinousness of the very notion of rebellion. See Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia: A Myth and its Transformations* (Oxford, 1982), 117.

quences until the very final stanza of the poem and in the immediate aftermath of the rape concentrates instead on the rapist's mental state: 'haec te victoria perdet' becomes 'A captive victor that hath lost in gain' (730), but the loss is articulated as 'the burden of a guilty mind' (735) rather than banishment from Rome. Tarquin's departure from the bedchamber is not even recorded in the *Fasti*, whereas in *Lucrece* he creeps away 'like a thievish dog' and sweats 'with guilty fear' (736, 740). We half expect him actually to become a dog, as a character in the *Metamorphoses* would. He has been transformed from a historical character into a mythic one: he is an archetypal figure, standing for all who are unable to curb their own will. As in Sonnet 129, the sexual will is ultimately self-consuming: 'His taste delicious, in digestion souring, | Devours his will that lived by foul devouring' (699–700). Here Tarquin undergoes an inward transformation that is the inevitable consequence of the desire that drives him. It is at the same time the kind of fitting punishment that is externalized in such figures as Ovid's Erysichthon, who pays for his wilfulness with perpetual hunger, and Spenser's Malbecco, who is so jealous that he eventually 'woxen so deform'd, that he has quight | Forgot he was a man, and Gelosy is hight' (*Faerie Queene*, III. x. 60). The souring of Tarquin's desire and the welling up of his guilt constitute early examples of a manœuvre that Shakespeare continued to practise in his mature tragedies: the rewriting of Ovid's physical changes in the form of mental transformations.

For the rest of the poem—more than a thousand further lines—the focus is on the raped Lucrece. At times the imitation of the *Fasti* remains quite close, as when Shakespeare copies Ovid's line about Lucrece being thrice unable to open her mouth to tell her husband and father what has happened, so unspeakable is the crime, so intense her shame. Thus Ovid's 'ter conata loqui ter destitit, ausaque quarto . . .' (823, 'three times she tried to speak, three times she gave over speaking, and daring on the fourth attempt . . .') becomes Shakespeare's 'Three times with sighs she gives her sorrow fire | Ere once she can discharge one word of woe' (1604–5); in a typical Renaissance amplification, Shakespeare combines the figure of three silences to one speech with a new figure that is not in Ovid, a military image ('gives fire', 'discharge') that harks back to the metaphors of siege warfare in the bedroom scene. But the second half of the poem also includes some much more substantial amplifications. These travel some distance from the source: where Tarquin after the rape is taken

from the *Fasti* and rewritten in the mode of a moralized reading of the *Metamorphoses*, Lucrece is rewritten as an emblem of the power of art to relieve suffering. She too seems to enter the *Metamorphoses*, but she does so not as one of Ovid's victims, but as one of his artists, a weaver of narrative like the daughters of Minyas, who reject the wild sexual rites of Bacchus and stay indoors to narrate the matter of Book Four, including the contrasting love-stories of Pyramus and Thisbe and Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. As they spin and weave, so Lucrece artfully constructs a visual set-piece, an *ekphrasis*.

First, however, she tries to sublimate her anguish through the traditional mode of the female complaint, with its highly formalized expressions of woe. But this tradition is moribund: the rhetoric simply does not work for her.[30] She endlessly reduplicates verbal figures without achieving any emotional advance. Formal complaint offers no remedy: it is a 'helpless smoke of words' that does Lucrece 'no right' (1027). Only when exemplary *narratives* are made available to her does the poem move forward. Her accusing apostrophe to night, opportunity, and time is finally exhausted at dawn. Cessation of the nightingale's song effects the temporal punctuation: 'By this, lamenting Philomel had ended | The well-tuned warble of her nightly sorrow' (1079–80). The end of the night and of the nightingale's song is also the textual marker for the end of Lucrece's complaint; Lucrece and Philomel are thus identified with each other. Since they are both archetypal rape victims, it is an obvious enough identification (Shakespeare might have been drawn to it by the fact that the brief entry in the *Fasti* for the day after 24 February concerns the swallow who is both the harbinger of spring and the metamorphosed form of Procne, Philomel's sister). Lucrece then goes on to complain to the day for revealing her shame and to the daytime birds for singing merrily. This leads her to invoke Philomel as a more appropriate songster:

> 'Come, Philomel, that sing'st of ravishment,
> Make thy sad grove in my dishevelled hair.

[30] 'Shakespeare is writing not merely within the complaint tradition but also against it: he is rendering many of its assumptions very prominent and very problematical. If Lucrece delivers a complaint against Tarquin, in a sense Shakespeare delivers one against his genre': Heather Dubrow, 'A Mirror for Complaints: Shakespeare's *Lucrece* and Generic Tradition', in *Renaissance Genres*, ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), 399–417 (p. 400); the substance of the essay is incorporated in Dubrow's *Captive Victors*.

As the dank earth weeps at thy languishment,
So I at each sad strain will strain a tear,
And with deep groans the diapason bear;
For burden-wise I'll hum on Tarquin still,
While thou on Tereus descants better skill.

'And whiles against a thorn thou bear'st thy part
To keep thy sharp woes waking, wretched I,
To imitate thee well, against my heart
Will fix a sharp knife to affright mine eye,
Who if it wink shall thereon fall and die.
These means, as frets upon an instrument,
Shall tune our heart-strings to true languishment.

'And for, poor bird, thou sing'st not in the day,
As shaming any eye should thee behold,
Some dark deep desert seated from the way,
That knows not parching heat nor freezing cold,
Will we find out, and there we will unfold
To creatures stern sad tunes to change their kinds.
Since men prove beasts, let beasts bear gentle minds.'
(1128–48)

Dialogue with the nightingale provides a way out which is not available to the isolated complainer; this is the first moment of shared emotion in the poem. It is achieved by imagining two female voices harmonized musically—'strain', 'diapason', 'descants', 'means',[31] and 'frets' are all technical terms. Instruments of pain become the means of making music: Shakespeare is moving towards a classical definition of tragedy, the traditional work of which is to transform knives to frets and thus to tune the cracked heart-strings. Lucrece proposes that she and Philomel will team up to play the part of Orpheus singing to the beasts. Within the allusion there is a sophisticated interpretation of the place of Orphic song in the *Metamorphoses* as a whole: Lucrece implicitly argues that it inverts the normative pattern of the poem, in which 'men prove beasts', by using music to make 'beasts bear gentle minds'. Before the rape, her verbal art is compared to that of Orpheus in an earlier part of the myth, the moment when the singer descends into the underworld and plays his lyre so sweetly that Pluto sleeps and Eurydice is able to escape: 'So his unhallowed haste her words delays, | And moody Pluto winks while Orpheus plays' (552–3). In the previous stanza to

[31] A technical term for the middle register between bass and treble.

this, Tarquin is explicitly described as a 'rough beast' (545). But, as Eurydice's escape was short-lived, so is Lucrece's: Tarquin's bestial desire only 'winks' for a moment and soon he silences her with her linen. The second Orphic allusion, in the address to Philomel, undoes this silence and offers a glimpse into an alternative world of gentleness, created by the female voice.

Lucrece begins to help herself through her attempt to help Philomel, as she holds a knife against her breast in imitation of the thorn against which the nightingale presses her breast. The thorn's pricking is what causes the metamorphosed Philomel to cry 'tereu, tereu', the name of her rapist, Tereus; Lucrece's long and painful performance comes to a corresponding climax when she finally brings herself to say the name of Tarquin. Like Philomel's, hers is a stifled, half-inarticulate cry:

Here with a sigh as if her heart would break
She throws forth Tarquin's name. 'He, he,' she says—
But more than he her poor tongue could not speak.
(1716–18)

At this moment, it is as if the two women are speaking together. A kind of sisterhood is achieved, but it has no meaning in the male world of Rome, and in the next instant Lucrece kills herself. Nancy Vickers points out that the poem then ends as it began with the woman absent and the men 'rhetorically compet[ing] with each other over Lucrece's body'.[32]

But before the climax is reached Lucrece progresses from music to painting and from speech to action. Her contemplation of 'a piece | of skilful painting made for Priam's Troy' (1366 ff.) gives Shakespeare and his reader the opportunity to enjoy some highly colourful descriptive writing in the manner of Ovid's intricate account of Arachne's tapestries at the beginning of Book Six of the *Metamorphoses* or Spenser's imitation of those tapestries in the House of Busyrane in Book 3 of *The Faerie Queene*. In Book 1 of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas sees a painting of the Trojan war in a temple in Dido's Carthage; this may be the model for the inclusion of an *ekphrasis* in *Lucrece*, but the descriptions themselves—of the contention of Ajax and Ulysses, the venerable Nestor, the grieving Hecuba—are derived

[32] Nancy J. Vickers, '"The blazon of sweet beauty's best": Shakespeare's *Lucrece*', in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York, 1985), 95–115 (p. 108).

from Ovid's account of the Trojan war in Book Thirteen of the *Metamorphoses*. As in *Troilus and Cressida* and *The Tempest*, Shakespeare contaminates high Virgilian matter with its Ovidian revision. Ovid switches the emphasis from the march towards the establishment of empire to the expression of female suffering. He sidesteps rather than plods in the master's tracks, he weaves a dance around the unbending line of the Virgilian text. His improvisation on Virgil prefigures Shakespeare's on him: again, Shakespeare is drawn to the emotions rather than the politics of the story. He dwells not on the public and specifically republican consequences of the rape, but on the private and distinctively female space in which suffering can be voiced and the silence to which a woman must submit in public can be temporarily broken—Lucrece in fact gets to speak more lines than any other female persona in any other individual work of Shakespeare.[33]

Having identified with the suffering Philomel, Lucrece finds more woe, yet also more companionship, in the suffering Hecuba (her maid weeps in sympathy with her, but it is only in the mythological *exempla* that Lucrece can confide):

> So Lucrece, set a-work, sad tales doth tell
> To pencilled pensiveness and coloured sorrow:
> She lends them words, and she their looks doth borrow.
> (1496–8)

There is a creative reciprocity at work here, an artful exchange. Lucrece goes to the painting in search of 'a face where all distress is stelled' (1444)—'stelled' is a coruscating multiple pun, suggesting 'stalled', penned up, 'stiled', penned with a stylus, 'steeled', engraved, and 'stelled', fixed. She finds the face she is looking for in the despairing Hecuba. The latter is the exemplary picture of grief—'Time's ruin, beauty's wreck, and grim care's reign' are 'anatomized' in her (1450–1)—but, being painted, she has no tongue. Lucrece therefore says that she will sing for her, perform her grief: ' "Poor instrument," quoth she, "without a sound, | I'll tune thy woes with my lamenting tongue" ' (1464–5). It is a performance intended to elicit from the Elizabethan reader a response akin to Hamlet's when the Player once more expresses and beautifies the grief of Hecuba.

[33] She speaks 645 lines (more than a third of the text). Her only possible competitor is Rosalind (who has about 635, but a strict line-count is hard, since she speaks so much prose). I agree with Philippa Berry's sense that this part of the poem allows a female voice to be heard and that this voice makes Lucrece more than 'a sign used to mediate and define men's relationships to men' (which is what she is in readings such as those of Nancy Vickers, cited in my previous n., and Coppélia Kahn, in 'The Rape in Shakespeare's *Lucrece*', *Shakespeare Studies*, ix (1976), 45–72)—Berry, 'Woman, Language, and History in *The Rape of Lucrece*', *ShS* xliv (1992), 33–9 (p. 33).

With the painting of Hecuba, as with the address to Philomel, a 'sympathy of woe' (to use a phrase that belongs to the Andronicus family)[34] is established between two female figures. It is a pattern which Shakespeare reiterates in the opening lines of 'A Lover's Complaint': 'From off a hill whose concave womb re-worded | A plaintful story from a sist'ring vale.' The echo effect here creates a sister for the deserted woman who is voicing the complaint: that sister is Echo, herself a despairing lover. We learn a few lines later that the lover is tearing up letters. Initially we assume that these are epistles to or from the man who has deserted her, as they would be in the *Heroides*; we discover later that they are in fact letters to the man from his previous lovers, which he has tactlessly passed on to her as tokens of his desirability. The tearing of them may then be seen as a revision of the *Heroides*. Ovid's women write to their lovers in a tone of anger mixed with grief; the letters veer between threats of suicide and pleadings for a second chance, for the man to return. The pathos of the collection is the reader's knowledge that the end will usually be suicide, not reunion. The tearing of letters in 'A Lover's Complaint' is a recognition that the attempt to get a fickle man back by writing to him is doomed; the lover rejects the written appeal to the man and finds instead a feminine *locus*—a hill with a womb, a vale that is a sister—in which her voice can be doubled with that of Echo and the plaint can offer some relief.

But the male will always intrude. In 'A Lover's Complaint' the double female voice is overheard by the narrator of the poem, the 'I' who in the first stanza 'laid to list the sad-tuned tale'. In *Lucrece*, male eyes watch the woeful women. At the climax of the viewing of the painting, a face stares back at Lucrece. It is that of false Sinon, who insinuated the fatal Horse into Troy. In Lucrece's mind, Sinon's face is metamorphosed into that of Tarquin. Shakespeare has taken Sinon from Virgil's second book (*Aen.* ii. 77 ff.) and grafted him on to an Ovidian image of Tarquin as the same kind of deceiver. In the passage of the *Fasti* quoted earlier, Tarquin cites a personal precedent for his decision to take Lucrece by cunning followed up with force: 'cepimus

[34] *Titus*, III. i. 148.

audendo Gabios quoque', 'by daring we captured Gabii too'. The allusion is to the incident narrated in the first half of the *Fasti* for 24 February, in which Sextus Tarquinius gained entry to Gabii by pretending to have been cast out from Rome, then betrayed the city from within. In his annotated edition of the *Fasti*, Shakespeare would have found a note by Marsus that made the Trojan parallel explicit: 'Ut Sinon apud Virg.' ('as Sinon in Virgil').[35] Shakespeare thus maps Tarquin on to Sinon and triangulates the destruction of Troy, of Gabii, and of Lucrece: the intertextual weave is artful in the extreme. But just as the educated reader is finding a way through it, Lucrece scratches Sinon out of the painting in her most vigorous action prior to her suicide. Self-reflexive art by itself—what I have called 'the intertextual weave'—can only do so much: it must lead to action. The whole sequence exemplifies the difficulty the human mind has in forgetting; rape is mental as well as physical spoliation in that the image of the rapist enters his victim's mind. She then tries to erase him, but cannot: you can't undo a rape, you can't undo history. Sinon and Tarquin will never be unwritten. Lucrece herself recognizes this, but her action, built upon her reading, has afforded her a limited catharsis: 'At last she smilingly with this gives o'er: | "Fool, fool," quoth she, "his wounds will not be sore"' (1567–8). That wry smile—her first—is a boldly Ovidian change of tone. It affords Lucrece a kind of satisfaction. For a moment, there seems to be an indecorum in a smile at such a moment, but then the reader perceives its psychological truth and sees Lucrece as the opposite of Tarquin, as at least momentarily a victor in defeat.

The intrusive eyes are also those of the male reader, who earlier in the poem has been made complicit with the rape: the artfully rhetorical twist of referring to the golden threads of Lucrece's hair as 'Modest wantons, wanton modesty' unavoidably endorses Tarquin's own wantonness. So too, the blazon that describes Lucrece's body, relishing the ivory globes of her breast, elides the reader's gaze with Tarquin's: like the rapist, the reader of the blazon has 'mightily noted' the woman's passive, sleeping form—and 'What did he note but strongly he desired?' (414–15). Once this is perceived, one realizes why Lucrece's artful rhetoric is needed in the second half of the poem: it must compensate for Tarquin's duplicitous art. Language must be shown to have sympathetic capabilities as well as coercive and

[35] *Fasti* (Basle, 1550), 141, cited in Baldwin, *Literary Genetics of Poems*, 145.

voyeuristic ones. The rape of Helen led to the fall of Troy; the rape of Lucrece leads to the rise of the Roman republic. That is the immediate relevance of the passage concerning Lucrece and the painting. But its profounder relevance is aesthetic more than historical. Shakespeare concentrates on the art of the painter, the 'imaginary work', the 'Conceit deceitful, so compact' (1422–3), in order to suggest that art may be a lie which outdoes the truth of nature—not a malicious lie, but a comforting one. The comfort has ultimately to be ours, not Lucrece's. To be true to history—and the historical plot does finally enter in the poem's last stanza—she must commit suicide. And even in the sections of the poem when we are to imagine her gaining comfort through her communion with Philomel and Hecuba, a moment's reflection reveals that the emotions are ours, not hers. 'Lucrece' has no more reality than the two female mythological figures whom she addresses; but then she also has no less reality than them, in that all three of them have the truth of exemplarity. To put her in front of a picture is to remind us that we are in front of an artwork ourselves, a verbal picture, an exemplary rather than a particular truth. But that is how rhetoric works: it creates emotion *in the listener*. The narrative of her works for us as the image of Hecuba works for her.

Nevertheless, Shakespeare did, I think, recognize that there is potentially something tasteless about giving so much rhetorical copiousness to a persona who is supposed to have been raped. The *ekphrasis* is introduced as a way of getting beyond the flat rhetoric of the complaint tradition. But it still depends on Lucrece's speech, on an eloquence that may well appear indecorous in the mouth of the violated. Her linguistic art is displayed for the pleasure of the predominantly male readership. The male reader stares in upon the suffering Lucrece as Sinon intrudes upon the female space of Hecuba; the scratching out of Sinon is a marvellous move, but the reader cannot be similarly erased unless the poem is to be torn up like the letters in 'A Lover's Complaint'. Shakespeare overcame this problem quite remarkably in *Titus Andronicus*. There Lavinia is permanently silenced at the time of her rape: the way in which she is deprived of the musical art that was previously a mark of her grace is an emblem of the pathos of her loss. Despite the innovative *ekphrasis*, *The Rape of Lucrece* remains 'The Complaint of Lucrece'; in a bolder revision—one might even call it a deconstruction—of the genre of complaint, Shakespeare invents in the character of Lavinia a 'Speechless

complainer' (III. ii. 39).[36] The musical voice of complaint, loaded in every rift with Ovidian poetic ore, is given over to Marcus. Where Lucrece is a poet even as she is a sufferer, in *Titus* there is a stark disjunction between rhetorically measured language and the woman's mutilated body. Lavinia is not vouchsafed Philomel's release into song; her rape is never sublimated. She is not even allowed an artful suicide, as Lucrece is—her father can only expiate her shame by killing her.

[36] I believe that *Titus* really was a 'new' play when Philip Henslowe recorded it as such at the Rose Theatre on 23 Jan. 1594 and that it was therefore composed in very close proximity to *Lucrece*, which must belong to this period—Shakespeare presumably had his second narrative poem in mind when he referred to 'some graver labour' in the dedication to *Venus and Adonis* (entered 18 Apr. 1593); it was itself entered on the Stationers' Register on 9 May 1594. My date for *Titus* is later than that given by most scholars; I shall argue my case for it in the introd. to my forthcoming Arden edn. of the play. It should, however, be noted here that there is particular emphasis on Lavinia as a 'speechless complainer' in the fly-killing scene, which was a late addition to the play (it does not appear in the quarto that was entered on 6 Feb. 1594) and therefore almost certain to have post-dated *Lucrece*.

Shakespeare and Ovid

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