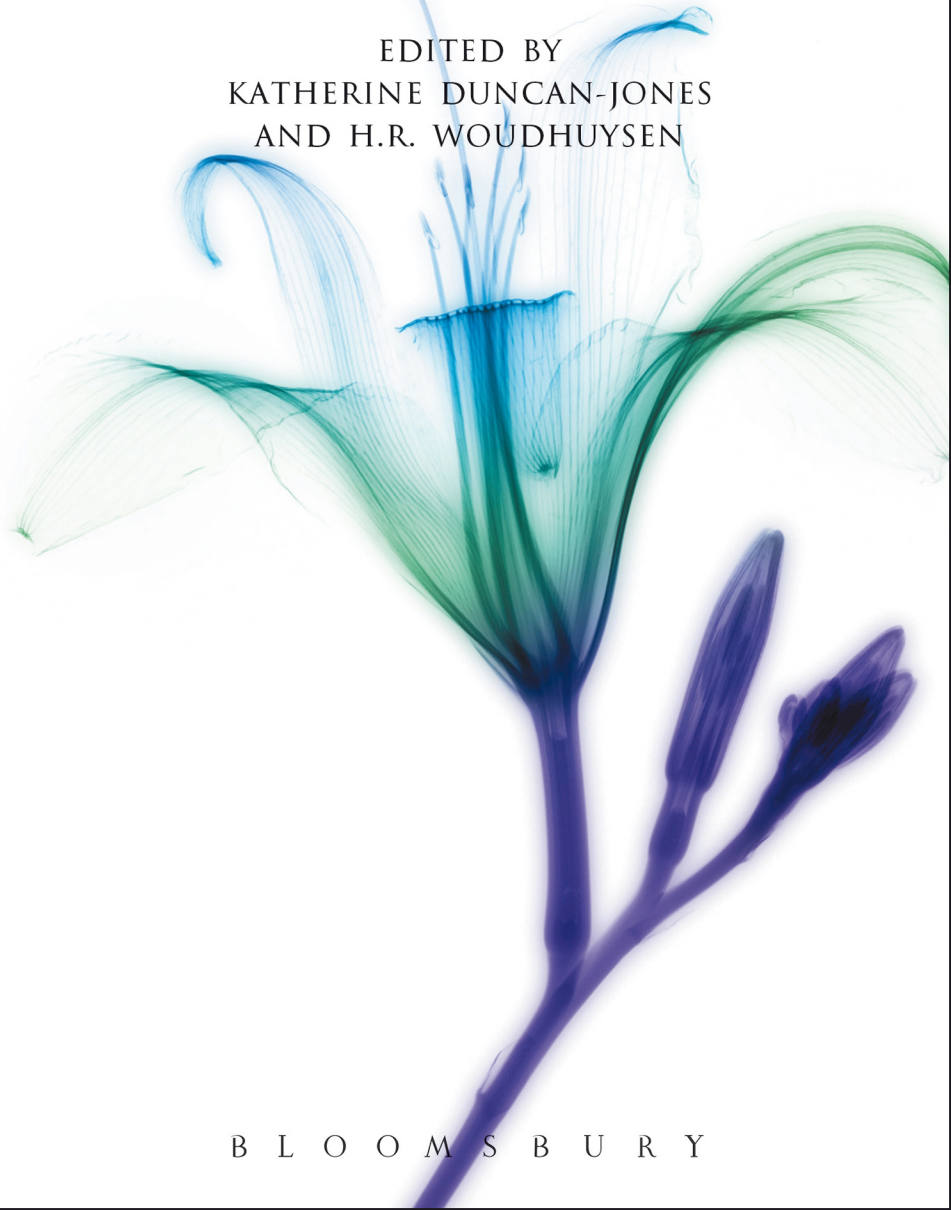


THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

SHAKESPEARE'S POEMS

EDITED BY
KATHERINE DUNCAN-JONES
AND H.R. WOULDHUYSEN



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THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

SHAKESPEARE'S POEMS

Venus and Adonis,
The Rape of Lucrece and
the Shorter Poems

Edited by

KATHERINE DUNCAN-JONES
AND H.R. WOULDHUYSEN

THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

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GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

The earliest volume in the first Arden series, Edward Dowden's *Hamlet*, was published in 1899. Since then the Arden Shakespeare has been widely acknowledged as the pre-eminent Shakespeare edition, valued by scholars, students, actors and 'the great variety of readers' alike for its clearly presented and reliable texts, its full annotation and its richly informative introductions.

In the third Arden series we seek to maintain these well-established qualities and general characteristics, preserving our predecessors' commitment to presenting works as they have been shaped in history. Although each volume necessarily has its own particular emphasis which reflects the unique possibilities and problems posed by the work in question, the series as a whole maintains the highest standards of scholarship, combined with attractive and accessible presentation.

Newly edited from the original quarto and folio editions, texts are presented in fully modernized form, with a textual apparatus that records all substantial divergences from those early printings. The notes and introductions focus on the possibilities of meaning that editors and critics have discovered in the work. While building upon the rich history of scholarly activity that has long shaped our understanding of Shakespeare's works, this third series of the Arden Shakespeare is enlivened by a new generation's encounter with Shakespeare.

THE TEXT

On each page of the work itself, readers will find a passage of text supported by commentary and textual notes. In the text itself, unfamiliar typographic conventions have been avoided in order to minimize obstacles to the reader. Elided forms in the early texts are spelt out in full wherever they indicate a usual late twentieth-

century pronunciation that requires no special indication. Marks of elision are retained where they are necessary guides to the scansion and pronunciation of the line. Final -ed in past tense and participial forms of verbs is always printed as -ed, without accent, never as -'d, but wherever the required pronunciation diverges from modern usage a note in the commentary draws attention to the fact. Where the final -ed should be given syllabic value contrary to modern usage, e.g.

Controlling what he was controlled with
(*VA* 270)

the note will take the form

270 **controlled** controllèd

COMMENTARY AND TEXTUAL NOTES

Notes in the commentary, for which a major source will be the *Oxford English Dictionary*, offer glossarial and other explication of verbal difficulties; they may also include discussion of points of interpretation and, in relevant cases, substantial extracts from Shakespeare's source material. Editors will not usually offer glossarial notes for words adequately defined in the latest edition of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* or *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, but in cases of doubt they will include notes. Attention, however, will be drawn to places where more than one likely interpretation can be proposed and to significant verbal and syntactic complexity. Notes preceded by * discuss editorial emendations or variant readings from the early edition(s) on which the text is based.

The textual notes are designed to let readers know when the edited text diverges from the early edition(s) or manuscript sources on which it is based. Wherever this happens the note will record the rejected reading of the early edition(s), in original spelling, and the source of the reading adopted in this edition. Other forms from the early edition(s) recorded in these notes will include some spellings of particular interest or significance. Where two or more early editions or manuscript sources are

involved, for instance with *The Passionate Pilgrim*, the notes also record all important differences between them. The textual notes take a form that has been in use since the nineteenth century. This comprises, first: line reference, reading adopted in the text and closing square bracket; then: abbreviated reference, in italic, to the earliest source to adopt the accepted reading, italic semicolon and noteworthy alternative reading(s), each with abbreviated italic reference to its source. Distinctive spellings of the basic text follow the square bracket without indication of source and are enclosed in italic brackets. Names enclosed in italic brackets indicate originators of conjectural emendations when these did not originate in an edition of the text, or when the named edition records a conjecture not accepted into its text.

P R E F A C E

In ‘pete the parrot and shakespeare’, a comic poem parodying E.E. Cummings, first published in 1931, the American writer Don Marquis drew a touching sketch of Shakespeare weeping into his beer in the Mermaid Tavern, drinking heavily in the company of Ben Jonson and Francis Beaumont. He views his whole career as a failure, despite much wealth and popular acclaim, because he has spent so much of it writing sensationalist plays for the general public rather than elegant verse for the book-buying elite:

hells bells that isn t
what i want to do
i want to write sonnets and
songs and spenserian stanzas
and i might have done it too
if i hadn t got
into this frightful show game
business business business
grind grind grind
what a life for a man
that might have been a poet
(from *archy and mehitabel*, 120)

Though the point is made playfully, it carries more than a grain of truth. It was the narrative poems that established Shakespeare’s early fame most strongly. Among his best-educated readers – academics, students, clergymen – his failure to write any more such poems after 1594 must have been extremely disappointing.

Yet in modern times both his *Sonnets* and, even more, his narrative poems have generally been viewed as peripheral to Shakespeare's achievement. When large international Shakespeare conferences focus only on the plays no apology is made. Conversely, when detailed attention is now and then given to the poems in such formal, academic, settings, some professional Shakespearians can be relied on to complain that not enough is being said about the plays, seeming determined to shift discussion back to what they evidently believe to be the only important body of Shakespeare's work. In the hope of indicating the interconnectedness of Shakespeare's writing in all genres we have sought here to locate the poems carefully within Shakespeare's literary career. Both in the Introduction and in the unusually full and detailed commentary notes the reader will find many poem–play links, some thematic, some generic, many stylistic and linguistic. The narrative poems are particularly full of verbal links to the chronologically adjacent *Henry VI* and *Richard III* tetralogy, as well as to *Edward III*, now plausibly dated to 1592–3. The long poems also frequently anticipate images and phrases to which Shakespeare was to return in later works. Though *Venus and Adonis* was the more popular work during his lifetime, it appears to be *Lucrece* that lodged itself most deeply in Shakespeare's creative imagination. It is prominently alluded to in *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Cymbeline* and these allusions reflect Shakespeare's awareness that the poems continued to be reprinted, and to find fresh readers, throughout his career as a leading playwright. Many of the 'Other poems' can also, to a lesser extent, be connected with Shakespeare's career as a playwright. For instance, even though it was probably not designed by Shakespeare himself, the *Passionate Pilgrim* miscellany of 1598 or 1599 offers several allusions to *Romeo and Juliet*, and includes one poem (PP 14) that seems to be a spin-off from it. Even the extraordinary 'Phoenix and Turtle' verses appended to *Love's Martyr* (1601) can be connected with the chronologically proximate *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night*.

Some of Shakespeare's plays, especially his earliest and his latest, were written in collaboration with other writers. The main body of his poems, however, appears to have been his own unaided work. Each of the two great narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Lucrece* (1594), is as long as a (short) play. As we have tried to show broadly in our Introduction, and in fine detail in commentary notes, we believe these to be the most carefully patterned and structured works in the whole canon, as well as the most explicitly 'literary'. Working alone, Shakespeare was able for once to exercise complete control over the design of his artefacts. But while Shakespeare worked alone, we have worked together. We accept joint responsibility for every part of this edition, though the hand of Katherine Duncan-Jones may be most apparent in the Introduction, and that of H.R. Woudhuysen in the commentaries and in Appendix 1.

We are much indebted to previous editors, especially H.E. Rollins, J.C. Maxwell and our Arden predecessor, F.T. Prince, among twentieth-century scholars. More recent editions by John Roe and Colin Burrow have been enormously helpful. The appearance of Burrow's edition of *The Complete Sonnets and Poems* in 2002 and of Patrick Cheney's book *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright* in 2004 have also offered welcome signs that the time may be ripe for a full integration of Shakespeare's non-dramatic verse within the canon.

We are grateful to the patient staff who have assisted our searches in many libraries and archives, including: the British Library; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the library of Christ Church, Oxford; the English Faculty Library, Oxford; Somerville College Library, Oxford; the library of University College London; the University of London Library; the Society of Antiquaries, London; the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office, Stratford-upon-Avon; the National Library of Wales; the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC. We are grateful to the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, for permission to reproduce in Appendix 3 the

‘Poeticall Essaies’, which includes Shakespeare’s ‘The Phoenix and Turtle’, from their copy of Robert Chester’s *Love’s Martyr* (1601).

We have also received expert and generous help from many individuals, including Professor Peter Beal, Dr Robert Bearman, Professor Gordon Campbell, Professor Tom Craik, Professor Martin Dodsworth, Professor David Gants, Antony Griffiths, Dr Beatrice Groves, Dr Helen Hackett, Dr Sally Harper, Dr Nicolas Jacobs, Professor Christa Jansohn, Dr Hilton Kelliher, Denise and Idris Lloyd-Jones, Dr Ceridwen Morgan, Catherine Patterson, Dr John Pitcher, Gillian Robson, Professor Gary Taylor, Professor John Took, Alison and Martin Trowell, Professor Brian Vickers, Professor René Weis.

The eagle-eyed Richard Proudfoot has helped us to purge many errors, omissions and confusions, and has improved the edition as a whole, especially its commentary, at every stage, with characteristically generous and incisive insights and ideas too numerous to list, but here gratefully acknowledged. If there is a bird with sight even sharper than that of the eagle, it is to this that we liken our brilliant copy-editor, Hannah Hyam. She, too, has corrected errors, spotted problems that our own eyes had missed, and has made many helpful suggestions thanks to which our procedures have been made considerably clearer and more consistent than would otherwise have been the case. This edition was originally commissioned by Jessica Hodge; we are grateful to her, and more especially to Margaret Bartley, the current publisher, and to her assistants Philippa Gallagher and her successor Charlotte Loveridge, for their practical help, support and advice. We are grateful also for the critical alertness of Ann Thompson. We are also grateful to Brian Vickers who, at a late stage in the production of this edition, subjected the commentary to a close and critical examination which has improved it in a number of ways. But as with all those who with their watchful scrutinies have assisted in the preparation of this edition, we alone are responsible for any errors and misrepresentations which remain.

One reader whose response to our edition we were eagerly awaiting was Sasha Roberts. Her pioneering study *Reading Shakespeare's Poems in Early Modern England* should have been followed by many further investigations of the literary responses of early modern readers, especially female ones. Her death in September 2006 was shockingly untimely.

Katherine Duncan-Jones, Oxford

H.R. Woudhuysen, London

INTRODUCTION

PRELIMINARIES

Every other volume in the Arden series is devoted to a single work. Even the verse texts in the series' other non-dramatic volume, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, are arguably coherent in their arrangement, and certainly derive from a single original, the 1609 Quarto. As its title indicates, this volume is different. It opens with two works, the 'Narrative' poems, each of which is as long as a (short) play. Well over half of this Introduction is devoted to these substantial poems. Not only are they intimately connected to the rest of Shakespeare's writing (see pp. 54, 56), they are also intimately connected to each other. Whether or not he originally conceived of them as a pair, it is clear that by the time he composed *The Rape of Lucrece*, the second, he intended them as such. Both poems focus on a female protagonist, one a goddess, the other a mortal woman. Both concern sexual desire, Venus' unfulfilled lust for Adonis contrasting with Tarquin's sexual violence against Lucrece. Both draw on classical sources, the first from Graeco-Roman myth, the second from early Roman history. The main action of *Venus and Adonis* occurs out of doors, much of it under bright midday sun. The main action of *Lucrece* occurs indoors and at night, much of it in semi-darkness. There are many refined stylistic and linguistic complementarities between the poems, to which we draw attention in the commentary. Because we believe the poems to be so closely connected, we discuss them in tandem throughout the relevant sections of the Introduction, rather than dealing with them sequentially.

We hope that this procedure will help to attract new readers to this major part of the Shakespeare canon, which is very much more accessible than it may at first appear. Although both *Venus* and *Lucrece* are more patterned and verbally complex than any of the plays, they are also considerably more naturalistic. They require a different kind of reading from the plays that are generally a new student's first point of contact with Shakespeare, and for this reason may at first appear challenging. Yet a concentrated perusal will soon be rewarded. As Heather Dubrow has observed, 'A distrust of elaborate devices . . . leads many modern readers to devalue works that delight in wordplay.' However, as she goes on to say: 'Shakespeare never forgets, and never allows us to forget, the multiple and indissoluble links between the art of rhetoric and the art of living' (Dubrow, 16, 20). Readers new to these poems may especially relish many passages of amusing quick-fire dialogue in *Venus* (see p. 60); the narrator's richly physical evocations of the protagonist's fleshy, sweating body; and his detailed descriptions of horses, dogs, hares, the savage boar and woodland landscape (see pp. 63–4). Such extended descriptions of physical nature are relatively uncommon in Shakespeare's plays. When they do occur, naturally enough, they are used to reinforce a dramatic situation, rather than offering leisurely enjoyment to a reader who may decide to pause and re-read them. The difference can be seen if, for instance, we compare the vivid description of Adonis' splendid horse (289–300) with the comparably vivid prose account of the diseased and ill-equipped horse ridden by Petruchio to his wedding in *The Taming of the Shrew* (3.2.48–63). *Lucrece*'s naturalism is of a rather different kind, relating above all to the complex emotions and reflections of the central figure. No character in a play, even Hamlet, is presented to us so fully and so painfully in terms of individual consciousness. There is also another way in which both poems offer delights absent from the plays. Both are remarkable for their allusions to the art of painting, and invitations to the reader to compare the poet's art with that of the visual artist. *Lucrece* incorporates a very extended description

of a painting of the siege of Troy (1366–1526). As we have tried to indicate both through our choice of illustrations (see especially Figs 2–6, 8) and our discussion of visual artefacts within the section entitled ‘Protagonists: visible and audible women’, these two poems offer unique opportunities to link Shakespeare with the great Renaissance painters of Italy and France. It appears also that he had some acquaintance with artistic theory.

Shakespeare’s ‘other’ poems (including the poems attributed to him in contemporary texts) are extremely diverse in genre and style, ranging from sonnets and amorous lyrics to satirical and punning epigrams. In contrast to the ‘narrative’ poems, whose texts, authorized by Shakespeare himself, were excellently printed by his Stratford contemporary Richard Field, almost all of the ‘other’ poems raise questions about authorship. Just one, ‘The Phoenix and Turtle’, has provoked a huge amount of critical discussion and debate, and has also prompted many widely divergent historical, religious and biographical interpretations. Readers may be surprised to discover how much of this Introduction is devoted to a contextualization of these verses, Shakespeare’s contributions to the ‘Poetical Essays’ appended to Robert Chester’s *Love’s Martyr* (1601). The reason for this is that we feel that the historical context of this volume, and in particular its appended ‘Poetical Essays’, has been rather neglected. Unlike other modern editors, we have attempted to situate *Love’s Martyr* within the career of its dedicatee, the courtier-poet Sir John Salusbury. We believe that Shakespeare was aware of other volumes of verse dedicated to Salusbury, and that he may even have been acquainted with the man himself. Specifically, we connect the publication of *Love’s Martyr* and its appended poems with Salusbury’s painful struggle to join the 1601 Parliament. This largely original historical approach by no means answers all questions about ‘The Phoenix and Turtle’. However, we believe that it provides a good deal of relevant contextual material that readers may wish to consider when arriving at their own conclusions, especially when studied in conjunction with Appendix 3, a facsimile of the ‘Poetical Essays’.

We have also broken some new ground in our exploration of poems and inscriptions with contemporary or early attributions to Shakespeare. More textual witnesses have been examined and collated here than in previous editions, and a considerable amount of new research underpins our accounts of AT 3, 'Verses on the Stanley tomb at Tong', and of AT 9, 'Upon the King'. With the first of these our investigations strengthen the case for the possibility of Shakespeare's authorship. However, discussion of these issues will be found in headnotes and commentaries, rather than in this Introduction. Only the *Passionate Pilgrim* miscellany is discussed in detail here.

LITERARY HISTORY: SWEET SHAKESPEARE

Unlike his earliest plays, Shakespeare's two great narrative poems were published by the poet's own wish, and with his name publicly attached to them. In this sense they were his first literary 'heirs', children of his imagination whose father was proud to see them bear his name. It was because of these poems, rather than his earliest plays, that Shakespeare first became a well-known writer. For his Elizabethan fans, the poet Shakespeare was above all 'sweet'. This is very different from the literary image generally encountered by modern readers. In his *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) A.C. Bradley established a model of Shakespeare's achievement that continues to shape the perceptions of modern readers. Exhibiting the 'high seriousness' that the critic Matthew Arnold (1822–88) had declared to be essential to great art, Bradley's Shakespeare is seen to explore the great mysteries of good and evil and man's place in the cosmos. His claim to the continued attention of posterity rests essentially on the four 'great' tragedies in which he did this, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. Yet this is not how Shakespeare was seen by his contemporaries. His literary reputation was quickly established in the mid-1590s on the strength of the two long poems, currently the most neglected items in the Shakespeare canon, which continued to be reprinted,

read and imitated throughout the Jacobean period. While his burgeoning success as both an actor and a playwright provoked envy, as expressed in the attack on him as an ‘vpstart Crow’ in *Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit* (1592), Shakespeare’s non-theatrical poetry was received with immediate delight. In 1595, for instance, a fierily outspoken clergyman called William Covell, a fellow of Queens’ College, Cambridge, published a book against divination and prophecy to which he appended ‘A Letter from England to Her Three Daughters, Cambridge, Oxford, Inns of Court’. Assuming the voice of ‘England’, Covell claims that contemporary English poets can easily hold their own against those of Italy and France. ‘Diuine *Spenser*’ – a Cambridge man – is a far better poet than either Tasso, Ariosto, Ronsard or Du Bartas. Covell’s ensuing eulogy of an Oxford-educated poet, Samuel Daniel, is accompanied by a long marginal note beginning ‘All praise worthy. Lucrecia Sweet Shakspeare. Eloquent Gaueston. Wanton Adonis’ (sigs R2^v–3^r). Carried away with enthusiasm, Covell appears to have added *Peirs Gaveston* (1594?) – strongly influenced by Shakespeare, but written by Michael Drayton – to Shakespeare’s authentic poems, *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Lucrece* (1594).¹ However, he knew exactly what adjective to apply to Shakespeare: ‘Sweet’. This was what every discerning reader called him. Also in 1595, John Weever, a pupil of Covell’s, called Shakespeare ‘Honietong’d’ (Honigmann, *Weever*, sig. E6^r); and in 1598 yet another Cambridge man, Francis Meres, praised the writings of ‘mellifluous & hony-tongued *Shakespeare*’ (sig. 201^v). In a play performed at St John’s College, Cambridge, in 1600 a witty character closely based on the Cambridge-educated Thomas Nashe responds to a stanza quoted from *Venus and Adonis* by exclaiming simply ‘O sweet Mr Shakspeare’ (Leishman, 185). By the end of Elizabeth’s reign the identification of ‘Shakespeare’ with sugar, honey and sweetness was so complete that Henry Chettle, rebuking him

1 Some vagueness about exactly what Shakespeare had written was common among his early admirers; John Weever, for instance, alluded to his plays in 1599 as ‘*Romea Richard*; more whose names I know not’; see Honigmann, *Weever*, sig. E6^r.

for failing to elegize his patroness the dead queen, alluded to the 'honied muse' of 'Melicert' (Chettle, *Garment*, sig. D3^r). The name was no doubt chosen partly for its Ovidian associations,¹ but more because its first syllable, *Mel*, is the Latin for 'honey'.² That 'sweet' label, initially inspired by the poems of 1593 and 1594, stuck so firmly that it continued to be applied when plays rather than poems were being addressed. Ben Jonson's memorial tribute prefixed to the 1623 First Folio culminates in the exclamation 'Sweet Swan of *Auon*!'; and in his 'L'Allegro' (written about 1631) John Milton, though writing of his plays, not his poems, alluded to 'sweetest *Shakespear* fancies childe'.³

In calling Shakespeare 'sweet' early admirers were not claiming, as some sentimental readers may have imagined, that he was in person a 'sweet' or loveable man. The word 'sweet' had specifically literary connotations, alluding to 'sweet' or 'sugared' rhetoric, as defined in *OED*'s sense 5c: 'Of song or discourse, and hence *transf.* of a poet, orator, etc. . . . Pleasing to the ear and mind; pleasant to hear or listen to; sometimes implying "persuasive, winning"'. What his contemporaries received with such immediate delight were the decorative and harmonious qualities of Shakespeare's poetic rhetoric. Both in structure and in detail all parts of his poetic discourses are 'sweetly' married together. And even though the tragedies *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* were, like *Venus and Adonis*, immediately popular, it does not seem to have been for their deep tragic insights that they were primarily enjoyed. What early audiences and readers most relished was the development of the very same 'sweet' rhetoric of which Shakespeare had already shown himself master in the poems, and which was to be enjoyed also in passages in the plays such as the 'balcony' scene in *Romeo and Juliet* or the description

1 Ovid, *Met.*, 4.522ff. Son of Athamas and Ino, Melicert becomes the sea god Palaemon.

2 For a fuller discussion of early allusions to Shakespeare as a poet, see Cheney, *Poet-Playwright*, 64–7.

3 Line 133, in Norbrook, 453.

of Ophelia's drowning in *Hamlet*. Readers with some knowledge of Italian were aware of the *dolce stil nuovo*, the 'sweet new style' which had been pioneered by Italian love poets in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (*Princeton Encyclopedia*, 301–3). In praising his verse as 'sweet' such readers implied that Shakespeare, like the great Italian poets of the early Renaissance, had pioneered a 'sweet new style' in his own native language. Though applied so early in his career, the 'sweet' label indicates that he was already viewed as a national poet whose writings enabled English literary culture to hold its own in a wider European context. Covell's use of the adjective 'Sweet' in a passage claiming that English poets are superior to Continental ones makes this sufficiently clear.

'Sweetness' of style, whether in a poem or a play, offers no guarantee of a happy conclusion. Both of the narrative poems, as we shall see, end tragically, and *Lucrece* – if anything the more ambitious in its rhetorical patterning – is tonally dark throughout. The pleasures afforded by 'sweet' rhetoric are at once emotive and technical, almost musical. They do not derive from subject-matter as such, but from the sophistication and sensitivity with which any subject-matter, whether light or sombre, trivial or tragic, has been rhetorically shaped. We can be intensely moved, as John Keats was, by Shakespeare's evocation of the vulnerability of a snail (*VA* 1033–8)¹ as much as by his account of the sufferings of Hecuba (*Luc* 1447–56). Intricately designed stanzas and groups of stanzas, each with their own internal patterning, offer delights analogous to those that audiences continue to receive from the varied polyphonic harmonies composed by Shakespeare's most talented musical contemporaries such as William Byrd and Thomas Tallis. The description of Adonis' horse, for instance, is a masterpiece of compression:

Round-hoofed, short-jointed, fetlocks shag and long,
Broad breast, full eye, small head and nostril wide,

1 For Keats's delight in Shakespeare's description of the snail retracting his 'tender horns', see Keats, 1.189, 265.

High crest, short ears, straight legs and passing strong,
Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide:
Look what a horse should have he did not lack,
Save a proud rider on so proud a back.

(*VA* 295–300)

This is magnificently concrete, tactile and visual. Though it was compared by Edward Dowden to ‘an advertisement of a horse sale’ (Rollins, 491), Samuel Taylor Coleridge, more discerningly, saw the passage as ‘far more admirable’ even than the celebrated description of the terrified movements of a hunted hare (*VA* 679–708; Coleridge, 1.215). Yet Shakespeare is of course equally skilful in anatomizing interior consciousness. In *Lucrece*, especially, many passages explore moods of vacillation and hesitancy, as the protagonist struggles at once to make sense of what has happened to her and to make up her mind whether to live or die.¹ This stanza, in which she prepares to compose a letter to her husband, can be read as a subtle analysis of writer’s block:

Her maid is gone, and she prepares to write,
First hovering o’er the paper with her quill.
Conceit and grief an eager combat fight;
What wit sets down is blotted straight with will.
This is too curious-good, this blunt and ill:
Much like a press of people at a door,
Throng her inventions, which shall go before.

(*Luc* 1296–1302)

Ever since Bradley’s landmark study of the tragedies, readers have tended to see Hamlet’s ‘To be, or not to be’ speech as Shakespeare’s definitive account of deliberative and vacillating thought processes (Bradley, 132). As such it has provided one of the touchstones of his ‘greatness’. Yet a stanza such as the one quoted from *Lucrece*

1 There is one extended passage of emotional vacillation in *VA* (937–1024), in which Venus is first fearful that Adonis has been killed and then persuades herself that he is, after all, alive.

is in its quieter way equally potent, for instance in the concluding comparison of conflicting thoughts to a crowd of people pushing and shoving to get through a door. The simile derives extra resonance from the fact that in physical terms Lucrece is alone, and the last thing she wants is for a 'press of people' to burst in on her and interrupt her solitary deliberations.

Paradoxically, the outstanding early success of Shakespeare's poems contributed to their later banishment to the margins of the canon. When John Heminges and Henry Condell undertook to collect up their late colleague's plays in the volume now known as the First Folio there was no need for a reprint of the narrative poems. No 'stolne, and surreptitious copies', but excellent authorized texts, these two works had already been reprinted many times, *Venus* as recently as 1620 and *Lucrece* in 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death.¹ The size and scope of the First Folio, and the failure of its compilers even to allude to the fact that Shakespeare had also written poems and sonnets, led later generations of readers to see him as a playwright only, his early Ovidian poems apparently both forgettable and forgotten. Modern readers have thus missed a whole dimension of Shakespeare's work, one that is of high value in itself and that also illuminates many of the plays. Patrick Cheney has suggested that Heminges and Condell deliberately 'set about to memorialize their own profession' (*Poet-Playwright*, 69). This could be so. But it seems equally possible that Shakespeare's reputation as a writer of 'sweet' verse appeared in 1623 to be so fully assured that Heminges and Condell thought that it went without saying. Yet Cheney is surely right to suggest that John Benson's 'modest octavo edition' of the *Poems* in 1640 actually contributed to a sharp decline of interest in Shakespeare's non-dramatic verse. Few editors before Malone in 1780 included the poems or *Sonnets*, and those who did relied on Benson's rearranged and inauthentic collection (*Poet-Playwright*, 1–7).

1 For a fuller account, see pp. 514–17.

VENUS AND ADONIS AND LUCRECE

1593–4: *Idle hours well spent*

In 1593–4 Shakespeare's career as a print-published poet took off with a swiftness that is matched by the openings of the poems themselves. As early as line 6 of *Venus and Adonis* the goddess 'gins to woo' the mortal youth; and in line 1 of *Lucrece* Tarquin speeds 'all in post' towards his intended victim in Rome. Though some critics have found *Lucrece* slow and wordy, extremely rapid movement characterizes many of its passages of narrative, such as the arrival of Lucrece's maid (1215), the despatch of her letter to her husband (1332), and finally the carrying of her dead body through the streets of Rome (1853). Though carefully differentiated in style, stanza form and diction the poems share the emphatic phrase 'more than haste' (*VA* 909; *Luc* 1332). Both stories are told with great immediacy in the present tense, with little sense of a distinct narrative persona.¹ As Coleridge observed of *Venus*, 'You seem to be *told* nothing, but to see and hear everything' (2.330). One technique used to produce this effect of immediacy is the use of 'Look . . .' to introduce a comparison, which leads the reader to 'see' an image directly without even quite noticing that the literary device of simile is in play. There are half a dozen examples of 'Look . . .' in *Venus*, whereas *Lucrece*, whose narrator, as we shall see, is much less concerned with visual description, has just one (see *VA* 67n.). According to F.T. Prince, 'Flashing or glowing speed is . . . the dominating quality of the verse' in *Venus* (Ard², xxviii). Prince, in turn, was inspired by Coleridge, who found in Shakespeare's comparison of Adonis' departure from Venus to the disappearance of a shooting star (*VA* 815–16) 'the liveliest image of succession with the feeling of simultaneousness' (2.332).

Shakespeare himself appears to have moved with great speed and concentration towards the attainment of his ambitious poetic

1 But see *VA* 251, 607, lines in which the narrator fleetingly expresses sympathy for Venus.

goals. In the dedicatory epistle to the nineteen-year-old Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton, he called *Venus* ‘the first heir of my invention’. It was the first work to be published under Shakespeare’s name, and, unlike the early plays, was written with a view to posterity as well as to immediate profit. The epigraph on the title-page of *Venus* (see Fig. 16) drew attention to this major shift. It indicates that the poet has now turned away from the *vulgus*, or mob, who had recently flocked to see performances of his plays, and aspires towards a loftier and more durable style:

*vilia miretur vulgus; mihi flavus Apollo
pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua.*
(Ovid, *Amores*, 1.15.35–6)

These lines were rendered by Christopher Marlowe as

Let base-conceited wits admire vile things,
Fair Phoebus lead me to the Muses’ springs.
(*Poems*, 141)

More literally, they have been translated as

Let what is cheap excite the marvel of the crowd; for me
may golden Apollo minister full cups from the Castalian
fount.

Readers familiar with their context in the *Amores* would recognize these lines as supporting Ovid’s claim to poetic immortality. Though the writer’s body will perish, the best part of him, his elite verses, will survive, as he proclaims in the poem’s closing lines:

*ergo etiam cum me supremus adederit ignis
vivam, parsque mei multa superstes erit.*

I, too, when the final fires have eaten up my frame, shall
still live on, and the great part of me survive my death.
(*Amores*, 379)

Ovid's poem of self-vindication is addressed *Ad Invidos*, that is, 'to those who hate him'. It was particularly appropriate for Shakespeare to invoke it in the year following the envious attack made on him publicly in *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*. We don't know how Shakespeare encountered *Amores*, 1.15. It has been suggested that English translations of the *Amores* were available to him,¹ but this is by no means certain. However, if he wrote *Venus* in tandem with Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (see pp. 20–1) he could have seen Marlowe's translations in manuscript. It may also be relevant that the poem's printer and publisher, Shakespeare's Stratford schoolfellow Richard Field, published an edition of the Latin text in 1594 (of which only two complete copies survive). Earlier editions of *Amores* by Field may have vanished altogether.² As T.W. Baldwin pointed out, the lines quoted by Shakespeare appeared in Octavianus Mirandula's *Flores*, a grammar-school anthology of poetry. But they are there misquoted – '*populus*' for '*vulgus*' – whereas Shakespeare's quotation is correct (Baldwin, *Genetics*, 1–2).

The couplet chosen by Shakespeare as epigraph has further implications in its full context. Though drawn from Ovid's *Amores* rather than his *Metamorphoses*, it forms an apt preliminary to a quintessentially Ovidian poem. It implies that *Venus* – and possibly also the 'graver' work promised in the dedicatory epistle – will not be a short lyric, but an ample and substantial narrative requiring many 'full cups' of inspiration for its completion. And yet another way in which the allusion to Ovid's *Amores*, 1.15, was especially relevant to *Venus* concerns the time in which Shakespeare's poem was published, a time when the fear of death

1 Gillespie (393–4) claims that Marlowe's translations probably circulated in manuscript after their composition in the 1580s; there is, however, no surviving evidence for this.

2 Field's 1594 printing of Ovid's minor works, including *Amores*, is STC 18929. The epigraph was quoted by Gabriel Harvey immediately after praise of *Venus*, *Lucrece* and *Hamlet* (see p. 44, n. 1). His ensuing phrase, 'quoth Sir Edward Dier', may suggest that the lines were a favourite quotation of Dyer's, or may simply refer forwards to the phrase that follows, 'betwene iest, & earnest' as Dyer's; see Harvey, 232.

was particularly immediate for all city-dwellers, writers and readers alike. While William Shakespeare proclaimed himself, in the signed epistle to Southampton (see Fig. 17), to be the poem's legitimate father or begetter, there is little doubt that plague-driven necessity was his invention's mother. Because of the high incidence of plague deaths in London, the public theatres were closed from 23 June until 29 December 1592. After reopening for just one month, they were once again closed for the whole of 1593.¹ Playing was briefly resumed in January 1594, which saw the performance of the three *Henry VI* plays at Edward Alleyn's Rose Theatre (see Duncan-Jones, 'Three partes'). But a return of plague caused the theatres to be closed yet again from 3 February until 1 April 1594 (Gurr, 91). This prolonged closing of the playhouses compelled Shakespeare to divert his creative energies to a different form of writing, upmarket poems intended for publication. Possibly he had been considering such writings for some time. Certainly the new genre was made both lucrative and distinguished by the opportunity to dedicate the poems to a wealthy and generous young patron who could be relied on to pay the poet a substantial reward.²

Sir William Davenant's claim, transmitted by Nicholas Rowe, that 'my Lord *Southampton*, at one time, gave him a thousand Pounds, to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to', is no doubt a wild exaggeration (Chambers, *WS*, 2.266–7). Rowe himself was slightly sceptical about it. But there is no doubt that at this point Southampton appeared to have great expectations. It was estimated in 1583 that the value of his estate, when he came of age in the autumn of 1594, would come to £4,000 per annum at least (Stone, 215). The fact that other writers, such as Thomas Nashe and Barnabe Barnes, also

1 Jaggard, under 1593, estimated deaths from plague in the regnal year of 1593–4 at 10,675. The casualties included that year's Lord Mayor, Sir Cuthbert Buckle, Vintner, who died in July.

2 For a full record of payments made by patrons to one late Elizabethan writer, see Vogt.

dedicated works to him in the early 1590s shows that the young earl was widely viewed as a 'dere louer and cherisher . . . as well of the louers of Poets, as of Poets themselues' (Nashe, 2.201). Nor is there any doubt that as soon as he came of age Southampton was wildly extravagant, giving generously to friends and clients, as well as spending large sums on gambling.¹ Though much of this money with which he was so lavish was either borrowed or else obtained by renting out or selling off inherited property, that did not affect its value for those fortunate enough to receive it, and Shakespeare was indeed fortunate. While we might imagine that periods of prolonged theatre closure in 1592–4 would have left the rising actor-playwright financially ruined, in 1596, only a couple of years after the reopening of the playhouses, he purchased both a grant of arms, proclaiming his family's 'gentle' status, and a substantial mansion, New Place, in his native Stratford-upon-Avon. Earnings from the theatre in 1595–6 are unlikely to provide the full explanation for his remarkably strong economic position. There is a further telling piece of evidence that the poems made him rich. Suits for debt against his father, John Shakespeare, of which there had been a succession in the preceding years, cease entirely after the spring of 1593 (Bearman, 'John Shakespeare'). While many individuals in this period fell into severe debt, full financial recovery is extremely unusual in the absence of major patronage. It seems likely that Shakespeare's first step towards elevating the status of his family was to restore his father's economic and social position, and that it was his rewards from Southampton for *Venus* and *Lucrece* that made it possible to do this. Southampton, 'noble . . . godfather' to *Venus*, acted as patron and rescuer to Shakespeare in time of plague; Shakespeare, in turn, acted as patron and rescuer to his own father in time of economic necessity.

Shakespeare's promise in the dedication of *Venus and Adonis* to devote 'all idle hours' to the 'graver labour' of completing *Lucrece*

1 For a fuller account of Southampton's financial affairs, see Stone, 214–22; also Akrigg, 38–40.

has a flash of aristocratic sprezzatura, recalling such works as William Paulet, Marquis of Winchester's *The Lord Marquess's Idleness* (1586).¹ Creative idleness was normally the prerogative of the well born, and as a currently unemployed craftsman still of yeoman status, Shakespeare exhibited actor-like audacity in mimicking such a relaxed posture. As long ago as 1962 Muriel Bradbrook suggested with characteristic verve and vigour that the 'sumptuous and splendidly assured' *Venus and Adonis* was written and published partly in support of Shakespeare's own social ambition (68). The 'graver' *Lucrece*, with its ancient Roman setting and grimly tragic climax, is even more conspicuously an elite, even learned, poem, about as remote as could be imagined from the public playhouses and their rabble audiences.

In each case, the process of bringing the poem to full completion is likely to have occupied Shakespeare for at least three or four months, from February until April or May in 1593 and then the same again in 1594.² *Venus* was licensed just before Shakespeare's twenty-ninth birthday, *Lucrece* just after his thirtieth. Each is carefully designed, reflecting the writer's close attention both to structure and style and conceivably to other matters connected to their publication. *Venus*, most of whose action occurs on a warm summer's day, may have seemed a particularly attractive purchase around 11 June, St Barnabas' day, the longest day of the year (Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle*, 63). The book's first recorded purchaser, Richard Stonley, acquired his copy on 12 June. The poem's unexpected modulation from erotic comedy during a summer's day to bleak and bloody tragedy at dawn was particularly apt for the high summer of 1593. Late summer was the season in which plague epidemics were generally at their most severe, and dawn was the time when carts began to trundle up and down the city

- 1 The book was still actively remembered in 1596, when Nashe suggested that a sequel to it would be marketable if it were not for the then all-consuming popular interest in the Earl of Essex's sack of Cadiz (Nashe, 5.194–5).
- 2 *Venus and Adonis* was licensed for printing by the Archbishop of Canterbury on 18 April 1593; *Lucrece* by the Warden of the Stationers' Company on 9 May 1594 (see pp. 476, 482).

streets to carry away the previous night's victims, their drivers calling out 'Haue you anie dead bodies to bury?' (Nashe, 2.286). Since it was widely believed that plague outbreaks were God's punishment for sexual licence, a natural association was also available between Venus' 'sweating lust' and the ensuing death of Adonis.¹ Particularly complex numerological patterning has been found in *Venus*, in which, for instance, the central stanza describes Adonis on top of Venus, but refusing to consummate their relationship.² The poem's mid-line, 'All is imaginary she doth prove' (597), sums up this non-climactic climax. At the same time it draws attention to the writer's own 'imaginary', or rather imaginative, power in evoking what Coleridge (2.330) called 'the animal impulse itself'. There is also a literary parallel here. Venus' use of a swoon as a seduction strategy – 'She sinketh down, still hanging by his neck' (593) – is analogous to that of Chaucer's Troilus, which also occurs at the poem's mid-point.³ And as a whole, *Venus* is composed of 199 stanzas, a number that suggests incompleteness and unfulfilment.

There are many further stylistic refinements. For instance, the poem opens with the words 'Even as', and its second half opens with the words 'Even so' (601). There are also repeated sequences of stanzas with the same or complementary openings, such as 'Sometime she' (223), 'Sometime he' (277); 'And now . . . This said' (181, 217) and again at lines 829 and 865; or 'A thousand' (517, 907). Shakespeare also took great care to distinguish the two poems stylistically, as can be seen in such matters as his differing deployment of polysyllabic words. While *Venus* includes only about 300 words of three or more syllables, for instance, the more Latinate (though also considerably longer) *Lucrece* has about 640 such words. A more immediately visible distinction is between the two poems' verse forms. *Venus* is written in six-line stanzas of iambic pentameters, rhyming ababcc. This form was

1 For a fuller discussion see Duncan-Jones, 'Playing fields', 128–9.

2 For a ground-breaking study of the poem's numerology, see Butler and Fowler.

3 Chaucer, *Troilus*, 3.1092; cf. also Sidney, *OA*, 235.

popular well before the 1590s.¹ In his literary treatise *The Reulis and Cautelis to be Observit and Eschewit in Scottis Poesie*, published by Thomas Vautrollier in 1584, the eighteen-year-old James VI of Scotland described this rhyme scheme as ‘Commoun verse’, and said that whether composed in four-foot or five-foot lines it was the correct stanza form to use ‘In materis of loue’.² *Lucrece*, however, is written in ‘rhyme-royal’, stanzas, that is, seven pentameter lines rhyming ababbcc. James called the form ‘*Troilus* verse’, because of its use by Chaucer in *Troilus and Criseyde*, and directed that it should be used ‘For tragicall materis, complaintis, or testamentis.’³ Both the overall design of the poems and their refined stylistic complementarities reveal a careful and painstaking Shakespeare who, working alone, rather than in collaboration either with other poets or with a company of players, could not possibly be characterized here as warbling ‘his native Wood-notes wilde’.⁴ Far from being an untaught child of nature, Shakespeare showed himself to be an ‘artificial’ writer in the best Elizabethan sense. That is, he composed complex verses with great art and ingenuity.

Shakespeare may have had the themes of either or both poems in mind for a few years. Some literal-minded Romantic critics suggested that *Venus*, with its rustic images of runaway horses and hunted hares, must have been originally drafted in provincial Stratford. John Payne Collier dated it before 1586 on the grounds that

It bears all the marks of youthful vigour, of strong passion, of luxuriant imagination, together with a force and originality of expression which betoken the first

1 But see *Princeton Encyclopedia*, 1342, where the form is called the *Venus and Adonis* stanza.

2 James, sig. M4^v. While Thomas Vautrollier was away for a year or so in Scotland printing for King James VI, his star apprentice Richard Field, who was to print Shakespeare’s poems, also ‘probably helped run the business’ in London; see Kathman.

3 James, sigs M3^v–4^r. See also *Princeton Encyclopedia*, 1065–6.

4 John Milton, ‘L’Allegro’, line 134 in Norbrook, 453.

efforts of a great mind, not always well regulated in its taste: it seems to have been written in the open air of a fine country like Warwickshire, with all the freshness of the recent impression of natural objects.

(quoted in Rollins, 385)

This is an unnecessary conjecture. ‘Open air’, if that was indeed required for the composition of such a poem, could be encountered only a short walk from the Elizabethan City of London, as could game forests and wild animals. Nevertheless, Shakespeare seems to have been thinking about this poem’s theme on a small scale several years before he embarked on the full narrative. Perhaps he was inspired by two short poems on Venus and Adonis, also in six-line stanzas, appended to Robert Greene’s *Perimedes the Blacksmith* (1588). These make comic play with Adonis’ youth, the first bearing the saucy refrain ‘I am but yoong and may be wanton yet’ (sig. H1^r). He may also have been influenced by another of Greene’s romances, *Greene’s Never Too Late* (1590), in which ‘*Infidas song*’, with a refrain in French, is addressed by Venus to a ‘Sweet *Adon*’ who appears to be shy and unresponsive (sig. G3^{r-v}). Venus and Adonis also appear as a subject for painting in the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590 or earlier):

We will fetch thee straight
Adonis painted by a running brook,
And Cytherea all in sedges hid
(*TS* Induction 2.49–51)

Following up a suggestion first made by Edmond Malone, C.H. Hobday argued cogently that three of the four ‘Venus and Adonis’ sonnets included in *The Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599 may be early ‘workshop shavings’, poetic drafts which reflect interest in a theme that Shakespeare would later work up into a long poem. Certainly the second of these sonnets (*PP* 6), in which Venus watches Adonis diving into a ‘brook’ while she hides herself ‘Under an osier’, parallels the *Shrew* lines very closely. If Hobday’s

suggestion is correct, these sonnets may, like the *Shrew* Induction, belong to the period 1589–90.

Both in style and in genre *Venus* also reflects the influence of Thomas Lodge's mythological poem in six-line stanzas *Scilla's Metamorphosis* (1589),¹ and this link also points towards 1589–90 as a possible period for the long poem's earliest conception. Lodge mingles the erotic, the playful and the tragic very much as Shakespeare was to do. And though Lodge himself was later to be charged with plagiarism, he here made a gift to other poets of the fruitful topic of Venus' tragic grief for Adonis. The sea god Glaucus describes Venus' sorrow as an exemplary model for the sufferings of himself and the water nymph Scilla, best to be comprehended by such a witness as

He that hath seene the sweete *Arcadian* boy
Wiping the purple from his forced wound . . .
And *Venus* starting at her loue-mates crie,
Forcing hir birds to hast her chariot on.
(sig. A3^v)

The three stanzas in which Lodge's Glaucus describes Venus' grief for Adonis compose a poetic cameo whose equivalent in Shakespeare's poem is a full-size rhetorical portrait. And though Lodge doesn't say in so many words that Adonis, when alive, rejected Venus' wooing, his evocation of the goddess's violent mood-swings – 'Her bitter threatens, and then her passions meeke' – offered some hint of this, anticipating the 'Variable passions' of Venus that Shakespeare was to explore more fully.² Being familiar with the recent poetry of the Pléiade movement in France, some of which he translated, Lodge knew about the great popularity of Ovidian verse on the Continent. Perhaps it was partly through

- 1 Lodge's poem was entered in the Stationers' Register on 22 September 1589 as 'The history of Glaucus, and Sylla' (Arber, 2.530). For a detailed discussion of it, see Keach, 36–51.
- 2 Lodge, sig. A3^v; *VA* 967: the phrase is used as title for the first book-length study of the poem, Mortimer's *Variable Passions*.

Lodge that Shakespeare, in turn, came to realize the huge poetic potential of Ovidian myth.

A more immediate influence may have been Abraham Fraunce's *Amintas' Dale*, published in the autumn of 1592.¹ Here the story of Adonis and Venus is told in English hexameters. Fraunce describes Venus' wooing of the mortal youth in extremely sensuous and physical terms:

And then *Adonis* lipps with her owne lipps kindly she
kisseth,
Rolling tongue, moyst mouth with her owne mouth all to
be sucking,
Mouth and tong and lipps, with *Ioues* drinck *Nectar*
abounding.

(Fraunce, sig. M2^r)

Nevertheless it is not apparent that their affair is fully consummated, and as in Shakespeare's poem, Adonis seems very young: Venus twice addresses him as 'Sweete boy'. While Shakespeare's Venus promises to 'enchant' Adonis with her talk (145), Fraunce's Venus actually does so. The first story with which she entertains him is that of Hero and Leander:

Sometimes, louely records for *Adonis* sake, she
reciteth;
How *Leander* dyde, as he swamme to the bewtiful *Hero*
(sig. M2^r)

In a later prose passage Fraunce analyses the symbolic meaning of the Hero and Leander story, saying that their love 'is in euery mans mouth', and quoting the opening lines of Juan Boscan's Spanish poem *Historia de Leandro y Hero* (Fraunce, sig. M4^{r-v}). Fraunce's book seems thus to compose a link between Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*. It may have been *Amintas' Dale* that stimulated both poets to

1 The book was entered in the Stationers' Register on 2 October 1592 (Arber, 2.621).

think about the potential of their respective subjects for fuller poetic treatment. Like both Lodge and Fraunce, Shakespeare and Marlowe also mingle the tragic, the erotic and the playful. There are some awkward questions about dating, for the composition of *Hero and Leander* is conventionally assigned to the last weeks of Marlowe's life, the spring of 1593, when he was staying with Sir Thomas Walsingham at Scadbury in Kent (Marlowe, *Poems*, xxv). By this time it is likely that most, even all, of *Venus and Adonis* was complete. Yet there are compelling links between the two poems. Lines early on in Marlowe's poem, describing the sleeves of Hero's gown, share both subject-matter and treatment with Shakespeare, in so far as Adonis is imagined as 'disdainful':

Her wide sleeves green, and border'd with a grove,
Where Venus in her naked glory strove
To please the careless and disdainful eyes
Of proud Adonis that before her lies.

(*HL*, 1.11–14)

There are also a handful of verbal links between Marlowe's poem and Shakespeare's, which include the phrase 'Rose-cheeked Adonis' (*VA* 3; *HL*, 1.93; see also *VA* 463, 720 and nn.).

One possible scenario is as follows. Already perhaps associated both in friendship and in writing plays for the Queen's Men or Lord Strange's Men, Shakespeare and Marlowe may have come together even more closely in the aftermath of the attack on both of them in *Groatsworth* in the autumn of 1592. According to Henry Chettle 'a letter written to diuers play-makers, is offensively by one or two of them taken' (Chettle, *Dream*, sig. A3^v). Marlowe and Shakespeare appear to have been the 'two' who found themselves most maligned. Both men may have embarked at this time on ambitiously classical narrative poems to show the reading public what great things they could achieve that had nothing to do with 'play-making'. But while Shakespeare lived to complete and publish his 'classical' poem, Marlowe's was apparently unfinished, and certainly unpublished, when he was fatally stabbed in Deptford on 30 May 1593.

The subject matter of *Lucrece*, like that of *Venus and Adonis*, may have been in Shakespeare's mind for a few years before he wrote the poem. For instance, Lucrece's extended meditation on the sufferings of Hecuba could have been partly prompted by a recent poem on the subject, Thomas Fenne's *Hecuba's Mishaps* (1590),¹ as well as by Aeneas' long speech in Marlowe and Nashe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, 2.1.244–88. And Lucretia, like Venus and Adonis, is mentioned in *The Taming of the Shrew*. As part of his plan to tame her, Petruchio promises to reveal a Kate who is like 'Roman Lucrece for her chastity' (*TS* 2.1.296). Many strong parallels to the poem's theme of violent rape and its political consequences are also to be encountered in *Titus Andronicus*, though whether this was written before or after *Lucrece* is a matter of debate.² If the early dating of *Titus* is correct, we can see Shakespeare using the 'idle hours' imposed on him by theatre closures (see p. 13) to articulate the rape victim's thoughts about her sufferings in great depth and detail, in contrast to Lavinia in *Titus*, who, her tongue torn out by her assailants, is compelled to be silent.

At the close of *Scilla's Metamorphosis* (1589) Lodge had presented himself, much as Shakespeare was to do in the title-page epigraph to *Venus* (discussed on pp. 11–12), as abandoning the crowded and 'vulgar' environment of the playhouse, along with the 'penny-knaves' who bought seats there, in favour of the solitary dignity of upmarket verse-writing. As he moved from historical drama to Ovidian verse narrative Lodge stepped into an arena which appeared to promise true 'fame'. Even the poem's title punningly reflects this transition, for a pugnacious male 'Scilla' has been metamorphosed into a delicate female one. In his play written in about 1588, *The Wounds of Civil War*, he had focused on a quite different 'Scilla', the man alluded to by Shakespeare in *2 Henry VI* 4.1.84 as 'ambitious Sylla', a ruth-

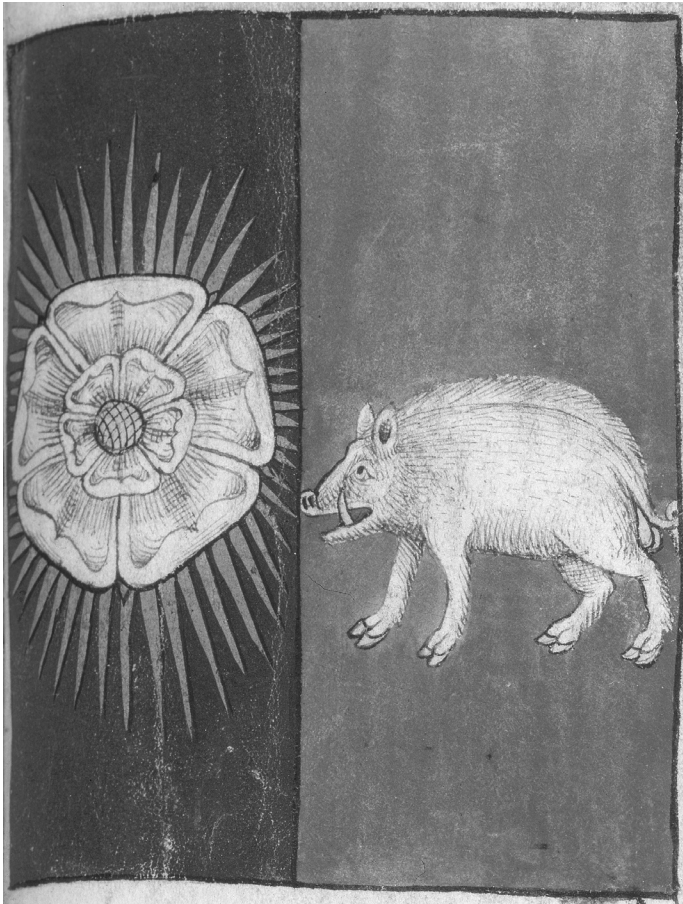
1 Though not mentioned on the title-page, this long poem is the closing item of Fenne's *Fenne's Fruits* (1590).

2 For a discussion of the dating of *Titus*, see *TxC*, 113–15.

less Roman general who aspired to be Dictator.¹ In contrast, the 'Scilla' of his narrative poem is a fragile water nymph wooed by the 'sea-god' Glaucus. She is punished for her scorn of him by being metamorphosed into the sea-girt rock, perilous to sailors, of 'Scilla and Charybdis' fame.

Shakespeare, too, had recently worked on a drama about civil war, as prime author of the historical sequence now known as *1, 2 and 3 Henry VI*. The imaginative leap that he made from dramatizing the recent events of the Wars of the Roses to amplifying the ancient myth of 'Rose-cheeked Adonis' was at least as great as that made by Lodge when he turned from Roman history to erotic mythology. Verbal links recorded in our commentary suggest that the *Henry VI* plays were never far from Shakespeare's mind when he was writing *Venus* and *Lucrece*.² One speech in particular, the long soliloquy in which Richard, Duke of Gloucester, sets out his schemes to encompass the crown by means of self-transformation, is alluded to at several key moments. Some of Lucrece's exclamations to Opportunity and Time seem also to glance obliquely towards the Wars of the Roses and their eventual resolution, especially the line 'Time's glory is to calm contending kings' (939). Following performances of *Henry VI*, and probably preceding those of *Richard III*, the narrative poems are, as it were, embraced by the myth of the Crookback. The 'angry chafing boar' (662) that destroys Adonis has evolved from, or was to develop into, the heraldic white boar which was Richard III's crest and cognizance, and which, for a while, made all England bleed (see Fig. 1). Itself a heraldic symbol, Richard's boar destroys the heraldic accoutrements of others, most notably the crest borne by the Stanleys (*R3* 3.2.11, 3.4.82).³ In its savagery, the Ricardian boar soon becomes indiscriminately destructive:

- 1 For the date of Lodge's play and Shakespeare's familiarity with it in *Titus*; see Bate, *Tit*, 89.
- 2 See, for instance, the opening lines of *Venus*; the image of the 'empty eagle' (55), which occurs also in *2H6* 3.1.248, *3H6* 1.1.268 and *E3* 3.1.88; 'breeder', *VA* 282, whose only other occurrence in this sense is in *3H6* 2.1.42.
- 3 For Shakespeare's interest in the Stanley family, see commentary on *AT* 3.



- 1 White Boar badge borne on a banner by Richard III, which also shows his emblem of the white rose of York

The wretched, bloody, and usurping boar,
That spoil'd your summer fields and fruitful vines,
Swills your warm blood like wash and makes his trough
In your embowell'd bosoms.

(*R3* 5.2.7–10)

Some of the Tudor historians, determined to blacken Richard in every way possible, described the defeated king's body being carried away, naked, from Bosworth Field, strapped on to a horse behind his own personal herald, whose title was 'Blanch Sanglier', or White Boar. The story is told by Edward Hall, one of the chroniclers drawn on by Shakespeare (Bullough, 3.300).

The main distinction between the destructive energy of Richard III's 'boar' and that of the wild boar that kills Adonis is the latter's clumsily amorous or sexual drive:

And nuzzling in his flank, the loving swine
Sheathed unaware the tusk in his soft groin.
(*VA* 1115–16)

Some commentators have made much of this boar's symbolically sexual energies, Ted Hughes even identifying them as the key to everything else Shakespeare wrote, which perhaps overstates their long-term significance. Yet there is no doubt that the boar's fatal assault on Adonis is indeed described in highly sexualized language both in Venus' fearful anticipation of their encounter (see, for instance, 617–18) and in her response to the event itself, which she sees as an attempt at a kiss that has gone horribly wrong (1110).¹

As he moved on to the 'graver' poem, Shakespeare continued to think about matters both of heraldry and of sexual defilement. The quasi-sexual wound inflicted on Adonis by the boar prepares thematically for that unseen 'crest-wounding private scar' (*Luc* 828), explicitly sexual, inflicted upon Lucrece and her family by Tarquin. In truth, the heraldic and the sexual were always closely related. Upstanding 'crests' were sported aloft on their helmets by men of honour. Those who were 'crest-fallen', whether defeated in battle or humiliated in other ways, were seen as both dishonoured and emasculated.² The sexual symbolism of a 'crest', as an externally visible symbol for a phallus, is invoked both in *Venus* (104) and in *Lucrece* (828).

1 See also Keach, 78.

2 Cf. *2H6* 4.1.59, *R2* 1.1.188, *MW* 4.5.100.

Political context: Southampton, Clapham, Burghley

Commonly, the dedicatory epistle, along with any other prefatory material, was the last part of a book to be written and delivered to the printer. But Shakespeare may for some time have had Henry Wriothesley (1573–1624), third Earl of Southampton, in view as patron and primary addressee of *Venus and Adonis*, and perhaps therefore also of *Lucrece*. The strongest evidence for this lies in a poem dedicated to Southampton two years earlier, John Clapham's *Narcissus*, which had been published in 1591 (Akrigg, 33). Written in Latin hexameters, it locates the Narcissus myth in England, the 'Fortunate Island', presided over by a Virgin Queen. In a palace in a wood Love proffers Ovidian advice to Narcissus about how to win over the woman he loves, however moody she may be. But Narcissus is carried off on a galloping horse called 'blind Lust', falls in love with the nymph Echo, and after a frustrating dialogue with her is soon drowned in the river of Self-Love and metamorphosed into the yellow flower that still bears his name. Charles Martindale and Colin Burrow have questioned the applicability of the poem to Southampton's own situation, claiming that it 'could scarcely be regarded as an argument for marriage' (151). Yet the poem can surely be read as a warning to a well-born youth to reject the selfish narcissism of adolescent self-love, natural though that may be in one so well born and well endowed, and as implicitly encouraging him instead to prefer love of, and marriage to, a woman. In 1591 the orphaned Southampton was only seventeen, but he was already under strong pressure to marry. His guardian, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, wanted him to marry his grand-daughter Elizabeth Vere, whose surname is alluded to in line 194 of *Narcissus* – an allusion missed by Martindale and Burrow:

Et nequeo sine te, sine vita viuere [Echo] *uerè*
(Clapham, sig. B3^r)

('I can no more live without you than I can live without life'; [Echo] 'Truly')

As a whole Clapham's poem suggests, as Shakespeare's Sonnets 1–17 were later to do, that youthful self-admiration – possibly including masturbation – is both fruitless and self-destructive. A youth so noble and so beautiful has an obligation to 'the world' (cf. *Son* 1.14, 3.4) to beget legitimate children to replicate his name, virtue and physique.

Burghley's attempts to persuade his young ward to marry Elizabeth Vere began late in 1589, but Southampton, 'pleading his youth, asked to be given a year to make up his mind' (Payne, 269). A couple of years later Elizabeth Vere was still unmarried, having rejected an alternative match with Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland. Burghley had not abandoned the hope that Southampton might yet be persuaded to woo and marry her. All that Shakespeare needed to know, in order to have composed *Venus* specifically for presentation to the marriage-averse young earl, was that Southampton's older mentors continued to be extremely anxious to see him matched to their liking before he came of age and was no longer under his guardian's control. John Clapham, the author of *Narcissus*, has been dismissively sidelined as 'not quite a nobody' (Martindale & Burrow, 147). Yet he was a significant and loyal servant to Queen Elizabeth's closest adviser. He wrote a biography of Burghley, enfolded within a memoir of the queen, and was present at his deathbed.¹ It's likely that Burghley himself encouraged Clapham both to write and to publish *Narcissus* as a pro-marriage poem dedicated and presented to his ward Southampton. This raises some questions. Was Shakespeare, too, known personally either to Burghley or to Southampton? Was he, too, directly guided and encouraged by Lord Burghley? There are a few details in the preliminaries of *Venus* that suggest that he may have been known to Southampton, at least, in so far as he seems to expect his young patron to know who he is. As we have seen, the first three words of the title-page epigraph, '*Vilia*

1 Read & Read; their edition is a surprisingly inaccurate text based on BL Sloane MS 718 and Additional MS 22925.

miretur vulgus' ('Let the crowd marvel at common things'), appear to function here as a backward glance towards the *vulgus*, or large crowd of people, who had recently marvelled at performances of Shakespeare's Wars of the Roses plays in the public theatres (see p. 13). This allusion could be recognized only by a reader who was aware both of the popularity of these plays and of the identity of their chief author. And within the dedicatory epistle the phrase already quoted, 'all idle hours', suggests that the epistle's recipient is expected to have some awareness of what it is that keeps Shakespeare busy when he is not penning Ovidian verse. Perhaps Southampton was already acquainted with Shakespeare as an actor and a playwright, occupations currently jeopardized by the plague outbreak and closure orders; and perhaps Burghley, aware of the young man's pleasure in the theatre, hoped that such a talented individual would be more effective than Clapham had been in presenting arguments in favour of marriage.

Whether or not Shakespeare was personally acquainted with Southampton before he wrote *Venus*, it is likely that he had encountered him by the time *Lucrece* was ready for publication. The fact of the repeated dedication indicates that *Venus* was favourably received and its author rewarded. This time, Shakespeare uses the bold and highly unusual word 'love' in the opening sentence of the dedicatory epistle. He is most unlikely to have done so unless he was confident that it would be well received. It is conceivable also that the phrase in the epistle's closing sentence, 'Were my worth greater, my duty would show greater', alludes to the poet's still lowly social status, which he hoped soon to elevate with Southampton's assistance. Southampton's great uncle Sir Thomas Wriothesley had been Garter King of Arms. The silver falcon that was to form the crest of the Shakespeare arms in 1596 may possibly allude to the four silver falcons which appear on the Wriothesley coat of arms.¹

1 For a fuller discussion of these matters, see Duncan-Jones, 'Heralds'.

If Shakespeare was acquainted with Burghley and/or with Southampton, a likely person to have brought them together is the printer Richard Field. Field is presumed to have been at school with Shakespeare; certainly their fathers knew each other quite well (Eccles, 59–60). Of half-a-dozen Stratford contemporaries of Shakespeare's who were apprenticed to London stationers Field was far and away the most successful. There are also definite links between Burghley and Field, who was to be the printer of both of Shakespeare's poems. Field's first independent publication, in 1588, was of a pro-Spanish tract of which texts also survive in Burghley's own hand.¹ Burghley had previously employed Thomas Vautrollier, Field's late master (Kathman). In 1589 Field had been the printer of *The Art of English Poesy*, which he particularly commended to Burghley, declaring himself to be 'alwaies ready and desirous to be at your Honourable commaundement'.² His success in cultivating and sustaining such exalted connections is underlined further by his next major printing job, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, translated by John Harington and dedicated to the queen. But there are also several other ways, not mutually exclusive, in which Shakespeare could have encountered Southampton. He could, for instance, have seen him, and perhaps heard gossip about his reluctance to marry, when the earl visited Oxford as part of the queen's progress there in late September 1592. Royal progresses always attracted huge crowds of spectators, and Oxford lies on the normal route between London and Stratford. Also, this was a time when the theatres were closed. Yet another suggestion, made by G.P.V. Akrigg, is that Shakespeare was at some point presented to Southampton by Sir George Carew, who was married to the Stratford heiress Joyce Clopton, and was on friendly terms both with Southampton and his mother (Akrigg, 193). It could also

1 STC 15412; Kathman.

2 Puttenham, 2; see also William Stepney, *The Spanish Schoolmaster*, printed by Richard Field for John Harrison in 1591 and dedicated to Robert Cecil, younger son of 'S^r. Burleigh, & S^r. Thesorero mayor de la Serenissima Maiestad de la Reyna de Inglatierra'.

be relevant that Southampton overlapped at St John's College, Cambridge, with Thomas Nashe, who dedicated *The Unfortunate Traveller* to him in 1593, especially if it is true, as several scholars have conjectured, that Nashe had collaborated with Shakespeare on *1 Henry VI* (Burns, 82–3).

The fact that allusions to *Venus* were made very early by two individuals who were both, in different ways, strongly interested in Lord Burghley, suggests that on its first appearance the poem could have been believed by some to have a connection with him. The elderly Richard Stonley, who recorded the purchase of a copy of *Venus* in his diary on 12 June 1593,¹ worked for Lord Treasurer Burghley as a Clerk of the Exchequer. Stonley was a regular book-buyer, but his normal preference was for sermons and history rather than poetry. It may have been the dedication to Southampton, whose guardian was his boss Lord Burghley, that prompted this uncharacteristic purchase. But though he acquired *Venus*, Stonley may not have been much interested in reading it. In contrast, the crazy soldier William Reynolds, who saw a copy in late September 1593, evidently read it quite closely.² He had a hostile obsession with Burghley, whom he believed to be habitually cruel and corrupt as well as a personal enemy to himself. His interpretation of *Venus* was wildly fantastical. He read the poem as a coded message to himself from the Privy Council concerning his own tempestuous and largely imaginary relationship with the queen. Reynolds would now be diagnosed as a sufferer from erotomania, or de Clérambault's syndrome, in which the subject believes that someone of a much higher status is in love with him (or her).

Yet Reynolds may not have been entirely mistaken in believing that this book, with its conspicuous dedication to Lord Burghley's promising young ward, carried political and social significance

1 Stonley MS, fol. 9^r. Stonley appears to have paid sixpence for his new copy of *Venus and Adonis*.

2 Duncan-Jones, 'Much ado', 488–90; Reynolds MS, fol. 86^v. The account of *Venus and Adonis* occurs in the third of Reynolds's 1593 letters contained in the manuscript. It is addressed to the Citizens of London, and like the preceding letters which are addressed to the queen and Burghley, is dated 21 September 1593.

beyond its ostensible subject-matter. Implicitly, the poem compliments Southampton, much as Clapham's *Narcissus* had done, as an Adonis-like youth of irresistible charm who is averse to marriage and procreation and suffers as a result. However, it paid an even greater compliment to Southampton's literary discernment by associating him publicly with what quickly became the most popular narrative poem of the late Elizabethan period.

Protagonists: visible and audible women

In addition to their 'sweetness' of style, a likely reason for the popularity of Shakespeare's poems of 1593 and 1594 is the central position given to female figures, announced in each poem's title. This probably enhanced their appeal both to young men and to women readers. Extended exploration of the experience of female protagonists was an attractive feature of the narrative and reflective genre in which Shakespeare was writing.¹ Whether or not he was its author, he was to be associated with this genre a few years later when *A Lover's Complaint* was published under his name with the *Sonnets*.² In plays written for performance by all-male companies there were considerable constraints on the presentation of women. The leading boy actors must have been astonishingly gifted in their ability to memorize long speeches and to deliver them movingly. Such well-schooled youths were required, early in Shakespeare's career, for the role of Katherina in *The Taming of the Shrew*, or Margaret of Anjou in *1, 2 and 3 Henry VI*. Self-evidently, Katherina is presented as a young woman who does not conform to accepted stereotypes of the 'feminine'. She is impatient, sharp-tongued and physically violent. In the second scene in which she appears she has tied up her younger sister's hands, and strikes her. And even though, as the play's title promises, we watch Katherina being 'tamed', there is a paradox here. Katherina is tamed in just one way. She learns to be obedient to her husband

1 For a wide-ranging exploration of female-voiced complaint poems, see Kerrigan.

2 For a different proposal about the authorship of *LC*, see Vickers, *Shakespeare*.

Petruchio, having perhaps fallen in love with him in the process. But she continues to be lively, assertive and articulate, in strong contrast to the other women in the play, who are conventionally demure and speak few lines. Katherina's final speech, a sermon on wifely obedience, is the longest speech in the whole play. This was a challenging part for a boy actor, but one that never required him to be either demure or charming.

Like many women in the English histories, Margaret of Anjou is fierce, self-willed and pugnacious. She is moved by savage ambition and, in *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*, a keen sense of wrong. Her speeches convey neither erotic charm nor maternal tenderness. Indeed, Shakespeare capitalizes richly on this very limitation. In her great slanging match with Richard, Duke of York, a passage for which Shakespeare soon became celebrated, York attacks her precisely on the grounds of her lack of femininity. Margaret – he claims – is not really a woman at all:¹

O tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide! . . .
Women are soft, mild, pitiful, and flexible;
Thou stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless.
(*3H6* 1.4.137, 141–2)

Margaret's eloquent tongue is chiefly deployed for railing and complaint. She has few moments of quiet contemplation, whereas Venus and Lucrece have many. While the best boy actors at the disposal of the playing companies were evidently superb, they were probably at their best in parts which required a good deal of shrillness and shrewishness.

When he turned from the public theatres to write for an audience of sophisticated readers of printed verse, Shakespeare was liberated to explore aspects of female behaviour that were beyond the reach of even the most brilliant boy actor. He could also go well beyond the kind of physical detail that could be made

1 The attack on Shakespeare in *Greene's Groatsworth*, sig. F1^v, alludes to 'his *Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde*'.

apparent to a large theatre audience. Venus, though a goddess, inhabits a recognizably feminine, fleshly and highly sexualized body. She blushes, sweats and pants with a mature physicality that is both seen and 'felt' in close-up. She appears to possess both mass and weight, being strong enough to 'pluck' Adonis from his horse and to carry him under one arm while simultaneously controlling his 'lusty courser' with the other (29–32). The midday sun makes her 'sweat' (175). Later, abandoned by Adonis, she runs 'wildly' through the prickly undergrowth of the forest

Like a milch-doe, whose swelling dugs do ache,
Hasting to feed her fawn hid in some brake.
(875–6)

This simile underlines both Venus' femininity and her animal-like instincts.

In contrast to the goddess's physical freedom and energy, Lucrece endures the intensely confined solitude that was the lot of so many high-born ladies in Shakespeare's period. As readers of the poem, we are granted privileged access to her interior consciousness. Such copious soliloquizing would not be tolerable in the playhouse. Reading attentively, we can also observe the strong contrast between the amplitude of Lucrece's reflections in solitude and the bashful awkwardness of her speech in company. Silently, she shows pleasure at Tarquin's report on her husband's military success 'with heaved-up hand' (111). In the final scene, in the presence of all the Roman lords, she can identify her assailant only with stammering hesitancy, unable to speak his name: 'He, he, fair lords, 'tis he' (1721). This is one of several passages in which Shakespeare closely follows Ovid's account in *Fasti* (see Appendix 2), where at the same point

Three times she tried to speak, three times she
stopped; she dared
A fourth time but did not lift her eyes.
(*Fasti*, 2.823–4; p. 533, ll. 823–4)

On one of the few occasions when Shakespeare's Lucrece embarks on a longer speech addressed to someone else – her entreaty to Tarquin not to compromise his own princely status by raping her (575–666) – she is brutally interrupted after a single line that opens a stanza:

‘So let thy thoughts, low vassals to thy state –’
‘No more,’ quoth he. ‘By heaven, I will not hear thee!’
(666–7)

In her moral integrity, personal dignity, intellectual sophistication and capacity for deep reflection Lucrece has much in common with the imprisoned and tortured Princess Pamela in Book 3 of Sir Philip Sidney's revised but unfinished *Arcadia* (1590), herself modelled on historical prisoners such as Lady Jane Grey. Early readers may also have seen a parallel to Mary, Queen of Scots, so long a prisoner, who, like Lucrece (317), found lonely solace in embroidery. Yet many twentieth-century critics failed to notice the contrast between Lucrece's verbal inhibition in public and the poet's free articulation of her interior thoughts in private, and have accused her of garrulity. Extraordinarily, the last Arden editor, F.T. Prince, complained of her ‘remorseless eloquence’, claiming that ‘After her violation, Lucrece loses our sympathy exactly in proportion as she gives tongue’ – thus implying that he might perhaps have been willing to sympathize with her if only Shakespeare hadn't given such excessive attention to her sufferings (Ard², xxxvi).

The protagonists of Shakespeare's poems derive from wider and more varied sources than the women of his English history plays. While figures such as Joan la Pucelle and Margaret of Anjou have been elaborated mainly from historical chronicles, pictorial images of both Venus and Lucrece played an important part in their evolution. Both figures were widely visible in the everyday world of Shakespeare and his readers. For instance, Venus figured in some printed emblem books, such as Geoffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblems* (1586), where she is seen both on her own and in the company of Cupid.¹ From 1570 there was a painting

1 Whitney, sig. F1^v (Venus without Cupid), sig. T2^v (Venus with Cupid).

by the monogrammatist 'HE' at Whitehall Palace which showed Elizabeth I confronting, and outfacing, Juno, Pallas and a naked Venus (Fig. 2). This splendid picture was seen and remarked upon by visitors to London (Waldstein, 46–8). Erotic images of Venus could be encountered in some private houses. The Jesuit John Gerard describes a fellow Jesuit, Father Oldcorne, staying in a Catholic household in London in the 1580s:

In the window of his room he saw a painted pane of glass depicting Mars and Venus. The scene was indecent, and although the house did not belong to his friend – he had merely rented it – Father Oldcorne, unable to endure the sight, struck his fist through the glass and told his friend how unseemly it was to let such things stand.

(Gerard, 10)

Lucretia, whose story had been told by both Chaucer and Gower,¹ was a particularly popular subject for visual representation throughout Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Penny, 80–6). In Elizabethan England her image could be encountered in shop signs, printers' devices, illustrated initials and seal rings, as well as in paintings and tapestries. In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* Malvolio recognizes Maria's forged letter as coming from the Lady Olivia because of its seal, 'the impressure her Lucrece, with which she uses to seal' (*TN* 2.5.92–3). Malvolio might suspect that a lady whose personal emblem was the chaste Lucrece was not very likely to compose love letters, were it not that the ingenious Maria has recruited even this emblem to the service of Olivia's supposed infatuation:

'I may command where I adore,
But silence, like a Lucrece knife,
With bloodless stroke my heart doth gore'
(2.5.104–6)

1 Chaucer, *Legend*, 1680–1885; Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, 7.4754–5130.



2 Allegorical painting by the monogrammatist 'HE' of Elizabeth I with Juno, Pallas Athene and a naked Venus, with Cupid at her side (1569)

The image of Lucrece could be viewed in sharply conflicting ways. Though apparently delivering a warning to wives to die rather than betray their husbands – or in Olivia’s case, expressing a determination to reject all amorous advances – it nevertheless showed a dishevelled and bare-breasted woman whom less serious-minded young men might view as an erotic pin-up. As Nicholas Penny has observed, the many versions that showed Lucrece in the nude ‘were not, we suspect, designed to inspire elevated sentiments in those who owned them’ (84). Some images, faithful to Ovid’s stress on Lucretia’s determination to fall to her death in a decorous and seemly manner,¹ show her clutching her clothes tightly around her, yet a substantial minority do not. The great South German painter Lucas Cranach (1472–1553) painted Lucretia’s suicide many times, sometimes showing her bare-breasted, but often wholly nude. It was one of Cranach’s nude versions that appears to have been most popular, surviving in at least fifteen versions or studio copies (Fig. 3).²

By the end of the century the image of Lucrece’s suicide was so familiar in London that Ben Jonson was able to give a character the line ‘he makes a face like a stab’d LVCRECE’ confident that his audience would immediately know what that looked like.³ Two sixteenth-century printers, Thomas Berthelet and Thomas Purfoot, chose an image of Lucrece as their device. The woodcut used as a colophon by the former, who was printer to Henry VIII, showed “‘Lucrecia Romana”, wild-eyed, open-mouthed, and with dishevelled hair, thrusting a sword into her bosom’ (Jonson, 9.521). The latter used a more dignified image of Lucretia during the 1590s. For instance, in 1594, the year in which Shakespeare’s poem first appeared, Purfoot published a Latin–English dictionary for children bearing this image as its colophon (Fig. 4).

1 This was faithfully transmitted by Chaucer: ‘as she fel adoun, she kaste hir lok, / And of hir clothes yet she hede tok / For in her fallynge yet she had a care, / Lest that hir fet or suche thing lay bare’ (*Legend*, 1856–9).

2 Cranach, no. 240; see also Donaldson, 15–20.

3 *Cynthia’s Revels*, 5.4.160 (Jonson, 4.144).



3 Painting of Lucretia killing herself by Lucas Cranach (1472–1553)



Printed at London by Thomas
Purfoot, and are to be sold at his
Shop at the figure of the Lucrece at
the little North dore of
Paules. 1594.

- 4 Woodcut of Lucretia killing herself used by the printer Thomas Purfoot in a Latin–English dictionary for children (1594)

Both of the mythic female protagonists of Shakespeare's poems could be encountered in the writings of Sidney, where they are also associated with the visual arts. In the revised *Arcadia* Sidney describes the imprisoned Princess Philoclea (sister of Princess Pamela; see p. 34 above) in a state of utter dejection: 'sitting of that side of her bed which was from the window (which did cast such a shadow upon her as a good painter would bestow upon Venus, when under the trees she bewailed the murder of Adonis)' (*NA*, 321). The circumstantial phrase 'under the trees' suggests that the well-travelled Sidney may have been thinking about a specific painting of Venus lamenting the death of Adonis in a woodland glade, such as that by Sebastiano del Piombo now in the Uffizi gallery in Florence (Fig. 5). The link Sidney made between Lucretia and the art of painting was even closer, for he used the dying Lucretia as his defining analogy for the exemplary artistry of the 'right' poet, one who imitates Platonic ideas rather than recording physical actualities. In so doing, such a 'right' poet resembles the best kind of painter, who shows 'the constant though lamenting look of Lucretia, when she punished in herself another's fault, wherein he painteth not Lucretia whom he never saw, but painteth the outward beauty of such a virtue' (*Defence*, 80–1). Sidney's *A Defence of Poetry* did not reach print until 1595, but other links between this treatise and Shakespeare's early writings suggest that he may have seen a manuscript text of it (Duncan-Jones, 'Liquid prisoners', 8–9). Certainly Shakespeare's rarefied, rhetorical treatment of Lucrece's body – most rarefied of all, perhaps, in the climactic scene of her suicide – conforms to Sidney's insistence on moral significance as a far higher priority for the true creative artist than material literalism.

As the two poems are contrasted and complementary, so are their title figures. Venus' overwhelming fleshliness (see p. 33) provoked intense embarrassment in several twentieth-century male critics. C.S. Lewis, for instance, said that

Shakespeare's Venus is a very ill-conceived temptress.
She is made so much larger than her victim that she