NARRATING RAVISHMENT IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Narrating Ravishment in Early Modern English Literature

In early modern English, “ravishment” was an ambiguous term that could mean sexual violation, or abduction. This thesis moves from the ambiguity inherent in the early modern application of “ravishment” to look at narratives of ravishment in early modern English literature, namely, *The Faerie Queene* (1590) by Edmund Spenser, Thomas Middleton’s 1611 play *The Lady’s Tragedy,* and Shakespeare’s long poem *Venus and Adonis* (1593). These texts offer narratives of ravishment that diverge from the normative early modern narrative of ravishment where a male aggressor attempts to seduce a female, resorting to violence when rhetoric falls short of persuading her. In these texts, a female is impregnated by the sun, a dead female body is exhumed, and a female pursues a male through a rhetoric of seduction that becomes a form of ravishment in itself, respectively. Through these marginal narratives of ravishment, this thesis argues that narratives of ravishment in early modern English literature reveal the ways in which ravishment works in non-normative, implicit ways. This thesis attempts to show how the forms of ravishment in these texts become instrumental to an interrogation of the notions of subject, agency, and ravishment itself, in addition to leading to a destabilization, or construction, of subjectivities.

ÖZET

Erken Modern Dönem İngiliz Edebiyatında Ravishment Anlatısı

Erken modern İngilizce'sinde, *ravishment*, anlamı müphem bir kelime olup, cinsel ihlal veya kaçırma anlamlarını karşılayabilirdi. Bu tez, *ravishment* kelimesinin erken modern uygulamasına içre olan müphemlikten yola çıkarak, Edmund Spenser'ın *The Faerie Queene* (1590) şiirine, Thomas Middleton'ın *The Lady's Tragedy* (1611) oyununa, ve Shakespeare'in *Venus and Adonis* (1593) şiirine bakmaktadır, bu metinler üzerinden erken modern dönem İngiliz edebiyatındaki *ravishment* anlatılarına yoğunlaşmaktadır. Bu metinler, erkek bir saldırganın bir kadını baştan çıkarmaya çalıştığı, retorik iknada başarısız olunca da şiddete başvurduğu normatif erken modern *ravishment* anlatısından sapan anlatılar sunar. Bu metinlerde, bir kadın güneş tarafından hamile bırakılır, ölü bir kadın bedeni mezarından çıkarılır, ve bir kadın bir erkeğe, retoriğinin bir *ravishment* formuna dönüşmesi noktasına dek, kur yapar. Bu tez, marjinal *ravishment* anlatıları üzerinden, erken modern İngiliz edebiyatının, *ravishment*'ın normatif olmayan, gizil yollarla işleyebildiğini ortaya çıkardığını savunur. Tezin amacı, bu metinlerdeki *ravishment* formlarının özne, edimsellik, ve *ravishment* kavramlarını tartışmaya açtığını ve özneliğin sarsılmasına, ve kurulmasına, vasıta olduğunu göstermektir.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

But if she do refuse, then woe to th' atempter?
Eccho, attempt her.
She will proudly refuse, and speakes in iest neuer?
Eccho, euer.
So though still she refuse, she speakes in iest euer?
Eccho, euer.
Then such (as these) bee the true best signes to seeke out such?
Eccho, seeke out such.
Such will I seeke but what shall I do when I first shall attempt her?
Eccho, tempt her.
How shall I tempt her-eare she stand on termes of her honor?
Eccho, on her.
Oh might I come to that! I thinke it is euen so
Eccho, tis euen so.
Strongly to tempt, and moue (at first) is surely the best then?
Eccho, the best then.

–Barnabe Barnes, *Parthenophil and Parthenophe*, pp. 136-137

Barnabe Barnes' Ode 8 from his 1593 collection of Petrarchan sonnets, madrigals, odes, and elegies provides an example of one of the standard pursuit strategies in early modern English literature. The echo that accompanies Parthenophil's lovesick versifying on his beloved Parthenophe repeats his last words and often adds light-hearted wit when they are homonymic: "Speake Eccho tell: / Why Lillyes, and red Roses like her? *Eccho*, like her" (Barnes, 1593, p. 104). It is when Parthenophil considers how to approach his beloved that the echo exceeds its natural capacities to prescribe a more assertive agenda of pursuit. Instead of retrieving and playing, Echo responds, assuming a more active position that mirrors the pursuer in early modern erotic writing, particularly in epyllia. Nouns become imperative verbs under linguistic pressure, and signify a breach of limits: "atempter" can only be so after the fact, so to advise one who has already done so to "attempt her" is to endorse pushing

back against established limits, to “bounce back stronger”. Echo substantiates this advice by confirming twice that Parthenophe “speakes in iest euer”, that her refusal is not earnest. This is the typical suggestion of some the most canonical pursuers of early modern English erotic writing, and moves the narrative forward after the woman’s refusal by drawing on the Ovidian premise that a woman’s refusal is “in iest” and translates to assent, because “force is pleasing to girls; / what they like, they often want to have given ‘unwilling’” (Ovid, 2014, p. 87). In her seminal study on rape and women’s writing in early modern English literature, Jocelyn Catty notes that figuring “coyness as an active strategy” is one of the ways in which texts “[undermine] female sexual denial” (Catty, 1999, p. 72). Catty adds that a text might do this also “by asserting that a woman’s ‘no’ always means ‘yes’”. Witness Astrophil after Stella, “Lest once should not be heard, twice said, No, No!”, as he interprets grammar rules so “That in one speech two negatives affirm!” (Sidney, 2001). Whereas strategic coyness might count as a subset of insincerity which figures largely in early modern misogynistic discourse, the affirmative refusal leaves no space in language for women to turn down amorous advances. Concisely, that women might say and mean no, is not only improbable, but also semantically impossible. Echo accordingly responds to Parthenophil’s inquiries, he shall first “tempt her” to “attempt her”. That she might “stand on termes of her honor” is not a concern, “on her” then is the place to go. In the end, “Strongly to tempt, and moue (at first) is surely the best” modus operandi for the pursuer. Following the previous exchange, “strongly” describes advances at once insistent and forceful. While Echo encourages the pursuer to tempt, attempt, move, and remedy the beloved’s “honor” by being “on her”, the fact that it is ultimately a sonorous and ideological construction of Parthenophil himself suggests that the rejected pursuer is always

already implicated the wayward means of pursuit that is rape. This is further evident when Parthenophil affirms, “Oh might I come to that!” regarding the prospect of being “on” Parthenophe. This is the end and aim of seduction, much like Venus’wish to keep Adonis “fastened in her arms”, the single-mindedness of which she embellishes with incessant rhetoric. Pursuit originates in desire, and the desiring pursuer considers the possibility not only of refusal, but also of what could follow next–forcing assent.

Forcing assent, seduction, rape, and ravishment are, as Melissa E. Sanchez (2011) notes, conflated in “Renaissance legal and poetic practice,” in which sharp distinctions threaten to neglect the complexity of the ambivalence with which narratives of ravishment present these concepts (p. 71). “Legally, ‘rape’ signified forcible penetration followed by emission… ‘Ravishment’, on the other hand, could mean either abduction–physically carrying a woman away against her will… or seduction–figuratively being carried away by one’s own desires” (Sanchez, 2011, p. 71). This thesis moves from this ambiguity that conflates rape and ravishment while distinguishing them, an ambiguity through which rape becomes a volatile element in texts that might serve a plethora of functions, primarily, as a force that pushes narrative forward, “as a figure of the power-relations between the sexes,” and as a narrative blind spot that leaves acts of violence open to interpretation (Catty, 1999, p. 3). Rape in early modern English literature thus opens up a locus of questions concerning the limits of subjects and bodies: How do different forms of ravishment paradoxically destabilize subjects, even as it forges them? How do they configure the subject through what is done unto it, in the encounter of the self with violence?

Narratives of ravishment in early modern English literature offer representations of destabilized subjects: Ovidian nymphs who are oblivious to, and

violated by, the erotic male gaze, bodies that resist rhetorical and physical attempts at seduction, and bodies that do not yield, even in death. Violated bodies and broken language open up questions of the boundaries of the body, of what it means to be a subject or agent, of the ways in which desirous power attempts to rape and ravish the unyielding body, along with the possibility that such threats of violation might facilitate the forging, or fortifying, of subjectivity. It is the aim of this thesis to argue that narratives of ravishment in early modern literature provide insight into how rape and ravishment might occur in ways that deviate from more recognizable models of rape that feature a male aggressor attempting to persuade, or directly violating, a female object of desire. Robertson and Rose (2016), for instance, standardize their definition of rape as "a savage act against a woman, whether physical or psychological", but they concede the paradoxical character of rape whereby it

> simultaneously exists as always one thing… and never one thing, since it inevitably constitutes a thread in a complex network of interconnected cultural institutions and practices that changes from one historical moment to the next. Rape is about bodies, and, like the body, it must be understood as it is socially constructed. (p. 7)

Robertson and Rose's definition of rape allows for the coexistence of a standard model that evinces heteronormative power relations, and of an elusiveness inherent in the definition of rape. The authors also point out cultural mechanisms of meaning-making and organization as informing the definitions of rape. Rape is "socially constructed", and as such, different narratives of rape reveal the power relations and social values of their milieu, signifying more than heteronormative power imbalance, and putting emphasis on less recognizable forms of violation as forms of ravishment. The agents and bodies involved in an act of rape are equally socially constructed. While Rose and Robertson are

nowhere claiming that only women are raped, it is generally agreed that the rapable body -even a man's- is that one which is socially constructed as "female" and in a

position of weakness or ambiguity, able to be taken by force and objectified by those in power. (2016, p. 4)

The necessary leeway in defining rape thus accentuates the constructive capacities of rhetoric too, opening up an understanding of the function of Venus' rhetoric of seduction in femininizing Adonis to render him compliable and vulnerable to her advances, and of the role of the Tyrant's apostrophizing the Lady's dead body, characterizing it as female in a way that death cannot efface, so as to transform the corpse into "the rapable body".

Rhetoric allows the aggressor to fashion the body of the object of desire according to their will, but it is also integral to a normative model of ravishment in the sense that it can function as a tool, and a form, of sexual violence by itself. Catty (1999) attests the disturbing proximity between coercion and seduction:

> (Male) persuasion… implies a scenario of (attempted) seduction, while (female) dissuasion implies one of (threatened) rape. That the two tend to be presented instead as counterparts contributes to the confusion of verbal with physical force. (p. 19)

Whereas Catty sees male persuasion and female dissuasion as part of a tension operative in early modern literary representations, and thus definitions, of rape, early modern English literature offers narratives in which these two elements exist in a continuum which moves from attempted seduction to threatened rape in subtle speed, eventually culminating in rape. Catty herself offers Mary Wroth's *Urania* as an example, where the aggressor "chooses to try persuasion rather than rape, but there is no suggestion that rape by force is impossible" (1999, p. 186). The implicit suggestion that rape is possible in case persuasion fails underlies the rhetoric of seduction. This implicit threat is perhaps the motivation of "female-voiced polemical writers" from this period, specifically, their "conflation and equation of verbal persuasion and sexual violence as equally coercive and damaging" (p. 231-32). In

short, if one aspect of a normative model of rape in early modern English literature is the establishment of the aggressor as male, and the object of desire as female, the other aspect is the significance of rhetoric as a tool of seduction that bears in itself the potential to erupt in the form of sexual violence, or rape.

This thesis attempts to show, through closer inspection of non-normative narratives of ravishment, that these forms of ravishment reveal the subtler ways in which sexual violence and ravishment can appear as narrative forces to destabilize or construct bodies that complicate the question of ravishment, bodies that also reveal themselves to be integral for a reading of what is at stake in each potential instance of ravishment. *The Faerie Queene*, *Venus and Adonis*, and *The Lady's Tragedy* all offer narratives of ravishment that are marginal compared to the structures of heteronormative power imbalance and trajectories from seduction to violence. Spenser's nymph Chrysogone is impregnated by the sun in her sleep in a precarious narrative that connotes the Mariological body and immaculate conception, even as it hints at the disturbing lack of agency of the sleeping body. *The Lady's Tragedy* features the living, then dead, body of the Lady as she navigates an array of objecthoods that are subjectified, and subjectivities that are objectified, becoming idol, relic, corpse, thing, female, and finally, a lover, in the hands of the rapacious Tyrant who desires her in life and in death. Finally, *Venus and Adonis* reverses gender roles to cast Venus into the role of the sexual aggressor who attempts to seduce, in a scenario that is non-normative also in that she is an older, more powerful female pursuing an eminently "unripe", young boy. These marginal narratives of ravishment alert the reader to the subtler, less accessible ways in which ravishment might work, in forms of sexual violence upon a sleeping body by a form not blatantly masculine, upon a dead body, or in the shape of rhetoric, and not necessarily physical

assault. This thesis thus approaches the theme of ravishment in early modern English literature from the angles and inquiries offered by these texts who are also relatively understudied. All three texts have ironically had their vogues in scholarship, all studied enough, if not overstudied, at this point. However, certain episodes of these texts lend themselves particularly well to a being read as narratives of ravishment, and such a reading reveals ways of violation and ravishment operative in these episodes, that might have been heretofore overlooked. The nymph Chrysogone who is impregnated by the sun, for instance, features in an episode that has been received in positive and negative lights, as an origin story of all life and as a disturbing tale of rape. Recent scholarship that contextualizes this episode, and notes both Spenser's ideals for it and the voyeuristic, violent undertow, provides insight as to how ravishment facilitates the ideal conception in this episode, even as it complicates this very idealness through the less optimistic, erotic undertow of desire and violation. Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* likewise merits from a closer look at how ravishment is manifested in the discourse of a woman in pursuit, in contrast with more standard narratives of ravishment where the pursuer is a male whose rhetoric of seduction bears the implicit threat of rape and vaguely transforms into attempted rape. *Venus and Adonis* might be considered understudied in the sense that it is marginal to Shakespeare's canon of dramatic works and sonnets today, although it was his bestseller during his lifetime. Both early modern and contemporary critics have emphasized the light aspect of the poem, obscuring the darker underbelly of the rhetoric of seduction, which can, through insistence and continuous attempting, constitute a form of ravishment in itself.

This thesis consults several theoretical trends to unpack the questions of subjectivity, agency, and sexual violence regarding the studied texts. Derrida's *The*

Animal That Therefore I Am supplies the text with a theory of subjectivity that focuses on Western philosophy's emphasis on the Cartesian, thinking self and the self-declaration of the "I", and circumvents this monumental declaration of the "I" as proof of subjectivity in order to explore ways in which entities that do not verbally declare the self constitute different forms of subjectivity. While Derrida's theory is particularly useful in understanding the kind of subjectivity that is denied, and paradoxically possessed by, the Lady in Middleton's drama, this theory's potential contributions to the unconscious impregnation of Chrysogone are discarded in this thesis. Instead, Chrysogone's similarly problematic subject position is explored through the studies of Harvey and Traub regarding the theoretical implications of masculine hegemony inherent in the epistemologies of gardening and gynecological manuals. The discourse prevalent in these manuals lays bare the female body as open to masculine, and thus productive and knowledgeable, intervention. This hegemonic operation upon Chrysogone's body and impregnation constitutes one of the ways in which her body is sexualized and left vulnerable through a current of implied sexual violence that compromises the idealness of conception.

The first chapter looks at the episode of Chrysogone's "miraculous" conception and childbirth in Book III of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (2013). As Catty (1999) notes, "the threat of rape is extended to virtually every female character in *The Faerie Queene*", but Chrysogone remains a relatively understudied character in the scholarship on rape in early modern English literature. This is primarily due to the conflicting significances of her conception, which is the origin of the poem's allegories for virginal and marital chastity, the former of which also embodies one projection of Queen Elizabeth I (Roche, 1964). Compared to a plethora of other female characters who face threats of unambiguous rape,

Chrysogone's conception seems not as explicit a threat, or instance, of violation. Yet, a closer look at this episode reveals that the elements suggestive of the idealness and naturalness of Chrysogone's conception also amplify the undertow of ravishment, and engender an ambivalence that makes it difficult to interpret the presence of rape, and its function. Instead of positing a binaristic question of presence, this chapter thus aims to affirm the simultaneity of idealization and rape to ultimately posit that even a supposedly immaculate origin story is tainted by corporeality, implications of intervening upon a sleeping body, questions of agency, and subtle forms of violation that might nonetheless constitute rape. Accordingly, this chapter begins from Chrysogone's name and allegory to propose that they potentiate her ravishment and complicate the idealness and sexual purity of her conception from the beginning. Chrysogone's name also suggests allegory as a model of the ravishment that occurs in her impregnation. Then the chapter looks at the framing of Chrysogone's conception, and how Spenser's speaker formulates it as exemplary, because free from carnal desire. The next section focuses on the scene of Chrysogone's bathing and subsequent impregnation to discuss the elements of voyeurism, the erotic gaze, innocence, and violence, along with the Ovidian contexts of rape, all of which are activated throughout Chrysogone's bathing, Titan's omniscience, and her eventual sleep. Initially, voyeurism and the neutralization of Chrysogone's subjectivity, through Spenser's emphasis on her sleep, bring about her effacement and overall imply an act of ravishment. In order to illuminate the implications of Chrysogone's sleep and of Titan's impregnating intervention, this section draws on the theoretical frameworks of Staub and Harvey, to respectively inspect the analogous discourse of gynecological and gardening manuals, and to interpret the role of gendered pleasure, both of which further describe the episode's power imbalance and Chrysogone's lack

of agency. Whereas the natural circumstances of Chrysogone's impregnation suggest a spontaneous, ideal form of love and conception, the contextualization of such natural associations hints at this conception's more voluptuous and violent aspects, thereby casting doubt as to the possibility of an ideal creation of life. The chapter concludes with the poem's comparison of Chrysogone's impregnation to Nile's inundation, where the episode's spontaneous creation typifies the genesis of all life, even as the Nile's link to Book I's monstrous mother Error imbues nature, and by extension, Chrysogone's solar conception, with ambiguity. Ultimately, this chapter argues that the episode is deliberately ambivalent regarding Chrysogone's rape, because the idealness and sexual purity of procreation which her conception is supposed to embody are always already problematic. When the concept of immaculate conception is embodied, the corporeality of form reveals the concept as the oxymoron it is bound to be. Chrysogone's ravishment opens up questions of the limits of agency, and of forms of control that can be exercised over a body by an array of agents, from the erotic gaze to masculine principles of genesis. Spenser's poem centralizes the figure of the sleeping or unconscious female body, and constantly ambiguates this body by moving back and forth between Chrysogone's conception as ideal and as a disturbing intervention, if not rape. Although her state verges on absence, Chrysogone's sleep positions her in the liminal space between consciousness and unconsciousness, a space which opens up avenues of inquiry as to the limits of a sleeping body's agency. The ravishment of the unconscious female body occasions conception as violation, which contrasts the speaker's frame of this conception as pure and ideal, ultimately suggesting that corporeality problematizes even the most ideal narrative of procreation and that Chrysogone's unconsciousness taints any potential of idealness with the undertow of rape. The next chapter focuses

on Thomas Middleton's 1611 play, *The Lady's Tragedy* to engage further with such questions of agency, autonomy, corporeality, and rape through the titular Lady's dead body. The central figure is a dead female body, which further complicates the question of rape in relation to an "absent" subject. Through the Tyrant's violations that potentially constitute a form of rape, the dead female body becomes the locus of discussions of the autonomy of a body that is not only susceptible to alteration by the Tyrant's fantasies, but also female.

The second chapter focuses on the array of questions *The Lady's Tragedy* opens up, pertaining to the limits of subjectivity, and the implications of forms of sexual violation that constitute a relatively understudied minority within the entire body of narratives of ravishment in early modern English literature. Middleton's play features the Lady as its main character, who is also dead for half of the play and who, in life, declares that her opinions, clothing, or loyalties shall not be altered, by the Tyrant who pursues her. After she commits suicide to avoid rape, the Tyrant disentombs her body and "alters" her by dressing her up, taking her where he goes, through cosmetics, and finally, by using her body for pleasure. Regarding the Lady's ironically numerous alterations, Gottlieb (2015) comments that she is "the most significant [prop]--and arguably the most significant [actor]"; and these alterations turn her into an object of obeisance, love, fear, and later a Ghost who has to save her body to rest in peace, thereby justifying the play's central question: "what's she?" (p. 255; 3.1.195). Her shifting form at the hands of others challenges the concept of autonomy and subjectivity she herself posits in the beginning, moving from the principle that she shall not be altered. What problems do the Lady's unhinged postmortem roles pose in relation to her role as a subject? From her self-assertion to her alterations, what becomes of her right to determine her love, her body, her

person? Does death efface subjectivity, as well as the logic of consent? Can the dead be violated, and if so, what kinds of acts would constitute offense; against whom or what, would the offense be done? Does the fact that the object of desire cannot respond spur necrophilia, and constitute, in macabre conciseness, the "perfect" rape? The subject figures large in each of these inquiries, which focus on the limits and violation of the subject. In Middleton's play, the Tyrant's numerous interventions upon the Lady's body form a spectrum of ravishment, from her disentombment, to the Tyrant's necrophiliac rape. Ravishment thus becomes the main device through which the play interrogates and stages the boundaries of "human". In this context, the Tyrant's violations carry amplified significance: simply by virtue of having crossed the threshold of life and decaying, the Lady's cadaverous presence on stage constitutes a perpetual undoing of the established boundaries of "female", "dead", "object", "subject". Through a series of violations that always verge on, and finally culminate in, ravishment, the destabilizing force of the dead female body challenges categorization, and interrogates the limits of autonomy.

The third chapter moves from the dead female body, to the female as attempter of ravishment in Shakespeare's 1593 poem *Venus and Adonis*. Shakespeare's most popular poem in the early modern period has always been interpreted as the comedic counterpart to his tragic *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). The poem offers delight and entertainment, significantly through reversal of gender roles in seduction, making Venus pursue Adonis with the rhetorical gusto and desirous insistence of a male seducer of narratives of ravishment. However, Venus' attempt at seduction imbues the poem with an undertow of ravishment; that the typical instrument of seduction, namely, rhetoric, does not fail to culminate in the forced resolution of rape is because Venus is a woman. This chapter concerns this darker

aspect of Shakespeare's poem, in which Venus bears strong resemblance to conventional ravishers and her attempt at seduction figures a form of ravishment that does not necessarily involve heteronormative rape. Along with the comedic and wayward effects of desire, *Venus and Adonis* also portrays a form of ravishment that inheres in the rhetoric of seduction. It is this chapter's argument that the reversal of the gendered roles of seduction allows Shakespeare to exercise the rapacious capacities of rhetoric in the absence of the possibility of rape, because Venus is a woman. The poem ultimately constructs a rhetoric of seduction that is closer to physical assault than it is to verbal persuasion.

CHAPTER 2

"AND PHOEBUS WITH FAIRE BEAMES DID HER ADORNE": CHRYSOGONE'S RAVISHMENT IN THE FAERIE QUEENE

In *The Faerie* Queene (1590), Spenser's allegories for virginal and marital chastity, Belphoebe and Amoret, are conceived when the nymph Chrysogone is impregnated by "Titan faire" and "his beames" in her sleep (Spenser, 2013, p. 341, line 3.6.6.5). This episode is generally read as Spenser's attempt to establish origins "pure and vnspotted from all loathly crime / That is ingenerate in fleshly slime", not only for the virtue of chastity, but also for an ideal version of conception that is uncorrupted by carnal desire (lines 3.6.3.4-5). Thomas Roche (1964) even interprets "this miraculous birth [as] an analogue to the Incarnation. The reason is neither idly hyperbolic nor blasphemous; it is… Spenser's way of suggesting the true genealogy of Christian virginity and marriage" (p. 106). However, critics have also perceived the negative associations of Chrysogone's conception with rape, exacerbated by her unconscious state and the objectification of the female body, noting also the parallel between Titan and the rapes of Jove. The tension between the positive and negative implications of this episode stems from the ways in which Chrysogone's conception might constitute a form of rape, which is still problematized by the possibility that such a reading goes against Spenser's intentions. [1] This chapter attempts to move beyond the question of whether ravishment is present in the episode, and instead aims to posit the problem of ravishment to be its dual role, as a means to an ideal form of procreation, and as the embodiment of the problem of sex that is always already inherent in procreation. It is this chapter's aim to refrain from attempting to

[1] For a brief survey of numerous and conflicting readings of the Chrysogone episode, see Staub 2015, p. 17.

reconcile ravishment with Spenser's positive goal to build a pure origin story, and instead, to remain cognizant of the simultaneously positive and negative implications of the episode, through which Spenser complicates the notion of even the most ideal form of conception. In Spenser's poem, ravishment is instrumental, both to a pure conception and to its problematization.

2.1 The allegory and violence of "Chrysogone"

Book III's sixth canto introduces Belphoebe with the claim that "all her whole creation did her shew / Pure and vnspotted from all loathly crime" (lines 3.3-4). "All" of "whole" is already a broad gesture and that Belphoebe's creation is pure from "all" carnal crime complements the excess of such promise. This beginning alerts the reader that Belphoebe's birth is going to be in no way ordinary or tainted, and that it will be pure in its entirety. "Her mother was the faire *Chrysogonee*", the poem informs (line 4.1). Chrysogone's first mention merits attention, because it is through her name that the poem begins to complicate its own promise of pure and unspotted origins. Like any other name in *The Faerie Queene*, "Chrysogone" demonstrates the significance of etymology for the action of the poem, where the name describes the fate, purpose, and allegory of the character, and concisely, serves as an interpretation. A. C. Hamilton (2013) annotates "Chrysogone", by reference to Draper (1932) and T. Cooper (1565), to mean either "golden-born" and allude to the myth of Jove impregnating Danaë by transforming himself into a golden shower, or "gold-producing" (p. 342). Even before impregnation, then, Belphoebe's conception originates in a place of violence on the grounds of Chrysogone's association with the Danaë myth, and her status as an allegory in general. Danaë is a significant inclusion to the story of Chrysogone because, in addition to her reappearance towards the end

of Book III in Busirane's tapestries depicting Jove's exploits, her impregnation by Jove bears the closest resemblance to Chrysogone's own engagement with Titan. This frame of the myth of Danaë is an integral source for the sentiment of ravishment in the story of Chrysogone. In the Danaë myth, to begin with, Danaë's father Acrisius imprisons her in a tower in order to circumvent the oracle that he will be killed by his grandson. Jove, however, is enamored by Danaë's beauty and transforms himself into a shower of gold to rain down on the tower, impregnating Danaë who later gives birth to Perseus. Ovid mentions in a list of Jove's procreative transformations "how he also came / To Danae like a shoure of golde," and later adds about Perseus "that he was conceyved / By Danae of golden shower through which shee was deceived" (Golding, 1966, lines 4.750-51; 6.139). Even in brief, Ovid's mentions point out Jove's agency and Danaë's deception, neither of which would necessarily appear condemning for an early modern audience acquainted with Ovid's rapacious metamorphoses and polymorphs, but they nevertheless insinuate lack of consent and of knowledge. Jove's desire boils over the fortified layers around Danaë, and reaches her in a form that pertains to the wayward character of desire. Danaë is, after all, "deceived". She might have been misled, led into error, deluded, or imposed upon; none of the definitions of the word allow Danaë a scope of agency greater than that of someone who does not have all the facts (OED, n.d.). That she is deceived by Jove's metamorphosis does not only efface her agency as an informed subject, but it also associates eroticism and desire with a certain waywardness, with an aberration, an erring from the right path.

Chrysogone's association with Danaë is not confined to etymology; Book III incorporates into its final episodes in the house of the tyrant Busirane several tapestries such as those woven by Arachne, and depicting the exploits or rapes of

Jove. One of these tapestries depicts how “into a golden showre / Him selfe he chaung’d, faire *Danaë* to vew” (lines 11.31.1-2). The entire stanza embodies the tapestry, detailing Jove’s deceit:

> And through the roofe of her strong brasen towre
> Did raine into her lap and hony dew,
> The whiles her foolish garde, that litle knew
> Of such deceit, kept th’yron dore fast bard,
> And watcht, that none should enter nor issew;
> Vaine was the watch, and bootlesse all the ward,
> Whenas the God to golden hew him selfe transfard. (lines 3-9)

The emphasis on strict enclosure merits attention, because Jove’s divine violation occurs almost in despite, with the awareness of transcending law. Jove himself animates the speaker’s ridiculing of “foolish garde” and the risible futility of the “strong brasen towre” with “th’yron dore fast bard” in the face of “the God”. The “vaine” watch and “bootlesse” protection do little when he “to golden hew him selfe transfard”; tinged with a precious ore that contrasts the now markedly mortal brass and iron. The adjectives insist on the futility of various forms of guarding, insinuating that they might have even provoked Jove to violate all the barriers. Like Chrysogone’s pastoral haven that encloses her away from “mens vew”, Danaë’s tower proves ineffectual against the desiring male. Its security is interlaced with the ineluctible arrival of the polymorphous Jove in the form of a “golden showre”, where the reflexive pronouns evince his absolute control over his form and metamorphosis. Jove is unstoppable, because he is not bound to form; a certain level of authority is entitled to a quintessential polymorphism, which will also become problematic in the Chrysogone episode.

Chrysogone’s first mention in the poem thus already unveils an origin that belies the speaker’s claim that “all” of Belphoebe’s “whole” creation is free from “all” carnal crime and desire, along with the power imbalances they bring. Moreover,

Chrysogone's name "has the force of a patronym, and signifies her subjection": it anticipates, even shapes her fate, thereby exemplifying "the typical operations of allegory, where meaning is violently imposed on the material (and hence feminine) world", as Katherine Eggert (2000) notes after Gordon Teskey's seminal theory of allegory and violence (Berger, 1994, p. 96; p. 10). Diverging into a brief look at allegory and how violence appears in the way allegory operates in texts will illuminate how Chrysogone's name has already brought a certain register of violation and force to bear upon the pure conception of Belphoebe and Amoret.

Jean Pépin (1958) notes that "the word allegoria is relatively recent in the Greek language. Yet it translates a very old idea, expressed above all in the word *hyponoia*. The primary sense of *hyponoia* is 'supposition' or 'conjecture'" (p. 85 as cited in Del Bello, 2007, p. 38). As such, *hyponoia* "presupposes a relation between two different mental concepts. On the one hand a concrete datum is presented to perception; on the other, hyponoia suggests an idea concerning the future beyond the world of senses." This relation between the surface and its abstract underneath draws *hyponoia*, the word ancient authors used instead of *allegoria*, closer to allegory's modern sense of "meaning something other than what one says" (Del Bello, 2007, p. 38). "The definition is indeed Aristotle's," Del Bello explains in his chapter on etymology and allegory, "but… Aristotle applied it to *hyponoia* (underlying sense) and not to 'allegory'". One famous document of the rupture between *hyponoia* and *allegory* is Plutarch's (1927) *Quomodo adolescents poetas audire debeat*, where he offers further insight into the stakes of "the supplanting of the term *hyponoia* by *allegoria*":

> By forcibly distorting these stories through what used to be termed 'deeper meanings,' [*hyponoia*] but are nowadays called 'allegorical interpretations,' [*allegoria*] some persons say that the Sun is represented as giving information about Aphrodite in the arms of Ares, because the conjunction of the planet

> Mars with Venus portends births conceived in adultery, and when the sun returns in his course and discovers these, they cannot be kept secret. And Hera's beautifying of herself for Zeus's eyes, and the charms connected with the girdle, such persons will have it, are a sort of purification of the air as it draws near the fiery element;—as though the poet himself did not afford the right solutions. (Teskey 1997, p. 47; 1927, p. 101)

Although the two words are not synonymous, Plutarch's account brings forth an element of violence that *hyponoia* and *allegoria* have in common, particularly with respect to the interpretive act they occasion. In Plutarch's account, allegorizing readers are not unlike Bacon's (1999) "reasoners" who "resemble spiders" in their approach to science, for they "make cobwebs out of their own substance" (p. 128). They pursue a meaning they assume lies beyond what the poet has supplied, and they "will have it" by forcible distortion, bending air if they do not find what they seek. Yet Plutarch hints at what distinguishes allegorical interpretations from spiderweb: unlike the self-contained architecture of the latter, allegorical interpretations "forcibly distort" stories. There is thus an element in allegory that is rugged. It is unlike the course of nature, and it involves force and distortion. By extension, violence looms in the concept of allegory, and allegorical interpretation is akin to wresting. It is not surprising that Puttenham (1589) defines allegory through the same association in his handbook of poetry: "Allegoria is when we do speake in sence translative and wrested from the owne signification" (as cited in Teskey, p. 43).

Plutarch points toward allegory's semiotic ancestor *hyponoia* as the origin of the notion of interpretive violence which carries over into *allegoria*. In Greek, *hypo-* is a subterranean prefix usually for "under, beneath" whether it modifies a verb or an adjective; therefore it lends itself well to studies of forms of power imbalance and force that interpretive acts might involve. Teskey (1997) also dwells on the violence of propositional relations by reviewing the sexual terms of their decription, such as when "matter is made pregnant with form by assuming a 'subject' (*sub-iectum* 'cast

down')" or when Aristotle terms matter *"hypokeimenon*, 'that which lies underneath'" (p. 16). Both words, Teskey points out, "indicate matter as assuming the proper position for the wife in intercourse". Such indication is not alien to *hyponoia*: "supposition" features the Latin prefix *sub-*, an equivalent of the prefix *hypo-* that literally translates to "putting under" (OED, n.d.). "Conjecture", on the other hand, concerns the violence of a different kind of mating and literally means "to throw together" or "cast together" (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.). The final meaning associated with *hyponoia* is Plutarch's "deeper meanings" which underlie, and so require a breach of, surface matter. In essence, *hyponoia*'s ancestral relation to allegory puts emphasis on the act of force that allegory demands from the reader, who distorts forcibly; conjectures; supposes by way of wresting the "deeper meaning" from underneath the visible surface of the poem. The act of obtaining access to what is underneath is an act of violence, and this comparatively obscure constituent of allegory is illuminated by the word's history rooted in *hyponoia*. However, the supplanting word *allegoria* incorporates an emphasis on the "Other" that *hyponoia* lacks and that is equally significant in terms of the semiotic scope of allegory (Del Bello, 2007, p. 38). Del Bello consults Jon Whitman's study of allegory to investigate this added sense of the other, which Whitman traces in the two component parts of the word "allegory". The first comes from "allos, means 'other'; it inverts the sense of the second component. This second component is the verb agoreuein, originally meaning 'to speak in the assembly,' in the agora" (Whitman, 1987, p. 263 as cited in Del Bello, 2007, p. 39). When the two senses combine, "we get the established meaning of 'speaking about the Other'" (p. 40). From the sense of speaking about an other ensues what Del Bello terms a "referential split—something or someone removed from the present discourse to which words obliquely refer,"

whereby allegory "exposes the limits of language," but the sense of multiple voices in dialogue "[acknowledges] the communal, dialogic setup of meaning making." *Hyponoia* thus illuminates the violent wresting that operates in allegorical interpretations, and *allegoria* incorporates into those operations a plurality of agents comprised mainly of the speaking subject and the absent object. In short, both the construction and interpretation of allegory require the violence of wresting what is underneath, forcing meaning out into the open. Allegory also involves the effacement of the other of whom it speaks. According to Teskey, this effacement is gendered, where allegory assumes a conventionally masculine position in the impregnation of feminine matter with the imposition of form. Allegory's etymology, and Teskey's theory of allegory and violence together show how this violence contributes to the dominance of one discourse, of one masculine will that shapes and interprets matter. Allegory studied as such holds a mirror to the Chrysogone episode, where a prostrate and sleeping Chrysogone is impregnated by solar rays, and gives birth to Amoret and Belphoebe when she is again asleep. Her fate is dictated by the allegory that begins from her name and its reference to the circumstances of both conception and childbirth. The name destines her for the allegorical signification of an ideal conception and of the origins of virginal and marital chastity, and the allegory forces Chrysogone into exile in order to function properly, by using her as a formal vessel not just for Amoret and Belphoebe, but also for meaning itself.

2.2 Introducing heavenly influence

In the beginning of canto 6, Spenser's speaker addresses "faire Ladies" who must be wondering how Belphoebe "so great perfections did in her compile" despite dwelling in "saluage forests / So farre from court and royall Citadell", the cradles of courtesy

and refinement (lines 1.3-5). Several critics have debated the imagined audience of the speaker, whose gendered and classed versions carry different significances.[2] The "faire Ladies" of the Chrysogone episode–a readership that will change in the later cantos–exemplify how the audience can generate meaning for an episode. Following Harry Berger's (1994) argument that "the third book, which centers on problems of gender, generation, and sexuality, offers its readers gendered positions that correspond to those it represents," it might be argued that the speaker's address to women of high status, who are not only fair but also ladies, establishes Chrysogone's impregnation and childbearing as natural and ideal, even from the beginning (p. 93). Spenser's self-conscious speaker might expose cautionary carnal spectacles to an undifferentiated mass of readers, but he would not specifically address one to ladies. By referring to a courtly female readership who is familiar with the court, "the great schoolmaistresse of all courtesy", the speaker markets Chrysogone's story as a positive, if not directly instructive and exemplary, narrative of procreation and childbearing fit for courteous and refined ladies (line 1.6). Besides, if the speaker has an aristocratic, courtly, and urban female readership in mind, it makes sense for him to anticipate their wonderment that "saluage forests" can produce the "noble Damozell" who is Belphoebe (Draper, 1932; line 1.2). Spenser's answer to that wonderment is the vision of a nature so ideally free from wayward desire and sins of the flesh that it becomes conducive to the virtues of chastity, even as it engenders an act of procreation.

[2] See Harry Berger's recapitulation of this debate about *The Faerie Queene*'s accessibility to a female readership and the implications of its addresses to gendered readerships in *Desire in the Renaissance* (1994). In his chapter, Berger contributes to, and juxtaposes, the arguments of Quilligan, Shepherd, and Silberman (p. 93). See also Draper 1932 for a class-based classification of aristocratic versus commoner readers that Spenser imagines.

Chrysogone's story is characterized by the tension between natural circumstances that suggest a spontaneous love and conception free from carnal desire, and elements of ravishment that undermine this ideal vision. The speaker captures this tension well in an introductory remark that Amoret and Belphoebe "were begot, and bred / Through influence of th'heuens fruitfull ray" (lines 6.1-2). Passive voice neutralizes the role of Chrysogone in this begetting, but that the twins are "bred / Through" heavenly influence merits attention due to the associations of the word with the female parent who nurses and brings her offspring to completion in her womb (OED, n.d.). Even a word that potentially suggests the female contribution to procreation is disassociated from Chrysogone and tied to the influence of heaven's rays. Yet, to breed could have had a figurative implication for the early modern reader, who would have seen the word to mean generation of abstract entities– breeding thoughts, for instance, would have been a familiar resonance (OED, n.d.). Thus, the initial narrative of Amoret and Belphoebe's conception implies that Chrysogone will be a passive, almost absent agent, but this narrative also figures the twins' generation as an intellectual operation. Silberman (1995) concludes likewise by looking at the significance of the concept of "influence", which she reads as a

> literal inflowing as well as the infusion of immaterial power or action at a distance (OED s.v. "influence" 1, 3, 4). By positing the immutable origins of Ideas, Plato elevates the abstract over the concrete, spirit over flesh, and the ideal over the mutable… Heavenly influence ensures the purity of Belphoebe's conception… In other words, Belphoebe's conception has the purity of an intellectual idea. (p.43)

Silberman's reading of the connotative network of "influence" reveals its combination of fluidity and abstraction. A. C. Hamilton (2013) improves upon this combination and notes the fluidity of heavenly influence in particular, by connecting the heavenly influence of these lines to "the heuens" of the second stanza where they "so fauorable were" that in Belphoebe's "berth", "all the gifts of grace and chastitee /

On her they poured forth" (p. 342; lines 2.1-2; 5-6). Building on Silberman's analysis, Hamilton points out that the heavenly influence over the birth of the twins is a kind of emanation, as suggested by the gifts being "poured forth" into Belphoebe's constitution. So far, liquid heavenly influence has been associated with the purity of Chrysogone's conceiving, and Belphoebe's birth. The image of a liquid heavenly influence also recalls the very first stanza of Book III's third canto that contributes to the theme of purity, where Spenser describes that

> Most sacred fyre, that burnest mightily
> In liuing brests, ykindled first aboue,
> Emongst th'eternall spheres and lamping sky,
> And thence pourd into men, which men call Loue;
> Not that same, which doth base affections moue
> In brutish mindes, and filthy lust inflame,
> But that sweete fit, that doth true beautie loue. (lines 1-7)

Here Spenser formulates the "sweete fit" of true love that loves "true beautie", as opposed to lust that masquerades as love but instead appeals to "base affections" in "brutish mindes". Spenser crowns Book III's thematic treatise of love with the final "sweete fit" of the reunited lovers Amoret and Scudamour in the ending to the 1590 edition. The lovers' hermaphroditic embrace crystallizes an ideal romantic union between a legitimate couple, one half of which is Amoret, the figure for chastity in marriage herself. As her body becomes "the sweet lodge of loue and deare delight" she echoes Chrysogone, who is likewise vessel to an abstract concept/ion that she is practically in service of (line xii.45.4). Moreover, Amoret "did in pleasure melt, / And in sweete rauishment pourd out her spright" (lines 6-7). Hamilton suggests the imagery of orgasm in Amoret's "melting" and in her spirit "pourd out", as does Harvey's (2002) interpretation of this stanza as a representation of "sexual delight" (p. 405; p. 58). While Spenser opposes this hermaphroditic and conjugal union, where man and wife unite as one, to carnal lust, the fluidity of this amorous union

problematizes the purity that heavenly influence has heretofore been associated with. The reason for this is that purity and intellectuality have previously desexualized both Chrysogone's impregnation, and Belphoebe's birth, which now potentially acquire more erotic undertones on par with the associations of heavenly influence with the "pourd" fluidity of amorous relations, even when sanctioned by marriage. Indeed, the image of pouring heavenly emanation into corporeal forms consolidates ideal love as something that flows through people. In this ideal form it is natural, spontaneous, and free from carnal lust, figured forth instead as a "sweete fit" that esteems true beauty. The canto's ultimate association of true love with a corporeal excess of delight, namely, orgasming, occurs within the divinely sanctioned limits of Amoret and Scudamour's partnership. As Sanchez (2011) notes, marriage offered early modern political and erotic discourses an alternative model for "the relation between monarch and populace in terms of a marriage between a masculine *imperium* and a feminine *concilium*" (p. 4). According to Sanchez, "marriage offered a model of a voluntary and reciprocal relation", as an ideal alternative to the model where feminine populace is subjected to the masculine tyrant. The erotic suggestions of pouring and amorous fluidity are sanctioned within the framework marriage, which is not the case with Chrysogone and Titan's rays. Chrysogone's impregnation is the opposite of voluntary and reciprocal; asleep and unaware, she has no autonomous presence to consent, there is no volition to volunteer. The fluidity of heavenly influence thus possesses an eroticism, a corporeal affiliation with bodily fluids and desire, that is subtly out of place in the story of Chrysogone. The purity and eroticism of her conception are in tension with each other, initially, and throughout the episode.

2.3 “By what straunge accident faire Chrysogone / Conceiu’d these infants”

Chrysogone’s story opens “vpon a Sommers shinie day, / When Titan faire his beames did display” (lines 6.4-5). It is upon this day that “In a fresh fountaine, far from all mens vew, / She bath’d her brest, the boyling heat t’allay” (lines 6-7). First of all, Titan’s presence in this stanza alone is ubiquitous but subtle. He is in the “shinie” day and the sparkling water of the fountain; he “his beames did display / In a fresh fountaine,” suggesting the shine carries over from the day to the water. The brilliant light represents a masculine and inescapable intrusion, especially in comparison to other episodes featuring the Ovidian secluded water *topos*. In Book I, canto xii, Una, for instance, gazes on the festive maidens after Redcrosse kills the Dragon, “As fayre *Diana* in fresh sommers day, / Beholden her Nymphes, enraung’d in shady wood, / Some wrestle, some do run, some bathe in christall flood” (lines 7.7-9). Through the simile, both Diana and Una occupy a covert space without such obtrusive illumination, and both their spaces are inhabited by maiden companions. The wood is shady and the “flood” is “christall”, suggesting that Titan’s beams do not penetrate into the landscape which offers women spaces of escape from male vigor. Neither does sunlight cover the water’s surface with a sparkling sheen, the flood is clear, clean, lucid. Meanwhile, Chrysogone’s isolation “far from all mens vew” is already impinged on by Titan’s omniscience. Her distance from the male gaze is still populated by the inescapable light of Titan. Even the water is obscured by the glitter of the beams Titan displays therein and thus marked as his domain. Moreover, there is an erotic quality at odds with Chrysogone’s solitariness and more along the lines of “mens vew” in the way “she bath’d her brest, the boyling heat t’allay”: she bathes specific parts of her body, the heat is “boyling” and the water helps with the excessive heat in a scene that overall emphasizes, and even eroticizes,

Chrysogone's corporeality. On the one hand, such emphasis is inescapable because the "shinie day", "boyling heat", and bathing "[provide] the mollifying influences of heat and moisture essential to creation" (Quitslund, 2001, p. 198). Titan is present, through display of beams, in the fountain, and he is present in the form of light and heat even prior to sunlight's penetration of Chrysogone. In short, he is implicated everywhere in the origin of Chrysogone's conception as the agent who mollifies her body, prepares it for creation, and utilizes all natural forces for this, often in an erotic way that contrasts the idealized "sacred throne" of Chrysogone's "chaste bodie". "Noontime by a pool," according to Burrow (1993),

> is a dangerous moment for Ovidian nymphs. Had Ovid told the story of Chrysogone's conception, though, it would have indubitably ended with a preventive metamorphosis, or the rape of the heroine, say, by Apollo. Spenser cuts this anticipated violent climax, and substitutes for it sweet silent conception. (p. 116)

The Ovidian potential of sexual violence is inherent in the setting of Chrysogone's story. Noontime by a pool might lead to frustration, secret sights, erotic desire, voyeurism–witness Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, or Diana and Actaeon. Krier's (1990) reading of the scene by the fountain combines "the ancient motif of the goddess surprised at her bath by a fascinated man" and thus, the theme of the violating gaze, with the undertow of "Ovidian aggression and rape", but Krier argues that Spenser mitigates the violence therein (p. 138). Krier mentions, for instance, that Titan "lacks any kind of bad faith in his relation to the woman, because by not assuming human form he also does not assume fully human male volition", moreover, his display of beams is superimposed on Chrysogone's naked sleep, thus rendering "Chrysogonee's display as innocent as that of the sun." Krier contends that "both are aspects of fully natural, sanctioned processes". It appears, however, that the natural connotations of Chrysogone's impregnation are also intertwined with

undercurrents of sexual violation. The elements that shield her from "sexual wounding that leads to transformed consciousness," such as her sleep during conception and childbirth or the innocence of being oblivious to the male gaze, simultaneously eradicate Chrysogone's agency, consent, even her pain and pleasure (Krier, 1990, p. 138). According to Krier, her "unconsciousness of any viewer" facilitates "the possibility for… the revelation of a life candid, complete, and apart from the watcher", but her unconsciousness does not invalidate the aggregate of spectators implicated in the scene: Titan, the speaker, and Spenser's reader, which the next stanza reveals to be male (1990, p. 139). In fact, "the sense of watching the naked and the private" is amplified by "her innocent, open solitude", which also "sharpens our awareness of watching her" (Krier, 1990, p. 137). Following Krier's argument that Spenser perceives "loss of innocence" to be "inherent in one's awareness of oneself as object of another's view", Chrysogone's obliviousness cements her innocence and inability to gaze erotically (p. 137). But these attributes in turn cement the power imbalance that also operates in narratives of ravishment, between the vulnerable female object, and the male spectator. Ultimately, the scene where Chrysogone conceives ends up juxtaposing the natural, "sweet silent conception" with the disturbing intervention upon Chrysogone's body that insinuates "the eye cannot be innocent in any simple sense" (Krier, 1990, p. 137). Spenser does replace the potential of Ovidian rape with "sweet silent conception," but it is doubtful whether conception is mutually exclusive with the heroine's rape in the case of Chrysogone. There is too little in the episode to claim that there is rape, and there is much to claim that there is not; what is significant beyond this binaristic question is how the implication of rape shapes and benefits the purity of conception, even as it

complicates the notion of purity and doubts the very possibility of a pure conception when conception has an indisposable corporal element.

After her bath, Chrysogone is further eroticized in the stanza where she is impregnated by the sun's rays, first through her sleep, then her body's erotic display, then finally, through the Titan's intrusion. The single stanza of her impregnation at once describes a form of sexual violation and a desexualized, naturalized image of conception:

> Till faint through yrkesome wearines, adowne
> Vpon the grassy ground her selfe she layd
> To sleepe, the whiles a gentle slombring swowne
> Vpon her fell all naked bare displayd;
> The sunbeames bright vpon her body playd,
> Being through former bathing mollifide,
> And pierst into her wombe, where they embayd
> With so sweet sence and secret power vnspide,
> That in her pregnant flesh they shortly fructifide. (lines 7.1-9)

The first half of this stanza insists on putting Chrysogone to sleep. Already with "yrkesome wearines" she has become "faint", a fading consciousness that Spenser distinguishes from other similar feelings of faintness in *The Faerie Queene* through an array of soporific words of all kinds. Pertile (2019) looks at the "stounds" of Redcrosse and Guyon, for example, to argue that Spenser uses episodes of seeming unconsciousness to explore a sense of self and presence that operate with even more vigor in the temporary removal of full self-awareness. After noting that "a feeling of faintness… emerges in the syncope between personhood and unconsciousness", Pertile argues that Guyon's faint crystallizes "a moment in which, at the edges of total unconsciousness, embodied subjectivity experiences itself—the immersion in physical life that it is—with heightened intensity" (p. 70). According to Pertile, this expansion of self-experience has to be preceded by a loss of consciousness or an episode of bodily absence, because in such "a passage through insentience… unfelt

affect makes itself felt so suddenly, and with a power so great that, paradoxically, it temporarily neutralizes feeling altogether" (p. 82). Chrysogone's faintness and consequent sleep come into relief as distinct from the pattern of heightened self-awareness that Pertile observes is experienced by the knights after particularly edifying episodes such as Guyon's descent into Mammon's cave. As opposed to an abrupt reconfiguration of consciousness, Chrysogone's sleep arrives gradually; this gentle arrival equally translates to a sapping of vital energy, due to which connotation, it acquires a sinister undertow. She becomes faint and weary first. When "vpon the grassy ground her selfe she layd", there is cinema in the movement the speaker traces, in addition to an emphasis on Chrysogone's prostrate form. She aims "to sleepe", and sure enough, "a gentle slombring swowne / Vpon her fell": soporific words abound to the point of copia, and each word mollifies Chrysogone's state of unconsciousness a bit further. Her prostrate and unconscious image recalls Teskey's vision of "matter as assuming the proper position for the wife in intercourse", ready for the imposing, masculine form (1997, p. 16). Staub (2015) picks up futher implications of Chrysogone's sleep, one of which is its link to Virgin Mary who also "was held to feel neither pleasure in conception nor pain when giving birth, both symptoms of a postlapsarian sexuality" (p. 20). Moreover, Mary's

> death was often interpreted as a kind of sleep… The interpretation of Mary's death as sleep confirms the unique purity and incorruptibility of her body; it was not subject to the decay—and hence death—of other human bodies (108–11). In Spenser's description of Chrysogone's impregnation, sleep provides a similar liminal space that serves at once to sanctify her physical body at the same time that it desexualizes it. (pp. 20-21)

Chrysogone's sleep thus reinscribes the birth of Belphoebe and Amoret as miraculous, it also hints at the sanctity and chastity of Chrysogone's body. Yet, Staub notes that "paradoxically, the almost complete omission of the material effects of conception and pregnancy constructs Chrysogone as a disembodied womb," whereas

Mary's corporeality, her breasts, milk, and womb, were often integral to her worship (2015, p. 21). Staub then marks one crucial consequence of the link between Chrysogone and Mary: it "may serve to make the birth of Belphoebe and Amoret miraculous," as has been shown, but "it does very little to valorize her maternal body", which the poem imagines as a "disembodied womb" or an "incubator", through Chrysogone's unambiguous lack of consciousness (Staub, 2015, p. 21). Even prior to her impregnation, the speaker differentiates Chrysogone from other feelers of faintness in the poem, and "empties" her consciousness, effaces her presence, effectively priming her for impregnation. It is through her removal, effacement, and thus, objectification, that Chrysogone becomes ready for pregnancy.

Chrysogone's sleep on the ground might constitute a vegetable fantasy where "she is further assimilated," without tension or violence, "into the world of nature when the ground welcomes her, one of the flowers already spread naturally to the sun" (Krier, 1990, p. 138). Accordingly, Krier interprets "the notion of display" in her state of being "all naked bare displayd" to "[carry] no ominous ethical undertones, being as completely without the will to be seen", and even to mimic Titan's "benign" display of his beams. Yet, Chrysogone's obliviousness does not invalidate the secret spectators, namely, the speaker, the reader, and Titan himself, all of whom are masculine. The reader, who was initially envisioned as a "faire Ladie", becomes a male throughout the course of Chrysogone's impregnation, so that by the end of it, "miraculous may seeme to *him*, that reades / So straunge ensample of conception" (lines 8.1-2). The masculinity of spectators and Chrysogone's unconscious, flower-like state receive a different, less gender-neutral reading in Staub's (2015) contextualization of this scene in relation to gynecological and gardening manuals, which, she argues, extensively borrowed from one another: "the

maternal body is a garden" (p. 14). These manuals, or the epistemologies they embody, "stem at least in part from the same impulse: to understand and tame an unruly feminine wilderness". According to Staub, the presence of these epistemologies in this scene implicates the Chrysogone episode in the effort "to assure masculine control and authority over the maternal body". In this vein her sleeping form becomes less like an asexual flower, and rather, emblematizes the female body as it appears in gardening and gynecological manuals. The latter analogize "women's reproductive bodies" to "agrarian fields" through agricultural metaphors of tilling land,

> playing on at least two social facts. First, labouring men plowed these fields, making women the passive ground upon which men acted. Second, men of somewhat higher status owned that land, making women's reproductive bodies equivalent to property owned by men. (Fissell, 2004, p. 203 as cited in Staub, 2015, p. 16)

Gardening manuals conversely liken agrarian land to "a female body fertilized and controlled by the shaping power of the male gardener," who is "'Maister of the earth…' The idea that the man holds procreative power over the maternalized earth recurs in this literature" (p. 16; Markham, 1613, A3r as cited in Staub, 2015, p. 16). These horticultural and gynecological epistemologies inform the interpretation of Chrysogone's body as a desexualized and idealized site of miraculous birth. They suggest the ways in which her body is, on the contrary, sexualized and through this sexualization, subjected to a power imbalance that potentiates the registers of rape and ravishment in this scene. The natural setting of the episode is "endowed with fertile corporeality," and Chrysogone complements the feminization of land, as a naturalized feminine site: she becomes "the land that will sprout beautiful flowers after taking in the energy and nutrients provided by the sun" (Harvey, 2002; Sawday, 1995, p. 219 as cited in Staub, 2015, p. 15). In light of these arguments regarding

horticultural and gynecological analogies, Chrysogone's sexualization and subjection plays out through a combination of these epistemologies. Her body is likened to land to be tilled by the master gardener. She becomes passive and prostrate like fertile land, and just as equally susceptible to his intervention. Her impregnation will be as spontaneous as the fertilizing of land through heat and moisture, her flower-like state harbors no agency or ability to consent. The plantlike image thus hints at natural, miraculous conception, at the expense of Chrysogone, now disembodied. Staub's contextualization thus reveals the ways in which Chrysogone's sleep and position sexualize her body while also objectifying her, and amplifying her vulnerability. This contradiction between Chrysogone's body as sexualized and desexualized complicates the former reading of sleep as a signifier of her body's sanctity and chastity, because it also inflects the benignness of Titan's impregnation of her with the voyeuristic and hegemonic undertow of the play of sunbeams that verges on rape. In fact, the "wearines" that falls on Chrysogone appears like a prelude to this rape, whereby Chrysogone is first removed, "abducted", from the scene and cast into unconsciousness. Thus absent from her self and from the scene, she is, in a way, already ravished before the solar penetration–considering that one meaning of ravishment is precisely such abduction with the intent of rape.

2.4 Sleep, absence, rape, and nature

The speaker later reiterates Chrysogone's absence during conception and childbirth: "Vnwares she them conceiud, vnwares she bore: / She bore withouten paine, that she conceiu'd / Withouten pleasure" (lines 27.1-3). The speaker insists on her lack of pain and pleasure, which consolidates the unblemished miraculousness of her conception and childbearing. However, the same feature that renders Belphoebe and

Amoret's origins immaculate is also suggestive of her impregnation as an act of rape. First of all, while she is unconscious, sunbeams "vpon her body playd," almost as if leisurely exploring her body, now fully accessible and "mollifide". The total sanctity of Chrysogone's naked display appears more doubtful, given Titan's sinuous play upon Chrysogone's softened flesh. Titan's initial continuation of "that pleasurable sensation of nature's gifts caressing her soft skin" contrasts the moment when the sunbeams "pierst into her wombe" in a direct reference to penetration, and by proxy, to the phallic violence of penetration, altogether framing a rape (Eggert, 2000, p. 8). Like Eggert, Berger (1994) unambiguously argues that the episode "politely periphrases a solar rape":

> from a safe distance the sun god's "fruitfull ray" pierces Chrysogone's womb with "secret powre unspide" even though, like Diana, she hides from men. This miracle of distanced and furtive sex affords the god the pleasures of Actaeon without the attendant dangers, while for the nymph there is impregnation without apparent sex, without awareness, without consent or pleasure. (p. 99)

Moreover, Titan's beams "fructifide" in her flesh, further passivizing it. The onanic transitive implies that they bear fruit, doing the "fructifying" by themselves in this one-sided, non-consensual impregnation akin to tilling land. Even though Titan allows Chrysogone only in the capacity of an Aristotelian empty vessel, there are nevertheless a "sweet sence and secret power vnspide" that drive conception. However, Berger (1994) contends that the former "must—since Chrysogone sleeps through it—be Titan's, and the narrator seems in describing Titan's secret pleasure to be identifying himself with it" (p. 109). The "sweet sence" must be Titan's also because the speaker dismisses any possibility of Chrysogone's pleasure afterwards. Moreover, the "secret power vnspide" adds to Titan's omniscient overpowering of Chrysogone by recalling the revelatory discourse of both gardening and gynecological manuals, due to which Staub identifies the impregnation scene as

"distinctively voyeuristic" – "women's reproductive organs had long been characterized as 'secrets,' …Medical texts, because they expose those 'secrets,' are characteristically voyeuristic, and sometimes titillating… they seek to control women's bodies by displaying what many feel should be concealed" (p. 25). In light of Staub's contextual framework, Titan is not only the master gardener, but also the male anatomist; he is privy to the secret of her "wombe", he is able to impregnate her with "secret power vnspide" which suggests utter lack of supervision, charting Chrysogone's "wombe" as part of his dominion. He is also the only recipient of pleasure, or "sweet sence". Harvey's (2002) study of pleasure and oblivion illuminates how the unequal distribution of pleasure figures into the power imbalance that supplies ravishment in this episode. Harvey reveals the sexual significance of unconsciousness by pointing out early modern connections between "eroticism and forgetfulness", for instance, the oblivion of climax or sexual pleasure (p. 53). According to Crooke (1615), it is such sexual ecstasy that makes women endure pregnancy, the pain of childbirth, the challenges of child-rearing, and men tolerate the "degradation" of carnal union (Harvey, 2002, p. 53). Harvey recapitulates Crooke's argument that "the passionate 'extasie' that carries us out of our selves just when bodily pleasure is most intense is paradoxically a 'senselessness,' a sensual indulgence so extreme that it temporarily snuffs out consciousness"; she then builds on Crooke by arguing that such erotic amnesia is necessary to what she terms "generational memory", because this extreme pleasure is what makes human beings endure the challenges of procreation and propagation (p. 54). When the speaker rejects the possibility of Chrysogone's pleasure, but subtly hints at Titan's "sweet sence", he effectively causes Chrysogone to lose all her stakes, so to speak; the lack of blissful incentive to conceive and give birth is noticeable, only because it is

punctuated, not in the least by the speaker's copious use of soporific words to denote Chrysogone's absence.[3]

"Miraculous may" Chrysogone's impregnation "seeme to him, that reades", but according to Quitslund (2001), "Spenser only allows this to *seem* miraculous", because

> Reason teacheth that the fruitfull seades
> Of all things liuing, through impression
> Of the sunbeames in moyst complexion,
> Doe life conceiue and quickned are by kynd:
> So after *Nilus* inundation,
> Infinite shapes of creatures men doe fynd,
> Informed in the mud, on which the Sunne hath shynd. (p. 198; lines 8.3-9)

Like Quitslund, Burrow (1993) argues that the "straunge accident," or "wondrous" begotting," or "straunge ensample" of Chrysogone's impregnation is normalized and naturalized when this episode is transposed to the origins "of all things liuing" and "her spontaneous generation becomes the archetype of all generative processes" (p. 116). This conception thus becomes exemplary, a model that all life follows; accordingly, "the Sunne" is also exalted and revered: "Great father is he of generation / Is rightly cald, th'authour of life and light" (lines 9.1-2). The expansion of Chrysogone's singular conception into an origin story for life and creation itself thus paints Titan in a positive light as well, and lauds his procreative, fertilizing influence. Yet, the stanza crowns the ambiguities surrounding Chrysogone's conception with the imagery of the Nile, and problematizes the perfection of her conception, even as the speaker reveres it as a miniature genesis. In the speaker's analogy of the Nile, Chrysogone resembles the "fruitfull seades" which "conceuie" with "impression of the sunbeames", but as many critics have noted, the fertile

[3] The possibility that "sweet sence" could have belonged to Chrysogone as a "nocturnal emission", or a sleep orgasm, is not likely. By the early modern period, male sleep orgasms had long been associated with the activity of the imagination, and I could not find any sources suggesting that female sleep orgasms were ever studied in the period.

imagery has been used in Book I, in an entirely different context where the monster Error vomits books and hermaphroditic amphibians:

> As when old father *Nilus* gins to swell
> With timely pride aboue the Aegyptian vale,
> His fattie waues doe fertile slime outwell,
> And ouerflow each plaine and lowly dale:
> But when his later spring gins to auale,
> Huge heapes of mudd he leaues, wherein there breed
> Ten thousand kindes of creatures partly male
> And partly femall of his fruitful seed;
> Such vgly monstrous shapes elswher may no man reed. (lines I.i.20.1-9)

The comparison of Error's vomit to the hermaphroditic brood of Nile's overflow manifests the element of monstrosity in nature, while it simultaneously exposes the natural aspect of monstrosity. As Hamilton (2013) notes, "it was a commonplace of natural history that the [Nile] breeds strange monsters," but he also traces the connection to *The Faerie Queene'*s later marine wedding pageant "the fertile Nile, which creatures new doth frame" attends (p. 36). The "ten thousand kindes of creatures partly male / And partly femall" describe an extreme of fertility that partakes in the same spectrum of that of Error, who daily feeds a thousand offsprings. Both of these groups "breed", the image of which embed a naturalized but monstrous proliferation in these images of reproduction. Furthermore, the Nile's "timely pride," or seasonal flooding, orchestrates "fattie waues" that "doe fertile slime outwell", whence emerges an adjectival copia around the river's fertility through synonyms that rapidly breed depictions of fecundity. More importantly in the context of Chrysogone, "slime" harkens back to the speaker's claim that Belphoebe's creation is "pure and vnspotted from all loathly crime, / That is ingenerate in fleshly slime". The Nile imagery incorporates into Chrysogone's conception "slime" of a different kind that primarily signifies nature's fecundity, but it inevitably brings into this context Error's monstrous motherhood, nature's hermaphroditic productions, "irony and

indeterminacy" (Quitslund, 2001, p. 198). In brief, the epic simile ties the Nile to the monster Error through an emphasis on breeding and fertility. Through a comparison between Nile's outpouring and Error's, the speaker bestows monstrous motherhood upon the river, and Chrysogone's association with Nile's fertile slime implicates her in this underbelly of genesis. Yet, "old father Nilus" is masculine, and it is "his fruitfull seed" or semen that facilitates the creatures' reproduction, fertility is not exclusive to the feminine. The epic simile conjoins the mother monster and the father river, and Nature's own hermaphroditism breeds creatures in its own image. The originary, ancient Nile testifies to a nature that bears within itself the potential of monstrosity and its reproduction, thereby problematizing the idealization of Chrysogone's–and Titan's–procreation. If Chrysogone's conception is not completely immaculate, and immune to less optimistic interpretations, then Titan's play upon her body can also be interpreted in less optimistic verbiage, as violation, ravishment, and rape. Chrysogone's sleep constitutes a liminal state that particularly supports the latter verbiage to describe Titan's deed. This state also contributes to discussions of the limits of agency and consent, or of diverse definitions of what constitutes rape. Thomas Middleton's 1611 play *The Lady's Tragedy* allows the next chapter to pursue similar inquiries, but through the central figure of the titular Lady's dead body, which further complicates the question of rape in relation to an "absent" subject. Through the Tyrant's violations that potentially constitute a form of rape, the dead female body becomes the locus of discussions of the autonomy of a body that is not only susceptible to alteration by the Tyrant's fantasies, but also female.

CHAPTER 3

"LABOUR LIFE INTO HER": RAVISHMENT AND NECROPHILIA IN *THE LADY'S TRAGEDY*

"I am not to be altered" (Middleton, 1611/2007, 1.1.123). Thus speaks the Lady for the first time in *The Lady's Tragedy* (1611) attributed to Thomas Middleton, in what seems to be a statement defending her autonomy against the Tyrant's claims on her love and her appearance. The first one ventures that she "must be [his]". Now that he is king, the Tyrant is convinced that "she'll leave the lower path" of his rival Govianus' affection, "and find the way to us." His second puts this conviction to action; bypassing the Lady's protests, he instructs his servants to clothe her "like an illustrious bride," and to chuck her "widow's case, a suit to weep in" (1.1.14-5; 106; 119; 122). This is the point where the Lady intervenes in defiance, her adamant "I am" announcing a certitude of self that belies the Tyrant's insistence that in refusing his advances, she has merely "forgot herself" (1.1.117). Yet passive voice complicates her gesture of autonomy by making it dependent on the external threat of a dummy agent who may in fact alter her after all. It is a response, then, that foreshadows her ultimate, and equally paradoxical, act of defiance: to commit suicide to avoid her rape. But it also foreshadows what follows: that even after she escapes his violations her body still remains, open to being disentombed, preserved in jewels, revered, altered by makeup, and finally used for pleasure. The Tyrant's "alterations" of the Lady's body form a spectrum of ravishment from her literal disentombment, to the necrophiliac rape that is implied at the end, which remains in constant contrast with the Lady's initial assertion of herself as not to be altered. It is this problem of how to imagine autonomous selfhood in conjunction with an remarkably alterable

body, and particularly a female body, that haunts the play throughout, and frames the paradoxical structures that comprise the Lady's character.

3.1 "What's she?": the Lady's death, subjectivity, and alteration

The Lady's Tragedy questions what it means to be a subject mainly through the figure of the Lady's altered dead body, and the notion of her response. Alive, she voices her dissent and acts it out in her suicide, and she is resurrected to "be altered" and oscillate between corpse, object, herself, relic, idol, lover, monster, murderer. The dynamic corpse and its fantasy-prone Tyrant therefore constitute the play's destabilizing question of the boundaries of humanity: where does "human" end, how far do its constituent tenets extend beyond death, if they do at all, and what kind of subject might be desired by a power who seeks control within and beyond these boundaries? Throughout the play, the Tyrant tries to control her dead body by assigning it different roles through staging or cosmetics. Yet, the Lady's physical decay and returning Ghost articulate a capacity to respond to, if not fend off, these attempts over her dead body and thus form a postmortem agency peculiar on the early modern stage.[4] Through the Lady's body and these contested claims over it, *The Lady's Tragedy* challenges the binaries between life and death, subject and object, person and property. The Lady's cadaverousness facilitates this destabilization, because it allows intervention to appear as violation, or rape, given that the body that could have consented once, is now unable to. Human life in the

[4] Heather Wicks (2019) distinguishes the Lady from "other beautiful, lifeless women on stage, such as Juliet or Ophelia," because she "rots. Her insistent decomposition mocks the Tyrant's desire for the body's compliancy and control of the narrative the Lady's body tells in death" (p. 6). For an analysis of the use of dead female characters as stage props focusing on Gloriana's skull in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and the Lady's corpse in *The Lady's Tragedy*, see Gottlieb, 2015. Gottlieb also distinguishes the Lady's "enfleshed corpse" as a "fuller development of chastity, posthumous identity, and autonomy" (p. 273).

past therefore inflects the dead body of the present with a form of subjectivity, through which operation the play destabilizes the notion of subject. Like the "dial" of Shakespeare's (2000) "Sonnet 77," whose "shady stealth" marks "time's thievish progress to eternity" even as it moves not, the Lady embodies many different roles despite and because of "the exquisite vacancy" of her corpse (lines 7-8; Barker, 2010, p. 243). Her corpse is vulnerable to manipulation and free interpretation as its "inventory of absences renders it susceptible to imaginative inscription," right from her disentombment where the Tyrant is reinscribing her as his "blest object" against the soldiers' more fearful and vulgar views of the corpse as, well, "dead", or "the meat" that is "picked out" of " a great city-pie brought to a table / Where there be many hands that lay about" (Barker 244; LT 4.3.61; 133-5).

Previous scholarship has done much to tease out the various implications of the Lady's postmortem appearances and the Tyrant's control over them. Critics like Susan Zimmerman (2002) and Gottlieb (2015) have focused on the Lady's corpse as idol and as stage property respectively, while those like Heather Wicks (2019), Sheetal Lodhia (2009), and Tanya Pollard (2005) emphasize the material reality of death figured in the rotting corpse in order to explore the limits of erotic commemoration, the body's precarious relation to soul in the early modern period, and poisoned kiss as a figure for theater's deceptive allure that threatens to merge spectator with spectacle. During decomposition, the corpse rearticulates death's finality despite disinterment and adornment by the Tyrant; accordingly, other critics who focus on the corpse qua decaying flesh have momentarily sympathized with the Tyrant whose affections will never be reciprocated.[5] However, critical sympathy with the Tyrant may often be at the expense of the Lady's dead body. That is, sympathy

[5] See, for example, Wiggins, 1998, Crawford, 2003, and Palfrey, 2014.

for the Tyrant as "the man *condemned to love*" with nothing less than "an ardency that no lover shall ever outdo" foreground his helplessness, but it might consequently understate his control over the Lady even in her death (Palfrey, 2014, p. 98). Conversely, recognizing the Tyrant's treatment of the Lady's corpse as a form of violation that is a pleasure in itself for him, rather than a consequence of amorous despair, redirects the focus onto the Lady's altered body.[6] This focus foregrounds the Lady's postmortem responses to the Tyrant, and establishes her as a responsive adversary of the Tyrant despite her deadness. The Lady's dead body thus becomes a site of contest between the Lady and the Tyrant over her self-possession.[7] I am aware that critical discussions of self-possession center around the living. However, I argue that Middleton's play extends this concept beyond death to mark it as a primary tenet of subjectivity that might have postmortem applications. In arguing this, I am influenced by the discomfort the play generates through the discrepancy between the self-possession the Lady declares as a living woman, and the Tyrant's increasing disregard of it throughout the play. The play sustains this discrepancy until the Tyrant's death, and despite the traditional submissiveness of the corpse. The Lady's dissent before and after her death thus establishes self-possession as integral to human subjectivity, and human subjectivity as a form of resistance. The Lady possesses the capacity to respond to the Tyrant's modifications, both as a living

[6] See Crawford, 2003: "It's important to remember, though, that these were not his original intentions, and that his repeated un manning by his desire for the Lady has essentially forced him to this… In fact, it's interesting to recall as well how often the Tyrant doesn't use force" (p. 105). The Tyrant does refrain from and argue against force, but it also merits attention that what drives the Lady to suicide is practically the Tyrant's besiegement of the house where Govianus and the Lady are immured, after a sudden change of heart ["Force shall help nature" (2.3.74)].

[7] I borrow this term from Kirsten Mendoza (2021) who defines it as "having the right to property in one's person", and further, as the "theoretical right to determine who can touch [one's] bod[y] and in what way," in her article on "racializing consent in John Marston's *The Wonder of Women*" (p. 31; 34).

subject through her denied consent, as a Ghost who rearticulates this denial, and as a dead body that decays. This capacity suggests that the Lady's subjectivity, characterized by her self-possession or her right to decide who can touch or "alter" her, is a response in and of itself to tyranny–one that is expressed by the spectacle of her decaying corpse. It is by denying and manipulating this capacity to be a self-possessing subject that the Tyrant sustains his desire for the Lady, and battles her corpse to reinscribe her as the subject he wants her to be, all the while staging the ultimate tyrannical fantasy of the yielding subject.

Whenever the Tyrant violates the corpse by modifying, objectifying, or fondling it, he also reveals two implications of his necrophilia: his disregard for the self-possession and consent of the Lady's former or living self, and his persevering desire that attempts to overwrite not only the Lady's person, but also death itself. The many roles he imposes upon the dead body intensify the Lady's ambiguous position as a dead subject, and interrogate what it means to be a subject, particularly through the notion of response. Her disentombed, mute body is deprived of the autobiographical gesture of indexing oneself as an "I" thinking itself, able to respond for itself. This emphasis on response belong to Jacques Derrida (2002), who draws on the Cartesian tradition to posit that response is integral to the notion of subjectivity (p. 87). Derrida's notion of response points towards the Lady's biggest appeal for the Tyrant: her neutralized subjectivity, embodied by her objectified corpse. In light of Derrida's theoretical framework, the Lady's cadaverous inertia and nonresponse appear to fuel the Tyrant's desire, whose demand for the corpse's spoken word associates subjectivity with response, and nonsubjectivity with nonresponse. This framework allows the Tyrant to conveniently ignore the Lady's alternative responses such as decaying and returning as a Ghost detached from the

body itself; he can even attempt to control this decay through cosmetics. In the end, this ambiguous nonsubject, who may be altered after all, is precisely what he desires. If a dead human body is already a liminal entity between human and thing, then the Tyrant's desire further destabilizes this position and makes the Lady travel the in-between, from human to object, and back again.

3.2 Response and self-possession

One of the earliest expressions of the Tyrant's concern with response, and self-possession in general, follows the Lady's adamant assertion that she is not to be altered. "How?" asks the Tyrant, not only recognizing her dissent to any modification of herself, but also asking her to elaborate it (1.1.123). The Lady replies, "I have a mind / That must be shifted ere I cast off these [mourning clothes]", before answering her court attendant father's complaints: "I happened righter than you thought I had", for she denies recognition to the usurper Tyrant (1.1.123-5; 167). The Lady steadily responds to the Tyrant, who speaks about her to his attendants and refers to her in third person despite her presence, with a grounding "I am" that announces a will not to be bent or altered, and a self who is able to declare it so. She refuses to remain the dummy object in the Tyrant's discourse, and asserts herself as a subject capable of responding. By extension, her response becomes a political demand to be recognized. "This sameness… the very same fact that I am," is for Derrida the foundation of a certain tradition of the subject, and although he examines it with an eye to what it denies animals[8], this tradition cements the Lady's

[8] Troyer describes as "necrophilia laws" a subgroup of US necrophilia laws which define the crime more explicitly, for example, Minnesota laws which say, "Whoever carnally knows a dead body or an animal or bird is guilty of bestiality, which is a misdemeanor" (140). The morbid integration of necrophilia into bestiality demonstrates the extensive reach of the marginalizing capacity of this Western canon of the subject that Derrida traces.

subjectivity in the traditional sense that would be ruling an early modern court (p. 90). Even more important is that the Lady's self is integrated into "what presents itself to oneself as thinking"; that she is unalterable is traced, by herself, to her possession of "a mind / That must be shifted" before she changes her attire, behavior, mood, in short, her exterior (p. 86). The Lady presents herself as autonomous by displaying and referring to "what presents itself to oneself as thinking" (p. 86). For she "proceeds… from" a paraphrased "'I think' to 'I am'", and is therefore "assured of… philosophical certitude" (p. 86). Following her thinking self, her announcements of how "she is" only amplify her subjectivity. Moreover, she responds to what is asked of her, by interrogators that address, because recognize, her as an autonomous self who can answer for herself; first she relays her will to the Tyrant, then she returns her father's complaints of her impudence by assuring him, simply, that she is right, even "righter" than his estimate. Derridean is the alignment between her response and her filial responsibility, due to which she presents herself in the court of the Tyrant/father, "exposing [herself] before the law" in order to "[answer] for [herself]... to the appeal or command of the other," and in her case, to both (p. 111).

Described through response and self-assertion, the Lady's self-possession thus establishes her capacity to respond and answer for herself. Curiously enough, the Tyrant initially recognizes both her autonomy and her ethical due. Though "'tis in [his] power… to force her to [him]" as her father reminds him, the Tyrant refuses "to stand upon such payment. It must come / Gently and kindly, like a debt of love, / Or 'tis not worth receiving" (1.1.188; 192-4). In other words, he wants her consent and the amorous cooperation implied by the suffix. Even if his pecuniary analogy and later verdict of house arrest exude self-entitlement regarding her affection, his discourse acknowledges the Lady's response and heeds her self-possession, thereby

recognizing her subjectivity. The subjectivity, which her responsive activity has testified to, is now her protection against violation. Her insistence on this kind of self-declaring and verbal response, however, will backfire in her death where her inability to provide it will encourage her corpse's thorough objectification by the Tyrant, and intensify the ontological ambiguity of her corpse between human and object.

The Lady's death yokes together the problem of postmortem response, and the ontological status of the corpse. Her adamant resolution to die contrasts sharply with her soft silence as a dead body; this contrast initially misinterprets her dead body as a thing divested of subjectivity. When the impatient Tyrant's fellows besiege the house where she is under arrest, the Lady decides to commit suicide in apprehension of rape. Soldiers have surrounded the house with "their eyes still fixed upon the doors and windows," and the Lady observes the urgency of their situation, declaring, "It is for me they come" (3.1.59; 64). While she tries to convince Govianus, her lover and the rightful heir to throne, to kill her, the Lady is already exhibiting a complex notion of self-possession through what appears to declare its opposite: "His lust may part thee from me, but death, never / Thou canst not lose me there, for dying thine, / Thou dost enjoy me still. Kings cannot rob thee" (3.1.144-6). At first glance, she is objectifying herself both as Govianus' property, and as a thing that he can lose, enjoy, and be robbed of, since these experiences are not mutually exclusive with the Lady's death. Yet, if we remember Mendoza's definition of self-possession as the right to decide who touches one's body and in what way, "dying thine" appears to assert that right, rather than sign it away. Moreover, it merits repeating that this is an emergency: her abduction is imminent, "voices within" have begun to be heard, and Govianus' confused "Which hand shall I take?" and obstinate

"Must I lose thee, then?" betray his inaptitude (3.1.140; 142). This context makes it very possible that the Lady, although genuinely loyal to Govianus, is amping up the prospects of his possession of her to assuage his qualms about killing her, so that he will 'get on with it'. She crowns Govianus with a symmetrical garland of "thee… thou… thine… thou… thee," thereby presenting him an image of herself surrounded by him. Her resolution to belong to Govianus, and her subtle persuasion therefore create a scene of the Lady's self-possession through which she presents her own self as a subject.

After praying, the Lady announces her departure to Govianus: "I have prepared myself for rest and silence / And took my leave of words" (3.1.133-4). Rest, repose, lack of motion, sleep are the usual connotations of death. So is silence, but the Lady associates departure from life specifically with departure from "words," thus introducing the problem of the subject's postmortem response. Even for her, life is the spoken event of words, sound, utterance, the word; silence is its end, and it ends in silence. Considering the Derridean links between speech, words, response, and subjectivity mentioned above, the Lady anticipates death to undo this web of the logos, and her subjectivity along with it. Her pious farewell consequently prophesies not only rest and silence, but also the Tyrant's interpretation of rest and silence as nonresponse, ergo, as nonsubjectivity. Just as the Lady's subjectivity is problematized around the time of her death, so is the corporeal ambiguity of her corpse. Right after she dies, the fellows enter in search of her, and one spots her dead body:

> SECOND FELLOW. [seeing the Lady] My lord, what's she?
> GOVIANUS. Let me see,
> What should she be? Now I remember her.
> O she was a worthy creature
> Before destruction grew so inward with her. (3.1.195-8)

What results from the second fellow's conjoined interrogative and personal pronouns is slightly monstrous: a gendered thing, an anthropomorphized object, the corpse in the room that can be seen but not respond. Another has to be questioned of her identity, her ontology, and his answer is not less unsettling than the question. Playful, Govianus stalls, until he marks worthiness and destruction as clues to the Lady's transformation. First, her worthiness in life chimes in with the Tyrant's pursuit of her consent, and the subjectivity she has displayed in self-possession. "She was a worthy creature," because she was a self-asserting, responsive human being who could answer for herself, even when the answer was her own annihilation. Govianus' past tense conveniently applies to both her life and her worthiness in this sense, which continues into his phrasing of her death as destruction. Literally de-building, or a reversal of building, "destruction" implies that the Lady is demolished, dismantled, torn down, because her autonomous self has gone, "[silencing] the pianos and with muffled drum" as death invalidates her response and resistance (Auden 3). Unfazed, the second fellow comments: "You have a lady, sir… we must force her [to court]", reducing the Lady at once to a countable noun and a possession (3.1.200). "She'll never strive with you," Govianus quips; his abridged version of her loss of response is jocose, so all the more macabre (3.1.202). Overall, their conversation demarcates the Lady's body as unresponsive and nonresistant. Being as such, she is open for intervention, or–to crudely subtitute the notion of vulnerability which presupposes a living subject–available.

The Lady's seeming nonsubjectivity signifies her openness to intervention for the Tyrant, whose resurrection of her corpse further complicates her liminal status between human and object, and *as* object. Upon the news of her death, the Tyrant exclaims: "Dead! And I so healthful? / There's no equality in this" (4.2.9). He

immediately juxtaposes his vitality with the absolute, concise, merciless "dead." He is not just alive, but redundantly so, "so healthful" is he that he has to baptise the contrast with an exclamation mark. He is still a "personal subject… capable of its selfness [peut son égoïté]" and who "can affirm itself in its selfness," in short, capable of the "power of the I" (Derrida, 2002, p. 93). He pinpoints a complex dynamic that involves what Derrida would term the "I can I" of the Tyrant, and the "she cannot she" of the Lady; what is at stake beyond the merely alive and dead is the robust "ipseity of the I" against the nonsubject (p. 93).

The Tyrant judges right that there is no equality in this. Quick to exploit it, he decides to rob her grave. As his horrified soldiers, who "sweat with fear as much as work can make" them, open her tomb, the Tyrant beholds and categorizes the dead Lady in ecstatic vocative, "O, blest object!... I could eternally stand thus and see thee" (4.3.52; 62; 64). The noun and the Tyrant's consecration doubly objectify the body, which he declares blessed and greets with the hymnal, enthusiastic "O". In his seminal article on apostrophe in lyric poetry, Jonathan Culler (1977) describes the objectifying operation of the apostrophe as that which "ask[s] inanimate objects to bend themselves to your desire," and attempts "to make the objects of the universe potentially responsive forces," in other words, to make them "function as subjects" (pp. 61-2). Culler also points out that "the animicity enforced by apostrophe is independent of any claims made about the actual properties of the object addressed," and thus provides an image of the Tyrant's contradicting intentions in apostrophizing the Lady's corpse: he is at once demanding that she responds to his attention as a subject proper, and remains an inanimate thing whose objecthood is reinscribed by his address. Moreover, he does not need the object of his address to be living, or "blest" for that matter, to apostrophize it. His adjectival apostrophe constructs the

object at his will, which reveals another relevance of Culler who factors in the element of the audience to add to his argument that in apostrophizing, the orator "makes a spectacle of himself… dramatize[s] or constitute[s] an image of self" (p. 63). The Tyrant, who has a double audience in the soldiers on stage and the spectators off of it, is then instrumentalizing the apostrophe to construct a relationship between himself as the necromantic "poetic presence" figuring his object through the "pure *O*" of his voice, and the Lady who cannot do so and is further objectified by his attention (p. 63). He alone seems to emerge victorious as a subject from this relationship, where even the Lady's presence on stage is at first implied by his "*gazing into the opened tomb*" (4.3.61). The apostrophe reveals how the Tyrant's conceives of his own power and designs his prospective relationship with the Lady; according to him his power lies in "poetic intervention" which alone enables an object to "occupy the place of the addressee" and he will model their relationship on this power to manipulate the Lady's body in order to make the Lady occupy the many places of objects of his fantasy (Culler, 1977, p. 66). His gaze here demands eternity, for he is so mesmerized his trance can last forever, during which all he would do is to "stand" and "see", his gaze can consume, for all eternity, the corpse and also the fantasy of a body beyond decay. Conseqently, the final function of his apostrophe is to figure the corpse not as part of an event, but as the object of a "timeless present" that resists narrative, a "now" that stems from the apostrophic forces in poetry, which Culler identifies as the temporality of discourse or writing (p. 68). This is where "nothing need happen because the poem itself is to be the happening," in other words, where he is the scribe who will apostrophize, fictionalize, stage, and reconstruct the Lady. All in all, Culler's insights unveil the haunting problem of the play, which is the Tyrant's presupposition of the corpse as

an object that will bend to his fantastical request that it displays subjectivity when he commands, and one whose inability to provide the verbal response that characterizes his own notion of subjectivity validates his intervention. His attempts to reinscribe the dead Lady as the kind of subject who can be bent to his will are grounded on this perspective, and will be countered by the Lady's capacity to respond as a postmortem subject that he denies recognition.

The Tyrant's fascination evokes the body as relic, holy object, even idol, and christlike subject of a deformed Second Coming, until he concludes that "'tis not possible death should look so fair," replacing the numinous nexus with mundane admiration (4.3.64). Unlike his soldiers, the Tyrant is immune to the awe and anxiety that often accompany the emblematic space of mortality. Lynn Meskell (2005) observes with regard to the practice of mummification that in ancient Egypt, "an obsession with preserving the body through and beyond the zone of death" is "coupled with an attendant dread of physical decay" (p. 60). She notes that decomposition of the body, which is a source of anxiety for many cultures, "voids the corpse of its signs and its social force of signification… depersonifies the individual," and for those "who countenance that decay, the process reinforces the fragility of life and the existential terror of its own symbolic decomposition" (p. 60). The Tyrant glosses over such postmortem signification by admiring how she supposedly looks fairer than one who has succumbed to physical decay. His immunity to the existential and dreadful implications of the corpse denies it the affective power to inspire such reflection. For the Tyrant who truly "countenance[s] that decay," she is not the terrifying sign of his own "symbolic decomposition." She is neither symbolic nor terrifying for him who sees not decay or mortality but pleasure in the corpse; for him, her dead state is primarily aesthetic.

As the soldiers remove the Lady's body from the tomb, her complicated ontological identity is further emphasized by the Tyrant's desire for her response. He commands his soldiers to lift the body out, then receives and speaks to it:

> THE TYRANT. [He receives the Lady's body from them]
> Art thou cold?
> I have no faith in't yet; I believe none.
> Madam! 'Tis I, sweet lady, prithee speak!
> 'Tis thy love calls on thee, the king thy servant.
> No, not a word? All prisoners to pale silence?
> I'll prove a kiss. [He kisses the body] (4.3.87-91)

The Tyrant is presented with the body, and his activities emphasize its inertia as he receives it like a deity receiving a human sacrifice, kisses it–not necessarily on the mouth according to the stage direction–and speaks to it. He has already fictionalized their relationship as an anatomy in this mock-tableau of the practice. First, the actor playing the Tyrant must be replicating the anatomist's upright authority over the passive horizontality of the cadaver as he holds the body.[9] Secondly, he relays his experience of the "pale silence" of the "cold" body, then refuses the body's story of death and asserts his own voice over it by announcing that he will "prove a kiss", even though being in a position to kiss the body already "proves" it dead since the living Lady would not have allowed it. The Tyrant refuses to read the body though he positions himself as its interpreter. In the words of Elizabeth Bronfen (1992), he will "[transcribe] his own experience of this death", take the corpse as a "hermeneutic task" to interpret at will, like the anatomist (p. 10). However, Bronfen adds that this position of "analysing death by proxy" also places the anatomist in a "death-like position" since he is dependent on the knowledge of death and female sexuality

[9] I am influenced by Elizabeth Bronfen's reading of Gabriel von Max's painting, "The Anatomist (Der Anatom)" where she points out the vertical against horizontal as a defining force in the anatomist's relationship with the cadaver, and also reminds of the association of this upright posture with the masculine lover to hint at the erotics underlying the painting, and anatomy in general. See "Preparation for an autopsy" in *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*, Elizabeth Bronfen, pp. 3-15 (Manchester, 1992).

possessed by the dead woman, to acquire which he has to identify with the corpse and jeopardize the "safe boundary between himself and her". The Tyrant's kiss thus melts this boundary to an extent, and foreshadows its final annihilation by the Lady's poisoned kiss, where the Tyrant will literally analyze her to death.

The Tyrant's first question naturally meets a silence that allows him to assert his own response to her body. His moniker personifies the corpse to no avail, for she is not the socially elevated female anymore who responds to "madam". His rhetorical crux is the deliberate self-assertion of the "autodeictic" despot who fills the cadaverous lack of response: "'Tis I," he announces, "prithee speak!" (Derrida, 2002, p. 87). Derrida's subject returns to find the opposing ipseity gone, and presents himself (to himself, in a way) over the empty space left by the departed other. Amorous plea veils the command issued by the Tyrant who can and does populate the Lady's presence with "a call, an order, a noise," and with "questions… concerning 'what is asked of [her]'" (p. 84). He weaves a web of "art thou, prithee, calls on thee, speak," all appellations to which she remains mute. Furthermore, his inquiring "art thou" addressed to the Lady might as well be pronouncing her as artifice[10]; it complements the contradictory emphasis on personal pronouns and crystallizes the Lady's movement, controlled by the Tyrant, between human and thing, or person and artifice. In light of these terms, the Tyrant's address to the Lady foreshadows the ultimate conflation of person and artifice in the made-up face of the Lady in the final scene, which Zimmerman compares to the figure of the "painted harlot" whose mask hides the death "in potentia" that is already unmasked in the dead Lady's face. This conflation, where the painted but spiritually empty "strumpet"

[10] I owe this realization to Matthew Gumpert's commentary.

is a literally spiritually empty dead body with make-up, will mark the crux of the Lady's ambiguous position as a dead subject (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 233).

The Lady's cadaverous lack of response is what Levinas regards as the death of the human other, which is "the moment when the other no longer responds," as Derrida summarizes (2002, p. 111). Derrida comments on Levinas that human death "means 'he is no longer responding' there where 'he will have responded'," as opposed to the animal's nonresponse which "means 'it has never responded,' 'it never will respond'" (p. 112). He interprets this difference as "the right of nonresponse that is accorded the human face by means of secrecy or in death," the right that is denied the animal (p. 112). This very right is what the Tyrant denies the Lady when he requests her "words" even when they are "prisoners to pale silence", her past subjectivity notwithstanding. In addition to his despotic erection of the "here I am" appealing to the Lady's name, he demands conversation, depriving her of the rest and silence she foresaw when she took refuge in death. No silence is too disheartening for the Tyrant, who conversely revels in her nonsubjectivity to the extent that he relieves a morsel of his necrophiliac desire by "proving" a kiss. The predictable trial exudes macabre confidence that the Lady is beyond the question of consent, having transcended the capacity for "knowing what a word, and what the word word means. Of knowing whether one can answer for it" (Derrida, 2002, p. 76). There is "not a word" anymore, no response annexed to a subject no matter what is asked of her, hence his emancipation from the responsibility to recognize the other.

3.3 The object of horror

His disregard for the Lady as a subjective other drives the Tyrant to underplay the Lady's macabre effect on the soldiers, and blinds him to her changing capacity to

respond to and repel him. Middleton's theatergoers and we as readers, however, discern the Lady's change by virtue of the behavior of the Tyrant's onstage audience of soldiers. The soldiers' response to disentombing outshines any other affective articulation in the play by its reiteration of fear. First of all, "I'm afraid, sir," the Second Soldier begs the Tyrant in order to be excused from striking the tomb (4.3.27). When the Tyrant takes over, the First Soldier's aside consolidates the appalling force of the scene: "Life, what means he?" he curses despite being in a church, "Has he no feeling with him? By this light, if I be not afraid to stay any longer, I'm a stone-cutter! Very fear will go nigh to turn me of some religion or other" (4.3.45-9). The fear he voices twice has broken verse to make his sentiment spill out in panic prose; furthermore, he uses the vernacular image of soldiers as irreligious to hint at an act so horrible that it will "nigh," shortly, turn him to religion, an act not unlike miracles in that sense (Briggs' note to 4.3.47-9). The laboring Tyrant's barked "Freeze you in idleness and can see us sweat?" implies that the soldiers are rooted to their spot in shock, their fearful spectatorship confirmed by the Second Soldier's reply that "[they] sweat with fear as much as work can make [them]" (4.3.51-2). They take up the Lady's body "not only… with reverence, but with fear" and the "fine chill venery" that is the Tyrant's kiss finally horrifies the First Soldier to a peak: "I'll be sworn / All my teeth chatter in my head to see't" (4.3.74; 91-3). Sweating, freezing, chilling, aversion to physical contact with the object of fear, and shuddering so much that convulsions make teeth chatter, comprise a package of physical agitation that is complemented by its cognitive counterpart of the soldiers' appraisal of their theft which is "ten thousand times worse than ent'ring upon a breach," and the corpse that is, in their simplest terms, "dead!" (4.3.59;71). This physical and cognitive structure is the horror that affects the soldiers in the face

of disentombing the Lady, and of her transformation into the Tyrant's amorous fiction of the "blest object." This particular affective reaction of the characters is precisely what demarcates and cues the mirroring affect evoked in the audience. Noel Carroll (1990), who theorizes this affect as integral to horror-as-genre, differentiates it from natural horror by naming it "art-horror" (p. 15). Carroll distinguishes horror from terror, suspense, and so on, by offering the presence of monsters as a criterion. More importantly, he argues that "what appears to demarcate the horror story from mere stories with monsters, such as myths, is the attitude of characters in the story to the monsters they encounter," meaning that they react to monsters as "abnormal, as disturbances of the natural order" (p. 16). The characters' affective reaction to monsters is key to understanding the emotion of art-horror that works of horror are supposed to elicit from their audience, since "in works of horror the responses of characters often seem to cue the emotional responses of the audiences" (p. 17). Carroll's conclusory formula states that

> I am occurrently art-horrified by some monster X, say Dracula, if and only if 1) I am in some state of abnormal, physically felt agitation (shuddering, tingling, screaming, etc.) which 2) has been caused by a) the thought: that Dracula is a possible being; and by the evaluative thoughts: that b) said Dracula has the property of being physically (and perhaps morally and socially) threatening in the ways portrayed in the fiction and that c) said Dracula has the property of being impure, where 3) such thoughts are usually accompanied by the desire to avoid the touch of things like Dracula. (27)

In light of Carroll's formula, the soldiers are art-horrified by the Tyrant's spectacle of disentombing the Lady; as its audience they instruct the early modern and contemporary theatergoer in the affect that this scene is supposed to generate, and more importantly, the affect that the Tyrant cannot experience. Their physical agitation is accompanied by their fearful evaluation of the disentombment, reluctance "to disquiet ghosts / Of any people living," and aversion to touch the corpse (4.3.36). The art-horror experienced by the soldiers thus implicates a monster in the Tyrant's

spectacle, a formal object of their emotion, which becomes the Lady's dead body. It is all the more significant that Carroll's monster horrifies through the thought of its being "possible," but "refers to any being not believed to exist now according to contemporary science" (Carroll, 1990, p. 27). What is this monster but the Lady as self-possessing subject? The dead Lady as a subject and potential ghost who is able to be disturbed by their violation horrifies the soldiers, whose horror points the dead Lady out as the monster of their fear. Unlike the soldiers, the Tyrant ignores the capacity of the dead Lady to threaten, pollute–respond–to him, dramatizing instead his amorous fiction of possessing her. Whereas his soldiers' horror cues that of the audience, the Tyrant remains unperturbed by this affective circulation, but any audience has now been alerted to anticipate the unraveling of the corpse's capacity to harm.

3.4 Objectification of the dead body for pleasure

The Tyrant subsequently channels his inner Talmudic Herod to reveal that he will "[keep] her long after her funeral," and "unlock the treasure house of art" to do so (4.3.122-3). His plan is to keep the Lady in a quasi-mummified state sustained by artifice, while he "benefits" from her semblance of life. When the Lady's Ghost arrives to rescue the body, she reveals to Govianus that the Tyrant keeps the body in his own private room, "there he woos [her]", "plies his suit to [her]," "folds [her] within his arms and often sets / A sinful kiss upon [her] senseless lip" (4.4.67-8;71-2). Apparently he has weaponized her right of nonresponse as a guarantee of her nonresistance, while he still demands her response which kindles his advances by never arriving. When transitive, "wooing" means "to sue to or solicit (a woman) in love," thereby suggesting that the Tyrant addresses the corpse as he would a living

woman (OED, n.d.). He is paying court with respect to traditional gender dynamics, and he demands, by suing and soliciting her, that she returns his affections; he appeals to her, courts her, asks for her love. Then he "plies" or diligently insists on his amorous "suit," free to do so as the sole subject of his exchange. He is equally able to move on, by himself, to necrophiliac embraces and kisses. Given the redundancy of using both "wooing" and "plying," combined with the ambiguity of "wooing," the intransitive use of which also refers to making love, he possibly has intercourse with her. As an unresponsive, because dead, nonsubject, and a dummy beloved, the Lady becomes a site of tension in the Tyrant's hands. On the one hand, she is anthropomorphized in the role of the beloved, on the other, The Tyrant enjoys her human appeal but also her cadaverous externality to the "ethical circuit" that would not condone such enslavement of a (human, as noted by Derrida) other (p. 106). Simultaneously included into (as participant and prop) and excluded from human affairs, the Lady suffers from the liminality between human and object.

The Lady's liminality is sustained further by the Tyrant's "treasure house of art," and parallels that of "the mummy, oscillating between human and object status" (Meskell, 2005, p. 58). Both the Lady and the mummy result from a certain desire "to ward off death, to smother it in artificiality in order to evade the unbearable moment when flesh returns to dust" (Meskell, 2005, p. 59). Her Ghost relays that the Tyrant "weeps when he sees the paleness of [her] cheek," so his efforts are concentrated on where he reads the most decomposition, the face (4.4.73). Despite her forced, restless habitation of the liminal zone, the Lady's demise has begun to inscribe on her flesh as blood has withdrawn from her cheeks; her pallid countenance grieves the Tyrant like an unexpected relapse, and even like a refusal to return his affections in a blush. Either way, the lack of blushing signifies the nonresponse of a nonsubject, and while

nonresponse appeals to the Tyrant, his fantasy requires the corpse to resemble its living counterpart. His solution is to send for a "hand of art" to "dissemble life upon [her] face" (4.4.74-5). That is, the Tyrant will use "the faciality machine" that Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze (1980) theorize to refer to the social production of faces. This machine operates "when the body, head included, has been decoded and has to be overcoded by something we shall call the Face," not unlike the Lady whose destruction, dismantling, de-building, has removed her from human circuits, to a large extent (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, p. 170). Death is the absolute erasure from which the Tyrant desires to rescue the face qua subject, he wants to see blood, and by implication, consent, on the Lady's cheeks. The metonymic "hand of art" is the reverse psychopomp who will paint her face back from the dead. When a vengeful Govianus enters the Tyrant's chamber disguised as the makeup artist, the Tyrant's reference to the Lady betrays the extent of his fixation on the face, as well as the Lady's accelerating objecthood:

> THE TYRANT. Look on yon face and tell me what it wants.
> GOVIANUS. Which? That, sir?
> THE TYRANT. That. What wants it? (5.2.66-7)

Govianus plays along with the Tyrant, who completely nullifies the Lady because her pale countenance requires artifice to dissimulate life, and thus be once more bedecked with personal pronouns. "Yon" is a determiner referring to a distant "that," in this case it is as existential as it is physical. Along with the distant poetics of "that" and "hich", the "it"s galore reinforce the haunting object status of the Lady by "decapitating," or de-facializing her. After all, it is "yon face" at the focus of their conversation. Disassociated from the Lady as such, "the face is a horror story" that has become an object which "wants", can be pointed at, be present but yonder (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, p. 168).

Govianus has to identify what it needs for overcoding the corpse, tailoring it to the Tyrant's desires. For death is a subject that does not expire, and it has begun to respond. This is why the Tyrant commands Govianus:

> THE TYRANT. Let but thy art hide death upon her face
> That now looks fearfully on us, and but strive
> To give our eye delight in that pale part (5.2.81-3)

The Tyrant is the despot of the faciality machine that has subjects "inscribed in its overall grid," and the first role of which is "the computation of normalities" therein (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, pp. 177-8). The Lady's face has heretofore been compatible: human enough to kiss, woman enough to woo, and satisfactorily unresponsive. Now her demise is beginning to show, because the dead respond to ongoing life by decomposing as "destruction grows inward" with them. The gaze that "now looks fearfully on" the Tyrant conjoins death, "death upon her face," and her face in a single machine; the line gathers them together like an army, the next announces that they are, in fact, looking back. Death gazes back at the Tyrant as her demise becomes the Lady's triumph. Death gazing back at the Tyrant also performs the Lady's dissenting subjectivity, whose possession of herself even if in death "undoes" the Tyrant psychically and literally through her poisoned kiss. "Her pale cheeks become "a multiplication of eyes," replicating the erect and direct gaze of the despot himself (p. 183). "This is the face as seen from the front, by a subject who does not so much see as get snapped up by black holes," or her pale cheeks heralding a languishing contagion of nonsubjectivity that has already happened (p. 183). As a result, the Lady's face oscillates between dead and alive, corpse and body, pale and lover; it defies the Tyrant's facial units and gazes back. Therefore the Tyrant has to reassert his gaze, re-erect himself, reproduce his fantasy through "the social production of face" (p. 181). "The face is a politics": her painted cheeks will testify

to the Lady as subject, and earn his approval by complying with his possessive desire that rivals death in the claim over her corpse (p. 181). The face truly is a politics since the Lady will speak back through the poisoned kiss to repel the Tyrant's advances once and for all.

The Tyrant's insistence on response motivates his final approval of the Lady's face. Govianus will retreat "as [his] grace / Gives approbation," and the faciality machine does not only approve but also celebrates the artifice: "O she lives again! / She'll presently speak to me!" (5.2.113-4). That she will speak, and *to* him, her spoken word and response are again the prequisite for life, and it is this responsive life that the cosmetic blush typifies, that the Tyrant desires to dissemble on the Lady's face. This is the "perfect" rape, because the responsive subject merely appears present and equal, whereas "there is no equality in this." She looks like she might respond, but she is "no longer responding," will never respond, and better yet, she does not have to, as there is no one left; because it is impossible to obtain, consent is also unnecessary. This is the despot's fantasy: the subject who "gives his eye delight," lacks ipseity and subjectivity, bends the erect spine: a nonsubject.

Ultimately it is the despotic fantasy of the subject without subjectivity that kills the Tyrant, and which the Lady combats in death. First of all, the Lady's silence itself ironically bespeaks her narrative. Wicks' (2015) analysis of the Lady's dead body as an object of the Tyrant's sexual commemoration points out that "her insistent decomposition mocks the Tyrant's desire for the body's compliancy and control of the narrative the Lady's body tells in death," correspondingly, the verbal response that the Cartesian model of subjectivity favors and the Tyrant demands from her would in fact provide him with his desire of the reciprocating, amorous nonsubject (p. 6). It is her literally rotting silence that extends her self-possessing narrative and

"satirizes the eroticization of the dead female body" (p. 7). It is significant to note that throughout the play, despite his bravado against the power of death, the Tyrant acknowledges that this power is affecting the Lady. Most emblematic of his admissions occurs right after he kisses the corpse's painted face and suspects: "I talk so long to death, I'm sick myself" (5.2.122). It is the Tyrant who has orchestrated the dissimulation of life on the Lady's face by himself. In the end, what kills him is not only his own tyrannical and necrophiliac fiction whose fictionality he acknowledges. His murder is also a byproduct of the Lady's response to this fiction in the form of her decomposition, which, along with Govianus' poisoned cosmetics, responds to the Tyrant by gazing back at him and gradually retreating further into the reality of decay, a reality that bespeaks her aversion to being possessed by the one she has not consented to. It is ironic that in death, the Lady possesses a greater degree of autonomy and subjectivity than Spenser's Chrysogone, who, in sleep, is effaced to the extent of being removed from her own impregnation through sleep. In the next chapter, the ravishment in question features an entirely different type of female, in the capacity of the pursuer whose insistent attempts at seduction are akin to the rapacious violations of the Tyrant upon the Lady's body. Faced, not with an unresponsive dead body, but with a refusing youthful beloved, Venus' attempts constitute another form of ravishment that is supplied primarily by rhetoric, one which gets increasingly closer to ravishment as its aggression escalates.

CHAPTER 4

RHETORIC, RAVISHMENT, AND WOMAN IN PURSUIT IN *VENUS AND ADONIS*

Venus and Adonis (1593) is Shakespeare's first printed work and also his most popular, having gone through 12 known editions by 1620. The fact that it has never been institutionalized as part of a curriculum or such public agenda suggests that its popularity is by volition, and has been the result of early modern readers' enjoyment. The poem is generally considered to be an epyllion or a minor epic, and as such, it belongs to a wave of Ovidian writing that flourished in the last decade of Elizabeth I's reign and decades before that in early modern European print environment. It was not only part of a larger and recognizable poetic project, but also explicit, erotic, and witty, all of which attributes might have influenced its popularity. The poem is based on Ovid's episode of Venus and Adonis where they are lovers and enjoy a relationship before Adonis is killed by a boar; in Shakespeare's version, the lovesick goddess of love relentlessly pursues an unwilling and disdainful Adonis, before he likewise dies in the boar hunt and leaves her with her desire unconsummated. The poem has been received as the comedic and more youthful counterpart to Shakespeare's graver *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), but such reception and the generic expectations of pleasurable and wanton reading associated with the epyllion have obscured the darker undertow of desire in the poem. This chapter concerns this darker aspect of Shakespeare's poem, in which Venus bears strong resemblance to conventional ravishers and her attempt at seduction figures a form of ravishment that does not necessarily involve heteronormative rape. Along with the comedic and wayward effects of desire, *Venus and Adonis* also portrays a form of ravishment that

inheres in the rhetoric of seduction. It is this chapter's argument that the reversal of the gendered roles of seduction allows Shakespeare to exercise the rapacious capacities of rhetoric in the absence of the possibility of rape, because Venus is a woman. The poem ultimately constructs a rhetoric of seduction that is closer to physical assault than it is to verbal persuasion.

This chapter begins from the genre of the epyllion and the expectations it engenders in order to argue that the overlooking of the poem's implication of ravishment might have a generic cause. Then follows a comparison between Shakespeare's poem and its source myths in *The Metamorphoses* by Ovid, where Shakespeare's changes further illuminate how Venus figures a more violent ravisher in the poem and rhetoric looms larger. Finally, the chapter focuses on Venus' rhetoric of seduction, particularly on her self-blazon and famous deer park imagery, to argue how ravishment is present in different forms of domination and coercion inhering in her rhetoric.

4.1 Epyllia and generic expectations

The epyllion is a short, Ovidian, erotic narrative that had a vogue in the early modern period, and flourished in the last decade of Elizabeth I's reign in the English context. Ovid was immensely popular in the early modern European print environment, and by the time Shakespeare's poem was first published in 1593, the English "translation" of the Ovidian trend had been under way since Thomas Lodge's 1589 *Scillaes metamorphosis*. Colin Burrow (2002) touches upon the number of Venus and Adonis stories in circulation around the Continent to state that most of Shakespeare's readership would have recognized his poem as part of a larger cultural project where poets extracted episodes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to expand upon

desire and love's perversities in a display of virtuosity. Sarah Carter (2011) narrows the main characteristics of the epyllion down to a basis on previous myths, an erotic subject matter, and ironic tone. Although Carter notes that this brief summary is insufficient for many epyllia, her description fits *Venus and Adonis* well, in addition to providing the key generic aspects in which the poem lends itself well to a study of atypical ravishment–namely, conversation with other myths or intertextuality, and eroticism. It is in these aspects that Venus and Adonis complicates the more typical "narratological formulation of rape in early modern culture," which Truman (2003) asserts "was more than a description of physical assault; rape was primarily about an attempt at seduction (supported by a threat of force) which finally fails as the narrative ends in violence" (p. 41). In this formulation, it is typically the male pursuer who attempts at seduction and resorts to force when discourse fails. In *Venus and Adonis*, the goddess of love herself pursues a male, and several critics contend that this reversal of the gendered dynamic of seduction prevents the narrative from culminating in rape, since Adonis is adamant in his refusal and Venus cannot force herself on Adonis in the way she herself desires to be overpowered (Starks, 2007, p. 84).[11] That rape does not occur in the poem to resolve Venus' frustration also resonates with the tendency of several epyllia writers to "excuse [rape] as the natural result of love", and with Venus' accusations that Adonis acts "unkind", or unnatural, by refusing her (Shakespeare, 2016, pp. 648-55, lines 187; 204; 310; 478). Yet, as a mature goddess against a mortal ephebe, Venus has superiority over Adonis and this power imbalance impinges on the comic effect of her constant failure to seduce or force Adonis. That her power is also very much physical is evident in scenes where she hauls and moves Adonis, which interrupt and pierce through her discourse of

[11] For instance, Carter, 2011, p. 153; Bate, 2011; Carter, 2021, pp. 65-83.

seduction. What renders *Venus and Adonis* distinct from the other epyllia is its nuanced treatment of the problem of force: if Venus cannot rape Adonis, she is still able to intimidate and even force him. Instead of "a description of physical assault", the poem suggests insistence itself as a form of force, for it is Venus' insistence on seducing Adonis that sustains a darker undertow of ravishment in the poem. Venus' inability to rape Adonis does not hinder the looming presence of ravishment. In fact, it is precisely because she is a female pursuing a male, and unable to forcibly consummate her attempt at seduction, that the poem is able to posit seduction as a form of ravishment itself. When "love" cannot reach its epyllionic "natural result," and desire does not yield but nevertheless demands yielding, seduction perseveres and accelerates towards ravishment, as a closer look at Venus' rhetoric of seduction and Adonis' reaction to her will show. The poem's conversation with other myths also bears on the poem's theme of force. The myths of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, Myrrha, and Pygmalion invest Venus' attempt at seduction with its own "unkindness", since they involve a transgression of "the ideological boundaries between the sexes", and "non-normative or illicit objects of desire (relatives, statues, awkward pubescent boys)" respectively (Carter, 2011, p. 5). It follows that inasmuch as Venus insists on pursuing Adonis despite the mythic network in which their story is enmeshed, her pursuit appears to push back against boundaries that separate legitimate from the illicit. That desire insists on pursuing objects even furthest from legitimated reach and lying beyond wayward routes is, according to Burrow (2002), one of the most popular appeals of the epyllion for Elizabethan readers:

> Renaissance readers of Ovid responded vigorously to this aspect of his art, which is not anything so reassuringly stable as 'homosexual': it makes any reader who is committed to reading with his or her sexual desires alive experience sexuality as a dislocating force. Once you choose to gaze erotically, eros could pull your desires in any direction, towards men, towards women, or towards hermaphroditic adolescents. (p. 21)

Shakespeare's Adonis is unambiguous in his refusal to "gaze erotically," perhaps because he is aware that desire will not relent once it is set in motion: "lust like a glutton dies" in pursuit of "men… women… hermaphroditic adolescents", also statues and kin, considering the myths of Pygmalion and Myrrha that occasion the relations between Venus and Adonis (Shakespeare, 2016, p. 663, line 803). After all, Pygmalion is the great grandfather of Adonis' mother, Myrrha. Venus thus becomes the full embodiment of the erotic gaze that contrasts the unresponsiveness of Adonis. Her prolonged attempt at seduction is also the prolonged counterforce of this erotic gaze against Adonis' asexual priggishness. Keen on wresting a sexual awakening and assent from the marmorial Adonis, this counterforce constitutes a form of ravishment that traverses "—the [thin] dividing-line between the verbal coercion of rhetoric and the physical one of rape" (Bate, 2011). What thus separates Venus' seduction from that "in both Ovidian and Elizabethan poetry… where [women] usually have to be seduced and hence to some degree coerced", is the fact that Venus, a woman, is unable to rape Adonis in the standard manner of epyllionic denouement (Bate, 2011). This leaves Venus no alternative instrument of coercion, thereby allowing seduction to take on the additional force of insistence and attempt, through which it approaches ravishment. In order to understand how ravishment operates in the poem, it will be useful to look briefly at how epyllia tend to treat sexuality and sexual women. Doing so will also show that the epyllion genre comes with a set of generic expectations, and engenders a certain critical reception, which might have obscured the graver operations of ravishment that go against the poem's more popular comic tone. The primary tenets of this genre–eroticism and rhetoric– and those of Shakespeare's poem–that the seducer is a woman and that she fails to seduce the male–are also those that may have obstructed the register of Venus' ravishment of Adonis.

For the scope of this thesis, the most important aspect of the epyllion is its eroticism, often "deviant" as Carter (2011) terms those relations that digress from, and so transgress, social, corporeal, and ideological boundaries (p. 5). According to Carter, this definition allows for rape to count as a form of deviant sexuality, and it is a particular characteristic of the epyllion where rape, as opposed to its employment in stage drama, "is not confined to the main plot of the epyllion. In fact, rape is part of the background to most of these poems… It frequently takes place – or is threatened – in subsidiary action" (Catty, 1999, p. 73). Rape is not a governing event in the epyllion. Whether attempted or actualized, its supplementarity dislocates focus and almost naturalizes rape as a form of sexuality. Truman's observation that the early modern narratology of rape concerns an attempt at seduction rather than direct physical assault enriches a reading of both Catty and Carter's definitions of rape in epyllia by suggesting the attempt itself as a form of deviant sexuality, even rape. This attempt utilizes the art of rhetoric to persuade the reluctant beloved, moreover, the epyllion draws a connection between "sexual maturation" and "mastery of rhetoric" (Ellis, 2018, p. 247). The linguistic art is at the forefront of seduction. In *Venus and Adonis*, the object of desire is also considerably articulate. Yet, Adonis' responses often verge on simple moralism, and so echo the correlation between sexual and rhetorical masteries. When he argues that "Love surfeits not; lust like a glutton dies. / Love is all truth, lust full of forgèd lies", he displays skill by pitting opposites against each other and alleviating the effect of contrast through the sporadically internal alliteration of a dulcet "l" sound, but his moral antithesis is cannot triumph over Venus' rhetoric which shows a greater variety of the amorous mode (Shakespeare, 2016, p. 663, lines 803-4). Like a personified sonnet sequence she jumps from admiration to accusation, from desire to despair, capturing the many moods love

engenders. “Fie, lifeless picture, cold, and senseless stone,” she condemns Adonis, then “impatience chokes her pleading tongue, / And swelling passion doth provoke a pause,” before “'Pity,' she cries, 'some favour, some remorse!'” (Shakespeare, 2016, pp. 648-50, lines 211; 217-8; 257). The pursuer is naturally more proficient in both sexuality and rhetoric, since their attempt will prolong the epyllion which depends on expanding an episode from Ovid, typically below 100 lines in the original. Thus, in the epyllion, the duration of both the seduction attempt and the poem is contingent on the rhetorical skills of the pursuer, and by proxy, of the poet. Hence the predominance of 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” (Bate, 2011). Moreover, from the pleasure the epyllion affords in rhetoric emerges another portrait of rhetoric as ravishment in *Venus and Adonis,* which is congruous with Ellis’ link between sexual maturation and rhetorical proficiency. Catherine Bates (2012) elucidates this portrait when she mentions Shakespeare’s preoccupation with language in this poem, which he explores through the

> use of the formula—tried and tested in Renaissance sonnet sequences—that frustrated desire leads to eloquence. Met with rejection, the lover must redouble his/her efforts and, in the bid to win the other over (now more determined than ever in the face of a challenge), the words just flow. Adonis’ reluctance gives Venus the cue for speechifying…

In line with Bates’ recapitulation of the formula that refusal spurs rhetoric, one source of the pleasure of the epyllion appears to be perseverance in the face of rejection. If, as Bate argues, the Elizabethan reader delights in cunning tongue and prizes Shakespeare’s mellifluous tongue, then this pleasure also demands to see the pursuer push back against the beloved’s reluctance. The beloved ought to yield–or

else. Therefore, part of the epyllion's appeal originates in this confrontation, and subsequent negotiation, with boundaries. The generic attribute of rhetoric's predominance in epyllia testify to a fascination with language, more specifically, with the efficacy of language to compel consent, albeit oxymoronically. The endeavour to wrest assent from the stony Adonis is in Shakespeare's poem all the more appealing, since Venus' gender hinders the standard violent end of rape, thereby allowing rhetoric a vast expanse to exercise itself. In short, along with eroticism, often manifest as rape, "cunning rhetoric" is a primary attribute of the epyllion and it embodies an attempt at seduction that replaces physical assault. Rhetoric too can potentially verge on ravishment.

Venus and Adonis differs from the majority of other epyllia in that it is a female suitor who employs this cunning rhetoric of seduction.[12] Even though Catty (1999) characterizes the epyllion genre "by its proliferation of actively sexual women characters", what merits attention is that Shakespeare's Venus woos Adonis for hundreds of lines and to no avail (p. 57). Desire does not reach fruition in the poem, tinging it with a characteristic air of frustration. The absence of "just one more stanza" to achieve an even 200 stanzas suggests, according to Kristin Runge (2015), another aspect of this spectacle of incompletion, for "just like Adonis' life, the poem seems to end prematurely" (p. 36). Since Venus cannot resolve her desire by forcing herself on Adonis, she is doomed to prolong her rhetorical "sport" where "Her song was tedious, and outwore the night"; her discourse is one of lovers' "copious stories, oftentimes begun, / End without audience, and are never done" (Shakespeare, 2016,

[12] For epyllia with female suitors and reluctant youth, see also Ellis, 2003, and Ellis, 2018. Jim Ellis argues that in such epyllia, what is at stake is the youth's metamorphosis into adult male, hence his reluctance towards seduction. The female's desire leads male youth's metamorphosis astray, replacing it with "another, less desirable one: Leander is drowned, Adonis is gored, and Hermaphroditus is the victim of an unwanted merger" (Ellis, 2018, p. 246).

p. 664, lines 841; 844-46). Her attempt does not build aggression to end in violence, it is one of failure so continuous that it grows tedious. According to some critics, this tedium of prolonged and failing seduction is the origin of the poem's humor. Bates (2012) claims, for instance, that "much of the humour of Venus and Adonis derives from the witty role reversal Shakespeare creates by making Venus the subject rather than the object of desire", whence her "increasing desperation, her claims of attractiveness and irresistibility" are "undermined all the more comically by their demonstrable failure to impress". In her interpretation of Venus' failure at seduction, Carter (2011) further claims that the poem "hopes to generate comedy from the assumption that a woman cannot rape a man", and Bate (2011) affirms this "comic spectacle of the rapacious goddess" which he juxtaposes with the "tragic spectacle of the raped emblem of chastity" of Shakespeare's second published long poem, *The Rape of Lucrece* (p. 153). The actual rape of Lucrece and the foundation of the Roman Republic do comprise a "graver labour" than the "unpolished lines" of the epyllion, nonetheless, Bate's observation that *Lucrece* replays "the story of sexual pursuit… in a darker key" anticipates *Venus and Adonis*' own kind of "unkind" sexual coercion (Shakespeare, 2016, p. 643, lines 4; 7-8). Expectations of entertainment that cluster around this genre and the poem's reception by both its contemporaries and modern critics suggest that this comedic aspect has obscured the "darker key" of Shakespeare's epyllion. The myths that inform the poem and Venus' attempt at ravishment will afterwards demonstrate this undertow at play.

Despite the fact that Ovid had been one of the most influential authors of Western literature for 1500 years, *Venus and Adonis'* Ovidian character stirred critical reception to classify *Venus and Adonis* as what Sasha Roberts (2002) terms "light literature": "not the serious stuff of theology, politics or history", but "'idle

bookes, & riffe raffes'" principally about amorous passions (p. 14; Bodley, 1926, as cited in Roberts, 2002). Early modern critics emphasized the poem's sexual and delightful, thus wanton and light aspect, afflicting *Venus and Adonis* with "generic indignity" (Roberts, 2002, p. 79). One famous document of this classification is Gabriel Harvey's annotation that "the younger sort takes much delight in Shakespeare's *Venus Adonis*, but his *Lucrece* and his tragedy of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, have it in them to please the wiser sort" (Taylor et al., 2016). Harvey thus separates "the younger sort" from those who are "capable of judging truly concerning what is right or fitting", and the delight of fun from wisdom–regardless or perhaps because of the immense popularity of *Venus and Adonis* implied by the "much delight" youth takes in it (OED, n.d.). Harvey's comment is valuable in terms of the critical divisions it not only posits but also predicts. In the vein of such early modern responses, Roberts herself, for instance, exemplifies the ways in which their divisions endure. "Bawdy pleasure, not moral pain, is the keynote" to *Venus and Adonis*, whose "subject matter is undeniably salacious… the shenanigans of an older woman lusting after a coy young man" (Roberts, 2002, p. 25). Sexual appeal and education, pleasure and pain stand split, and so do the comic and the tragic. In fact, Roberts, along with several other scholars, describes the poem's first half as "a comic, witty, farcical romp" that counteracts the final stanzas' potential tragic register through "something approaching gravitas and pathos": overall, Roberts argues, "the poem's distinctly comic tone compromises any attempt to take the poem… in full seriousness" (pp. 25-6). Sensual gestures, the reversal of male and female roles, the wide array of markers of physicality from sweat to stumbling amplify the comic register and articulate the "romp" that drives *Venus and Adonis*.

Even modern critics who protest that Shakespeare's two early narrative poems are frequently misrepresented and understudied, such as Heather Dubrow (1987), might employ the critical divisions of the poem's early modern lineage. Dubrow posits such a division on the level of Shakespeare himself, by basing her case upon the extent to which these early works too exhibit "the type of psychological acuteness we normally associate with Shakespeare" (p. 24). When Dubrow wonders why Shakespeare has made "the aggressor" a female, for example, she defers to subjects' relationship with their female monarch, Queen Elizabeth I (p. 34). "The sexually forward women in sixteenth-century epyllia reverse the customary roles of man and woman, much as a female monarch reverses those same roles… Ambivalence about an unsuccessfully manipulative heroine encodes ambivalence about a brilliantly manipulative queen" (Dubrow, 1987, p. 34). Dubrow's reading taps into the undercurrent of Elizabethan political anxieties in the poem regarding a female monarch's political conduct, whether in the form of granting favors at court or overseeing policies. By focusing on subjects' ambivalence, and Elizabeth's social strategies such as manipulation, Dubrow also brings into relief the erotic theme that laces these political anxieties. In brief, her reading of Venus as the aggressor provides an example of criticism that potentiates the darker undercurrents of coercion and anxiety in the poem, though in Dubrow's chapter, this reading is an attempt to display the kind of complexity that attests to the psychological complexity of Shakespeare's early work that deserves more attention. Implicit in Dubrow's *defence of poesy* are several postulates: psychological depth characterizes Shakespeare; Shakespeare the dramatist is separate from Shakespeare the poet; "normally," the former is the locus of Shakespeare's idiosyncratic complexity; and finally, his earliest and most explicitly Ovidian narratives are worth analysis because they too

harbor this complexity. Although Dubrow's project reacts against simplifying these narratives as experimental early works, both her criticism and Roberts' typify the way early modern generic assumptions that cluster around light literature and juvenilia may trickle down to modern critical approaches (p. 16). In short, the genre of epyllion produces certain generic expectations of eroticism, pleasure, wantonness, and lengthy insight regarding the themes of love, desire, and the ways in which they go wayward. These expectations give rise to subsequent divisions such as those between light literature and literature proper, or delight and wisdom. However, some of the very myths that predict and anticipate such expectations are also those that inform the darker undertow of sexual desire that inflects the comedic affect of Shakespeare's poem.

4.2 Reworking Ovid

> Shakespeare's Adonis, after all, is no mere transplant from an isolated moment in Ovid's poem, but a site of confluence for numerous metamorphic figures, beginning with the equally beautiful, equally doomed boys Cyparissus, Hyacinthus, and Narcissus. (Daniel D. Moss, 2014, p. 43)

Like the other epyllia, *Venus and Adoni*s is highly intertextual. First and foremost, Shakespeare expands the episode of Venus and Adonis in *The Metamorphoses* invest the myth with an undertow of ravishment, even as they effect "a whole new gloss on Ovid's tale, turning a tragedy of loss into a comedy of non-fruition" (Bates, 2012). The most salient difference in Shakespeare's poem is that Adonis resists Venus, and consequently, requires seduction. In Shakespeare, the potential comedic results of Adonis' refusal are tempered with the violence of coercion from the beginning, where Shakespeare replaces Ovid's "Dame Venus" with the "Sick-thoughted Venus" who "makes amain unto him, / And like a bold-faced suitor 'gins to woo him" (Golding, 1966, p. 212, line 604; Shakespeare, 2016, lines 5-6). The analogy between

affection and physical ailment is much more present for this Venus, the force of whose emotion boils over into their initial encounter as she "makes amain" unto Adonis. Taylor et al. (2016) gloss this action as "[moving] forcefully". The OED's (n.d.) definition of the adverb as "with all one's might; forcefully; violently; vehemently" and also as "at full speed" reveals the wider scope of Venus' approach towards Adonis, in addition to characterizing her by an aggregate of urgency and despair even before Adonis' refusal. Still before his refusal, Venus concludes her first speech to venture into more physical advances that cement the reversal of gender roles and the violence of Venus' seduction:

> With this she seizeth on his sweating palm,
> The precedent of pith and livelihood,
> And trembling in her passion, calls it balm—
> Earth's sovereign salve, to do a goddess good.
> Being so enraged, desire doth lend her force
> Courageously to pluck him from his horse.
>
> Who blushed and pouted in a dull disdain
> With leaden appetite, unapt to toy.
> She red and hot as coals of glowing fire;
> He red for shame, but frosty in desire. (Shakespeare, 2016, lines 25-36)

The stresses of iambic pentameter mirror Venus' coercive dominance as they measure time in Venus' actions. When "with *this* she *sei*zeth *on* his *swea*ting *palm*… and *trem*bling *in* her *pas*sion, *calls* it *balm",* for instance, the march of the lines bring into relief verbs of attack, as well as their affective register for both the ravisher and the victim through an array of sweating, trembling, blushing, and heating body parts. Krier (1990) elucidates the particular significance of the blush with regard to coercion and ravishment:

> To observe the rising blood in the face, in Ovid's amorous social world, is to observe the most deeply internal being made external and visible against the will; as an opening up of interior identity, the blush functions as a proffer of intimacy, even against the consent of the blusher. (p. 59)

The blush is a staple in ravishment narratives and in line with Krier, it wrests an otherwise subterranean reaction from within the body, often against its will. The intimacy it offers in its exposure of the blusher's interiority does not necessarily occur with the blusher's consent. Adonis' blush thus amplifies the note of violence and coercion that opens Shakespeare's version of the myth, and inflects it throughout. Again in the beginning, an impassioned Venus takes on the man's part in this narrative of ravishment and resorts to force, physically overpowering Adonis since "desire doth lend her force / Courageously to pluck him from his horse". The rhyming couplet's customary lack of meter here allows the sixain to conclude on a note of unbridled violence as it is liberated from the marching iambic pentameter. Furthermore, the image of Venus plucking Adonis anticipates the future violence of the poem's ending, where Venus "crops the stalk" of Adonis' "new-sprung flower" (Shakespeare, 2016, lines 1171; 1175). According to Daniel D. Moss (2014), Venus' cropping of the flower is one in a series of actions through which she becomes "permanently identified with the poem's angrier hue" after Adonis' death (p. 47). Moss further argues that this act figures an "aetiological abortion… on the floral Adonis," because Shakespeare's twist "eliminates any potential for the Adonis flower's annual renewal… short-circuits this traditional application of the myth as a universal cycle of life, death, and rebirth" (p. 45). In epyllionic fashion, the small gesture of plucking a flower becomes a murderous severing of a living body from its vital substrate. Moss' reading illuminates the presence of this murderous aspect in the beginning of Venus and Adonis' interactions. It is after reading the poem's final plucking that the violence therein appears to have been present in the poem all along.

Through the image of plucking and the subsequent–and literal–handling of Adonis, Venus' first attack emasculates Adonis, which is another crucial difference

between Ovid's myth and Shakespeare's version. When Venus plucks Adonis from his horse, Adonis takes on the vegetal or floral, essentially passive, characteristics of the typical objects of this verb, such as the "Oliue leafe pluckt off" in King James Bible (OED, n.d.). Adonis has already been in sync with floral depiction, the speaker introduces him as "rose-cheeked" and Venus addresses him as "'The field's chief flower, sweet above compare, / Stain to all nymphs, more lovely than a man" (Shakespeare, 2016, lines 3; 8-9). The speaker at once hints at the youthful vitality of Adonis' and the blush, which will keep returning as Adonis' feminine refrain. In addition, Venus' address stresses the floral metaphor's effeminizing capacity, and posits Adonis' beauty as an emasculating quality that raises him above men in loveliness, in fact, renders him rival not to men but to nymphs. Later when Venus suspects Adonis is dead, she adds to Adonis' efflorescent portraits in berating Death: "They bid thee crop a weed, thou pluck'st a flower" (Shakespeare, 2016, line 946). On the other hand, Venus acquires the masculine qualities of strength and courage in her plucking the lightweight Adonis off of his horse, and she continues to reverse the gendered dynamics of ravishment in a further display of her force as she carries "Over one arm the lusty courser's rein; / Under her other was the tender boy". Seizing Adonis' hand and plucking him align Venus' physical assault with one sense of rape as ravishment, or "forcible abduction of a woman, esp. with the intention of rape; rape itself" (OED, n.d.). The reversal of gender roles in the application of strength and the context of abduction effeminize Adonis, while masculinizing Venus' natural, for divine, strength (Carter, 2011). These predatory maneuvers of Venus has spurred readings of her as "panting, sweating, rapacious," but Valerie Billing (2017) contests "such readings" as she finds them to "surprisingly align with heterosexist scholarship in their disgust for Venus… and overlook the queer erotic potential of the large

female body". Billing argues that "descriptions of Venus's body and her largeness develop a female-centered queer erotics that promotes the pleasure of extended erotic exploration rather than heterosexual penetration and climax", which allows a critical approach that comprehends Venus' corporeality beyond binaries of masculine and feminine. However, Venus uses the capacities and prospect of erotic exploration as part of her rhetoric of seduction. The ultimate aim of her utilizing her erotic corporeality is to seduce and overpower Adonis, which complicates the queer potential of such utilization by aligning her with the male ravisher who uses his strength, both physical and political, to dominate the female. It follows that although "erotic exploration" offers a valuable alternative to "heterosexual penetration and climax", the former is as unwarranted as the latter in this context and amplifies the threat of ravishment that both hold over Adonis.

Venus' advances align her with conventionally masculine behavior of ravishment narratives. This is also evident in Adonis' response as he "blushed and pouted in a dull disdain / With leaden appetite, unapt to toy". The blush, pout, disdain, and despondence that deter the mutuality of Venus' affection typifies him as the mistress of Petrarchan sonnet sequences, a feminine position in conjunction with the formula that refusal augments the rhetoric of seduction (Bates, 2012). Bates' focus on Shakespeare's reworking of Petrarchism demonstrates how the poem plays with gender roles in seduction, but more importantly, it facilitates another intervention into the ways ravishment comes to fore in the poem. While the poem resembles, or rather, lampoons the lyric style of Petrarchism, it also has a distinction in terms of the erotic dynamics. Petrarchan sonnets feature "a pattern of inequality between an exalted Beloved and an abject poet whose love goes largely unheard and unrequited" in the manner of *Venus and Adonis*, but according to Cynthia Nazarian

(2016) these sonnets figure the abject poet as "a secular equivalent to the martyr" who is "exposed to torrents of desire and despair", leading sonneteers to "figure love as cruelty and suffering" and portray "their speakers… as victims" (p. 3). The Petrarchan lover persona is often rapacious, but the mistress' refusal aggravates a rhetoric of suffering which betrays the torment and violence of loving without reciprocation, it represents a "powerless desire" from which the lover persona derives rhetorical strength and crafts a voice "both critical and unstoppable because it suffered". On the other hand, Shakespeare's Venus suffers from unrequited love and a stony "mistress", but the Petrarchan dynamic is made more complex by her repeated physical attempts on Adonis, and by their power imbalance which works against the Petrarchan "pattern of inequality" between the lover and the beloved. The lover's rhetoric in Venus' case is one bent on seduction, but only so that in the end, "fastened in her arms Adonis lies": force is as predominant as rhetorical proficiency as an instrument of seduction (Shakespeare, 2016, line 68). When "Backward she pushed him, as she would be thrust, / And governed him in strength, though not in lust", Venus cements their reversal of the gendered dynamics of Petrarchan sonnets with an added element of tyranny in her strength (lines 41-42). Force only allows for a bodily dominance and cannot compel lust or affection, and Adonis remains an unwilling subject whose oppression, already an effeminizing political inferiority, causes "the maiden burning of his cheeks" (line 50).

Among Shakespeare's major changes to Ovid's myth, Adonis' prematurity accompanies his femininity and Petrarchan connotations. Adonis is be renown for his youth and beauty, like several other beautiful boys of Ovid such as Hermaphroditus and Narcissus, but Shakespeare's Adonis is unique in terms of the poem's representation of his youth. This Adonis is no mere ephebe. He is a "tender boy" of

“unripe years”, protesting the older woman’s advances because “Who plucks the bud before one leaf put forth?” (Shakespeare, 2016, lines 32; 416). Adonis is “tender” not only in years, but also in character. His scorn for love is a means for him to resist Venus’ “government” as an unwilling and unyielding subject, so this government may be in strength though not in lust. Yet, the same scorn is the origin of his immaturity. “‘I know not love,' quoth he, 'nor will not know it,’ / Unless it be a boar, and then I chase it”; the resolution not to know love is adolescent in its simplicity and determination, and Adonis’ higher esteem of a boar hunt is amusing (lines 409-10). When he proclaims, “My love to love is love but to disgrace it”, it is possible to visualize him literally thumbing his nose at Venus, playing with the word “love” with irreverence (line 412). This mood prompts Subha Mukherji (2013) to describe Adonis’ general mode as “petulance, altogether inadequate for love”, and to view his later antithesis of love and lust in this light, as a “reductive and immature Platonism which Shakespeare’s poem places in a young boy’s mouth, as a piece of adolescent moralism”. Adonis is young in body and in spirit, his ideas appear to be as binaristic and rudimentary as fits an ephebe with a long life ahead to instruct him in the nuances of life. Concisely, in Mukherji’s words, “there i**s s**omething pre-sexual about Adonis, something ‘unripe’”, which renders Venus’ insistence on sexualizing him against his will and despite his professed self-knowledge all the more rapacious, because she is not only professing to an epyllionic desire for the illicit, which is here the ephebe for her as an older woman. She is also trying to involve Adonis in a sexual world which he does not want to enter yet, she is inviting, if not coercing Adonis to “gaze erotically” and participate in the “dislocating force” of sexuality, as Burrow terms it. Adonis’ attempts to discourage Venus by claiming sexual prematurity backfire, since this attribute is to her liking: “The tender spring upon thy

tempting lip / Shows thee unripe, yet mayst thou well be tasted", she decrees to Adonis, indeed, comparing his premature years to the "prime" of "fair flowers" (lines 127-8; 131). The poem's emphasis on Adonis' youth strengthens the aggressive portrayal of Venus when she approaches this unripeness, which Adonis hopes will obstruct and sober up her desire, as incentive. Meanwhile, what appeals to Ovid's Venus is primarily the beauty of Adonis: "And every day more beawtifull than other he becam. / That in the end Dame Venus fell in love with him" (Golding, 1966, p. 212, lines 10.603-604). As opposed to Shakespeare, who brings up the unripe years of Adonis, Ovid marks Adonis' maturation in the passage of time, whereby he comes into his conventional quality of beauty with each passing day so as to arrive at its summit where Venus, "in the end", falls in love with him. Besides, Ovid's reader does not have to interpret Adonis' maturity, for the speaker articulates how "Anon a stripling hee became, and by and by a man" (line 10.602). Shakespeare's Adonis is prematurely objectified through Venus' erotic gaze, Ovid's Adonis has already matured to the point where Golding anticipates his death in the premise that "manhod by admonishment restreyned could not bee", and moralizes it as one that "dooth shew that manhod stryves / Against forewarning though men see the perill of theyr lyves" (lines 10.832; Epistle, 222-3). The myth does not single Adonis' youth among his many appeals for Venus. "Thy tender youth, thy beawty bryght, thy countnance fayre and brave", Venus tells Adonis, "had the force too win the hart of Venus", who has no particular appetite for youth itself, but is simply enamord by it (lines 10.634-35). Ovid's Adonis is sufficiently "man" to be able to represent a moral about "manhod", and to belong in the same group as "men" whose "manhod" perseveres, even in the face of an imminent threat to life. Masculine rashness, rather than "Petrarchan priggishness", is the primary tenet of Ovid's Adonis (Ellis, 2018, p.

246). With this Adonis, and a different Venus, their companionship also appears to be the opposite of that in Shakespeare's poem.

Ovid's episode of Venus and Adonis is initiated by the familiar violence of Cupid's dart targeting Venus. Yet, in Ovid "An arrow sticking out did raze hir brest uppon the bare", and it is not a significant source of discomfort as "The wound / Appeered not too bee so deepe as afterward was found" (Golding, 1966, p. 213, lines 10.607-609). The arrow grazes Venus' naked breast, barely wounding her in an encounter more sensual than it is violent. This is love at its mellowest, and it is subsequently a smooth progress from the initial smart of love to companionship where "Shee lovd Adonis more / Than heaven. To him she clinged ay, and bare him companye" (line 10.614-15). While Shakespeare's Venus intercepts Adonis at dawn and is repeatedly rejected by him until midnight, Ovid's "Inflaamd" goddess clings to Adonis and keeps him company indefinitely (Golding, 1966, p. 213, line 10.611). Both goddesses advise Adonis to refrain from perilous hunts, but unlike Shakespeare's, Ovid's Venus is not constrained with despair lest Adonis should escape, and her speech bears wisdom: "Encounter not the kynd of beastes whom nature armed hath," Venus tells Adonis, "For dowt thou buy thy prayse too deere procuring thee sum scath" (Golding, 1966, p. 213, lines 632-33). Deadly game makes deadly hunting, which would turn praise too dear a purchase at the cost of life; this is a warning to take seriously and obscures Venus' more amorous motivation to keep her lover alive. Shakespeare's Venus cannot be so subtle. Pinning Adonis down like a wayward child, Venus beseeches him not to hunt the boar, but moves from the premise that wild game does not esteem beauty. "'Alas, he naught esteems that face of thine," she cautions Adonis, "Beauty hath naught to do with such foul fiends. / Come not within his danger by thy will" (Shakespeare, 2016, line 631). For all her

rhetorical proficiency, Venus shows little regard for her audience. Adonis' fascination with the boar hardly promises to heed the animal's esteem for his beauty, and he himself lacks Venus' interest in his beauty since he shuns the erotic gaze and refuses to accept the role of the object of desire Venus forces upon him. Moreover, Venus appeals to the amorous pathos that has heretofore failed to swerve Adonis:

> 'What should I do, seeing thee so indeed,
> That tremble at th'imagination?
> The thought of it doth make my faint heart bleed,
> And fear doth teach it divinatïon :
> I prophesy thy death, my living sorrow,
> If thou encounter with the boar tomorrow. (lines 667-72)

Adonis has previously shown himself to have little fondness for abstract concepts and lovesick pleas. He has proclaimed that he does not value love–unless it is a boar, then he might chase it. Given his sober approach to life and his youthful impatience, Venus' rhetoric seems destined to fall short of convincing Adonis, especially when she dramatizes her fear with such vehemence. Her divination, Adonis can easily dismiss as the debris of a "sick-thoughted" mind. Not surprisingly, he is unperturbed and restless to escape Venus, who chastises him:

> 'Lie quietly, and hear a little more;
> Nay, do not struggle, for thou shalt not rise.
> To make thee hate the hunting of the boar
> Unlike myself thou hear'st me moralize,
> Applying this to that, and so to so,
> For love can comment upon every woe.
>
> 'Where did I leave?' 'No matter where,' quoth he,
> 'Leave me, and then the story aptly ends (Shakespeare, 2016, lines 709-16)

Venus herself is aware that her warning is unfamiliar rhetoric for her, unlike Ovid's Venus, who can temper affection with wisdom, and whom Adonis disobeys only because "manhod" does not admit restraint. Ovid's Adonis is otherwise attentive to Venus, even "demaunding why?" following her comment on "Lyons": "sure I hate them at my hart" (Golding, 1966, p. 213, line 10.640). She responds to Adonis'

inquiry by promising to tell him of "A monstrous chaunce… That hapned for a fault", but demands they find a sweet spot under yon poplar (lines 10.641-42). Her steering meets no resistance, and it follows that "They sate them downe anon. / And lying upward with her head uppon his lappe along, / Shee thus began: and in her tale shee bussed him among" (Golding, 1966, p. 213, lines 10.645-47). Ovid's Venus and Adonis enoy a relatively smooth union in which Venus can lie her head on Adonis' lap in a position that would not have been possible without Adonis' consent, and she can intersperse their conversation with kisses. Moreover, their relationship incorporates more than mere lust. Adonis responds to Venus in dialogue, and Venus consults him in the middle of her story of Atalanta–"Thinkst thou I was not woorthy thanks, *Adonis*, thinkest thow / I earned not that he too mee should frankincence allow?" (lines 10.798-99). As Bates (2012) summarizes it, "Adonis is Venus' partner in love: he and the goddess are joined in a willing, consensual, and mutually satisfying relation". Shakespeare's Venus, however, tries to get Adonis to stay still in a moment that not only infantilizes Adonis, but also lampoons Ovid's lovers' poplar scene in the original. Adonis is squirming to get away, and Venus is trying to get him to stay, so that she can discourse "a little more". Shakespeare might be lampooning the Ovidian original, but Venus rearticulates her superior power regardless of her comedic effect, through her sepulchral verdict: "thou shalt not rise". When she similarly includes Adonis in her monologue, the result is risible, because she has forgotten her place and Adonis could not care less: "no matter where", he replies. It does not matter. Though risible, this scene establishes the claustrophobic dynamic between Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis, where Venus does not let go of Adonis, and Adonis cannot get away fast enough.

Another Ovidian myth that informs Venus and Adonis' claustrophobic dynamic is the union of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, whose most salient differences from Shakespeare's poem are the ultimate sexual consummation and the figure of the hermaphrodite. Like Shakespeare's Venus, Ovid's Salmacis is a female in almost ecstatic passion who pursues an unwilling youth, but unlike Venus, Salmacis is granted her wish and is literally "fastened" to Hermaphroditus. In Ovid's myth, she "the yongman did espie. / And in beholding him desirde to have his companie" (Golding, 1966, p. 90, line 4.383-84). Her "euphemistic" desire "to have his companie" implies an urge for mutuality, which belies the subsequent passion in her increasingly aggressive and voyeuristic pursuit. No industry occupies this "Nymph as neyther / To hunt, to run, nor yet to shoote, had any kinde of pleasure", she appears to be mostly idle, admiring her reflection and picking flowers while "at the water as a glasse she taketh counsell ay / How every thing becommeth hir" or "gathering flowres from place to place she strayes" (lines 4.374-381). Her infatuation with Hermaphroditus is one among the many pleasurable activities Salmacis occupies herself with, which foreshadow the themes of idleness and concupiscence that will characterize their union for an early modern audience. First of all, She approaches Hermaphroditus who has chanced upon the "goodly Poole" she haunts, and proposes to "have his companie": "let me by stelth obtaine / That which shall pleasure both of us", she offers, in case he has a "wife and bedfellow" (lines 4.368; 397-9). If he does not; "let me then be thy spouse. / And let us in the bridelie bed our selves togither rouse" (lines 4.400-401). Salmacis pursues an unwilling Hermaphroditus, but her intentions nevertheless originate in a vision of mutual pleasure that consists of a unit of "our selves" who "togither rouse" in what will "pleasure both". Shakespeare's Venus, on the other hand, does not veil her initial

impatience, neither does she begin from a vision of consensual and mutually pleasurable union. “If thou wilt deign this favour, for thy meed / A thousand honey secrets shalt thou know” she promises Adonis, and in this vein “typical of her volubility… as if impatient with single measures, Venus talks in multiples”: “And, being sat, I'll smother thee with kisses”, in fact, with the “fresh variety” of “Ten kisses short as one, one long as twenty” (Bates, 2012; Shakespeare, 2016, lines 15-22). Venus’ “multiples” betray, rather than belie, her overwhelming passion for Adonis, as well as a voracious appetite which yearns to devour and taste him for the length and varying rhythm of dozens of kisses. As opposed to Salmacis’ vision of mutual pleasure, Venus begins from a fantasy of absorption where she “smothers” Adonis with kisses, almost kissing her way into him in an act of devouring that thus threatens Adonis with the loss of self. Adonis does not have the opportunity to refuse before Venus plucks him off and abducts him under her arm, his furious blush is the sole protest he can afford. He “'gins to chide, but soon she stops his lips, / And, kissing, speaks, with lustful language broken: / 'If thou wilt chide, thy lips shall never open’” (lines 46-8). Venus cannot even discourse without intervening into her speech with kisses. Her speech has fractured into “lustful language broken”, but her language alone controls the situation, even when it is turbulent and fragmented. Her threat to Adonis contradicts her fascination with kissing him by connoting a morbid image of lips sealed, or sewn together.

Venus’ initial position as the only agent in control in her seduction plot, and the obliteration of Adonis’ “chides”, distinguish her from Salmacis, who at least begins from a fantasy of mutual pleasure. In response to Salmacis’ suggestion, Hermaphroditus likewise blushes, but he is able to sternly bid Salmacis gone. He “Waxt red: he wist not what love was”, like Shakespeare’s Adonis, Hermaphroditus

has a pre-sexual innocence, along with an aversion to Salmacis' lust for him (Golding, 1966, p.90, line 4.404). While she is "clasping him about the Ivorie necke: / Leave of (quoth he) or I am gone, and leeve thee at a becke / With all thy trickes" (lines 412-14). Hermaphroditus can threaten Salmacis, either she leaves or he will, as opposed to Shakespeare's Adonis who, albeit futilely, has to beseech Venus to leave him. "'Let go, and let me go,'", "leave me here alone", "'Leave me, and then the story aptly ends" he repeats throughout the poem before he finally "breaketh from the sweet embrace / Of those fair arms which bound him to her breast, / And homeward through the dark laund runs apace" (Shakespeare, 2016, lines 379; 382; 716; 811-13). Adonis' request to leave grows in direct proportion to Venus' "idle over-handled theme" and he can break the tedium only abruptly, with an act of violent detachment, breaking and breaking from the clasp of Venus' binding arms and corporeal confinement (line 770). However, the two narratives have in common this kind of claustrophobic attachment which Ovid's story brings forth in Salmacis' deception. "Afraide" most probably because she is going to lose sight of Hermaphroditus if he leaves, Salmacis pretends to leave herself, only to hide "in a bushie queach, where kneeling on hir knee / She alwayes hath hir eye on him" (Golding, 1966, p. 90, lines 4.414; 418-19). Salmacis' voyeurism "fastens" Hermaphroditus in another sense, violating his solitude and exposing him to Ovid's reader too. Krier (1990) comments on the threatening "pressure of Salmacis's watching", and the ensuing "single relation between Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, figured in the line of sight from her eyes to his nakedness" at the point when "he tooke so great delight / In cooleness of the pleasant spring, that streight he stripped quight / His garments from his tender skin" (lines 4.424-6; p. 60). Voyeurism fractures the initial sentiment of mutuality by forming an unequal relation through the line of sight Krier traces between the "secret

sight" whom the spectator violates, but at her own expense; Salmacis' voyeurism testifies to the disruptive capacity of desire as it undoes the stability of the gazing subject. "When Salmacis behilde / His naked beautie, such strong pangs so ardently hir hilde, / That utterly she was astraught", Hermaphroditus' naked beauty engenders throes of passion that physically ail and distract her (lines 4.426-28). As desire takes hold, it musters Salmacis' distraction into a violent ecstasy that animates her, leading her to the ultimate pursuit whence the hermaphrodite will be born: "She was so far beside hir selfe, that scarsly could she stay" (line 4.433). Consequently, when Hermaphroditus dives into the pool, so does she. With her amorous appetite kindled by the erotic sight, she goes after Hermaphroditus with single-minded rigor that Shakespeare's Venus will echo in her voracious and "voluble" attempts: "And caught him fast betweene hir armes for ought that he could doe. / Yea maugre all his wrestling and his struggling to and fro, / She held him still, and kissed him a hundred times and mo" (lines 4.443-45). The futility of Hermaphroditus' efforts to escape is evinced by the way she grasps him "fast" and "for ought that he could doe", and more so in the speaker's observations of his "maugre" struggling "to and fro" as Salmacis "held him still". For all his maneuvers, Hermaphroditus is bound by Salmacis, neither to nor fro can save him from her kissing him "a hundred times and mo". Unable to fully consummate their union, Salmacis intimidates Hermaphroditus like Shakespeare's Venus, but she has the advantage of deferring to higher deities: "Strive, struggle, wrest and writhe (she said) thou froward boy thy fill: / Doe what thou canst thou shalt not scape. Ye Goddes of Heaven agree / That this same wilfull boy and I may never parted bee" (lines 4.459-61). The commandment "thou shalt not escape" is a familiar tune at this point, but in this myth it receives divine support as the gods allow their metamorphosis, whence "The bodies of them twaine / Were mixt

and joyned both in one" (lines 462-63). Their union is a spectacle of natural vegetation so unlike its violent origin characterized by Hermaphroditus' seismic struggling:

> 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. (lines 4.464-67)

Salmacis' coercive contribution to this metamorphosis is evident throughout. There may be divine will involved, but as Bate (2011) points out, it is "through hir hugging and hir grasping of the tother" that their fusion is effected, their members "mingled" and "fastned". Despite the natural image of one bark of two twigs, this union does not rest easy as a consensual marriage of bodies. It rather appears like the rape from which metamorphosis often saves characters in Ovid, instead of thrusting them into a perpetual version of it. Early modern glosses of this episode also condemn it through misogynistic moralizing. In the epistle to his translation, Golding (1966), for instance, interprets "idlenesse" as "cheefest nurce and cherisher of all volupteousnesse", and observes the myth to signify "that voluptuous lyfe breedes sin: which linking all toogither / Make men too bee effeminate, unweeldy, weake and lither" (Epistle 115-16).[13] Here Golding cautions against lustfulness and concupiscence, engendered by a type of idleness he associates with femininity, because the chief embodiment of such idleness is the vain and frolicking Salmacis. These erotic deviances, Golding argues, effeminize men and sap their strength, because in "voluptuous lyfe" sins proliferate and effect a loss of self, or of

[13] See Carter, 2011, pp. 127-29, "Moral allegory" for a more extensive look at early modern moral glosses of this myth. Carter summarizes that "the majority contemporary to Beaumont and Peend focus on Hermaphroditus' emasculation, and 'tend to interpret his metamorphosis in moral, rather than physiological terms'. George Peele suggests in 1584 that the myth informs us 'Howe Salmacis resembling ydleness / Turns men to women all through wantoness.' This reading is standard."

masculinity, in men. Carter (2011) also contends that the early modern consensus on the hermaphrodite myth reads it as a cautionary tale against desire's corruption, with desire referring to that of females in particular. This moral reading of the myth merits attention in that it recognizes Hermaphroditus' innocence and unwillingness prior to the forced melding of bodies, all the while condemning Salmacis for her unwarranted contamination of innocence with the erotic. Early modern reception thus processes the myth with a sensitivity towards the event of ravishment, and its alteration of the victim's soul and body, which it seldom employs for interpreting narratives of ravishment where gender roles follow the more standard form of male pursuer against a female object of desire.

Salmacis and Hermaphroditus' claustrophobic union figures a form of rape, or at least engenders a violation and contamination that early modern critical reception has recognized. However, the image of man and woman united as "two twigges both growing into one" and "in one barke" also has the potential to describe an ideal union between the sexes, a consensual marriage of mutual bondage in which man and wife "togither holde", and this interpretation has negatively affected the extent to which ravishment has been associated with the myth. In *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser, this is the famous and later revised ending of Book III in the 1590 edition, where the separated lovers Amoret and Scudamour unite, embrace, and "like two senceles stocks in long embracement dwelt" (Spenser, 2013, p. 405, line 3.12.45.9). In fact, "had ye them seene, ye would haue surely thought, / That they had beene that faire *Hermaphrodite"* (line 3.12.46.1). Spenser's image idealizes the hermaphroditic conjugal union by naturalizing it in the image of two "senceles" trunks that dwell in "long embracement"; the trunks do not "gaze erotically" and are removed from the world of corporeal passions that swerve humans out of their ideal

course, furthermore, they dwell in their embrace, very much at home in it, and are united "long" in near-timelessness. A. C. Hamilton's (2013) footnote suggests the Christian association with the Genesis' image of man cleaving to wife to make one flesh (p. 405, n45.9). Spenser's Christianized and naturalized version of the hermaphroditic embrace obscures one of the original halves' struggle to escape this clasping of bodies, only to be contained in it for eternity. Bate (2011) additionally exemplifies the way in which a modern sensibility can approach this myth and once again, obscure the narrative of ravishment inhering in it. Bate sees in "the description of interpenetration… not halving of strength but doubling of perfection… the moment of wild passion paradoxically seems to outlast the subsequent stasis. This, we feel, is an image of how sex should be." Bate does not dwell on the fact that this ideal version of sex occurs at the expense of Hermaphroditus' strength, indeed not halving it, but effacing it altogether through the clinging Salmacis and gods' will. Even Carter (2011) who argues the same notes the union as a comedic one when she points out that "Bate ignores Hermaphroditus' continual struggle against the nymph. The sexual union is still coercion, albeit represented as comic" (p. 129). As it is the case with *Venus and Adonis*, comedic effect works against the moments of rupture in narratives of ravishment wherein coercion becomes visible, peeking through the dynamism and entertainment of language. As the previous references have noted, the reversal of gender roles in these narratives amplifies the comedic register, and also adds the dimension of women's agency especially appealing to contemporary criticism. Hence Bate's reading of the myth, in which, because it is one "in which the initial desire for that union stems from the woman", it embodies a "rare example of a union that is not tainted by the exercising of male power… the nearest thing available in a patriarchal culture to a myth of sexual equality." The most important gloss to this

piece of criticism would be that Salmacis does not exercise male, but conventionally masculine, power as she relentlessly clings to, and threatens, Hermaphroditus. "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", which is why Salmacis' assertive position in the myth is a valuable exception. Yet, Salmacis is also exceptional in that she does not resort to verbal coercion at all, because her deception leaves Hermaphroditus vulnerable enough to the physical form of coercion, which she does not hesitate to take advantage of, deriving strength from Hermaphroditus' presence in her own domain of power, which is the water. Ironically, it is precisely the attributes that might lead critics to idealize the hermaphrodite myth that render it a narrative of ravishment.

In short, Ovid's episode of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus informs Shakespeare's poem in its depiction of voluptuous and insistent female desire, the feminine pursuit of an unwilling male youth, and physical coercion. Yet the episode lacks the verbal element of coercion in the form of the attempt at seduction through rhetoric, and unlike *Venus and Adonis* where the latter looms large, consummation occurs. Following the Petrarchan formula that refusal incites rhetoric, Venus displays a compulsion to speak, but Adonis' aversion to her advances is in tension with this compulsion throughout the narrative. This tension emits the uneasiness of nonconsensual erotic relations throughout the poem and rivals the effect of the poem's comedy, and it is constantly triangulated between Venus' physical coercion, rhetoric of seduction, and Adonis' distaste for–and refusal of–both. Venus' discourse characterizes the poem as a narrative of ravishment, and a closer inspection of several of its fragments illuminate how her inability to have sex with Adonis, and

Adonis' refusal, provoke greater degrees of coercion in Venus' rhetoric. This rhetoric constitutes a form of ravishment in itself which casts doubt as to whether the lack of an explicit erotic culmination can truly translate to an absence of consummation or rape.

4.3 Attempting ravishment

Venus and Adonis presents an alternative to the typical scenario in which the male pursues the female and can entertain the possibility of forcing her if she does not yield. In Shakespeare's poem the female in pursuit cannot do the same in the face of refusal. This endows Venus' rhetoric with aggression and negates the possibility of rapacious resolution. Unlike Salmacis, she cannot entrust her frustration and hope to the greater authority of divine will because she herself is divine. Rhetoric remains her only hope and as such, it becomes the locus of her erotic frustration with which she wields this instrument with the ever-increasing force incited by her dependence on it. Bate (2011) contradicts this conception of Venus' rhetoric as ravishment:

> 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… For much of Venus and Adonis, sexual desire is a source of comedy.

On the other hand, the earlier sequences display an insistent aggression and mythical allusions that might suggest a greater degree of violence than Bate allows them. "Nobody really gets hurt", but is that enough to render the violence "playful"? For instance, after Venus reprimands Adonis for being "obdurate, flinty, hard as steel", she bids him speak in assent or not speak at all in an echo of her previous threat to close his lips: "Speak, fair, but speak fair words, or else be mute" (Shakespeare, 2016, lines 199; 208). If "fair" Adonis does not utter "fair" words on par with his

beauty which appeals to Venus, he must resign his voice altogether. In other words, if his utterance does not comply with his appearance and Venus' desire, his lips are better off closed. This plea for Adonis' verbal consent and participation in dalliance announces that Venus will not recognize his refusal, even if she lacks the means to actualize in rape what such refusal of refusal engenders in normative scenarios of seduction. She orders Adonis to "Give me one kiss, I'll give it thee again," affirming that she will respond to any assent with passion, and when her unwarranted promise is implied to be refused by Adonis, she gets more aggressive:

> 'Fie, lifeless picture, cold, and senseless stone,
> Well-painted idol, image dull and dead,
> Statue contenting but the eye alone,
> Thing like a man, but of no woman bred:
> Thou art no man, though of a man's complexion,
> For men will kiss even by their own direction.' (lines 209; 211-16)

Venus' association with Pygmalion in this condemnation warrants a closer look, because it associates Adonis with Pygmalion's statue by proxy. This association primarily emphasizes her despair and adds a comedic undertone, because in Pygmalion's story it is Venus who animates the statue in response to Pygmalion's prayer, whereas in her own pursuit, refusal proves more obdurate than steel or stone and she who can animate stone cannot persuade Adonis to consent. But the association of the statue with Adonis also implies that Venus can still please herself with Adonis. Adonis becomes accessible to the extent to which an unresponsive stone is still accessible to the erotic gaze and behavior. In Ovid's version of the myth, Pygmalion commences erotic relations with the statue even before it comes to life, to begin with. He "of his counterfetted corse conceyveth love in hart," and despite the unnatural object of desire, sexuality naturally follows love:

> He often toucht it, feeling if the woork that he had made
> Were verie flesh or Ivorye still. Yit could he not perswade
> Himself too think it Ivory. For he oftentymes it kist.

> And thought it kissed him ageine. He hild it by the fist.
> And talked too it. He beleeved his fingars made a dint
> Uppon her flesh, and feared least sum blacke or broosed print
> Should come by touching over hard. (Golding, 1966, p. 206, lines 10.272-79)

Pygmalion touches the statue at length, even confusing the senses of "verie flesh" and "Ivorye", fancying himself to be touching flesh. He kisses it often and with long duration, since at some point he begins to think it is reciprocating. The way he "hild it by the fist" parallels Venus' when she "sometime her arms enfold him like a band" and when he struggles, "locks her lily fingers one in one" (Shakespeare, 2016, lines 225; 228). The fist that Pygmalion holds translates to Adonis' entire body in Venus' grip, the claustrophobic register of which accentuates her "circuit of this ivory pale" as a space of ravishment (line 230). She herself tells Adonis, "I have hemmed thee here", that is, she has restricted him in her arms where he cannot exercise any will. The allusion to Pygmalion recalls the difference between "hemming" a struggling boy, and holding hands with a statue, and as a result, Venus' association with Pygmalion exacerbates the coercive and rapacious aspect of her. In addition, Pygmalion seems to exert such force in his own fondling that "he beleeved his fingars made a dint / Uppon her flesh", he fears the consequences of "touching over hard" and thus demonstrates that it is not impossible to engage in erotic activities with a senseless stone. If he can touch his statue "over hard" and fear dints on ivory, Venus can certainly engage in erotic activities with Adonis that only require her own touch and render Adonis' consent inconsequential. Venus might be unable to consummate their union in a melding of bodies, but she can fondle Adonis and imprison him within her "lily" clasp of limbs, or ivory "circuit". It is also significant that all the verbs that signify a form of Venus' imprisoning Adonis describe the barren image of interpenetration with a single subject. In other words, the images of locking one's fingers together, clasping hands, or of the circuit of one's arms possess

an asexual element, an onanism at best, where the body takes erotic shapes by itself, for its own pleasure, and without reciprocation. All the interpenetration that underlies Venus' gestures of holding and "hemming" Adonis have something barren, or fruitless about them, just like Adonis has something pre-sexual about him, as mentioned by Mukherji above. There is always an abortive equality to Venus' attempt at seduction.

The abortive side of Venus' attempt at seduction stems from the rapacious limits of her gender, but it also originates in the mastery of her rhetoric over Adonis' consent. Venus' famous descriptions of her own body, first in a blazon, then as a deer park, constitute her subjectivity at the expense of Adonis', even as it exemplifies a positive instance where a female reclaims her own body and vocalizes an authorial subjectivity over its representation. Her self-representation becomes a form of writing over Adonis' will, and guidance takes the form of coercion. Venus first blazons herself since Adonis is unwilling to do so: "Mine eyes are grey, and bright, and quick in turning, / My beauty as the spring doth yearly grow, / My flesh is soft, and plump, my marrow burning" she informs Adonis (lines 140-42). By itemizing her physical appeal, she eradicates the objectifying gap between the lover and the beloved in the form of blazon, and emerges as a subjectivity through her ability to reference herself, or, through her self-awareness. She cements this subjecthood by inviting Adonis to listen to her: "'Bid me discourse, I will enchant thine ear," she tells him (line 145). The promise of an enchanting discourse adds to her self-awareness a faith in her proficiency in rhetoric, and this esteem of her voice becomes significant in light of Lynn Enterline's (2004) theory of "the rhetoric of animation" as the predictor of a predominant fantasy in Ovid, a "fantasy about the self as speaking consciousness", and further, "of subjecting others to the overwhelming power of

one's words" (pp. 61-62). Venus attempts to persuade Adonis by explaining to him, in her self-blazon, what it is about her that should appeal to him. But it is her famous image of her body as Adonis' deer park that cements her voice as the kind of poetic agency, and authorial subjectivity:

> Within the circuit of this ivory pale,
> I'll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer:
> Feed where thou wilt, on mountain or in dale,
> Graze on my lips, and if those hills be dry,
> Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie. (Shakespeare, 2016, lines 230-34)

It appears as if she is offering herself to him, but her decree that he "shalt be" her deer—and dear—echo her previous prohibition of escape. As Carter (2011) also argues, she reigns supreme in her eroticization of herself, just as she does in her attempt at seduction. "The invitation to explore her body, the natural images corresponding to pubic hair ('bottom-grass'; 'brakes obscure and rough') and reference to cunnilingus (grazing 'where the pleasant fountains lie'), constitutes a speaker very much in control of the sexual situation", Carter observes accordingly (p. 156). Briefly, the sexual rhetoric becomes an instrument of Venus' authorial subjectivity. Moreover, the erotic garden imagery is a manual to her own body as much as it is an "invitation to explore" it as Carter states, and thus possesses an onanism that furthers Venus' control over the encounter at this point. The Petrarchan tool of the blason which indicates possession of the anatomised female body by the male poet becomes, in Venus' hands, a signifier of her own voice, whether it is in the form of an invitation—and, by proxy, of consent--or a guide for Adonis to her own pleasure. If the male poet's blazon objectifies the lady over the distance between the lover persona and the beloved, Venus' blazon subjectifies her as a female in sync with her own desire and body. The rhetoric of seduction, however, even when works

to a woman's benefit, does not lead straight to empowerment. The fact of her insistence against the backdrop of a struggling Adonis continues to loom over the text.

In her attempts to coax Adonis to explore her body, Venus embodies the rhetoric of animation Enterline studies in relation to the story of Pygmalion, especially Marston's version in The Metamorphosis of Pygmalion's Image (1598). The story of Pygmalion, Enterline (2004) argues, posits "the metarhetorical fantasy of a voice capable of moving even stones", which is precisely the fantasy that animates Venus' self-admiring and seductive rhetoric in the two instances of her self-blazon and her deer park invitation (p. 126). Having accused Adonis of being obdurate like stone, Venus tries to melt wax once again and persuade him to have sex with her; the fantasy of animating stone thus invigorates her rhetoric of seduction, wherein she cements her subjectivity and control of the situation. Enterline (2004) questions the capacity of the voice as "an index of authorial subjectivity" and focuses on Marston's use of the verb "move" in his depiction of Pygmalion, drawing on the verb's significance as the end goal of rhetoric (p. 125). In this light Venus becomes an authorial subject, despite her final failure. She attempts to literally move Adonis between "mountain" and "dale", and to make him "feed", "graze", and "stray lower". The potential of agency in these movements is, of course, neutralized by the fact that all of these movements are allowed only "within the circuit of this ivory pale", a space in which Adonis is ironically immobilized by Venus as she invites him to move upon her body. Thus, her erotic self-narratives imply a passivized Adonis who is coerced into being guided as to how to pleasure and explore Venus. The territory she offers to him is constrained, because her imagery feeds off of her clasp of Adonis in this episode. As long as she is holding him still in her embrace, she can offer him

the world, but the world as she herself has fashioned it in her own image. She will allow Adonis mobility only insofar as it stays within the limits her voluptuous corporeality circumscribes.

Venus is often in an empowering position of control which comes at the expense of Adonis' neutralization and imprisonment. For instance, in the deer park episode, exploration is not really a choice, since it is Adonis' only means to mobility in this moment, hence the predominance of the element of coercion in Venus' otherwise liberating and erotic self-portrait. Shakespeare's changes and allusions to Ovid's original stories, and Venus' rhetoric of seduction overall cause Venus to appear more like a ravisher, and her attempt at seduction, rather like assault—often physical.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Canonical interpretations of the texts studies in this thesis, namely, Spenser's poem *The Faerie* Queene, Middleton's play *The Lady's* Tragedy, and Shakespeare's poem *Venus and* Adonis, benefits from a critical lens bent on subtleties: power relations embedded in exchanges shape the implications of language, and of the text. Venus, for instance, is the champion of love, and uses the affectionate way of addressing another person in early modern English. Yet Adonis does not consent to this relationship of affection Venus constantly tries to construct through her use of "Thou", and that Venus insists on including him in this discourse, on inviting him in without allowing him the option to refuse, impinge on the affectionate aspect of her own portrayal. Affection, through insistence and negation of Adonis' consent, turns into a form of force, and an attempt at compelling Adonis.

The non-normative narratives within the scope of this thesis reveal arguments of ravishment and violence that more conventional narratives of rape might be unable to probe. They show how scenarios of ravishment that are not conventional rapes might verge on rape nonetheless. Although the boundaries blur when it comes to distinguishing ravishment from rape, these narratives display how attempts at seduction, rhetoric of persuasion, certain treatments of the human body, and interventions upon the body in states of unconsciousness or even death, might resonate with the power imbalance and violation of consent that characterize rape. Therefore, this thesis is informed by continuous discoveries of ravishment's conflation with rape. The extreme affection, and later, violation, that the Tyrant displays regarding the Lady's dead body questions the limits of agency, for instance,

and asks the audience whether a dead body can be raped. The most salient aspect of Middleton's play, after reading into the Lady's postmortem agency and subjectivity and consent, becomes that the play appears to agree that a dead body can be raped, and that human agency is not confined within the lifespan of the biological body. Instead, the Lady's refusal to assent propels an affect of discomfort and violence to operate throughout the scenes where the Tyrant is manipulating the dead body, whether by applying make-up to dissimulate life, or by apostrophizing and blasoning the dead body in an attempt to conjure the Lady's potential to become his beloved. Much like the Lady's withholding of consent, Chrysogone's sleep becomes a locus of discomfort in Spenser's poem, where her impregnation's pureness and idealness are dented by the lack of Chrysogone's awareness and consent. Although Chrysogone's conception bears resemblance to a sanctified immaculate conception, her lack of consciousness potentiates negative implications to counter the idealness of her impregnation. Attention to the discourses of gynecology and gardening that were contemporaneous with Spenser's poem discovers that in her sleep, and through the machinations of the master figure of the Sun, Chrysogone's body is shaped in the image of the passive land to be tilled by the man, and the female body is further rendered vulnerable in the poem's display of her sleeping body and even of her womb, becoming one of the female bodies left open for the education and mastery of the male gaze through the epistemology of the gynecology manual. Scholarly intervention, in brief, reveals the ways in which power relations configure the sexual interventions, if not sexual violence, operating upon different bodies in these narratives. These bodies in different states, one asleep, one dead, and one, a young and unconsenting boy, are also configured by the treatments they receive and by their own response, or the lack thereof.

Recognizing the less normative patterns in which sexual violence, ravishment, and rape might play out reveals that early modern English literature tended to the subtler forms of violence, despite its penchant for the not-so-subtle displays of stage violence in drama, or for double entendre and bawdy humor. This literature allows one to engage with discourses of knowledge as potential forms of violence that affect and configure the body, and it also provokes the question of the violence of language itself. That words can be a form of violence is an implication this thesis stands by, an implication that resonates with contemporary debates on the violence of language and words as forms of sexual violence. Early modern English literature thus offers narratives that, through contextualization and close reading, reveal that words *can* be violent, that language *can* be violence, and that it is necessary to tune into the subtleties and intricacies of language and human relations, because power imbalance and violence are not always immediately obvious. These texts thus offer new ways of looking at past texts, and by extension, at conflicts from the past that have not "past" at all.

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