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# Shakespeare, the master manipulator

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**Shakespeare: The Master Manipulator**

by

Linda J. Myers

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

English

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1989

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(date)

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## ABSTRACT

This literary and theoretical exploration aims to prove Shakespeare, in *Venus and Adonis*, to be unobtrusive yet highly intrusive, and therefore a most influential narrator. Much study has been done regarding narration over the centuries. Recent studies by the French have produced *narratology*, a study of narrative structure. This study is currently guiding scholars to reassess literary works through the ages. Critics such as Wayne Booth and Seymour Chatman are forcing us to re-evaluate the criteria by which we gauge the effectiveness of storytelling -- both the story itself, and the telling of that story.

To discuss *Venus and Adonis* in any critical fashion, a review of the literature is necessary. Shakespeare's style in *Venus and Adonis* is shown to be distinct from that of his source and contemporaries from his working in the same poetic genre, the epyllion. Modern literary theories of structuralists such as Todorov, Barthes, and Genette bear upon any intense study of narrator; therefore, an overview of these current theories and applications prefaces the exploration of Shakespeare as the subtly manipulative narrator of *Venus and Adonis*.

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**INTRODUCTION**

## INTRODUCTION

The enjoyment of a story comes from the telling. A boring story can become intriguing if told in the proper manner. The narrator's manner controls the text. He is the link between the reader and the characters. Much study has been done regarding narration over the centuries. Recent studies by the French have produced *narratology*, a study of narrative structure. This study is currently guiding scholars to reassess literary works through the ages. Critics such as Wayne Booth and Seymour Chatman are forcing us to re-evaluate the criteria by which we gauge the effectiveness of storytelling -- both the story itself, and the telling of that story. Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* is a particularly interesting poem in which to explore different facets of narration.

To discuss *Venus and Adonis* in any critical fashion, a review of the literature is necessary. Shakespeare's style may be misconstrued: to consider it imitative of the typical writing of the period would be a false conception. Shakespeare's style in *Venus and Adonis* will be shown to be distinct and idiosyncratic to Shakespeare himself.



Modern literary theories of structuralists such as Todorov, Barthes, and Genette have bearing upon any intense study of narrator. Therefore, an overview of these current theories and applications will be presented as a preface to exploration of Shakespeare as the subtly manipulative narrator of *Venus and Adonis*.

CHAPTER ONE

Venus and Adonis: Across the Years

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Venus and Adonis Across the Years*

Appreciation for Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* has evolved with time; appropriately, the poem has found a renewed interest and appreciation among the contemporary critics. Although not all contemporary critics acknowledge the poem's comic humor, all, at least do value the poem.

The nineteenth century critics enthusiastically appreciate *Venus and Adonis*'s impressionistic style, the notion that faith in Beauty is the principle of life. Shakespeare's animals, imagery, clarity, and serenity - all contribute to this notion. S. T. Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* (1817) remarks that "You seem to be told nothing, but to see and hear everything" (Coleridge 15).

Coleridge ignores the story line and focuses his criticism on Shakespeare's language. The poem is said to consist of a series of scenes held together only by a "never broken chain of imagery, always vivid and, because unbroken, often minute" (Coleridge 15). Shakespeare's rhetoric is held in the highest regard, "the highest effort of the picturesque in words, . . . higher perhaps

than was ever realized by any other poet" (Coleridge 15).

A later critic, George Wyndham, in his introduction to *The Poems of Shakespeare* (1898) praises Shakespeare's "lovely imagery and perfect diction and, flowing rhythm" (Wyndham xcii). He claims that "Shakespeare's Poem is of love, not death; but he handles his theme with just the same regard for Beauty, with just the same disregard for all that disfigures Beauty" (Wyndham lxxxvi).

Shakespeare's language in this poem takes Wyndham through the full range of emotions: "The laughter and the sorrow of the Poem belong wholly to the faery world of vision and romance, where there is no sickness, whether of sentiment or of sense" (Wyndham lxxxvi). Coleridge provides a shift in focus "from the court of Beauty to the court of Morals," but both critics agree that the poem's style is most vivid, a kind of verbal painting.

Beginning the 20th century, critics such as Walter Raleigh in *Shakespeare's Poems* (1907), feel that Shakespeare's "preoccupation with his art" leaves the poem lacking in human emotion and "destitute of feeling for the human situation" (Raleigh 81). He agrees with Hazlitt's description of the poem as an "ice-house." The metaphors and characters "can be nothing but reminiscences of pictures. . . the series of pictures painted in words by

the master-hand of Ovid" (Raleigh 81, 82). These critics view the poem as art for art's sake, not deserving more scrutiny than a superficial, obvious glance at elaborately designed metaphors, melody of verse, and descriptive use of color. The poem is considered a series of beautiful and provocative pictures drawn by words. George Saintsbury, in his chapter on "Shakespeare: Poems" in the *Cambridge History V* (1910) notes that Shakespeare's aim is "less to tell a story than to draw a series of beautiful and voluptuous pictures" (Saintsbury 253). Critics in this first twentieth-century generation do expand the scope of their criticism; unfortunately, they also amplify their poor opinion of the poem. The poem is condemned by Algernon C. Swinburne in *Shakespeare* (1909) as "conceited" and in "bad taste" (Swinburne 4). C. J. Pooler in his *Shakespeare* edition (1919), finds the poem's subject "trifling" with "certain incidents, regrettable." His examination of the poem's tone and message is, obviously, influenced by previous criticism. He blames the poem's "failure" on what I believe is the most delightful part: "the intrusion into poetry of the spirit of the epigram" (Pooler 29-32).

Later in the twentieth-century, critics, like Douglas Bush, refuse to find any satisfaction in the poem. Bush

decides that if the poem is viewed as art, "a piece of pure tapestry, all would be well, in a limited sense. But for an orgy of the senses it is too unreal, for a decorative pseudo-classic picture it has too much homely realism" (Bush 149). Bush seems to dismiss *Venus and Adonis* as an "unsatisfactory classical poem" (Bush 149). Hyder Rollins' *New Variorum Edition* (1938) accurately summarizes criticism of the poem prior to his publication, "today scholars and critics scarcely mention *Venus and Adonis* without apologies expressed or implied" (Rollins 370).

Some critics, however, find moral uplift in the poem, and thus view it more favorably. Lu Emily Pearson, for example, in *Elizabethan Love Conventions* (1933) declares the poem "as didactic a piece of work as Shakespeare ever wrote"; for "when Adonis is killed, beauty is killed, and the world is left in black chaos, for beauty, the soul of matter, unites all parts of creation with the great God of beauty" (Pearson 285). Pearson argues that Venus symbolizes lust, the destructive agent of sensual love, "that sullies whatever it touches" (Pearson 285). Shakespeare's Adonis stands for reason in love, "all truth, all good" (Pearson 285). This critic commends Adonis for his combat against lust, and refusal to

surrender to the sensuality in love that Venus pursues. Thus Pearson sets the criticism on a new, more virtuous, path.

An equally favorable opinion, though less concerned with ethics, emphasizes Shakespeare's writing style. At last, the door opens for a humorous look at the poem! Kenneth Muir and Sean O'Loughlin *The Voyage to Illyria* (1937), make note of Shakespeare's "almost satiric" outlook and his use of "ironic hyperbole in mockery of the exaggerations of love" (Muir 18). The work's subtle irony leads Rufus Putney to explore the comical aspect of *Venus and Adonis* in his article appropriately titled "Venus and Adonis: Armour with Humor," *Philological Quarterly* (1941). Putney claims that Shakespeare followed the tradition of comic eroticism. The very notion of a chaste Adonis, Putney finds "distinctly funny" (Putney 535). The picture of an enamored Venus, "frustrated and presently perspiring," was too comical to pass up. The whole story is "ludicrous even in the later portions, where Venus's lament became a diverting parody" that prevents any pathos of the original myth (Putney 534-548). Putney fully recognizes what I feel is Shakespeare's intention: fun! Putney's exploration of satire, irony, hyperbole, and comic eroticism discovers the talent and genius of the

young poet. The poem gains popularity under Putney's comical attitude and Pearson's moral reading. These approaches usher in a new generation of criticism that is positive toward *Venus and Adonis*.

By contrast, completely misinterpreting the lighthearted nature of the poem, Hereward T. Price's article "Function of Imagery in *Venus and Adonis*" in *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science Arts and Letters* (1945), views *Venus and Adonis* as a tragedy (Price 275). Price claims that "the poem has been hugely underrated" (Price 276); this is ironic in light of the fact that he continues further to underrate the work. He finds "a tendency to deprecate Shakespeare's choice of subject has persisted down to present day . . . Even when the critics are not offended by the subject matter, there is no disposition to treat the poem seriously" (Price 286). Price himself treats the poem seriously, indeed too seriously. Price's serious attitude toward the poem veils its humor. He views the poem as a tragedy. Price claims that the poem's themes, "the destruction of something exquisite by what is outrageously vile" and "the fundamental problem of why evil should be free to destroy the good" (Price 277), lead to the tragic aspect of the story line. He claims that images reinforce this



pessimistic theme: "*Venus and Adonis* is a structure of which the bricks are images . . . fire, light and dark, the colors red and white, wild animals and nature, and, above all, war" (Price 280). Price explores all of the conflict in the poem: Christian vs. pagan, man vs. animal, internal vs. external, and morality vs. sensuality. These conflicts are all there, of course; conflict is the crux of any plot, but the tone of the entire poem disputes such a dismal reading. Price explores new depths of the poem, but as J. W. Lever notes, "whether these depths might be compatible with its surface brilliance is a question left open to us" (Lever 21).

Criticism of *Venus and Adonis* reflects the mid-century trend toward specialization. Symbolism became a popular area of specialized study. A. J. Hatto in *Modern Language Review* (1946) focuses on the Boar image. He investigates the reason for Venus' jealousy of the Boar by tracing the history of literary allusions to the beast. Hatto finds that the Boar symbolizes "overmastering virility" (Hatto 355). Shakespeare's reversal of his protagonists' sex roles places Venus and the Boar in rivalry for Adonis. The horses come into scrutiny under Robert P. Miller in *Journal of English Literary History*, "Venus, Adonis, and the Horses" (1952). Miller finds that

Shakespeare's humor is clear in its use of this image, even though "its relation to the main narrative . . . expresses a 'moral dimension' in the poem" (Miller 249). The digression is "a parody of the game of romantic courtship . . . Reflecting the traditional atmosphere of love, much of the description is conducted in the refined and artificial language associated with romance, but hardly appropriate for realistically conceived horses. Courtly overtones abound; there are echoes of the heroic hyperbole . . . Basically humorous, his artistic intent is evidently to ridicule an artificial system by exposing its essential nature" (Miller 251, 254). By "conditional parallelism" bestial, equine conduct suggests the human situation, "fallen Adam," while allowing Venus and Adonis a moral choice. "Shakespeare is giving artistic expression to current ideas. The activity he describes was to him apparently an aspect of human folly, and, although its degenerate nature is quite precisely specified, his total presentation of it is delightfully humorous" (Miller 264). Thus, Shakespeare's position is equated with the conventional Renaissance morality of his time while at the same time Miller asserts the humorous quality of his work.

Later in the twentieth century, Christopher Butler

and Alister Fowler take a more technical approach to the imagery of *Venus and Adonis*. They focus on the images of numbers in *Shakespeare 1594 - 1964: A Collection of Modern Essays by Various Hands* (1964). In "Time-Beguiling Sport: Number Symbolism in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*," Butler writes, "It seems only reasonable to suppose that the numerological structure of the poem is intended to provide an unequivocal comment on the symbolic meaning of human events" (Butler 129). This supposition comes after a close analysis of "parallels in the action and structure of the poem" (Butler 128). Nature's time-table of seasons and days lends numbers to this theory. *Venus and Adonis*, as characters, are associated with astrological symbols; the cosmos is set in an earthly time frame. Lastly, the poem is numerically equated with its source, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the study concludes that "the numerological form points to astronomical and mythological spheres of reference, in terms of which alone the poem's intended meaning may be understood" (Butler 133). These critics assert that the meaning derives from the "subtle temporal numerology," but deciphering this meaning is left to the reader.

As J.W. Lever observes, *Venus and Adonis* passes from "virtual disregard to no small degree of critical interest

and acclaim . . . Furthermore, it was good entertainment, once Shakespeare's meaning was grasped" (Lever 21). When Renaissance conventions were understood, the poem was revitalized as a "highly moral, even highly didactic" poem (Lever 21).

Not all critics, however, agreed with the positive trend of *Venus and Adonis* criticism. Similar to Douglas Bush, C. S. Lewis in *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (1954), has a negative attitude toward the poem. He finds that as we read, "we become more and more doubtful how the work ought to be taken" (Lewis 498). If it is "a poem by a young moralist, a poem against lust," the story does not point the moral at all well (Lewis 498). On the other hand, the poem, if meant to be "erotic enticement, fails egregiously." Lewis states that allusions to unseemly physical reactions such as "satiety", "sweating", "gorge", and "glutton" arouse only disgust as "the dominant mood of the reader." And he feels that the "flushed, panting, suffocating" Venus, bears no resemblance to "the golden Aphrodite" (Lewis 499). Lewis summarizes his argument in one simple conclusion: "It will not do" (Lewis 499). Lewis completely misses comical aspects of the poem and tries to apply moral lessons that just may not apply! And if they

do apply, comedy is a much more effective teacher than a lecture on morality.

Franklin M. Dickey in *Not Wisely But Too Well* (1957) notes that Renaissance poetry was meant to teach by moving the affections with sensuous imagery" (Dickey 52). He observes that "The poem was of course meant to delight, but it also has something to say" (Dickey 52). The "main theme of love versus lust" is explored through the characterization of Adonis and Venus (Dickey 47). "Despite the humor implicit in Shakespeare's picture of an adolescent Adonis, Venus is a tyrannical and cruel goddess" (Dickey 48). She "was not wholly destructive, but she was displeasing to a Renaissance God," who preferred reason to passion (Dickey 49). Those who sided with Venus (lust) would "also find Milton's Satan a more 'sympathetic' character than God" (Dickey 53). (Milton's Adam had suffered for eating forbidden fruit; Shakespeare's Adonis died for abstaining).

Other more modern critics lend their approval to *Venus and Adonis*. M.C. Bradbrook in *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry* (1951) celebrates the "purely instinctive creatures," Venus and Adonis. She finds that "even their physical reactions - feelings presented in terms of flesh, its moistness, its texture - were

wholesome and good" (Lever 22). Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (1961), believes Shakespeare's sympathies are with Venus, the animals, and lustful passion. The poem, for Bullough, "is not merely or mainly a praise of sexual love; it is a pictorial and psychological study of the physical and emotional attitudes of wooing and revulsion, lust and coyness, pursued with voluptuous delight" (Bullough 164). It "provides an explanation of love's urgencies, perversities and contraries." An "Ichnographical Interpretation of *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare's Ovidian Comedy," *Shakespeare Quarterly* (1963), by Eugene B. Cantlupe, assures us that Shakespeare, trying his "hand at the new erotic-mythological poem," pulls out "all the rhetorical stops . . . to make the erotic, Italianate qualities of the genre more palatable to English taste by means of comedy" (Cantlupe 142). There is "an exploitation of the sensuous and erotic as well as the satirical and farcical. Moreover, [Shakespeare] makes doubly certain that the basic situation . . . provides for every possible irony". The characters are "immensely comic . . . but also beget sympathy through rollicking, robust humor." Shakespeare's style is "often wild and hyperbolic but always amusing and entertaining" (Cantlupe

143). In *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives* (1977), William Keach prefers the "rather more pluralistic readings intended to accommodate the poem's many contradictory aspects" (Keach 52). He finds Shakespeare's handling of the mythological material "confusingly ambivalent" (Keach 53), allowing either comic or moral interpretation. Keach states that this ambivalence is "nowhere more conspicuous than in Shakespeare's handling of Venus. He wastes no time is capitalizing on the comic and satirical potential of making her more aggressively lustful" (Keach 60) than Adonis. Her speech parodies the conventions of Renaissance love poetry, and therefore, satirizes the literary love-relations of the late sixteenth century. It is Shakespeare's comic tone that allows this satire to be fully realized and appreciated.

Finally, and most currently, Muriel Bradbrook's article, "Beasts and Gods: the social purpose of *Venus and Adonis*" (1984), removes us from debate over the poem's meaning and instead places emphasis on what the poem did for Shakespeare, "what was surely his initial intention, to make a second name for himself" (Bradbrook 43). We are brought back to the beginning of the critical survey to analyze the effect of Shakespeare's poetic style. Recent criticism suggests that it is Shakespeare's narrative

style that provides the humor which engages his literary audience. Shakespeare, as the narrator of his poem, envelopes us in his world and shows us its humorous side. In *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare narrates a familiar myth from a comic perspective.



CHAPTER TWO

Shakespeare's Original Style

## CHAPTER TWO

### Shakespeare's Originality of Style

During the Renaissance, Ovid's works were among the texts used in educating young men. He was considered the master of style and technique. Shakespeare and his contemporaries Thomas Lodge and Christopher Marlowe were most certainly among the young men who learned to read and write poetry by studying Ovid. A comparison of the epyllia by these writers reveals each poet's style of poetic narration and demonstrates that Shakespeare's style was his own and not simply an imitation of Ovid or a stylistic clone of the current fashion exemplified by his contemporaries Lodge and Marlowe.

The most obvious way to define a text's narrator is by his degree of intrusiveness. The epic poetry of Shakespeare's source, Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, and the epyllia of Shakespeare's contemporaries, Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and Lodge's *Glaucus and Scilla*, and Shakespeare's other narrative poem, *The Rape of Lucrece*, demonstrate varying degrees of intrusiveness. Closer examination reveals that the more intrusive narrator is the less influential narrator. Thus, Shakespeare's unintrusive, omniscient narrator is the most manipulative. We do not find ourselves

wondering what this narrator is up to because we do not consider him at all. Therefore, questions about trust and objectivity do not occur to us. Shakespeare's narrator, therefore, has more influence and control over us because we receive his perspective at a more subconscious level.

The narrative presence, tone, and focus of each author, influence our attitude toward the text and the characters. Ovid, interested in preserving and conveying mythological and historical tales, emphasizes factual detail and thus conveys a detached tone which leaves us as detached from his characters as he is. Although Shakespeare easily manipulates us into sharing amused detachment from his characters in *Venus and Adonis*, his emphasis on the characters forces us to form definite opinions about them. The characters in *Lucrece* are less effective as Shakespeare shifts his emphasis toward rhetoric and dramatic effect. This lack of concern with character development also is characteristic of Lodge and Marlowe who concentrate on their rhetoric.

Redundantly hyperbolic descriptions and verbose narrative by Marlowe, Lodge, and Shakespeare in *Lucrece* detach us from all characters, including the narrator. Because of Shakespeare's focus on his characters in *Venus and Adonis*, we are involved with them and Shakespeare's

manipulation without, even realizing it.

Ovid's *Metamorphosis* tells the story of Venus and Adonis briefly and factually as if we already know it. Ovid includes all of the necessary names, places, and sequences of events; then he moves on to the next myth. The protagonists, Venus and Adonis, are treated as minor characters. They are not embellished with any description nor any characterizing dialogue. To be fair, a bit of description in the beginning of Ovid's tale reports that Adonis is "in all conditions right" as Ovid compares him to "the naked Cupids that in the pictures bee" (ll. 591-592).<sup>1</sup> Ovid is sure to include the purpose for Adonis' becoming "The beautyfullst babe on whom man ever set his eye," in that "He did revenge the outrage of his mothers villanye" (ll. 601, 605). Adonis' appearance is the only information Ovid offers. Shakespeare creates a much fuller and therefore more influential picture of "Rose-cheek'd Adonis . . . Hunting he lov'd, but love he laugh'd to scorn" and "Sick-thoughted Venus \ [who] makes amain unto him, And like a bold-fac'd suitor gins to woo him" (ll. 3-6).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Quotations from Ovid's text are taken from *The Metamorphoses of Ovid: An English Version* by A. E. Wyatts, 1954.

<sup>2</sup>Quotations from Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Ed. G. Blakemore Evans, 1974.

Shakespeare does not give us intents and purposes -- he gives us description that shapes our attitude. Obviously, a "Rose-cheek'd" lad is a young innocent, and a "Sick-thoughted", "bold-fac'd" woman is out to corrupt this innocence. Without even realizing it, we are under the narrator's influence within the first stanza of the poem.

It is important to note here that the tone of the narrator comes not only through his description, but from what he allows the characters to say. We do not merely "see" all through the narrator, but we also "hear" all through the narrator. What and how much the characters say leaves quite an impression on us. The attitude of the narrator toward the characters is obvious by noting the dialogue that the narrator allows us to hear. We may be given only a persuasive selection of dialogue.

The speech of Ovid's Venus is entirely free of emotion. In lines 652-825 Ovid allows Venus to tell the story of Atlanta and Hippomentes, but the emotionless speech is that of a detached narrator. Her words simply allow Ovid to fit in another myth that needs telling. Ovid contributes to the flatness of the characterization with his bland, factual description. Even at a point which should indicate high emotion, when Venus expresses her passion for Adonis, none is revealed:

They sate them downe anon,  
And lying upward with her head uppon his lappe along,  
She thus began: and in her tale she bussted him along.

(ll. 645-647)

This factual account does nothing to show or evoke emotion from the characters or from us. This Venus cannot possibly be the goddess of Shakespeare's corresponding scene:

Backward she push'd him, as she would be thrust,  
And govern'd him in strength, though not in lust.  
So soon was she along as he was down,  
Each leaning on their elbows and their hips.  
Now doth she stroke his cheek, now doth he frown,  
And gins to chide, but soon she stops his lips,  
And kissing speaks, with lustful language broken,

(ll. 41-47)

Shakespeare is clearly more concerned with characterization than Ovid. This is a humanizing portrayal of Venus as she uses physical persuasion rather than celestial power to pursue her beloved. Granted, Ovid's Venus has a docile, amiable partner, but we could never imagine his Venus mustering the passion or the energy to do more than assist Ovid in the telling of his mythological stories. When warning her lover she speaks the words, but Ovid's narration leaves these words emotionless.

Shonne

These beastes, deere hart: and not from these alonely  
see thou ronne,  
But also from eche other beast that turnes not backe to  
flight,  
But offerth with his boystrous brest to try the chaunce of  
fyght:  
Anemis lest thy valeantnesse bee hurtfull to us both.

(ll. 826-830)

The term of endearment, "deere hart", is the only indication of any emotion whatsoever. Yet, it is surrounded by such dryness that all meaning is lost except demonstration that Adonis meant something to Venus so she told him of the prophesy. As Ovid follows up with more facts, he further negates any possibility of an emotional reading:

This warning given, with yoked swannes away through  
aire she goeth. (ll. 831-832)

We have no feeling for the characters. Ovid, as narrator, is not overtly present within these lines, yet such factual speech suggests that readers are to get the facts, all of the facts, and only the facts, and then move on to the next mythological tale.

Shakespeare and Ovid are equally unintrusive and

guiding. In Shakespeare's narration, however, we get much more than the facts of a myth. We form a definite attitude toward the characters of his poem. This attitude is deliberately shaped by Shakespeare. For example, unlike Ovid, Shakespeare creates an emotionally volatile Venus. At the moment of warning and prophesy she exclaims her horror:

"The boar!" quoth she, whereat a sudden pale,  
Like lawn being spread upon the blushing rose,  
Usurps her cheek; she trembles at his tale,  
And on his neck her yoking arms she throws.

(ll. 589-592)

Shakespeare follows Venus' sentiments with a description that does not leave much to the imagination. Shakespeare's hyperbolic description goes to the other extreme from Ovid and gives us a Venus who over-reacts to the point of absurdity. She sharply contrasts Ovid's Venus who flatly says what is necessary and flies off.

Verbally, Shakespeare uses Adonis as his "straight man." While Shakespeare's Adonis says very little, like Ovid's corresponding character who says nothing at all, Shakespeare allows Venus enough verbal rope to hang herself. Venus rambles on and on in her pursuit of Adonis. She tries blazons of her beauty, metaphors about her body, snippets



of poetry, and blatant appeals -- all to no avail. We sit back and laugh as she produces reams of verbal persuasion which are blocked by one simple line or phrase from Adonis. For example, after "She seeks to kindle him with continual kissing . . . Her pleading hath deserv'd a greater fee" (ll. 606-610):

"Fie, fie," he says, "you crush me, let me go,

You have no reason to withhold me so." (ll. 611-612)

He later rebuffs her advances with a didactic moral accusation:

"I hate not love, but your device in love,

That lends embracements to every stranger.

You do it for increase: oh strange excuse!

When reason is the bawd to lust's abuse."

(ll. 789-792)

As if Venus' pleading is not foolish enough, Shakespeare gives us Adonis' quick, blatant retorts that serve to make Venus appear even more absurd for continuing her pursuit. Thus, the dialogue, like the description, reveals Shakespeare's humorous perspective on the characters.

Shakespeare and Ovid are equally controlling through their unintrusive narrative presence. Though the tone of each narration is very different, their narration is equally manipulative. The attitudes of the authors penetrate each

text and move us toward their opinions and attitudes. We never think to question their accounts. We take Ovid's factual tone to be authoritatively knowledgeable and, therefore, accurate. And Shakespeare has us so amused that we never think to question his view for one moment. The thought of a narrator does not enter our minds as we read; obviously, we never question the accuracy of the account; we simply enjoy it.

In keeping with his source Shakespeare does not make his narrator a character within the text as do Lodge and Marlowe. Neither the *Metamorphosis*, *Lucrece*, nor *Venus and Adonis* contain any indication of a narrator separate from the author himself; they are one-and-the-same. There is no significant change in diction, style, or rhetoric to indicate separation between the author's voice and that of the narrator.

Contrastingly, Lodge creates a most obvious separation between himself and the narrative voice of *Glaucus and Scilla*. His first person narrator enters from the very beginning of the poem as a distinct character who participates in the action of the story:

Walking alone (all onely full of grief)

Within a thicket nere to Isis sloud

Weeping **my** wants, and wailing scant reliefe,

text and move us toward their opinions and attitudes. We never think to question their accounts. We take Ovid's factual tone to be authoritatively knowledgeable and, therefore, accurate. And Shakespeare has us so amused that we never think to question his view for one moment. The thought of a narrator does not enter our minds as we read; obviously, we never question the accuracy of the account; we simply enjoy it.

In keeping with his source Shakespeare does not make his narrator a character within the text as do Lodge and Marlowe. Neither the *Metamorphosis*, *Lucrece*, nor *Venus and Adonis* contain any indication of a narrator separate from the author himself; they are one-and-the-same. There is no significant change in diction, style, or rhetoric to indicate separation between the author's voice and that of the narrator.

Contrastingly, Lodge creates a most obvious separation between himself and the narrative voice of *Glaucus and Scilla*. His first person narrator enters from the very beginning of the poem as a distinct character who participates in the action of the story:

Walking alone (all onely full of grief)  
Within a thicket nere to Isis sloud  
Weeping **my** wants, and wailing scant reliefe,

Wringing **mine** armes (as one with sorrowe wood);  
The piteous streames relenting at **my** mone  
Withdrew their tides, and staid to hear **me** grone.

[emboldening mine] (ll. 1-6)<sup>3</sup>

By use of "my" in the third line we know that the narrator is relating his own actions. Self-references in each of the following lines ("mine armes", "My mone", "me grone") leave no question to whom these actions belong. We also understand that through parenthetical asides the narrator gives us some insight into his emotions.

Similarly, Marlowe uses a first person narrator; however, he does so less intrusively than Lodge. In Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, Marlowe's narrator appears as the poet of the tale who recounts the story for us, but he is not an actual participant in the action. He is an observer who describes places, characters, and events. The first person references throughout the text are limited: "I can tell ye" (I. l. 65),<sup>4</sup> "my rude pen" (I. l. 69), "my slack muse" (I. l. 72), "Harken a while, and I will tell you why" (I. l. 385), and "I term this" (II. l. 275). These

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<sup>3</sup>Quotations of Lodge's *Glaucus and Scilla* are taken from *The Complete works of Thomas Lodge*. Ed. E. W. Gosse, 1832.

<sup>4</sup>Marlowe's textual quotations are from *Hero and Leander: A Facsimile of the First Edition*, edited by Louis Martz, 1972.

self-references do not fully characterize the narrator, but they do serve to separate Marlowe - the author, from his narrator - the poet. While the respective narrators of *Glaucus and Scilla* and *Hero and Leander* enter the text to inform us of essential facts and important moments, their intrusive nature allows us to hold them out for examination. We decide whether or not to trust the narrator. The narration of the *Metamorphosis* and *Venus and Adonis* is intrusive as well, but not obtrusive. The narrative voice guides our responses but does not hold itself out for questioning; we simply follow its lead. The guiding factor in all forms of narration is the tone of the text. Marlowe and Lodge manipulate our attitude; however, the device of an obvious narrator within the text is limiting. We are allowed to examine and evaluate the narrator as a character and this hinders the extent of the narrator's influence over us.

The serious tone of Marlowe's poet/narrator holds him up for ridicule. This narrator, like Ovid, begins factually and unintrusively with a tale that we are, obviously, supposed to already know. Unlike Ovid, however, Marlowe's narrator almost immediately demonstrates a mocking tone. We soon find ourselves feeling sarcastically superior to the characters. His description of

Hero, for example, builds to the point of ridicule:

The outside of her garments were of lawn  
The lining purple silk, with gilt stars drawn;  
Her wide sleeves green, and bordered with a  
grove,  
Where Venus in her naked glory strove  
To please the careless and disdainful eyes  
Of proud Adonis that before her lies.

(I. 1. 9-14)

It is difficult for us to imagine such a cloak, much less the woman who would wear it. We read on to find out that, like any fashion-bug, she has to top things off:

Upon her head she ware a myrtle wreath,  
From whence her veil reach'd to the ground beneath

(11. 17-18)

We can't help but wonder why she would want to wear a veil that covers the . . . (shall we say 'colorful'?) cloak. We then move to her physical features such as her mouth and breath:

The odour which her breath forth cast  
And there for honey, bees have sought in vain,  
And beat from thence, have sought to light again

(11. 22-23)

Now that we picture this oddly dressed woman ineffectually

beating bees from her face, the narrator continues to describe the "pebble-stones" hung about her neck and her legs "branch'd with blushing coral to the knee/ Where sparrows perch'd, of hollow pearl and gold" (ll. 32-34). No longer can we fit all of this into one picture! The narrator has gotten carried away with his imagery; we feel fragmented and confused. The absurd description is suitably ended: "such as the world would wonder to behold" (I. l. 34). We certainly do "wonder." Our wonderment, however, is not at Hero's image, but at how the narrator can possibly expect us to take this image seriously. The narrator's sardonic attitude parallels that of Shakespeare in *Venus and Adonis*. We laugh at Hero and Leander as we do at Venus and Adonis; however, our laughter in Marlowe's story extends to the narrator. Because there is no clue to let us know that we are not to take this description seriously (except the mere fact that it is so ridiculous), we feel that the narrator truly intends this to be a romantic view of a beautiful woman. Thus, the farcical view turns back on him, and he is included in our mocking laughter. We take him as lightly as we take such an outrageously described Hero. We clearly cannot trust his perspective.

As if the narrator anticipates our disbelief, he brings in others to substantiate his outlandish description:

Some say, for her the fairest Cupid pin'd

But tis true, so like was one the other

As he imagin'd Hero was his mother (ll. 37-40)

We do not know who "Some" are, but because the narrator is telling us about them, we do not trust their opinion either. Thus, they do not provide the validation that the narrator seeks. We first meet Marlowe's narrator after another such description. At line 51 where the description of "Amorous Leander, beautiful and young" begins, we have something like Ovid's factual quality. The narrator, however, does not stop at fact in his description of Leander. He goes on to compare Leander to the gods. Realizing, once again, that all of his elaborate description needs support, the narrator breaks into personal affirmation: "I could tell ye" (l. 65). After he continues his elaborate blazon of Leander's beauty, he supports his claims with an apology:

but my rude pen

Can hardly blazon forth the loves of men,

Much less of powerful gods: let it suffice

That my slack muse sings of Leander's eyes,

(ll. 60-72)

The lack of confidence displayed in these lines is justified. This ability should be questioned. As with Lodge's narrator, the hyperbole runs away with Marlowe's



narrator. Lodge's narrator seems to be testing to see just how much flowery praise he can heap onto one character. He struggles desperately to impress, but his lack of discipline evokes the opposite effect. He haphazardly employs every poetic device known to man within one poem. Name dropping is constant, with no explanation or classical reference; the narrator simply interjects them as they occur to him. Like a precocious child sounding as if he knows more than he does, the narrator expects **us** to know all of his references. Essentially, he just says everything and hopes that it all works out. It does not work, at least not to his favor. As a result we interpret everything he says with skepticism.

Like Marlowe, Lodge creates a narrator whose descriptions are elaborate and involved. Lodge's narrator, however, emphasizes the emotional rather than the physical nature of his characters. We find the narrator very emotional and passionate from the start as he describes Glaucus:

From foorth the channell, with a sorrowing crie  
The Sea-god Glaucus (with his hallowed heares)  
Wet in the teares of his sad mothers dye)  
With pitious lookes before my face appeares;

(11. 7-9)

This description of a "sorrowing", "hallowed", "pitious"

creature is obviously supposed to elicit our sympathy. Just as Shakespeare humanizes Venus, this narrator certainly humanizes his Sea-god:

And as I sat under a Willow tree,  
The lovelie honor of faire Thetis bower;  
Reposed his head upon my faintful knee:  
And when my teares had ceased their stormie shower  
He dried my cheekes, and then bespake him so,  
As when he waild I straight forgot my woe.

(11. 12-17)

The narrator's description certainly draws our sympathies toward Glaucus. We think that it is very nice (however unusual) for a Sea-god to come on shore in order to ease a mortal's troubled mind. It is not long, however, before our sympathies begin to turn. As Glaucus takes over to narrate his story, the narrator unwittingly gives us descriptions that alter our opinion of Glaucus:

Herewith his faltering tongue by sighs oppressed.  
Forsooke his office, and his bloud resorted  
To feede the heart that wholly was distressed,  
Whilst pale . . . my knee supported

His feeble head and arme, so fill of anguish

(11. 193-197)

And now he sighes, and then his heart is stung;

Againe he speakes gainst fancies fond deceit,  
And tears his tresses with his fingers faire,  
And rents his roabs, halfe mad with deepe  
despaire. (ll. 419-421)

The haples lover worne with working woe,  
Upon the ground lay pale as any corpse,  
(ll. 466-467)

Midway through the story we realize how ineffective this god truly is. The narrator elicits our sympathies which we willingly give for the first two or three emotional episodes. By the fourth ploy for pity, however, we are tapped out. We want this character to buck up and get to the point as Glaucus drones on about his woes. We should know we are in trouble when the narrator begins by preparing everything in sight to have pity on Glaucus: "The clouds", "The fields", "The rockes", "The hills", "The aire", "The trees", "The Shepheardes . . . And flockes", and "The Nymphes", "Prepare their teares to hear [his] tragic storie:" (ll. 109-118). Like Marlowe's narrator, Lodge's pulls all stops. We find any and all types of poetic devices used. The speech of Glaucus and the narrator runs together so that we are never certain of exactly who is speaking. We have to constantly turn back the pages to make

certain that we have not missed a speech tag. We hear of the "wofull" condition so often that near the end it has lost all meaning:

To make long tale tedious to the wofull,  
Wofull that read what wofull shee approoved:

(ll. 657-658)

The adjective "tedious" is the most accurate in the entire poem and we are the "wofull that read" the words.

The narrator gives a verbose description of the nymphs and fairies who come to dote on Glaucus when he faints; they revive him, and ask him to continue. This is fine at first, but after a while we find that only they have the patience to stick with his tale. By the time Venus finally enters to remove the barb that holds Glaucus caught in his unrequited love, we are more relieved than he is. The narrator hangs on every word that Glaucus says and recounts every one to us. He is clearly taken with Glaucus; thus, we get little of the other protagonist, Scilla, and the bit that we do get is slanted.

Scilla is described as "faire" and "lovely,"

Whose beauties all the tides with wonder noted  
Fore whom Palemon and the Tritions danced  
Whilst she hir upon the tide advanced.

(ll. 570-572)

That's it. After all of the elaborate, in-depth detail we get about Glaucus, this is the entire view that the narrator allows us of Scilla. She is shot by Cupid's arrow which causes a role reversal. She now loves Glaucus who (with barb now removed) no longer loves her. We feel that she gets what she deserves because the narrator does not allow her to state her side of the story. He does allow her to speak, more than two or three lines at a time, while he describes her speech and actions to sound tedious and boring:

And how her lippes doo dwell upon his cheekes;  
And how she sighes, and seares shee loves and  
leekes,  
And how she vowes, and he her vows envies:

(ll. 623-624)

How oft with blushes would she plead for grace,  
How oft with whisperings would she tempt his  
eares:

How oft with Christall did she wet his face:  
How oft she wipte them with her Amber heares:

(ll. 627-630)

He even asks us to pity him for having to write her words:

Rue me that writes, for why her rith deserves it:  
Hope needs must faile, where sorrow scarce

preserves it.

(ll. 655-656)

The narrator wants us to sympathize with Glaucus (who became tedious and boring all on his own), but we are devoid of emotion for any creature described by this narrator. The narrator is so impressed and overwhelmed that a god would come talk to him - a mere mortal - and that he is amongst all of these celestial beings, that he is clearly not objective. We only get Glaucus' side of this story; Scilla does not stand a chance. Lodge may take his narrator seriously; we, however, do not. We are the truly objective observers, and we mistrust this narrator, as we do Marlowe's. If he influences us at all, it is to oppose his opinion.

Concentration on rhetoric and reader effect makes Shakespeare's *Lucrece* a transition from the "non-narrated" texts of *Venus and Adonis* and Ovid, to the obvious narrators of Lodge and Marlowe. Shakespeare is, once again, the narrator as he is in *Venus and Adonis*. In *Lucrece*, however, a rhetorically verbose style like that of Lodge and Marlowe, leaves us detached from Shakespeare's characters. This detachment is similar to the aloofness we feel for Ovid's characters. Shakespeare does not engage us with his characters in this work as they are not his primary concern. The potential for empathy is there, but it is suffocated by

Shakespeare's concern with diction as a means of creating a dramatic effect. The hyperbolic language of *Lucrece*, so different from the style of *Venus and Adonis*, prevents us from feeling for the characters. The work reads like an overly melodramatic historical account. We find out who the characters are and what they do, but we do not form any attachment to them.

Shakespeare immediately tells us that Lucrece is a "chaste" and "Peerless dame . . . within whose face beauty and virtue strived" (ll. 4, 5, 51). Tarquin is "lust-breathed," "borne by the trustless wings of false desire" as a "false lord" (ll. 2-3, 49). She is "This earthly saint adored by his devil" (l. 84). These descriptions tell us the part that the protagonists will play, but such judgmental description evokes no emotion. Where *Venus and Adonis* are "real people" to whom we can relate, the characters of *Lucrece* are flat, "unreal," and remote. Like Ovid, Shakespeare is factual; however, he uses the ineffectually verbose, descriptive language of Lodge and Marlowe.

Shakespeare has the potential to involve us with the characters' feelings by allowing us to witness their introspection. The hyperbole and length of their thought and speech, however, causes the opposite effect; we are

distanced from them. For example, Tarquin's mental debate on his way to Lucrece's bedroom goes on for nearly two hundred lines by which time we do not care if he rapes her or not as long as he takes some action. Shakespeare's description at Tarquin's height of passionate desire gives us copious decoration as the villain gazes at the "silent war of lilies and roses" (l. 71) upon his sleeping victim's face:

This heraldry in Lucrece' face was seen,  
Argu'd by beauty's red and virtue's white;  
Of either's colour was the other queen,  
Proving from world's minority their right.  
Yet their ambition makes them to fight;  
The sov'reignty of either being so great,  
That oft they interchange each other's seat.

(ll. 64-70)

Is this how true villains think? All of this flowery imagery leaves us cool toward Tarquin. There is no emotion in all of his elaborate description. It is difficult to even find much lust as Tarquin "justly controls his thoughts unjust" (l. 187).

As he faces Lucrece's accusations and appeals he merely expounds profuse foreshadowing:

So thy surviving husband shall remain



The scornful mark of every open eye;  
Thy kinsmen hang their heads at this disdain,  
Thy issue blurr'd with nameless bastardry.  
And thou, the author of their obloquy,  
Shalt have thy trespass cited up in rhymes  
And sung by children on succeeding times.

(ll. 518-525)

This tells us what is to occur, but where is the feeling?  
What is the emotion? We are left equally unmoved after  
Lucrece's response:

Mud not thy fountain that gave drink to thee,  
Mar not the thing that cannot be amended.  
End thy ill aim before thy shoot be ended;

(ll. 577-579)

My husband is thy friend; for his sake spare me.  
Thyself art mighty; for thine own sake leave me.  
My self a weakling; do not then ensnare me.

(ll. 582-584)

Shakespeare does not allow Lucrece any emotional confrontation. Her organized, logical appeals continue for another fifty lines covering, among other topics, hospitality, friendship, duty, and chivalry. Shakespeare provides no emotional pith.

Shakespeare leaves it up to his character to tell us of

her own actions. This is equally ineffectual:

My sighs like whirlwinds labour hence to heave thee;

If ever man were mov'd with woman's moans,

Be moved with my tears, my sighs, my groans.

(ll. 586-588)

Such a continually flat reaction erodes any empathy we may have mustered as it diminishes the horror of Tarquin's actions. Thus the end result is factually stated and received:

She bears the load of lust he left behind,

And he the burden of a guilty mind. (ll. 734-735)

As did Ovid's, Shakespeare's epigrammatic style leaves the reader dry. We watch and hear the action, but are not involved. We are not horrified or amused; we are devoid of response. Thus, we are unmoved by either Lucrece's suicide or "Tarquin's everlasting banishment" (l. 1855) which ends the poem.

We are too involved in the rhetoric of *Lucrece* to question the narrator's influence. It is submerged in long soliloquies and descriptions. The poem is successful poetically, but not emotionally. We remain detached from the characters. Where Ovid provides history on a need-to-know basis, dry and factual, Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* provides details and rhetoric that leave us equally

dry. Both Marlowe and Lodge's narrators ride off into a thicket of description from which neither is able to extricate himself. Lodge's narrator is caught in emotional empathy as Marlowe's is ensnared by his own love of elaborate physical description: because Lodge works on the emotional and Marlowe works on the physical and neither works on characterization, their characters remain flat. Shakespeare's humorous stance in *Venus and Adonis* liberates him. In this poem we see a great leap from the original source, Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, to a mature style of writing exemplified by wit and humor which results in characters who are "real people," able to stand alone, with whom the reader can identify. This identification engrosses the reader and allows Shakespeare to work the masterful manipulation that clearly sets him apart from both his source and his contemporaries.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**Narratological Foundation and Structure**

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#### Narratological Foundation and Structure

In recent years, there has been great critical interest in the techniques, language, and rhetoric of narrative fiction - "narratology." Narratology systematically explores the elements of a "story" previously scrutinized in literary research: author, plot, point of view, narrative voice, time, distance, mood, tone, and style. It concentrates on the way narrative "discourse" (rhetoric) structures a sequence of events in time (a "story") into an organized form (a "plot"). The study formulates a system of rules that governs all forms of narration. Because "narratology" is founded in structuralism, the work of structuralist theorists such as Tzvetan Todorov, Roland Barthes, and Gerard Genette cannot be ignored.

Theories are altered through application to different texts. This conclusion by Todorov justifies his pursuit of a seeming contradiction: structuralist criticism. Todorov explains that "criticism seeks to interpret a particular work, while structuralism, for its part, is a scientific method implying an interest in impersonal laws and forms, of which existing objects are only the

realizations" (Todorov 73). This idea of separating a text into laws and forms leads Todorov to establish "the science of narrative" which he deems "narratology." The basis for this science is language because, in Todorov's opinion, language is the unifying structure of man's common universe: mental, physical, and emotional. Therefore, Todorov's structure for narratology replicates a grammar, establishing a linguistic basis for his narrative model.

Todorov's narrative model divides a narrative into three categories: semantic, syntactic, and verbal. The verbal aspect concerns the language in which stories are told. Todorov's analysis, heavily slanted toward linguistics, negates a comprehensive study of narration and narrator. He claims that one can "understand narrative better if one knows that a character is a noun, and the action is a verb . . . one will understand nouns and verbs better if one thinks of the role they adopt in the narrative . . . to combine a noun with a verb is the first step toward narrative" (Todorov 84). Thus, in this theory characters are seen as nouns, their attributes as adjectives and their actions as verbs: the story is read as an extended sentence. For example, we will use a stanza that summarizes the entire poem:

The warm effects which she finds missing  
She seeks to kindle with continual kissing.

But all in vain, good queen, it will not be;  
She hath assay'd as much as may be prov'd.  
Her pleading hath deserv'd a greater fee;  
She's Love, she loves, and yet she is not lov'd.

"Fie, Fie," he says, "you crush me, let me go,  
You have no reason to withhold me so."

(ll. 605-612)

This passage is an extended sentence of the entire poem. The pronouns are the characters. The verbs describe their actions: Venus seeks, pleads, and loves while Adonis is crushed, wishes to leave, and denies. Negative adjectives and adverbs support the theme of Venus' unrequited love. Todorov's textual examination is revolutionary; however, it omits a study of "narration" - the manner in which a story is told - not due to oversight, but because his narrative structure excludes certain elements included in later narratological theories such as point of view, distance, and tone.

Roland Barthes' structuralist approach reiterates Todorov's close relation between language and narrative; however, his narrative model does not adhere so rigidly to

narrow categories. Barthes divides the structure of narrative into units. These units consist of segments that the reader identifies as a paragraph, a phrase, or a sentence. Rather than by linguistic references, Barthes defines his units according to the narrative effect.

The warm effects which she finds missing  
She seeks to kindle with continual kissing.

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"Fie, fie," he says, "you crush me, let me go,  
You have no reason to withhold me so."

(ll. 605-612)

As a paragraph (a stanza here) this section tells the entire theme of the poem: the story of Venus' unrequited pursuit of love. Each phrase or sentence sums the emotions of the characters as it unfolds the theme of the story: Venus continues her pursuit of Adonis; this pursuit is in vain; her pleading gets her nowhere; Adonis is clearly not interested. This passage is a



paragraph, or an extended sentence, that tells the entire story. But while looking at the form of the paragraph or sentence and what it says, we miss the nuances that characterize the telling of the story and most influence our reading. Though such units follow a sequential organization in the narrative, structuralists realign them in an atemporal frame work for examination and explanation. Barthes calls this his "step-by-step approach" which accentuates the text's "plurality" by the attempt to "star the text instead of assembling it, to fragment and disperse it, instead of unifying it" (Jefferson & Robey 100).

Barthes' refusal to unify a work into any sort of coherent sense limits his effectiveness. It is true that the narrator's rhetorical devices must be separated out and examined individually, but only in order to see how each influences the whole, the unity, that the narrator provides. For example, the voice of Shakespeare's narrator is consistent, utilizing every opportunity in each scene to manipulate our attitude toward the characters. There are many aspects of this voice that individually lend to reader manipulation, yet all exist for a common purpose: to combine into a single effect. Barthes' resistance to this purpose of coherence limits

the usefulness of his theory in studying Shakespeare's narration.

While Gerard Genette, another structuralist, agrees that there are different levels to a narrative, his definition of narratology includes an analysis of the interaction between these levels. Hence, his theoretical approach is the most applicable to the study of narrator and narrative voice. Genette distinguishes between "narrative" as "histoire" (story), the sequence of events in the text; "narrative" as "récit" (text/plot), the story's actual verbal or written form; and "narrative" as "narration," the act of telling or writing the story. Although he distinguishes these levels and concentrates on the "narrative discourse" or "the oral or written discourse which undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events," (Genette 25) he does not separate them. They function dependently - the narrating produces the narrative, and the narrator must have the narrative to narrate.

Linguistically and rhetorically, Genette finds that "narrative may be regarded as the development - monstrous, if you will - given to a 'verbal' form, in the grammatical sense of the term: the expansion of the verb" (Genette 25). This leads him, like Todorov, to analyze narrative

discourse in "categories borrowed from the grammar of verbs" (Genette 27). Although he adheres to this categorical format, Genette restructures the terminology to suit his discussion in *Narrative Discourse*. He coins new phrases to focus already known narrative terms: "flashback" becomes "analepsis," "point of view" becomes "focalization," the difference between "showing" and "telling" returns to Plato's terms "diegesis" and "mimesis." He discerns five categories of narrative analysis in his book which focuses heavily on time in the first 3 chapters: "Order," "Duration," and "Frequency," and then shifts the final focus toward the narrator in the chapters "Mood" (*how* words are stated) and "Voice" (*what* words are stated) where he notes the important difference between these two latter narrative aspects.

Genette refers to narration as "focalization." This change in term helps to bring out the important difference between mood and voice while it helps prevent the confusion that often occurs when a term such as "point of view" is used. Genette shows that most studies on point of view interrelate two aspects that should be treated separately: the viewer, who creates the mood (focalization); and the speaker, who creates the voice (narration).

Genette discusses the language in terms similar to Todorov's: *who is doing what action, and how it is done* (similar to Barthes' breakdown of action); but then Genette goes on to ask about the *telling* of the stanza. He goes beyond the presented material to look at *how* the material is *presented*. For example, in referring to our passage from Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (ll. 605-612) Genette may ask, how does Shakespeare as narrator want us to view the characters and the actions? Is "good queen" a sarcastic reference to Venus? Is Adonis a whiner? Is Venus a fool? Examining the unification accomplished by the overriding voice is essential to a full study of a narrative text. Obviously, we can see and speak simultaneously, but it is important to note that both actions need not be assigned to the same agent. Booth and Chatman pick up on this division of activity as they seek to extract the narrator from the text in order to examine his function within the text and his influence upon the reader.

It is Genette's linguistic and rhetorical terms, and his "model transformation theory," that provide him with depth and flexibility that other structuralists, such as Todorov and Barthes, lack. Todorov's structuralist theory deals with only one aspect of structural analysis of

narrative: the events. Barthes's deals with more than one level of narrative, but he fragments them to the point where unification is no longer possible. Genette's theoretical conclusions and his theoretical structure, which integrates the categorical levels of analysis, best suit a discussion of narrator and narrative voice.

Structuralists provide the theory that writers such as Wayne Booth and Seymour Chatman put to practical use in their discussions of fiction.<sup>5</sup> Booth claims that many books and articles have been published with a focus on point of view, but they have "given classifications and descriptions which leave us wondering why we bothered to classify and identify" (Booth 60). Booth's probe into fictional rhetoric, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, seeks to assimilate all aspects of narrative language into a focussed discussion of linguistic influence. Booth's discussion, similar to structuralist practice, categorizes the familiar narrative subject matter of plot, author, voice, and tone. His categories overlap, allowing him to thoroughly examine each subject, such as "Narrator" from all possible perspectives.

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<sup>5</sup>For a more in depth analysis of this application see Rimmon-Kenan's discussion in *Contemporary Poetics*.

Booth discusses the narrator within all contexts. He moves from type -- "Types of Narration: Person, Dramatized and Undramatized Narrators, Observers, and Narrator-Agents," "Self-Conscious Narrators," "Reliable Narrators" -- to function -- "Telling and "Showing," "Variations of Distance," "Manipulating Mood," "The Morality of Impersonal Narration." Booth, while emphasizing how words work, explores authorial choices of narrator, the effects of that selection, and the reader's interpretation of the selection. His is a most systematic analysis regarding questions of point of view, the notion of implied author, types of narrators, and the norms of the text. This linguistic evaluation serves as a model for any comprehensive rhetorical study. Booth argues for the telling of a story rather than the showing.

Like Booth, Seymour Chatman utilizes narratological theory, but his concentration shifts from linguistics and rhetoric to the means and methods of narrative discourse. His book *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* follows structuralist theory in exploring the "what" and the "way" of narrative "in itself." Chatman states, "The what of narrative I call its 'story'; the way, I call its 'discourse'" (Chatman 9). He poses his views of narrative and his presuppositions about

narrative influence and then focuses on the components of "story" - plot, character, and setting - and separately on "discourse" - the ways in which the story is transmitted. He synthesizes theories, discussing events, time, characters, point of view, and narration.

My exploration of Shakespeare as narrator of *Venus and Adonis* seeks to incorporate the theory and practicality of Genette's distinction and interaction between elements, Booth's probing into fictional rhetoric, and Chatman's exploration of the purpose and procedure of narrative discourse.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**Narratology: Definitive Practice**



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Narratology: Definitive Practice

As discussed in the first chapter of this paper, early critics of *Venus and Adonis* note that "you seem to be told nothing, but to see and hear everything" (Coleridge 15). Later comments reiterate that "Shakespeare's narrator rarely intrudes his own interests or sympathies. When he does, it is primarily to direct the reader's attention to the action he describes rather than to divulge anything about his own emotional state and sensibility" (Keach 71). These comments neglect to note that Shakespeare is the narrator of *Venus and Adonis*; and that Shakespeare as narrator impresses definite views about his characters; and further, that his constant presence in, and control of, the text leads us to share his opinions. The style of *Venus and Adonis* is Shakespeare's own; as shown in chapter two of this paper, he was not imitating his source or his contemporaries. Therefore, analysis of this poem is distinct and particular to him. A systematic study of Shakespeare as narrator in *Venus and Adonis* clearly shows 1) his consistent intrusiveness, 2) his clearly defined attitudes

toward his characters, and 3) his influence on us, as readers, which leads us to view Venus as an ineffectual manipulator and Adonis as a naive youth who merely wishes to go out and play.

The nature of spoken or written discourse naturally implies that someone speaks it or writes it. Interpretation of a narrator is supported by the idea that within a text the narrator speaks to his reader. "But even when there is no narrator who describes himself, we can explain almost any aspect of a text by postulating a narrator whose character the elements [story, text, and narration] in question are designed to reflect or reveal" (Chatman 200). Texts make an internal distinction between story and presentation, between objects and narration of those objects. Thus, a literary work is both a story and a narration.

The influence of the narrator is directly proportional to his perceptibility -- perception at the reader's conscious and/or unconscious (overt or covert) level. Critics who find Shakespeare's narrator (Shakespeare himself) uninfluential and unintrusive have neglected his constantly manipulating presence within the text. We must first note his presence, and then we can measure his influence.

Incorporating the theories of Gerard Genette, Wayne Booth, and Seymour Chatman, our structure of narrative aspects includes the following topics: levels or types of narration, temporal distance (space and time), extent of narrator participation, degree of narrator perceptibility, internal and external character knowledge, narrator reliability, and the reader (or 's "narratee")<sup>6</sup>.

#### **HIERARCHY OF NARRATIVE TYPOLOGY**

Within the story a character may narrate a story of his own, a separate narration within the narrative. This process produces a stratification of narrative levels and assembles these levels into a hierarchical structure. The narrative (story) as a whole is termed "diegesis." The stratification of narrators within this diegesis is primarily three fold: "extradiegetic" -- the authoritative or superior narration of the diegesis (i.e. Shakespeare); "metadiegetic" -- narration of a story

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<sup>6</sup>Although I understand Chatman's separate consideration of narrator and narratee, I feel that it is essential to combine these concepts into one discussion. To dismiss the narratee is to dismiss the notion of audience; the narrator cannot tell his tale without an idea of his audience. Therefore, the narratee must be a simultaneous consideration, even if we merely employ this concept in order to measure the influence of the narrator.

within the diegetic story; and "hypodiegetic" -- narration of a story within a story of the diegetic story.<sup>7</sup>

Genette corresponds these levels with various functions such as *narrative, directing, communicating, testimonial, ideological, or actional*.<sup>8</sup>

In Shakespeare's poem, Shakespeare allows Venus to tell her (metadiegetic) story of the boar's savagery (ll. 615-716) to warn Adonis and to detain (or should I say retain) him a bit longer. Therefore, her narrative performs an "actional function" which means that it maintains or prolongs the action of the (extradiegetic) story: Venus continues to detain Adonis; Adonis continues to plead to leave; we continue to be entertained by "watching" these two; Shakespeare maintains his narrative of their actions. Shakespeare's stratification of narrative levels provides variety in voice and function. Thus, the reader remains engaged with the text.

#### **NARRATOR PARTICIPATION**

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<sup>7</sup>Further distancing from the diegesis is termed by the addition of the prefix "hypo-" (i.e. "hypo-hypodiegetic").

<sup>8</sup>For detail of each function and corresponding levels refer to Genette's *Narrative Discourse*, 1972, pp. 255-257.

Extradiegetic narrators and intradiegetic narrators (narrators at any level "below" authoritative) can be either present or absent from their story.<sup>9</sup> The nonparticipating (absent) narrator Genette terms "heterodiegetic" (Genette 255). Shakespeare as narrator of *Venus and Adonis* is both heterodiegetic and extradiegetic. He is not overtly present within the text, yet he controls its entire universe. "It is precisely [the narrator's] being absent from the story and [his] higher narratorial authority in relation to it that confers on such narrators the quality which has often been called 'omniscience'" (Rimmon-Kenan 95). This omniscient quality connotes the following: knowledge of the character's thoughts and emotions; presence when the characters are supposed to be alone; ability to convey simultaneous actions occurring in different places; and knowledge of past, present, and future.

If we use omniscience as a measuring stick, we find that Shakespeare is indeed a participant in *Venus and Adonis*. He knows what "sick-thought'd" game Venus plays. He explains Adonis' reluctance to succumb to Venus'

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<sup>9</sup>While Chatman gives us a choice between present and absent narrators, I prefer Rimmon-Kenan's approach which provides a stratified range of perceptibility.

desires. He watches the characters without their knowledge or consent; yet he is close enough to hear every word they say and to interpret facial expressions. He relates the simultaneous events of Adonis' struggle with the boar and Venus' search for Adonis. He is familiar with his mythological characters before, during, and after this story. Shakespeare participates in each omniscient aspect of the text, continually leading and guiding our subconscious. We are never left to formulate our own "view" or opinion of the characters or their actions.

#### **NARRATOR PERCEPTIBILITY**

Lack of overtness is what Chatman refers to as a narrator's "covertness." Shakespeare's text is a covert work in that there is much dialogue where the characters speak and the narrator is silent. "The most obvious task for a [narrator] is to tell the reader about facts that he could not easily learn otherwise, . . . description of physical events and details whenever such description cannot spring naturally from a character" (Booth 169). We must remember, however, that "the dialogue is 'quoted' by someone, the same 'someone' who identifies the speakers, [the setting, and the physical description of the

characters]. Who is that someone if not the narrator?" (Rimmon-Kenan 96). Even though Shakespeare is a primarily covert narrator, overt signs of him are present. Chatman structures a list of signs in order of perceptibility which we can use to measure the degree of Shakespeare's presence within his text.

### Setting Description

Description of the set, Chatman states, is "the weakest mark" of the narrator (Chatman 219). Descriptions exist, even in completely covert texts where description is discerned only by the characters' actions. The setting of *Venus and Adonis* is not described. Natural images indicate an external setting: a wooded area with a clearing in which the characters interact.

We envision the clearing because the characters' protection from the sun diminishes: "For, where they lay, the shadow had forsook them" (l. 176); and when Adonis, once he finally escapes the Venus' clutches, "homeward through the dark lawnd runs apace" (l. 813). "Lawnd" signifies "an open space between two woods" (Hamilton 1555n).

We know that a densely wooded area is near by because

the horses escape into it: "As they were mad unto the wood they hie them / Outstripping crows that strive to overfly them" (ll. 323-324). Later, Venus "hasteth to a myrtle grove" in search of Adonis:

And as she runs, the bushes in the way,  
Some catch her by the neck, some kiss her face,  
Some twin'd about her thigh to make her stay.  
She wildly breaketh from their strict embrace,  
Like a milch doe, whose swelling dugs do ache,  
Hasting to feed her fawn hid in some brake.

(l. 871-876)

The concluding metaphor of deer further evokes a forest setting where these animals dwell.

### External Character Knowledge

Shakespeare's presence is felt most strongly through his characterization. He knows his characters well. We do not get much actual physical description of the characters; however, we do get what we need to obtain a sense of who they are, or rather the roles that they play.



We obtain a limited knowledge of their overt appearance. Venus is "lovely" and "beauteous," but all we really know of her is "golden hairs," "fair arms" and "lily fingers" which seems to be said in jest. She is described as "bold-fac'd" and "devouring." Adonis is "tender," "young," and "pretty."

Our primary source of information comes through Shakespeare's use of metaphor and simile. Venus is "a bold fac'd suitor," "an empty eagle," "gluttonlike," "a vulture," and an "engine." Shakespeare affects a negative attitude toward her character with unfeeling, violent images. On the other hand, Adonis' description is of a "sweet," "silly," "tender boy" with "maiden burning" cheeks, a "soft bosom," and a "pretty dimple." His comparisons indicate a naive, vulnerable youth: like "poor birds deceived" and "As those poor birds . . . helpless," "a bird . . . tangled in a net," and Venus' "prey." Shakespeare has clear views of his characters which he subtly conveys to us through his selective description and imagery. Our sympathies are guided toward poor, young Adonis, while Venus is mocked as an old lecher.

External knowledge also takes into account the narrator's prior knowledge of the characters. Although

this story is told retrospectively (see Time p. 71) we do not feel that Shakespeare knew these characters before watching them this day. The action throughout the story (pursuit and denial) is a continuous cycle. Therefore, Shakespeare (and we) can quickly anticipate character action and reaction, but this does not necessarily indicate a prior knowledge of these characters.

#### Internal Character Knowledge

External character knowledge refers to the narrator's prior knowledge of a character, while internal character knowledge digs a bit deeper as it includes abstractions and generalizations or summations of the characters. This type of description reveals the omniscience attributed to an extradiegetic narrator.

Shakespeare takes great liberty in reporting to us the thoughts, interpretations, and attitudes of his characters. "A narrator who can tell things of which the characters are unconscious is clearly felt as an independent source of information" (Rimmon-Kenan 98). For example, as we carefully reread *Venus and Adonis* we note an abundance of statements that make us wonder if we are listening to the character or to Shakespeare. There are

no quotation marks to indicate monologue/soliloquy, but the sentiments expressed are clearly those of the character. For example, as Venus comes to realize her inability to seduce Adonis, a series of questions are asked, seemingly by Shakespeare, but we realize that these must be her questions at this time:

Now which way shall she turn? what shall she say?  
Her words are done, her woes the more increasing;  
Her time is spent, her object will away,  
And from her twining arms doth urge releasing.

(11. 253-256)

Similarly, when Venus searches for Adonis, Shakespeare summarizes her conclusions:

For now she knows it is no gentle chase,  
But the blunt boar, rough bear, or lion proud,  
Because the cry remaineth in one place,

Where fearfully the dogs exclaim aloud (11. 883-886)

Shakespeare explains Venus' logic. Shakespeare also voices Adonis' thoughts as Adonis finally relents to Venus' advances:

Hot, faint, and weary, with her hard embracing, . . .  
He now obeys, and now no more resisteth,  
While she takes all she can, not all she listeth.

(11. 559-564)

Shakespeare is compelled to tell us of Adonis' exhaustion. Shakespeare does not allow us for one moment to think that Adonis has willingly succumbed to Venus. Shakespeare continually uses his omniscient internal knowledge as a strong guiding factor in his poem.

#### **DISTANCE SUMMATION**

Summation of events that have occurred, no matter how brief the account may be, serves to draw attention to the narrator. For, as Chatman states, "Summary presupposes a desire to account for time-passage, to satisfy questions in a narratee's mind about what has happened in the interval. An account cannot but draw attention to the one who felt obliged to make such an account" (Chatman 223). Shakespeare does not often fill us in on what has happened, but prior to departure from Shakespeare's (our) "view" we are informed as to what the character will do in the interim before we "see" him again. For example, Adonis finally frees himself from Venus: ". . . he breaketh from the sweet embrace / . . . And homeward through the dark lawnd runs apace" (l. 811-813). Although Adonis exits from our sight, we can assume he is home in bed. Venus stays with us as we listen to her "wailing"

her "woes" until the morning light arrives. The only "gap" we have is the next day. We know that Adonis is hunting with his friends, but we do not see him or meet them. By Shakespeare's limitation of his omniscient perspective, he forces us to empathize with Venus' anticipation. We get only Venus' worry over her missing beloved. She remains the focus of narration.

### Time

If we consider narration as an event, it need not occur simultaneously with the events it describes. It can accommodate various distances from the actual events of the story. *Venus and Adonis*, for example, begins in the present; we feel as though Shakespeare is watching the characters and describing their interaction simultaneously. Although the poem's content is mythological, we feel no vast distance of time. The characters are right before Shakespeare as he tells us of them. Rimmon-Kenan's conclusion that "common sense tells us that events may only be narrated after they happen" appears untrue until we are already into the story, at which point we do not immediately notice (if we notice at all) that we shift between present and past:

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Taking no notice that she is so nigh,  
For all askance he holds her in his eye.

O what a sight it was wistly to view,  
How she came stealing to the wayward boy,  
To note the fighting conflict of her hue,  
How white and red each other did destroy!

But now her cheek was pale, and by and by  
It flash'd forth fire, as lightening from the sky.

(ll. 341- 348)

Verb tense changes our distance from the characters.  
First, we watch as Adonis "holds" Venus (in the present);  
then we pull back into the past tense and muse over "what  
a sight it was [*italics mine*]"; finally, a combination of  
past progression follows as she "came stealing."

The shift from present action (Genette's "anterior  
narration") to a summation of past events (Genette's  
"ulterior narration") varies the distance between the  
narration and the story. The concluding couplet of the  
second stanza demonstrates Shakespeare's control through  
diction; with "now" and "by and by" we are gently eased  
into the present once again. Shakespeare then confirms  
our position with the tense transition "Now" in beginning  
the following stanza:

Now was she just before him as he sat,

And like a lowly lover down she kneels; (ll. 349-350)

"Now" we find ourselves again observing current events. Shakespeare alternates smoothly, almost imperceptibly, between past and present in complete control of the distance between his narration and his story.

Only upon conclusion do we know that the events of the poem take place within a twenty-four-hour time frame. As Genette says, "One of the fictions of literary narrating . . . is that the narrating involves an instantaneous action, without a temporal dimension" (Genette 222). Although we feel that Shakespeare is watching the characters for the duration of an entire day and that we are there with him through the entire time, Shakespeare "talks" to us only as long as it takes us to read the story. Genette notes that from beginning to end "nothing is held to separate those two moments of the narrating instance except the atemporal space of the narrative as text . . . it is a single moment without progression" (Genette 223).

Shakespeare subtly handles time transitions. Adonis brings nightfall in a single line:

"And now 'tis dark, and going I shall fall."

"In night," quoth she, "desire sees best of all."

(11. 719-720)

Venus reaffirms the time by using it to encourage Adonis to stay with her in the darkness.

A metaphor of a lark brings in the morning of Adonis' fatal day:

Lo here the gentle lark, weary of rest,  
From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,  
And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast  
The sun ariseth in his majesty. (11. 853-856)

As Booth points out, these metaphors are created and "told" to us by "someone." Since this "someone" is the narrator, the metaphors naturally draw attention to him (Booth 116).

### Space

Spatially, Shakespeare seems midway between his characters and us. He is near enough to his characters to hear every word and interpret all facial expression. We are equally close to him as he transfers his interpretations to us. We do not invade "personal space;" we are far enough away to view all that happens, yet we are not in the action. We can "see" what is going on without intruding.



Mentally, however, we are too close to be objective -- too close to Shakespeare, that is. This closeness is comfortable for us because Shakespeare does all of the work for us -- he thinks, he interprets, he mocks. We merely listen and follow along. We make no judgment; it is made for us. We do not "see" the action; we "see" Shakespeare's perception of the action. Just as he assumes the thoughts of his characters, he presumes our responses as well. Therefore, he falls midway between the characters and us both physically and mentally.

#### **NARRATOR COMMENTARY<sup>10</sup>**

##### **Commentary: Interpretation**

Shakespeare often interprets the characters' words or actions. He *tells* us rather than *shows* us. This information not only tells us about the character, but about the narrator as well. For example, when Shakespeare tells us the state of mind behind a character's action: when Adonis "obeys" Venus, Shakespeare cannot merely state that Adonis allowed Venus to have her way with him;

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<sup>10</sup>Structure of this section closely follows Rimmon-Kenan's more thorough discussion of narrative aspect.

Shakespeare feels that he has to tell us why Adonis is suddenly so docile in Venus' "fair arms." We learn as much about Shakespeare's prejudice against Venus, as we do about Venus herself.

Her lips are conquerors, his lips obey,  
Paying what ransom the insulter willeth;

(ll. 449-550)

Hot, faint and weary with her hard embracing,  
Like a wild bird being tam'd with too much  
handling,

Or as the fleet-foot roe that's tir'd with chasing,  
Or like a froward infant still'd with dandling:

He now obeys, and now no more resisteth,

While she takes all she can, not all she listeth.

(ll. 559-564)

With this sort of commentary we can question the way a situation is appraised by Shakespeare. He shows that he sympathizes with Adonis and is critical of Venus.

**Commentary: Judgment**

The interpretive description often borders upon an accusation or a judgment. Judgment, however, is a more overt assessment about what is going on. It is not

Shakespeare telling us what a character thinks, but Shakespeare telling us what we should think about the character and/or his action. For example, Shakespeare speaks out directly in his assessment of Venus' song:

She marking them begins a **wailing** note,  
And sings **extemporally** a **woeful ditty**, . . .  
Her song was **tedious**, and **outwore** the night,  
[emboldening mine] (ll. 835-836, 841)

Shakespeare is extremely judgmental of Venus. His negative assessment is presented factually; we do not question it. The entire poem sets her up for ridicule. Adonis is not neglected, however; he is "**the poor fool** [who] prays her that he may depart" (l. 578), "**the silly boy**, believing she is dead" (l. 467), "Or like **the froward infant** still'd with dandling" (l. 562). We comply with Shakespeare who, as judge and jury, finds Adonis stupidly innocent and Venus relentlessly monotonous.

**Commentary: Generalization**

This type of commentary differs from the others in that it lacks specificity; it refers to a whole group or event. Shakespeare often interjects "little pearls of wisdom" that are all his own and can stand alone. These

personal philosophies show us a bit of this narrator's belief system. For example, we find a comment concerning women couched in the description of the jennet:

Being proud as females are, . . . (1. 309)

We may assume that Shakespeare was not overly fond of women until we see that men do not escape his commentary:

How love makes young men thrall, and old men dote;  
How love is wise in folly, foolish-witty.

(1. 837-838)

Which leads to a general critique:

For lovers' hours are long, though seeming short;  
If pleas'd themselves, others, they think, delight  
In such-like circumstance, with such-like sport.

Their copious stories, oftentimes begun,  
End without audience, and are never done.

(11. 841-846)

As Venus is about to "chide" Death, Shakespeare chides mankind:

Look how the world's poor people are amazed  
At apparitions, signs, and prodigies,  
Whereon with fearful eyes they long have gazed,  
Infusing them with dreadful prophesies;

(11. 925-928)

Shakespeare takes (actually *makes*) many opportunities to

comment on the world at large, as well as his characters. This commentary conveys his sarcastic tone and wary attitude which cause us to question his objective reliability.

#### **NARRATOR RELIABILITY**

Although Chatman distinguishes between an "ironic narrator" and an "unreliable narrator" (Chatman 228-229), Shakespeare suits both categories. Irony, as defined by Chatman, occurs when "the speaker carries on a secret communication with his auditor at variance with the actual words he uses and at the expense of some other person or thing, the victim or 'butt'" (Chatman 228-229). Because this secret communication exists between Shakespeare and the reader, we can speak of him as an ironic narrator. Shakespeare's ironic stance extends to all characters, but focuses on Venus. He continually sets Venus up to fall. He uses metaphors that cast her in the worst possible light. His emphasis on Adonis' youth and mortality pokes fun at her because she cannot seduce or save a mere mortal, worse yet, a mere child. Yet, ironically, it is because of Adonis' youth that Venus is unable to tempt him. Poor Adonis just wants to go play with his friends.

I must disagree with Chatman as he states that "the butt of unreliability is the narrator himself, not the characters, about whom we form our own conclusions . . ." (Chatman 234). Shakespeare molds our conclusions; he does not leave us to surmise our own conclusions. He focuses on his characters which prevents us from focusing on him and his manipulation. We do not consider whether he is reliable or not.

A reliable narrator "speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work;" an unreliable narrator does not (Booth 158-159). We "trust" the reliable narrator's account of the story and commentary on it as authoritative. An unreliable narrator, on the other hand, gives us reason to suspect the accuracy of his views.

Unreliability occurs in degrees. Many, such as Chatman, find that the narrator is the victim of unreliability; it mars his character. This is not applicable in Shakespeare's case. We laugh with his slanted account of the characters and their actions. They are the butt of his jokes; they are marred. We enjoy our feeling of superiority to a goddess. For, as Booth explains, "Irony is always thus in part a device for excluding as well as for including, and those who are included, those who happen to have the necessary

information to grasp the irony, cannot but derive at least part of their pleasure from a sense that others are excluded . . . on this moral level we discover a kind of collaboration which can be one of the most rewarding of all reading experiences." (Booth 304, 307). Therefore, Shakespeare's unreliability comes from his ironic stance.

Chatman wonders at the narrator's motivation: "[it] cannot be for the sheer joy of storytelling" (234). Why not? In Shakespeare's case, this very well may be his motivation: to give his story humor through an ironic twist. We, as a part of society, have the ingrained notion that "boys chase girls." The male is pushy and persistent; the female is demure and resistant.

Shakespeare has turned the tables (and this is not even to mention that a mere mortal is denying a great love goddess). Shakespeare feeds into our natural resistance to this role switch by making the "her" masculine and "him" feminine. Although this twist may lead us to question his perception, it most certainly provides entertainment and readability.

On the other hand, due to Shakespeare's ironic wit, his narration remains unquestioned. His strong metaphors, opinionated adjectives, and sarcastic asides provide him with a tone that we perceive as confident, and therefore,

trustworthy and dependable. Shakespeare employs all of the techniques discussed above to establish this tone which is like a screen through which he filters his narrative. We enjoy Shakespeare's "filtering" which allows the screen to go undetected unless we are earnestly searching for it. The imperceptibility of his narrative screen enables us to declare Shakespeare the master manipulator.



CHAPTER FIVE

The Master Manipulator

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### The Master Manipulator

The Narrator, traditionally, is a flat, colorless figure. His function is to provide information that is vital to the reader's understanding of the tale. As seen in chapter four of this paper, Shakespeare breaks tradition. He, as narrator, provides the vital plot information; however, he goes further to deliver emotion, prejudice, and perception in a style that compels us to accept his opinion.

The poem begins abruptly. We get right into Venus' attack. Shakespeare is there with us in the very first line already coloring (literally) the way we see the scene:

Even as the sun with purple-color'd face

Had ta'en his last leave of the weeping morn,

(ll. 1-2)

Hyperbole is already begun with the purple-fac'd sun and the weeping morn. Shakespeare's conceit has created the screen of poetic embellishment through which we will receive his story. Shakespeare's concentration, however,

is not on plot; he focuses on his characters.

Our introduction to Adonis is immediate. We meet a zealous youth:

Rose-cheek'd Adonis hied him to the chase;  
Hunting he lov'd, but love he laugh'd to scorn.

(11. 3-4)

Shakespeare depicts a rosy-cheeked lad, awakened early by eager anticipation of his favorite game -- the hunt. He is not lethargically awakened so early by duty or obligation; he eagerly anticipates the dawn with youthful zeal for the hunt he loves. With a laugh (perhaps a naive, nervous giggle) he scorns romantic love because it is something that he does not yet understand. Venus, on the other hand, has complete comprehension of romantic love and lustful love; she knows precisely what she wants:

Sick-thoughted Venus makes amain unto him,  
And like a bold-fac'd suitor gins to woo him.

(11. 5-6)

Our first thought is that this character is lecherously sick-in-the-head -- not a very attractive ideal!

Shakespeare does not offer an appealing physical appearance either; "bold" is not a synonym for beauty! Shakespeare's description makes her into an Amazon, a "bold-fac'd" warrior who thinks of nothing but lust and

the expedient pursuit thereof. Her hunt is just as ambitious, if not more so, than Adonis'. Her description lacks the levity and light-hearted, care-free anticipation that accompanies Adonis.

Typical of most young boys, Adonis merely wishes to go play with his friends:

He tells her no, tomorrow he intends  
To hunt the boar with certain of his friends.

(ll. 587-588)

Shakespeare's description clearly indicates a naive youth whose only desire for Venus is for her to leave him alone. Venus, however, is relentless in her pursuit. Shakespeare describes not only her appearance as aggressive, but her actions as well:

With this she seizeth on his sweating palm,  
The president of pith and livelihood,  
And trembling in her passion, calls it balm,  
Earth's sovereign salve, to do a goddess good.

Being so enrage'd, desire doth lend her force  
Courageously to pluck him from his horse.

(ll. 25-30)

Venus does not touch or pick up; she "seizeth." She trembles with her emotion ("passion"), her logic is off as she misinterprets Adonis' nervous sweat and "calls it

balm," and her physical body shows brute strength as "desire doth lend her force." It becomes quite apparent that Adonis is not schooled in matters of passion which he has not yet encountered, and which Venus now forces upon him as she "courageously" plucks from his horse.

Adonis does not reject Venus out of conceit or selfishness. Shakespeare's description impresses upon us that Adonis is simply too young to recognize and/or act upon lustful instincts. We see him as a "wayward boy" with a "soft bosom" and a "hairless face" that reveals a "pretty dimple." He is a "tender," "silly," "sweet," "poor fool." Shakespeare's similes and metaphors further the impression of youth: he is a "fawn" to Venus as a "milch doe," "prey" to Venus' rapacious ways, and "like the froward infant."

Shakespeare's use of metaphor emphasizes his prejudice against Venus and his sympathy toward Adonis:

Even as an eagle, sharp by fast,  
Tires with her beak on feathers, flesh, and bone,  
Shaking her wings, devouring all in haste,  
Till either gorge be stuff'd, or prey be gone;

(11. 55-58)

It isn't enough for Shakespeare to state that Venus brutalizes Adonis. The violence of the eagle metaphor

turns us away from Venus to root instead for Adonis, the underdog, who is the "prey" to be "stuffed" and "gone."

Shakespeare subtly slants our opinions, not only through metaphor, but through use of color as well:

She red and hot as coals of glowing fire,  
He red for shame, but frosty in desire.

(ll. 35-36)

Identical colors describe both characters with entirely different meanings. Shakespeare differentiates the characters in a way that supports his prejudice: Venus' red signifies her passion and Adonis' red, his shame. We see all through Shakespeare's eyes. Venus doesn't stand a chance.

Unsubtly, Shakespeare comes right out and makes a moral judgment:

Red cheeks and fiery eyes blaze forth her wrong;  
Being judge in love, she cannot right her cause.

(ll. 219 -220)

Venus, we are directly told, is "wrong." And further, we know that she must be gravely "wrong" because "she cannot right her cause." Venus stands no chance against Shakespeare. She cannot be taken seriously.

Adonis, on the other hand, cannot seem to lose the narrator's favor:

At this Adonis smiles as in disdain,  
That in each cheek appears a pretty dimple;

(ll. 241-242)

Another judgment is made by Shakespeare; it is obvious by the words "as in" that Shakespeare is making a judgment call. His descretion of Adonis' actions and motives manipulates us to behave and feel as Shakespeare: to smile with detached rejection. The prettiness of Adonis' dimple is a more subtle description of the effeminacy of male youth. Thus, once again we are "disdaining" Venus and allying with Adonis. We do so again when Venus "faints" and "the silly boy, believing she is dead" behaves childishly:

He wrings her nose, he strikes her on the cheeks,  
He bends her fingers, holds her pulses hard,  
He chafes her lips, a thousand ways he seeks  
To mend the hurt that his unkindness marr'd,  
He kisses her, and she by her good will  
Will never rise, so he will kiss her still.

(ll. 475-480)

This is finally an objective view of a character's actions. These actions are Adonis', of course; Shakespeare will not yet leave us free to pity Venus. He clues us in to her deceptive "good will." Shakespeare's

sarcasm says much about his personality and perspective in this poem.

Shakespeare's attitude is consistently intrusive, subtly and obviously, throughout the text. It influences the way we perceive the huntress and her hunted. We are surprised when, near the end of the poem, Shakespeare seems to sympathize with Venus; his attitude softens and his prejudice slackens. Although "despair and hope makes [her] ridiculous" (l. 986) as she searches for Adonis, fluctuating between believing him alive or dead, the imagery and metaphors Shakespeare uses to describe her are much more friendly than previously in the poem.

Shakespeare softens as Venus cries when she believes her beloved Adonis dead:

The crystal tide that from her two cheeks fair  
In the sweet channel of her bosom dropp'd;

(ll. 957-958)

"Crystal," "fair," and "sweet" are not adjectives that we expect Shakespeare to use in a description of this goddess. Her emotions seem suddenly sincere as her sorrow is detailed (ll. 966-968), her tears are "like pearls in glass" (l. 980), and "she chides Death" for taking Adonis (l. 932). Further, we are denied Shakespeare's knowledge of Adonis' situation. This denial performs two functions:



1) by keeping our logic and knowledge in suspension, Shakespeare makes us believe and depend on what he says; and 2) he forces us to share Venus' suspense, thus forcing us to empathize with her.

We may wonder why Shakespeare changes his (and therefore our) stance. Narratologically, this new viewpoint solves a structural problem. Shakespeare's change of attitude is essential to the continuation of the poem. Venus cannot continue to be an overbearing lecher, with Shakespeare unsympathetically watching, because there is no one either to lust for or against whom to compare herself. Adonis is dead. So, Shakespeare alters his stance allowing himself to extend the poem a few hundred lines to insert the final details of the myth, the Flower sequence.

Additionally, Shakespeare alters our impression of Venus by allowing her to tell the concluding portion of the myth. Consequently, he needs her naratees, us, to take her seriously. A newly sympathetic Venus can deliver this part of the myth in a symbolic and romantic manner that would seem bizarre if our attitude toward her had not changed. She can eulogize youth, love, unfulfilled dreams, lost desires, sexual frustration, and all else that has occurred in the poem thus far before she mounts

her dove-drawn chariot and flies off. By this point, Shakespeare has manipulated us so that we are not resentful that Venus will live to love again and it is the sweet innocent Adonis who is dead because we no longer view Venus as a voracious predator.

Shakespeare as narrator manipulates us so craftily in *Venus and Adonis* that we do not even realize what is happening. Shakespeare has truly mastered various narrative techniques. His omniscience, descriptions, philosophical asides, and what he allows his characters to say, all influence our perception of the text and prove Shakespeare to be a master of manipulation.

**CONCLUSION**

## CONCLUSION

Literature provokes literature. This self-perpetuating process leads to exciting possibilities for study and research. Thus, the theoretical realm of literature is continually provided with opportunity and sources to develop methods through which this endless literary vista may be explored. Thanks to work in Structuralist theory, which is central to my presentation (see chapter 3), we receive a new awareness that allows us to re-examine the narration of narratives for differences within similarities. These differences give us renewed perception and insight into the writers who contribute to this vast body of literature.

Our study of *Venus and Adonis* clearly shows that Shakespeare's poetry has been subjected to many types of literary study through the ages. Each critical examination has served a two-fold purpose: 1) demonstrating a new aspect of Shakespeare's literary ability, and 2) providing a new body of critical opinion to be written about -- hence, more literature! Current literary criticism and the theoretical study of narratology provide

a new measuring stick by which to gauge *Venus and Adonis*.  
Our measurement reveals the extent to which Shakespeare  
manipulates , employing all of the narrative tools and  
techniques available to his craft, his unsuspecting  
readers.

WORKS CITED: Books & Articles

WORKS CONSULTED

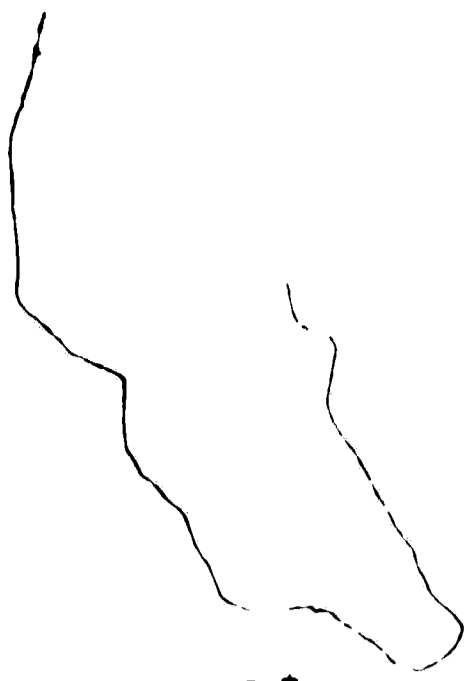
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