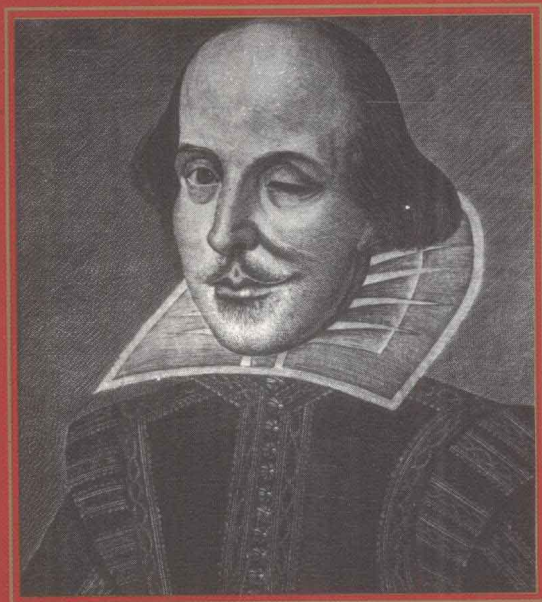


SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS AND POEMS



Edited by LOUIS B. WRIGHT and VIRGINIA A. LaMAR
Illustrated with material in the Folger Library Collections

SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS AND POEMS



**WASHINGTON SQUARE PRESS
PUBLISHED BY POCKET BOOKS**

New York London Toronto Sydney Tokyo Singapore

For information regarding special discounts for bulk purchases,
please contact Simon & Schuster Special Sales at
1-800-456-6798 or business@simonandschuster.com

A WASHINGTON SQUARE PRESS *Original* Publication



A Washington Square Press Publication of
POCKET BOOKS, a division of Simon & Schuster Inc.
1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

Copyright © 1967, 1969 by Simon & Schuster Inc.

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce
this book or portions thereof in any form whatsoever.
For information address Washington Square Press,
1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

ISBN: 0-671-66926-5

First Washington Square Press printing April 1988

10 9 8 7 6 5

WASHINGTON SQUARE PRESS and WSP colophon are
registered trademarks of Simon & Schuster Inc.

Printed in the U.S.A.

Preface to the Narrative Poems

Shakespeare's Poems is designed to provide a readable text of Shakespeare's narrative poems. In the centuries since Shakespeare, many changes have occurred in the meanings of words, and some clarification of Shakespeare's vocabulary may be helpful. To provide the reader with necessary notes in the most accessible format, we have placed them on the pages facing the text that they explain. We have tried to make them as brief and simple as possible. Preliminary to the text we have also included a brief statement of essential information about Shakespeare and his stage. Readers desiring more detailed information should refer to the books suggested in the References, and if still further information is needed, the bibliographies in those books will provide the necessary clues to the literature of the subject.

All illustrations are from material in the Folger Library collections.

Preface to the Sonnets

Shakespeare's *Sonnets* is designed to make available the text of a collection of poems that are the most personal of any of Shakespeare's works and contain some of the world's greatest love poetry. In the centuries since Shakespeare, many changes have

Prefaces

occurred in the meanings of words, which makes clarification of Shakespeare's vocabulary desirable. Writing in the sonnet form also resulted in even greater compression of meaning than is found in blank verse. In the notes, placed opposite the sonnet they explain, we have tried to suggest multiple meanings, as well as to give synonyms for single words. In addition, beneath the notes we have supplied a brief prose paraphrase for each sonnet, giving our interpretation of its fundamental meaning. Readers who wish to study the sonnets more intensively should see the References for additional titles on the subject.

L. B. W.

V. A. L.

INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's Narrative Poems

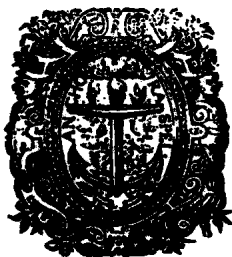
To understand *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* it is necessary to understand the literary fashions of Shakespeare's day. As a young aspirant to a literary reputation, Shakespeare felt compelled to write something that would be considered "literature." Although he was making a reputation as a writer of plays, dramatic pieces in his time had hardly more claim to be called literature than do radio or television scripts today. To establish himself as a literary figure, Shakespeare had to write something that would be approved by the literary public. Narrative, lyric, or epic poetry would meet this requirement. Consequently, Shakespeare turned his hand to narrative verse and produced two poems that immediately found favor with the public: *Venus and Adonis* (1593) followed a year later by *Lucrece* (1594). Having proved himself a "poet" in the accepted tradition, he could now go on about the business of being a productive playwright. Furthermore, according to tradition, he received not only recognition but a substantial financial reward from the Earl of Southampton to whom he dedicated both poems.

In 1593, when Shakespeare wrote his dedication to *Venus and Adonis*, Southampton was a dashing courtier, not quite twenty years old, in great favor at the Court of Queen Elizabeth. The author himself was only twenty-nine. A rising young nobleman of



VENVS AND ADONIS

*Vilia miretur vulgus: mihi flavus Apollo
Pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua.*



LONDON

Imprinted by Richard Field, and are to be sold at
the signe of the white Greyhound in
Paules Church-yard.

1593.

The title page of the first edition of *Venus and Adonis* (1593).
Courtesy, the Bodleian Library.

Southampton's type was precisely the sort to whom an aspiring author might dedicate an amorous poem written in the Ovidian manner. Evidently Southampton was pleased, because the next year Shakespeare dedicated to him his second long poem, *Lucrece*. According to Nicholas Rowe, writing in 1709, Southampton proved a generous patron and "at one time gave him [Shakespeare] a thousand pounds to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to." As Sir Edmund Chambers points out, this amount is clearly an exaggeration, but Southampton obviously found Shakespeare's dedications pleasing to his vanity. Furthermore, he doubtless found the subject matter of *Venus and Adonis* congenial to his taste.

In the dedication of *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare describes his poem as "the first heir of my invention," a phrase which has bothered some critics because he had already written plays. Obviously the author is simply discounting his playwriting as of no moment; he is saying that this poem is his first literary production.

To get *Venus and Adonis* into print, Shakespeare sought out Richard Field, a Stratford man who had come up to London and established himself as a printer. Field registered the poem with the Stationers' Company on April 18, 1593, and published it in quarto size soon thereafter. This first quarto version was well printed and is the basic text used for all later editions, including the present. The poem was immediately popular and went through at least six-

teen editions by 1640. Some of the later editions are printed in octavo size, but for convenience all editions are usually listed as "quartos."

The success of *Venus and Adonis* was encouraging, and in 1594 Shakespeare had Field bring out *Lucrece* in quarto. Though the title page simply called the poem *Lucrece*, the running title over the pages of the text was given as "The Rape of Lucrece." *Lucrece* also proved a popular success and went through eight editions by 1640. As in the case of *Venus and Adonis*, the first quarto of *Lucrece* is the basis for all later editions.

The two poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, treat love and passion from different points of view and apparently were designed for contrast. The first deals with love in a light, almost comic, vein, even though young Adonis does die in the end. As F. T. Prince observes in the new Arden edition of the *Poems*, "The fate of a youth who, having been slain by a wild boar, evaporates into air, and whose blood turns into a flower, to be plucked and worn by a goddess in her bosom, is not intended to rouse tragic emotions. The retention of this fairy-tale detail from Ovid is only the most obvious of Shakespeare's innumerable devices to make his story light as a bubble and to keep it floating." *Lucrece*, on the other hand, treats the darker side of passion in a way more fitting for a tragic drama than a narrative poem. The soliloquy-like meditations of Tarquin and the declamatory speeches of Lucrece sound as if the author had fashioned them for dramatic utterance.

It may be significant that the grim tragedy of *Titus Andronicus* and *Lucrece* both saw their first publication in the same year, 1594. The light mood of *Venus and Adonis* had temporarily vanished.

Shakespeare's narrative poems represent a fashion in verse adaptation of classical legend popular in the later years of the sixteenth century. The erotic behavior of the gods on Olympus and of other figures in classical mythology, as revealed by Ovid, appealed particularly to the Elizabethans. Thomas Lodge published in 1589 a verse narrative, *Scilla's Metamorphosis, Interlaced with the Unfortunate Love of Glaucus* which appeared again in 1610 with a variant title, *A Most Pleasant History of Glaucus and Scilla*. Christopher Marlowe, who died on May 30, 1593, left an unfinished poem, *Hero and Leander*, which had an even more erotic appeal than *Venus and Adonis*. Other contemporaries of Shakespeare were diligently reading their copies of Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or, if they were well-Latined, reading Ovid in the original. Golding had published the first four books of the *Metamorphoses* in 1565 and followed this in 1567 with *The XV Books of P. Ovidius Naso, Entitled Metamorphosis*. The latter work had at least seven editions by 1612. Ovid in the original, of course, was standard reading in the grammar schools, and Shakespeare as a schoolboy had learned his Ovid well. Throughout his poems and plays occur innumerable echoes of Ovid. The source for Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* is the *Metamorphoses*. The poet tele-



L V C R E C E.



L O N D O N.

Printed by Richard Field, for John Harrison, and are
to be sold at the signe of the white Greyhound
in Paules Church-yard. 1594.

The title page of the first edition of *Lucrece* (1594) printed,
like *Venus and Adonis* the year before, by Shakespeare's Stratford
friend, Richard Field.

scoped material from two episodes, Venus' encounter with Adonis and the nymph Salmacis' infatuation with Hermaphroditus.

Golding's Ovid has Venus dally with Adonis, caress him, warn him against the dangers of boar hunting, and depart in her swan-drawn chariot. In the next episode a nymph, Salmacis, spies young Hermaphroditus bathing in a pool and is instantly carried away by passion for the handsome lad. She plunges into the pool, wrestles him to shore, and, though he resists for a time, the gods above answer Salmacis' prayer for Hermaphroditus' love. He surrenders so that, as Golding phrased it, "The bodies of them twain/ Were mixt and joined both in one."

For his own purposes, Shakespeare changed the story and concentrated the entire love encounter between Venus and Adonis. Furthermore, he made Adonis resist to the end, leaving the goddess of love disconsolate. This new treatment of the legend was one that might have appealed to a youth like the handsome and spoiled Southampton. Already pursued by women himself, he must have been amused and pleased at Adonis' capacity to resist the wiles of a pursuing woman. Shakespeare makes Venus' importunity somewhat ridiculous, and his interpretation of the tale undoubtedly entertained brash young courtiers of the day. Theirs was a man's world, and they took their love where they found it—or, with callous arrogance, left despairing damsels unsoled. They could laugh at Shakespeare's Venus and remember similar situations in their own experience.

Introduction

In his *History of English Literature* a French scholar, Emile Legouis, points out that in *Venus and Adonis* Shakespeare eliminates most of the classical mythology and substitutes a realistic situation: "His goddess is a woman skilled in lovemaking and ravaged by passion, and in *Adonis* we already have the young sport-loving Englishman, annoyed and fretted by the pursuit of a beautiful amorous courtesan whose sensuality is unbounded and who retains no prestige of divinity."

Although only a fanatically earnest symbolist or allegorist can find any deep moral significance in *Venus and Adonis*, the poem does have foreshadowings of meaningful passages in later plays and in the *Sonnets*. Venus' arguments to Adonis remind one of the so-called "procreation" sonnets:

"Torches are made to light, jewels to wear,
Dainties to taste, fresh beauty for the use,
Herbs for their smell, and sappy plants to bear;
Things growing to themselves are growth's abuse.
Seeds spring from seeds and beauty breedeth beauty;
Thou wast begot; to get it is thy duty.

"Upon the earth's increase why shouldst thou feed,
Unless the earth with thy increase be fed?
By law of nature thou art bound to breed,
That thine may live when thou thyself art dead;
And so in spite of death thou dost survive,
In that thy likeness still is left alive."

[*Venus and Adonis*, ll. 163-174.]

Further similarities to the *Sonnets* appear in other stanzas.

HEREAFTER FOLLOW DIVERSE

Poeticall Effaies on the former Sub-
iect, viz: the *Turtle* and *Phoenix*.

*Done by the best and chiefest of our
moderne writers, with their names sub-
scribed to their particular workes;
never before extant.*

And (now first) consecrated by them all generally,
*to the love and merite of the true-noble Knights,
Sir Iohn Salisburie.*

Dignum laude virum Auspiciat ueris.



MDCL

The title page of the *Turtle and Phoenix* supplement to Robert
Chester's *Loose's Martyr* (1601).

Introduction

Later in the poem, the contrast between love and lust, the burden of Adonis' rebuttal of Venus' plea, reminds one of the same theme that appears from time to time in the plays, as early as *Romeo and Juliet* and later in *Measure for Measure*:

"Call it not love, for love to heaven is fled
Since sweating Lust on earth usurped his name;
Under whose simple semblance he hath fed
Upon fresh beauty, blotting it with blame;
Which the hot tyrant stains and soon bereaves,
As caterpillars do the tender leaves.

"Love comforteth like sunshine after rain,
But Lust's effect is tempest after sun;
Love's gentle spring doth always fresh remain,
Lust's winter comes ere summer half be done;
Love surfeits not, Lust like a glutton dies;
Love is all truth, Lust full of forged lies."

[*Venus and Adonis*, ll. 793-804.]

In *Othello* (III, iii), the passage ". . . and when I love thee not/ Chaos is come again" reminds one of Venus' lament over Adonis:

"For he being dead, with him is beauty slain,
And, beauty dead, black chaos comes again."

Other similarities in Shakespeare's later work indicate the power of phrasing that he was already mastering in this early poem.

Critics have long acclaimed the poetic imagery in the verses describing the jennet and the stallion and

the poor trembling hare. Shakespeare brought from the woods and fields of Warwickshire a fund of memories of outdoor life that he utilized effectively in his poems as well as in his later plays.

In *Lucrece*, Shakespeare again took material from Ovid, this time from the *Fasti*, which he must have read in the original Latin. He also drew upon Livy for details, and he might have used other sources for a legend that had been constantly retold. Chaucer in *The Legend of Good Women* provides a version of Lucrece "As seyth Ovyde and Titus Lyvius." William Painter took from Livy the story which he included in *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566).

Shakespeare's version of the Lucrece tale follows somewhat the pattern of an old type of poetic "complaint" that gained popularity with *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1559). In this collection of verse "tragedies," the ghosts of various figures from history report their sad state and the conditions that brought them to such a sorry pass. Although *Lucrece* is more sophisticated and less conventionally designed than the older "complaints," it nevertheless shows an affinity with the type. Indeed, a number of poems more or less contemporary with *Lucrece* exemplify a new form of complaint influenced by Ovid. In 1592, Samuel Daniel published *The Complaint of Rosamond* which stimulated a renewed interest in this form of narrative verse.

The modern reader finds Shakespeare's *Lucrece* tedious and tiresome. Someone has said that the poet is more interested in Tarquin's soul than in

Introduction

Lucrece's body. At any rate, Shakespeare has Tarquin give a lengthy meditation before committing his crime and an even more lengthy meditation on his guilt afterward. But it is Lucrece who bores us most with her lamentations. The impact of her declamations upon most readers is succinctly described by F. T. Prince in his introduction in the Arden edition of the *Poems*: "The greatest weakness of Shakespeare's Lucrece is . . . her remorseless eloquence. In Ovid Lucrece does not even plead with Tarquin; but Shakespeare makes her start an argument which might have continued indefinitely if the ravisher had not cut it short. After her violation, Lucrece loses our sympathy exactly in proportion as she gives tongue."

Despite its obvious weaknesses, *Lucrece* has passages that show a powerful feeling for imagery and a deepening sense of tragedy. The poem reflects the somber cast of *Titus Andronicus* and presages the darker passages in plays like *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. Critics have pointed out that in *Lucrece* Shakespeare shows evidence of trying "to realize the sensations of the two protagonists" in the same way that a dramatist must get inside the characters that he attempts to portray. In this sense, *Lucrece* is nearer to Shakespeare's dramatic creations than is *Venus and Adonis*. Some critics have found *Lucrece* more satisfactory than *Venus and Adonis* because it deals with realities rather than with "thin absurdities." Though the dramatic quality of *Lucrece* has won the praise of some, the majority have found the poem