

THE DUBUQUE SHAKESPEARE PROJECT

at the Carnegie Stout Library, Dubuque, IA

Fall 2024

BECOMING THE BARD

Venus and Adonis/ The Rape of Lucrece

Synopsis: Shakespeare's first published work *Venus and Adonis* is a lyrical tale of goddess Venus being infatuated with and pursuing the youthful hunter Adonis. The narrative is witty and erotic with supporting tangential stories of animals. The other long narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece* is more somber and portrays the lust of Tarquin and the subsequent shame experienced by Lucrece devoting very few lines to the rape itself. Lucrece's lament takes up nearly half the poem with the fallout action restricted to a few stanzas at the end. Both poems end in tragedy for the pursued, but with consequential results beyond them.

Discussion Topics:

- Both poems feature nonconsensual sex with powerful figures pursuing the less powerful. However, the tones are widely divergent with Venus being lighter and more humorous. How do gender dynamics dictate the tonal shifts in the poems and our reactions to them?
- Venus and Lucrece are both given long speeches to provide insights into their state of mind, but with very different reactions from readers. How does Shakespeare structure the tonal shifts so that Venus inspires mockery and Lucrece inspires empathy?
- Adonis, the victim and Tarquin, the aggressor are both given an opportunity to state their thoughts. How do Shakespeare's portrayals of a callow youth and an unapologetic rapist work within the context of their respective narratives?
- Shakespeare adopts two different stanza schemes for the poems; 6 lines for Venus and 7 for Lucrece. How does the form affect the tone of the poem?

Folger Text Links:

<https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/venus-and-adonis/>

<https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/lucrece/>

NOTE: There are no filmed versions of the narrative poems though some excellent audio versions can be found.

Audio: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZ3s9EBLO-8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkfczcmnxZdY> (read by Richard Burton)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vd2ddyYAUJY> (opera snippet)

Other resources to consider:

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

Sep 8, 2024

2 PM

Carnegie-Stout Public Library 360 W 11th Street, Dubuque, IA