Shakespearean and Marlovian Epyllion: Dramatic Ekphrasis of *Venus and Adonis* and *Hero and Leander*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a practice-as-research project 'articulating and evidencing' (Nelson, 2013, p. 11) research and practical explorations of Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and William Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, using a method defined in the thesis as 'dramatic ekphrasis'. A theatrical adaptation of the works — staged using the language of both poems as an amalgamated visual and acoustic theatre piece — exposes (through practice) the authors' transgressive sexual and amorous themes. The narrative poems of Shakespeare and Marlowe are interpreted as having cultural purpose, and the exegesis explores how the poems expose and challenge biased Elizabethan gender paradigms, homosocial hegemony and moral stability in Elizabethan England. Through ekphrasis and contemporary performance methodology, the adaptation transposes the narrative verse to dramatic action in order to challenge our twenty-first century audience by destabilising gender and sexuality. By transposing the narratives into performance practice, the thesis strives to link the poems' challenge to homosocial bias in the late sixteenth-century to our modern culture — to challenge present-day audience perspectives of gender-normative and heterocentric biases. Also, the thesis describes ways in which the practice illuminates and reinforces unique differences in the authors' dramatic style. The thesis concludes by reflecting on and assessing the efficacy of both research and practice findings.

To the loving memory of my father-in-law, Leon J. Marano

and to

Carolanne Marano

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> *Progressive*: 'advocating or working towards change or reform in society, esp. in political or religious matters; committed to progress, forward-looking'
> (2014 *OED* online 4. b.)

The purpose of this project is to apply a unique method of interrogating and understanding the theatrical and theoretical relationship between William Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (1593) — 'two of the most popular poems of the age' (Bate, 1993, p. 48). This thesis employs the methodology of practice to defamiliarise the poems by transposing them from the medium of early modern printed poetry to that of twenty-first century theatrical performance art. In light of this purposeful transformation, this thesis uncovers how my performance practice reacts to, and is guided by, key research findings concerning Shakespeare's and Marlowe's minor epic stories, as well as the distinct theatrical language styles within their narratives.

The genesis of this 'practice-as-research' project stems from my desire to explore the interaction between poetry and performance. My professional life has been balanced between the theatrical discipline of dramatic performance and directing practice, and the academic discipline of theoretical and critical study of early modern minor epic poetry, also known as 'epyllion'. I am keen to bring aspects of these two disciplines (and passions) into an intimate discourse to understand what *'substantial insights*' (Nelson, 2013, p. 27, emphasis in original) can be discovered about each. Specifically, I want to know what the two disciplines might reveal if I conflate them as a cohesive project.

The Elizabethan epyllion, a genre initiated by Thomas Lodge (1558-1625) with his *Scillaes Metamorphosis* (1589), is a truncated narrative epic poem based on classical myth

and erotic in nature, with a dependency on Ovidian mythical sources. Lodge hit upon Ovid as a source for his deeply moving and erotic short epic *Scillaes Metamorphosis*, borrowed from book XIV of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Elizabeth Story Donno describes the importance of Lodge's innovation: 'he inaugurated not only a new Elizabethan genre but also a new standard of poetic achievement' (Donno, 1963, p. 6). Lodge's achievement gave rise to writers who were interested in 'embroidering and ornamenting their poems with all the power of rhetorical devices and ingenious invention (*Ut nectar, ingenium*)' (Donno, 1963, p. 9). Most poems of the genre focus on the ecstasy of love, often in the form of a lament, and contain mystical transformations, as in Lodge's *Scillaes Metamorphosis,* John Marston's *Metamorphosis in Pygmalion's Image* (1598) and Francis Beaumont's *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* (1602).

Many epyllia share the trope of the aggressive or romantic female pursuer, as do Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, Thomas Heywood's *Oenone and Paris* (1594) and Michael Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe: Ideas Latmus* (1595) (all except *Venus and Adonis* are found in Donno, 1963). All writers of early modern epyllia explore eroticism and seem to move away from the medieval tradition of '*Ovide moralisé*' (Ellis, 2003, pp. 5-6) towards a real sense of sexual discovery*,* which seemed significant to Arthur Golding, the most popular Christian translator of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Nims, 2000). Amorous love poetry, erotic liberation, and Shakespeare's and Marlowe's illumination of these themes, are at the heart of the main research inquiry.

ARTICULATING THE RESEARCH INQUIRY

The main research inquiry focuses on how the exposure, through practice and research, of Shakespeare's and Marlowe's progressive depiction of sexuality and gender in *Venus and Adonis* and *Hero and Leander,* can affect a contemporary intellectual understanding of (as

well as a live audience's emotional response to) the amorous and erotic themes and characters within these minor epics. It is argued in this thesis that both Shakespeare and Marlowe were inspired by the genre and used its connection to lyrical love poetry and Ovidian eroticism to explore themes that can be considered *progressive* in relation to strict gender norms and patriarchal sexual and religious power structures in England in the last decade of the sixteenth century. The thesis also proposes that these themes (highlighted in our production) are still relevant to our twenty-first century consciousness and have power to confront an audience boldly with challenges regarding the nature of what is socially acceptable on the stage and on the page.

This inquiry explores major decisions that were made in staging the main characters and themes in my adaptation. The practitioner-researcher mode allowed me to dramatise this inquiry and examine the works through the magnified lens of stage performance. Conflating the poems as a single piece served further to defamiliarise the separate poems by putting them directly into an intertextual theatrical relationship. Further, staging this conflation of text uncovered unique authorial differences in 'playing' dramatic style (Chapter 4).

Key findings in the area of 'practice as research' as a recognized mode of academic inquiry have guided the development and articulation of this thesis and have enhanced my own methods of 'dramatic ekphrasis', a concept that will be defined shortly. Using the modality of practice as research, I presented (supported by this written investigation and DVD documentation) a fully staged adaptation of the poems using the language of both works as a cohesive theatrical event. The exegesis was implemented with the help of guidelines set forth by a collection of critical sources specific to practice-based research.

Still a relatively new mode of inquiry, practice as research has been developing over the last several decades, often combining research methods to explore concepts of fluidity, interconnection, intertwining and overlap of theory and practice. Graeme Sullivan states that 'art practice can be claimed to be a legitimate form of research and that approaches to inquiry can be located within the studio experience' (Sullivan, 2005, p. 109). According to John Freeman:

> Practice-based research offers a clear challenge to conventional thinking in its premise that the practice of performance can be at once a method of investigative research and the process through which that research is disseminated.
>
> (Freeman, 2010, p. 7)

Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean (2009, pp. 19-25) refer to their model of creative and research processes as 'the iterative cyclic web' (Smith and Dean, 2009, p. 19) where different modes of inquiry, whether they be 'goal-oriented' or 'process-driven' (Smith and Dean, 2009, p. 23), are allowed to move through and around any point on the large circle surrounding 'practice-led research', 'research-led practice' and 'academic research' (Smith and Dean, 2009, p. 20). The practice-as-research approach offers practitioners exciting opportunities to forge new knowledge and participate in rigorous academic research through the creation of an exegesis (Little, 2011, pp. 26-27; Sullivan, 2005, pp. 91-92). The exegesis can provide a written contextual framework for the practice, as well as develop, define and elucidate clear research imperatives of the project. The exegesis can be created through rigorous and diverse processes of research (both theoretical and practical) that can be tested against specific research concerns.

Creative arts inquiry involves a 'specific intentionality and the adoption of certain practices and aims' (Little, 2011, p. 23). Robin Nelson (2013), in *Practice As Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, describes his model as 'theory imbricated within practice' (Nelson, 2013, p. 33) (suggesting an overlap of practice and

theory) beginning with '*research inquiry*' (Nelson, 2013, pp. 96-97, emphasis in original) — his alternative to standard research questions — which potentially reveal '*substantial insights*' (Nelson, 2013, p. 27, emphasis in original) as the result of implementation. Nelson describes his construct as 'praxis' and 'an iterative process of "doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing"' (Nelson, 2013, p. 32). These concepts of active inquiry as iterative processes are important in articulating my own experience of the practice as it unfolded. It seems helpful here to supplement this exegesis with a brief explanation of the development of the practice from 2010 to 2013, using aspects of Nelson's construct of 'doing-reflecting-reading-articulating-doing' (Nelson, 2013, p. 32) as a guidepost.

THE UNFOLDING OF THE PRACTICE

This thesis began as an 80,000-word dissertation, with the practice element envisaged as an additional and separate culmination of theory-based inquiry. As the thesis evolved, however, it was recast into a practice-based research project for which the actual reflective rehearsal experiments (and their discoveries) did not occur until the later stages of the research process. Due to the shifting nature of the thesis itself, the early chapters (1-3) focus more on directorial results of the practice, largely as they emerged from literary-historical discoveries (October 2010-December 2012). The project later shifted towards more doing-reflecting-doing discoveries in practice, coinciding with the processes of rehearsal (starting in late December, 2012) and performance (June, 2013), as articulated in Chapters 4 and 5.

While this late shift in methodology created challenges and limitations for a sustained process of studio inquiry within this practice-as-research project, the literary-historical research was essential for developing and contextualizing the adaptation. Although I was not in rehearsal until late 2012, I began developing the practice quite

simultaneously with my theoretical research starting late in 2010. During the first months of the research process, I engaged in the active 'doing' phase of transposing narrative into dramatic text. The poems were studied as two separate pieces. Noting clear similarities in genre and tone, I initially began with the idea of transposing the narratives into two separate scripts, one for *Venus and Adonis* and one for *Hero and Leander*, then contemplated how they both might be presented to a live audience. Late in 2010, when the poems were transposed into two rudimentary scripts, they began to reveal theatrical possibilities relating to the characters and the distinct writing styles of Shakespearean and Marlovian epyllion. This transposing-contemplating (doing-reflecting) process led to a more focused reflecting phase during which I contemplated methods that could be employed to present the structures of the texts separately, as well as how the characters might be represented within both texts. Based on close readings of the poems themselves, further contemplation followed regarding a directorial concept. Key research imperatives emerged, including the decision to present a challenge to the audience regarding the themes of gender and sexuality and to propose a link between the poems' transgression of the Elizabethan moral and religious culture and our own gender-normative and heterocentric culture.

As this reading-reflective phase informed the subsequent doing phase, the script began to change, based on experimentation, into a more cohesive artistic adaptation of the texts. Early in 2011, the poems were investigated using text-as-script. I began actively cutting, streamlining, re-arranging and 'acting out' the characters (solo voce) in both texts. This doing phase inspired a lengthy reading-reflecting-doing phase in 2011 and 2012. For instance, reflecting, researching, reading and experiencing the poems from a literary-historical perspective led to the doing phase of adapting the poems as a single script (see,

for example, the influence of Sir Robert Stapylton's 1669 treatment *The Tragedie of Hero and Leander* in Chapter 1). Also, a close reading of Catullus' *Of the Argonauts and an Epithalamium for Peleus and Thetis* (ca. 50 BC) inspired me to rearrange and adapt *Venus and Adonis* to serve my main inquiry (see Chapter 2). Further, I spent much of 2011 and 2012 reading and reflecting on relevant literary and historical material that had the potential to resonate with the progressive sexual and gender themes in both poems. The reading-reflecting phase of organizing a directorial concept led to other research findings concerning a broader historical context of the evolution of the erotic and experimental minor epic genre from ancient sources, which is articulated in Chapter 2. Throughout this reading-reflecting phase, I began articulating and evidencing ideas into the body of the written thesis. In the middle of 2012, I wrote sections on ancient epyllia, medieval poetry and Elizabethan cultural oppression of poetry and theatre. It was discovered how Shakespeare and Marlowe might have drawn upon the evolution of ancient epyllion, medieval love poetry and Elizabethan politics, to put forth progressive narrative poems, which challenged sexual and gender norms. During this writing phase, I was particularly mindful of the practice, the future production and how these themes might play out on stage in the adaptation.

The doing phase of rehearsal (late in 2012) was perhaps the most surprising stage of the entire process. During this stage of the thesis, in particular, it became apparent that studio inquiry was essential in articulating the full scope of the research project. Reflective discoveries were revealed by seeing and hearing actors (myself included) grapple with the challenges and questions posed by confronting the complex differences and surprising similarities of Marlowe's and Shakespeare's characters, rhythms and styles within their poems. This doing phase led to extensive doing-reading-reflecting-articulating-doing

phases wherein critical source materials regarding performance theories (Brecht, 1964; Berry, 1991, 1992; Stanislavski, 1981; Meisner and Longwell, 1987; Cohen, 1978, 2002) and studio experimentations in which the actors explored those performance theories, were overlapping in cyclical fashion. The praxis helped solve stylistic (both directorial and performance) challenges of staging the two distinct narrative poems. Discovery in rehearsal and performance (articulated in Chapter 4) regarding the contrast in bringing to life the detached style of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, as opposed to Shakespeare's psychological and emotional style in *Venus and Adonis*, could not have been revealed by other means of inquiry. Also, the different styles of the authors in practice led to research concerning current traditional approaches to acting heightened language structures (Berry, 1991, 1992; Barton, 1984). Further, the practice was found to be a necessary approach because a key research imperative of the project was to confront an audience with questions concerning sexuality and gender. Through studio experiments with gender swapping and the defamiliarising of normative sexual identity of the characters within the adaptation, we discovered ways to present progressive themes in live performance. These practice-as-research discoveries could not have been revealed through other modes of traditional academic inquiry. These interrogations are possible only through methods of practice and experimentation, which are articulated throughout the thesis.

Also, theatrical performance urges questions relating to who my audience is meant to be. What are my intentions for producing the event? The intention towards the audience (pursued shortly) is a key consideration in both how and why the production evolved from a process of inquiry into final practice.

AIMS

This thesis reflects the incremental nature of my discoveries by posing three key aims, outlined below. All of my research aims are intended to inform and be informed by the creative practice of the thesis, which I have conceived, adapted, staged and documented using the construct of 'dramatic ekphrasis', as defined below. The following three aims will be investigated within the five chapters of the thesis in the pursuit of my main inquiry:

Aim 1) To demonstrate how major decisions in the practice (informed by my main inquiry) are influenced by a study of various key historical and contemporary 'research findings' connected to the ancient legends of Venus and Adonis and Hero and Leander (Chapter 1), and from a selection of findings from ancient erotic narrative epyllion (Chapter 2).

Aim 2) To investigate how Shakespeare and Marlowe seized upon the liberty of their contemporary genre of epyllion subversively to violate social bias regarding morality, masculine power structures, gender and sexuality. And to demonstrate how a theatrical adaptation of both poems as an amalgamated, cohesive theatre piece can elucidate the authors' congruous subversive agenda, which can, in turn, have a progressive impact on a twenty-first century audience (Chapter 3).

Aim 3) To experiment with a practice-as-research model in rehearsal and performance, and to discover how the rehearsal process and eventual staging of the poems reveal '*substantial insights*' (Nelson, 2013, p. 27) (upon practice and reflection) towards the unique differences and challenges an actor and audience face when confronted with Marlowe's dramatic style, in comparison to Shakespeare's (Chapters 4 and 5).

CLARIFICATION OF 'DRAMATIC EKPHRASIS'

Robin Nelson explains that 'one of the key challenges of PaR [practice as research] is to make the "tacit" more "explicit"' (Nelson, 2013, p. 43). Therefore, because the central occupation of this thesis is a dramatic exploration of Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and William Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* using the concept I have termed as 'dramatic ekphrasis', my own working definition of this literary and practical conceptualisation needs clarification. Ruth Webb observes that:

> If we turn to the ancient usages of the word [ekphrasis] we find ourselves in a very different intellectual world from that inhabited by literary critics, art historians and archaeologists who contributed in their various ways to the invention of the modern genre of ekphrasis. (Webb, 2009, p. 39)

Modern definitions have used ekphrasis to mean a written description of a visual piece of art in order to elevate the majesty or beauty of the work and to interrogate a symbolic meaning of the object's features and scenes, as Keats does with his *Ode To A Grecian Urn* (Heffernan, 1993, pp. 107-115) and as Homer does with Hephaistos' shield in his *Illiad* (Scully, 2003, pp. 29-47). Valerie Robillard and Els Jongeneel edited their book *Pictures into Words: Theoretical and Descriptive Approaches to Ekphrasis* as a comprehensive study of how critics 'employ a wide variety of approaches to the interplay between the verbal and the visual arts' (Robillard and Jongeneel, 1998, p. xii). James Heffernan defines ekphrasis as 'the verbal representation of visual representation' (Heffernan, 1993, p. 3). Claus Clüver, in his essay 'Quotation, Enargeia, and the Functions of Ekphrasis' expands Heffernan's more narrow definition into 'the verbalization of real or fictitious texts composed in a non-verbal sign system' (Clüver, 1998, p. 49). None of these modern definitions seems to fit completely into the wide spectrum of the original usage and meaning of the word. However, critics seem to agree that ekphrasis has to do with the transposition of one art (or several arts) into another. The broadness of the *Oxford English*

Dictionary term seems to contain elements of both modern and classical definitions: 'to speak ... a plain declaration or interpretation of a thing' (2014, *OED* online). This leads back to the research from Webb who is most influential in my own conception of the term. She explores ancient classroom usages of ekphrasis:

> The scholia to Homer's *Illiad*, for example, identify a range of passages as ekphrasis, some of these overlap with the modern usage, like the description of shields, while others are simply moments in the action in which the commentator found particular appeals to the imagination. (Webb, 2009, p. 40)

Webb's book *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (2009) includes translations of *Progymnasmata* where we find Theon's explanation of ekphrasis as 'a descriptive (*periegematikos*) speech which vividly (*enargos*) brings the subject shown before the eyes. An ekphrasis may be of persons, events, and places and times' (Theon, 2009, p. 197). She includes a similar definition from Aphthonios as 'a descriptive speech bringing the subject vividly before the eyes' (Aphthonios, 2009 p. 201). Key in this definition, according to Webb, is the term *enargeia*, which she describes as 'the vividness that makes absent things seem present by its appeal to the imagination' (Webb, 2009, p. 193).

Dramatic ekphrasis, then, in my own practical understanding and usage, is *the visual and acoustic dramatisation of vivid narrative descriptions of things, persons, events and actions*. I have transposed the works of poetic art, in this case the adaptation and cutting of Marlowe's and Shakespeare's epyllia ('moments in the action'), that had previously existed passively on the printed page as narrative 'speech' and I have actively brought that subject matter 'vividly before the eyes' of my audience. The audience is actually seeing the vivid descriptions that are 'shown' to them, not as a metaphor, as Theon's description seems to indicate —'vividness (*enargeia*) which makes one almost see

what is being spoken about' (Theon, 2009, p. 198) — but through active, physical and acoustic and dramatic manifestation. The adapted play-script itself stands as the single work of art — a sign system — and the performance event (*praxis*) of that art enhances the art. It does so at times through immediate dramatisation of 'actor-character' dialogue (such as Venus with Adonis and Adonis with Venus, Leander with Hero and Hero with Leander, or narrator with the audience); and at other times through dialogue (or dramatic narration) overlapping physical re-representation, such as when an actor-character is describing visual representations that are simultaneously being physically represented through movement or dance on stage. An example of this type of dramatic ekphrasis in my adaptation is Venus' description of the boar. Shakespeare's Venus describes the horrible visual elements of the boar to Adonis:

> O, be advised: thou knowst not what it is
> With javelin point a churlish swine to gore,
> Whose tushes never sheathed he whetteth still, ...
> On his bow-back he hath a battle set
> Of bristly pikes that ever threat his foes;
> His eyes like glow-worms shine when he doth fret; ...
> His brawny sides, with hairy bristles armed ...
> His short thick neck cannot be easily harmed: (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 615-627)

For this section of the adaptation, the choice was made to put an actor in a boar's head mask (Figure i.1a) (inspired by Ben Jonson's and Gregory Doran's use of puppetry — see Chapter 1). The body of the boar was represented by seven other actors who 'interpreted' the 'tushes', 'bow-back', 'brawny sides' and 'thick neck' (Figure i.1b). We explored many different modes of depicting the boar, including staging it using footlights, which cast shadows of the actors on a separate scrim. We tried using a visual projection of a painting of a huge boar; however, in the final production it was decided to use the physical presence of the actors and the puppet mask to portray the animal's fierceness.

Figure i.1a Dramatic re-presentation of Shakespeare's poetic description of the 'boar' using puppet head mask and seven additional actors.

Figure i.1b The 'boar' in staging rehearsal.

A dramatic story can be 'pictured' and 'heard' in the imagination of the reader looking at a printed text containing these descriptions, but a staging brings it more fully to life and exposes the poetic images with an enhanced visual and acoustic interpretation as the mode transfers from verbal (telling) to visual and aural (showing) (Hutcheon, 2006). Transposing narrative verse into dramatic action has a unique effect, paradoxically, of corrupting the authors' form and structure (narrative poetry) and, as stated above, liberating or enhancing (with dramatic adaptation) their dramatic qualities. Thus, the term 'dramatic ekphrasis' suits the precise nature of this project. The vivid adaptation of narrative comes alive on a lyrical, heightened level because of the elevated language, different from a standard staging of a play or adaptation of a novel into a play. Interpretive movement, dance, music and acting are essential elements in my production, which seeks to realize visually and aurally the heightened narrative style of non-dramatic poetry — poetry that has intrinsic dramatic qualities. Sources most helpful in formulating my practical understanding of 'seeing' poetry are St. Augustine's (354-430 AD) treatise *De Ordine* (1942, ca. 430) and Philip Sidney's (1554-1586) *An Apology for Poetry* (1973, ca. 1579). St. Augustine (1942) penetrates the philosophy of artistic invention as being connected with our god-given

rational interpretations. Marianne Shapiro, in context of her discussion on Dante, paraphrases St. Augustine's *De Ordine* as an example of how we interact with movement and verse:

> Augustine observes that as we watch a dancer we distinguish spontaneously between the harmonic movements that produce our delight and the dancer as a sign of the other things (signum rerum), which is what makes the movements rationabilis (rationalizable). It is this semiotic value perceived *per oculos animum* (by the eyes of the soul), which gives meaning to the movements and gestures. Analogously, for Augustine, when we read verses we separately perceive their acoustic and intellectual properties, although these need not (indeed, should not) be opposed.
>
> (Shapiro, 1990, p. 38, emphasis in original)

In *An Apology for Poetry*, Sidney describes narrative poetry as a 'speaking picture ... to teach and delight' (Sidney, 1973, p. 158). Sidney credits poets with yielding 'to the powers of the mind an image of that whereof the philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description, which doth neither strike, pierce, nor possess the *sight of the soul* so much as that other doth' (Sidney, 1973, p. 107, my emphasis). This is what makes dramatic ekphrasis a powerful tool. The reader no longer has to rely solely on *oculos animum* or what Sidney describes as the 'sight of the soul'. The reader's incorporeal perception of 'acoustic and intellectual properties' becomes more corporeal in the performance where the reader becomes the audience and, essentially, 'watches' the printed text materialize.

POETRY AND THEATRE

In Chapter 1, I discuss how conducive Shakespeare's poem *Venus and Adonis* is to performance. Richard Meek strives to understand Shakespeare's interest in the visual nature of narrative verse and states that 'readers of Shakespeare's poem are explicitly encouraged to see these events in their mind's eye' (Meek, 2009, p. 31). Similarly, Marlowe's poem has inherent theatricality that makes it conducive to dramatic adaptation. Patrick Cheney suggests, that the character 'Venus' double-genre art [Ovidian poetry and

theatre] of tragic desire looks to be a rather precise photograph of Marlowe's aesthetics, specifically as established in *Hero and Leander'*. Cheney explains: 'Hero's complete attire — "myrtle wreath" (l. 17) and "Buskins" (l. 31) — reveals her to be a (feminine) figure for Marlowe's Ovidian art of elegy and tragedy; she is a figure for his own intertwining of poems and plays' (Cheney, 2004, p. 87). Cheney explores Shakespeare's and Marlowe's literary career paths as poet-playwrights and states:

> Shakespeare's generation was the very first to consolidate this new type of author [poet-playwright], when it capitalizes upon a complex cultural dynamic that includes the emergence of both a print and a theatre culture. (Cheney, 2004, p. 28)

What makes their epyllia so conducive to stage adaptation is that they were written with such similar sensibilities of poetry and theatre. And critics such as Clifford Leech seem to be keenly aware of their immediate dramatic power and theatrical influence on future playwriting:

> *Venus and Adonis* and *Hero and Leander* may have constituted a mode of approach that could be, and was, carried on in the dramatic form. In the prose fiction before 1592 there is little outside the *Arcadia* that is comparable with the two poems in its degree of realism or in its sympathetic understanding of the way people behave, just as there is no earlier drama with the same note of mature comedy. And because Marlowe and Shakespeare were primarily dramatists, their nondramatic writing was the more likely to establish a close relationship with the plays of the ensuing years. (Leech, 1986, p. 179)

Cheney's idea of a discourse between poetry and theatre within the poems and the 'realism' of what Leech describes as 'mature comedy' within *Hero and Leander* and *Venus and Adonis* both influenced my approach to the adaptation. Cheney's idea helped in my negotiation of lyrical elements of heightened poetry in performance while Leech's theory helped my understanding that the poems contained elements of comedy rooted in characters with true motivation.

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?

> The only thing that all forms of theatre have in common is the need for an audience. This is more than a truism: in the theatre the audience completes the steps of creation ... I think any director will agree that his own view of his own work changes completely when he is sitting surrounded by people.
>
> Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (1968, p.127)

As a guidepost for discussion concerning who my audience is meant to be, I have been influenced by Milly S. Barranger's (1986, pp. 323-327) practical understanding of an audience's role in theatre criticism. For Barranger, an audience forms a collective that reacts to the human, social, artistic and aesthetic (entertainment) significance of a live theatrical event. She views this type of reflection as audience criticism or 'audiences as critics' (Barranger, 1986, p. 323). Indeed, it is important for a dramatist to be in dialogue with the critical audience long before they arrive at the theatre. Most decisions I make in the trial-and-error process of rehearsal are directly related to the intended (target) audience and how I want them generally to respond to the piece. Therefore, it is necessary to identify who my audience is, or perhaps more accurately, who I *want* them to be, and then make decisions about how possibly to affect them, inspire them, entertain them and challenge them with my practice, without preaching or pontificating.

Theatre is an intense enterprise wherein the privilege to discourse intimately with a collective arena of strangers is balanced with a responsibility to affect them in some productive way. I relate the active 'productive affect' rather than 'instructive affect' because my voice as a dramatist is always borne out of some social conflict within my own inward moral sensibilities. Just as I bring my own life experience to the art, so too do the audience members, and I want them to have an emotional response, unique to each spectator. In essence, as Peter Brook explains, the artist 'challenges the audience truly

when he is the spike in the side of an audience that is determined to challenge itself' (Brook, 1968, p. 134).

To contextualize further, my audience is a collective community (in this experiment, a small audience at George Cadbury Hall, University of Birmingham, UK) of twenty-first century people interested in witnessing sixteenth-century literary poems as part of a doctoral thesis. I want them to be a community that is open to recognizing the progressive sexual themes presented in the piece. And I want them to be inspired by this work to broaden their understanding of, and perhaps enhance their own perspectives towards, the still-prevalent societal issues of marginalized sexual populations and genders. Certainly, the poems provide opportunities for my practice to present progressive themes related to the questioning of heteronormative paradigms and traditional gender roles. Also, I want the audience to embrace the possibility that Shakespeare and Marlowe can speak to us with a progressive voice — a voice that prefers a sublime knowledge of love over moral strictures. Peter Brook writes that in the Elizabethan theatre: 'Drama was exposure, it was confrontation, it was contradiction and it led to analysis, involvement, recognition and, eventually, to an awakening of understanding' (Brook, 1968, p. 36). It can be argued that the poems *Hero and Leander* and *Venus and Adonis* match Brook's fierce description of Elizabethan drama. These poems have the potential to 'speak' to a contemporary audience in profound ways, and my design, though never a demand, is to challenge the audience to broaden their perspective of present-day issues through the experience of sixteenth-century poetry.

The staging brings to life two printed texts that an audience of theatregoers would perhaps not otherwise encounter. To communicate most effectively the relevant and important themes explored by Marlowe and Shakespeare as interrogated in this thesis, my

responsibility is to engage the audience acoustically by making the complex rhetoric accessible to them. Engagement with active listening (amidst a culture saturated with images in mass media) is essential for deepening the spectators' discovery of the themes presented in the poems and in my production. Further, if my audience is not in some ways engaged aesthetically, both visually and acoustically, the mindful main drive of the 'productive affect' is lessened. In other words, clarity is a paramount concern in the production. Theon's description of ekphrasis, for example, states: 'The virtues of ekphrasis are the following: above all clarity (*sapheneia*)' (Theon, 2009, p. 198). Concentration on making the language as clear as possible is a major component of the practice explored in Chapter 4.

The above stated aims allow for reflection upon the practice. An honest contemplation of whether or not my practice was effective in communicating my aims seems essential to the critical discourse. While success or failure in theatre practice is challenging to measure or determine, critical reflection of the adaptation performed on 7 and 8 June 2013, is explored in Chapter 5 of the thesis. In his book *On Directing,* Harold Clurman (1972) discusses how he wants his audience to be a group (himself included amongst the group) who 'look forward to what we may have to say' and states, 'when I am disappointed by the audience's reactions, I try to understand the reason; I investigate the cause of the discrepancy' (Clurman, 1972, pp. 160-161). Similarly, I want to discover what I perhaps failed to achieve in presenting to an audience, and how the process might evolve in possible future manifestations of this enterprise.

FILLING A GAP IN RESEARCH

Beyond their similarity in probable date of composition in 1593 (Cheney and Striar, 2006, p. xvi), and adherence to (and similar divergence from) the emerging popular 1590s erotic

genre of epyllion, the poems strike me as equally dramatic and immediate creations (although different in style). They both read like theatre pieces in different ways. Marlowe's poem is written entirely in heroic couplets structured with sublime set speeches, descriptive narrative and scant dialogue between the main characters. Shakespeare's poem, by contrast, is written with a tremendous amount of dialogue. Even the narrative descriptions seem immediate. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famous investigation of the poem discusses its inherent theatricality:

> His Venus and Adonis seem at once the characters themselves, and the whole representation of those characters by the most consummate actors. You seem to be *told* nothing, but to see and hear everything. (Coleridge, 1864, p. 377)

Colin Burrow states that *Venus and Adonis* creates 'a pictorial mode of writing, in which similes become part of the visually imagined scene. Voices do not simply echo off the page ... they take on bodies' (Burrow, 2002, p. 24). Richard Meek states that 'readers of Shakespeare's poem are explicitly encouraged to see Shakespeare's dramatic force even in their mind's eye, and are repeatedly commanded to "look"' (Meek, 2009, p. 31). Shakespeare himself perhaps urges his lover (or subject) in sonnet 23 (Shakespeare, 1997, p. 157) to engage his 'books' (l. 9) with the 'eloquence' (l. 9) of his 'speaking breast' (l. 10).

Numerous recent theatrical presentations of *Venus and Adonis*, ranging from staged readings of the poem to full-scale productions that transposed every line of the narrative verse into dramatic action, have inspired this project. These various treatments are discussed in some detail in Chapter 1. However, no such recent adaptations, readings or significant dramatic production history of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* could be found. Chapter 1 discusses how others might have been *influenced* by Marlowe to write various separate theatrical 'treatments' spanning from the seventeenth century to the twentieth

century both in dramatic and non-dramatic form but, despite the popularity of Marlowe's poem in modern scholarship, I found no recent evidence documenting Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* being staged purposely as transposed dramatic script. Yet, it can be argued that the poem has a distinct and immediate dramatic drive very similar in tone (although different in style) to Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. By contrast, more than 20 major productions of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (see Chapter 1) were discovered. This lack of productions of Marlowe's poem contributed to the genesis of this project. There seems to be a gap in the understanding of the 'side-by-side' comparisons and significance of the poems by this lack of theatrical attention to Marlowe's poem. This could simply be characteristic of the tradition in modern scholarship of putting Marlowe in 'second place'.

Later, in Chapter 4, I discuss Marlovian acting, which has long been relegated to an 'afterthought', while studies (both practical and theoretical) in Shakespearean verse acting have been numerous. To focus attention specifically on distinct modalities of acting Marlovian verse separate from the practical techniques associated with the volumes of publications on Shakespearean acting, this staging of Marlowe's poem with Shakespeare's is studied as an important format for discussion. The practice has shown that it is helpful to explore original ideas of Marlovian rhetoric, as well as performance theories of 'distancing' most closely associated with Bertolt Brecht (Brecht, 1964; Rouse, 1984; Logan, 1988). Distancing is explored insofar as it helps specifically in both the actor's understanding of (and playing of) the many differences of structure, meter, rhythm (heroic couplet vs. ababcc sixtain) and the audience's tacit perception of how distinct the poems are in style (Brechtian distancing in Marlowe vs. Stanislavski-based psychological investigation in Shakespeare). The audience, then, has the unique opportunity to witness and directly engage with language that progresses from Marlowe to Shakespeare, and then

back to Marlowe. During the Marlowe sections the spectators are reminded of the artifice and their role in it, and during the Shakespearean 'insertion', the audience is immersed more in the actions, motivations and intentions of the characters. This experience is possible only through practice (see also Chapters 4 and 5). Therefore, the adaptation relies on the narrative language of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* as the main play, and Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* becomes the essential 'play-within-a-play', a bold theatrical digression from the minor epic narrative form of *Hero and Leander.*

Chapter 2 explores how the device of digression in ancient examples of epyllia has contributed to my decision for this digression or 'insertion' of Shakespeare's poem into Marlowe's. Also important to the play-within-a-play construct was my research into different printed and performed 'treatments' of the legends Venus and Adonis and Hero and Leander (Chapter 1) and the assertion that Shakespeare's poem 'reads' more like a play than any other Elizabethan epyllion, including Marlowe's.

STRUCTURE OF THE ADAPTATION

The adaptation is a full one-act working script (playing just under one hour) using the language of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* with a play-within-a-play of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis.* It is as faithful to decasyllable as possible without corrupting the unique rhythms of the distinct and separate verse styles of the writers. Throughout the play, Marlowe's and Shakespeare's narrators, are introduced as 'Ovid' himself. 'Ovid' (the fictional character is identified hereafter in quotation marks) takes the audience on a journey of ekphrastic images and character exploration, which is played out onstage through action, dialogue and interpretive dance — with the gods as 'Greek chorus'. The gods, who are described by Marlowe as 'in sundry shapes' (Marlowe, 2006, l. 143), switch genders (see also Chapter 3) and characters, and are transformed into animals and objects.

Once ‘Ovid’ brings us to the mystical ‘Adonis festival’, Shakespeare’s characters Venus and Adonis enter and ‘perform’ for the audience at Sestos and the special audience member Hero (whom I placed on a ‘throne’ platform during the play-within-a-play). Therefore, the language switches from Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander* to Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*. The crucial difference in my treatment as opposed to that of others, such as Robert Stapylton (see Chapter 1), is that my adaptation is faithful to the actual language of both poems directly. In fact, my adaptation uses *only* language written by Marlowe and Shakespeare. After Marlowe’s Adonis festival, during which a streamlined and adapted version of Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* is performed, featuring Adonis’ encounter with the boar, the action returns to Marlowe’s epyllion. The language is then an adapted version of Marlowe throughout the rest of the play. Marlowe’s Leander — who is introduced as a traveling actor (a leading tragedian) — portrays Adonis, and subsequently falls in love with an enamored and star-struck Hero.

FURTHER STAGING CONTEXT

The staging requirements of the production are basic and ‘bare boned’ as the project intends to celebrate language and movement over technical aesthetic. A bare stage forces the audience to respond more actively to the ‘dramatic ekphrasis’. The aesthetics of light provide *visual* separation of space and place, while the performance (both physical and aural) of the narrative images in the poetry drive the story.

The play can be staged with as few as eight actors. However, it seems beneficial to incorporate (as we have done) an additional chorus of dancers to represent the gods as Greek chorus. The choral aspect of the production speaks to the allegorical pagan eroticism expressed by Shakespeare and Marlowe within their epyllion. Indeed, much of the devised and choreographed movement in the piece link Shakespeare and Marlowe visually as

writers of eroticism. The choreography was influenced by aspects of ancient traditions of Greek dance and music.

The project did not need a devised ‘workshop’. There was a specific script from which to motivate the thrust of the production (see Appendix 1). Dance and movement, which were key elements in the production, were rehearsed with definitive visual and dramatic aims.

The preceding contextual explanations and definitions are helpful for understanding the groundwork of this project. The thesis will now shift focus to explore research findings and examinations of practice in pursuit of the above-stated aims.

CHAPTER 1

APPROACHING CHARACTER AND STORY

> Dead shepherd now I find thy saw of might
> 'Whoever loved that loved not at first sight?'
>
> William Shakespeare, *As You Like It* (1974, 3. 5. ll. 181-182)

The main focus of this chapter is to examine some of the challenges inherent in my practice of staging the themes of sexuality, love at first sight (connected to themes of external and internal beauty) and aspects of comedic parody in my adaptation. Investigations of key examples of poetry and theatre proved helpful for discovering effective ways of presenting extreme characters with their extreme character traits. This section refers extensively to the main characters in the adaptation. Neptune, a key smaller role, is explored in his own section because of his unique homoerotic relationship to Leander and his de-stabilising representation of gender norms in the adaptation. This chapter examines individual and separate 'research findings' connected to the ancient legends of Hero and Leander and Venus and Adonis respectively, ranging from ancient poetic allusions to fully staged contemporary dramatic adaptations, to works of art and ancient novels. This chapter also explores how the practice was inspired by the ancient writing from Tatius (*Leucippe and Clitophon*), Ovid (in *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides*), Virgil (*Georgics* 3) and Musaeus (*Hero and Leander*), and examines how Shakespeare and Marlowe might have influenced one another in their separate 'treatments'. Indeed, it can be argued that Marlowe's poem has more in common with Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (and vice versa) than with any other treatment of the story before 1593. Also, this chapter explores how succeeding artists such as Ben Jonson, Lord Byron, Sir Robert Stapylton, William Wycherley and Gregory Doran (amongst others) were perhaps inspired by Shakespeare's and Marlowe's treatments. Studying how others might have engaged with

these stories as well as how they have treated the stories' main characters has proved helpful in structuring my own adaptation and in directing the presentation of character. Each research finding will be discussed in relation to how it affected the practical experiments as well as the methods used in staging nondramatic poetry.

These separate explorations will all relate to the main inquiry, which is, again, an exploration (and theatrical exposure to an audience) of the poems' progressive portrayal of sexual and gender power structures.

HERO AND LEANDER

In his *Heroides* (ca. 17 B.C.) (2001), Ovid (ca. 43 BC-16 AD) gives us the exchange (epistles XVIII and XIX) of the exuberant young lovers Leander and Hero, filled with the power of first love, illustrated in some detail in Marlowe's adaptation. While it is abundantly evident that Ovid's treatment of the legend in *Heroides* describes post-sexual consummation, Marlowe, by contrast, creates erotic tension throughout his adaptation by delaying the consummation (Haber, 2009, pp. 43-49; Cheney 2006, p. 19) until the last 50 lines of the more than 800-line 'fragment'. Heightening the sexual eroticism, Marlowe disregards much of Ovid's treatment and relies heavily on Musaeus' *Hero and Leander* (ca. 500 AD) (1975). Unlike Marlowe's 'unfinished' version, however, Musaeus' poem is quite moral (Morales, 1999) — ending with the tragic deaths of its main characters. It can be argued that Marlowe left his poem 'unfinished' for the purpose of being transgressive (violating strict boundaries) to the religious moral order of Elizabethan England (see Chapter 3). Therefore, it is worth noting the originality and transgressive spirit (Brown, 1998) inherent in Marlowe's poem, even though he lifts much of the basic story from ancient sources.

The legend of Hero and Leander, star-crossed lovers captured by desire and true love, predates Ovid. Leander's bold and fateful swim across the Hellespont in Greece following the bright light of Hero's candle has been a source of artistic inspiration (poetical, theatrical, musical) for thousands of years. Thomas Gelzer pinpoints the legend from local folklore around the great channel 'at the earliest from the third century B.C.' (Gelzer, 1975, pp. 302-303), and William Keach argues that the story is 'pre-Homeric' in folklore (Keach, 1977, p. 246). Certainly, when Virgil refers to the story in his *Georgics* (29 CE), he assumes his reader's knowledge:

> Spare a thought for that young man, his passion's fervour burning to the quick. Needless to say, he swims a raging sea late at night, not knowing where he's going, and all the while above his head heaven's gate thunders and the rocky hazards reverberate in turbulence. Nor can the cries of his demented parents bring him back, Nor the girl who'll waste away for want of him, and die of grief.
>
> (Virgil, 2006, book 3. ll. 258-263)

Virgil connects the legend to the rustic pastoral and to the basic issues of animalistic sex and desire. According to Gary Miles (1980, pp. 197-198), Virgil is using *amor* to highlight how man and beast are similar in their uncontrollable desire and passionate lust. Virgil uses the legend to display how man and beast are drawn by the same 'raging fury' (Virgil, 2006, book 3. l. 244). Virgil spends a portion of book 3 on relating how animals and men are driven relentlessly and, as is the case with Leander, destructively, to passion (Miles, 1980, p. 198). Interestingly, before he alludes to Hero and Leander, he describes the uncontrolled desire of the horse that figures so prominently in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*. He also discusses the fierceness of the boar, which is similar to Shakespeare's description of the boar in *Venus and Adonis*.

> See if every stallion doesn't shake and shiver in each pore
> if a whiff of that familiar scent drifts down the wind and reaches him.
> Nothing now keeps them in hand, not the rider's rein nor anger's whip;
> not cliffs or rocky caves; nor sweeps of water act as obstacles

> though they may snap at mountains and snatch them away in swirling surf.
> The Sabellian boar goes lumbering by, honing his tusks,
> his trotters tearing up the ground, and grinding sides against a tree,
> up and down, this way and that, until he has inured his flanks against injuries.
> (Virgil, 2006, book 3. ll. 250-257)

This was influential in staging the parodic and erotic Leander swim across the Hellespont in my production. 'Ovid' (Carolanne Marano) was directed to highlight, as passionately as she could, Marlowe's description of the 'proud horse'. She was encouraged to hit the consonants very hard to create the ferocity and uncontrolled lust of the horse. Also, she was asked to deliver the language with long vowels as onomatopoeic emphasis to create a kind of sexual 'moan' from the horse.

The following is an example. Hard-hitting consonants and long vowel emphasis are in double capital letters while specific physical directions I gave are in parentheses:

> For as a HHoTT PProuDD horse highly disdains
> To have his head controlled, but BBreaKKs the reins,
> SSpiTTs forth the RINGled BBiTT, and with his hOOves (Stamp the stage floor)
> CCHHecKKs the submissive grOWWnd (Stamp foot again)
> (Drahos, 2011) (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 625-628)

It was determined that the horse represented the lustful, beastly passions Leander is exuding when he leaps 'lively in' the Hellespont and I wanted to reflect this in Leander's swim. To show that animalistic power is what motivates Neptune's attraction, the actor playing Neptune (Dan Kent) was directed to enter the stage (water) with an animalistic scream (a call of the wild) in pursuit of the young boy. He initially suspects Leander is Ganymede (suggesting erotic androgyny in Leander) and once he knows Leander is mortal he seems to fall into a deeper lust. To create an erotic drive with both language and physical action, the actor was directed to 'display' and perform for Leander, as a peacock does for his desired mate.

Virgil's excessive emotion and images of sexual confusion were influential in staging the swim. Virgil's line: 'Needless to say, he swims a raging sea late at night, not knowing where he's going' (Virgil, 2006, l. 259), seems connected to Marlowe's line 'Home when he came/He seemed not to be there but like exiled air ... set in a foreign place' (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 600-603). Further, being accosted sexually by Neptune adds to his confusion: 'you are deceived, I am no woman I' (Marlowe, 2006, l. 676). Neptune, on the other side, is only confused initially about the identity of Leander (linking him to Jove's effeminate cupbearer) — not about his gender. This implants Leander further in the position of sexual novice. He seems unaware of Neptune's real capacity to desire another male sexually. Leander (Will Cooke) was directed to be completely surprised by Neptune's force and, furthermore, to view Neptune's behaviour as bizarre and confusing. This reaction, juxtaposed by Neptune's playful confidence and physicality (see below), created the intended comic effect.

STAGING THE FIGURE OF NEPTUNE

The depiction of eroticism during the swim directly relates to how I chose to present the figure of Neptune throughout my production and it relates to my main inquiry. Many critics write about the homoeroticism of Neptune in Marlowe's poem (Haber, 2009; Smith, 1994; Ellis, 2003; Cheney, 1997). Influenced by this criticism, Neptune's physicality was staged as different from the typical hyper masculine depiction from classical mythology. When I traveled to Florence, Italy (January 2011), I visited Bartolomeo Ammannati's 'fountain of Neptune' in the Piazza della Signoria. The enormous size and imposing erotic masculinity of this epic statue was overwhelming. Some accounts of ancient legend suggest that Neptune is a veritable figure of extreme heterosexual masculinity. For example, St. Augustine's *The City of God Against the Pagans* (1998, pp. 293-294)

discusses Neptune's multiple partners (Salacia and Venilia) as an example of extreme pagan lust. Neptune is the Roman god of the sea and brother to Jove himself. He has enormous elemental power. He can raise storms (and calm them), shape the waves, destroy ships and ride giant sea-horse drawn chariots. He is almost always depicted in sculpture as giant, rugged and serious. Yet Marlowe's Neptune has a gentle playfulness and seems to be helplessly in love with young boys. He has no control over his tremendous desire for the sexually ambiguous Leander. He is at once in deep lust and deep love with Leander, and he displays the same kind of sexual playfulness that we explored with Venus towards Adonis. In fact, Neptune seems to mirror Venus' pathetic pursuit and sportive playfulness towards the reluctant Adonis.

Neptune (Dan Kent) was directed to skip, smile, dance, kiss, caress, seduce, charm and offer 'giddy toys' to the young swimmer with a careless ecstasy. Dan Kent was cast as Neptune because of his very slight physique and his ability to play the type of physical comedy needed to present the parody of serious dramatic classical models of the sea god. I decided to contrast my casting of Neptune with the Uffizi statue as boldly as possible (Figures 1.1a and 1.1b) and discovered that this worked visually to enhance the parodic style. Also, the figure of Neptune in the adaptation challenged heteronormative belief systems by displaying homoerotic sexual aggression. The actor was directed to play the real internal 'hot' lustful desire underlying the external playfulness.

Figure 1.1a Dan Kent as Neptune, god of the sea at University of Birmingham, Cadbury Hall (June 2013).

Figure 1.1b The Fountain of Neptune by Bartolomeo Ammannati (1565) at the Piazza della Signoria next to the Uffizi gallery in Florence, Italy.

TREATMENTS OF HERO AND LEANDER INFLUENTIAL TO MY PRACTICE

BEN JONSON

Ben Jonson, in the first recorded direct allusion to dramatic adaptation of Marlowe's poem, sets the story of Hero and Leander as a play-within-a-play — using a puppet show — in his comedy *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). Jonson uses the puppet show with inventive substitution. The grand channel of the Hellespont is metamorphosed to the River Thames, the bold hero Leander is transformed to a Dyer's son, and Hero is crassly turned into a 'wench of the Bankeside' (Jonson, 1966, 5. 3. l. 115) with a penchant for drinking sherry. Importantly, this is not intended to parody Marlowe's poem itself, as later treatments such as Wycherley's *Hero and Leander in Burlesque* do. Rather, Jonson is ridiculing the

audience (Riddell, 1988, pp. 38-40). Here we see the first direct attempt to see the poem as a dramatic theatre piece. The matching quotations are in italics:

> Cokes: But doe you play it according to the printed booke? I have read that.
> Leatherhead: By no means Sir.
> Cokes: No? How then?
> Leatherhead: A better way, Sir, that is too learned and poeticall for our audience; what do they know what *Hellespont* is? *Guilty of true loves blood*? or what *Abidos* is? or *the other Sestos hight*?
> (Jonson, 1966, 5. 3. ll. 99-106)

Marlowe's opening verse:

> On *Hellespont, guilty of true love's blood,*
> In view and opposite two cities stood,
> Sea-borderers, disjoined by Neptune's might:
> The one *Abydos, the other Sestos hight.* (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 1-4)

Although Jonson's dialogue displays his own intellectual superiority, it is a testament to the theatricality of Marlowe's treatment that Jonson explores the poem's dramatic possibilities with direct allusion and respect. Jonson further points up the farcical by debasing the characters in a burlesque for his audience. Jonson's treatment was influential to the general theme of my practice in that the legend of Hero and Leander is confirmed by Jonson to be steeped in comedic parody. Jonson also brings up questions concerning gender and performance with the puppets, which supported my decision to destabilise gender in the adaptation. Similar to the Christian polemicist Philip Stubbes' diatribe against cross-dressing (see Chapter 3), the zealot, Busy, rails on theatrical gender destabilisation:

> *Bus.* Yes, and my main argument against you, is that you are an abomination; for the male, among you, putteth on the apparel of the female, and the female of the male ...
> Pup. It is your old stale argument against the players, but it will not hold against the puppets; for we have neither male nor female amongst us. And that thou may'st see, if thou wilt, like a malicious purblind zeal as thou art!

THE PUPPET *takes up his Garment*.

Edg. By my faith, there he has answer'd you, friend,
by plain demonstration. (Jonson, 1966, 5. 5. ll. 90-101)

The puppet show creates a farcical element and a presentational distance (Chapter 4) of character that I found helpful throughout my production. In fact, I had originally planned to stage Cupid as a puppet (see my stage directions in Appendix 1), but later decided to cut the love god entirely. Cupid was eliminated not only because the Mercury digression (in which Cupid plays a major role) was cut, but also because I wanted to create the sense that 'Ovid' (as puppet master) was controlling the action. The production endeavored to create the illusion of 'Ovid' 'pulling the strings' of the characters through her active telling of the story. For instance, 'Ovid' actively 'cued' the responses and actions of the characters and, at specific moments, controlled the lights and sound on stage. 'Ovid' had the ability to 'freeze' the action, call forth thunder, introduce characters, dim the lights for mood and activate urgency in the characters' motivation. Ben Jonson's device also resonated with Greg Doran's production of *Venus and Adonis* (see discussion of *Venus and Adonis* treatments below) and both of their ideas of puppetry were useful in 'Ovid's' narration.

SIR ROBERT STAPYLTON

In 1669, Sir Robert Stapylton wrote a tragedy called *The Tragedie of Hero and Leander*. Though there is no known history of it ever being performed, this work significantly links the theatricality of the ancient legend Venus and Adonis with Hero and Leander. Stapylton's play opens at the festival of Venus and Adonis with 'The Show' taking place at Sestos. Hero's brother and sister play the lovers Venus and Adonis and Stapylton provides a wonderfully useful description of the festival/play:

The Show

Theame [Hero's sister] *and Samettes* [Hero's brother], *habited like Venus and Adonis, appear in a chariot, drawn by Girls and Boys, wearing vests and Garlands of Roses.* Theame and Samertes Kiss.

1 Boy. *Venus* and *Adonis* Kiss;
Pretty Maids, how like you this?
1 Girl. We like all, that Love's Queen esteems.
2 Boy. And she likes Kissing well, it seems:
Our smiling *Goddess,* this Feast-Day,
Will grant all Suits: pray Virgins, pray.
2 Girl. When you grow Men, that you prove true,
Sweet Boyes, we pray: for what pray You?
2 Boy. We pray to *Venus*, that she'l please
To make us all *Adonises.*

Song

When Sons of Mars quarrel
For Fame and the Laurel,
They dye, nipt like Buds in the Spring:
We Children of Venus,
When our Nurses wean us,
Play, Laugh, Kiss, and merrily Sing.
Yet We get Renown,
Which Cupid proposes;
And We wear a Crown,
Not Laurel, but Roses.
Our Goddess, Softer then our Flowers,
Will make no resistance. (Stapylton, 2010)

The alluring amalgamation of the stories (including a chorus, music and dance) is partly what the practical aspect of my project strives to achieve. Stapylton creates a full-length adaptation of the legend of Hero and Leander and infuses the antique story of Venus and Adonis. I have no doubt that Stapylton knew both Shakespeare's and Marlowe's epyllia and was perhaps inspired to see these legends as linked. This play gave me the impetus to somehow meld the poems together into a single production. Before I had found Stapylton's play, my initial idea was to present both poems separately on consecutive nights. I thought that the separate 'plays' could be compared and contrasted within the context of two

offerings in order to view them more exclusively and subjectively. However, further theoretical exploration of Marlowe's and Shakespeare's poems — especially critical source material urging the poem's unique similarities as well as research on historical epyllion's use of digression (see Chapter 2) — kept bringing me back to the idea of melding them. It made sense to me artistically as well, because the poems seem to complement each other in startling theatrical ways (Chapter 4). Therefore, just as Stapylton's insertion of *Venus and Adonis* takes place at Sestos, my adaptation chooses a similarly appropriate moment (see also Chapter 2) in Marlowe's poem to insert Shakespeare as a play-within-a-play — the Adonis festival:

> Men of wealthy Sestos, every year,
> For his sake whom their goddess held so dear,
> Rose-cheeked Adonis, kept a solemn feast.
> Thither resorted many a wandering guest
> To meet their loves; such as had none at all
> Came lovers home from this great festival. (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 91-96)

It seemed obvious to insert *Venus and Adonis* as part of the 'great festival' dedicated to Adonis, performed for the famous cloistress of Venus, Hero of Sestos. By making Leander an actor portraying Adonis, we affirm his similarity to Adonis (Chapter 4), and simultaneously create a theatrical opportunity for the immediate 'love at first sight' between Hero and Leander upon Leander's first 'entrance' in the play.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

Shakespeare engaged with the myth of Hero and Leander in many of his plays and poems with what have been considered direct allusions to Marlowe's poem. The most famous is in *As You Like It* where Shakespeare quotes directly: 'Dead shepherd now I find thy saw of might/"Whoever loved that loved not at first sight?'" (Shakespeare, 1974, 3. 5. ll. 81-82) This mirrors Marlowe's 'Where both deliberate, the love is slight,/Whoever loved that

loved not at first sight'? (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 175-176) and is the only instance where Shakespeare quotes a contemporary explicitly and directly (Gillespie, 2001, p. 324). These quotes proved very influential in the practical exploration because both poems seem to have a powerful and sublime understanding of instant spiritual love, which seems to counter both of the poems' extreme eroticism and comic irony. In the adaptation, my intention was to highlight the parodic, farcical and extreme side of human lust so that the juxtaposition of true spiritual love could stand out in a beautiful antithetical relief. According to Marlowe, spiritual love is divine, ruled by the fates. If lovers deliberate, their love is slight. It is more powerful to be ruled by immediate forces — to see a lover and then react with the fires of passion. Plato discusses the philosophy of this intense love in reaction to the sight of beauty in some detail in his homoerotic and homo-amorous dialogues of *Phaedrus* (Plato, 2002, 255a-e, pp. 39-41). Achilles Tatius discusses love at first sight in his work *The Adventures of Leucippe and Clitophon.* In book I, Clitophon describes being struck by Leucippe's beauty:

> Directly I saw her, I was lost: for beauty wounds deeper than any arrow and strikes down through the eyes into the soul; the eye is the passage for love's wound. All manner of feelings took possession of me at once ... Try as I would to drag my eyes away from gazing upon her, they would not obey me, but remained fixed upon her by the force of her beauty, and at length they won the day against my will.
>
> (Tatius, 1969, Book I stanza 4)

Later in stanza 9, Clitophon's cousin Clinias relates his own belief (based on his experience) that:

> When the eyes meet one another they receive the impression of the body as in a mirror, and this emanation of beauty, which penetrates down into the soul through the eyes, effects a kind of union however the bodies are sundered; tis all but a bodily union — a new kind of bodily embrace. (Tatius, 1969, Book I stanza 9)

This influenced how the narrator was directed in my adaptation. Carolanne Marano was urged to highlight the language so that the performance could find stresses in the verse

having to do with sight, eyes, lust and love (indicated below by capital letters). For example, to highlight its importance to the story, Ms. Marano was directed to deliver the text (quoted below) from centre stage, in direct presentation to the audience. It is also indicated where sound and light cues were added to enhance the magical moment when the lovers are struck at first sight:

> Thence flew Love's arrow with the golden head;
> (sound cue: 'BING' light cue: BUMP)
> And thus Leander was enamoured.
> Stone-still he stood, and evermore he gazed,
> Till with the FIRE that from his count'nance BLAZED
> Relenting Hero's gentle heart was strook:
> (sound cue: 'BING' light cue: LIGHTS TO FULL)
> Such FORCE and VIRTUE hath an AMOROUS look.
> It lies not in our power to love or hate,
> For will in us is over-rul'd by fate.
> When two are stript, long ere the course begin,
> We wish that one should lose, the other win;
> And one especially do we AFFECT
> Of two gold ingots, like in each respect:
> The reason no man knows, let it suffice,
> What we BEHOLD is censur'd by our EYES.
> Where both deliberate, the LOVE is slight:
> Who ever lov'd, that lov'd not at first SIGHT?
> (Drahos, 2011) (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 161-176)

To keep the focus on the language and action, lights and sound were used sparingly in the production. When sound and lights were used, it was always with the intention of supporting the narrative action and lyricism and enhancing the idea that love is immediate (as quick as the sound of the 'bing') and that love brings with it a brightness and clarity. Also, by bringing the lights full (I employed every light available in the theatre here) I wanted to suggest a sense of sexual heat.

Similarly, Venus falls in love with Adonis at first sight. In Ovid's version, she is quite literally struck with Cupids arrow (Ovid, 2000, ll. 603-615). Shakespeare's poem excludes Cupid's arrow, so in staging, Adonis (Will Cooke) was directed to mime the

firing of his hunting arrow — the very arrow that wounds Venus — into the air upon his first entrance. In essence, Adonis himself becomes a type of cupid. In my adaptation, Adonis is unconsciously responsible for Venus' pursuit and deep love. I wanted to create the cruel irony that Adonis despises love: 'Hunting he loved, but love he laughed to scorn' (Shakespeare, 2007, l. 4), but it is his hunting arrow that is responsible for introducing him to Venus, goddess of love and sex. The hunter, like Actaeon, becomes the hunted.

Adonis' hunting arrow resonates with Marlowe's idea of destiny in love: 'For will in us is over-rul'd by fate' (Marlowe, 2006, l. 168) connected to sight. Venus is struck at once by Adonis' overwhelming visual beauty. In fact, her first utterances to Adonis form a blazon:

> VENUS
> Thrice fairer than myself,
>
> OVID
> Thus she began,
>
> VENUS
> The field's chief flower, sweet above compare,
> Stain to all nymphs, more lovely than a man,
> More white and red than doves or roses are;
> Nature that made thee, with herself at strife,
> Saith that the world hath ending with thy life. (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 7-12)

It is interesting that Venus spends almost the entire poem pursuing Adonis with sweating lust, yet when she finds Adonis dead, her loss is very real and tender. Her devastation is internal, pathetic and extremely cathartic. This is evidence of Shakespeare's interest in juxtaposing the virtues of love versus lust. Still, her loving lamentation is directly related to the visual beauty of Adonis:

> Alas, poor world, what treasure hast thou lost!
> What face remains alive that's worth the viewing? ...
> The flowers are sweet, their colours fresh and trim;
> But true-sweet beauty lived and died with him.
> (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 1075-1080)

In playing Venus, I tried to tap into a very real sense of love lost. In essence, with the death of her love, the truest part of herself has been cruelly taken. Adonis' potential is gone in an instant, in the very heart of his prime years, and I wanted the audience to feel deep empathy for Venus. My intention was to show that Venus' love is spiritual, powerful, grows deep at first sight and continues on, even after Adonis' death. In fact, it is at Venus' celebration of Adonis' death — the 'great festival' (Marlowe, 2006, l. 96) — that we see Hero and Leander fall in love at first sight.

In Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, the poetry is heightened most powerfully after their sexual encounter. Almost the entire poem depicts a confused, yet aggressive, Leander and a knowing, yet coyly passive, Hero. After they experience the union they both seem to have been pursuing for more than 700 lines, Marlowe brings them closer through intense visual exposure, which seems to intensify their love. Indeed, it inspires Apollo to serenade the lovers in their post-coital bliss:

> Thus near the bed she blushing stood upright,
> And from her countenance behold ye might
> A kind of twilight break,
> So Hero's ruddy cheek Hero betrayed,
> And her all naked to his sight displayed,
> Whence his admiring eyes more pleasure took
> Than Dis, on heaps of gold fixing his look.
> By this, Apollo's golden harp began
> To sound forth music to the ocean.
>
> (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 801-812)

This section proved to be a challenge for the actor playing 'Ovid' (Carolanne Marano). She questioned whether her voice could successfully depict such heightened visual sensuality. Indeed, it can be argued that this section of the poem is Marlowe at his most lyrical. Ms. Marano was directed towards using long, sustained vowel sounds and it was suggested that her intention be to hypnotize the audience with a sensual harmony. We worked to 'lyricize' this word music in order to communicate the intensity of love between Hero and

Leander. Again, Ms. Marano was directed to find the stresses in the words describing visual sensuality. She was encouraged to apply techniques developed in Cicely Berry's *Voice and the Actor* (1991, pp. 18-42), a process that uses breath and relaxation of the vocal instrument to resonate sound deeply and truthfully. I also staged the action with the intention of visually supporting and enhancing the poetry. A single light was brought up on Hero downstage centre just before her exposure of 'all naked to his sight displayed' and she was directed to convey a sense of love and ecstasy. She was encouraged to send a silent prayer to Venus who was now, for Hero, the true goddess of love. As the lovers embraced, the scene was underscored with harp music to enhance the sublime quality of the love scene. Chapter 3 discusses the directions given to the character 'Ovid' regarding the narrative description of sexual eroticism and sexual consummation at the end of the play.

LORD BYRON AND ANTITHESIS

Thomas Gelzer (1975, pp. 324-326) describes many recreations of the story, most notably: Ovid's *Heroides*; a mime performance of Leander's swim inside the Flavian Amphitheatre during the reign of Titus (which inspired me to mime Leander's swim with Neptune in my adaptation); Musaeus' minor epic *Hero and Leander* (ca. 500 A.D.); and Lord Byron's *Bride of Abydos* (1859, p. 82), which describes the conditions of his own swim across the narrow part of the channel (see also Epstein, 2010). Byron (1859) feels the wildness of water as a metaphor for the tempest of desire:

> The winds are high on Helle's waves
> As on that night of stormy water
> When Love, who sent, forgot to save
> The young, the beautiful, the brave
> The lonely hope of Sestos daughter.
>
> (Byron, 1859, Canto the Second I, p. 82)

In many poetic treatments (as with Byron's and Virgil's above), there exists a broad emphasis on antithesis — the wildness of passionate waves juxtaposed with tender youth and the delicacy of 'young' and 'beautiful' love. I tried to depict this antithesis, specifically in Leander's difficult swim across the Hellespont and his exhausted arrival at Hero's tower. Tumultuous waves were created on stage with blue silk fabric (shaken violently by actors), juxtaposed with a soft white billowing sheet bathed in ultraviolet lights in Hero's bedchamber where the young lovers consummate their love (gently 'pillowed' by actors).

INFLUENCES IN STAGING HERO

Stapylton's 1669 treatment (previously explained as influential to my structure) also, importantly, displays Hero's sensual language. Here, Stapylton describes Hero's inward desire and sexual need:

> *Hero.* My Love, you are fore toil'd: I did mistake,
> Your blood inflam'd, does that high Colour make;
> Bathe, put your self into a kindly heat,
> And then, *into my Bosome drop your Sweat.* (Stapylton, 2010)

Stapylton's tragedy is never steeped in the scatological, and in this respect it differs from Wycherley's burlesque parody of Shakespeare's and Marlowe's poems in *Hero and Leander in Burlesque* (1669). Wycherley casts Hero as 'A bonny buxom bounsing Sestian Lass' (Wycherley, 1964, p. 77), and his treatment seems deliberately base and satirical. Nevertheless, the poem was influential to my practice because, like others, it depicts sexual playfulness and liberated morality in the burlesque. Importantly, Wycherley picks up on Hero's 'Virility' (Wycherley, 1964, p. 79), which he seems to highlight as an attempt to unite her with Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (Booth,

2007, *EMLS* online). Wycherley's treatment was helpful to my practice in confirming Hero's capacity to represent ambiguity of gender roles:

> *Hero* therefore (that knew the world) took on her
> For slouching Lad the wooing in brisk manner;
> And roundly said, Feat Youth, for want of speakling,
> D'y' think that I will suffer a heart-breaking?
> When Men are become Women, Women then
> May without shame (I take it) become Men.
> But Custom's crueller than Love, to gag us:
> For Silence more than Love before doth plague us.
> Why must nice Slut be dumb, though rack'd, nay prest,
> When it is impudence not to confess't?
> Alas when I'm on fire, I must cry out. (Wycherley, 1964, p. 91)

Wycherley's text seems to be most occupied with linking Hero with Shakespeare's character of Venus. Determined to focus on Hero's lust and gender ambivalence, Wycherley goes as far as to put a mustache on the famous heroine:

> Her Brows soft Fur was of a paler Dye,
> Conformable to that which prettily
> Peep'd on her upper Lip, and cowardly
> Made shew of Heroine Virility. (Wycherley, 1964, p. 79)

Hero (India Storm West) was directed to explore a deep sense of innocent morality that gets corrupted by her irresistible sexual playfulness and deep lust for Leander. Stapylton's treatment was a major influence for this choice because his play seems occupied with the sublime tragic love affair. However, we also worked on creating a Hero that had a sexual coyness, as Ben Jonson and others seemed to present — a knowing sexuality (Venus-like) influenced by the Wycherley treatment — and we tried to work that against the more ambiguous sexual knowledge possessed by Leander. The following are examples of this in practice.

'Ovid' describes Leander as sexually confused: 'like Aesops cock this jewel he enjoyed' (Marlowe, 2006, l. 535). Even after Hero throws herself upon him 'like light Salmacis' (l. 530), Leander is still naive and instead of behaving like a lover, he 'like a

brother with his sister toyed' (l. 536). Hero was directed towards a deliberate physical seduction of Leander in her reaction to her perception of his sexual naiveté. Ms. West displayed herself in sexually provocative poses on the stage right platform, which created an effect of gender-role reversal. Hero became the sexual teacher, Leander the naive innocent student. Hero seems to be directing the action and, when she finally encounters Leander sexually, she expresses neither guilt, nor modesty, nor moral remorse. In fact, in the final tableau, Hero was directed to look at the audience and give them a 'knowing wink', which created, metaphorically, the blackout and end of show. Hero's sexual equality and her liberation from the moral strictures (that condemn sex outside of the sanctity of approved marriage) are thereby celebrated with the idea that she was always in control. The wink communicated directly to the audience, as if to say: 'I planned this all along; I knew what I wanted from the very beginning and it all worked out well'. By contrast, Leander (Will Cooke) was directed to be initially quite clueless sexually, which blurs his gender role and links him directly with Adonis. Will took on a playful quality towards Hero after her sexual advance. The actors were directed to 'swing their holding hands' and Will was directed to 'smack' Hero on the back as a gesture of masculine friendship. Leander eventually finds his own sexual identity, but not until he is tested and taught by the more knowing Hero. It wasn't until Hero 'taught him all that elder lovers know' (l. 553) that he awakened sexually. The previously noted research helped me approach the challenging task of staging and interpreting Hero, in particular, in my production. I found it especially compelling that the practice itself revealed this idea of sexual freedom and coyness in Hero. It offered a new perspective on her intentions towards Leander. And it was fascinating to watch the character come to life on stage. These

treatments of the legends, albeit in different ways, seem to be giving the heroine a sexual directness.

SIMILARITIES OF HERO AND VENUS INFLUENTIAL TO MY PRACTICE

It is important to note how Marlowe, in describing Hero, adorns his heroine with a garment of ekphrastic imagery directly alluding to Shakespeare's main character Venus (Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen, 2007, p. 21). Marlowe's Hero, described as 'Venus' nun', (Marlowe, 2006, l. 45) wears a garment depicting (and thereby identifying her with) the lustful, insatiable and naked Venus, goddess of sexual exploits.

> At Sestos Hero dwelt; Hero the fair,
> Whom young Apollo courted for her hair,
> And offered as a dower his burning throne,
> Where she should sit for men to gaze upon ...
> 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. (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 5-14)

Hero, ironically, then, becomes a sex object herself, objectified by Apollo for 'men to gaze upon' (l. 8) and branded with the emblem of Shakespeare's Venus. Here the 'careless and disdainful eyes of proud Adonis that before her lies' (ll. 13-14) is perhaps a direct allusion to Shakespeare's poem. If Marlowe were referring to some other known depiction of the spiteful relationship, for example, the painting by Titian (Figure 1.2), he certainly would not have described them lying down — a position that Venus forces upon Adonis in Shakespeare's poem, which we consequently adopted for our production:

> 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. (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 41-44)

Figure 1.2 *Venus and Adonis* by Titian (1553)[1]

The description *before* her could also refer to *on* her and the 'lies' could be Marlowe referring directly to Adonis' self-deception (as in Shakespeare) or perhaps the action of Venus in a sexual pose, enticing the inexperienced youth with sexual coercion. So, from the very start there is a rather bizarre description of Hero's beauty connected to Apollo and Venus and, finally, Nature. Our costume designer, Lucy Moss, wove a pictorial image of Venus and Adonis into the fabric of Hero's 'kirtle'. Interestingly, the kirtle is another name for a sort of masculine 'man's tunic' (Sinfield, 2007, p. 133), which reinforces an enigmatic and ambiguous gender paradigm in Hero. Lucy also created Hero's bizarre blood-stained dress, her long veil, her seashell 'buskined' boots (suggesting her masculine theatricality) and her myrtle wreath. Also, the allusion to Apollo signifies a union Marlowe makes with Daphne in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book I. There, Daphne is transformed into a bucolic tree, mutable and a-sexual, much like the tragic consequences of incest inflicted upon Adonis' mother. Marlowe creates in his first fifty lines a connection with Nature while, paradoxically, invoking the personification of Nature herself who, jealous of Hero's

[1] http://www.terminartors.com/artworkprofile/Titian-Venus_and_Adonis

gifts, inflicted ‘black[ness]’ (Marlowe, 2006, l. 50) (ugliness) on half the world in reaction to her own creation. The character of a spiteful Nature (played by Eliza Haines) was added to highlight Hero’s beauty. To give Hero a Venus-like power and regal charisma, admiring women were added, who applauded her as she strode the platform at Sestos.

Hero and Venus were directed with similar enigmatic traits, thus hinting at Shakespeare’s and Marlowe’s knowledge of the paradox of the cult of Elizabeth. The identification of Elizabeth with the Venus-Virago is perhaps being reshaped by Shakespeare and Marlowe into a more ambivalent, confusing and deflated category.

Though Marlowe’s Hero is not an outwardly aggressive female, parallels can be drawn with Venus. We can discover the same white-hot burning of desire in Hero that we typically associate with the more outwardly aggressive Venus. Marlowe gives us the pithy parenthetical lines ‘all women are ambitious naturally’ (Marlowe, 2006, l. 428) and being wooed, ‘women use but half their strength’ (l. 780). In addition to this is the inward ‘slip’ (Sinfield, 2007, p. 128) of Hero before describing the serenity of her turret. Her subconscious speaks (as if against her will) an abrupt, if tender ‘come thither’ (Marlowe, 2006, l. 357). Hero can be perceived as manipulating the situation in a more subtle way than her Venusian counterpart, thus revealing a purposeful coquettishness that appears more intelligent than Venus. As stated earlier, Hero struggles with the moral implications of losing her irrevocable virginity: ‘once lost, lost forever’ (l. 570). Yet Hero is definitely not confused sexually. William P. Walsh, in his essay ‘Sexual Discovery and Renaissance Morality in Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*’, describes Hero as limited in her ‘understanding of sex; she sees physical love as loss, not as potentially fruitful’ (Walsh, 1972, p. 44). By contrast, in my adaptation I directed the following passage to discover a girl who instinctively takes refuge in the one place that signifies a territory for sex — her bed. As

Leander climbs in, she 'Being suddenly betrayed dived down to hide her/And as her silver body downward went/With both her hands she made the bed a tent' (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 746-748). In the production, images were used such as 'dived down' and 'her silver body downward went' to perhaps suggest an ironic sexual strategy by Hero. The military reference of 'tent' was depicted on stage with a sheet, which perhaps exaggerated Leander's sexual prowess (imagery of concealed phallus as a central tent post) and provoked images of Venus' sexual exploits with Mars, the god of war:

> Over my altars hath he hung his lance,
> His battered shield, his uncontrolled crest,
> And for my sake hath learned to sport and dance,
> To toy, to wanton, dally, smile and jest,
> Scorning his churlish drum and ensign red,
> Making my arms his field, his tent my bed. (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 103-108)

The comparison does suggest similarities in character. Ms. West was directed towards this knowing sexual agenda. Also, Hero was directed to, like Venus, fake her own fainting in order to draw Leander in for a kiss. 'Ovid' was directed to play the following 'love unacquainted' speech with a sense of irony:

> By this, sad Hero, with love unacquainted,
> Viewing Leander's face, fell down and fainted.
> He kissed her, and breathed life into her lips. (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 485-487)

Our intention here was to engage the audience and make them privy to Hero's intentions while depicting a theatrical strategy. In essence, the Venus faint 'teaches' the actor Leander what to do in real life. He mimics his actions in the play and the results are very similar. After the kiss, she becomes the sexual aggressor, ready to engage fully and deny Leander nothing. Like Venus, her faint becomes a ploy (a discovery in rehearsal May, 2013). I staged it with a very similar intention as Venus' faint, and 'Ovid' was directed to play the comic irony as if to say to the audience: 'here we go again! Another faint, another kiss!'

After the kiss, Leander seems to change from displaying the *carpe diem* rhetoric of Venus, to the chaste naiveté of Adonis. What is compelling (and humorous) is that Hero is throwing herself at an idea — not, as she seems to hope, towards a willing, experienced sexual partner. Marlowe, paradoxically, lures us along with the Leander-as-aggressor trope. Most of the dialogue belongs to his 'bold sharp' (Marlowe, 2006, l. 197) sophistry. But by line 495, when Hero drops the fan, we begin to realize that Hero controls the action and ultimately the consummation of her sexual fantasy:

> So on she goes, and in her idle flight,
> Her painted fan of curled plumes let fall,
> Thinking to train Leander therewithal.
> He being a novice, knew not what she meant ... (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 494-497)

This solidifies the idea that Leander's sophistry is ambivalent and empty. Like Adonis, Leander simply cannot understand the subtle forwardness of Hero to the extent that Hero is eventually forced to make things much easier for him at her turret. Upon Leander's second visit to the turret, when the lovers finally consummate, he arrives completely naked (only shirtless in our production) and trembling at her door. Marlowe describes Hero as shocked:

> She stayed not for her robes, but straight arose,
> And drunk with gladness, to the door she goes.
> Where seeing a naked man, she screeched for fear,
> Such sights as this, to tender maids are rare. (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 719-722)

Hero was directed to scream and look away and then look back at his body three times. She was directed to cover her eyes with her hands but with her fingers 'webbed' so that she could peek through to fully see her naked lover. In this regard, my production strived to depict Hero as an equally bold, yet much more subtle sexual character than Venus. This was certainly our intention in the practice. The audience was again confronted with an enigmatic sexuality in this woman, whose power lies in her inner confidence and outward affection.

TREATMENTS OF VENUS AND ADONIS INFLUENTIAL TO MY PRACTICE

In Book X of his *Metamorphoses,* Ovid (2000, ll. 585-864) also tells the story of Venus and Adonis (with just over two hundred lines). Adonis is a young beautiful boy, born of incest from a metamorphosed myrrh tree, and Venus is, of course, the Goddess of Love, born of the ocean and governess of sex and lust. In Ovid's story Adonis seems receptive to the amorous advances of Venus (Ovid, 2000, ll. 585-864, pp. 265-272). Richard Meek (2009, pp. 38-39) points out the Erwin Panofsky (1969, p. 153) theory that Shakespeare was influenced or inspired by the famous painting of *Venus and Adonis* by the sixteenth-century Italian painter Titian (1490-1576) that shows Adonis rejecting the advances of Venus in grim defiance. However, it seems more likely that Shakespeare was original in his exploration (Hulse, 1981, p. 146). Shakespeare takes the main thrust of his narrative from Book X but he adds almost twelve hundred lines of female aggressiveness, male sexual confusion and gender ambiguity. These are absent in Ovid's (2000) version of the tale but present elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*, most notably in the stories of *Narcissus and Echo* (Book III) and *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* (Book IV). Edmund Spenser's 1590 treatment of the story seems to mirror Ovid in Adonis' mutual affection. However, Spenser creates an ideal world (different from Ovid) for the lovers in *The Fairie Queene*, which Shakespeare may have found less interesting and less dramatic. Certainly, Spenser describes Adonis 'Joying his goddess, and of her enjoyed' (Spencer, 1970, 3.6.48 l. 2) in a 'perpetuall' (3.6.47 l. 6) afterlife, free from sharp realities — made sharp (metaphorically) by the 'cruell tusk' (3.6.48 l. 4) of the boar.

In contrast to Marlowe's, Shakespeare's poem is very rich in quasi-theatrical dialogue, and it lends itself more immediately to stage adaptations. Adaptations have included Greg Doran's 2004 RSC production of *Venus and Adonis: A Masque for Puppets,*

which played both in London and at Stratford's Swan Theatre, receiving fine reviews. Doran directed the piece, with Michael Pennington portraying the narrator. Fiona Mountford in *The Evening Standard* wrote:

> As actor Michael Pennington, seated to the right of the tiny stage, mellifluously narrates the poem and guitarist Steve Russell adds accompaniment, a team of five blackclad puppeteers manipulate the models with incredible dexterity and exquisite precision. It is not customary to witness an audience of adults — the work is not recommended for anyone under 14 — remain open-mouthed with wonder, but this they did when the lovers' long-postponed kiss caused Venus and Adonis to float up into the air. (Mountford, 2004)

Perhaps inspired by Jonson's mock-Marlovian *Hero and Leander* mentioned above, Doran's adaptation used a combination of string and rod puppets to elevate the visual elements of the narrative. Doran explains that the sensational theatricality of Shakespeare's poem led him to see the potential of *Venus and Adonis* as 'an excellent theatre piece' (Doran, 2004). Paul Taylor in *The Independent* rated this production as one of the best plays across the country in 2004: 'Shakespeare's witty erotic poem is brought to life by marionettes in a show that magically marries the formality of the Jacobean masque and the enchantment of Japanese Bunraku puppetry' (Taylor, 2004, p. 42). Doran's production proved most useful in my understanding of how I would stage the representation of the boar (Figures x.1a and x.1b) with live actors. Also, Doran confirmed, as stated, that the narrator could serve as a distanced 'manipulator' of the action. This gave me the idea to include the narrator as both a storyteller of narrative action and a more active 'actor/narrator' in the play-within-a-play. Essentially, Ovid 'played herself' in the play-within-a-play by stepping out of the main 'real' love story of Hero and Leander and becoming a kind of 'puppet representation' who is manipulating herself in the episode of *Venus and Adonis*.

Also influential was my research of a three-actress *'Venus'* performed in Dallas, Texas, by the Undermain Theatre Company in 1991. Julie Dam's review of the production in *The Dallas Morning News* describes the rich characters as brilliantly suited for the stage; particularly the narrator adapted to 'Venus' thwarted lover Mars' who 'straddles the line between interactive character and omniscient storyteller' (Dam, 1991). During early rehearsals, 'Ovid' was directed to interact with the other characters on stage. I thought 'Ovid' could be more active like Mars in the Undermain production. But this concept later changed in favour of a more ironic and detached 'Ovid'. Therefore, 'Ovid' remained 'invisible' to the characters on stage while guiding the audience's perception of them from an omniscient perspective. This gave the illusion that our characters were acting from individual needs, motivated by real wants and desires. Our more distanced approach to narration is explored more in Chapter 4.

Multiple-actor adaptations (with more than one actor portraying different character 'traits' of the main characters) seem to be a new way of interpreting the multi-faceted and often outrageous characters in *Venus and Adonis*. Marion Potts, an Australia-based director, staged a two-actress *Venus* in which the audience became the 'presence of Adonis'. Set in a stark hotel room, they performed the inward duality of Venus' love versus lust. Potts described the experience directing the narrative as 'one of the most rewarding experiences I've had in the theatre' (Potts, 2010, p. 9). This adaptation was particularly influential in my practice because it portrayed an enhancement of personality in the character of Venus. Although, as stated, I am a male actor who portrayed Venus with dual gender traits, I felt that a more feminine presence on stage would add heightened vigor and variety to my portrayal. Using a thread of Potts' concept, three other youthful women were added to be Venus' 'entourage'. The women were reflections of Venus'

desires and they played her companions, her servants, her Graces, her 'actors' and her allies in the seduction of Adonis. The purpose of this concept was to add to the intensity of Venus' already uncontrollable desire. However, importantly, when Adonis dies, Venus leaves in her swan-driven chariot without the women. My feeling was that the women were manifestations of Venus' feminine lust who were no longer needed in the deep painful process of mourning her spiritual love.

Another popular adaptation of *Venus and Adonis* was performed at Shakespeare Orange County (formerly Grove Shakespeare Festival). A one-man *Venus and Adonis* performed by Benjamin Stewart, who included every word of the nearly twelve-hundred-line poem, as well as every character, to good reviews. Jan Herman in *The Los Angeles Times* praised: 'this "*Venus and Adonis*" pairs the Bard's linguistic genius — his metaphors of unsurpassed brilliance and his rhetorical power — with a highly theatrical performance capable of great scale and intensity, as well as intricate subtlety and nuance' (Herman, 1995). Stewart wore only black, on a black stage to concentrate attention upon the verse. Using no props, music or production magic, he wanted to 'present to the public an, as it were, unsung masterpiece by Shakespeare that the individual auditors and viewers would probably never read and even if they did would probably, in so doing, miss on the page the delicacies and gemstones of it' (Stewart, 1997, p. 296). Our own practical exploration of the poem embraces gender ambiguity, much like Stewart's. Stewart's 'accessible' production also speaks to my intention towards the audience, explored in the introduction. We endeavoured to make the language as clear as possible (Chapter 4) for our public audience.

The treatments of both tales speak to how enduring these particular myths have continued to be for centuries. They demonstrate and question both the mysterious nature of

‘quick’ love and the deep psychological complexity of sex and gender identity. As this chapter indicates, I have been influenced by the specific legends of these stories in historical and contemporary context. Most of my research in this chapter relates to how these stories can be studied in relation to my practical understanding of characters within the poems.

Chapter 3 suggests how Shakespeare and Marlowe may have seized upon the unique eroticism of Elizabethan epyllion to subvert morality and masculine hegemony. It further describes how my research and practical understanding of early minor epic erotic subversiveness are imbricated into my final presentation. However, my practice is also influenced by the historical evolution of the epyllion genre, which is the focus for the following chapter. Since Shakespeare’s and Marlowe’s poems are minor epics, I have reached back to Hellenistic and Roman writers, who were the progenitors of this unique genre, in order to understand and demonstrate how the evolution of the epyllion relates to the structure of my adaptation and practice.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF THE MINOR EPIC GENRE AND PRACTICE

> Will you reade Virgill? take the Earle of Surrey. Catullus? Shakespeare and Marlowes fragment.
>
> Richard Carew, *The Excellencie of the English Tounge,* 1614 (1984, p. 43)

The main focus of this chapter is an examination of some of the challenges for my practice in the more progressive sexual and gender themes of my adaptation. Studying key examples of ancient epyllia, evolving through to medieval poetry, was helpful for discovering methods of presenting the often ambiguous and enigmatic characters that Shakespeare and Marlowe invented within their poems. These research findings were also helpful in solving challenges in staging (or not staging) the long and often tedious lyrical laments in the play. In this chapter, I examine what I have determined are individual and separate evolutionary '*resonances'* (Nelson, 2013, p. 32, emphasis in original) from Callimachus' *Hecale*, Moschus' *Europa*, Catullus' *Of the Argonauts and an Epithalamium for Peleus and Thetis* and the medieval Italian influence of Petrarch. This chapter also proposes a definition for the classical genre of epyllion and, in so doing, focuses on the evolution and trends of minor epic and then links these trends, hermeneutically, to the early modern epyllia *Hero and Leander* and *Venus and Adonis* and to my adaptation. Each research finding is discussed in relation to how it affected my practical experiments, my main inquiry and the methods that were applied in staging the lyricism of nondramatic poetry.

Before examining the resonances in this chapter, it is important to introduce a very basic definition for the ancient epyllion genre, separate from traditional epic poetry.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ANCIENT EPYLLION AND EPIC NARRATIVE

The permissiveness of the controversial Greek term *επύλλιον* (epyllion) aside (Allen, 1958, pp. 515-516; Donno, 1963, p. 6n; Hollis, 1990, p. 23), there does seem to be a direct pathway from the ancients to succeeding artists, and the elastic nature of the genre itself serves to link a pattern of elements that reveal clear evolution. Ancient epyllion seems to have a uniquely *feminine* vein that opens in response to a fondness for the common plight of meaner creatures. This was influential in exploring the ambiguous gender paradigms and sexual equality in my adaptation. It seems that these first epyllia had a feminine focus that differed from ancient, traditional epic poetry. The traditional epic that emerged from Homer's seemingly limitless capacity for improvisational inspiration has been imitated by generations of artists who try to capture the verbosity of the oral tradition. My practice celebrates the lyrical as oral presentation in much the same way.

It is worth noting that, unlike the epyllion, the epic never faded away. The Oxford definition of 'epic' with its elevated oral traditions of heroic adventures 'which celebrates in the form of a continuous narrative the achievements of one or more heroic personages of history or tradition' (*OED* online) goes far to give us a template with which to gauge the radical departure of the ever experimental little epic, defined as having 'miniature', 'allusive', 'digressive' and 'erotic' dimensions (Baldick, 2001, pp. 86-87). Peter Toohey relates that most classical epyllia employ a focus on unheroic characters and women who experience no 'moral regeneration' (Toohey, 1992, p. 101). The little epic emerged in about the second century BC. Succeeding ages would re-edify and refine the sub-genre until it died out, though it was resurrected many times.

HECALE

A.S. Hollis contends that in antiquity, 'If we had to choose one poem to represent the epyllion, it would surely be Callimachus' *Hecale*' (Hollis, 2006, p. 142). Even from this very early Alexandrian poem (ca. 200 BC) we can see a burgeoning uniqueness of style. The poem develops (in its fragmentary form) a decisive purpose of counter-epic. It is short — estimated at about 1,000 lines (Hollis, 2006, p. 142) — and is digressive, allusive and surprisingly erotic. Hollis (2006, p. 142) describes the tone of the poem as heroic, but with a dominant matriarchal vein. Callimachus' poem has a curious mix of legend, mythology and (importantly) a series of digressions.

Toohey describes the poem *Hecale* as a tale that 'shifts away from male and heroic concerns' and explores (with narration) 'a type of low-life realism' (Toohey, 1992, p. 102). This description directly illuminates the dangerous subversiveness of Shakespeare's and Marlowe's sixteenth-century epyllia and their countering of patriarchal domination and religious tyranny (Chapter 3). Callimachus' fragment has all the notes of an experimental Hellenistic counter-epic. He uses the lofty epic hero Theseus, whose great feats of conquering the Minotaur are chronicled in myth, and humanizes him. He brings Theseus down to earth in the same way that Shakespeare transports Venus from her chariot pulled by flying swans into a forest of timorous, fleeing hares. And Marlowe brings Hero from the protection and sanctity of Venus' high altar to a vulnerable exposure of her sexuality with her naked Leander. Indeed, Callimachus offers us a vulnerable feminine heart that is dignified and unselfish. Hecale welcomes Theseus, a powerful masculine stranger and Callimachus boldly folds in layers of the 'Attic' (Callimachus, 1958, l. 230, p. 181) woman's gentle approach: the removal of Theseus' wet clothes, her building of the fire, her sitting him on her bed, the relief of his 'wild olives' (Callimachus, 1958, ll. 248-149,

p. 187) foot bath. The whole scene takes on a somewhat ambiguous, but attractive, sensuality. Kathryn Gutzwiller (1981, pp. 54-56) sees this rustic treatment of Theseus as a purposeful contrast with Homer's traditional epic *Odyssey* in that Callimachus responds antithetically to the grandness of Odysseus' treatment by the sorceress Circe. Circe's handmaids pour Homer's hero a bath — grand, and fit for a god — performed with an almost spiritual ceremony (Homer, 1919, ll. 360-370). Callimachus, by contrast, gives Theseus a κενηβη (Callimachus, 1958, l. 246, p. 187) or small tub for his feet, which obviously needs to be filled and refilled in the rustic setting.

As stated, this tenderness, which, in effect, humanizes the legendary Theseus, was influential in my practice. For example, Venus and Hero were depicted with similarly sensual mortal desires that contrasted sharply with their more divine qualities. Venus is a goddess, yet she is continually sweating, panting, aching and subjugating herself to the mortal Adonis. I strived to play her with very real and often scatological desire. Hero is a cloistered innocent, a spiritual virgin devoted to the divine goddess of love, yet she spends the entire play in pursuit of her own sexual desire. The approach to staging the characters is discussed further in Chapter 3.

THE EUROPA

In the evolution of epyllia, the next most important work relevant to my practice comes from the *Europa* by Moschus (ca. 150 BC), which is described by Toohey: 'The *Europa* is short, makes strong use of digression ... its concern is erotic, and the narrative proceeds in the main form a *female* point of view' (Toohey, 1992, p. 106). The poem describes the legendary story of Zeus carrying the beautiful Europa on his wide back, but the mythological, heroic and immortal masculine theme does not fully take hold of the poem's structure. *Europa's* lyrical basket scene illustrates a unique feminine slant in Hellenistic

poetry, as well as poignant digression into pastoral. A portion of the basket scene from *Europa* here provides an epyllion example of counter-epic subculture, with a distinctly feminine vein of sensuality:

> Now when these damsels were got to the blossomy meads, they waxed merry one over this flower, another over that ... Then all the band fell a-plucking the spicy tresses of the yellow saffron to see who could pluck the most, only their queen in the midst of them culled the glory and delight of the red red rose and was pre-eminent among them even as the Child o' the Foam among the Graces.
>
> (Moschus, 1912, p. 433)

This is hardly a patriarchal heroic. Moschus displays a non-heroic vulnerability and erotic female sexuality with an allusion to Venus (and her sensual Graces) and the use of 'plucking', specifically, the contest of 'who could pluck the most'. Influential to my practice was Moschus' use of the perceived innocence of the feminine, evidenced in the basket scene, which becomes overrun by the uncontrolled, hot desire of male sexuality (Jupiter's eventual rape of Europa), but with a feminine sexual responsiveness to that masculinity. Europa is sensual towards her eventual assailant:

> So came he into that meadow without affraying those maidens; and they were straightway taken with a desire to come near and touch the lovely ox, whose divine fragrance came so far and outdid even the delightsome odour of that breathing meadow. There went he then and stood afore the spotless may Europa, and for to cast his spell upon her began to lick her pretty neck. Whereat she fell to touching and toying, and did wipe gently away the foam that was thick upon his mouth, till at last there went a kiss from a maid unto a bull.
>
> (Moschus, 1912, p. 435)

Sexual irony becomes an essential part of the genre of epyllion in the sixteenth-century, particularly as it relates to gender-bending paradigms of Marlowe and Shakespeare. In my practice, the character of Adonis was linked to Europa's sexual conflict. Even when Europa is being abducted, she seems strangely compliant to Jupiter. Similarly, Adonis is being forced into a sexual situation, but he is not without his own sexual curiosity.

We see Adonis, time and again, not only admonishing love for love's sake, but also blatantly establishing his own ineptitude:

> 'I know not love,' quoth he, 'nor will not know it,
> Unless it be a boar, and then I chase it.
> 'Tis much to borrow and I will not owe it;
> My love to love is love but to disgrace it,
> For I have heard it is a life in death,
> That laughs and weeps, and all but with a breath'.
>
> (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 409-414)

The sexual rhetoric remains empty. But the reader/audience is at once frustrated and exhilarated by Adonis' refusal, just as we are excited by Europa's fear of Jupiter mixed with her sexual curiosity. Europa's sexual curiosity in Moschus' poem resonated with my practice. For example, Shakespeare suggests that the youthful Adonis has a sexual curiosity he cannot help but explore. When Venus feigns and falls in her classic sexual ploy, Adonis takes his opportunity, despite his learned philosophy that love is 'much to borrow' (l. 411). He kisses Venus when she is 'unconscious' to test his own sexual prowess: 'He kisses her' (l. 479). This is quite significant because when she awakes and begs for more, Adonis seems to understand that sexual contact is exciting. It is not that he prefers hunting or that he does not know how to use his sexual equipment. It is simply that he is afraid of contact before he understands how, who and what he is attracted to:

> 'Fair queen,' quoth he, 'if any love you owe me,
> Measure my strangeness with my unripe years.
> Before I know myself, seek not to know me;
> No fisher but the ungrown fry forbears,
> The mellow plum doth fall, the green sticks fast,
> Or being early plucked is sour to taste. (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 523-528)

According to William Keach, the paradox for Venus is that Adonis is 'this remarkably beautiful and alive creature [who] refuses to interest himself in the love he arouses and seems so well suited for' (Keach, 1977, p. 70). But this is based on the endowment of character put upon Adonis by the narrator and by Venus. 'Ovid'/narrator simply assumes

that Adonis ‘laughed [love] to scorn’ (Shakespeare, 2007, l. 4), but later seems surprised by Adonis’ kiss. In the adaptation, Adonis’ kiss was separated from his more naive actions when he ‘wrings her nose’ (l. 475), ‘bends her fingers’ (l. 476) and ‘chafes her lips’ (l. 477), with the definitive couplet:

> He kisses her, and she by her good will
> Will never rise, so he will kiss her still. (ll. 479-480)

This is hardly proof of the narrator’s assertion that Adonis ‘laughed [love] to scorn’ (l. 4). I directed Will Cooke to take the moment where his sexual curiosity is awakened by this opportunity (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 ‘The Kiss’ of Adonis and Venus in rehearsal at George Cadbury Hall, University of Birmingham, UK.

The kiss was sustained long enough for Venus to cue her entourage with a ‘thumbs up’ excitement that her ploy was working. ‘Ovid’, as if surprised by the length of the kiss, if not Venus’ feigning, describes more than a platonic or medicinal touch of lips. She says ‘he will kiss her still’ — ‘still’ meaning continuously or always — as his final action. And

we know he enjoyed it because he later dangles the kiss as a sexual reward for Venus. Curiously, Adonis tests himself once more with the 'fake' bargain he makes with the great goddess upon his departure to meet his friends for the hunt:

> 'Now let me say good-night, and so say you;
> If you will say so, you shall have a kiss.'
> 'Good-night', quoth she, and ere he says adieu,
> The honey fee of parting tendered is:
> Her arms do lend his neck a sweet embrace;
> Incorporate then they seem: face grows to face.
>
> (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 535-540)

Shakespeare brings us allusions of hermaphrodism with the mutable 'incorporate' figures. They become a single sexual being — male and female. It is significant to note that the sensuousness of the kiss is tempered, not with Adonis' disdain, but with a permeable and mystical union of 'face grows to face' (l. 540). Will Cooke was directed to explore the inward nature of his discovery and his character's unique sexual exploration: 'Love surfeits not, lust like a glutton dies;/Love is all truth, lust full of forged lies' (ll. 803-804). His antithetical desires become not only an admonishment of Venus, but also a form of working out his own naive and undiscovered truths.

Moschus achieves his main design to take his reader off the page and into his or her own visual imagination. The sensual basket scene is descriptive. The description of the basket itself is an example of what we want from the epyllion — a play-within-a-play as a narrative description of story within story, with mythical legend raised in ekphrastic relief. The digression of Zeus transforming Io into a cow parallels his own transformation to a bull, as well as prefiguring Europa's fate. Also, his seductive power infuses *both* digressive and main thrust. Similarly, my intention was to use the digressive story of Venus and Adonis to increase the sexual appetites of both Hero (who watches the play) and Leander (who acts in the play). The play-within-a-play is a source of eroticism, intended to excite

the characters sexually and emotionally. Therefore, their love at first sight is both spiritual and eroticized.

OF THE ARGONAUTS AND AN EPITHALAMIUM FOR PELEUS AND THETIS

The genre continued to evolve almost a century later in Rome with Catullus' (ca. 84-54 BC) minor poem *Of the Argonauts and an Epithalamium for Peleus and Thetis.* Richard Carew's (1555-1620) *The Excellencie of the English Tounge* (1614) links Catullus directly with Shakespeare and Marlowe specifically: 'Will you reade Virgill? Take the Earle of Surrey. Catullus? Shakespeare and Marlowes fragment' (Carew, 1984, p. 43). The allusion is a rare but important example for understanding not only how classicism infiltrated early modern writing, but also how the 'fragment' (*Hero and Leander*) is not bracketed with any particular Shakespearean text, but simply links him with Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* in the spirit of Catullus, an ancient writer of erotic epyllia. Catullus included many elements of epyllion that informed my practical study of *Venus and Adonis* and *Hero and Leander*, particularly relating to the way I treated the lyrical laments of Venus in reaction to Adonis' departure to hunt the boar and to her cathartic lament after Adonis' death.

Catullus' *Of the Argonauts and an Epithalamium for Peleus and Thetis* is a complex poem of advanced structure with emphasis on a feminine character. It is a 'profoundly erotic creation' and its 'Narrative pace is varied by the use of third-person narrative (expansive or staccato), by direct speech and by narrative intrusion' (Toohey, 1992, p. 109). The distinct dialogue within the poem seems immediate and dramatic as the tapestry comes to life and speaks. The poem evokes the marriage story of Thetis, a Nereid sea goddess and eventual mother of Achilles, and Peleus, King of Thessaly, the eventual (mortal) father of Achilles. Like Moschus' *Europa*, it contains detailed, imaginative ekphrasis. A prime example is Catullus' painted cloth depiction in the couple's wedding

shrine of the adventures of Theseus and Ariadne. Perhaps inspired by Moschus' basket, Catullus employs ekphrastic description in the poem's digressive thrust:

> In the midst of the palace a sacred couch, truly joyful for the marriage of the goddess, gleaming with Indian ivory, stained with the red dyes won from purple murex. The cloth depicts in ancient forms, with marvellous art, in all their variety, the excellence of gods and men. Here are seen the wave-echoing shores of Naxos Theseus, aboard his ship, vanishing swiftly, watched by Ariadne ungovernable passion in her heart, not yet believing that she sees what she does see.
>
> (Catullus, 2001)

Catullus elevates the marvelous art of artistic creation. The extended movement of Catullus' painted cloth has a dramatic pace in the digression of Ariadne and Theseus. Catullus, like Moschus, and later Marlowe and Shakespeare, evokes imaginative description *as* narrative. The poem focuses on the bold heroic exploits of Theseus (epic-like) conquering the beastly Minotaur, then suddenly digresses and studies instead the deep pain of Ariadne. The distinctly dramatic dialogue emanates from the lofty narrative, giving one of the first examples of the epyllion's digression into tragic amorous complaint:

> often loud shrieks cried the frenzy in her ardent breast, and then she would climb the steep cliffs in her grief, ... a frozen sob issuing from her wet face: 'False Theseus, is this why you take me from my father's land, faithless man, to abandon me on a desert shore'? (Catullus, 2001)

The device of complaint is important to Catullus' epyllion because it seems to allow the writer (in a counter-epic spirit) to explore more unconventional and emotional modes of communication with a sense of freedom. In fact, as Arthur Leslie Wheeler points out, 'two hundred and twelve of the four hundred and nine lines are devoted to another tale — that of abandoned Ariadne — in which the poet feels a deeper interest than in the ostensible theme' (Wheeler, 1934, p. 122). The complaint of Ariadne is deeply emotional. It occupies a large section placed almost in the middle of the poem. Indeed, her complaint and eventual curse is so intense that it has ramifications on ancient historical legend concerning

the suicide of Theseus' father Aegeus and the destiny of Theseus. Ariadne's heightened complaint had a strong influence on my practical experimentation.

Reading Catullus inspired me to look more closely at Venus' rather lengthy complaints in Shakespeare's poem. For example, Shakespeare's Venus has two major complaints within the poem. The first one is when Adonis breaks from her embraces and disappears into the night to hunt the boar. Her confused and ominous lament mirrors Catullus' Ariadne:

> And now she beats her heart, whereat it groans,
> That all the neighbor caves as seeming troubled,
> Make verbal repetition of her moans,
> Passion on passion, deeply is redoubled,
> 'Ay me,' she cries, and twenty times, 'woe, woe',
> And twenty echoes, twenty times cry so. (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 829-834)

Venus' second major lament, after Adonis' death, takes on a more aggressive dimension, involving a curse directed at the very nature of love:

> Since thou art dead, lo here I prophecy,
> Sorrow on love hereafter shall attend:
> It shall be waited on with jealousy,
> Find sweet beginning, but unsavory end.
> Ne're settled equally, but high or lo,
> That all loves pleasure shall not match his woe.
> (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 1135-1140)

I had originally planned to include both of these lengthy complaints in my adaptation in their entirety, but after reading Catullus, I decided to include only part of them. The pessimism of the lament of Ariadne in *Of the Argonauts and an Epithalamium for Peleus and Thetis* is relentless, with Ariadne's plea to the Eumenides for revenge dominating the whole spirit of the poem. Her vehemence tempers the erotic and amorous drive that is so exciting within the rest of the poem and it led me towards a pessimistic ending, despite Ariadne's meeting of Bacchus. This is not to suggest that I found Ariadne's lament distasteful, unjustified or unnecessary. But this poem inspired me to look back at the play-

within-a-play in my adaptation and make decisions about how the 'show' would be presented to the character of Hero. As stated, I wanted the play to 'eroticize' the action for Leander and for Hero, and the deep laments of Venus seemed to overpower this intention. However, to cut the laments completely would too much corrupt the structure of the piece and destroy a sense of cathartic pathos that was found to be helpful in depicting the depth of Venus' true love for Adonis. In the end, I compromised.

For the first lament, the language on lines 816–868 was replaced with a softer, more lyrical dance. Venus' lamentable song was turned into a three-minute choral dance using all of the female dancers as Venus' swans. My intention was to demonstrate to the audience (Hero) a cheerful optimism within Venus' sadness. Venus, like Ariadne, is abandoned by her lover, but is immediately surrounded and comforted by her lovely companions much the same way Ariadne is surrounded by the Bacchantes. My intention for the dance sequence was for it to take on a sensuality all its own. Venus' swans gently touch and caress the goddess to transform her melancholy. Music was used here as well, to highlight and reinforce Venus' melancholy (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 23).

Venus' final lament starts when she discovers Adonis' body, new killed by the boar. This was the only instance in my adaptation in which Shakespeare's text was 'rearranged'. I thought it would be more dramatic to bring out the characters of Death on stage so that Venus, kneeling over Adonis' dead body, could aggressively attack them (not physically) directly. Her exclamations towards the 'Hard favor'd tyrant' (Shakespeare, 2007, l. 931) were taken from line 931, but Shakespeare's poem does not discover Adonis dead until line 1029. The line sequence was reversed so that Venus' exclamation, or 'false complaint' against Death could flow into, and become part of, her 'true complaint' over her loss. This placed stronger focus on the relationship of Venus towards Adonis and

allowed the lament to become more of an active, streamlined eulogy. Because it did not serve the piece, almost all of her angry curse against the nature and future of love was cut.

The epyllion crafted by Catullus led to the ultimate evolution of the genre in the first century AD, which, perhaps ironically, led to its apotheosis and eventual death. With Ovid, suggests Toohey, we have 'an epyllion within an epyllion' (Toohey, 1992, p. 115). Ovid's broad and long epic contains short, intense, ironic, digressive, erotic and metamorphic fantasies that perhaps shut the door on the genre by its sheer scope. The *Metamorphoses* is a cosmological epic that strives to encompass the creation of the world and, in so doing, explain the meaning of human existence. Perhaps Ovid's *Metamorphoses* took the genre into an unequalled and unsustainable scope.

In Augustan Rome, Ovid experimented with a sense of liberty and counter-culture (and adultery with the emperor's granddaughter) that eventually banished him from his native Rome (Bate, 1993, p. 4). Patricia Johnson argues that 'the literary world had changed and that Ovid found himself in isolation, with few worthy poetic peers and none as daring' (Johnson, 2008, p. 121) as the Augustan. If what Toohey (1992, p. 116) describes as the extinction of the genre with Ovid's all inclusive *Metamorphoses* is true, then we not only have an 'epyllion within an epyllion' (Toohey, 1992, p. 115) but a paradox within a paradox. For Renaissance writers looking for new and subversive styles, Ovid was most certainly the spark for epyllion reinvention.

ITALIAN INFLUENCE OF PETRARCH

Although an exploration of the classic epyllia of Callimachus, Moschus, Catullus and Ovid is essential in discussing an evolutionary trend, the verse form, style and psychology specific to the early modern short epic are primarily manifestations of even earlier writing, as it shows medieval and late medieval influence from the thirteenth- and fourteenth-

century Italians. We have discussed the main constructs of epyllion as socially conscious, rooted in the established classical epic, erotic and lyrical. The genre of epyllion owes much directly to Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374). It is this Italian author who gives us a link to English Renaissance. The master builders of English verse, Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, owe much to Petrarch, who (like Ovid) had experimented with combining elevated rhetorical style with extreme pathos. The English move towards pagan classicism, allegory and mythological psychology, in turn, was crucial to the pioneers of early modern epyllion. The troubadour song, a rustic, pastoral, very common vernacular lyric became the cornerstone of Italian poetry. Its celebrity is ironic, since the lion's share of Petrarch's poetry was written in Latin (Durling, 1976, p. 7). Petrarch was heavily influenced by Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), who called for a more eloquent vernacular, sung in emulation of the 'great poets' (Alighieri, 1990, p. 74). Petrarch was fascinated by the lofty veneration of classical literature and used it for his very personal struggle with romance, the nature of love and deep inward complaint. Petrarch's *canzone 23* in his *Rime sparse* reveals an obvious and extensive Ovidian influence. The poem lyrically shifts in waves of allusions to sex, complaint, transformation and psychological complexity. Petrarch chooses Ovid, not only because of Dante's veneration of 'the great poets' (Alighieri, 1990, p. 74), but because Ovid seems to influence him with ironic and measured sensuality. The constant striving for the spiritual and psychological love of Laura cannot be contained emotionally. His desire calls out for transformation, relief and awakening. He conjures Ovidian myth as a mechanism of reaching beyond the corporeal world that frustrates him. But, relief never comes. In *canzone 23,* Petrarch (1976) captures a sense of cold vulnerability like Battus' knowing but ignorant betrayal of Mercury, an Ovidian cruelty which seems to manifest itself in Petrarch as an inurement to suffering.

> Poi la rividi in altro abito sola,
> tal ch' i' non la conobbi, o senso umano!
> anzi le dissi 'l ver pien di paura;
> ed ella ne l'usata sua figura
> tosto tornando fecemi, oime lasso!
> d'un quasi vivo et sbigottito sasso. (Petrarch, 1976, ll. 74-80)
>
> (Later I saw her alone in another garment such that I did not know her, oh human sense! rather I told her the truth, full of fear, and she to her accustomed form quickly returning made me, alas, an almost living and terrified stone.)

He rails against the humanness of his suffering — 'o senso umano!' — and his potent honesty to his lover. In a sense, Petrarch is writing his own epitaph with the measured strokes of Ovid. As Robert M. Durling points out, *canzone 23* is deeply instructed by no less than six 'reenactments' (Durling, 1976, p. 27) of Ovidian myth. Durling confirms Petrarch's use of the legends of Apollo and Daphne, Phaeton, Cygnus, Echo, Actaeon and Battus. In fact, he (Durling, 1976, pp. 26-33) postulates that all of Petrarch's *Rime sparse* are in some way inspired by Ovid. The poem conjures Phaeton; a creature obsessed with adventure and overreaching desire, who, as it turns out, is in way over his head. The *sasso* that Petrarch's lover casts him in is essentially his grave, but worse, he is *quasi vivo* so his suffering becomes eternal.

Petrarch's poetry is influential to my practice because Venus' lament for Adonis' death, alluded to above, is intensely lyrical, and the verse seems to sing with a similar painful extremity. In practice, I tried to act the verse without the 'quality' of negative complaining. Instead, I attempted to act the true love that was in my heart with a positive, passionate delivery. My intention was to depict Venus' sublime ecstasy of loss. Venus, in some ways, becomes the classic Petrarchan lover. The female Venus is the amorous pursuer while the male Adonis becomes (metaphorically) her elusive Laura.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SHAKESPEARE'S AND MARLOWE'S EPYLLIA AND PRACTICE

> … poetry feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up; she lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled, if mankind are ever to increase in happiness and virtue.
>
> Plato's *The Republic* (2009, Bk. X)

This chapter addresses how studying key source material regarding the poems' subversive political agenda was helpful for discovering methods of presenting gender ambiguity, transgressive religious paradigms and spiritual love to a twenty-first century audience. Research findings ranged from sixteenth-century moralist writings to contemporary scholars who investigate the authors' reaction to a male-dominated society and strict religious moral codes. I also examine briefly a historical context of the poems' transgressive reputation (in Middleton's *A Mad World My Masters*) in order to place them in early modern England as subversive writings that were famous for their salacious effects on both men and women. Each research finding is addressed in relation to how it affected my practical experiments, as well as which methods were employed in staging the nondramatic poetry. In creating my adaptation, sources were discovered that supported my idea for an erotic thrust in production, while simultaneously supporting my belief that Shakespeare and Marlowe speak to us with a voice that was progressive for its day and remains relevant (and still somewhat progressive) today — a voice that professes gender and sexual equality. Again, these research findings all relate to Shakespeare's and Marlowe's progressive depiction of sexuality and eroticism, which is at the heart of my main inquiry.

CONTEXTUALIZING GENDER DESTABILISATION IN THE PRACTICE

Part of what developed in my adaptation had its genesis in relevant critical source material. Critics who discuss the poems' transgressive qualities in relation to the oppressiveness of the Elizabethan society were helpful to the practice. Personal identity in Renaissance society was rooted in a belief in and strong adherence to an extremely masculine hegemony. Considering this enormous and intolerable anxiety associated with the feminisation of the masculine in any form, contemporary critics have suggested that Shakespeare and Marlowe perhaps put forth their epyllia as treatises that transcend that anxiety and move towards instability of moral and social norms based on male domination through state and church, or what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1985) describes broadly as a homosocial paradigm. My argument is that Shakespeare and Marlowe responded to this culture with counter-cultural poems that violated the accepted gender norms and practices of sexuality and, in so doing, they countered (and artfully challenged) the extreme oppressiveness of the society.

To explore this argument, my dramatic adaptation emphasized sexual liberation through the deliberate bending of genders. In portraying Venus as a man dressed like a woman, my intention was to present, visually and theatrically, the paradox of her extreme sexual duality (both feminine and masculine). This choice of dress was intended not to employ 'camp' or parody, but to embrace Venus' transvestite characteristics, which can be studied as transgressive to the puritanical leanings of Elizabethan Protestantism (for Venus' potential as an effeminizing force towards Adonis), and progressive towards the heterocentric world of the twenty-first century audience (because of the presentation of what is perceived as 'homosexual' eroticism). As the man playing Venus, myself, dressed and made up ambiguously (Figure 3.1), my acting choices were a deliberate play of both

feminine *and* masculine style to highlight the binary sexual identity of Shakespeare's Venus. It is important to note, therefore, that to confuse the gender of the actor is not necessarily to confuse the character. As F.T. Prince suggests of Venus: 'She has a kinship with Cleopatra, and even with Falstaff' (Prince, 1960, p. xxxii.). Indeed, Venus has the feminine beauty (or feminine ambition) to boast that her 'beauty as the spring doth yearly grow' (Shakespeare, 2007, l. 141) and that her flesh is 'soft' (l. 142) and her hand 'smooth' (l. 143) and her whole physical aesthetic has 'no defects' (l. 138) while just before she demonstrates the enormous strength to lift the strapping Adonis off his horse and carry him around under her arm.

Figure 3.1 Jonathan Drahos as Venus — Ambiguous sexuality and gender in Venus.

In our production, I cut the narration describing Venus 'pluck[ing]' (l. 30) Adonis off his horse and instead showed the action by throwing him over my shoulder, spinning him around and thrusting him down to the ground so that I could be in place for a 'gentle' seduction. I strove to weave a continuous interplay of feminine softness and masculine strength throughout the play-within-a-play. By creating a sexual duality in Venus, my goal was to confront the audience with an exhilarating, dangerous conflation of homo and hetero eroticism, and expose them to same-sex emotional love in Venus' true lamenting for Adonis' death. The ambiguous gender also served to confront the audience's gender-normative belief systems. It is important to note, as an observation of the predominance of gender norms in our present-day belief systems, that my decision to play Venus did not come from a desire to be more steeped in the process (although this level of participation did prove beneficial to my overall reflection). My decision to take on the role stemmed from the fact that the actors I approached to play Venus in the production said they would feel uncomfortable playing a female character. The fact that this was an obstacle for actors whose very occupation calls on them to shift identity confirmed for me that the issue of sexual identity and gender normativity is still a very conscious concern in our sociopolitical western culture.

To further represent the sexual ambiguity in the practice, Shakespeare's and Marlowe's narrators in *Venus and Adonis* and *Hero and Leander* were examined. Rather than cast a man for the narrators, a female actor was costumed in both masculine and feminine dress as she portrayed the single character of 'Ovid'. Simply casting a female challenges the common critical understanding of the narrators as voyeuristically masculine (see Chapter 4). The same female actor then changed gender attire from male in Marlowe's language to female in Shakespeare's play-within-a-play (Figures 3.2a and 3.2b) and then

back again. ‘Ovid’ celebrates her/his own sexual ambiguity by telling the story from an hermaphroditic perspective. Again, merely having a woman actor dressed as both a man and a woman at different episodes within the main play and play-within-a-play confronts the audience with a hint of sexual ambiguity.

Figure 3.2a Carolanne Marano as ‘Ovid’, dressed in masculine attire to narrate *Hero and Leander.*

Figure 3.2b Carolanne Marano as ‘Ovid’, dressed in feminine attire to narrate *Venus and Adonis*.

Historically, Puritan factions railed against cross-dressing as an aberration. Philip Stubbes’ *Anatomy of Abuses* gives us a brief insight into the Reformation moralist’s sensibility:

> It is writte in the 22 of Deuteronomie, that what man so ever weareth womans apparel is accursed, and what woman weareth mans apparel is accursed also ... Our Apparell was given us as a signe distinctive to discern betwixt sex and sex, & therfore one to weare the Apparel of another sex, is to participate with the same, and to adulterate the veritie of his owne kinde.
>
> (Stubbes, 1877, p. 73)

This research resonated with my desire to be progressive in my practice. For example, 'Ovid' represents a progressive idea in our production — the notion that we are presenting gender ambivalence. The audience could, therefore, watch and listen to the story from a narrator who represents gender equality. 'Ovid's' blazon for Leander, often interpreted as homoerotic, was acted out by a female actor dressed in masculine attire. Similarly, presenting a freedom from strict religious sexual moralism, the allegorical pagan 'gods' in the play broke all the rules for moral strictness by taking on liberated and ever-changing sexual tastes or proclivities without a hint of moral consequence. For this display of liberation, I was inspired by Marlowe's fantastical description of 'Venus' glass'. 'Ovid' describes the bizarre visual scene depicted within Hero's tower:

> There might you see the gods in sundry shapes,
> Committing heady riots, incest, rapes; (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 141-144)

To depict this section, the dancers were brought onstage for an erotic series of dramatic tableau. On cues from 'Ovid', they were directed to freeze in interpretive representations of 'riots', 'incest' and 'rapes' (l. 144) (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3 The Chorus depicting erotic tableau in rehearsal for *Hero and Leander* — University of Worcester, UK.

The erotic and sartorial choices in my adaptation were all designed to highlight, elucidate, enhance and, ultimately, present the notions of liberated sexual equality found within the poems. Bruce R. Smith argues that the poems *Venus and Adonis* and *Hero and Leander* 'represent not an exclusive sexual taste but an *inclusive* one ... these poems are bisexual fantasies' (Smith, 1994, p. 136). The poems are broadly 'inclusive' of bisexuality, homosexuality and ambiguous androgyny, as well as heterosexuality. Sexual ambivalence was identified and exploited in the production. It is through the de-stabilising of gender identity that boundaries of marginalized sexuality can be more clearly understood as 'inclusive'. John Roe explains that 'in these two poems … the erotic enjoys free play, even determines the shape and nature of the poetic experience in a way that is unprecedented in earlier Tudor poetry' (Roe, 2000, pp. 31-32). Jonathan Bate relates that *Venus and Adonis* is 'a poem about transgressive sexuality' (Bate, 1993, p. 60). This research lines up with the poems' reputation in the early modern period. The poems were considered quite erotic and were mentioned together as such by contemporary accounts, as if they had the reputation of being companion pieces. Thomas Middleton (1580-1627) confirms this in his bold, satirical comedy *A Mad World My Masters* (1605). The hypocrite, Harebrain, is fearful of his wife's infidelity and, ironically, engages a courtesan (posing as a moral friend) for help in correcting his wife's suspected lasciviousness:

> HAREBRAIN: Do labour her prithee; I have conveyed away all her wanton pamphlets as *Hero and Leander, Venus and Adonis*, oh two luscious mary-bone pies for a young married wife. Here, here prithee take the resolution and read to her a little.
>
> COURTESAN: She's set up her resolution already, sir.
>
> HAREBRAIN: True, true, and this will confirm it the more. There's a chapter of hell, 'tis good to read in this cold weather. Terrify her, terrify her; go, read to her the horrible punishments for itching wantonness, the pains allotted for

> adultery; tell her her thoughts, her very dreams are
> answerable, say so; rip up the life of a Courtesan, and show
> how loathsome 'tis. (Middleton, 1995, 1. 2. ll. 44-54)

Importantly, Middleton mentions *Hero and Leander* and *Venus and Adonis* not as separate reading for male voyeurism, rather (boldly) as stimulants for female masturbation. The Courtesan, in giving 'chaste' advice to Harebrain's wife, convinces her to act virtuous and hide her secret fantasy from her husband:

> COURTESAN: ... If he chance steal upon you, let him find
> Some book lie open 'gainst an unchaste mind
> And coted scriptures, tho for your own pleasure,
> You read some stirring pamphlet, and convey it
> Under your Skirt, the fittest place to lay it.
> (Middleton, 1995, 1. 2. ll. 87-91)

The obvious reference to 'stirring pamphlet ... under your skirt' (ll. 90-91) is a bold reaction to these poems and suggests that they were read by women who were privileged with at least a reading education. Further, they were read, at least in Middleton's mind, as *companion* pieces of sexual poetry, and shared perhaps for their sublime, arousing qualities. Middleton, famous for his own sexual writing, especially his delightful, gender-twisting character of Moll Cutpurse from *The Roaring Girl*, written with Thomas Dekker (Kahn, 2007, p. 721), was likely influenced by the deeply sexual ambiguity of Marlowe and Shakespeare. Middleton and Dekker seemed deeply concerned with gender identity and transgression by boldly dramatizing the famous real-life cross-dresser Mary Firth (Kahn, 2007, pp. 721-726).

While demonstrating how Shakespeare and Marlowe may have subverted their own oppressive culture, my staging showed a twenty-first century audience that these poems, when enacted, have the potential to be equally transgressive and progressive to our contemporary world. The dramatisation of the poems challenged the audience with this question: Has our tolerance of minority groups evolved in the four hundred plus years

since the poems were written? It can be argued that the fallacy of gender equality in our heterosexual world (Ingraham, 1994) seems as evident now as it was for the Elizabethan homosocial world. Indeed, the twenty-first century is still locked in heated (and often violent) debates about minority groups — women, homosexual, bi-sexual and the transgendered.

It is relevant here to explore additional aspects of Shakespeare's and Marlowe's oppressive political environment in order to discover how the writers may have subverted it. Then I will relate the spirit of this exploration to my practice and to the progressive challenges that were presented to the audience.

BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Early modern science regarding gender and sexuality, it should be noted, cannot always be separated from governmental and religious policy. The Renaissance was occupied with the sexual science theories of Galen (Billing, 2008), an ancient philosopher, scholar and scientist in the art and practice of medicine who was rooted deep within the Renaissance mindset when it came to negotiating sexual differences. Galen's single-sex theory uses the rather unfortunate description of the mole as an example of anatomical sexual difference. Simply put, the mole's eyes are useless because they don't have the heat to form properly. Similarly, the woman lacks sufficient *in utero* heat and is anatomically incomplete. The genitals of the female are 'cold and wet', and internalized because of 'lack of sufficient heat during foetal development of the penis, scrotum and testicles to be pushed out of the body' (Billing, 2008, pp. 14-15). However, it should be stated that curiosity about gender was constantly changing.

Christian Billing argues that 'taking a Galenic paradigm as the single unified reference point for the continuing flux of experimental ideas developing in early modern

anatomical science is a phantasmagorical means of critical illumination' (Billing, 2008, p. 4). However, there was undeniable suppression of the notion of women's rights in the Renaissance. Deats (1997, p. 81) relates that the single-sex theory (explored by early modern scholars) contributes to the notion that womankind were a result of God's botch job. In any case, it has been established that men had almost all of the religious and political power, and women did not. The early modern male was defined by, it seems, and certainly valued for, his masculine strength and reason. What most critics have found (including Billing, 2008) is an enormous amount of anxiety about sexuality in early modern England, particularly male gender identification and fear of feminisation of the masculine identity. This has not entirely to do with fear of the so-called *homosexual*.

Alan Bray's book *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* highlights the ambiguous nature of early modern male sexuality. Indeed, as Bray (1982, p. 13) points out, the word 'homosexual' itself did not exist until well into the nineteenth century. Terms like 'sodomite' were used to describe aberrant *behaviour,* as well as other transgressions (Deats, 1997, p. 85; DiGangi, 1998, p. 197) but not necessarily sexual *identity.* Certainly, states Bray (1982, p. 71), with many other critics, including Stanley Wells (2010, pp. 33-34), the courts in England had laws against sodomy but hardly ever indicted those who were known or suspected of this transgression. Again, the feminisation of masculine identity was of greater concern than behaviour. Therefore, perhaps to maintain control, the early modern male seemed to choose masculine friendship over male-female romantic love — demonstrating the female as a male possession to be shared amongst male friends. William Carroll (2000, pp. 49-62) and Jeffrey Masten (1997, pp. 37-49) discuss the bonds of male friendship, using examples of Shakespeare's Valentine-Proteus relationship in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. This male-male bond included strong, unbending identification

with other males, presumably to reinforce the dominance of social norms. Therefore, the sociopolitical aspects of the patriarchy cannot be overestimated. In a male dominated world where most women, according to Sara Munson Deats (1997, p. 50), suffered oppressive and often abusive conditions, any movement that would compromise masculinity was perhaps considered a threat and would be vehemently denigrated on social, governmental and religious levels. Therefore, poetry was considered a 'feminizing' force in society. 'Homosocial' embraces all things masculine and rejects all things that might be construed as identifying males as having feminine characteristics. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick (1985) in her seminal work *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* relates, male-male bonding is a phenomenon based at the very heart of power and masculine identity that dominates social structure.

How did the male population, then, reconcile the obvious fact that they were subject to a female monarch? The answer lies in Elizabeth's genius creation of the cult of the Virgin. While the Queen theatricalized herself as the Virgin Mother of England (Greenblatt, 1980, p. 168), she lived in a very masculine world. In fact, the Queen's greatest vulnerability in a male dominated society was her gender. The ruler of the country — indeed the most powerful person in the world — was a childless, husbandless, beautiful, self-professed virgin Queen. She was the ultimate 'magazine cover' object of sex herself. How could the nation, then, *not* be obsessed with an erotic sense of irony? The Queen and her council battled anxiety regarding her gender, her virginity, her strength to rule and her refusal to marry throughout her reign (Camden, 1970, pp. 29-30). Elizabeth herself was not a champion of feminism. She was not even a voice for women, but a patriarchal voice who championed male councilors, supported male-dominated laws and perpetuated male hegemony — all the while presenting herself publicly, according to David Norbrook, as an

'exception to the general rules about male superiority' (Norbrook, 2002, p. 106). Puritanical attempts to eliminate aberrant behaviour that would threaten stability cannot be underestimated. Poetry and drama were increasingly condemned by some as effeminate forces that promoted amoral activity. Sex and politics collided, and in Elizabethan England political paradigms were not necessarily separate from religious polemics. Some people considered plays and poems to be filthy and amoral, and they went so far as to publish pamphlets against them. Hard-line puritans protested fiercely in parliament against the playhouses. In their view, players, poets, dancers, musicians and singers should be either pushed out of town or escorted to the scaffold. This puritan faction became a loud voice in England. Severe Protestant works surfaced such as John Northbrooke's 1577 treatise *Against Dicing, Dauncing, Playes, and Enteludes with other Idle pastimes.* Northbrooke, a self-professed preacher, was appalled by the moral liberties taken by an irreligious population:

> God be mercifull to this realme of Englande, for we begynne to have ytching eares, and lothe that heavenly manna, as appeareth by their slow and negligent comming vnto playes, &c. Ovid was banished by Augustus into Pontus (as it is thought) for making the book of the Craft of Love.
>
> (Northbrooke, 2012, p. 93)

The sharp edge to this kind of treatise was that the so-called 'moral' factions considered plays and poems not only to be offensive aesthetically, but also to contain a truly blasphemous cry against Jesus Christ himself and everything Christianity professes as morally sound. Phillip Stubbes' treatise *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583) has a bold title page. Before even opening the pamphlet, the reader is confronted with scripture from Mathew 3 Ver. 2 and Luke 13 Ver. 5 (Stubbes, 1877, p. 97). Stubbes rails against theatres and likens them to devil worship: 'For so often as they goe to those howses where Players frequent, thei go to Venus palace, & sathans synagogue, to worship deuils & betray Christ

Iesus' (Stubbes, 1877, p. 143). Elsewhere, Stubbes refers to these interludes as places for sin and immoral behaviour:

> ... these goodly pageants being done, every mate sorts to his mate,
> every one bringes another homeward of their way verye friendly,
> and in their secret conclaves (covertly) they play the *Sodomites*, or worse.
> (Stubbes, 1877, pp. 144-145)

While plays were considered dangerous, indeed poetry was often thought to be even more morally unsound. Nowhere in Early Modern England could one disseminate ideas (and hence, an agenda) more powerfully than in the publication of words. Ian Fredrick Moulton (2000, pp. 82-86) explains that many early modern moralists denounced theatre as an evil pastime that teaches sloth and lust, and corrupts the eyes and ears of the audience. Dramatic poetry, moreover, infected the *soul* of the reader and was considered salacious, feminizing and perilous to the social patriarchal power structure of England. Stephen Gosson's (1554-1624) *School of Abuse* (1579) rails on narrative and expresses an anxiety about the subversive dangers of poetry in detail:

> pul off the visard that Poets maske in, you shall disclose their reproch, bewray their vanitie, loth their wantonnesse, lament their follie, and perceiue their sharpe sayings to be placed as Pearles in Dunghils, fresh pictures on rotten walles, chaste Matrons apparel on common Curtesans. These are the Cuppes of *Circes,* that turne reasonable creatures into brute Beastes, the balles of *Hippomenes,* that hinder the course of *Atalanta;* and the blocks of the Divel that are cast in our wayes, to cut off the rase of toward wittes. No marueyle though *Plato* shut them out of his schoole, and banished them quite from his common wealth, as effeminate writers, vnprofitable members, and vtter enimies to vertue. (Gosson, 1868, p. 20)

'Unprofitable members' of society were thought to be obstacles to virtuous progress and deserved no less than to be either shut out of the commonwealth completely or, what Gosson suggests with 'the balles of Hippomenes', physically punished. Atalanta and Hippomenes were transformed into lions for their sexual and moral transgressions (Ovid, 2000, 10 ll. 648-830).

In light of this research, I return now to the poems, my practice and an articulation of how my twenty-first century staging resonated with this investigation of early modern political oppression.

STAGING SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS IN MY PRACTICE

The following demonstrates and supports decisions made in my practice regarding transgressive elements discovered within the poems that could have a progressive affect upon my audience.

Hero and Leander is boldly transgressive in its absence of a moral compass or accountability. The gods, for instance, can do absolutely whatever they like, whenever they please, without moral conscience or consequence. They delight in abject debauchery as they preside over the festival of Adonis:

> The men of wealthy Sestos, every year,
> For his sake whom their goddess held so dear,
> Rose-cheeked Adonis, kept a solemn feast,
> Thither resorted many a wand'ring guest
> To meet their loves; such as had none at all
> Came lovers home from this great festival. ...
> There might you see the gods in sundry shapes
> Committing heady riots, incest, rapes; (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 91-144)

The Adonis festival could be understood by certain readers as a 'promiscuous gay carnival' (Roe, 2000, p. 40) and it seems to directly subvert Phillip Stubbes' 'pageants' admonishment above that 'every mate sorts to his mate, very one bringes another homeward of their way verye friendly, and in their secret conclaves (covertly) they play the *Sodomites*, or worse' (Stubbes, 1877, pp. 144-145). Nothing in Marlowe's poems seems 'covert' or 'secret'. There are no hidden 'conclaves' where lovers meet. The festival is an open national celebration where everyone enjoys the wealth and freedom of loose morality and pagan debauchery. In the adaptation, a 'festival celebration' was inserted here

(before the play-within-a-play) that sought to portray an erotic sexual freedom. The chorus was choreographed in an interpretive sexually inclusive dance with rhythmic and tribal Greek music (Chapter 4). I coupled women with women and men with women in an effort to eliminate the distinction of sexual proclivity during the dance and create a salacious liberation with gods 'committing heady riots' (Marlowe, 2006, l. 144). However, due to constraints in levels of experience of actors and the fact that this was a student production in a university setting (with obvious, unavoidable constraints of its own), much of the eroticism that might potentially be explored in this scene could only be suggested. This limitation, however, did not entirely discount its efficacy (see Chapter 5). The poems' erotic images and their abandon of the social morals admonished by 'antipoetic' (Herman, 2007, p. 27) writers like Gosson still seem to be completely relevant when set against specific voices of moralism in our contemporary world.

Further, there is no moral accountability for Marlowe's two lovers either. The poem ends abruptly after the lovers experience intense physical and emotional pleasure. Much has been made of the fact that Marlowe left the poem unfinished. However, critics, including Marion Campbell (1984) and Louis Martz (1972), contradict the poem's 'fragmentary' status. I gathered further research that influenced me in this regard by viewing the huge display of Leonardo Da Vinci's art at the National Gallery in London in 2011. The fact that Da Vinci finished very few of his sketches and paintings suggests that he was perhaps occupied with the psychology of human incompleteness or the process of psychological evolution. The process of de-defining the rational can be a very powerful device. The questions left unanswered by a work unfinished can be as compelling as the work itself, despite the apparent intention of the artist (see also Gilbert, 2003). By leaving the work a 'fragment', Marlowe throws his reader off course. Hero is never forced to share

the night with the day because the poem ends as the sun's '... flaring beams mocked ugly Night/ Till she, o'ercome with anguish, shame, and rage,/Danged down to hell her loathsome carriage' (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 816-818). Therefore, there is no punishment for unmarried sexual consummation and destruction of chaste virginity. The lovers defy the Christian and Pagan gods at once and the poem is allowed to end as Louis Martz defines it: as 'a finished comedy, celebrating the joys of physical love' (Martz, 1972, p. 13). This is perhaps why George Chapman felt compelled to 'complete' the poem, change its form (into epic) and add a moral contemplation and a spiritual transformation of the lovers (Campbell, 1984, pp. 241-266).

In Marlowe's poem, the two lovers are perhaps mirroring the greedy pagan lust we picture within the glass. Leander becomes at once *Hercules,* completing one of his twelve labours, and *Mars*, the god of war. Hero, finally, is transformed from the chaste Venus' nun to more of what we see with Shakespeare's Venus, the goddess of lust, sex and erotic desire caught post-coital under the net cast by Vulcan. After the extremely pleasurable encounter of the lovers, the poem ends abruptly followed by the words 'Desunt nonnulla' (Some things missing). These words may suggest that the printer in 1598 assumed that Marlowe's sudden death in 1593 prevented him from finishing the poem as a tragedy (Campbell, 1984). However, it is possible that the words 'Desunt nonulla' were written by Marlowe. In any case, Marlowe's abrupt ending gives the poem a powerful subversive message because it cheats the righteous and celebrates liberty from moral strictures, by excluding the moral consequence that was traditionally associated with Ovidian narratives: 'Renaissance Ovid was expected to combine merriment with morality. With this subject at least, Marlowe could manage only merriment' (Smith, 1994, p. 134).

Inspired by this exclusion of morality within the poem, my adaptation endeavoured to enhance the sensuality of the ending scene to confront the audience with visual debauchery. I staged the 'gods in sundry shapes' (l. 143) joining Leander and Hero 'displayed' on the bed for a tableau depicting a stylised, sexually inclusive orgy. In our purposely ambiguous ending, a Brechtian placard was projected on the back screen of the theatre, which read 'Desunt nonnulla (Some things missing)'. The 'incomplete' nature of Marlowe's poem aided my practice, regardless of whether the words 'Desunt nonnulla' were written by Marlowe or by the printer, because it offered an opportunity to challenge the audience's own perspective towards sexuality and gender-normative bias. The physical staging of the sensual tableau and Hero's knowing wink, confronted the audience with the possibility that the virgin cloistress Hero was actually in command of her own liberated sexual fantasies from the very start. Further, the projected placard 'Desunt nonulla (Some things missing)' literally communicated to the audience our intentional omission of moral consequence for unsanctified sexual transgression, unlike the moral consequence that figured so prominently in Chapman's continuation of the poem (Campbell, 1984, pp. 252-254; Smith, 1994, p. 134; Chapman, 2006, 3. ll. 13-22) and the treatment by Musaeus (Morales, 1999). The abrupt ending invited the audience to contemplate what might be 'missing', based on their own moral compass.

Shakespeare depicts the mythical goddess Venus as unable to resist the sexuality of Adonis' voluptuous 'tempting' (Shakespeare, 2007, l. 127) lips, that are described as 'fair' (l. 115), 'red' (l. 116), 'ruby coloured portal' (l. 451). Venus and the lustful narrator make specific mention of Adonis' lips more than thirty times. It seems evident, that Shakespeare must unleash a ferocious sexuality on Adonis — a lust beyond measure — in order to point up Adonis' androgyny. Venus' sexual intention has no ambiguity whatsoever and, because

of her frustration, she seems to encompass a character firing on multitude levels of internal duality. She can at once be fierce and tender, coy and forceful, loving and hateful.

Similar to Marlowe, Shakespeare seems intentionally to leave his poem morally incomplete, but instead of cutting off the poem before the moral, as Marlowe does, Shakespeare eliminates even the possibility of a moral. There can be no moral because there is nothing consummated in the sexual relationship. Indeed, Adonis is not guilty of any apparent transgressions. The paradox is that Adonis is punished for no apparent reason. Metaphorically, Venus becomes as flaccid as Adonis by failing to seduce Adonis.

In contrast to the ambiguities of gender roles in *Venus and Adonis* and *Hero and Leander*, when it comes to their plays, Marlowe and Shakespeare seem to remain locked in a clear patriarchal homosocial political order. While this thesis does not have room to explore and argue examples to support this generalisation, I suggest that none of Shakespeare's or Marlowe's plays have ambiguous or amoral endings in the same vein as *Venus and Adonis* and *Hero and Leander*. In fact, in close readings of the plays of Marlowe and of Shakespeare, I find myself critically examining their overriding misogyny and moral order. This was a key influence in how all of the characters were directed in my practical explorations (see also Chapter 4) as it resonated with my desire to stage a morally liberated play. It was my research for moral liberation that led me to Ovid's elegies. Since Marlowe translated three books of Ovid's *Amores*, I found that a reading of his translations/adaptations resonated with my production.

OVID'S INFLUENCE ON ASPECTS OF STAGING LEANDER AND ADONIS

As noted, discovering the eroticism that can be considered subversive to the norms of society is an important way to examine epyllia in Elizabethan England. Ovid's sexual poems seem to provide the centre from which Shakespeare and Marlowe gain their erotic

excitement within their epyllia. We cannot know absolutely (Sinfield, 2007, p. 125) what caused the banishment of Ovid from Augustan Rome, but what else could banish a respected poet of the aristocracy to humiliating and unforgiving lands if not his unbridled erotic liberty? Alan Sinfield points out that Elizabethans, 'like the Romans ... had arbitrary arrest, torture, and public executions ... and [in both societies] there was scandal, satire and legislation about (supposed) sexual immorality' (Sinfield, 2007, pp. 127-128). For the Tudors, the *Amores* of Ovid represented a 'new way of thinking about sexual expression', and that 'Elizabethans found in them a vision of love and, in the same breath, a recipe for abuse' (Sinfield, 2007, p. 128). In fact, the 1599 'Bishops' Ban' or 'Bishops' Order' included Marlowe's translations of Ovid's elegies among the works which were prohibited further printing and of which extant copies were to be burned (McCabe, 1981, p. 188; Moulton, 2000, pp. 102-108).

Katherine Duncan-Jones and Henry Woudhuysen (2007) put forward a theory that suggests a possible linkage between Shakespeare and Marlowe and Ovid's *Amores* in 1593. At the same time they possibly came together for writing their epyllia (Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen, 2007, p. 21), Shakespeare, states Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen, 'if he wrote *Venus* in tandem with Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* ... could have seen Marlowe's translations in manuscript' (Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen, 2007, p. 12) of Ovid's *Amores*. This is very significant. Ovid's *Elegies* exhibits, according to Patrick Cheney, a compelling sequence that 'refuses to *idealize* desire, the relations between men and women, human sexuality, and the body' (Cheney, 2006, p. 8). If we can assume, as has been suggested, that Marlowe shared his English translation manuscript of the Latin poet with Shakespeare at approximately the same time they embarked upon writing their epyllia, then we can understand how they then began to grapple with ideas of sexuality that

in Ovid's sequence express a 'cultural need to display desire in all its ardor, confusion, and violence' (Cheney, 2006, p. 8).

Moulton suggests that Marlowe's translations of the elegies (more than the originals) 'celebrates effeminacy and argues for the pleasures of subjection. It is better, the volume suggests, to be a captive of pleasure than a conqueror of men' (Moulton, 2000, p. 104). The sense of sensual liberty that both Marlowe and Shakespeare received from Ovid's love poetry seemed beyond measure. Ovid is constantly occupied with lust in the *Elegies*. It controls the male character of the poems, it seems to dominate his obsessions, yet he celebrates his own subjugated salaciousness.

Marlowe's narrator seems to use Ovid's 'voices' in the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria* and, according to William Keach, the narrator shares an 'often cynical erotic expertise' (Keach, 1977, p. 88) with the 'speaker' in Ovid's poems. In contrast to Shakespeare's narrator, Marlowe's narrator is 'guiding our experience' (Keach, 1977, p. 88). For example, Ovid's voice is personal and his erotic writing is first person singular:

> Stark naked as she stood before mine eye,
> Not one wen in her body could I spy.
> What arms and shoulders did I touch and see,
> How apt her breasts were to be pressed by me!
> How smooth a belly under her waist saw I,
> How large a leg, and what a lusty thigh! (Ovid, 2006, *Elegia V* book 1 ll. 17-22)

Marlowe's narrator ('Ovid') copies Ovid's sexual playfulness in his description of Leander's full look on Hero's nakedness but in the distanced description:

> And her all naked to his sight displayed,
> Whence his admiring eyes more pleasure took
> Than Dis, on heaps of gold fixing his look. (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 808-810)

The excess of visual stimulation here is measured in *Hero and Leander* with 'heaps of gold' (Marlowe, 2006, l. 110) and in Ovid's *Elegies,* it is in the repetitive imagery and alliterative excess of 'How large a leg and what a lusty thigh!' (Ovid, 2006, l. 22).

Marlowe's language is much more lyrical and more distant than Ovid's. Much discussion took place with the actor playing 'Ovid' regarding the final scene where both lovers are naked (not in our production) and engage in sex (see Chapter 5). Chapter 1 described how 'Ovid' was directed to explore a sense of distanced emotional lyricism for her ending image of 'Apollo's golden harp' (Marlowe, 2006, l. 811) sounding forth music to serenade the lover's post-coital love. But before this, 'Ovid' describes the sexual act itself: 'Leander now like Theban Hercules,/Entered the orchard of the Hesperides' (ll. 781-782).

Ms. Marano suggested that she play her entire speech describing the erotic action from the stage right platform. Her instinct was to frame this final scene as a deep exploration exclusively between the young lovers. We tried this for a couple of weeks in rehearsal, but it never worked. I wanted to establish the same kind of sexual liberty in this scene that I was reading in Marlowe's *Ovid's Elegies* and decided to include 'Ovid' in the scene.

Ms. Marano was directed to stand directly over the lovers on the floor and she was urged to try to personalize the feelings as if she were herself experiencing them and playing both parts. This was the only time during the production that I did not want 'Ovid' to be detached from the action. The intention was for 'Ovid' to be caught up in her creation and cross over into the eroticized action. This contrasted sharply, as we discover in the next chapter, with 'Ovid's' deliberate distancing in both Marlowe's poem and in the adaptation.

CHAPTER 4

PRACTICE: PROBLEM, SOLUTION, RESULT, PROBLEM

This chapter focuses almost exclusively on the process of rehearsal and experimentation in the practice. Michel Foucault's 'What is an Author' offers the basis for a practical schema for writing about the project as a work in progress — a dramatic creation rooted in theoretical explorations (Barrett, 2007, pp. 135-146). Since I directed the piece, there is an inevitable element of my own voice in this thesis; nevertheless, my exegesis takes a scientific approach. Foucault speaks of the author as 'one who speaks of the goals of his investigation, the obstacles encountered, its results, and the problems yet to be solved' (Foucault, 1977, p. 130). At the same time, he instructs the author (as distinct from the practitioner) to distance himself as much as possible from the subject (in this case the creative interpretation or the play) to maintain an analytical framework based on the rigours of research (in this case 'practice as research'). Foucault explains: 'In short, the subject (and its substitutes) must be stripped of its creative role and analysed as a complex and variable function of discourse' (Foucault, 1977, p. 138). The following reflections are based on practical experimentation during the months of rehearsal starting October 2012 through June 2013.

While the focus of this chapter may seem to diverge from my main research inquiry, it is important here to elucidate the process of the practice in rehearsal. My directorial approach to the play — working in depth with the text and with the actors — was essential in interrogating and reconciling both the challenges and themes presented in my practice.

PROBLEM: A NARRATIVE NARRATOR

Early modern dramatic poetry presents numerous challenges to the actor and director who seek to bring it to life. The complexity of the language itself can make it seem, at times, impenetrable. Then, there is the complicated task of clarifying the language of narrative poetry, bringing it to life as a dramatic play — in a sense acting as translators for our audience. Indeed, poetry written specifically for the stage is difficult enough for a modern actor. John Barton relates his practical experience with actors and their 'natural fear ... of poetry' (Barton, 1984, p. 2) as if somehow actors were born with an instinct to avoid active engagement with the 'foreignness' of heightened rhetorical verse. In reaction to this, Barton writes his book with a practice-based research approach. As a companion to his astute theories about playing verse, Barton (1984) includes practical demonstrations on an appended DVD. His accomplishment helped our purpose because many of his techniques in coaching and directing actors through Shakespearean verse (and prose) have become part of the practical lexicon of playing Shakespeare since the early 1970s. But 'playing' narrative offers quite unique challenges to a director and actor. The narrator (of the narrative) becomes a character (dramatically) and his/her ekphrastic images must be realized physically. In fact, the narrator took on a *tour de force* lead role as the character responsible for bringing incorporeal fantasy out of our (audience) imaginations and into our corporeal lives. Early in the rehearsal process, this presented a real obstacle.

In this adaptation, as stated, the narrators were introduced as 'Ovid' himself, author of the *Metamorphoses*. 'Ovid's' attachment to the mutable transience that his/her story represents allows us to explore our theme of erotic gender ambivalence and confusion of homosocial domination of Elizabeth's government. To heighten this exploration in this practice, the same 'female' actor played the narrator for both poems throughout. Much

commentary has been written about the narrators of *Hero and Leander* and *Venus and Adonis* — specifically their perceived homosexual desire towards Leander and towards Adonis — but this is frankly presumptive rather than text-based, and it is a grave mistake. Where does the assumption stem from that insists the narrators are masculine? While Shakespeare and Marlowe include distinct physical descriptions of the characters in both poems, neither text provides an actual description of the narrators. For decades critics have assumed that the narrator's voice is masculine (Smith, 1994, p. 132; Ellis, 2003; p. 101; Rutter, 2012, p. 116; Goldberg, 1992, p. 127). William Keach, who describes Marlowe's narrator as male, describes the narrator's blazon of Leander as 'self-confessing *occupatio*' (Keach, 1977, p. 95). However, there is no evidence to support that either Shakespeare or Marlowe thought of themselves as narrator to their own pieces, or that they had in mind a male storyteller.

In my adaptation, as stated, I chose to shift the role of gender in the production by approaching the mutable 'Ovid' as sexually ambivalent — containing traits that are both feminine and masculine. This freed the actor to explore, in her acting choices, any kind of sexual proclivity or action without having to justify it, or be defined by it. Again, this sets up a challenge to our audience because gender is presented as mixed by the very 'voice' that is guiding the spectator through the story.

My amalgamation of the narrators is further informed by certain biased critical theories surrounding both narrators. Philip Kolin, in discussing the role of Shakespeare's narrator in his essay section 'The Narrator and his (Dis)guises', states: 'Whatever opinion of the narrator a critic holds, there lurks the persistent issue of whether a reader should become an active, even willing accomplice in interpreting the action or must succumb as simple auditor/witness to the narrator's point of view' (Kolin, 1997, p. 50). Kolin's use of

the word ‘witness’ is key. The narrator in our adaptation is allowing the witness/audience to become a willing accomplice through dramatic action rather than controlling the action, as does the narrator in the Marlowe sections (Keach, 1977, p. 88). Indeed ‘activity’ is what distinguishes Shakespeare’s invention from all others in the genre. In *Venus and Adonis*, again, the narrator’s point of view is not imposed on us (Keach, 1977, p. 71) and our understanding of the piece is shaped through what Rufus Putney describes as Shakespeare’s unique dramatic structure: ‘Dialogue outweighs description or narration, and the dramatic power of the poem is further enhanced by the diversities of the character’s emotions as well as by vivid pictorial images’ (Putney, 1997, p. 124). This description from Putney further supports the rationale for including Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* as a play within a poem — Marlowe’s poem. It is Shakespeare’s dramatic structure that offers an immediate drive. For instance, the active word ‘now’ is mentioned by Shakespeare’s narrator (by my count) thirty-five times, sometimes as emphatic repetition using *epanalepsis* or, as in the following example, *anaphora*:

> And *now* she weeps, and *now* she fain would speak,
> And *now* her sobs do her intendments break.
> Sometime she shakes her head, and then his hand,
> *Now* gazeth she on him, *now* on the ground.
>
> (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 221-224, my emphasis)

The narrator never wants the audience to forget that what he/she describes is actually happening theatrically. By positioning Shakespeare’s actively dramatic poem within Marlowe’s poem, we can actually experience the real difference in narrative. Coleridge’s statement about *Venus and Adonis*: ‘You seem to be *told* nothing, but to see and hear everything’ (Coleridge, 1864, p. 377) was an important influence in this project. Shakespeare is more (to our contemporary understanding) immediate and more of what I would categorize as a product of modern realism. By contrast, with Marlowe, we are told

more about what is happening, or what has happened, by the narrator. The adaptation further enhanced this difference by cutting much of the narrator's language in *Venus and Adonis* and trimming some of Leander's longer set speeches in *Hero and Leander*, leaving a streamlined, character-driven comic/drama as a play-within-a-play, bookended with the main narrative story.

Marlowe's language in the bookend pieces posed several challenges for both director and actors in the production. In the early rehearsals, we felt that the bookended structure ran the risk of becoming tedious. Georgia E. Brown (2004a, p. 117) notices that in Marlowe's narrative, the text becomes reverent and has the effect of delaying the action for the purpose of leading the reader on. At that point in rehearsal (April 2013), the show was not giving the audience enough compelling visual dramatic action. However, because highlighting the difference in narrative character development between the works was part of my goal, I did not want to cut too much of the narrator's voice. The intention was to preserve as much narration as possible without diminishing Marlowe's dramatic development of Leander and Hero. As stated, it is Marlowe's narrator, dominating the poem that 'most clearly differentiates Marlowe's epyllionic technique from Shakespeare's' (Keach, 1977, p. 88). We endeavoured to develop the 'character' of Marlowe's narrator in the spirit of what Keach describes as 'cunningly created and projected persona ... guiding our experience of the narrative' (Keach, 1977, p. 88). However, in order to keep more of the focus on the main characters in the piece, the extensive narrative digression (Mercury and Shepherdess) was cut.

Preserving Marlowe's narration and Shakespeare's dialogue in the adaptation illuminated the need for two distinct performance and directorial approaches to the texts.

The following section explains my approach to how the language was made clearer for the audience and what specific stylistic techniques were applied in rehearsal.

SOLUTION: CLARITY

The solution for the descriptions in sustained narrative voice proved to be decisions that emerged from a series of practical experimentation with the cast. Initially, we worked the narrator, 'Ovid', in the Marlowe sections through the complex rhetorical images using language only. For instance, the actor playing 'Ovid' had to first and foremost have a 'rote' definition of exactly what the language means. This involved looking up archaic words and studying the historical background of what Marlowe's narrator is describing. One-on-one sessions with the actor playing 'Ovid' usually included taking small sections of verse and discussing, in depth, their meaning, history and dramatic significance. For instance, we investigated the opening lines:

> On Hellespont, guilty of true-love's blood,
> In view and opposite two cities stood,
> Sea-borderers, disjoined by Neptune's might;
> The one Abydos, the other Sestos hight. (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 1-4)

The actor's choices here are dictated partly by analysing the meaning within the verse. The 'Hellespont' (Figure 4.1), a river 'guilty' of the drowning of Leander and the resultant suicidal drowning of his lover, Hero, has a long history in mythology. The actor playing 'Ovid' must know (because the narrator would know) that the river was named after Athamas' and Nephele's daughter Helle of ancient mythology. The legend states that Helle, with her brother Phryxis, boarded the back of the golden fleeced ram and flew out of sight from her evil stepmother Ino who plotted to kill her. While flying over the ancient river, Helle fell and drowned in the waves, thereby naming the channel *Helle*-spont (Cheney and Striar, 2006, p. 194). This story is as important to the playing of the language

as the more obvious knowledge that Neptune is the god of the sea and master of the tempestuous waters and perhaps the less obvious knowledge that the word 'hight' means 'called' or 'identified by'. We picked apart the text in this way line by line, learning all we could about the meaning of the language.

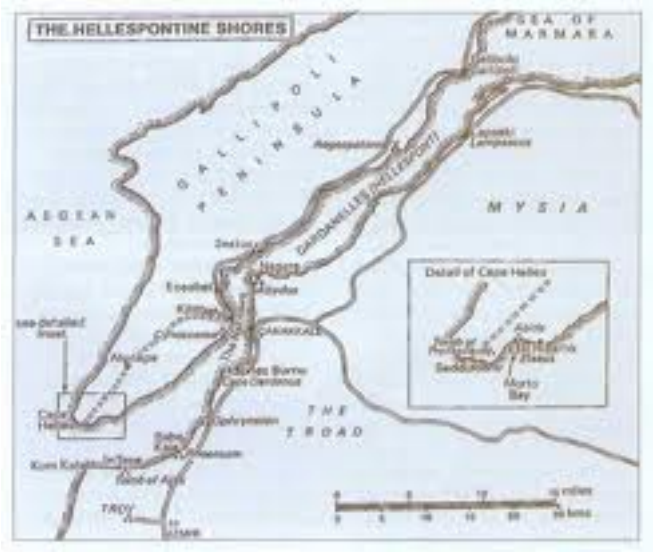

Figure 4.1 The Hellespont River and a detail of the Cape of Helles[2]

This thorough investigation of the meaning of the language proved helpful as we explored the distinct writing styles of Marlowe and Shakespeare in performance. Marlowe, according to Patrick Cheney, has the reputation as a writer who is most famous for having paved a solid path for the greatness of Shakespeare. Cheney (1997, p. 260) points out that Marlowe's reputation, certainly amongst scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, has been mistreated primarily with the label of rogue playwright lurking in the shadow of Shakespeare. Cheney is quick to point out, however, that Marlowe achieved a very distinctive career that, although it gave rise to many great artists such as Shakespeare and later Milton, included 'translations of classical Latin poems' (Cheney, 1997, p. 260), among them *Lucan's First Book.* Translation of epic poetry is something that Shakespeare never seemed to have attempted. Kenneth Muir goes as far as to apologize for Marlowe

[2] http://www.learningpracticalturkish.com/dardanelles-map.html

when he instructs us ‘continually to remind ourselves that he [Marlowe] was still in his twenties when he died — a reminder that some Shakespeareans neglect’ (Muir, 1988, p. 8). Marlowe deserves quite exclusive study. A brief look at his verse style was helpful in distinguishing him from his contemporaries and is also helpful here in articulating the difference in approach between Marlowe and Shakespeare in my production.

MARLOWE’S MIGHTY LINE

It is important here to briefly look at Marlowe’s verse style to understand how separate he made himself from other writers who preceded him. As David Riggs (2004) discusses: ‘Marlowe’s predecessors had trouble sustaining a melodious poetic line’ (Riggs, 2004, p. 115) with English metre. Marlowe used the variety that Latin hexameters naturally provided and made it work in iambic pentameter by using metrical devices (Riggs, 2004, pp. 117-118). Blank verse became a very popular form of theatrical writing. Michael Wood describes the blank verse style as ‘an effective mass medium with appeal across the board’ (Wood, 2003, p. 120). In *Tamburlaine*, Marlowe announces straight away that he will forever depart from what his audience was accustomed to.

> From jigging veins of rhyming mother wits,
> And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,
> We’ll lead you to the stately tent of war,
> Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine
> Threat’ning the world with high astounding terms
> And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword.
>
> (Marlowe, 1969a, ll. 1-6)

His verse line is iambic pentameter that stays regular for the first three lines. The fourth line is a feminine ending and then he hits us with a forceful variety in lines 5 and 6 when he describes the courageous action of Tamburlaine:

/ - - / - / - / - /

Threat'ning the world with high astounding terms

- / - / - - - / / / /

And scourging kingdoms with his ^ conquering sword

Troche, caesura, spondee and feminine ending all live in these two lines. Marlowe wrote in a style of verse to project a form of poetry that was both heightened *and* pedestrian.

PLAYING MARLOWE

It is interesting that although Marlowe has enjoyed critical theoretical study in abundance, particularly in the nineteenth century (Dabbs, 1991, p. 24), books about 'acting' Marlowe are all but non-existent — not only in the nineteenth century, but also the twentieth century — the age of the most extensive interrogations of performance theory in history. A broad search of the catalogues of the British Library and the Shakespeare Institute Library, amongst others, produced no specific comprehensive attention to playing Marlowe or acting Marlowe. It almost goes without mention that a similar search for 'acting Shakespeare' produced a veritable deluge of publications from playing techniques to detailed first-hand accounts by actors playing Shakespeare all over the world. John Barton's definitive book *Playing Shakespeare* includes only one example of Marlowe — from *Tamburlaine Part One* — and denigrates it as 'very Marlovian. Here is high language, but there isn't much character or complexity' (Barton, 1984, p. 14). However, the 'high language' foreignness that Barton struggles with is, paradoxically, the key into playing Marlowe's complex style of theatrical character development. That Marlowe was influenced by and gravitated towards the conceits of classical learning is clear in his exploration of how the language of heightened classical verse could be preserved in the

English iamb. Also, Marlowe seemed to play with meter very early in his writing career and seemed fascinated by narration. His amorous poems, including *Hero and Leander*, display heavy narration and his plays all show a unique narrative distance.

With *Hero and Leander*, Marlowe masters sudden changes in tone from long narrative to even longer dramatic set speeches. Robert Logan explains that in *Hero and Leander*:

> Marlowe distances us from his characters and their actions through a portrayal of the effects of eroticism rather than the causes, intellectualized mythological details and imagery, through comedy, generalizations, abstractions, sententiousness, and a shifting, mercurial narrative perspective. (Logan, 1988, p. 280)

This research was important to my practice because my perception is that Leander's and Hero's desires dominate them ultimately. This gave the actors a sense of freedom from the bonds of modern realism and allowed us to explore these characters with a greater emphasis on their sociological representation. In rehearsal, the actors were repeatedly directed towards playing the erotically and spiritually charged action without being, necessarily, motivated through a traditional 'character arc'. We worked on detaching (but not eliminating) the emotion in the characters while increasing the involvement of the narrator. The opposite was true for the play-within-a-play. This choice was influenced further by Robert Logan, who writes:

> If in his narrative focus Marlowe highlights sensation, spectacle, and event, Shakespeare emphasizes psychology. Each poem articulates a contrast between a focus on external events and one inward human state. In *Hero and Leander* the external focus predominates; in *Venus and Adonis* the opposite is true.
>
> (Logan, 2007, p. 68)

MARLOWE AND BRECHTIAN 'DISTANCE'

The actor approaching Marlowe, then, should not fight the language in an attempt to bring it within the parameters of 'playing Shakespeare'. In fact, the opposite must be explored.

Marlowe has a huge theatrical voice and the actor approaching this language must simply yield to it — indeed celebrate it for its stylistically bold presentational quality.

For this adaptation, Marlowe's narrator was played with a stylized eloquence that can be closely associated with the twentieth century performance theories of Bertolt Brecht (1964). Brechtian techniques have been discussed in connection with Marlowe's drama and poetry. Stevie Simkin, for example, writes: 'Brecht's model of performance can be more helpful in approaching *Faustus* than the dominant Stanislavsky-based model' (Simkin, 2000, p. 235). Robert Logan states that in *Hero and Leander* 'anticipating a major technique of a known admirer, Bertolt Brecht, Marlowe deploys stylistic forces of detachment to prevent us, as well as himself, from responding to the content of the poem with purely emotional engagement' (Logan, 2007, p. 65).

It is interesting that Marlowe's play, *The Troublesome Reign and Lamentable Death of Edward the Second, King of England, with the Tragical Fall of Proud Mortimer* was reshaped by Brecht in, it seems, an attempt to alter his audience's understanding of historical dramas. He cut half the characters from Marlowe's play and transformed the arc of motivation in the character of Edward from weak and ineffectual to bold and heroic (Bentley, 1966, pp. vii-xxvii). He also truncated the title, which is translated simply as *Edward II of England*. The play was one of his first (if not the very first) endeavours with 'epic theatre' in Munich in 1923. Willett and Manheim affirm that the play is 'very largely an original work' and was produced for the first time 'under Brecht's own direction' (Willett and Manheim, 1970, p. x). In his own reflection of 'Edward II: On Looking Through My First Plays (iv)', Brecht describes 'a break with the Shakespearean tradition' (Brecht, 1970, p. 454). Still, Marlowe seemed to offer Brecht unique opportunities. For Brecht, who is commonly known to have had a love-hate relationship with Shakespeare,

Marlowe seemed to be a more appropriate choice to employ for his bold introduction of epic theatre. Marlowe's verse is certainly less refined and, for Brecht, perhaps less associated with the 'lumpy monumental style beloved of middle-class philistines' (Brecht, 1970, p. 454) than Shakespeare's verse. In fact, according to W. Weideli, Marlowe offered Brecht an open forum. Brecht seemed to like that Marlowe's verse is more erratic than Shakespeare's and that Marlowe's *Edward II* is 'a juxtaposition of sketches where the dramatic tension can very easily slacken and then regain force' (Weideli, 1963, p. 16). Brecht employed this inconsistent and fluctuating dramatic attack to distance his audience from the mode of traditional theatre. He also applied techniques using heightened language and gesture that resonated with my practice. Cicely Berry writes:

> … as actors, we are able to be articulate through the language we bring alive; we therefore have a responsibility to that language. The care and life that we bring to it helps the hearers also to be articulate; and I think this has special value for the present time when computer technology threatens to dehumanize communication, and when the term 'post-articulate' has become current. Therefore we must always be after the reaching out through words, and not a dulled, inward-looking speaking of dialogue. ... We have to honor a greater need, and that is to make what we say remarkable to the hearer. This is what Brecht was after. (Berry, 1992, p. 10)

Stanislavski's (1981) characters are in flux only in as much as can be determined by their own contemplative understanding of their unique relationship to their perceived world. By contrast, John Rouse notices that 'Brecht is speaking ... about the theatrical *illustration* of reality' (Rouse, 1984, p. 29) including a 'defamiliarization' (Rouse, 1984, pp. 32-37) of gesture on stage. This idea influenced my approach to the Marlowe sections in particular. There, I offered a more involved directorial hand to the process. For instance, while 'Ovid' narrated the action in the Marlowe sections of the play, my other actors physically presented, at specific times, interpretive movement and dance that stylistically enhanced, supported or illuminated the narrative language throughout the piece (Brecht, 1964). I chose this directorial approach not for spectacle alone, but subtly to remind the audience

that the characters are deliberately including them in the telling of the story. By including the audience in the artifice, it was my hope more clearly to *illustrate* my directorial style in the Marlowe sections. The distancing effect was also highlighted in my direction of the extreme, enigmatic and unpredictable emotions in the poem's characters. For example, when Leander tries to be melodramatically passionate with 'sighs and tears' (Marlowe, 2006, l. 193), he becomes quite unromantic and clumsy. Hero reacts to his clumsiness with a stern Adonis-like disdain (ll. 192-196). Later, however, in a somewhat mercurial shift, Hero reacts towards Leander with romantic tears of her own. When Leander asks her 'to whom mad'st thou that heedless oath? [of chastity]' (l. 294), Hero replies with a most sublime description of ultimate vulnerability (ll. 295-299). Yet just over forty-five lines later, Hero shows a boldness that can only be seen as a display of sexual rhetoric in its own right. Remarkably, she abruptly invites Leander to her turret (ll. 345-358). The passage is filled with sexual innuendo with 'I play' (l. 351) and with reference to her pet 'sparrows' (l. 352), and when her tongue slips 'come thither' (l. 357), destiny takes hold and 'Ovid' narrates them to their ecstatic sexual discovery. Indeed, one can understand how the actors must always be at the ready — willing to play both extreme and subtle emotions with complete and equal commitment. Playing the full range of contrasting emotions in Marlowe's text allows the actor to be dynamic and unpredictable. My direction for the actors in the adaptation was ever mindful of contrasting emotional qualities — and when it was desired to lean towards one or the other to illuminate the story.

PROBLEM: PLAYING THE STYLE — THE 'WORLD OF THE PLAY'

The advantage of the adapted narrative being 'practice-based research' is that the 'world of the play' has been researched. I have attempted, as director, to approach not only the heightened verse, but the heightened situations, epic characters, and the gods and monsters

that Marlowe and Shakespeare created. The principal actors playing Leander and Hero, Venus and 'Ovid' were directed to 'score' their scripts with motivations, actions and intentions — looking to play conflict, obstacles and the endowment of character. Robert Cohen refers to 'action' (as an acting technique) as an informed set of intentions:

> Acting, by definition, is *action*, and it is *active* … Characters pursue their goals just as real people do, by employing *tactics*. They argue, they persuade, they threaten, they seduce, they inspire. They try to influence other characters in the play to support them and to discourage other characters from opposing them.
>
> (Cohen, 2002, p. 45, emphasis in original)

We then addressed the broader techniques of performance style. Robert Cohen capsulizes the difference between playing character and playing 'the style' of the play. He writes: '*Characterization* is a measure of how the individual character *differs* from the other characters, and *style* is a measure of how much he *resembles* them' (Cohen, 1978, p. 140, emphasis in original). So in our adaptation, the concept is directorial. I was most responsible for the cohesive 'resemblance' of the piece. The intention was to weave the crispness of the iambic verse (hitting consonants and resonating vowels) with interpretive movement, dance and music.

All of my experience in working with early modern verse rhythms was brought to bear in an attempt to bring the rest of the cast up to 'resemble' clarity of story and language. The idea of episodic theatre was helpful in my challenge to develop a broad theatrical style using narrative poetry.

SOLUTION: BRECHTIAN EPISODES AND PLAYING MARLOWE

Milly S. Barranger explains that for Brecht, epic theatre is '*episodic* and *narrative* ... Its structure was more like that of a narrative poem than of a well-made play' (Barranger, 1986, p. 242). Indeed, our adaptation is interrupted often with dance and movement

episodes, employing ekphrasis to illustrate the Marlovian narrative — to interpret and represent the descriptive images and interpret the characters' emotions. And although these episodes serve the main frame of the story, their eloquence and detail act as a Brechtian diversion into expressionism. We were, ultimately, experimenting with the Brechtian paradox: exploring our own de-familiarisation by confusing 'well-made' linear action with theatrical episodes of narration, while at the same time infusing the story with skillful involvement in dance and movement. It is important to point out that Brecht's theatre was, according to Speirs, not a move away from 'empathy' (Speirs, 1987, p. 50). Speirs relates that: 'In truth, Brecht's theatre is rhetorical. It is at least as persuasive in its intentions as it is analytic, and the many forms assumed by the "epic" narrator play a crucial rhetorical role in eliciting the spectator's assent to the construction put on reality by the narrator' (Speirs, 1987, p. 51).

From this basic point of view, our narrator was empowered in the Marlowe sections to explore a variety of techniques. While the actor should remain rooted in truth, the narrative offered a broad freedom of stylistic exploration. We explored, for example, endowing 'Ovid' with meta-physical powers. The character is, after all, the 'creator' of the piece and is in total control of its characters, its place, its perception of time. 'Ovid' has the power to interrupt and to influence the action at any time. The drive of the piece could naturally take on a spirit of unpredictability, hosted, as it was, by a storyteller whose very gender identity is a series of mixed masculine and feminine messages. Certainly, the texts of these epyllia could be played through a Shakespeare-Stanislavski realistic lens. My goal, instead, was to play in the spirit of 'epic' fluctuation.

Brecht transposed heightened verse into sections of antithetical theatricality. He always confronted his audience with the unexpected. For example, in *Edward II*, Brecht

(1966) chose to juxtapose the horrors of the Trojan war with the pleasure of Homer's poetic creation. What is surprising is how Brecht's pedestrian language, written in free verse, can illustrate quite clear and shocking antithesis. For example, in Mortimer's vivid description of the Trojan War (Brecht, 1966, pp. 18-20), Hector's bloody genitals are seen as a necessary sacrifice for the creation of Homer's sublime epic poem the *Illiad*. The same type of antithesis can be explored in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*. For example, Marlowe seems to relate the high spiritual debauchery of the 'gods in sundry shapes/ committing heady riots, incest, rapes' (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 143-144) as a necessary pre-show to the deep purity of the mortal poetic love of Hero and Leander, which happens 'at first sight' (l. 176) amongst bloodied birds and hedonistic pagan rituals. This can be imbricated with the Stanislavski-based, 'realistic' and dialogue-rich Shakespeare section starring Venus and Adonis as a purposeful, 'episodic' digression to the main action. Marlowe's distance as a poet translates with an even clearer lens than his distance as a playwright. Keeping in mind Brecht's (1964) call for a style of acting that embraces the skillful episodic fluctuations of character emotion and physical skill, I had a way forward for the direction of the main characters, Leander and Hero, as well. We have explored above how Leander's speeches are rooted in distanced sophistry and how Hero's motivations are antithetical and erotically coy. With Leander, the actor was directed towards an over-the-top expressionism. In our adaptation, 'Ovid' has transformed Leander into a theatrical character by making him an actor. Leander should approach the role with this broad presentational quality. Leander should have the freedom to play his character with a style ranging from farcical melodrama to very deep emotional vulnerability, depending on the whims of 'Ovid's' controlling narration. Also, with Hero, there must be an extreme paradoxical sexuality in her presentation of pure chastity. This will have the comic affect

our narrator intends for her. Hero's chastity, which is at the heart of *Hero and Leander*, should be an exaggerated conflict within Hero's characterisation. Therefore, I directed the actor playing Hero to play her antithesis with equal verve, without regard for maintaining a 'truthful character arch' throughout the play.

The added challenge for these actors was in my direction to employ these exaggerated means of often-paradoxical expression while consistently playing the truth of their situations. The actors should engage with the text from as truthful a place as possible in light of their given circumstances (Stanislavski, 2008, pp. 37-59) crafted by the actor-as-narrator. Speirs' interpretation of Brecht's theatre resonated with the practice:

> By placing the onus on the spectator to re-construct by inference the viewpoint of the narrator, this method of construction has the strongly suggestive effect of drawing the spectator into the perspective of the narrator.
>
> (Speirs, 1987, p. 50)

Hero and Leander, then, can be seen as a template for a broader understanding of 'playing Marlowe'. However, this is not to suggest that playing Marlowe's narrative is 'the same' as playing his tragedy. Still, Marlowe's plays all take on a narrative voice. This confuses some actors approaching Marlowe because they have been taught to listen for the core emotional drive through the characters speaking the verse. As with Shakespeare, the actor wants the identified emotions (or motivations) to be perfectly layered and linear. However, with Marlowe, characterisation is always chaotic, shifting focus and remaining non-linear. Frustration sets in for the actor when Marlowe, stubbornly, does not behave like Shakespeare. This supports the common, if erroneous, label that Marlowe has suffered in the last two centuries. In essence, the conception is that Marlowe is an important writer who is not Shakespeare. What has been often missing in practical explorations of acting Marlowe is a celebration of his uniqueness. Instead of trying pointlessly to bring a style of 'playing Marlowe' in line with his perceived master, Shakespeare, an actor approaching

any text of Marlowe should be constantly aware of the deep emotional voice of Marlowe's narrative qualities. This is not to suggest that Marlowe is the 'voice' of Barabas, Faustus or even Machievel. It is, however, to suggest what J.B. Steane (1969) has formulated in his introduction to the plays as being the main difference between Shakespeare and Marlowe. In Marlowe, 'we ... are made aware of an author, in a sense we are not when reading or watching Shakespeare' (Steane, 1969, p. 11). In an alternate form of criticism and in direct rebuttal to John Barton's claim that with Marlowe we have 'high language, but there isn't much character or complexity' (Barton, 1984, p. 14) one merely needs to call up Marlowe's extremely complex narrator in *Hero and Leander* or Faustus' celebration of the radiant light of Helen of Troy in *Doctor Faustus* (Marlowe, 1969b, 5. 2. ll. 110-116). The epic nature of Marlowe's narrative presents actors with the opportunity to engage with Marlowe's characters expressionistically, playing the ekphrasis with emotional distance. We found this approach extremely helpful in our adaptation and during our rehearsal process. It brought an interesting challenge to the practice, because many actors, including those in my cast, have been taught to listen for the core emotional drive of the character who, in this case, happens to be speaking in verse. However, the playing of Marlowe's variety of rhetoric is extremely important for the actor. One could argue that Marlowe's language has greater metrical ('un-regular' decasyllable) variety and therefore it might contain more theatrical possibilities for the actor. This will in many ways increase the actor's responsibility to the text and enhance the need for work on clarity of the complex rhetorical composition.

Earlier in this chapter it was suggested that the actor must analyse the text for historical meaning and textual definition. Meaning and definition are certainly completely different investigations. In other words, the history behind the legend of the Hellespont, for

example, is *meaningful* and separate from the significantly *meaningful* mythical god Neptune, which is separate from the fact that 'height' (Marlowe, 2006, l. 4) is *defined* as 'called'. If we read further, it must become evident that 'Apollo' (l. 6) has *meaning* as a pagan god of the sun; using Hero's 'hair' (l. 6) to attract young boys, while the word 'dower' (l. 7) is *defined* as a dowry, or gift. This type of exploration of text always pays dividends when the actor later approaches his motivated actions. In essence, clarity becomes paramount not only to our understanding of the story, but also in our ability to deliver our story to our audience.

It is not enough, however, for the actor and director to analyse the meaning and definition of the words in the text. If all one needed was a technical understanding of the language of Marlowe and Shakespeare, then audiences would not be so consistently and infuriatingly confused. Even the most astute audiences, who have the ability and desire to actively engage with a production of Marlowe or Shakespeare, can become confused and 'lost' in the story. The problem stems from a tradition in Stanislavskian acting that separates the actor from his audience. Stanislavskian actors have been taught to 'ignore' the audience. Stanislavski describes it as being private in public — or '*public solitude*' (Stanislavski, 2004, p. 915). Actors have put up a figurative 'wall' between themselves and the spectator. It must be stated that this is quite the opposite of what has been described as Brechtian distance — which strives to include the audience in the story. This type of Stanislavskian distance is extremely effective in realistic acting. Theories about modern realism, starting with Stanislavski, have led to influential techniques by seminal practitioners such as Lee Strasberg (1987), Sanford Meisner (1987) and Robert Cohen (1978). These theories continue to be the cornerstone of performance practice in the twenty-first century, and they have powerful resonance in my process as an actor and

director. However, although these practices are eminently relevant, the actor and director producing classical verse, most specifically early modern verse, must be keenly aware of the complexity of the rhetorical puzzle inherent in early modern text. Thus, for our purposes, it is not enough for the actor to have a fully 'scored' and motivated script analysis, with notes defining beat changes, motivated 'verbs' or intentions, character analysis, endowment and an imaginary inner life.

Our exploration in practice illuminated a clearer sense of the contrasting styles within the piece. Following, are examples of various techniques we used for making both Marlowe's and Shakespeare's language come to life on stage.

APPROACHING THE TEXT

My adaptation of these classical texts, first and foremost, had to be approached as a rhetorical scramble. Marlowe and Shakespeare scattered the story pieces using a complex and wonderful labyrinth of devices. Our job was to unscramble and assemble the puzzle for our audience. Not unlike specific notes of music, the words of Marlowe and Shakespeare must be orchestrated with verse structure, emphasis and scansion of iambic pentameter. All this helps in the quest for clarity, but *the technique that is paramount for language clarity is an understanding of operative words and rhetorical line rhythm emphasis.* Examples of this technique follow, but it is important to understand that by focusing technically on external systematic processes, we are not at the same time discounting internal naturalistic acting. Our actors were all trained in contemporary theatre practice and had at least a basic understanding of a Stanislavski-based approach to story telling. What they lacked was a thorough understanding of rhetorical structure in early modern verse acting. Therefore, many of our experiments focused on this specific practice.

In Stanislavski-based acting, the performer imagines a thin 'fishing line', barely visible connecting point 1-actor A and point 2-actor B to point 3-Audience. In our early modern verse adaptation, the performers were directed to imagine a 'thick bar' triangle connecting all three points. The audience must be a greater part of the collaborative creative experience. Therefore, in rehearsal we were always asking ourselves: Will the audience understand what we just did? Is the rhetoric controlled? Can anyone easily understand the language as we speak it? We understood that if the audience did not understand us, they would naturally (and understandably) tune us out completely. Indeed, the actors could have the greatest, most emotionally transcendent performance of their lives, but without clarity, the audience would hear nothing but semi-coherent phrases. If, on the other hand, the audience is aware that the actors are trying to deliver the language with clarity, they will usually want to meet the performers half way. This inclusion enriches the experience beyond the truthful playing of the imaginary circumstances within the story. Good productions of Shakespeare and Marlowe are transcendent because the poetry and prose are given a chance to be as moving and cathartic as the authors intended. Likewise, the actor is free to explore truthful acting if he knows his audience is with him and that the audience is actively engaged with the text. Again, dramatizing narrative verse heightens both the challenges and the rewards even further.

The following are examples of many lengthy rehearsals with our working script. These explorations started in late 2012 (with our narrator 'Ovid') and continued to be our main focus with all of the actors until the opening of the show on 7 June 2013. We assembled a full dramatis personae as of 4 March 2013. The cast included student actors (and dancers) from the University of Worcester with whom I had previously worked. I decided to play Venus in the production partly because I have extensive experience with

the verse and the physical attributes to play opposite Will Cooke — who is a big lad. Venus must dominate him physically. Carolanne Marano, who was also our choreographer, has broad experience playing Shakespearean text, and I wanted 'Ovid' to participate in, as well as 'direct', the choral dances on stage. For clarity of language, we worked diligently on the device of *antithesis*.

ANTITHETICAL OPERATIVES

Operatives can be defined as a determined word emphasis. The operative word simply receives more weight in the meter. By giving certain words more emphasis than others within the verse line, the actor is essentially deciding to aid the audience in their understanding of the text. But which words should be emphasized? Who decides this? And why? Exploring rhetorical device is key to understanding the clear design of early modern verse. Our company focused on this method as a paramount acting principle. After all, the art of rhetoric was the basis for all civilized society in early modern England. Skill in language was part of one's inward and spiritual identity. Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Retorique* (1553) offers an example of how highly rhetoric was regarded during the sixteenth century: '... among the eloquent, of all most eloquent: him thinke I among all men, not onely to be taken for a singuler man, but rather to be coumpted for halfe a God' (Wilson, 1998, online).

Shakespeare and Marlowe used rhetorical variety to craft their plays and poems with abundance and *elocutio*. *Antithesis* seems to be the most often used rhetorical device in Shakespeare's and Marlowe's verse structure. In fact, John Barton states: 'if I was only allowed to give one piece of counsel to an actor new to Shakespeare, I would probably choose to say, "look out for the antitheses and play them"' (Barton, 1984, p. 112). Cicely Berry explains that the actor 'has to be able to lift opposites so that they can catch the

attention of the hearer, for it is through this rhetorical device that the argument is presented' (Berry, 1992, p. 90). Therefore, my actors, in rehearsal, were constantly being reminded of the importance of looking for opposing words and thoughts within consecutive phrases.

PROBLEM — REALISM

In the rehearsal room, Will Cooke (Leander/Adonis) began his initial work with the text by trying to use the language to serve his intentions. His intentions became paramount in his delivery. As an instinctual actor, with years of experience using the Stanislavski system, he often read the lines as he felt them naturally. And his instincts helped him discover a useful collection of motivated actions, what Cohen refers to as 'tactics' (Cohen, 2002, p. 45), and a heightened sense of realism. The clarity of the language, however, tended to break down because the actor was focused too much on 'feeling the part'. It became uncontrolled and confused which caused his performance to become 'one-note'. I suggested that he try playing his intentions through the orchestrated use of rhetorical device. Through this shift in priority, we discovered that the variety of his motivations increased and he could be clearly understood. The resulting clarity of both language and intention not only helped the audience connect with the actions, but also helped this actor connect to the text and, indeed, with other characters within the play.

SOLUTION — RHETORIC

Below is a small example of our working session from 2 March 2013 when we specifically focused on researching the benefits of playing the rhetoric in a small section of the script.

We began with Shakespeare's character of Adonis. Will Cooke was directed to read aloud the following lines. The italics indicate where he initially chose to stress the word(s) within the lines:

ADONIS
I know *not Love*,

OVID
Quoth he,

ADONIS
Nor will *not* know it,
Unless it *be* a *boar*, and *then* I *chase* it;
Tis *much* to *borrow*, and *I* will *not* owe it;
My love to *love* is love but to *disgrace* it;
For *I* have *heard* it is a life in *death*,
That *laughs* and *weeps*, and *all* but with a *breath*.
Who wears a *garment* shapeless *and* unfinish'd?
Who plucks the bud before one leaf put *forth*?
If springing *things* be any jot *diminish'd,*
They *wither* in their prime, *prove nothing* worth;
The *colt* that's *back'd* and *burden'd* being young
Loseth his *pride*, and *never* waxeth strong.
You *hurt* my *hand* with *wringing* let us part,
And *leave* this idle theme, this *bootless chat*:
Remove your siege from my unyielding *heart;*
To love's alarms it will *not* ope the *gate*:
Dismiss your vows, *your feigned tears*, *your flattery*;
For *where* a heart is hard they *make no battery*.
(Drahos, 2011) (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 416-426)

Will instinctually chose to regularize the verse, and his operatives were often consistent with the natural stress of iambic pentameter. We discovered, however, that achieving our goal of maximizing language clarity was erratic and quite inconsistent. Further, when he chose to stray from the natural stress by emphasizing personal pronouns (*my, I*) and negatives (*not, no, nothing*) the clarity broke down even further. This discovery solidified a strict adherence to an experimental rule: we would try to avoid negative stress and personal pronoun stress as a general principle, and always look before and beyond the iambic pentameter rhythms for rhetorical device — then play that device. When Will was focused

more on playing his tactics, the text was muddled and did not sound clear. The thick bars connecting him to his audience seemed more like thin lines. He was directed to play the speech again with emphasis only on the rhetorical device of antithesis and to eliminate emphasis on personal pronouns and negatives. Italics in the following represent his adjustments.

> Unless it be a *boar*, and *then* I *chase* it;
> Tis much to *borrow*, and I will not *owe* it;
> My love to *love* is love but to *disgrace* it;
> For I have heard it is a *life* in *death*,
> That *laughs* and *weeps*, and *all* but with a *breath*.
> Who wears a garment *shapeless* and *unfinish'd*?
> Who *plucks* the *bud* before *one leaf put forth*?
> If *springing things* be any jot *diminish'd,*
> They *wither* in their prime, prove nothing *worth*;
> The *colt* that's *back'd* and *burden'd* being young
> *Loseth* his *pride*, and never *waxeth strong*.
> You hurt my *hand* with *wringing* let us *part*,
> And leave this *idle theme,* this *bootless chat*:
> Remove your *siege* from my *unyielding* heart;
> *To love's alarms it will not ope the gate:*
> Dismiss your *vows*, your feigned *tears*, your *flattery*;
> For where a heart is hard they *make no battery*.
>
> (Drahos, 2011) (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 409-426)

This shift of focus resulted in a big leap forward. His delivery started to take on variety and we could begin to understand a linear organisation of clear ideas. The speech was much more compelling to listen to because Will was guiding us through one specific opposite after the other. Notice also that Will eliminated all stress on personal pronoun and most negatives. He did, however, astutely play the negatives when it served him. For example, he played the mostly monosyllabic line for extreme emphasis: '*To love's alarms it will not ope the gate*' and this included a negative (*not*). He also stressed the 'no' on 'For where a heart is hard they make *no battery*' because it worked well to highlight the antithesis of the previous line where he describes Venus' attempts at breaking his will with '*vows ... tears*

... *flattery*'. We learned that our general principles and rules could be broken when it served clarity.

Here is another example (17 March 2013) of a text working session with Ms. Marano ('Ovid'). We worked on meaning and definition, as stated earlier, through all of her lines so that she had a solid understanding of how the character feeds the story and the spine of the play. 'Ovid' is the centre of the play — its conscience — and she is the only character who consistently speaks to the audience. She was directed to read the opening lines and make the meaning as clear as possible. Ms. Marano, an accomplished actor with decades of experience working professionally, made the following stress choices (in italics):

OVID

> The outside of her *garments* were of *lawn*,
> The *lining*, purple *silk*, with gilt *stars* drawn,
> Her wide *sleeves green*, and border'd with a *grove*,
> Where *Venus* in her naked glory strove
> To please the careless and disdainful eyes
> Of *proud Adonis*, that before her lies;
> Her *kirtle blue*, whereon was many a *stain*,
> Made with the *blood* of wretched *lovers slain.*
> Upon her *head* she ware a *myrtle wreath*,
> From whence her veil reach'd to the ground beneath.
> Her *veil* was artificial *flowers* and *leaves*, …
>
> (Drahos, 2011) (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 9-19)

By extracting only the operative words from this delivery, we get a clear understanding of what 'Ovid' is describing: *garments, lawn — lining, silk, stars — sleeves, green grove, Venus proud Adonis — kirtle, blue, stain — head, myrtle wreath — veil, flowers and leaves.* As she said the lines, we could 'see' the images. We felt confident, then, that the audience would clearly understand that our narrator was creating a story, setting the colours and textures of the scene as if weaving a tapestry. Ms. Marano was then asked to

make a small adjustment. She was directed to add a slight *caesura* (indicated by the carets below) between the object and their adjectives:

> The outside of her *garments* ^ were of *lawn*,
> The *lining*, ^ purple *silk*, with gilt *stars* drawn,
> Her wide *sleeves* ^ *green*, and border'd with a *grove*, ...
> Her *kirtle* ^ *blue*, whereon was many a *stain*,
> Made with the *blood* of wretched *lovers slain.*
> Upon her *head* she ware a *myrtle wreath*, ^
> From whence her *veil* ^ reach'd to the ground beneath.
> Her *veil* ^ was artificial *flowers* and *leaves*, ...
>
> (Drahos, 2011) (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 9-19)

The finding was helpful for engaging the audience because it provided, precisely in the pause, a moment for the audience members to create a mental image of, for example, the garment lining, while the actor simultaneously displayed it physically.

PLAYING ACTIVE INTENTIONS

Cicely Berry suggests that 'heightened' speech is often daunting to actors perhaps because, amongst other technical challenges, there is a need for formal language to be 'verbally explicit' (Berry, 1992, p. 33). This is certainly a challenge we encountered in our production. It took the actors several weeks of sitting with the text to gain a confident sense of ownership of their speeches. The challenge in rehearsal was persistent because we needlessly battled or resisted the language and allowed it to intimidate and dominate our naturalistic acting choices.

The solution, at least for our specific practice, was in a multifaceted approach that blended the best of our discoveries — doing the research to clarify our own understanding of the text, honing the technical skills necessary for working with complex rhetoric to inform our operative word choices and, further, taking the time to identify and play specific, 'positive' intentions — all to ensure effective communication with our audience. Given the bounty of richly complex language and imagery Shakespeare and Marlowe

provide as a foundation for the work, there was, for the actors, a sense of deep responsibility to bring fresh variety to their characters, which raised some additional challenges in our process. The following is a brief example of our explorations throughout March and April 2013.

PROBLEM: NEGATIVE LANGUAGE — SOLUTION: POSITIVE INTENTIONS

It was discovered that the narrative drive of the language that Marlowe and Shakespeare used was, in some passages, dramatically 'negative' in tone. Even Venus' *carpe diem* argument can be read (and acted) with a deeply negative tone. Here she attacks Adonis' very 'heart' as being guilty of murder:

> Thy eyes' shrewd tutor, that hard heart of thine,
> Hath taught them scornful tricks, and such disdain,
> That they have murder'd this poor heart of mine;
>
> (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 500-502)

The adaptation streamlined the Marlowe language towards narrative while minimizing the narrative (in favour of the immediacy of dialogue) in the play-within-a-play. Also, most of Venus' 'complaining' speeches in the adaptation were cut. This choice, however, was separate from my decision to present 'positive' intentions. Venus, in particular, spends much of the play admonishing Adonis' obdurate stubbornness. This can become relentless and uninteresting if the actor plays the negative language with negative intentions throughout. In this light, the 'negative' verse above was played with the 'positive' choice of discovery i.e. as if Adonis' cruel eyes inspired Venus to faint, which resulted in a tender kiss from Adonis. Throughout the piece, the ensemble was encouraged to play intentions with a positive immediacy and the motivation of actively trying to satisfy the character's wants. We discovered that this was helpful in minimizing a negative tone with the language.

While exploring Venus at rehearsal, I discovered that Shakespeare's antithesis is most definitely a clue into playing her extreme emotions with active intention. When Venus hears that Adonis intends to hunt the boar, Shakespeare has given her language of extremes — illusions of Adonis' divine beauty and the boar's violent terror. I fully committed to the 'positive' and miraculous beauty of Adonis (my intention was to sanctify his soul to divine realms) and then I switched abruptly to playing the dark violence of the boar's horrible capabilities (my intention was to warn Adonis). With both intentions, or tactics, the opposites were played with 'life and death' importance.

Intention: To Sanctify:

> Alas! he nought esteems that face of thine,
> To which Love's eyes pay tributary gazes;
> Nor thy soft hands, sweet lips, and crystal eyne,
> Whose full perfection all the world amazes;

Intention: To Warn:

> But having thee at vantage, wondrous dread!
> Would root these beauties as he roots the mead!
>
> (Drahos, 2011) (Shakespeare, 2007, ll. 631-636)

The result was a clearly defined text that could be both passionate and tender — internally and externally. It was discovered here that it is essential to gather clues from the rhetoric in order to play intentions. Also, we understood how important it is in this play, in which so much of the language protests or persuades, not to play the language with either 'complaining' or 'pleading' qualities.

PLAYING VENUS

Playing Venus proved to be an enormous acting challenge for me. I was inspired by Mark Rylance's description of his performance of Cleopatra in *Anthony and Cleopatra* during the 1999 season of the Globe theatre in London. He described the pitfalls and 'self-

conscious' dangers of playing a woman in Shakespeare. Beyond the inescapable perception of 'camp', it is certain that Rylance found solace in playing truth: 'I love Antony as much as I possibly can. If I really play that as truthfully as I possibly can, then they'll forgive me the rest' (Rylance, 2008). This is what I strived to do in playing Venus. She is in love and intense lust with Adonis. She is a 'bold faced suitor' and she is a relentless sexual predator. I had to play the truth of these wants and desires. I endowed the character of Adonis with the qualities of my lover, my object of desire, my deep emotional companion, my sex toy and part of my own beating heart. The fact that Adonis is also a man was immaterial to my approach — we celebrated gender ambivalence in our relationship. As the character, I needed to love Adonis and be as devastated by his death as if he were my own. In fact, Venus not only mourns Adonis' death, but also seeks revenge on the nature of love itself, thereby destroying herself in her grief.

ASPECTS OF ANCIENT MUSIC AND DANCE

The decision to include music and dance from antiquity was a difficult one. Since both Marlowe and Shakespeare set their poems in antiquity, it was important here to study aspects of ancient music and dance in order to illustrate why and when we decided to stray from, alter and be influenced by the resonances of those traditions. It was discovered early in the decision-making process, that a strict 're-creation' of ancient Greek dance and music was not desirable for the adaptation. Instead, the intention was to hold on to the ethos of the classical while exploring (and presenting) my own contemporary worldview through interpretive movements, music and dance. I hoped to root the style of the production in antiquity while allowing the spectator to accept that these are early modern narratives, based on quite ancient legendary characters. This posed a challenge for us in our explorations. Firstly, the problem in interpreting the poetic descriptions through movement

was complex. We found that having a ‘chorus’ who simply mimicked or imitated the narrative did not work well. When we explored this, we felt that the movement was not really enhancing the narrative with an exciting artistic aesthetic. However, when we explored more abstract interpretations, the essential support of narration was lost, and the main themes became too confused. Early discussions with Ms. Marano (as choreographer) included my suggestion that the movement should be non-literal, interpretive and expressionistic, but always connected firmly to the narrative. Indeed, as Lillian Brady Lawler (1947, p. 345) explains, the origins of Greek dance have a very liberal structure. Lawler states that the Greek definition ‘*orcheisthai* [meaning] ‘to dance’ seems to have connoted something like ‘to make any series of movements however simple, and involving any part or parts of the body, provided the movements be rhythmical’ (Lawler, 1947, p. 345). This idea of an all-inclusive structure freed me to explore any type of expression that I felt was relevant. The festival is put on by the ‘Men of wealthy Sestos’ (Marlowe, 2006, l. 91). This suggests that it is very much celebrated, produced, organized and advertised by the democracy of the people. Marlowe frees the people of Sestos, as well as ‘many a wand’ring guest’ (Marlowe, 2006, l. 94) to let loose with traditional dance. Therefore, this section of the play was the most dependent on ritual and spectacle. However, the ritual and spectacle were intended to be created through the imagination of ‘Ovid’ and brought to life without the crutch of scene painting, properties, or elaboration of mask.

Also, specific elements of music were added to enhance the action, providing a cohesive style. The spine of the play is centred around metrical rhythm in speech. The poetry was played out with movement. And the movement was sometimes played out with music. All three devices are metrical and connected, and they work together to form the

stylistic aesthetic in a technical way. As Lawler writes, poetry, dance and music 'were all facets of the same thing' (Lawler, 1947, p. 346) in ancient Greece.

As stated, the style of the piece contained elements of Greek classicism — even though we were acting and directing in the style of modern realistic Stanislavskian and Brechtian modes. Also, ancient Greek music, like the tradition of Greek dance and acting, is emotional and epic. It becomes essential to the poetic 'life' of the actions on stage. When we explored working without music, we found that the movement sequences simply did not flow with the rhythms of verse as smoothly. Music, in essence, bridged the gap for us between the acting of verse narrative and the story-telling dance sequences. It is not in the scope of this practice-as-research thesis to discuss the technical, mathematical, fragmented and complex study of ancient Greek musicology. However, I chose music for specific purposes in our production, including music from the artist Petros Tabouris (2003a; 2003b). Tabouris has a reputation as being well versed in ancient Greek musicology, while producing music that transcends time and place. He was an obvious choice because the attack of his music is lyrical and ritualistic. He has a unique genius for creating beautiful sound, even at its most bombastically percussive. In fact, our music was heavily dependent on percussive and lyrical sounds, particularly the kratola and auloi (Figure 4.2). The music consisted of the high-pitched ethereal 'whine' of the auloi and the more base, earthy foundation of the percussive kratola. Therefore, the dance sequences could freely explore both an elevated 'lyrical' style and a more tribal, choral and base style.

Figure 4.2 Musician playing the auloi and dancer playing kratola.[3]

THE PLAY-WITHIN-A-PLAY

The play was fully 'blocked' as of 12 April 2013. Although the staging was rough at this point, we were able to proceed with our scheduled run (excluding dancers) on 13 April 2013. The run-through was more like a stumble-through of the play. This is common since most of the actors (including myself) were still occupied with learning lines and focusing on all of the textual challenges highlighted above.

As the director, I learned about the 'holes' in the staging. For instance, it was not clear how to make a seamless transition from Marlowe's language to the Shakespearean play-within-a-play. This section is where the adaptation became most evident — and indeed most important. If the audience did not realize that we were 'performing' Shakespeare-within-Marlowe, then it was inevitable that they would be lost. The main challenge was to reconcile the chorus dancers becoming 'citizens' or 'men of wealthy Sestos', and to make clear Leander's transition from the object of 'Ovid's' desire (Marlowe, 2006, ll. 51-90) to an enthusiastic actor (playing Adonis) in the play — who is falling instantly in love with Hero. Also, 'Ovid' became, in essence, a performer within her own creation. Further, Venus appeared for the first time and was introduced with her entourage at this point. So there was a tremendous amount of activity on stage. As director,

[3] URL: http://www.aug.edu/~cshotwel/2001.Greeks.htm

I still grapple with the clarity of this transition. However, simple adjustments to the theatre space itself were made that proved helpful. For example, the stage at George Cadbury Hall, University of Birmingham, which was converted for use by the Department of Theatre Arts in 2009, has considerable depth — the permanent cyclorama on the back wall is as much as eleven meters from the first row of the audience. To bring the action closer to the audience, I masked off the extra depth with blacks, which allowed me to project a type of 'playbill' onto the blacks mid-stage to announce the play-within-a-play. Leander exited the stage and entered again dressed as Adonis for a pre-show curtain call to rousing applause along with Venus, her entourage, the Boar, Death and 'Ovid'. Ms. Marano's 'Ovid' was directed to play the subtle shift to 'performer' within the play to give the drive of the character a more 'narrative' facilitation. In other words, in this section, she was directed more towards serving the action, rather than being the 'creator' of it — as she does in Marlowe's language. Leander (as Adonis) fell in love with Hero (and she with him) at first sight during an exclusive moment at the pre-show curtain call. And Venus and her entourage re-entered, following a flock of flying swans. I framed the lights in Shakespeare's forest so that the spectators did not have to adjust significantly to a new playing space. All of these choices proved helpful in framing out the play-within-a-play.

Working intensely with the actors, the text and the theatrical elements of dance and music began to bring our company of artists together as a collaborative team. I felt that weeks before we presented the adaptation for an audience, the cast had a firm grasp of many of the challenges that we discovered in rehearsal. Although we did not feel in any way complacent, we felt confident that we could tell the story with clarity and that the play would resonate to challenge the audience to reflect on my main inquiry.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter explores how my practice functioned within the context of my stated research imperatives. It includes critical reflection regarding discoveries made during the practice-as-research process, as well as discoveries gleaned from the performances of the adaptation, as played to a live audience at the George Cadbury Hall, University of Birmingham on 7 and 8 June 2013.

Since 2010, I have been developing the adaptation of *Hero and Leander* and *Venus and Adonis* in order to deepen my understanding of the authors and poems. I have progressed with no presumption that I would find absolute answers to the inquiries raised in this thesis. But, as with any dramatic work by Marlowe or by Shakespeare, my 'scientific' dramatic experiment was to view the poems with a clearer lens — a magnified lens — and the theatrical staging was my laboratory microscope. One of my central aims was to study how the poems' eroticism subverted moral boundaries and male hegemony in early modern England. Also, I wanted to challenge a present-day audience (through practice as research) with progressive perspectives on marginalized sexual and gender populations. Further, I wanted to study the poems, as companions, in order to discover differences and similarities in the authors' styles.

FUNCTION OF THE PRACTICE WITHIN THE RESEARCH AIMS

It is important here to restate the aims from the introduction of the thesis in order to provide context and critical reflection in relation to my research imperatives.

Aim 1) To demonstrate how major decisions in the practice (informed by my main inquiry) are influenced by a study of various key historical and contemporary 'research findings' connected to the ancient legends of Venus and Adonis and Hero and Leander

(Chapter 1), and from a selection of findings from ancient erotic narrative epyllion (Chapter 2).

My practice reflected directorial discoveries within these research aims. As articulated in Chapter 2, the ancient evolution of the minor epic genre was extremely influential in formulating and portraying the strength of the female characters of Hero and Venus during rehearsals and in performance. Upon reflection, Callimachus' *Hecale* perhaps proved most important to my understanding of how progressive the minor epic genre could be. Even in its fragmentary form, the poem has a feminine drive that consistently resonated with my practice. The way Callimachus gave a powerful, sensual and independent voice to a subjugated, poverty stricken woman functioned as an inspiration and a way to confront the cast, the audience and myself with challenges and questions regarding contemporary marginalized populations throughout the process. Catullus' *Of the Argonauts and an Epithalamium for Peleus and Thetis* was important to the process of adapting *Venus and Adonis* into a streamlined and active erotic play during the early stages of the practice, as articulated in Chapter 2. Moschus' *Europa* resonated with my practice because Europa's sexual curiosity with her assailant Jove inspired the exploration of Adonis' surprising sexual curiosity, as he confronted Venus' dominating spirit in the adaptation. Through the research aim of exploring contemporary productions of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, I discovered resonances for my practice from almost all of the productions I was able to find. Of these, the most helpful were Greg Doran's use of puppetry (resonating with the decision to present 'Ovid' as 'puppet master'), Benjamin Stewart's sexually ambivalent one-man show of the entire erotic poem (illuminating and supporting directorial decisions to swap genders in the practice) and Marion Potts' production in which two actresses played different, and sometimes opposite, emotional

characteristics of the character Venus (which was helpful in crafting my own psychological investigation of the goddess). I was inspired by elements of these productions throughout the process of creating and staging my adaptation. Also significant in my research relating to contemporary productions of early modern poetry was the discovery that no significant production history could be found of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*. From this void, it followed that new knowledge could be produced by melding and comparing the theatricality of Marlowe with Shakespeare. Regarding the legend of Hero and Leander, researching treatments by Virgil, Ben Jonson, Lord Byron, Sir Robert Stapylton and William Wycherley inspired helpful exploration of eroticism, deep love and burlesque in rehearsal and performance. For example, directorial decisions were often influenced by the ridiculousness of Jonson's parody of Marlowe's poem using sexually ambiguous puppets, and Wycherley's burlesque of the moral ambivalence of both Hero and Leander. Robert Stapylton and Musaeus explored erotic passion and deep love in their treatments of Hero and Leander that were influential to my practice. As stated, Stapylton's treatment was the impetus to combine the two poems as a single piece. This literary-historical research directly influenced my explorations and was a key influence in how the practice functioned in relation to my research concerns. Further, my travels to Italy and the encounter with Ammannati's statue of Neptune resonated with the adaptation. The imposing masculine figure in Florence inspired the opposite casting of our figure of Neptune. The discovery that Neptune could be portrayed both physically and emotionally as opposite to legendary depictions of the god, helped to blur normalized gender and sexuality, which is related to my main research concern.

Aim 2) To investigate how Shakespeare and Marlowe seized upon the liberty of their contemporary genre of epyllion subversively to violate social bias regarding morality,

masculine power structures, gender and sexuality. And to demonstrate how a theatrical adaptation of both poems as an amalgamated, cohesive theatre piece can elucidate the authors' congruous subversive agenda, which can, in turn, have a progressive impact on a twenty-first century audience (Chapter 3).

Aim 2 focused on articulating the linkage of the political and cultural oppression of Shakespeare's and Marlowe's political environment, with our own. The epyllia of both Shakespeare and Marlowe were considered salacious in early modern England. The research concerning sections of Middleton's *A Mad World My Masters* in Chapter 3 suggested that the poems both had morally corrupt reputations and, importantly, were read together as companion pieces: 'two luscious mary-bone pies for a young married wife' (Middleton, 1995, 1. 2., ll. 45-46). In their writing, both authors violate patriarchal cultural biases as well as sexual and religious moral structures. A reading of Middleton's and Dekker's Moll Cutpurse in *The Roaring Girl* was helpful in determining how others may have been later influenced by Shakespeare and Marlowe to put forth transgressive ideas concerning gender and sexuality. It was also helpful to investigate how both Shakespeare and Marlowe were perhaps influenced by the deeply erotic and controversial Ovid (Chapter 3).

Research regarding anti-poetic and anti-theatrical treatises published by Elizabethan puritans, including Phillip Stubbes, John Northbrooke and Stephen Gosson, who rail against poetry and theatre as 'feminizing' and amoral, was useful in establishing a cultural context from which Shakespeare and Marlowe created progressive epyllia regarding sexuality and gender.

Further, it was beneficial to find critics, such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Christian Billing and others, who investigate the occupation of the early modern male with

masculinity. The practice functioned relating to Elizabethan homosocial culture by confronting a twenty-first century audience with themes of modern gender bias and questions regarding minority sexual groups. The practice blurred the gender-normative and heterocentric biases of our own world by swapping genders of certain characters and exposing the audience to progressive themes regarding marginalized sexual populations. The practice was socially conscious and striving towards progressive change in our society with the same subversive spirit that Shakespeare and Marlowe expressed in their own culture. The practice itself suggested a question to the thoughtful audience member: Has our tolerance of minority groups evolved in the four hundred plus years since the poems were written?

Aim 3) To experiment with a practice-as-research model in rehearsal and performance, and to discover how the rehearsal process and eventual staging of the poems reveal '*substantial insights*' (Nelson, 2013, p. 27) (upon practice and reflection) towards the unique differences and challenges an actor and audience face when confronted with Marlowe's dramatic style, in comparison to Shakespeare's (Chapters 4 and 5).

The practical explorations functioned within this research imperative in surprising and enlightening ways. When rehearsals began late in 2012, the challenge was to create a cohesive and comprehensible style in production. Through observation as the actors delivered the verse and began to create their characters within a modern, Stanislavski-based approach to acting, I discovered that, while Shakespeare's dialogue-rich text was amenable to this realistic approach, Marlowe's narrative verse seemed not well served by it. The immediacy of Shakespeare's dialogue contrasted with Marlowe's expressionistic, psychologically detached narrative style such that it required an approach other than modern, realistic techniques of directing and acting. This discovery led me to research

concerning the performance theories of Bertolt Brecht (Benjamin, 1973; Bentley, 1966; Brecht, 1964; Rouse, 1984; Speirs, 1987; Weideli, 1963; Willett and Manheim, 1970). Based on readings of Brecht, particularly his *Edward II*, I surmised that his expressionistic, episodic and narrative approach in practice seemed likely to resonate with Marlowe's narrative style. This research inspired me to return to the studio and try implementing aspects of Brechtian performance theory in the Marlowe sections, while continuing to apply Stanislavski-based performance techniques (Cohen, 1978, 2002; Meisner and Longwell, 1987; Stanislavski, 1968, 1981, 2004, 2008) in the Shakespeare section. Once the poems were rehearsed together as a single piece, the practice functioned as research by confronting problems and forming solutions. I was able to define intentional, specific methods (including dramatic ekphrasis) to achieve a cohesive style in production that highlighted the two distinct styles of the authors. Focusing on the Brechtian approach proved a fruitful direction to explore with Marlowe's text as there is a dearth of modern written practical-theoretical explorations of Marlovian performance technique. This research certainly led me to celebrate the differences in the authors' styles, both directorially and as an actor. Research through direct experience with the text was one of the reasons I decided to act in the piece. By performing in the play I directed, I had the opportunity to learn about the audience's response to my concepts in staging.

DISCOVERIES IN RELATION TO THE RESEARCH CONCERNS

Part of the main inquiry of the thesis was focused on the investigation of gender and sexuality in the poems and in the adaptation, while investigating the unique and separate narrative styles of Shakespearean and Marlovian epyllion. It was discovered that the eroticism we explored in rehearsal and performance simply did not always function the way it was envisioned. Decisions made regarding the depth of eroticism had to be explored

based on what our actors (mostly non-professional students) felt comfortable with. This is certainly not to say that I would necessarily, in a professional setting, want to push the boundaries of taste in the name of 'shock value'. But both poems describe more sexual exploration than we were willing to pursue in our production. Specifically, the sexual relationship between Venus and Adonis could have been explored much further. The Venus and Adonis kiss, for example, I would have extended and escalated in a serious erotic display. The reference of 'face grows to face' (Shakespeare, 2007, l. 540) has erotic possibilities beyond what Will Cooke (my former student) and I were willing to play. The kiss was certainly less powerful, not because we played it for comic effect necessarily, but because we 'commented' on the eroticism. A real opportunity was missed here to be subversive — to violate, with a display of deep sensuality and gender ambiguity, the perceived normality of sexual roles and sexual proclivity. However, during both performances, giggles were heard from the audience that were not perceived as reactions to comedy. Rather, it was discovered that the laughs seemed to be uncomfortable reactions to the homoeroticism. Although the eroticism was not explored as much as I thought was justified by the text, we still (perhaps) managed to make certain members of the audience confront their feelings towards sexual and gender stereotypes.

The same could be said of the relationship between Hero and Leander. Again, when engaging young theatre students in a play that contains sexual situations, we had to proceed very delicately so as not to push the boundaries of what is considered appropriate for an academic setting. Although India Storm West and Will Cooke were good friends and fellow students, we felt that we needed to back away from what would perhaps be asked in a professional setting. The sexual scenes between them were quite tame, restrained and tastefully suggestive. If the play were to be produced in a more professional

setting, I would want to be as faithful to the text as possible and explore perhaps a more dangerous quality. This means that when Marlowe describes Leander as being 'stripped ... to the ivory skin' (l. 637) for his swim, I would think it appropriate to show this. Not for shock value, but because when Leander arrives at Hero's tower, his naked body is deeply sensual and it inspires the actions that take place during the night. Similarly, when Marlowe describes Hero 'all naked to his sight displayed' (l. 808) the same could be said about her sensual exposure. With the scene being played as Marlowe created it, the audience could be much more inspired to think of the sexual beauty and purity of the young lovers — free from moral judgments, religious constraints, or an awareness of shame. The audience could more fully celebrate the young lovers' unselfconscious sexual freedom and sublime spiritual love. Still, as stated, there was an attempt at eroticism in these relationships, however tame, and in future manifestations of this practice, I would retain some of those comic elements Will and I explored and some of the tasteful restraint we showed in overabundance with Will and India. But these decisions would meld with braver choices of sexual abandon. I made the decision early in the process that I wanted the best actors for delivering the difficult language, even if that meant having to sacrifice some of the bolder sexual explorations. Having actors who could potentially grasp the language was a first and foremost concern, because none of the main ideas could have been explored if the play was not clearly delivered. The reasons for restraining the erotic thrust in a production that relies on eroticism are complex and in themselves prove that the poems are subversive — even to a twenty-first century audience. In the end, however, I was nervous about the outcome of insisting on such a controversial and dangerous exploration in an institutional setting.

Another area of discovery in my production had to do with 'Ovid's' relationship with the rest of the characters. 'Ovid' was not directed with enough power to change the action of what was happening both in the main story or the play-within-a-play. Often, 'Ovid' was directed with a split focus. At times I had 'Ovid' controlling the action as well as the lights and sound, but at other times I directed the actor to react to the action as if she were surprised by what was happening. In a future production of the play, I would firmly ground 'Ovid's' character as the 'puppet master'. I think he/she should control all aspects of the story — not just some of them. The intention was to highlight the concept of theatrical presentation and to direct 'Ovid' towards a closer connection with the audience. In future, my direction would be more aggressive with this concept.

The unique styles that we explored in terms of playing Marlowe's verse in relation to Shakespeare's were enlightening. It was discovered that these poems have the potential to work well together as a clear theatrical event, which is part of what the thesis set out to explore. However, it became clear that the staging of Marlowe's narrative structure posed unique challenges. It was discovered that a heightened sense of Brechtian distance, or 'defamiliarization' (Rouse, 1984, p. 32) was effective in distinguishing Marlowe's verse from Shakespeare's.

The actors I selected were, by design, willing to explore the separated texts of Shakespeare and Marlowe over a rather long rehearsal period. I started the process with good actors who had various levels of experience playing Shakespeare, but none had any direct exposure to playing Marlowe. Many hours were spent at the table with the actors building a solid foundation for speaking Marlovian verse. Marlowe's 'foreignness' was exacerbated by his rhetorical complexity. In my experience as the director, his verse took more hours to make clear and understandable. My observation of the actors in rehearsal

and performance revealed that Marlowe's text benefitted from an emphasis on presentational acting styles and an in-depth exploration of dramatic ekphrasis. The physical representation of the narrative, including dance and interpretive movement, brought Marlowe's complex narrative language to life in an active and accessible way.

By contrast, it was discovered that with the Shakespearean verse, the more the performers delved into the psychological motivations of the characters, the more the verse seemed to come alive. In response to the challenge of juxtaposing these two distinct styles with utmost clarity, it was discovered that a single narrator could serve as a uniting force to create a cohesive production. By introducing the narrator as 'Ovid', Ms. Marano was able to bring the separate poems together for the audience in performance — as a single creator. She brought to light a surprising and symbiotic relationship of Marlovian and Shakespearean verse by playing the role of facilitator. 'Ovid' was the consistent link the audience had with the characters and, importantly, with the language.

LIMITATIONS AND ALTERATIONS IN THE PRACTICE

In the earliest stages, the practice was envisioned as a full-length piece that would include every line of both poems. Time, space, style and production limitations influenced me to alter this concept. It was decided, instead, that the adaptation should play as a one-act with a performance time of about an hour. While the full poems together total 2,016 lines, I edited this to 815 lines so that the adaptation could still highlight the different styles of the authors while accommodating this shorter production time.

Another major alteration from conception to production had to do with my approach to the opening of the play — a crucial opportunity to set the tone of the piece. In early rehearsals, the play opened with a sustained dance in a dark storm. 'Ovid' was discovered on stage (centre) with the chorus in frozen silhouette (depicting a representation

of figures in a Greek urn) behind her upstage. With a snap of her fingers, 'Ovid' brought the chorus to life and silently directed the figures in a slow-motion dance, incorporating sustained tableau that foreshadowed the tragic drowning of Leander and Hero's consequent remorse and suicide. Before 'Ovid' spoke the first line of text, the dance ended with soft thunder, and all dancers exited the stage. The solitary 'Ovid' was then lit with a bright spot to begin her narration. Beginning the show with this dark scene, however, established a somber and complex tone, which neither aligned with the comic spirit of the production as a whole nor served to clarify the images in the narrative. I decided, instead to engage the audience immediately in the world of the play — to establish the character 'Ovid' as 'puppet master' in a bold, theatrical way, to introduce the concept of using physical representation of narrative descriptions (as dramatic ekphrasis) and suggest the comic spirit of the production. The play opened with the ensemble of actors creating the two cities (Abydos and Sestos) on opposite platforms left and right, with blue silks representing the Hellespont through the middle of the stage. 'Ovid' was discovered on the upstage platform and, with a crack of lightning and thunder, froze the action on stage. As she described the river and two cities, they came to life. The cast members presented themselves to the audience with comic gestures that were unique to each town and the river silk was shaken to represent the tempestuous waters of the Hellespont.

Experiments with dramatic ekphrasis in the practice illuminated several options for putting narration into action. Expressionistic movement choices and dance choreography were developed to enhance the narrative language with visual storytelling. Choreography became an essential element in certain sections, particularly during the Adonis festival in Marlowe's poem. The festival dance allowed 'Ovid' to control and describe (with visual aid) the 'heady riots, incest, rapes' (Marlowe, 2006, l. 144). In the 'play', the entire section

(about sixty lines) of Shakespeare's poem, after Adonis leaves Venus and she sings her 'tedious' (Shakespeare, 2007, l. 840) song, was replaced by our 'swan dance'. This three-minute sequence captured her suffering and, in essence, told the story of her 'moans' (l. 831). Another example of how choreography enhanced narrative is in my representation of the boar and hare. The dancers were able to transform (thereby visually demonstrating rhetorical antithesis) from the terrible boar to the 'timorous flying hare' (l. 674).

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Based on the discoveries made regarding Brechtian and Stanislavskian styles, I would relish the opportunity to direct a full-length, uncut intersection of these poems with an approach that is firmly rooted in juxtaposing the language styles through performance styles from the start. In future, I would go much further to distinguish Marlowe's narrative sections by having 'Ovid' cultivate a more tangible relationship with the audience. Also, there is opportunity to emphasize the external qualities of character and movement in Marlowe's sections while simultaneously deepening the psychological investigation of Shakespeare's characters.

The staging has opened up the potential to understand these works as narrative poems with dramatic social purpose. I was struck by how relevant the relationships and motivations of the characters are to a twenty-first century audience.

To my knowledge, these poems have never been staged together, yet they seem to fit together, theatrically, as if they were written for that purpose. I have learned much more about the intrinsic rhythms of both poems by staging them. Marlowe's verse is bigger than life and lends itself to more 'distanced' theatricality, while Shakespeare's poetry proved more structured theatrically and lent itself to a more dialogue-driven play.

I experienced the poems as they played out in front of an audience and witnessed their collective reception. The audience's response confirmed for me that the pieces have a very similar sense of comedy. Shakespeare and Marlowe seem to relish a spirit of play in their epyllia. Their poems have a playful freedom that resonates with theatrical comedy.

Through the gender mixing, we discovered both comedy and a freedom to explore bolder and more daring acting choices. The safety of the studio environment allowed the cast to discover their own sexual and gender biases, and revealed that normalized gender and sexual biases are still very much ingrained in our western culture. It was discovered that even artists who are drawn together to be progressive can find that personal, political and religious boundaries can affect the creative process. In many ways, the rehearsal was self-empowering and, at times, it was deeply self-reflective.

My intention is to develop the play further in a professional setting. I consider this adaptation a work in progress — as all theatre productions are for me. I have been reminded that theatrical performance is always out in front of us. We will forever be chasing the solution that does not exist in the theatre. Artistic choices should remain mutable — ever changing and evolving. As Ovid states:

> In all the world there is not that that standeth at a stay.
> Things eb and flow: and every shape is made to passe away.
> The tyme itself continually is fleeting like a brooke.
> For neyther brooke nor lyghtsomme tyme can tarrye still. But looke
> As every wave dryves other foorth, and that that commes behynd
> Bothe thrusteth and is thrust itself: even so the tymes by kynd
> Do fly and follow bothe at once, and evermore renew.
>
> (Ovid, 2000, ll. 197-203, pp. 382-383)

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APPENDIX — THE SCRIPT

HERO AND LEANDER

An Adaptation of Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* with a Play-Within-a-Play of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*
Adapted by Jonathan Drahos

Enter NOBLUS OVIDIUS NASSO (OVID). He is a majestic figure. He is played by a beautiful woman with a wise grace; as one who has written cosmological epics. He transcends time and place. He is NARRATOR to our tragicomedy and places the piece at the transient roots of 'no time' and 'all time;' but he sometimes interacts subtly with the characters. They are, after all, his creations. Upstage centre and elevated in silhouette is JOVE-KING OF THE GODS and he is seated on his throne with JUNO and many other Gods, Demi-Gods and their minions. They react verbally, physically and emotionally to their mortal subjects — and vice versa. A single light comes up on OVID down centre. The lights are an integral part of the production; just as mythological (Pagan) light; or inspiration is an essential theme in this adaptation of Marlowe's and Shakespeare's epyllia.

OVID
On Hellespont, guilty of true love's blood,
In view and opposite two cities stood,
Sea-borderers, disjoin'd by Neptune's might:

A light show of strobe and CRACKS of lightning reveal NEPTUNE-GOD OF THE SEA ascending from the trap. A liquid blue wash of light floods through centre stage. His entrance is marked with thunderous music, which should rattle the stage floor and audience. NEPTUNE is forceful, huge; he is decked modestly with pearls, jewels and sea agate. He carries his 'triple mace'. This picture of mythical masculinity looks sternly at the audience. His stern brow turns soft. He smiles and daintily waves a sweet 'Hi' to the audience and curtsies.

OVID (CONT'D)
The one Abydos, the other Sestos height.

OVID gestures and on opposite sides of the stage two ancient Greek cities are revealed — as much as can be done with light only.

OVID (CONT'D)
At Sestos Hero dwelt; Hero the fair,
Whom young Apollo courted for her hair,
And offer'd as a dower his burning throne,
Where she should sit for men to gaze upon ...

At this HERO of Sestos enters on the balcony of her castle. Soft music is heard. She is very beautiful, young, and innocent, but sexually ambiguous. She is played by a male actor. She allows herself to sensuously breath in the Hellespont. She is alone. Only NEPTUNE —invisible — sees her. His reaction is one of complete

indifference. He gestures a flinty shrug to the audience. Her WRETCHED NURSE enters behind her with her garments and as she helps her put on her clothes.

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

LEANDER enters as ADONIS in silhouette — his back to the audience and strikes a sexy pose as he lies upon the ground stroking his bow to a polish. He is played by the actor who plays LEANDER, so we want full light only when he is introduced later in the play as himself. Like a Narcissus he knows he is beautiful and smiles his dimpled grin at the audience. He hears someone running toward him. He jumps to his feet just as a huge, sweating, lustful and naked VENUS-GODDESS OF LOVE enters and tackles him like a football linebacker and they go rolling off stage. VENUS is played by a man with feminine characteristics (e.g. make-up and costumes).

OVID (CONT'D)
Her kirtle blue, whereon was many a stain,
Made with the blood of wretched lovers slain.
Upon her head she ware a myrtle wreath,
From whence her veil reach'd to the ground beneath.
Her veil was artificial flowers and leaves,
Whose workmanship both man and beast deceives.
Many would praise the sweet smell as she pass'd,
When 'twas the odour which her breath forth cast.
And there for honey bees have sought in vain,
And beat from thence, have lighted there again.

HERO beats away a swarm of bees. They return to her mouth and she beats them away again; but finds that she has swallowed one. She is exasperated, but used to it. It happens all the time.

OVID (CONT'D)
About her neck hung chains of pebble stone,
Which, light'ned by her neck, like diamonds shone.
She wore no gloves; for neither sun nor wind
Would burn or parch her hands, but to her mind,
Or warm or cool them, for they took delight
To play upon those hands they were so white.
Buskins of shells, all silver'd, used she;
And branch'd with blushing coral to the knee;
Where sparrows perch'd, of hollow pearl and gold,
Such as the world would wonder to behold;
Those with sweet water oft her handmaid fills,
Which, as she went, would cherup through the bills.

As HERO politely refuses the gloves, the NURSE brings out her boots made of shells. Attached to the boots are representations of sparrows-Chaucer's 'lecherous sparrows'. Water is sloshing out of the sides of her boots as she puts them on. They do seem, however, rather comfortable for her.

OVID (CONT'D)
Some say, for her the fairest Cupid pin'd,
And looking in her face was stricken blind.

A puppet representation of CUPID is suspended above HERO. A shaft of light flashes on him from HERO's direction. The doll freezes, then falls straight to the floor with a thud. He recovers, then swings back and forth and out of sight upstage.

OVID (CONT'D)
So lovely fair was Hero, Venus' nun,
As Nature wept, thinking she was undone,
Because she took more from her than she left;
And of such wondrous beauty her bereft:
Therefore in sign her treasure suffer'd wrack,
Since Hero's time hath half the world been black.

CYBELE, the ANATOLIAN NATURE GODDESS, with her flowing gown and high crown enters during OVID'S speech, and stands face to face with HERO. She is the Goddess of Pagan fertility. She kisses HERO. She weeps. And with her CLAP Sestos goes black. Abydos is washed with light. LEANDER enters as before only now we see him full. He is a traveler and his clothes reflect the sense that he is an actor somehow.

OVID (CONT'D)
Amorous Leander, beautiful and young
(Whose tragedy divine Musaeus sung)
Dwelt at Abydos; since him dwelt there none
For whom succeeding times make greater moan.
His dangling tressess that were never shorn,
Had they been cut, and unto Colchos borne,
Would have allured the vent'rous youth of Greece
To hazard more than for the Golden Fleece.
Fair Cynthia wished his arms might be her sphere;
Grief makes her pale, because she moves not there.
His body was as straight as Circe's wand;

With this LEANDER prepares for his performance in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* as he strips his clothes off.

OVID (CONT'D)
Even as delicious meat is to the taste,
So was his neck in touching, (OVID touches him) and surpass'ed
The white of Pelops' shoulder. I could tell ye
How smooth his breast was, and how white his belly,
And whose immortal fingers did imprint
That heavenly path with many a curious dint,

That runs along his back, 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,
Those orient cheeks and lips, exceeding his
That leapt into the water for a kiss
Of his own shadow, and despising many,
Died ere he could enjoy the love of any.
Had wild Hippolytus Leander seen,
Enamoured of beauty had he been;
His presence make the rudest peasant melt
That in the vast uplandish country dwelt.
The barbarous Thracian soldier, moved with nought,
Was moved with him, and for his favour sought.
Some swore he was a maid in man's attire,
For in his looks were all that men desire,
A pleasant smiling cheek, a speaking eye,
A brow for love to banquet royally;
And such as knew he was a man would say,

Enter a MAN like a jilted lover.

OVID (CONT'D)
"Leander, thou art made for amorous play;
Why art thou not in love, and loved of all?
Though thou be fair, yet be not thine own thrall."

At this point and through OVID's speech, everyone enters stage as if going to a festival but clearly the main attraction is the "Adonis Celebration" starring LEANDER as ADONIS. The play is of course a streamlined adaptation of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. We begin to hear music as people assemble with meats and breads and bottles of wine, grapes etc.

OVID (CONT'D)
Men of wealthy Sestos, every year,
For his sake whom their goddess held so dear,
Rose-cheeked Adonis, kept a solemn feast.
Thither resorted many a wandr'ing guest
To meet their loves; such as had none at all
Came lovers home from this great festival.

The GODS come down stage and here we have a choral dance describing the ekphrastic narrative. The dance is choreographed with the abandon of a 'Bacchanal'.

OVID (CONT'D)
There might you see the gods in sundry shapes
Committing heady riots, incest, rapes.
For know, that underneath this radiant floor
Was Danae's statue in a brazen tower,
Jove slyly stealing from his sister's bed,
To dally with Idalian Ganymede,

And for his love Europa bellowing loud,
And tumbling with the Rainbow in a cloud;
Blood quaffing Mars heaving the iron net
Which limping Vulcan and his Cyclops set;
Love kindling fire to burn such towns as Troy;
Sylvanus weeping for the lovely boy
That now is turned into a cypress tree,
Under whose shade the wood gods love to be.

A rush of music and then enter the players. Venus who we have seen before enters to thunderous applause and some minor players such as DEATH and the BOAR enter to hisses. The dogs enter then to huge applause and the lights dim to a feeling of early morning. The troupe exeunt.

(pause)

OVID enters centre and snaps his fingers. A gobo suggesting we have transported into the forest just then. Dawning lights reveal two GODS suspended mid air. They are, as seems obvious, two lovers. Post coital passions ensue in classic throws of familiar, but still romantic sadness at their parting. As SUN and MORNING are pulled apart, the stage brightens into a new day. The morning weeps at her familiar, yet always deadly remorse of the inevitable, necessary and fateful parting.

OVID (CONT'D)
Even As the Sun with purple colored face
has ta'en his last leave of the weeping Morn,
Rose-cheek'd Adonis hies him to the chase.

Enter LEANDER as ADONIS with bow and arrow, furnished like a hunter with horn and dagger. He chases prey with lightning speed and we see him able to nimbly stop, start, swiftly change direction, leap, roll, cover and reveal. This is all accomplished as skillful dance to pronounce his poetic existence; but also revealing how in touch with nature and natural creatures he is. He is quite literally a woodsman (he was born from a myree tree). By all accounts an impressive boy in his prime years.

OVID (CONT'D)
Hunting he loved, but love he laughed to scorn.
Sick-thoughted Venus makes amain unto him,
And like a bold faced suitor gins to woo him.

VENUS
Thrice fairer than myself,

OVID
Thus she began,

VENUS
The field's chief flower, sweet above compare,
Stain to all nymphs, more lovely than a man,
More white and red than doves or roses are;
Nature that made thee, with herself at strife,

Saith that the world hath ending with thy life.

She sits and motions him to sit between her legs.

Here come and sit, where never serpent hisses;
And being set, I'll smother thee with kisses:
And yet not cloy thy lips with loath'd satiety,
But rather famish them amid their plenty,
Making them red and pale with fresh variety;
Ten kisses short as one, one long as twenty:
A summer's day will seem an hour but short,
Being wasted in such time-beguiling sport.'

OVID
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
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,

Kissing him, she speaks into his face and wets his face with slobber.

VENUS
If thou wilt chide, thy lips shall never open.'
O! pity,

OVID
gan she cry,

VENUS
flint-hearted boy:
Tis but a kiss I beg; why art thou coy?
I have been woo'd, as I entreat thee now,
Even by the stern and direful god of war,
Whose sinewy neck in battle ne'er did bow,
Who conquers where he comes in every jar;
Yet hath he been my captive and my slave,
And begg'd for that which thou unask'd shalt have.

MARS has entered here and is a slave to every 'command' of VENUS' gestures — this is a dance here.

'Over my altars hath he hung his lance,
His batter'd shield, his uncontrolled crest,
And for my sake hath learn'd to sport and dance
To toy, to wanton, dally, smile, and jest;
Scorning his churlish drum and ensign red
Making my arms his field, his tent my bed.
O! be not proud, nor brag not of thy might,
For mastering her that foil'd the god of fight.

Touch but my lips with those fair lips of thine, —

Though mine be not so fair, yet are they red, —
The kiss shall be thine own as well as mine:
What seest thou in the ground? hold up thy head:
Look in mine eyeballs, there thy beauty lies;
Then why not lips on lips, since eyes in eyes?

Art thou asham'd to kiss? then wink again,
And I will wink; so shall the day seem night;
Love keeps his revels where there are but twain;
Be bold to play, our sport is not in sight:
These blue-vein'd violets whereon we lean
Never can blab, nor know not what we mean.

'The tender spring upon thy tempting lip
Shows thee unripe, yet mayst thou well be tasted:
Make use of time, let not advantage slip;
Beauty within itself should not be wasted:
Fair flowers that are not gather'd in their prime
Rot and consume themselves in little time.

'Were I hard-favour'd, foul, or wrinkled-old,
Ill-nurtur'd, crooked, churlish, harsh in voice,
O'erworn, despised, rheumatic, and cold,
Thick-sighted, barren, lean, and lacking juice,
Then mightst thou pause, for then I were not for thee;
But having no defects, why dost abhor me?

'Thou canst not see one winkle in my brow;
Mine eyes are grey and bright, and quick in turning;
My beauty as the spring doth yearly grow;
My flesh is soft and plump, my marrow burning;
My smooth moist hand, were it with thy hand felt.
Would in thy palm dissolve, or seem to melt.

She tries to touch him — he reluctantly backs away.

Narcissus so himself himself forsook,
And died to kiss his shadow in the brook.

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.

ADONIS
Fie! no more of love: (long pause)
The sun doth burn my face; I must remove.'

VENUS
Fondling,

OVID
She saith,

VENUS
Since I have hemm'd thee here
Within the circuit of this ivory pale,
I'll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer;
Feed where thou wilt, on mountain or in dale:
Graze on my lips, and if those hills be dry,
Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie.
Within this limit is relief enough,
Sweet bottom-grass and high delightful plain,
Round rising hillocks, brakes obscure and rough,
To shelter thee from tempest and from rain:
Then be my deer, since I am such a park;
No dog shall rouse thee, though a thousand bark.'

OVID
Once more the engine of her thoughts began:

VENUS
O fairest mover on this mortal round,
Would thou wert as I am, and I a man,
My heart all whole as thine, thy heart my wound;
For one sweet look thy help I would assure thee,
Though nothing but my body's bane would cure thee.'

ADONIS
Give me my hand,

OVID
Saith he,

ADONIS
Why dost thou feel it?'

VENUS
Give me my heart,

OVID
Saith she,

VENUS
And thou shalt have it;

O! give it me, lest thy hard heart do steel it,
And being steel'd, soft sighs can never grave it:
Then love's deep groans I never shall regard,
Because Adonis' heart hath made mine hard!

ADONIS
I pray you hence, and leave me here alone:
I know not love,

OVID
Quoth he,

ADONIS
Nor will not know it,
Unless it be a boar, and then I chase it;
Tis much to borrow, and I will not owe it;
My love to love is love but to disgrace it;
For I have heard it is a life in death,
That laughs and weeps, and all but with a breath.
Who wears a garment shapeless and unfinish'd?
Who plucks the bud before one leaf put forth?
If springing things be any jot diminish'd,
They wither in their prime, prove nothing worth;
The colt that's back'd and burden'd being young
Loseth his pride, and never waxeth strong.
'You hurt my hand with wringing. Let us part,
And leave this idle theme, this bootless chat:
Remove your siege from my unyielding heart;
To love's alarms it will not ope the gate:
Dismiss your vows, your feigned tears, your flattery;
For where a heart is hard they make no battery.'

VENUS
What! canst thou talk?

OVID
Quoth she,

VENUS
Hast thou a tongue?
O! would thou hadst not, or I had no hearing;

OVID
And at his look she flatly falleth down
For looks kill love, and love by looks reviveth;
A smile recures the wounding of a frown;
But blessed bankrupt, that by love so thriveth!
The silly boy, believing she is dead
Claps her pale cheek, till clapping makes it red;
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.

VENUS
'O! where am I?'

OVID
quoth she,

VENUS
In earth or heaven,
Or in the ocean drench'd, or in the fire?
What hour is this? or morn or weary even?
Do I delight to die, or life desire?
But now I liv'd, and life was death's annoy;
But now I died, and death was lively joy.
O! thou didst kill me; kill me once again:
Thy eyes' shrewd tutor, that hard heart of thine,
Hath taught them scornful tricks, and such disdain,
That they have murder'd this poor heart of mine;
And these mine eyes, true leaders to their queen,
But for thy piteous lips no more had seen.
'Pure lips, sweet seals in my soft lips imprinted,
What bargains may I make, still to be sealing?
To sell myself I can be well contented,
So thou wilt buy and pay and use good dealing;
Which purchase if thou make, for fear of slips
Set thy seal-manual on my wax-red lips.
A thousand kisses buys my heart from me;
And pay them at thy leisure, one by one.
What is ten hundred touches unto thee?
Are they not quickly told and quickly gone?
Say, for non-payment that the debt should double,
Is twenty hundred kisses such a trouble?'

ADONIS
'Fair queen,'

OVID
Quoth he,

ADONIS
If any love you owe me,
Measure my strangeness with my unripe years:
Before I know myself, seek not to know me;
No fisher but the ungrown fry forbears:
The mellow plum doth fall, the green sticks fast
Or being early pluck'd is sour to taste.
Look! the world's comforter, with weary gait
His day's hot task hath ended in the west;
The owl, night's herald, shrieks, 'tis very late;

The sheep are gone to fold, birds to their nest,
And coal-black clouds that shadow heaven's light
Do summon us to part, and bid good night.

Now let me say good night, and so say you;
If you will say so, you shall have a kiss.

VENUS
'Good night,'

OVID
Quoth she; and ere he says adieu,
The honey fee of parting tender'd is:
Her arms do lend his neck a sweet embrace;
Incorporate then they seem, face grows to face.
Now quick desire hath caught the yielding prey,
And glutton-like she feeds, yet never filleth;
Her lips are conquerors, his lips obey,
Paying what ransom the insulter willeth;
Whose vulture thought doth pitch the price so high,
That she will draw his lips' rich treasure dry.

VENUS
'Sweet boy,'

OVID
She says,

VENUS
This night I'll waste in sorrow,
For my sick heart commands mine eyes to watch.
Tell me, Love's master, shall we meet to-morrow
Say, shall we? shall we? wilt thou make the match?'

OVID
He tells her,

ADONIS
No; to-morrow he intends
To hunt the boar with certain of his friends.

The BOAR enters — a beautiful man wearing a head of the animal he is portraying.

VENUS
The boar!

VENUS rushes to him and knocks the BOAR flat to the floor. She covers him with her body.

ADONIS
'Fie, fie!'

OVID
He says,

ADONIS

You crush me; let me go;
You have no reason to withhold me so.'

VENUS

Thou hadst been gone,

OVID

quoth she,

VENUS

sweet boy, ere this,
But that thou told'st me thou wouldst hunt the boar.
O! be advis'd;

Here VENUS CLAPS and the chorus dancers enter and 'take the shape' of the BOAR. The lead dancer wears a boar mask and six other dancers interpret the 'tushes','bristly pikes', 'hairy bristles' and 'short thick neck'. The dancers move as one behind the mask to represent the bulk of the animal.

thou know'st not what it is
With javelin's point a churlish swine to gore,
Whose tushes never sheath'd he whetteth still,
Like to a mortal butcher, bent to kill.
'On his bow-back he hath a battle set
Of bristly pikes, that ever threat his foes;
His eyes like glow-worms shine when he doth fret;
His snout digs sepulchres where'er he goes;
Being mov'd, he strikes whate'er is in his way,
And whom he strikes his crooked tushes slay.
'His brawny sides, with hairy bristles arm'd,
Are better proof than thy spear's point can enter;
His short thick neck cannot be easily harm'd;
Being ireful, on the lion he will venture:
The thorny brambles and embracing bushes,
As fearful of him, part, through whom he rushes.
'Alas! he nought esteems that face of thine,
To which Love's eyes pay tributary gazes;
Nor thy soft hands, sweet lips, and crystal eyne,
Whose full perfection all the world amazes;
But having thee at vantage, wondrous dread!
Would root these beauties as he roots the mead.
'O! let him keep his loathsome cabin still;
Beauty hath nought to do with such foul fiends:
Come not within his danger by thy will;
They that thrive well take counsel of their friends.
When thou didst name the boar, not to dissemble,
I fear'd thy fortune, and my joints did tremble.
'But if thou needs wilt hunt, be rul'd by me;
Uncouple at the timorous flying hare,

The CHORUS changes into individual hares. They hop with a harmless sense of timorousness. And they bolt off all four corners of the stage and exit.

And when thou hast on foot the purblind hare,
Mark the poor wretch, to overshoot his troubles
How he outruns the winds, and with what care
He cranks and crosses with a thousand doubles:
Where did I leave?

ADONIS
No matter where!

OVID
Quoth he.

ADONIS
Leave me, and then the story aptly ends:
The night is spent,

VENUS
Why, what of that?

OVID
Quoth she.

ADONIS
I am.

OVID
Quoth he,

ADONIS
Expected of my friends;
And now ‘tis dark, and going I shall fall.

VENUS
In night.

OVID
Quoth she.

VENUS
Desire sees best of all.

ADONIS
Nay then.

OVID
Quoth Adon.

ADONIS
You will fall again
Into your idle over-handled theme;
The kiss I gave you is bestow’d in vain,
And all in vain you strive against the stream;
For by this black-fac’d night, desire’s foul nurse,
Your treatise makes me like you worse and worse.

If love have lent you twenty thousand tongues,
And every tongue more moving than your own,
Bewitching like the wanton mermaid's songs,
Yet from mine ear the tempting tune is blown;
For know, my heart stands armed in mine ear,
And will not let a false sound enter there;
Lest the deceiving harmony should run
Into the quiet closure of my breast;
And then my little heart were quite undone,
In his bedchamber to be barr'd of rest.
No, lady, no; my heart longs not to groan,
But soundly sleeps, while now it sleeps alone.
What have you urg'd that I cannot reprove?
The path is smooth that leadeth on to danger;
I hate not love, but your device in love
That lends embracements unto every stranger.
You do it for increase: O strange excuse!
When reason is the bawd to lust's abuse.
Call it not, love, for Love to heaven is fled,
Since sweating Lust on earth usurp'd 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.
More I could tell, but more I dare not say;
The text is old, the orator too green.
Therefore, in sadness, now I will away;
My face is full of shame, my heart of teen:
Mine ears, that to your wanton talk attended
Do burn themselves for having so offended.

Adonis breaks from Venus and quickly exits.

OVID
So glides he in the night from Venus' eye;

VENUS sighs and is joined by her swans who dance for her. There is a light change here suggesting there is a new day. On the scrim we see the sun and morn together again as at the top.

VENUS is stopped by the dismal cry of ADONIS' hounds.

OVID (CONT'D)
She hearkens for his hounds and for his horn:
Anon she hears them chant it lustily,

And all in haste she coasteth to the cry.
By this she hears the hounds are at a bay;
Whereat she starts, like one that spies an adder
Wreath'd up in fatal folds just in his way,
The fear whereof doth make him shake and shudder;
Even so the timorous yelping of the hounds
Appals her senses, and her spirit confounds.
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:
Finding their enemy to be so curst,
They all strain courtesy who shall cope him first.
This dismal cry rings sadly in her ear,
Through which it enters to surprise her heart;
Who, overcome by doubt and bloodless fear,
With cold-pale weakness numbs each feeling part;
Like soldiers, when their captain once doth yield,
They basely fly and dare not stay the field.
Thus stands she in a trembling ecstasy,
Till, cheering up her senses sore dismay'd,
She tells them 'tis a causeless fantasy,
And childish error, that they are afraid;
Bids them leave quaking, bids them fear no more:
And with that word she spied the hunted boar;

The BOAR enters with DEATH played by two beautiful men and they are confronted with VENUS. ADONIS is seen choking DEATH while he is raped by the BOAR. ADONIS seems compliant. ADONIS is killed with the final violent thrust of the BOAR. This is performed with a stylized dance. It is not a graphic, violent scene, but a lyrical one to point up the antithesis.

OVID (CONT'D)
As the snail, whose tender horns being hit,
Shrinks backwards in his shelly cave with pain,
And there, all smother'd up, in shade doth sit,
Long after fearing to creep forth again;
So, at his bloody view, her eyes are fled
Into the deep dark cabins of her head;
So she at these sad sighs draws up her breath,
And, sighing it again, exclaims on Death.

VENUS
Hard-favour'd tyrant, ugly, meagre, lean,
Hateful divorce of love,

OVID
Thus chides she Death.

VENUS
Grim-grinning ghost, earth's worm, what dost thou mean

To stifle beauty and to steal his breath,
Who when he liv'd, his breath and beauty set
Gloss on the rose, smell to the violet?
If he be dead, O no! it cannot be,
Seeing his beauty, thou shouldst strike at it;
O yes! it may; thou hast no eyes to see,
But hatefully at random dost thou hit.
Thy mark is feeble age, but thy false dart
Mistakes that aim and cleaves an infant's heart.
Hadst thou but bid beware, then he had spoke,
And, hearing him, thy power had lost his power.
The Destinies will curse thee for this stroke;
They bid thee crop a weed, thou pluck'st a flower.
Love's golden arrow at him shoull have fled,
And not Death's ebon dart, to strike him dead.
Dost thou drink tears, that thou provok'st such weeping?
What may a heavy groan advantage thee?
Why hast thou cast into eternal sleeping
Those eyes that taught all other eyes to see?
Now Nature cares not for thy mortal vigour
Since her best work is ruin'd with thy rigour.'
Alas! poor world, what treasure hast thou lost!
What face remains alive that's worth the viewing?
Whose tongue is music now? what canst thou boast
Of things long since, or anything ensuing?
The flowers are sweet, their colours fresh and trim;
But true-sweet beauty liv'd and died with him.
To see his face the lion walk'd along
Behind some hedge, because he would not fear him;
To recreate himself when he hath sung,
The tiger would be tame and gently hear him;
If he had spoke, the wolf would leave his prey,
And never fright the silly lamb that day.
But this foul, grim, and urchin-spouted boar,
Whose downward eye still looketh for a grave,
Ne'er saw the beauteous livery that he wore;
Witness the entertainment that he gave:
If he did see his face, why then I know
He thought to kiss him, and hath killed him so.

VENUS buries her head into ADONIS' wounds and is bloodied.

VENUS
Tis true, 'tis true; thus was Adonis slain:
He ran upon the boar with his sharp spear,
Who did not whet his teeth at him again,
But by a kiss thought to persuade him there;
And nuzzling in his flank, the loving swine
Sheath'd unaware the tusk in his soft groin.

Had I been tooth'd like him, I must confess,
With kissing him I should have kill'd him first;
But he is dead, and never did he bless
My youth with his; the more am I accurst.'
Sith in his prime Death doth my love destroy,
They that love best their love shall not enjoy.

VENUS casts a spell on the BOAR — ZEUS enters from his throne and violently kills the BOAR.

VENUS
Here was thy father's bed, here in my breast;
Thou art the next of blood, and 'tis thy right:
Lo! in this hollow cradle take thy rest,
My throbbing heart shall rock thee day and night:
There shall not be one minute in an hour
Wherein I will not kiss my sweet love's flower.

OVID
Thus weary of the world, away she hies,
And yokes her silver doves; by whose swift aid
Their mistress, mounted, through the empty skies
In her light chariot quickly is convey'd;
Holding their course to Paphos, where their queen
Means to immure herself and not be seen.

The crowd applauds and the actors come centre for their bows. All exit except LEANDER who is mesmerized by HERO, who is at her altar staring straight at him and mesmerized as well. There ensues a choral dance where the GODS mix with the mortals and LEANDER and HERO come together in a duet. The music is lyrical and there is a light special following HERO and LEANDER. The dance is dream-like — representative of reality but not in it. All characters dance back off and LEANDER and HERO are alone facing each other.

OVID (CONT'D)

Now dressed as a woman.

Thence flew Love's arrow with the golden head,
And thus Leander was enamoured.
Stone still he stood, and evermore he gazed
Till with the fire that from his countenance blazed
Relenting Hero's gentle heart was strook.
Such force and virtue hath an amorous look.
It lies not in our power to love or hate,
For will in us is overruled by fate.
When two are stripped, long ere the course begin
We wish that one should lose, the other win.
And one especially do we affect
Of two gold ingots like in each respect.
The reason no man knows; let it suffice
What we behold is censured by our eyes.

Where both deliberate, the love is slight:
Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?
He kneeled, but unto her devoutly prayed.
Chaste Hero to herself thus softly said,

HERO
Were I the saint he worships, I would hear him.

LEANDER
Fair creature, let me speak without offence.
I would my rude words had the influence
To lead thy thoughts as thy fair looks do mine,
Then shouldst thou be his prisoner, who is thine.
Be not unkind and fair; misshapen stuff
Are of behaviour boisterous and rough.
O shun me not, but hear me ere you go.
God knows I cannot force love as you do.
My words shall be as spotless as my youth,
Full of simplicity and naked truth.
This sacrifice, (whose sweet perfume descending
From Venus' altar, to your footsteps bending)
Doth testify that you exceed her far,
To whom you offer, and whose nun you are.
Why should you worship her? Her you surpass
As much as sparkling diamonds flaring glass.
A diamond set in lead his worth retains;
A heavenly nymph, beloved of human swains,
Receives no blemish, but ofttimes more grace;
Which makes me hope, although I am but base:
Base in respect of thee, divine and pure,
Dutiful service may thy love procure.
And I in duty will excel all other,
As thou in beauty dost exceed Love's mother.
Nor heaven, nor thou, were made to gaze upon,
As heaven preserves all things, so save thou one.
A stately builded ship, well rigged and tall,
The ocean maketh more majestical.
Why vowest thou then to live in Sestos here
Who on Love's seas more glorious wouldst appear?
Like untuned golden strings all women are,
Which long time lie untouched, will harshly jar.
Vessels of brass, oft handled, brightly shine.
What difference betwixt the richest mine
And basest mould, but use? For both, not used,
Are of like worth. Then treasure is abused
When misers keep it; being put to loan,
In time it will return us two for one.
Who builds a palace and rams up the gate
Shall see it ruinous and desolate.

Ah, simple Hero, learn thyself to cherish.
Lone women like to empty houses perish.
Less sins the poor rich man that starves himself
In heaping up a mass of drossy pelf,
Than such as you. His golden earth remains
Which, after his decease, some other gains.
But this fair gem, sweet in the loss alone,
When you fleet hence, can be bequeathed to none.
Or, if it could, down from th'enameled sky
All heaven would come to claim this legacy,
And with intestine broils the world destroy,
And quite confound nature's sweet harmony.
Well therefore by the gods decreed it is
We human creatures should enjoy that bliss.
One is no number; maids are nothing then
Without the sweet society of men.
Wilt thou live single still? One shalt thou be,
Though never singling Hymen couple thee.
Wild savages, that drink of running springs,
Think water far excels all earthly things,
But they that daily taste neat wine despise it.
Virginity, albeit some highly prize it,
Compared with marriage, had you tried them both,
Differs as much as wine and water doth.
Base bullion for the stamp's sake we allow;
Even so for men's impression do we you,
By which alone, our reverend fathers say,
Women receive perfection every way.
This idol which you term virginity
Is neither essence subject to the eye
No, nor to any one exterior sense,
Nor hath it any place of residence,
Nor is't of earth or mould celestial,
Or capable of any form at all.
Of that which hath no being do not boast;
Things that are not at all are never lost.
Men foolishly do call it virtuous;
What virtue is it that is born with us?
Much less can honour be ascribed thereto;
Honour is purchased by the deeds we do.
Believe me, Hero, honour is not won
Until some honourable deed be done.
Seek you for chastity, immortal fame,
And know that some have wronged Diana's name?
Whose name is it, if she be false or not
So she be fair, but some vile tongues will blot?
But you are fair, (ay me) so wondrous fair,
So young, so gentle, and so debonair,

As Greece will think if thus you live alone
Some one or other keeps you as his own.
Then, Hero, hate me not nor from me fly
To follow swiftly blasting infamy.
Perhaps thy sacred priesthood makes thee loath.
Tell me, to whom mad'st thou that heedless oath?'

HERO
To Venus,

OVID
Answered she and, as she spake,
Forth from those two tralucent cisterns brake
A stream of liquid pearl, which down her face
Made milk-white paths, whereon the gods might trace
To Jove's high court. He thus replied:

LEANDER
The rites in which love's beauteous empress most delights
Are banquets, Doric music, midnight revel,
Plays, masks, and all that stern age counteth evil.
Thee as a holy idiot doth she scorn
For thou in vowing chastity hast sworn
To rob her name and honour, and thereby
Committ'st a sin far worse than perjury,
Even sacrilege against her deity,
Though neither gods nor men may thee deserve,
Yet for her sake, whom you have vowed to serve,
Abandon fruitless cold virginity,
The gentle queen of love's sole enemy.
Then shall you most resemble Venus' nun,
When Venus' sweet rites are performed and done.
Flint-breasted Pallas joys in single life,
But Pallas and your mistress are at strife.
Love, Hero, then, and be not tyrannous,
But heal the heart that thou hast wounded thus,
Nor stain thy youthful years with avarice.
Fair fools delight to be accounted nice.
The richest corn dies, if it be not reaped;
Beauty alone is lost, too warily kept.

HERO
Who taught thee rhetoric to deceive a maid?
Ay me, such words as these should I abhor
And yet I like them for the orator.
Gentle youth, forbear
To touch the sacred garments which I wear.
Upon a rock and underneath a hill
Far from the town (where all is whist and still,
Save that the sea, playing on yellow sand,

Sends forth a rattling murmur to the land,
Whose sound allures the golden Morpheus
In silence of the night to visit us)
My turret stands and there, God knows, I play.
With Venus' swans and sparrows all the day.
A dwarfish beldam bears me company,
That hops about the chamber where I lie,
And spends the night (that might be better spent)
In vain discourse and apish merriment.
Come thither.

LEANDER approaches HERO. He stands very close to her. He goes to kiss her.

OVID
By this, sad Hero, with love unacquainted,
Viewing Leander's face, fell down and fainted.
He kissed her and breathed life into her lips,
Wherewith as one displeased away she trips.
Yet, as she went, full often looked behind,
And many poor excuses did she find
To linger by the way, and once she stayed,
And would have turned again, but was afraid,
In offering parley, to be counted light.
So on she goes and in her idle flight
Her painted fan of curled plumes let fall,
Thinking to train Leander therewithal.
Therefore unto him hastily she goes
And, like light Salmacis, her body throws
Upon his bosom where with yielding eyes
She offers up herself a sacrifice
To slake his anger if he were displeased.
O, what god would not therewith be appeased?
Like Aesop's cock this jewel he enjoyed
And as a brother with his sister toyed
Supposing nothing else was to be done,

HERO shows signs of sexual frustration and confusion almost like VENUS.

OVID (CONT'D)
Albeit Leander rude in love and raw,
Long dallying with Hero, nothing saw
That might delight him more, yet he suspected
Some amorous rites or other were neglected.
Therefore unto his body hers he clung.
She, fearing on the rushes to be flung,
Strived with redoubled strength; the more she strived
The more a gentle pleasing heat revived,
Which taught him all that elder lovers know.
And now the same gan so to scorch and glow
As in plain terms (yet cunningly) he craved it.

Love always makes those eloquent that have it.
She, with a kind of granting, put him by it
And ever, as he thought himself most nigh it,
Like to the tree of Tantalus, she fled
And, seeming lavish, saved her maidenhead.
jewels being lost are found again, this never;
'Tis lost but once, and once lost, lost forever.
Now had the morn espied her lover's steeds,
Whereat she starts, puts on her purple weeds,
And red for anger that he stayed so long
All headlong throws herself the clouds among.
And now Leander, fearing to be missed,
Embraced her suddenly, took leave, and kissed.
Long was he taking leave, and loath to go,
And kissed again as lovers use to do.
Sad Hero wrung him by the hand and wept
Saying,

HERO

Let your vows and promises be kept.

OVID

Home when he came, he seemed not to be there,
But, like exiled air thrust from his sphere,
Set in a foreign place; and straight from thence,
Alcides like, by mighty violence
He would have chased away the swelling main
That him from her unjustly did detain.
For as a hot proud horse highly disdains
To have his head controlled, but breaks the reins,
Spits forth the ringled bit, and with his hooves
Checks the submissive ground; so he that loves,
The more he is restrained, the worse he fares.
What is it now, but mad Leander dares?

LEANDER

O Hero, Hero!

OVID

Thus he cried full oft;
And then he got him to a rock aloft,
Where having spied her tower, long stared he on't,
And prayed the narrow toiling Hellespont
To part in twain, that he might come and go;
But still the rising billows answered,

LEANDER

No.

OVID

With that he stripped him to the ivory skin
And, crying

LEANDER
Love, I come,

OVID
Leaped lively in.

The swim is an interpretive dance between NEPTUNE and LEANDER.

OVID (CONT'D)
Where kingly Neptune and his train abode.
The lusty god embraced him, called him

NEPTUNE
Love.

OVID
And swore he never should return to Jove.
But when he knew it was not Ganymede,
For under water he was almost dead,
He heaved him up and, looking on his face,
Beat down the bold waves with his triple mace,
Leander, being up, began to swim
And, looking back, saw Neptune follow him,
Whereat aghast, the poor soul 'gan to cry

LEANDER
O, let me visit Hero ere I die!

OVID
The god put Helle's bracelet on his arm,
And swore the sea should never do him harm.
He clapped his plump cheeks, with his tresses played
And, smiling wantonly, his love bewrayed.
He watched his arms and, as they opened wide
At every stroke, betwixt them would he slide
And steal a kiss, and then run out and dance,
And, as he turned, cast many a lustful glance,
And threw him gaudy toys to please his eye,
And dive into the water, and there pry
Upon his breast, his thighs, and every limb,
And up again, and close beside him swim,
And talk of love. Leander made reply,

LEANDER
You are deceived; I am no woman, I.
Ay me,

OVID
Leander cried,

LEANDER
Th' enamoured sun that now should shine on
Thetis' glassy bower, descends upon my radiant
Hero's tower.

O, that these tardy arms of mine were wings!

OVID
And, as he spake, upon the waves he springs.
By this Leander, being near the land,
Cast down his weary feet and felt the sand.
Breathless albeit he were he rested not
Till to the solitary tower he got,
And knocked and called. At which celestial noise
The longing heart of Hero much more joys
Than nymphs and shepherds when the timbrel rings,
Or crooked dolphin when the sailor sings.
She stayed not for her robes but straight arose
And, drunk with gladness, to the door she goes,
Where seeing a naked man,
(Such sights as this to tender maids are rare)
And, seeking refuge, slipped into her bed.
Whereon Leander sitting thus began,
Through numbing cold, all feeble, faint, and wan.

LEANDER
If not for love, yet, love, for pity sake,
Me in thy bed and maiden bosom take.
At least vouchsafe these arms some little room,
Who, hoping to embrace thee, cheerly swum.
This head was beat with many a churlish billow,
And therefore let it rest upon thy pillow.

OVID
Herewith affrighted, Hero shrunk away,
And in her lukewarm place Leander lay,
Whose lively heat, like fire from heaven fet,
His hands he cast upon her like a snare.
She, overcome with shame and sallow fear,
Like chaste Diana when Actaeon spied her,
Being suddenly betrayed, dived down to hide her.
And, as her silver body downward went,
With both her hands she made the bed a tent,
And now she lets him whisper in her ear,
Flatter, entreat, promise, protest and swear;
Yet ever, as he greedily assayed
To touch those dainties, she the harpy played,
And every limb did, as a soldier stout,
Defend the fort, and keep the foeman out.
Yet there with Sisyphus he toiled in vain,
Till gentle parley did the truce obtain.
Wherein Leander on her quivering breast
Breathless spoke something, and sighed out the rest;
Which so prevailed, as he with small ado
Enclosed her in his arms and kissed her too.

And every kiss to her was as a charm,
And to Leander as a fresh alarm,
So that the truce was broke and she, alas,
(Poor silly maiden) at his mercy was.
Love is not full of pity (as men say)
But deaf and cruel where he means to prey.
Seeming not won, yet won she was at length.
In such wars women use but half their strength.
Leander now, like Theban Hercules,
Entered the orchard of th' Hesperides;
Whose fruit none rightly can describe but he
That pulls or shakes it from the golden tree.
And now she wished this night were never done,
And sighed to think upon th' approaching sun;
For much it grieved her that the bright daylight
Should know the pleasure of this blessed night,
And them, like Mars and Erycine, display
Both in each other's arms chained as they lay.
Thus near the bed she blushing stood upright,
And from her countenance behold ye might
A kind of twilight break,
So Hero's ruddy cheek Hero betrayed,
And her all naked to his sight displayed,
Whence his admiring eyes more pleasure took
Than Dis, on heaps of gold fixing his look.
By this, Apollo's golden harp began
To sound forth music to the ocean,
Which watchful Hesperus no sooner heard
But he the bright day-bearing car prepared
And ran before, as harbinger of light,
And with his flaring beams mocked ugly night,
Till she, o'ercome with anguish, shame, and rage,
Danged down to hell her loathsome carriage.

A dance follows where an erotic orgy in represented in tableau and silhouette around the bed of HERO and LEANDER — ambiguous, sexual, and dangerously erotic. The audience is not privy to the sex of the partners, and the partners change regularly.

THE END