

## **Actaeon and the Allegory of Vision in Hogarth's *Marriage à la Mode IV: La Toilette***

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### Introduction

Hogarth's *Marriage à la Mode* is a cycle of six paintings (1843) and carefully-supervised reproductive engravings (1845) satirizing the social-climbing English mercantile class which marries into a corrupt nobility only to succumb to a self-destructive extravagance and depravity. The narrative is known from the images themselves and from a long, anonymous poem entitled, *Marriage A-la-mode: an Humorous Tale in Six Cantos ... being an Explanation of the Six Prints Lately Published by Mr. Hogarth*.

A marriage is arranged between a wealthy merchant's daughter and a jaded Count ("Lord Squanderfield") who leaves his wife at home to dally with his mistress. The new Countess quickly acquires the courtly vices of wasteful living, art collecting, Italian opera, and adultery. Her husband eventually discovers her lover ("Silver Tongue") only to be killed in a duel of false honor. Silver Tongue is arrested and hanged and the ruined Countess flees to her family home where she commits suicide.<sup>i</sup>

One motif which has attracted commentary in scene four, *La Toilette*, is the African boy holding a statue of Actaeon and pointing to his horns. The anonymous poem which sees this as a punning reference to cuckoldry<sup>ii</sup> is surely correct given the tradition of cuckold's horns in literary discussions of Actaeon since the sixteenth century. Well known literary examples include Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Marlowe's *Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*, and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, all discussed below.<sup>iii</sup>

Set within an allegory of material extravagant as *visual culture* and held up by a licentious slave boy, Hogarth's Actaeon also raises a host of larger issues crucial for *Marriage à la Mode* and for Hogarth's art in general. These include adultery, racial stereotypes and miscegenation, art collecting and courtly aesthetics, the function of Hogarth's paintings in British society, and the actions of the real spectator who is explicitly compared to Actaeon. A brief review of the tradition for Actaeon in Western art will allow us to look more thoughtfully at Hogarth's allegory and to comprehend how the painting locates itself, and Hogarth's art as a whole, within contemporary artistic debates and cultural shifts in late eighteenth-century England.

## The Theme of Actaeon

In classical mythology, Actaeon was a young hunter who stumbled on the naked Diana bathing in the woods, only to be transformed into a stag devoured by his own dogs. Since Greek antiquity, Actaeon was commonly used as a metaphor for dangerous voyeurism and lust. In *The Bacchae*, Euripides made the proud and lascivious Pentheus into an Actaeon-like figure who dressed like a woman to spy on the maenads of Dionysius. The maenads, in turn, became “dogs” who “hunted” down Pentheus just like Actaeon, tearing him limb from limb.<sup>iv</sup> In Callimachus’s *Bath of Athena*, the young hunter, Teresias, stumbled, Actaeon-like, on the bathing Athena and was punished with blindness (later modified as prophetic power).<sup>v</sup> Comparisons between these two young men were particularly easy because they were first cousins.

In medieval Christian writing, Actaeon took on a darker significance in figuring a fatal lasciviousness, sinful cupidity, and descent into bestial passions.<sup>vi</sup> This monstrous Actaeon continued through the early modern period, elaborated with new ideas of adultery and horns of cuckoldry. In some authors, this was handled comically, as in books three and five Rabelais’ *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1546, 1562).<sup>vii</sup> A darker Actaeon appeared in other Renaissance works<sup>viii</sup> including Marlowe’s *Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* (1616) and Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* (II.3) and continued all the way to Rider Haggard’s deadly Ayesha.<sup>ix</sup> Marlowe’s Faustus used demonic powers to conjure up famous naked women from antiquity - Alexander’s mistress and Helen of Troy - to satisfy the Actaeon-like gaze of modern emperors and courtiers as well as his own desires. Like Alexander and Paris, Marlowe’s Faust destroys himself through a fatal “lust,” ambition, and adultery. As in the classical myth, Marlowe’s voyeurs all grow horns of cuckoldry.<sup>x</sup>

In *Titus Andronicus* (1596), Actaeon worked as an ironic foil to the innocent hunter, Bassianus, who happened on the evil adulterer, Tamora, Empress of Rome. Unlike the innocent Diana, Tamora lies in wooded ambush with her sons, planning the murder of Bassianus and the rape and disfiguring of his chaste sister, Lavinia. With perverse irony, Tamora accuses Bassianus of Actaeon-like behavior. Moments before his murder, he wonders, jokingly, if Tamora has Diana’s power to kill.<sup>xi</sup> Here Actaeon worked on multiple levels simultaneously. As a figure for Bassianus, he reversed the moral gendering of the myth and made Actaeon figure a male innocence destroyed by female lust. As a figure for the secretive and lascivious sons of Tamora who rape the innocent Lavinia, and for Tamora who conceals her own lusts in the woods, Actaeon also figured a demonic female lust and cuckoldry which eventually brought on its own destruction.<sup>xii</sup>

Other, more benign treatments of Actaeon appeared in early modern literature and art,<sup>xiii</sup> capitalizing on the humanist reevaluation of human desire and nudity and contributing to an exploding category of Renaissance art after 1500: soft-core, Biblical and mythological erotica. Examples include the bathing Bathsheba watched by King David whose lust drove him to adultery and murder, and the bathing Suzanna spied on by the Elders who were eventually stoned to death. In mythological representation, Renaissance and Baroque artists transformed Perseus rescuing Andromeda into a voyeuristic image by

placing the chained, naked Andromeda just inside the picture plane and relegating Perseus to the distance.<sup>xiv</sup> The example of Actaeon was never far from these images, as Tasso noted in comparing Actaeon to his hero, Rogier, gazing at the naked, chained Angelica who struggled like an unsuccessful Diana to hide herself.<sup>xv</sup> Ignoring the moral warning implicit in the reference to Actaeon, Tasso's Rogier hesitated to cover Angelica long enough to feast his eyes. More importantly, Tasso gratified the voyeurism of the male reader by describing Angelica's body in a lengthy passage.

Renaissance and Baroque artists were happy to transform Diana and Actaeon into a similar spectacle. Some artists like Cranach used the theme to offer up yet another courtly example of erotic bathing not unlike contemporary German depictions of the Women's Bath, the Fountain of Youth, Venus and Her Children, and the Feast of Herodias.<sup>xvi</sup> Other artists like Palma Vecchio (1530s) and Guercino (1630s) went to far as to relegate Actaeon – a hunter in Palma, a dog chasing a stag in Guercino- to a tiny, almost invisible figure in the distance. Faced by what seems to be a genre image of female bathers – none bearing the crescent moon signifying Diana - the male viewer is invited to wander at leisure among the many female nudes in the foreground before noticing the subdued reference to the moral fable. By reducing mythological imagery to a minimum, such works use a framework of lofty moralizing even as they slide toward images of pure voyeurism.<sup>xvii</sup>

If these paintings transformed the real spectator into an Actaeon-like participant, the mythological dimension worked primarily as a pretext and a prize in a clever game of allegorical hide and seek. While ostensibly warning against unbridled desire, the recognition of Actaeon also worked as the culmination of a hermeneutic game where educated viewers could see their own high learning, "noble" intellect, and aesthetic sophistication. By seeing the bathers of Palma and Guercino with the gaze of Actaeon, courtly viewers could indulge their own voyeurism safely while congratulating themselves on their high spiritual vision rising innately above the material, "carnal" gaze of the uneducated herd.<sup>xviii</sup> All this typifies the cleverness with which Renaissance and Baroque court art used mythological painting as upper-class erotica while carefully concealing or justifying such voyeuristic painting with a lofty framework of moral and intellectual allegory. While Titian painted a prominent Actaeon doomed to destruction in his pair of paintings on the theme, the presence of so much female nudity allowed the male viewer to have his allegorical cake and eat it too. It was this Italian Renaissance tradition of voyeurism disguised by lofty moral warning and mythological allegory which Hogarth satirized in *Marriage à la mode*, especially scene I, *The Marriage Settlement*, scene II, *The Tête à Tête*, and scene IV, *La Toilette*.

#### Marriage à la Mode IV: La Toilette

*Marriage a la Mode IV, La Toilette* imagines an aristocratic interior of extravagant wealth, idleness, pleasure, sexual license, and aesthetic leisure encompassing music, painting, and sculpture. Effeminate Italian opera singers perform at left<sup>xix</sup> while the room is decorated with lascivious works of Italian Renaissance art including a *Lot and*

*His Daughters* at right, <sup>xx</sup>Correggio's *Rape of Io*, a version of Michelangelo's *Rape of Ganymede*, and in the basket of artistic trophies in the foreground, a large majolica plate inscribed Julio Romano and depicting the *Rape of Leda*. <sup>xxi</sup>

Musical patronage and art collecting were traditional markers of wealth and class in eighteenth-century England. So were Hogarth's two African slaves at a time when slavery was largely unproblematic. <sup>xxii</sup> The older slave stands behind the Countess, offering tea. In the foreground, a slave boy unpacks a basket of artistic trophies including a Buddha, African fetishes, the majolica *Rape of Leda*, and a small, Italianate statuette of *Actaeon*. Pointing to Actaeon's horns, he looks out at the real viewer with a mischievous grin reminiscent of Jan Steen's all too knowing children.

The presence of boy slaves in Hogarth's art, and elsewhere in European art after 1500 was not accidental. As David Bindman has noted, Renaissance and Baroque court portraiture frequently depicted boy slaves looking up adoringly at their European masters. This formula allowed raw nature to appear submitting to higher civilization, savagery obeying reason, children following benevolent parental figures. As a child, the slave was at once harmless and happy within the paternalistic relationship of Western slavery. This innocent paternalism circulated in most European discussions and images of slavery at this time. The most famous literary example in England was Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) where the savage, cannibalistic African turned slave, Friday, gladly submitted to his new master, placing Crusoe's foot on his neck. <sup>xxiii</sup>

More importantly for my discussion, the two male slaves in *La Toilette* played on stereotypes of unbridled African sexuality which lay at the core of European myths of African savagery since at least the Renaissance. The lecherous African began circulating in mainstream visual culture only in the seventeenth century in comedic Dutch painting, especially in Hogarth's primary mentor, Jan Steen. In Steen's *Marriage Contract of Tobit and Tobias*, a male servant grins at the bride and at the real viewer while "tapping the keg," a Dutch expression equivalent to "deflowering the bride". <sup>xxiv</sup>

Lecherous Africans appear more frequently in eighteenth-century art, especially comic artists like Hogarth. In *Noon* from the *Four Times of Day* (1738), a black servant stands behind a white barmaid, fondling her bare breasts (Fig. 3). In scene two from *A Rake's Progress*, a turbaned black boy stares wide-eyed at the harlot's breasts, his gesturing hand overlapping compositionally with her thighs. (Fig. 4). <sup>xxv</sup> In a sketch for *A Rake's Progress*, (c. 1733) Hogarth introduced the slave boy later reworked in *La Toilette*. He stands in the foreground looking out, displaying classical and Italian Renaissance artistic trophies including the same *Rape of Ganymede* reused in *La Toilette*. <sup>xxvi</sup> If the *Ganymede* in *La Toilette* suggests the homosexual "vices" of the Italian musicians, as has often been noted, the slave boy holding the Ganymede in the sketch for *A Rake's Progress* suggests his innate lasciviousness and, presumably, the pederasty of the rake and his friends. (Aristocratic pederasty reappears in heterosexual terms as the primary subject of *Marriage à la Mode*, scene four where the Count appears with a young girl. )

The choice of African boys also allows sexual imagery to appear in a more innocent, playful, decorous way, like the eroticized putti which stream through eighteenth-century art and ornament, doing all sorts of things prohibited to adult figures.<sup>xxvii</sup> (To cite one example, a flying putto masturbates another putto in Watteau's otherwise restrained *Embarkation for the Island of Cythera*.) The African as boy also made sexual situations less threatening and taboo, as noted later in Richard Wright's autobiography, *Native Son*. As a servant boy in a brothel, Wright was perfectly acceptable in the rooms of white prostitutes as long as he remained an asexual servant boy keeping his eyes to himself. As soon as he broke this taboo and looked at a naked prostitute, he was beaten and expelled.  
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With early modern racial stereotypes in mind, it is easy to recognize unbridled lechery in the slaves of Hogarth's *La Toilette*. The older slave stands behind a noblewoman dressed in the latest pastoral mode and sometimes seen as a satirical image of the great musical patron and admirer of Italian castrati, Mrs. Fox Lane.<sup>xxix</sup> He bends over her from behind, offering tea at the climactic moment in the music. In touch with her natural feelings like the ideal pastoral woman described in Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloise*, Hogarth's noblewoman swoons to the amorous power of the music, her "feminine" passions overcoming all reason and restraint. (Note how one of her excited hands overlaps with the parted legs of the closest musician.) The slave and the noblewoman are carefully placed against a large bed whose curtain opens invitingly in a crowned pattern repeated by the mirror on the Countess's dressing table. Desire enters through the eye and the ear here and both seduce the male viewer with the female body and boudoir.

With his lecherous face, the slave quietly offers more than tea to the swooning noblewoman. Without depicting anything indecorous, Hogarth quietly invites the viewer to imagine the slave "mastering" the ecstatic noblewoman from behind, not unlike the slave fondling the white barmaid from behind in *Noon*. Hogarth underscores this sexual innuendo with a visual parallel in the nearby painting of *Ganymede* where another dark body penetrates a white figure from behind, generating an ecstasy.

The slave boy holding the Actaeon is another lascivious African, an eighteenth-century, racialized version of Steen's lecherous children grinning out at the real viewer. Holding the Actaeon and pointing at the antlers and at the debauched aristocrats beyond, the slave boy literally directs Actaeon's gaze, merging with him as another illicit voyeur. As Actaeon transgresses boundaries in seeing a chaste goddess naked, the young African violates racial taboos by witnessing and participating in a sexually-charged, upper-class, white boudoir. More generally, older slave, who stares wide-eyed at upper class debauchery, is another Actaeon figure. Though Hogarth deserves credit for this clever use of mythology, he wasn't the first to connect Actaeon to cuckoldry and racial stereotypes. In *Titus Andronicus*, the Actaeon-like lechery of Shakespeare's Tamora includes miscegenation with Aaron the Moor and both figures were punished with death. Other examples may exist in eighteenth-century comic literature and pornography.

## Seeing and Aesthetic Debates

By placing a voyeuristic slave boy holding a statue of Actaeon in a scene of courtly dissipation featuring ladies at their toilette and numerous works of erotic art, Hogarth used Actaeon to clarify a larger allegorical discussion overlaying issues of lechery, adultery, racial mingling, fatal mercantile ambition, and doomed courtly extravagance.

The figure of Actaeon also underscored Hogarth's theme of a decadent *visual* culture figured in the Italian paintings and in the theme of the countess at her toilette. Placed in this allegorical setting, the Countess becomes the chief object of voyeurism, her painted body surpassing the naked bodies around her in the oil paintings. Juxtaposed with Actaeon, she turns into a Diana figure comically inverted with none of the latter's chastity.

By making the slave boy's gaze, and that of the Actaeon statue itself, connect with the vision of the real spectator, Hogarth expanded the discussion of visual culture to the painting as a whole and to the larger aesthetic debates poised by his art. Held out to the real beholder by a figure who in some sense shares our gaze, the statue of Actaeon transforms the spectator into a potential voyeur peeping in on a secret, hidden world of modern dissipation. On a higher, more self-conscious level, the statue of Actaeon invites the moral viewer to contemplate a private world of corrupt seeing, visual culture, and aesthetics. Located within the "closed," coherent world of Hogarth's allegory, corrupt seeing and art-making become the subject of the moral viewer's higher gaze. In this way, the Actaeon simultaneously seduces us into voyeuristic pleasures and invites us to distance ourselves by making moral and aesthetic distinctions unavailable to the blinded characters inhabiting the allegory. The intellectual and moral vision of allegory – of Hogarth's own artistic vision – opposes itself to the decadent "seeing" of traditional court culture and of the modern British mercantile elites who buy and marry into that culture.

By calling into question different types of seeing and aesthetics within a larger social, moral, and economic world, Hogarth's allegory defined and justified his own groundbreaking aesthetic values which allegorized explicitly the next year in his print, *The Battle of the Pictures*<sup>xxx</sup> and ten years later in his treatise, *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753). In his treatise, and already in his art, most notably in *La Toilette*, Hogarth rejected traditional courtly aesthetics with its rigid hierarchy of the genres and its focus on heroic depictions of rulers. So too, his art largely avoided the vulgar naturalism perceived by eighteenth-century writers in Dutch seventeenth-century art. In the last scene of *Marriage à la Mode*, this earlier Dutch art appears on the walls of the Countess's family home to which she returns before committing suicide. With its urinating peasants and drunken tavern scenes, this art collection shows a mercantile aesthetic world of money without taste.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Instead, Hogarth proposed a middle way between these extremes, a self-consciously modern, British art grounded in modern life, earthy in its everyday subjects, dilemmas, and humor, prosaic in its comic naturalism, yet elevated in its allegorical ambitions, its moral tone, and its new mixture of comic and tragic, redefining both. *The Rake's*

*Progress*, *The Harlot's Progress*, and *Marriage à la Mode* may employ numerous comic episodes but they eschew traditional comedy's acceptance of human foibles and its happy endings where the social order is reconstituted within a larger spiritual universe. In contrast, Hogarth's cycles display a stern Enlightenment preference for morality tales and harsh punishment in this world.<sup>xxxii</sup> For all his comic edge, Hogarth might be better seen as creating a new kind of tragic or tragic-comic painting imbedded in everyday life.

Hogarth quietly announces his artistic ambitions in *La Toilette* by provoking an aesthetic discussion in the consciousness of the beholder. As a compelling example of Hogarth's modern, British genre painting, *La Toilette* invites comparisons with the "foreign" aesthetic titillation of Italian Renaissance art and the refinements of the French Rococo seen in the decorative objects and furnishings here and in the other paintings. By using traditional history painting and especially its loftiest expression in the Italian Renaissance to depict an encyclopedia of modern English "courtly" sexual vices - voyeurism, adultery, rape, sodomy, pederasty, and miscegenation – all but the last acted out by the real characters in his allegory, Hogarth made history painting condemn itself as just another expression of corrupt courtly values and hierarchies.

Amusingly, even the statue of Actaeon depicts him as a nude – in contrast to Italian Renaissance representations (and those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) where he is invariably shown clothed, as in works by Parmigianino and Titian, or later, paintings by De Troy and Gainsborough. In Hogarth's hands, Actaeon becomes another delicious nude for the corrupt gaze of courtly art collectors and patrons. The taboo-breaking voyeur himself becomes the object of a taboo courtly gaze. It is even easy to see on the face of this Actaeon a smiling gaze at the real spectator not unlike that of the slave boy who holds him. Actaeon's gaze works simultaneously as a come-hither look to jaded British aristocrats, a foil to the moral gaze of Hogarth's ideal viewer, and an artistic joke cleverly reversing Actaeon's role in Hogarth's allegory of vision. For aesthetically conscious spectators, the heterosexual peeper has become a homoerotic bon-bon like the painted *Ganymede* nearby.

A new, British moral allegory and serious, educational purpose defined themselves against courtly extravagance, idleness, and aesthetic hedonism. A resolutely modern, genre painting rejected an outmoded history painting tied to the courtly past. The classical-courtly subject of Venus – reserved for history painting - was transformed into something more immediate and useful, a domesticated subject of modern British life and its many vices. Traditional history painting gave way to something more "true," compelling, and morally profitable. A modern, British art broke self-consciously with traditional aesthetics along lines of class and geography while cleverly persuading the viewer in and through the very act of looking. Artistic seeing became the vehicle by which a new consciousness, a new sense of lofty mind experienced and defined itself as superior.

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<sup>i</sup> See Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965, vol. 1, pp. 267-275; Robert Cowley, *Hogarth's Marriage a-la-Mode*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press,

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1983; and Ronald Paulson, Hogarth: High Art and Low, 1732-1750, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, revised ed., 1992, pp. 203-245.

ii Cowley, op. cit., pp. 12, 111,  
«... *an emblem aptly made,  
To suit His Lord, Actaeon's head* »  
*And grinning as in's hand tis borne,  
He slyly points towards the horn.* »

This anonymous poem was over a thousand lines long and is reprinted in Arthur Wensinger and William Coley, Hogarth on High Life, Middleton, 1970,, appendix. One should also see cuckold's horns in the pointed hair-curlers of the nobleman at left known in the poem as the "Prussian envoy".

iii Around 1834, the Swiss caricaturist, Disteli, also used a painting of Actaeon transformed into a stag to underscore adultery and voyeuristic peeping in his satirical print, *The Galante Adventure Uncovered*. See

iv **Euripides, Bacchae**

DIONYSUS Ho! Pentheus, thou that art so eager to see what is forbidden, and to show thy zeal in an unworthy cause, come forth before the palace, let me see thee clad as a woman in frenzied Bacchant's dress, to spy upon thy own mother and her company. (Enter PENTHEUS.) Yes, thou resemblest closely a daughter of Cadmus.

PENTHEUS Of a truth I seem to see two suns, and two towns of Thebes, our seven-gated city; and thou, methinks, art a bull going before to guide me, and on thy head a pair of horns have grown. Wert thou really once a brute beast? Thon hast at any rate the appearance of a bull.

DIONYSUS The god attends us, ungracious heretofore, but now our sworn friend; and now thine eyes behold the things they should.

PENTHEUS Pray, what do I resemble? Is not mine the carriage of Ino, or Agave my own mother?

DIONYSUS In seeing thee, I seem to see them in person. But this tress is straying from its place, no longer as I bound it 'neath the snood.

PENTHEUS I disarranged it from its place as I tossed it to and fro within my chamber, in Bacchic ecstasy.

DIONYSUS Well, I will rearrange it, since to tend thee is my care; hold up thy head.

PENTHEUS Come, put it straight; for on thee do I depend.

DIONYSUS Thy girdle is loose, and the folds of thy dress do not hang evenly below thy ankles.

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PENTHEUS I agree to that as regards the right side, but on the other my dress hangs straight with my foot.

DIONYSUS Surely thou wilt rank me first among thy friends, when contrary to thy expectation thou findest the Bacchantes virtuous.

PENTHEUS Shall I hold the thyrsus in the right or left hand to look most like a Bacchanal?

DIONYSUS Hold it in thy right hand, and step out with thy right foot; thy change of mind compels thy praise.

PENTHEUS Shall I be able to carry on my shoulders Cithaeron's glens, the Bacchanals and all?

DIONYSUS Yes, if so thou wilt; for though thy mind was erst diseased, 'tis now just as it should be.

PENTHEUS Shall we take levers, or with my hands can I uproot it, thrusting arm or shoulder 'neath its peaks?

DIONYSUS No, no! destroy not the seats of the Nymphs and the haunts of Pan, the place of his piping.

PENTHEUS Well said! Women must not be mastered by brute force; amid the pines will I conceal myself.

DIONYSUS Thou shalt hide thee in the place that fate appoints, coming by stealth to spy upon the Bacchanals.

PENTHEUS Why, methinks they are already caught in the pleasant snares of dalliance, like birds amid the brakes.

DIONYSUS Set out with watchful heed then for this very purpose; maybe thou wilt catch them, if thou be not first caught thyself.

PENTHEUS Conduct me through the very heart of Thebes, for I am the only man among them bold enough to do this deed.

DIONYSUS Thou alone bearest thy country's burden, thou and none other; wherefore there await thee such struggles as needs must. Follow me, for I will guide thee safely thither; another shall bring thee thence.

PENTHEUS My mother maybe.

DIONYSUS For every eye to see.

PENTHEUS My very purpose in going.

DIONYSUS Thou shalt be carried back,

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PENTHEUS What luxury

DIONYSUS In thy mother's arms.

PENTHEUS Thou wilt e'en force me into luxury.

DIONYSUS Yes, to luxury such as this.

PENTHEUS Truly, the task I am undertaking deserves it. (Exit PENTHEUS.)

DIONYSUS Strange, ah! strange is thy career, leading to scenes of woe so strange, that thou shalt achieve a fame that towers to heaven. Stretch forth thy hands, Agave, and ye her sisters, daughters of Cadmus; mighty is the strife to which I am bringing the youthful king, and the victory shall rest with me and Bromius; all else the event will show. (Exit DIONYSUS.)

CHORUS To the hills! to the hills! fleet hounds of madness, where the daughters of Cadmus hold their revels, goad them into wild fury against the man disguised in woman's dress, a frenzied spy upon the Maenads. First shall his mother mark him as he peers from some smooth rock or riven tree, and thus to the Maenads she will call, "Who is this of Cadmus' sons comes hasting to the mount, to the mountain away, to spy on us, my Bacchanals? Whose child can he be? For he was never born of woman's blood; but from some lioness maybe or Libyan Gorgon is he sprung." Let justice appear and show herself, sword in hand, to plunge it through and through the throat of the godless, lawless, impious son of Echion, earth's monstrous child! who with wicked heart and lawless rage, with mad intent and frantic purpose, sets out to meddle with thy holy rites, and with thy mother's, Bacchic god, thinking with his weak arm to master might as masterless as thine. This is the life that saves all pain, if a man confine his thoughts to human themes, as is his mortal nature, making no pretence where heaven is concerned. I envy not deep subtleties; far other joys have I, in tracking out great truths writ clear from all eternity, that a man should live his life by day and night in purity and holiness, striving toward a noble goal, and should honour the gods by casting from him each ordinance that lies outside the pale of right. Let justice show herself, advancing sword in hand to plunge it through and through the throat of Echion's son, that godless, lawless, and abandoned child of earth! Appear, O Bacchus, to our eyes as a bull or serpent with a hundred heads, or take the shape of a lion breathing flame! Oh! come, and with a mocking smile cast the deadly noose about the hunter of thy Bacchanals, e'en as he swoops upon the Maenads gathered yonder. (Enter SECOND MESSENGER.)

SECOND MESSENGER O house, so prosperous once through Hellas long ago, home of the old Sidonian prince, who sowed the serpent's crop of earth-born men, how do I mourn thee! slave though I be, yet still

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the sorrows of his master touch a good slave's heart.

CHORUS How now? Hast thou fresh tidings of the Bacchantes?

SECOND MESSENGER Pentheus, Echion's son is dead.

CHORUS Bromius, my king! now art thou appearing in thy might divine.

SECOND MESSENGER Ha! what is it thou sayest? art thou glad, woman, at my master's misfortunes?

CHORUS A stranger I, and in foreign tongue I express my joy, for now no more do I cower in terror of the chain.

SECOND MESSENGER Dost think Thebes so poor in men?(\*, \* Probably the whole of one iambic line with part of another is here lost.)

CHORUS 'Tis Dionysus, Dionysus, not Thebes that lords it over me.

SECOND MESSENGER All can I pardon thee save this; to exult o'er hopeless suffering is sorry conduct, dames.

CHORUS Tell me, oh! tell me how he died, that villain scheming villainy!

SECOND MESSENGER Soon as we had left the homesteads of this Theban land and had crossed the streams of Asopus, we began to breast Cithaeron's heights, Pentheus and I, for I went with my master, and the stranger too, who was to guide us to the scene. First then we sat us down in a grassy glen, carefully silencing each footfall and whispered breath, to see without being seen. Now there was a dell walled in by rocks, with rills to water it, and shady pines o'erhead; there were the Maenads seated, busied with joyous toils. Some were wreathing afresh the drooping thyrsus with curling ivy-sprays; others, like colts let loose from the carved chariot-yoke, were answering each other in hymns of Bacchic rapture. But Pentheus, son of sorrow, seeing not the women gathered there, exclaimed, "Sir stranger, from where I stand, I cannot clearly see the mock Bacchantes; but I will climb a hillock or a soaring pine whence to see clearly the shameful doings of the Bacchanals." Then and there I saw the stranger work a miracle; for catching a lofty fir-branch by the very end he drew it downward to the dusky earth, lower yet and ever lower; and like a bow it bent, or rounded wheel, whose curving circle grows complete, as chalk and line describe it; e'en so the stranger drew down the mountain-branch between his hands, bending it to earth, by more than human agency. And when he had seated Pentheus aloft on the pine branches, he let them slip through his hands gently, careful not to shake him from his seat. Up soared the branch straight into the air above, with my master perched thereon, seen by the Maenads better far than he saw them; for scarce was he beheld upon his lofty throne, when the stranger disappeared, while from the sky there came a voice, 'twould seem, by Dionysus uttered-

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"Maidens, I bring the man who tried to mock you and me and my mystic rites; take vengeance on him." And as he spake he raised 'twixt heaven and earth a dazzling column of awful flame. Hushed grew the sky, and still hung each leaf throughout the grassy glen, nor couldst thou have heard one creature cry. But they, not sure of the voice they heard, sprang up and peered all round; then once again his bidding came; and when the daughters of Cadmus knew it was the Bacchic god in very truth that called, swift as doves they dived off in eager haste, his mother Agave and her sisters dear and all the Bacchanals; through torrent glen, o'er boulders huge they bounded on, inspired with madness by the god. Soon as they saw my master perched upon the fir, they set to hurling stones at him with all their might, mounting a commanding eminence, and with pine-branches he was pelted as with darts; and others shot their wands through the air at Pentheus, their hapless target, but all to no purpose. For there he sat beyond the reach of their hot endeavours, a helpless, hopeless victim. At last they rent off limbs from oaks and were for prising up the roots with levers not of iron. But when they still could make no end to all their toil, Agave cried: "Come stand around, and grip the sapling trunk, my Bacchanals! that we may catch the beast that sits thereon, lest he divulge the secrets of our god's religion."

Then were a thousand hands laid on the fir, and from the ground they tore it up, while he from his seat aloft came tumbling to the ground with lamentations long and loud, e'en Pentheus; for well he knew his hour was come. His mother first, a priestess for the nonce, began the bloody deed and fell upon him; whereon he tore the snood from off his hair, that hapless Agave might recognize and spare him, crying as he touched her cheek, "O mother! it is I, thy own son Pentheus, the child thou didst bear in Echion's halls; have pity on me, mother dear! oh! do not for any sin of mine slay thy own son."

But she, the while, with foaming mouth and wildly rolling eyes, bereft of reason as she was, heeded him not; for the god possessed her. And she caught his left hand in her grip, and planting her foot upon her victim's trunk she tore the shoulder from its socket, not of her own strength, but the god made it an easy task to her hands; and Ino set to work upon the other side, rending the flesh with Autonoe and all the eager host of Bacchanals; and one united cry arose, the victim's groans while yet he breathed, and their triumphant shouts. One would make an arm her prey, another a foot with the sandal on it; and his ribs were stripped of flesh by their rending nails; and each one with blood-dabbled hands was tossing Pentheus' limbs about. Scattered lies his corpse, part beneath the rugged rocks, and part amid the deep dark woods, no easy task to find; but his poor head hath his mother made her own, and fixing it upon the point of a thyrsus, as it had been a mountain lion's, she bears it through the midst of Cithaeron, having left her sisters with the Maenads at their rites. And she is entering these walls exulting in her hunting fraught with woe, calling

---

on the Bacchic god her fellow-hunter who had helped her to triumph in a chase, where her only prize was tears.

But I will get me hence, away from this piteous scene, before Agave reach the palace. To my mind self-restraint and reverence for the things of God point alike the best and wisest course for all mortals who pursue them. (Exit SECOND MESSENGER.)

CHORUS Come, let us exalt our Bacchic god in choral strain, let us loudly chant the fall of Pentheus from the serpent sprung, who assumed a woman's dress and took the fair Bacchic wand, sure pledge of death, with a bull to guide him to his doom. O ye Bacchanals of Thebes! glorious is the triumph ye have achieved, ending in sorrow and tears. 'Tis a noble enterprise to dabble the hand in the blood of a son till it drips. But hist! I see Agave, the mother of Pentheus, with wild rolling eye hastening to the house; welcome the revellers of the Bacchic god. (Enter AGAVE.)

...

[skip section]

...

AGAVE All ye who dwell in fair fenced Thebes, draw near that ye may see the fierce wild beast that we daughters of Cadmus made our prey, not with the thong-thrown darts of Thessaly, nor yet with snares, but with our fingers fair. Ought men idly to boast and get them armourers' weapons? when we with these our hands have caught this prey and torn the monster limb from limb? Where is my aged sire? let him approach. And where is Pentheus, my son? Let him bring a ladder and raise it against the house to nail up on the gables this lion's head, my booty from the chase. (Enter CADMUS.)

CADMUS Follow me, servants to the palace-front, with your sad burden in your arms, ay, follow, with the corpse of Pentheus, which after long weary search I found, as ye see it, torn to pieces amid Cithaeron's glens, and am bringing hither; no two pieces did I find together, as they lay scattered through the trackless wood. For I heard what awful deeds one of my daughters had done, just as I entered the city-walls with old Teiresias returning from the Bacchanals; so I turned again unto the and bring from thence my son who was slain by Maenads. There I saw Autonoe, that bare Actaeon on a day to Aristaeus, and Ino with her, still ranging the oak-groves in their unhappy frenzy; but one told me that that Agave, was rushing wildly hither, nor was it idly said, for there I see her, sight of woe!

AGAVE Father, loudly mayst thou boast, that the daughters thou hast begotten are far the best of mortal race; of one and all I speak, though chiefly of myself, who left my shuttle at the loom for nobler

---

enterprise, even to hunt savage beasts with my hands; and in my arms  
I bring my prize, as thou seest, that it may be nailed up on thy palace-wall;  
take it, father, in thy had and proud of my hunting, call thy friends  
to a banquet; for blest art thou, ah! doubly blest in these our gallant  
exploits.

...

v **Callimachus, Bath of Athena**

...

Inachus will come from the nourishing mountains  
bringing Athena her bath beautiful. Pelasgian men,  
beware lest unwitting you see the queen.  
Whoever should see Pallas, the city's guardian, naked  
shall look on this city of Argos the very last time.  
Lady Athena, you come out, and meanwhile I shall speak  
to these women; the tale is others', not mine.

...

Once on a time they undid the pins from their robes  
by the fair-flowing fountain of the horse on Helicon  
and were bathing; midday quiet took the hill.  
Both of them were bathing, and the hour was midday,  
and deep was the quiet that held that hill.  
Tiresias quite alone together with his dogs, his beard  
just darkening, had come to the sacred spot.  
Thirsting quite unspeakably he came to the fountain's flow,  
poor fool; he unwittingly saw what god's law forbids.  
Although angered Athena addressed him nonetheless:  
'You shall never more take back your eyes.  
What fate, Eueres' child, brought you this hard way?'  
She spoke, and night removed the boy's eyes.  
He stood there, unable to speak, for anguish stuck fast  
his limbs, and helplessness took his voice.  
But Chariclo cried out: 'What have you done to my boy,  
my lady? Is this the way you gods are friends?  
It's my son's eyes you have taken. Oh you wretched child,  
it was Athena's breast and loins that you saw,  
but you shall not see the sun hereafter. O miserable me,  
O mountain, O Helicon never more to be trod,  
how great the payment you exacted for a little: you lost some deer  
and a few roe, and it's my son's eyes you have.'  
The mother threw both arms around her beloved son  
and sustained the mournful nightingales' lament  
wailing heavily; the goddess took pity on her companion.  
And Athena declared to her the following words:  
'Noble lady, reconsider all that you said in anger;  
it was not I who made your son blind.

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It is not Athena's pleasure to snatch children's eyes.  
This is how Cronos' laws ordain:  
whosoever discerns an immortal, when the god himself does not choose,  
this man sees the god at a great price.  
Noble lady, this act is hereafter irrevocable,  
for so spun the threads of the Fates  
right at the time when you bore him; so now take,  
Euertes' child, the payment due to you.  
How many offerings Cadmus' daughter will later burn,  
how many Aristaeus, making prayer  
to see their only son, the young Actaeon, blind.  
He too shall be co-hunter of the mighty  
Artemis; yet neither their hunting nor archery  
shared in the mountains shall then avail,  
that time when unwitting he sees the beautiful bath  
of the divinity. No then his very own hounds  
shall dine on their former master, while a mother shall gather her son's  
bones, going round all the thickets.  
Happiest of women and blessed she shall call you,  
since you received a blind son from the mountains.  
So do not cry, my friend: for Tiresias besides  
because of you there will await many gifts from me,  
since I shall make him a prophet renowned in posterity,  
and one who is much more eminent than the rest.  
He will know the birds, the auspicious and those that fly  
to no purpose and which have ill-omened wings.  
...

<sup>vi</sup> See John of Salisbury's Policraticus 1.4 (1160) and Alexander Neckham, De naturis rerum (ca. 1190-1210) as discussed in Jane Chance, Medieval Mythography from Roman North Africa to the School of Chartres, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994, pp. 481, 488-489.

vii

**Rabelais, Gargantua and Pantagruel, Book 3.14 (1546)**

[Here Pantagruel describes an erotic dream and argues with Panurge over its meaning.]

*Dreamed indeed I have, and that right lustily; but I could take along with me no more thereof that I did goodly understand save only that I in my vision had a pretty, fair, young, gallant, handsome woman, who no less lovingly and kindly treated and entertained me, hugged, cherished, cockered, dandled, and made much of me, as if I had been another neat dilly-darling minion, like Adonis. Never was man more glad than I was then; my joy at that time was incomparable. She flattered me, tickled me, stroked me, groped me, frizzled me, curled me, kissed me, embraced me, laid her hands about my neck, and now and then made jestingly pretty little horns above my forehead. I told her in the like disport, as I did play the fool with her, that she should rather place and fix them in a little below mine eyes, that I might see the better what I should stick at with them; for, being so situated, Momus then would find no fault therewith, as he did once with the position of the horns of bulls. The wanton, toying girl, notwithstanding any remonstrance of mine to the contrary, did always drive and thrust them further in; yet*

---

*thereby, which to me seemed wonderful, she did not do me any hurt at all. A little after, though I know not how, I thought I was transformed into a tabor, and she into a chough.*

...

[Panurge interprets the dream] ...

*Come, Carpalin, let us to breakfast. To my sense and meaning, quoth Pantagruel, if I have skill or knowledge in the art of divination by dreams, your wife will not really, and to the outward appearance of the world, plant or set horns, and stick them fast in your forehead, after a visible manner, as satyrs use to wear and carry them; but she will be so far from preserving herself loyal in the discharge and observance of a conjugal duty, that, on the contrary, she will violate her plighted faith, break her marriage-oath, infringe all matrimonial ties, prostitute her body to the dalliance of other men, and so make you a cuckold. ...*

*A cuckold you will be, beaten and robbed. Then cried out Father John with a loud voice, He tells the truth; upon my conscience, thou wilt be a cuckold--an honest one, I warrant thee. O the brave horns that will be borne by thee! Ha, ha, ha! Our good Master de Cornibus. God save thee, and shield thee! ...*

*You are, quoth Panurge, very far mistaken in your interpretation; for the matter is quite contrary to your sense thereof. My dream presageth that I shall by marriage be stored with plenty of all manner of goods--the hornifying of me showing that I will possess a cornucopia, that Amalthean horn which is called the horn of abundance, whereof the fruition did still portend the wealth of the enjoyer. You possibly will say that they are rather like to be satyr's horns; for you of these did make some mention.*

*Amen, Amen, Fiat, fiat, ad differentiam papae. Thus shall I have my touch-her-home still ready. My staff of love, sempiternally in a good case, will, satyr-like, be never toiled out--a thing which all men wish for, and send up their prayers to that purpose, but such a thing as nevertheless is granted but to a few. Hence doth it follow by a consequence as clear as the sunbeams that I will never be in the danger of being made a cuckold, for the defect hereof is Causa sine qua non; yea, the sole cause, as many think, of making husbands cuckolds. What makes poor scoundrel rogues to beg, I pray you? Is it not because they have not enough at home wherewith to fill their bellies and their pokes? What maketh women whores? You understand me well enough. And herein may I very well submit my opinion to the judgment of learned lawyers, presidents, counsellors, advocates, procurers, attorneys, and other glossers and commentators on the venerable rubric, *De frigidis et maleficiatis*. You are, in truth, sir, as it seems to me (excuse my boldness if I have transgressed), in a most palpable and absurd error to attribute my horns to cuckoldry. Diana wears them on her head after the manner of a crescent. Is she a cucquean for that? How the devil can she be cuckolded who never yet was married? Speak somewhat more correctly, I beseech you, lest she, being offended, furnish you with a pair of horns shapen by the pattern of those which she made for Actaeon. The goodly Bacchus also carries horns,--*

*Pan, Jupiter Ammon, with a great many others. Are they all cuckolds? If Jove be a cuckold, Juno is a whore. This follows by the figure metalepsis: as to call a child, in the presence of his father and mother, a bastard, or whore's son, is tacitly and underboard no less than if he had said openly the father is a cuckold and his wife a punk. Let our*

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*discourse come nearer to the purpose. The horns that my wife did make me are horns of abundance, planted and grafted in my head for the increase and shooting up of all good things. What maketh women whores? You understand me well enough. And herein may I very well submit my opinion to the judgment of learned lawyers, presidents, counsellors, advocates, procurers, attorneys, and other glossers and commentators on the venerable rubric, De frigidis et maleficiatis. You are, in truth, sir, as it seems to me (excuse my boldness if I have transgressed), in a most palpable and absurd error to attribute my horns to cuckoldry. Diana wears them on her head after the manner of a crescent. Is she a cucquean for that? How the devil can she be cuckolded who never yet was married? Speak somewhat more correctly, I beseech you, lest she, being offended, furnish you with a pair of horns shapen by the pattern of those which she made for Actaeon. The goodly Bacchus also carries horns,--Pan, Jupiter Ammon, with a great many others. Are they all cuckolds? If Jove be a cuckold, Juno is a whore. This follows by the figure metalepsis: as to call a child, in the presence of his father and mother, a bastard, or whore's son, is tacitly and underboard no less than if he had said openly the father is a cuckold and his wife a punk. Let our discourse come nearer to the purpose. The horns that my wife did make me are horns of abundance, planted and grafted in my head for the increase and shooting up of all good things.*

**Rabelais, Gargantua and Pantagruel, Book V.36 (1562)**

[Here Panurge descends into the cave-like bowels of a temple and encounters demons.]

*By cob's body, I'll hamper, bethwack, and belabour all the devils, now I have some vine-leaves in my shoes. Thou shalt see me lay about me like mad, old boy. Which way? where the devil are they? I fear nothing but their damned horns; but cuckoldy Panurge's bull-feather will altogether secure me from 'em. Lo! in a prophetic spirit I already see him, like another Actaeon, horned, horny, hornified.*

viii In the dedication to his translation of *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius published in London in 1566, William Adlington offered a conventional medieval justification for mythology as moral allegory. Among the many myths summarily interpreted, the story of Actaeon appears.

*For by the fable of Actaeon, where it is feigned that he saw Diana washing her selfe in a well, hee was immediately turned into an Hart, and so was slain of his own Dogs; may bee meant, That when a man casteth his eyes on the vain and soone fading beauty of the world, consenting thereto in his minde, hee seemeth to bee turned into a brute beast, and so to beslain by the inordinate desire of his owne affects.*

Taken from a digital text on line at Project Gutenberg ([www.gutenberg.com](http://www.gutenberg.com)). In his *Lusiads* (1578, Canto IX), the Portugese humanist, Camoens, offered an eccentric Actaeon to condemn courtiers too busy hunting to find time to seek after women and love. Stretching the myth still further, Camoens used Actaeon to condemn idle rulers who hunt all day, neglecting their people.

*There was Actaeon, so austere in his devotion to the chase, so obsessed by its irrational, brutish pleasures that he eschewed the company of his kind, and especially of lovely womankind in order to pursue ugly, savage beasts. His punishment was bitter-*

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*sweet, for he was to be given a glimpse of Diana in all her beauty - and let him beware that he be not finally devoured by his own dogs, that he also loves.*

*There were rulers all over the world among whom not one was to be found concerned only with the public good, for their love was fixed wholly on themselves and on others equally self-centered. There were those who frequented the courts of kings selling as sound doctrine what was but adulation, ...*

(See Penguin edition, trans. William Atkinson, 1952, pp. 203-204.) Immediately after this passage, Venus rewards the brave Portugese sailors for their heroic exploits with an idyllic love island packed with naked nymphs waiting to be hunted down and ravished. Actaeon hunting Diana, or rather her chaste nymphs, reappears here without being named and without any traditional moralizing.

<sup>ix</sup> H. Rider Haggard, She, (1887), ch. 12, "Ayesha Unveils".

*"Ay, one thing, O Ayesha," I said, boldly; but feeling by no means as bold as I trust I looked. "I would gaze upon thy face."*

*She laughed out in her bell-like notes. "Bethink thee, Holly," she answered; "bethink thee. It seems that thou knowest the old myths of the gods of Greece. Was there not one Actaeon who perished miserably because he looked on too much beauty? If I show thee my face, perchance thou wouldst perish miserably also; perchance thou wouldst eat out thy heart in impotent desire; for know I am not for thee--I am for no man, save one, who hath been, but is not yet."*

<sup>x</sup> **Marlowe, Dr. Faustus, 1616**

[Marlowe published the first version in 1604. I use the revised edition published in 1616.]

*FAUSTUS.*

*I'll make you feel something anon, if my art fail me not.--  
My lord, I must forewarn your majesty,  
That, when my spirits present the royal shapes  
Of Alexander and his paramour,  
Your grace demand no questions of the king,  
But in dumb silence let them come and go.*

*EMPEROR. Be it as Faustus please; we are content.*

*BENVOLIO. Ay, ay, and I am content too: an thou bring Alexander  
and his paramour before the Emperor, I'll be Actaeon, and turn myself to a stag.*

*FAUSTUS. And I'll play Diana, and send you the horns presently.*

[skip section]

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...

EMPEROR. *O, pardon me! my thoughts are so ravish'd  
With sight of this renowned emperor,  
That in mine arms I would have compass'd him.  
But, Faustus, since I may not speak to them,  
To satisfy my longing thoughts at full,  
Let me this tell thee: I have heard it said  
That this fair lady, whilst she liv'd on earth,  
Had on her neck a little wart or mole;  
How may I prove that saying to be true?*

FAUSTUS. *Your majesty may boldly go and see.*

EMPEROR. *Faustus, I see it plain;  
And in this sight thou better pleasest me  
Than if I gain'd another monarchy.*

FAUSTUS. *Away! be gone! [Exit show.]--See, see, my gracious  
lord! what strange beast is yon, that thrusts his head out at window?*

EMPEROR. *O, wondrous sight!--See, Duke of Saxony,  
Two spreading horns most strangely fastened  
Upon the head of young Benvolio!*

SAXONY. *What, is he asleep or dead?*

FAUSTUS. *He sleeps, my lord; but dreams not of his horns.*

EMPEROR. *This sport is excellent: we'll call and wake him.--  
What, ho, Benvolio!*

BENVOLIO. *A plague upon you! let me sleep a while.*

EMPEROR. *I blame thee not to sleep much, having such a head of thine own.*

SAXONY. *Look up, Benvolio; 'tis the Emperor calls.*

BENVOLIO. *The Emperor! where?--O, zounds, my head!*

EMPEROR. *Nay, an thy horns hold, 'tis no matter for thy head, for that's armed sufficiently.*

FAUSTUS. *Why, how now, Sir Knight! what, hanged by the horns! this is most horrible: fie, fie,  
pull in your head, for shame! let not all the world wonder at you.*

BENVOLIO. *Zounds, doctor, this is your villany!*

FAUSTUS. *O, say not so, sir! the doctor has no skill,  
No art, no cunning, to present these lords,  
Or bring before this royal Emperor*

---

*The mighty monarch, warlike Alexander.  
If Faustus do it, you are straight resolv'd,  
In bold Actaeon's shape, to turn a stag:--  
And therefore, my lord, so please your majesty,  
I'll raise a kennel of hounds shall hunt him so  
As all his footmanship shall scarce prevail  
To keep his carcass from their bloody fangs.--  
Ho, Belimoth, Argiron, Asteroth!*

*BENVOLIO. Hold, hold!--Zounds, he'll raise up a kennel of devils,  
I think, anon.--Good my lord, entreat for me.-  
Sblood, I am never able to endure these torments.*

*EMPEROR. Then, good Master Doctor,  
Let me entreat you to remove his horns;  
He has done penance now sufficiently.*

**<sup>xi</sup> Shakespeare, Titus Andronicus, II.3**

*[Enter BASSIANUS and LAVINIA]*

*BASSIANUS           Who have we here? Rome's royal empress,  
Unfurnish'd of her well-beseeming troop?  
Or is it Dian, habited like her,  
Who hath abandoned her holy groves  
To see the general hunting in this forest?*

*TAMORA Saucy controller of our private steps!  
Had I the power that some say Dian had,  
Thy temples should be planted presently  
With horns, as was Actaeon's; and the hounds  
Should drive upon thy new-transformed limbs,  
Unmannerly intruder as thou art!*

*LAVINIA Under your patience, gentle empress,  
'Tis thought you have a goodly gift in horning;  
And to be doubted that your Moor and you  
Are singled forth to try experiments:  
Jove shield your husband from his hounds to-day!  
'Tis pity they should take him for a stag.*

*BASSIANUS           Believe me, queen, your swarth Cimmerian  
Doth make your honour of his body's hue,  
Spotted, detested, and abominable.  
Why are you sequester'd from all your train,  
Dismounted from your snow-white goodly steed.  
And wander'd hither to an obscure plot,  
Accompanied but with a barbarous Moor,  
If foul desire had not conducted you?*

---

LAVINIA *And, being intercepted in your sport,  
Great reason that my noble lord be rated  
For sauciness. I pray you, let us hence,  
And let her joy her raven-colour'd love;  
This valley fits the purpose passing well.*

BASSIANUS *The king my brother shall have note of this.*

LAVINIA *Ay, for these slips have made him noted long:  
Good king, to be so mightily abused!*

TAMORA *Why have I patience to endure all this?*

[she then has her sons kill Bassianus and rape and mutilate Lavinia]

<sup>xii</sup> In the *Adone* (1623), Marino's Adonis gazed at the naked Venus in her pastoral love bower. Blind to his own impending death, Marino's Adonis contrasts his seemingly innocent desire for Venus with the doomed lust of Actaeon.

*Admit, unhappy Actaeon, admit  
that for a finer form I burn and sigh;  
and very different is thy fate and mine,  
for I gain life from mine, and thou hast death.*

Marino, *Adone*, 1623, trans. Book VIII, verse 86. See *Adonis. Selections from L'Adone of Giambattista Marino*, trans Harold Martin Priest, Cornell University Press, 1967, p. 164. In verse 84, Adonis unwittingly compares his love for Venus to the love of Paris for Helen.

<sup>xiii</sup> Early sixteenth-century German printmakers inserted Diana and Actaeon into larger hunting landscapes crowded with German nobles as part of a burgher critique of courtly pleasures. See Georg Pencz's woodcut of 1530 and an anonymous German woodcut from the same period in *The German Single Sheet Woodcut, 1500-1550*, 4 vols., New York,

<sup>xiv</sup> Examples include Titian (1554-9), Vasari (1570s), Goltzius's engraving (1583), Domenichino (1605-10), Wtewael (Louvre, 1611), Rubens's late painting in the Prado (1638), Van Dyck (1620s), and Wouters (1620-30).

<sup>xv</sup> This takes place in Tasso's *Orlando Furioso* (1532) where he invents a chivalric version of Perseus and Andromeda.

When Ariosto's hero, Rogier, rescues the naked Angelica from the sea serpent, he brings her clothes as she turns away modestly.

*She turns while speaking, as in paint or stone  
We see Diana turn from Actaeon.*

*As best she can she hides her breast and loins,*

---

*Leaving exposed the beauty of her thighs,  
Orlando, who has freed her from her chains,  
To bring his drifting boat to harbour tries  
(To find some garments for her there he plans)*

See Ariosto, Orlando Furioso, Canto XI.58-59, Penguin ed., trans. Barbara Reynolds, p. 359.

<sup>xvi</sup> See Jacob Rosenberg, *The Paintings of Lucas Cranach*; fig. . Also see Cranach's *Fountain of Youth* (1546) in Rosenberg, *ibid.*, fig.xx and Springklee, *Woman's Bath* (c. 1518 after a drawing by Dürer) Pencil, *Venus and Her Children* (1531); Beham, *Feast of Herodias* (15xx), all in The Single Sheet German Woodcut, 1500-1560, 4 vols. NY, figs. xx. Burgkmair even placed the naked Muses in a fountain in his woodcut *Memorial to Conrad Celtis* (1507).

<sup>xvii</sup> Some might argue that these images downplay myth and serve up a bevy of beautiful female nudes only to lure the male viewer into the very sins committed by Actaeon in the act of viewing the painting. The male viewer eventually discovers his sinful gazing when he finally notices the tiny figures of Actaeon. Rather than catering to male voyeurism, this argument sees the artists carefully manipulating voyeuristic looking to trap the male viewer and to replace erotic gazing with a different moral self-gaze directed back at the beholder and undermining any voyeuristic eye. This argument strikes me as much too clever for pictures which serve up a kaleidoscope of twisting, turning female nudes to entertain the male gaze and overestimates the moral seriousness of patrons commissioning such erotic landscapes, mythologies, and depictions of rape.

<sup>xviii</sup> Other Renaissance and Baroque paintings went further in deproblematizing the theme of Actaeon. The related theme of Diana and Callisto allowed Renaissance viewers to depict a naked, bathing Diana and her nymphs without any reference to Actaeon. Fueled by proliferating depictions of other bathing beauties in myth and religion, notably Venus and Bathsheba, late sixteenth-century culture broke free of allegorical pretexts and problems altogether with the new subject of the female bather.

<sup>xix</sup> In an anonymous treatise entitled Reasons for the Growth of Sodomy in England (1749), Italian opera marks the decline in British morality.

*"Since the introduction of ITALIAN OPERAS here, our men have grown insensibly more and more effeminate, and whereas they used to go from a good comedy warmed with the fire of love and from a good tragedy, fir'd with a spirit of glory; they sit indolently and supine at an OPERA, and suffer their souls to be sung away by the voices of Italian Syrens".*

This passage is cited and discussed in Richard Meyer, "'Nature Revers'd': Satire and Homosexual Difference in Hogarth's London," in The Other Hogarth, eds. Bernadette Fort and Angela Rosenthal, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, pp. 162-173.

<sup>xx</sup> The painting was known in an eighteenth-century reproductive engraving as a Caravaggio. It was actually painted by Bernardo Cavallini as noted in Cowley, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>xxi</sup> Hogarth's version of Correggio's *Rape of Ganymede* shows only the upper half of the painting.

<sup>xxii</sup> David Bindman, "'A Voluptuous Alliance Between Africa and Europe: Hogarth's Africans,'" in The Other Hogarth, pp. 260-269. Also see Paulson, Hogarth: High Art and Low, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-229.

<sup>xxiii</sup> See Bindman, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-265.

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<sup>xxiv</sup> See Chapman, H. Perry, et al, Jan Steen: Painter and Storyteller: New Haven: Yale Un Pr, 1996, p.

<sup>xxv</sup> The gaze but not the gesture are discussed in James Turner, “‘A Wanton Kind of Chace’: Display as Procurement in ‘A Harlot’s Progress and Its Reception,’” in The Other Hogarth, eds. Bernadette Fort and Angela Rosenthal, Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 57.

<sup>xxvi</sup> For the sketch for *A Rake’s Progress*, see Bindman, op. cit., who does not note the pederastic implication of the boy holding the painted Ganymede).

<sup>xxvii</sup> Paulson, Hogarth: High Life and Low Art, op., cit., pp. 226-229 notes the ideological innocence of the black child and his value as a metaphor for the natural vs. the civilized. .

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<sup>xxix</sup> See Paulson, Hogarth’s Graphic Works, op. cit., p. 272

<sup>xxx</sup> See Paulson, High Art and Low, op. cit., fig. 99, discussed on pp. 231-234. In a section entitled “The Theme of Art,” op. cit., pp. 218-226, Paulson discusses the allegorical significance of the many works of art in *Marriage à la Mode*. Beyond a few comments on how Hogarth used art to represent courtly corruption (and mercantile meanness), Paulson does not discuss how art and seeing allegorized the larger aesthetic debates of the day in *La Toilette*. Since his books on Hogarth focus on these larger debates, I offer this reading of *La Toilette* less as a correction to Paulson than as an extension of his earlier discussion, through a more contemporary lens focused on issues of vision and gaze.

<sup>xxxi</sup> David Bindman, Hogarth and His Times, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, fig. 57, p. 115. The paintings include a urinating peasant by Teniers, a scene of two drunks in a tavern, and an early Kalf still-life of lowly kitchen ware. For Hogarth’s aesthetic view of a modern, self-consciously British “middle way: between traditional Italianate aesthetics and the vulgar naturalism perceived in Dutch Baroque art, see Bindman, pp. 15-28, 33-40, 45-57.

<sup>xxxii</sup> A parallel in France is Greuze’s two-part cycle on the Bad Son. In contrast to the prodigal son who is mysteriously forgiven, Greuze’s prodigal receives only punishment for his misconduct.