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MARGARET D. CARROLL

## The Erotics of Absolutism: Rubens and the Mystification of Sexual Violence

RUBENS'S *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus* confronts its viewers with an interpretative dilemma (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Painted about 1615 to 1618, the life-size composition illustrates the story recounted by Theocritus and Ovid of how the twin brothers, Castor and Pollux (called the Dioscuri), forcibly abducted and later married the daughters of King Leucippus.<sup>2</sup> Rubens's depiction of the abduction is marked by some striking ambiguities: an equivocation between violence and solicitude in the demeanor of the brothers, and an equivocation between resistance and gratification in the response of the sisters. The spirited ebullience and sensual appeal of the group work to override our darker reflections about the coercive nature of the abduction. For these reasons many viewers have wanted to discount the predatory violence of the brothers' act and to interpret the painting in a benign spirit, perhaps as a neoplatonic allegory of the progress of the soul toward heaven, or as an allegory of marriage.<sup>3</sup> Although I agree that a reference to marriage may be at play here, I also believe that any interpretation of the painting is inadequate that does not attempt to come to terms with it as a celebratory depiction of sexual violence and of the forcible subjugation of women by men.

Intimations of violence are embedded in the composition of the painting, which is modeled on an earlier drawing Rubens made after Leonardo da Vinci's *Battle of Anghiari* (fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> Rubens appropriates Leonardo's device of the parallel bodies of horses in the battle scene to align the women's bodies along parallel axes in the abduction, and Rubens inverts Leonardo's arrangement of facing warriors placed above converging horses' heads by placing matched horses' heads above converging human heads in the *Leucippus*. Rubens even takes up the lozenge design of Leonardo's group, though drawing it now into a more tightly packed equilateral diamond. Rubens's interlocking figures are patterned after the *Battle of Anghiari* in such a way as to charge the erotic action with the clashing energies of Leonardo's battle scene, even though the warriors' grimaces of rage and horror are replaced in the later canvas by a register of more tender expressions. The effect is to suggest to the viewer the violence and the pleurability of rape at the same time.

The pleasures of sexual violence had long been championed in Ovid's *Art of Loving*, where indeed this particular rape—by the Dioscuri of the sisters Phoebe and Hilaira—was cited as an example of how a lover might conquer the object of his desire by using force:



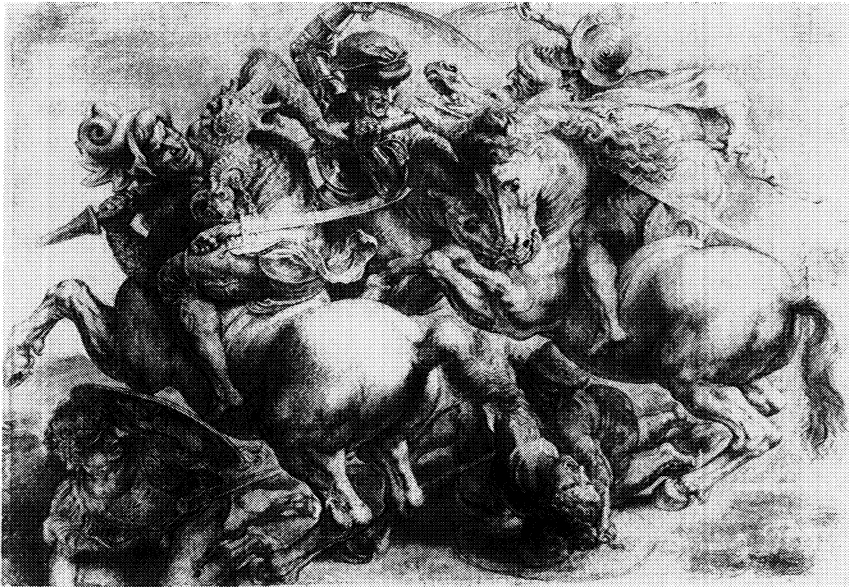
FIGURE 1 (above). Rubens, *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus*.  
Canvas, 88 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 82 $\frac{7}{8}$ ". Munich, Alte Pinakothek.

FIGURE 2 (right). Rubens, *Copy of the Battle of Anghiari by  
Leonardo da Vinci*. Pen and wash with grey and  
white body color on paper. Cabinet des dessins,  
Louvre, Paris.

Though she give them not, yet take the kisses she does not give. Perhaps she will struggle at first and cry, "You villain!" Yet she will wish to be beaten in the struggle. . . . He who has taken kisses, if he take not the rest beside, will deserve to lose even what was granted. . . . You may use force; women like you to use it. . . . She whom a sudden assault has taken by storm is pleased. . . . But she who, when she might have been compelled, departs untouched . . . will yet be sad. Phoebe suffered violence, violence was used against her sister: each ravisher found favour with the one he ravished.<sup>5</sup>

In applying this passage from Ovid to Rubens's painting, one art historian draws the conclusion that Rubens is celebrating the triumph of natural impulse over conventional inhibition: "The battle of the sexes is a necessity of nature. With Rubens it is a primal impulse of life, a fight for unification. . . . In being raped Phoebe discovers her destiny as a woman. Her rape reveals and enhances her nature."<sup>6</sup> In claiming something like a truth value for Rubens's celebratory depiction of this rape, this scholar mystifies it in terms of a misguided notion of what is natural in human sexuality. My position is that we must consider Rubens's painting, not as a revelation of primal human nature, but as a phenomenon of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European culture.<sup>7</sup> In particular we may view Rubens's painting as issuing from a tradition that emerged among princely patrons at the time, of incorporating large-scale mythological rape scenes into their palace decorations. With fundamental shifts in political thinking and experience in early sixteenth-century Europe, princes came to appreciate the particular luster rape scenes could give to their own claims to absolute sovereignty.

For one thing, with the rise of absolutist political theory in the sixteenth century, it was claimed that princely rulers were like Jupiter and stood above human law.<sup>8</sup> For another thing, the experience of war and politics in the early sixteenth century was such that rulers and theoreticians alike came to believe, in Felix Gilbert's words, that "force, which had previously been thought to be just one of several factors which determined politics, now came to be regarded as the decisive factor."<sup>9</sup> This point of view gave rise to political theory that not only recognized the necessity of violence but indeed valorized it.<sup>10</sup> Of particular interest here are



instances in which evocations of princely power and dominance are given a distinctly sexual coloration.<sup>11</sup> The best known of course is in chapter 25 of *The Prince* (1513), where Machiavelli urges the Prince to use force in contending with adverse circumstances:

Fortune is a woman and if you wish to keep her under it is necessary to beat and ill use her; and it is seen she allows herself to be mastered by the adventurous rather than by those who go to work more coldly. She is, therefore, always woman-like, a lover of young men, because they are less cautious, more violent, and with more audacity to command her.<sup>12</sup>

Princely claims to Jove-like sovereignty, to the right to subjugate by force both subjects and adversaries, and to sexual mastery over unconsenting partners are boldly intermingled in the decorative program of Federigo Gonzaga's Palazzo del Te in Mantua of around 1530.<sup>13</sup> To take one room, the Sala del'Aquile, as an example, we find three *stuccho* reliefs depicting rapes—or more precisely the forcible abduction of unconsenting sexual partners: Jupiter taking Europa, Neptune taking Amydone, and Pluto carrying Proserpina into the underworld (fig. 3).<sup>14</sup> Combined with a fourth relief of the enthroned Jupiter conferring with the gods, the three rape scenes thematize the rights of dominion each god enjoys in his respective region—earth, sea, and underworld—analogue to the rights of dominion enjoyed by Federigo Gonzaga and other princely rulers in the empire of Charles V.<sup>15</sup> Placed between a centaumachy and an amazonomachy below, and Jupiter destroying Phaeton in the vault above, these scenes of rape contribute to the ceiling's central theme of displaying the manifold aspects of Federigo's personal and political power.

The none-too-subtle implicit claims of Federigo's Mantuan program are made pedantically explicit in Vasari's decorative program for the Sala di Giove in Florence's Palazzo Vecchio. As Vasari explains in the *Ragionamenti* (written in 1558), each of the depicted scenes from the life of Jupiter corresponds to a parallel accomplishment or attribute of Duke Cosimo de' Medici.<sup>16</sup> Thus, for example, Jupiter's rape of Europa comes to stand for Cosimo's conquest of Piombino and establishment of a naval base on Elba.<sup>17</sup>

Only in the rape of Ganymede is Cosimo not identified with Jupiter. In that scene, Vasari tells us, Jupiter, appearing as an eagle, represents the emperor Charles V, while the boy Ganymede represents Cosimo, who in his youth "was carried into heaven by the emperor and confirmed duke."<sup>18</sup> But even in this exception to the programmatic identification of the duke with Jupiter, the interpretative principle remains the same: the sovereign, in this case Charles V, is one who, like Jupiter, conquers and rules without regard for contract or the prior consent of his subjects.<sup>19</sup>

In this absolutist conception of political rule the relationship between a prince and the state is less in the figure of the prince as the head of the single (male)

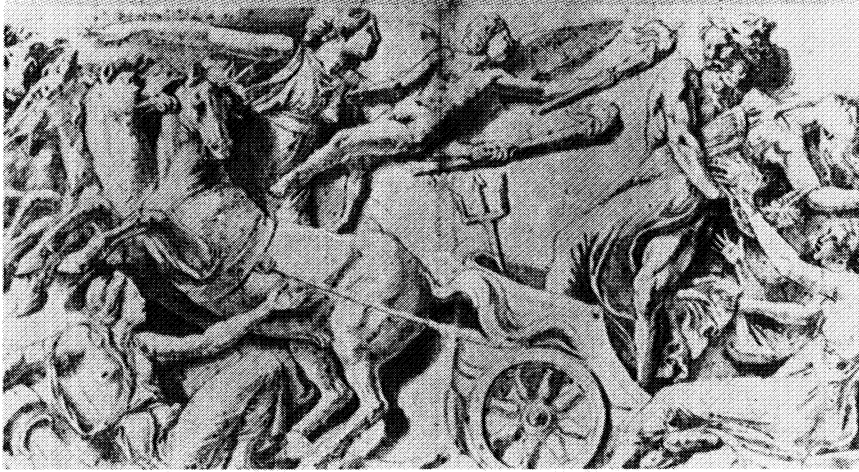


FIGURE 3. Giulio Romano, *Rape of Proserpina* (preparatory drawing for *stuccho* relief in the Palazzo del Te). Pen and wash on paper. Ecole des beaux-arts, Paris.

body of the republic than in the figure of two bodies: the prince taking forcible possession of a (usually) female body, the latter having no power to resist or make claims upon him.<sup>20</sup>

Once this refiguration of the prince's relation to his subjects is understood, it becomes readily apparent why, in 1583, Cosimo's son, Francesco de' Medici (Vasari's interlocutor in the *Ragionamenti*) would have found it appropriate to install Giovanni da Bologna's so-called *Rape of the Sabine* in the Loggia dei Lanzi on Florence's Piazza della Signoria (fig. 4).<sup>21</sup> Apparently Giovanni da Bologna (also called Giambologna) composed the group without any particular story in mind.<sup>22</sup> But that is not to say that the action here is ambiguous. The sculpture's subject is only ambiguous if one tries to link it to a particular historical narrative. As a *generic* rape scene, its meaning is perspicuous: that of a victory monument to Medicean success in subjugating the citizens and subject territories of Florence.<sup>23</sup> The inclusion of a defeated rival in the group suggests that the young man's triumph is not only over the woman but also over the man at his feet. In political terms, the monument would appear to commemorate the success of the Medici dukes in wresting control of Florence away from rival factions over the course of the sixteenth century.<sup>24</sup>

In contrast to earlier allegories of the city, here the personified Florence is not an active subject but a passive object; not the victor but the victor's possession, the trophy in a contest between men. Indeed a contemporary poem about the

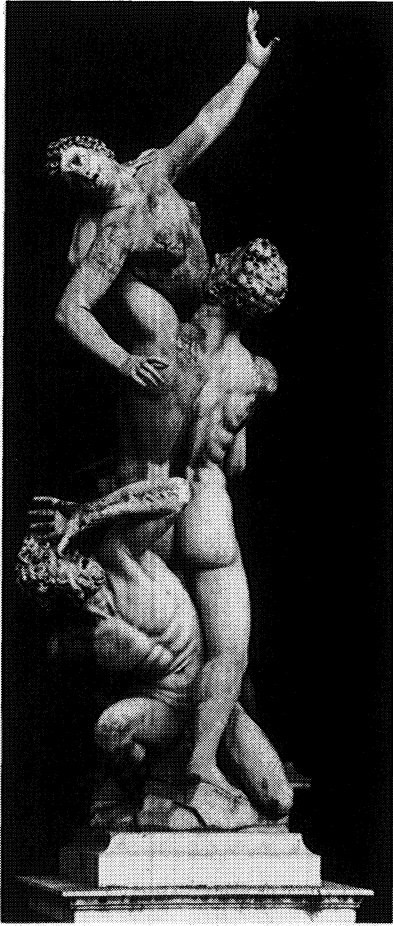


FIGURE 4 (left). Giovanni da Bologna, *Rape of the Sabine*. Marble, 13'6". Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence.

FIGURE 5 (right). Benvenuto Cellini, *Perseus*. Bronze, 18'. Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence.

sculpture likens Florence to the Sabine woman and praises Francesco, "who with such valor, with such wisdom possesses her."<sup>25</sup> In some respects the woman's function as an attribute of her captor's identity is suggested formally by the way in which we read her flailing body as an extension of his own: a contemporary description of the standing man as a burning, or ardent, youth was no doubt suggested by the flamelike shape of the composition, which, rising through his body, tapers to a flickering point in the woman's upraised arm.<sup>26</sup>

Much has been made of the way in which the sculptor makes the viewer want

to walk around the sculpture to take in what one critic describes as “the multiple . . . views that are predicated by the spiraling composition.”<sup>27</sup> Yet the main view of the group from the front does yield a more or less coherent view of the bodies of both men. It is the woman’s body that we see only as a fractional part, which lacks integrity and has become fetishlike.<sup>28</sup> The fetishistic display of the Sabine woman’s body effectively complements the display of the head of Medusa in Cellini’s *Perseus*—the sculpture with which Giovanni da Bologna’s group was paired in the Loggia dei Lanzi (fig. 5).<sup>29</sup> In each work the virile hero holds aloft part of a woman’s body as evidence of his capacity to dispossess and incapacitate his enemies.<sup>30</sup> Each work plays upon the thematics of sexual prowess and disempowerment as a way of establishing the hero/ruler’s *virtù* in facing down opposition.

The concept of *virtù* surmounting difficulty through the use of force is of course central to Machiavelli’s delineation of the ideal prince and is a recurrent theme in subsequent Florentine political rhetoric.<sup>31</sup> The gendered signification of the word *virtù* in particular (meaning, literally, manliness) surely underlies the sexual innuendo in Machiavelli’s endorsement of princely violence, quoted above.<sup>32</sup> The convergence of the sexual and political meanings in the concepts of force and *virtù* help clarify why this rape group could be taken as a fitting embodiment of those values and serve as a daunting public affirmation of Medicean princely prowess.<sup>33</sup>

A curious point to note is the way in which these same terms—*virtù*, *forza*, *difficoltà*—were applied not only to sexual and political experience in sixteenth-century Florence but to artistic experience and theory as well. Poems and texts written after the sculpture was unveiled in 1583 take up precisely those terms in lauding the sculptor’s accomplishment. Raffaello Borghini asserts that Giambologna made the group to prove to jealous rivals that he could produce large figures in marble. “Goaded by the spur of *virtù*, he arranged to show the world that he could not only make ordinary marble statues, but also many together, and the most *difficult* that could be made.”<sup>34</sup> It has long been recognized how central these terms are to Renaissance and particularly mannerist artistic theory.<sup>35</sup> However, by translating *virtù* as “virtuosity,” for example, art historians have neglected to consider how sixteenth-century writers used the terms to claim for artistic achievement the glory of sexual and political conquest.<sup>36</sup>

According to contemporary accounts, it was only after Giambologna completed the marble figures that the subject of the group was established as the rape of a Sabine woman.<sup>37</sup> This incident from Rome’s founding history was thought to have made possible the creation of a Roman “people.” Lacking women to bear them sons, the first settlers of Rome asked neighboring tribesmen for their daughters in marriage. When their neighbors refused, the Romans forcibly seized the women of the Sabine tribe and made them their wives, thus ensuring the perpetuation of the Roman line.<sup>38</sup> The genealogical import of the narrative explains how this scene of violent conflict between two men carries within it the



germ of their reconciliation. After all, the offspring that the Sabine woman bears the Roman youth will be the old man's descendants as well. Her passage from one man to the other establishes a familial bond between the two that will ultimately occasion their political unification.<sup>39</sup>

If one of the manifest historical benefits of the Sabine rape is to draw victor and vanquished into a propitious alliance, a latent benefit of the episode is to affirm a consensual tenet that underlies the rivals' antagonism: the concept that women are the property of men. The ancient sources specify that the Romans put their marriage requests to the neighboring tribesmen, not to the women themselves.<sup>40</sup> To reinforce the principle that a woman was the property of one man or another, early Roman marriage ceremonies—in which the bride, as the possession of the father, was “handed over” to the husband—often incorporated ritual practices recalling the original Sabine rape.<sup>41</sup> Not surprisingly, when sixteenth-century family and political theorists attempted to revive Roman family law and the absolute control of husbands and fathers over their womenfolk, they invoked the rape of the Sabines as an exemplary tale. Thus in 1500 Marcantonio Altieri recommends that his contemporaries include ritual allusions to the rape of the Sabines in their marriage ceremonies as a way of underscoring the husband's coercive power over his wife.<sup>42</sup>

The domestic significance of the Sabine rape helps us appreciate how Giambologna's public monument at once thematizes the grand duke's dominion over his subjects and rivals, and at the same time thematizes the dominion those male subjects may have hoped to enjoy over the women in their own homes. In so doing, the *Rape of the Sabine* could have helped create an empathetic bond between ruler and ruled that spans divisions of class and wealth by affirming their commonly held values in the domain of gender.<sup>43</sup>

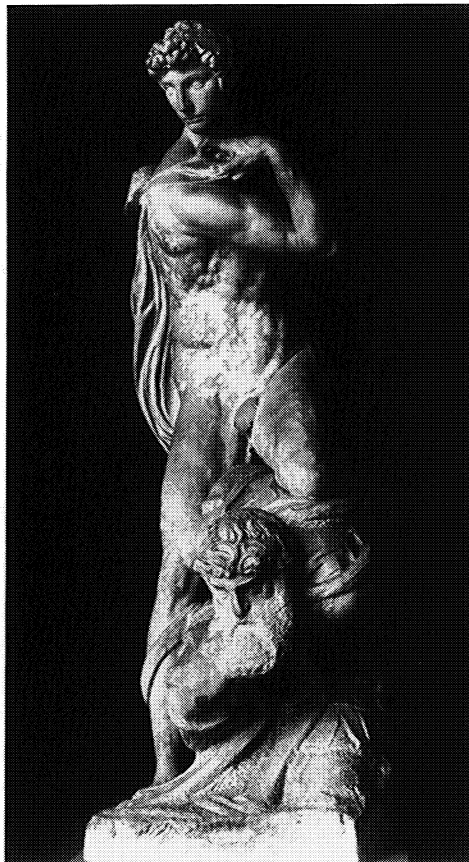
The Sabine narrative also gives pointed signification to the work as a demonstration of the sculptor's claims to artistic sovereignty. As has often been noted, the composition takes up the challenge laid down by Michelangelo that an artist should make his figures “pyramidal, serpentine, and multiplied by one, two, and three.”<sup>44</sup> Michelangelo's *Victory* fulfills these precepts in a group of two large-scale serpentine figures: an old man and a youth (fig. 6). But it was left to Giambologna to multiply the *figura serpentinata* in a large-scale group of three.<sup>45</sup> By this feat he not only vanquished his living rivals but also surpassed Michelangelo and made claim to be recognized as Michelangelo's worthiest successor.<sup>46</sup> Viewing the sculpture as Giambologna's bid to outstrip his rivals and Michelangelo, perhaps it was inevitable that his contemporaries should have invoked the imagery of the Sabine rape to liken the young sculptor to the youthful victor in his group, triumphant over and establishing filial ties with the father at his feet.<sup>47</sup>

This brief overview of the multifold significations of Giambologna's *Rape of the Sabine* suggests that its virtuosity resides not only in the serpentine arrangement of the figures but also in the way in which the group gives visible expression to the intertwined values and aspirations of patron, public, and artist at once.

It has been suggested that Rubens's *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus* could be seen as a pictorial variant of Giambologna's sculptural group.<sup>48</sup> Rivaling Giambologna's spiraling triad on a pyramidal base, Rubens sets four figures in pin-wheel rotation on the point of a diamond. By devising this swirling arrangement of four serpentine figures, however, Rubens has done far more than display his own virtuosity in taking up the challenge laid down by Michelangelo and Giambologna. He has transformed a figural tradition thematizing competition between men into a scene of fraternal cooperation. His male protagonists are no longer rivals but brothers, legendary for their mutual devotion.<sup>49</sup> Avoiding competition over a single woman, they undertake a joint sexual conquest in which each is allotted his prize.

Lacking all information about who first owned this canvas, one can only speculate about what prompted Rubens to paint it.<sup>50</sup> But because large-scale depictions of Castor and Pollux are a tradition peculiar to French monarchical imagery, it is worth considering that when Rubens painted this, shortly after 1615, he did so with the French court in mind. In France, too, after all, it was traditional to

FIGURE 6. Michelangelo,  
*Victory*. Marble, 8'6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>".  
Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.



incorporate rape imagery into princely programs as a means of affirming the ruler's sovereignty in private and public life.<sup>51</sup> Thus, for example, the verses accompanying a *Rape of Europa* on one of the triumphal arches for the entry of King Charles IX and his queen into Paris in 1571 cast Jupiter's rape of Europa as a figure both of the king's marriage to Isabel of Spain and of his prospective dominion over Asia (fig. 7): "Par le vieil Jupiter Europe fut ravie: / Le ieune ravira par Isabel l'Asie" (As the old Jupiter ravished Europa, the young one, through Isabel, will ravish Asia).<sup>52</sup> The use of a rape scene to celebrate Charles's acquisition of both a wife and subject territory attests to the eclipse in France, as in Italy, of medieval consensual notions of marriage and political contract by the absolutist insistence upon the unfettered powers of husbands and rulers alike.<sup>53</sup>

The figures of Castor and Pollux make their appearance atop another arch in these same royal entry decorations (fig. 8).<sup>54</sup> The ship flanked by Castor and Pollux is based on Alciati's emblem, *Spes proxima*, first published in 1531.<sup>55</sup> The emblem depicts the ship of state on a storm-tossed sea, with the constellation Gemini—identified with the twins Castor and Pollux—in the upper-right-hand corner. Alciati's epigram explains: "Our state, like a ship, is buffeted by countless storms, and there is only one hope for its future safety. . . . If the shining stars, the twin brothers, appear, good hope will restore our sinking spirits."<sup>56</sup> Alciati's floundering vessel has no evident captain or navigator: in keeping with absolutist theory, the prince is not "in the same boat" as his subjects. Rather he is their shining hope for salvation.<sup>57</sup> In the 1571 adaptation of Alciati's emblem, the ship of state is again saved by Castor and Pollux, who appear not only as stars but also in their human aspect—now identified with the young King Charles IX and his brother, the duc d'Anjou.<sup>58</sup>

It seems possible that Rubens was familiar with this image, particularly the way in which the two brothers incline toward the ship in the center, reaching out as if, in the words of the entry planner, "to touch the ship and to save it."<sup>59</sup> It seems additionally likely that even while drawing inspiration from the image, Rubens would have transformed it, going one step further than the inventor of 1571 toward enlivening this political allegory with animated figures—by replacing the bridles on the ground with rearing horses and by replacing the floundering ship of state with the abjectly disempowered, incipiently grateful figures of the daughters of King Leucippus.<sup>60</sup>

Although it was an established panegyric tradition in the early seventeenth century to compare the French king and his younger brother to Castor and Pollux, it is highly unlikely that the painting by Rubens alludes to Louis XIII and his brother by birth, since the king's brother, the duc d'Orleans, had just died in 1611.<sup>61</sup> Rather, it seems plausible to me that the Dioscuri here refer to Louis XIII and his new brother-by-marriage: the future King Philip IV of Spain. In 1612 a treaty was signed between France and Spain whereby it was agreed that in 1615 the future Philip IV of Spain would marry Louis's sister, Elisabeth, and that Louis

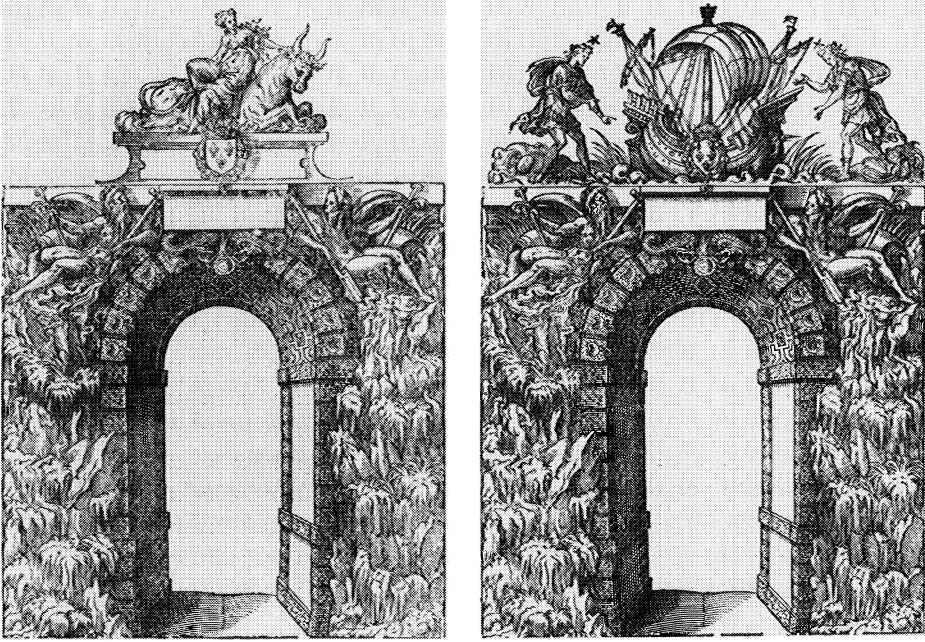


FIGURE 7 (left). Arch with *The Rape of Europa*. Woodcut from Simon Bouquet, *Bref et Sommaire Recueil de ce qui a esté faict et de l'ordre tenue à la ioyeuse et triomphante entrée de . . . Prince Charles IX de ce nom roy de France en sa bonne ville et cite de Paris* (Paris, 1572).

FIGURE 8 (right). Arch with *Castor and Pollux Saving the Ship of State*. From *ibid.* Both figures reproduced by permission of Houghton Library, Harvard University.

XIII would marry Philip's sister, Anne.<sup>62</sup> Marie de' Medici, the mother of Louis XIII, had negotiated the treaty with King Philip III of Spain, and she considered this marriage alliance to be the crowning achievement of her regency.<sup>63</sup> The actual exchange of princesses and dual marriages took place in the fall of 1615, when Louis XIII and his bride were aged fifteen and Philip of Spain and his bride were aged eleven and thirteen, respectively.<sup>64</sup> Most likely, these events would have come to Rubens's attention in his capacity as court painter to the governors of the Spanish Netherlands, since we know that his patrons in Brussels, the Archduke Albert and the Infanta Isabella, had a friendly relationship with Marie de' Medici and endorsed strengthening the bonds between France and Spain.<sup>65</sup>

Imagining that Rubens's painting does commemorate this nuptial alliance makes it possible to appreciate the appropriateness of Rubens's erotic transformation of the triumphal arch decoration of 1571. In fact, the step of likening

Louis and Philip to Castor and Pollux had been taken during festive celebrations that accompanied the signing of the treaty in the summer of 1612. A contemporary pamphlet describing the festivities mentions that the mounted figures of Castor and Pollux surmounted one of the stage sets in Paris's Place Royale. The pamphlet explains that the pair was meant to convey the expectation that, like the twins Castor and Pollux, the two monarchs, once united by familial bonds, would banish the tempests of war from Europe.<sup>66</sup> The fact that the "union" between the monarchs would be consummated when they married each other's sisters surely justifies Rubens's decision to represent the twin deities at the moment they take possession of their future brides.

If we provisionally grant that the "exchange of princesses" that took place between France and Spain in 1615 was the occasion for Rubens's painting, and if we compare it to a contemporary print that also refers to these marriages, we can appreciate what an astute and at the same time disturbing commentary upon the nuptials Rubens's version would have been (fig. 9).<sup>67</sup> We could say that both the print and the painting forego an attempt to record the historical marriage ceremonies in favor of trying to impart their underlying significance. In a curious confirmation of Claude Lévi-Strauss's explanation of the social value of marriage and the incest taboo, each work indicates that the primary bond being forged is not the bond between husband and wife but the bond between two men who, by exchanging sisters, become brothers-in-law, thereby bringing themselves and their nations into familial and political alliance.<sup>68</sup> The print shows the two couples flanking the marriage god Hymen, who, in the appended verses, applauds the union not between spouses but kings. Hymen says:

Scepters and crowns I bring into accord,  
Through marriage, love and concord,  
Conjoining divided kings.<sup>69</sup>





FIGURE 9 (left). *Allegory on the Marriage Alliance Between France and Spain*. Engraving. Cabinet des estampes, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.

FIGURE 10 (above). Rogier van der Weyden, *Escorial Deposition*. Panel, 7'2 $\frac{5}{8}$ " $\times$ 8'7 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Prado, Madrid.

Rubens, dispensing with labored abstractions, conveys the character of the new relationship between Louis and Philip by casting them as actual brothers and by representing their acquisition of wives as a joint sexual adventure, which at once consolidates the fraternal bond and at the same time serves the familiar function of demonstrating their princely *virtù*.<sup>70</sup>

A further point that contemporary encomiasts underscored was the effect the dual marriages had of transforming a former relationship of war between France and Spain into one of peace.

War is dead, and those who carried the torch of division within the state are those who now carry the torch of love. They sacrifice all their enmities on the altar of faith and make a victim without bile for the happy alliance of their scepters.<sup>71</sup>

Whereas this passage relies upon the rather contrived image of bearers of torches of war now becoming bearers of torches of love, who make sacrifices on the altar of faith, Rubens effects the same conversion of imagery of war into imagery of peace by patterning his composition after the *Battle of Anghiari*. Deadly warfare is



converted into erotic conquest. The violent impulses of antagonists are not eliminated so much as redirected against women. The dangers of combat are exchanged for the thrill of rape. Violence is absorbed into sexuality.

The strategy of eliminating violence between men by redirecting it against women calls to mind René Girard's analysis of sacrifice as violence performed on designated victims for the sake of mitigating conflict and rivalries within a community—that is to say, for the sake of preserving bonds of alliance between men.<sup>72</sup> His analysis helps us understand why the text just quoted uses the imagery of sacrifice and of “victims without bile.” It also helps elucidate a point noted by Svetlana Alpers: the impression one has of suspended action in the painting by Rubens. The stilled action calls to mind certain deposition scenes (such as the Escorial Deposition by Rogier van der Weyden) in which the figures are arranged, not to demonstrate how, logistically, Christ's body was lowered from the cross, but to hold up Christ's body as a sacrificial display to the viewer (fig. 10).<sup>73</sup> Similarly,

in the *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus* the figures are arranged less to clarify how the Dioscuri will get the women up onto their horses than to display the bodies of women who are offered in a rite of marriage. Indeed the near reverential gazes of the brothers are curiously consonant with the tender pathos of the companions of Christ and the Virgin (compare, in particular, the mounted rider with Rogier's John the Evangelist). As does the pamphlet, then, the painting alludes to the sacrificial nature of the nuptials, but Rubens is far bolder than the encomiast in suggesting that the victims in these rites are none other than the brides themselves.

The sacral import of these nuptials is also evoked in Rubens's later commemoration of the *Exchange of Princesses*, which he painted in around 1622–25 as part of his series commemorating the life of Marie de' Medici (fig. 11).<sup>74</sup> The meeting of the two princesses on the border between France and Spain, as each is about to pass into the other's country, is patterned after traditional Visitation scenes, which represent the momentous encounter between the pregnant mothers of Christ and John the Baptist (fig. 12).<sup>75</sup> By implicitly identifying the royal brides

FIGURE 11 (left). Rubens, *Exchange of Princesses at Hendaye*. Canvas, 12' 11" x 9' 7½". Louvre, Paris.

FIGURE 12 (right). Dirk Bouts, *Visitation*. Panel, 31½ x 22". Prado, Madrid.





with these holy mothers, Rubens turns our attention away from the violence of the brides' induction into sexuality and toward their future maternity and the birth of divinely favored heirs for the French and Spanish thrones.<sup>76</sup>

In the earlier canvas, however, Rubens adverts not to the new roles that await the princesses as mothers but to the traumatic moment in which, as brides, they are forcibly uprooted, seized upon by strangers, and launched into the unknown.<sup>77</sup> While the struggles of the lower sister convey her anguish and impotence against the overbearing force of her captor, the laxness of the higher sister suggests that she is about to abandon resistance altogether. Her limp hand and gratified expression signal her final acquiescence to her powerlessness and to the pleurability of being desired.<sup>78</sup> The subtle play upon violence and reverence, anguish and acquiescence in this scene suggests that Rubens sentimentalizes sexual difference and presents the brides as sacrificial victims, not so much to arouse our pity and indignation as to intimate the sacred importance of these nuptials and the sovereign powers of the brides' quasi-divine spouses. Thus the *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus* succeeds at once in making manifest the latent function of the royal marriages and in glamorizing them at the same time.

If we compare the painting to documentary records of the nuptials, we can appreciate what a mystification of those events Rubens's painting would have been. The exchange of sisters never had the effect of cementing a fraternal bond between Philip and Louis. Indeed they never met. Endless wrangling about precedent at the exchange ceremonies and all the ensuing diplomatic tensions between France and Spain indicate that no spirit of concord emerged to bind the two nations into a harmonious alliance. As for the bridal couples themselves, all the pleasures of sexual conquest and capitulation intimated by Rubens are signally uncorroborated by contemporary accounts.

The diary of Louis XIII's physician, Jean Héroard, provides a sobering narrative of how the fifteen-year-old Louis and his thirteen-year-old sister, Princess Elisabeth, experienced the events.<sup>79</sup> On the day Elisabeth left to join her eleven-year-old husband in Spain, she and her brother spent the entire morning and a good part of the afternoon together, crying, sobbing, and clinging to each other, until the Spanish ambassador finally drew her away, exclaiming, "Allons, princesse d'Espagne." Louis continued to weep after she left, finally complaining to his physician of the headache that all his crying had given him.

Louis was equally pained by the requirement that he consummate his marriage with his bride, Anne of Austria. Héroard's journal entry for 25 November 1615 gives reason to doubt that the consummation was successfully accomplished. Indeed the entire performance—and that it was, since witnesses and a written narrative of the consummation were required to establish the legality of the marriage—seems to have been a miserable ordeal for the fifteen-year-old spouses. Héroard records: at 4:00 P.M. the couple goes to mass. At 5:30 Louis takes Anne to her bedroom. He feels "disinclined," goes to his own room, and gets into bed.

He eats supper in bed; then several young gentlemen come into his room and tell him ribald stories. Louis feels ashamed and greatly afraid. Finally they reassure him. At 8:00 he returns to his bride's chamber, where he is "put into bed with the queen his wife in the presence of the queen his mother"—who stays in the room the whole time. At 10:15 he emerges from the bed and displays his bloodied member, claiming to have "done it" twice. Héroard marks his skepticism by adding, "so it would seem." In any case, it appears Louis did not resume sexual contact with his wife for at least another four years.<sup>80</sup>

Setting the physician's narrative of this nuptial union against Rubens's Ovidian scenario allows us to measure the gap between the actual experience of at least one bridal couple in 1615 and the fantasy purveyed by the painter. It leads us to recognize how violently, then as now, such mystifications of sexuality, with their seductive fictions of conquest and capitulation, can misrepresent the lived experiences of men and women alike.

## Notes

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1. Max Rooses, *L'Oeuvre de P.P. Rubens* (Antwerp, 1886–92), no. 579; Rudolph Oldenburg, *P.P. Rubens: Des Meisters Gemälde (Klassiker der Kunst)*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart, 1921; hereafter *KdK*), no. 131; catalogue entry (with bibliography) by Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., in Beverly Louise Brown and Wheelock, *Masterworks from Munich: Sixteenth- to Eighteenth-Century Paintings from the Alte Pinakothek*, National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C., 1988), pp. 105–8, no. 23.
2. Theocritus *Idylls* 22.137; Ovid *Fasti* 5.699 and *Artis amatoriae* 1.679–80; Apollodorus 3.11.2; Hyginus *Fabulae* 80. Among Renaissance mythographies, see Natalis Comes, *Mythologiae* (Venice, 1567; reprint ed., New York, 1976), book 8, pp. 247–50. Rubens appears to be the first artist since antiquity to have depicted this abduction. For an exhaustive review of ancient literary and visual representations of the Dioscuri, see articles in *Lexikon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (hereafter *LIMC*), vol. 3 (Zurich, 1986), part 1, pp. 567–635, and part 2, pp. 456–503.

Today the word *rape* is taken to denote sexual intercourse with an unconsenting partner. Evidence of phallic penetration and the emission of semen is crucial to the legal determination of whether or not a rape has occurred. According to current usage Rubens has not depicted a rape but an abduction. In antiquity and the Renaissance, however, it was the use of violence against a sexual partner that was taken as the incontrovertible evidence of a rape. The issue of whether phallic penetration actually occurred seems to have been considered a minor issue (or more frequently a foregone conclusion) once it had been established that the perpetrator had used force against his unwilling partner. In Renaissance Venice, for example, a man could be prosecuted for the crime of rape (legally defined as *carnaliter cognovit per vim*) if he "is

found to have committed any molestation or violence against any woman with a desire to commit fornication, whether or not he succeeds in that fornication”; quoted and discussed in Guido Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex, Crime, and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice* (New York, 1985), 89 and 90. Indeed, although most rape narratives specify that violence was used against an unconsenting partner, rarely if ever do they mention the moment of physical penetration. However, that by no means leaves any doubt that a rape has actually occurred. For these reasons, I find it appropriate to adhere to Renaissance tradition and retain the word *rape* for the titles of the scenes of sexual violence discussed in this paper.

3. Hans Gerhard Evers, *Rubens und sein Werk: Neue Forschungen* (Brussels, 1943), 253; Svetlana Alpers, “Manner and Meaning in Some Rubens Mythologies,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 30 (1967): 285–89; Martin Warnke, *Peter Paul Rubens*, trans. Donna Pedini Simpson (New York, 1980), 62; Wheelock, in *Masterworks from Munich*, 107–8. Both Warnke and Wheelock suggest that the allegory may be political in nature (referring to Spain’s dominion over her Netherlandish provinces). I will propose a different complex of political allusions below.
4. See Julius S. Held, *Rubens: Selected Drawings*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1986), 85–88, for a discussion of the complex relationship between Rubens’s drawing and Leonardo’s lost design.
5. Ovid *Artis amatoriae* 1.664–80; in *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, trans. J. H. Mozley, rev. ed., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), 59.
6. Reinhard Liess, *Die Kunst des Rubens* (Braunschweig, 1977), 382 (my translation).
7. On the social determinants of “rape culture” generally, see Peggy Reeves Sanday, “The Bases for Male Dominance,” in her *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality* (Cambridge, 1981), 163–83; and “Rape and the Silencing of the Feminine,” in *Rape*, ed. Sylvana Tomaselli and Roy Porter (London, 1986), 84–101.
8. In his commentary on Roman law published in 1508, Guillaume Budé likens the king to Jupiter, quotes Ulpian’s dictum that a prince is above the law, not bound by it, and endorses Aristotle’s fifth type of monarchy—in which the ruler has the same absolute dominion as that of a father in his home—as an ideal model; Guillaume Budé (Budaeus), *Annotationes in pandectas* (Paris, 1508), in *Operum*, vol. 3 (Basel, 1557; reprint ed., Westmead, Eng., 1966), 68.  
On the humanist revival of Roman law and its relationship to absolutist theory, see Myron Gilmore, *Argument from Roman Law in Political Thought: 1200–1600* (Cambridge, Mass., 1941); and Nannerl O. Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France: The Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Princeton, N.J., 1980), 57–61. On Budé’s importance for Italian absolutist theory, see Nicolai Rubinstein, “Dalla repubblica al principato,” in *Firenze e la toscana dei Medici nell’Europa del ’500*, ed. Furio Diaz et al. (Florence, 1983), 165.
9. Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence* (New York, 1984), 118 and 129.
10. J. R. Hale, “War and Public Opinion in Renaissance Italy,” in Hale, *Renaissance War Studies* (London, 1983), 359–87.
11. The intermingling of claims of sexual and military prowess characterizes a number of the princely *impreses* published by Paolo Giovio in his *Dialogo dell’impreses militari e amoroze* (Rome, 1555), ed. Maria Luisa Doglio (Rome, 1978). The most egregious is the “comic” *impresa* of the condottiere Giovanni Chiucchiera, which represents a wolf, unabashed by two dogs at his heels, poised to take sexual advantage of an ewe knocked onto her back. The image recalls Ovid’s image of Lucretia at the moment she is about

to be raped by Tarquin: “She trembled, as trembles a little lamb that, caught straying from the fold, lies low under a ravening wolf”; *Fasti* 2.799–800, trans. James George Frazer, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 115. Giovio explains that the condottiere’s *impresa* was meant to convey the “ardent nature” of his valor in cavalry engagements (147).

After the Medici returned from exile to Florence in 1512, it seems their supporters used sexual imagery to celebrate the Medici’s resumption of power. In 1514, Richard Trexler tells us, the *festaioli* of the hunt “put an estrous mare into the ring of the Piazza della Signoria with stallions, ‘so that anyone who didn’t know how to, learned’ the sexual act”; *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1980), 509. When Giuliano di Lorenzo di Medici was elected pope in 1513, “The simplest citizens demonstrated their allegiance to the Medici by placing the family’s coat of arms over their front doors. Public officials followed suit, covering the civic coat of arms with the Medici balls [*palle*]. . . . The Medicean cry of *Palle!* was on every lip, Cambi noted, and the traditional civic cry of *Marzocco!* could scarcely be heard, its utterance almost a challenge to the new Medicean order” (496–98). The sexual connotations of the word, *palle*, were not lost on contemporary Florentines. “The Medici ‘had the balls’ (*palle*) to make the Florentines’ testicles hurt, a contemporary pun ran, if the citizens could not accept a sweeter yoke” (509).

12. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. W. K. Marriott (London, 1958), 143.
13. Egon Verheyen, *The Palazzo del Te in Mantua: Images of Love and Politics* (Baltimore, 1977); Frederick Hartt, “Gonzaga Symbols in the Palazzo del Te,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 13 (1950): 151–88; Hartt, *Giulio Romano*, 2 vols. (New Haven, 1958), 1:105–60.
14. Verheyen, *Palazzo del Te*, 28–29; and Hartt, “Gonzaga Symbols,” 178–80. The subject of Neptune abducting Amymone is unusual (Neptune with Amphitrite, which is not a rape scene, is far more common). A literary source for Neptune and Amymone may be Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Sea-Gods*, 8.
15. Scholars have expressed uncertainty about the precise subject of the fourth *stuccho* with the enthroned Jupiter, Juno, Neptune, Mercury, and, I believe, Ceres. My guess is that it depicts Mercury (with pomegranate or pomegranate rind in hand) approaching Jupiter, while Jupiter deliberates on Ceres’ demand that her daughter Proserpina be returned to her from the underworld. Not only does the narrative in Ovid’s *Fasti* (4.585–614) accord with this scene of Olympian deliberation, but also Jupiter’s speech in the *Fasti* defending Pluto enunciates the principle of territorial division implied by the rapes on the other three *stucchi*: “He is not a son-in-law to put us to shame. I myself am not more noble: my kingdom is in the sky, another possesses the waters, and another, empty chaos”; 11.599–600.
16. Giorgio Vasari, *Ragionamenti* (Florence, 1588), trans., with commentary, in Jerry Lee Draper, *Vasari’s Decoration in the Palazzo Vecchio* (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1973), 164–77 and 434–37, also 28–37. See also Ettore Allegri and Alessandro Cecchi, *Palazzo Vecchio e i Medici* (Florence, 1980), 92–95; and more generally, Scott Schaefer, *The Studiolo of Francesco I de’ Medici in the Palazzo Vecchio* (Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1976), 227–32.
17. Draper, *Vasari’s Decoration*, 174–75 and 437.
18. *Ibid.*, 176–77. For a discussion of the rape of Ganymede as a figure of Cosimo’s ascendancy under Charles V, in Battista Franco’s *Allegory of the Battle of Montemurlo* (c. 1555), see James M. Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homosexuality in Art and Society* (New Haven, 1986), 166–67.

19. On the association of Charles V with Jupiter in the palace decorations of other princes dependent upon the emperor's patronage, see William Eisler, "Patronage and Diplomacy: The North Italian Residences of the Emperor Charles V," in *Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. F. W. Kent and Patricia Simons (Oxford, 1987), 269–82. On the palace of Charles's Genoese client, Andrea Doria (which included frescoes of Jupiter's rapes of Europa and Io), see also Elena Parma Armani, *Perin del Vaga: l'annello mancante* (Genoa, 1986), 73–152 and 263–81. The guiding spirit of Paolo Giovio (see note 11 above) behind the decorative programs of Andrea Doria, Federigo Gonzaga, and Cosimo de' Medici—all of whose palaces incorporated eroticized affirmations of princely and imperial sovereignty—is a matter deserving closer investigation.
20. Figurations of the Florentine republic as a male body in fifteenth-century political theory were analyzed by John Najemy in a symposium on "The Body in the Renaissance" held at Brown University, spring 1986.
21. Charles Avery, *Giovanni da Bologna* (New York, 1987), 109–14 and 254.
22. Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo* (Florence, 1584; reprint ed., Hildesheim, 1964), 72–74; also Avery, *Giovanni da Bologna*, 109–10.
23. As a poem written upon the unveiling of the sculpture indicates, the *Sabine* joined a sequence of sculptures in the piazza that were recognized as Florentine political allegories; Sebastiano SenLeolini, in *Alcune composizioni di diversi autori in lode del ritratto della Sabina*, ed. Bartolomeo Sermartelli (Florence, 1583), 46. On Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes*, see H. W. Janson, *Donatello*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1957), 2:198–205. On Michelangelo's *David*, see Charles Seymour, Jr., *Michelangelo's David: A Search for Identity* (New York, 1967), 55. On Baccio Bandinelli's *Hercules and Cacus*, and Benvenuto Cellini's *Perseus with the Head of Medusa*, see John Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini* (New York, 1985), 168.

It seems likely that Francesco installed the *Sabine* in the Loggia dei Lanzi as an emblem of dynastic, not personal, political achievement, since it was really Francesco's father, Cosimo I (1519–74), who had consolidated Medicean rule over Florence and Tuscany in the course of the sixteenth century; Eric Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries* (Chicago, 1973), 3–92; and note 31 below. Notwithstanding the political and military tranquility of Francesco's reign (1574–87), he persisted in commissioning art that celebrated the imposition and extension of Medici rule—for example: Giambologna's sculpture of *Florence Triumphant over Pisa* for the Salone dei Cinquecento in Francesco's residence, the Palazzo Vecchio (Avery, *Giovanni da Bologna*, 77–78; on the Salone dei Cinquecento, see Schaefer, *Studiolo of Francesco I*); and the equestrian monument of Cosimo I, which, though installed in the Piazza della Signoria after Francesco's death, had been proposed by him as early as 1581 (letter dated 27 October 1581 from Simone Fortuna to the duke of Urbino in Avery, *Giovanni da Bologna*, 251; discussed pp. 157–64).

24. On the history of the Medici family's struggles for control of Florence in the sixteenth century, see Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries*. In 1574 Francesco foiled a plot for his assassination by Orazio Pucci and a "blueblood gang" of Florentine youths (100).
25. Cosimo Gaci describes the *Sabine* as the "altera praeda / Ond'al Seme Roman Sabina terra / Produisse quella pianta eccelsa e grande / Che stese un tiempo i gloriosi rami" (the exalted prize, the *Sabine* earth, where Roman seed produced that lofty and great plant, which in time grew glorious branches) and then proceeds to the following passage:

Quanto è ricca Fiorenza, che di tanti  
 Nobili ingegni e chiari spirti è madre?  
 E quanto è ricco e degno il gran Francesco,  
 Che con tanto valor, con tanto senno  
 La possiede . . .

[How rich is Florence, mother of so many geniuses and bright spirits? And how rich and worthy is the great Francesco who, with such valor and such wisdom, possesses her . . .]

Eclogue, in *Alcune composizioni*, 29 and 43 (my thanks to Rachel Jacoff for her help with these translations). Francesco also referred to Florence as “the state I . . . possess”; Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries*, 101. Elsewhere Cochrane explains, “In the sixteenth century the word ‘state’ or *Stato* was usually used in a passive sense, as something that was possessed, acquired, or dominated”; 53.

26. Bernardo Davanzatti describes the youth as a “giovine ardente” in *Alcune composizioni*, 7.
27. Avery, *Giovanni da Bologna*, 114; see also John Shearman, *Mannerism* (Harmondsworth, Eng., 1967), 81–88.
28. On the fetish as “a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a safeguard against it,” and on “the impulse to execute [upon women] the castration which [fetishists] deny,” see Sigmund Freud, “Fetishism,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, 24 vols. (London, 1953–73), 21:152–53. For application of the term to artistic representation, see, among others, Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16 (1975): 6–18, reprinted in Brian Wallis, ed., *Art After Modernism* (New York, 1984), 361–73; Rosalind Krauss, “Corpus Delicti,” in *L’Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism* (New York, 1985), 95; and Carol Armstrong, “The Reflexive and the Possessive View: Thoughts on Kertesz, Brandt, and the Photographic Nude,” in this issue. Krauss’s characterization of fetishism as a “refusal to accept sexual difference” strikes me as a simplification, as does her assertion that “characterizations of surrealism as antifeminist [are] mistaken.”
29. Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini*, 163–86.
30. On the gendered signification of the head of Medusa, see Freud, “The Medusa’s Head,” *Standard Edition*, 18:253; and Neil Hertz, “Medusa’s Head: Male Hysteria Under Political Pressure,” *Representations* 4 (1983): 27–54.
31. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chaps. 6 and 25 in particular. Note the thematization of violence and victory in the decorations of the Sala dei Cinquecento (Draper, *Vasari’s Decoration*, 370–407) and the explanation Vasari gives to Francesco de’ Medici in *Ragionamenti*:

By reading the ancient and modern histories of the city, I was continually confronted with the troubled times and various misfortunes which led to so many changes of government, the rise and fall of innumerable citizens, sedition and civil discord, even the rebellion of her citizens with great bloodshed. I also considered the conflicts and wars suffered by the republic in subjugating the most noble and renowned cities nearby. . . . Similarly I deliberated upon the difficulties and suffering endured by your most illustrious house when Florence had a popular government and how, more recently, your father had to maintain at incalculable expense an army and a war in enemy territory before Siena surrendered with all her states. (403)

32. The complexities of Machiavelli’s use of the word *virtù* should not be underestimated.

See Leslie J. Walker, "Machiavelli's Concept of Virtue," in *The Discourses of Niccolò Machiavelli*, trans. and introduced by Walker, 2 vols. (New Haven, 1950), 1:99–102; and, more recently, Victoria Kahn, "Virtù and the Example of Agathocles," *Representations* 13 (1986): 63–83. It is not that Machiavelli recommends rape as an actual practice. On the contrary, he urges princes to forebear from raping their subjects—not in consideration for the women, but to avoid incurring the hatred of the men in their families, for "when neither their property nor honour is touched, the majority of men live content"; *The Prince*, chap. 19, p. 101.

33. The same may be said of Cellini's, which, as a sequel to Donatello's *Judith* marks a relocation of power from the corporate body of the republic (identified with Judith) to the singular body of the duke (identified with Perseus); Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini*, 168. On the motif of *virtù* in encomia for Duke Cosimo, see Draper, *Vasari's Decoration*, passim; and Karla Langedijk, *The Portraits of the Medici*, 3 vols. (Florence, 1981), 1:84–85; see also Rudolf Wittkower, "Chance, Time, and Virtue," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 1 (1938–39): 318–20.
34. "Per la qual cosa Giambologna punto dallo sprone della *virtù*, si dispose di mostrare al mondo, che egli non solo sapea fare le statue di marmo ordinarie, ma etiando molto insieme, e le piu *difficile*, che far si potessero" (emphasis added); Borghini, *Il Riposo*, 72. My translation.
35. Shearman, *Mannerism*, 21 and 41; also David Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton, N.J., 1981), 177–85.
36. The close identification of artistic with political glory is evident in several poems lauding Giambologna's sculpture. In one, his triumph over ancient sculptors is lauded as bringing to Florence the glory of Rome; *Alcune composizione*, 31. The imagery of force, victory, and, of course, rape itself is invoked repeatedly to characterize the sculptor's achievement:

La gloria dell'intera arte divina  
 Espresa nel triforme simulacro  
 Idea e norma a tutti grandi artisti  
 È, Gian Bologna mio la tua Sabina.  
 Di quella ardesti; il longo studio, e macro  
 È il vecchio padre a cui tu la rapisti.  
 —Bernardo Davanzati

[The glory of all divine art is in this triform image—the ideal and standard for all great artists. This, my Giambologna, is your Sabine, for whom you burned with desire. Long and wearing study (studio work) is the old father from whom you raped her. *Ibid.*, 7]

L'arte, che mai non feo, com'or sì note  
 Le forze sue, per se lo mostra à pieno,  
 Ne dirlo è d'huopo a chi ben fisso 'l mira.  
 Che chi non sà, che 'l marmo venir meno,  
 Infiammarsi d'amor, rodarsi d'ira,  
 Altri che Gianbologna far non puote?  
 —Lorenzo Franceschi

[Art, which had never done so before, now displays its force in the open. This need not be said to one who gazes well upon it. Who does not know who it is who could make marble swoon, be enflamed with love, or be eaten away by rage, other than Giambologna? *Ibid.*, 8]

Indeed not only is the creation of the work likened to an act of rape, but also its effect upon the viewer:

Rapir sentì 'l pensier soura misura,  
E restai come immobile, in astratto  
Quando mirai della Sabina il ratto,  
Ove Arte vince supera Natura.

—Francesco Marchi

[You feel your thoughts raped, carried out of bounds, and you remain immobile and abstracted when you gaze at the Rape of the Sabine, in which art conquers proud nature. *Ibid.*, 20]

My thanks to Rachel Jacoff for her help with these translations.

In principle, art historians would be inclined to read these lines as neoplatonic allegories of spirit and matter. But neoplatonic readings by now strike me as a way of evading the overt references to sex, gender, and violence that are central to the poems' (and sculpture's) argument.

37. Borghini, *Il Riposo*, 72. Avery, *Giovanni da Bologna*, 109–10. The evolution of the design from a small two-figure group executed in 1579 to the monumental triad of 1583 is considered in Charles Avery and Anthony Radcliffe, eds., *Giambologna: Sculptor to the Medici* (Edinburgh, 1978), 105–8 and 219–20.
38. Livy 1.9–13; Ovid *Fasti* 3.180–232; Plutarch *Life of Romulus* 14–15.
39. Livy 1.13. This is particularly stressed in Plutarch, who explains, “They did not commit the rape out of wantonness, nor even with a desire to do mischief, but with the fixed purpose of uniting and blending the two peoples in the strongest bonds”; *Life of Romulus* 14.6, in *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library 11 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1914–21), 1:131. The women persuade the Sabines to end their war with the Romans by reminding their fathers that, as fathers-in-law and grandfathers of Romans, they have family ties among their enemies; *Life of Romulus* 19. On rivalry over women as a means of establishing social bonds between men, see also Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York, 1985).
40. Livy 1.9.2.
41. In fact, Plutarch tells us that this is the origin of the custom of the groom carrying his bride over the threshold (*Life of Romulus* 15.5); see also Catullus *Carmina* 61, 162–63. On Roman marriages and the power of the *pater familias* over the women in his household, see Jane Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (Bloomington, Ind., 1986), 5–14; and Eva Cantarella, *Pandora's Daughters: The Role and Status of Women in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, trans. Maureen B. Fant (Baltimore, 1982), 113–18.
42. Discussed in Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, “An Ethnology of Marriage in the Age of Humanism,” in her *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Florence*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Chicago, 1985), 247–60, esp. 255. See also Juan Luis Vives, *De institutione foeminae christianae* (Basel, 1523), in *Vives and the Renaissance Education of Women*, ed. Foster Watson (New York, 1912), 110. It is this interest in reenacting the ancient drama in contemporary marriages that I think explains Rubens's decision to dress the Sabine women in contemporary Flemish dress in his 1638 depiction of the *Rape of the Sabines* (National Gallery, London, *KdK* 370).
43. For the theoretical principle, see Heidi Hartmann, “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union,” in *Women and Revolution*, ed. Lydia Sergent (Montreal, 1981), 14–15. For its application to the analysis of works



- of art, see Griselda Pollock, *Vision and History: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art* (London, 1988), 32–34.
44. Gian Paolo Lomazzo (1584), in Shearman, *Mannerism*, 81; quoted more extensively (with Michelangelo's further recommendation that the figure have a flamelike shape to convey "the *furia* of the figure") in Summers, *Michelangelo*, 81ff.
  45. Michelangelo only realized his design for the three-figured Samson and the Philistines in a small-scale model; Shearman, *Mannerism*, 83.
  46. "All that he wants is glory, and his greatest ambition is to rival Michelangelo. Many connoisseurs—including the Grand Duke himself—think that Giambologna is already on a par with Michelangelo, and so long as he goes on living he will gradually outstrip him"; Simone Fortuna to the Duke of Urbino, 1581, quoted in Avery, *Giovanni da Bologna*, 251.
  47. See poems using rape imagery to praise the sculptor, cited in note 36 above.
  48. E. H. Gombrich, as mentioned in Alpers, "Manner and Meaning," 289n. Julius S. Held notes that E. Dhanens proposed that the composition of the *Leucippus* makes use of Giambologna's bronze relief of the *Rape of the Sabines*, affixed to the base of the free-standing group; *The Oil Sketches of Rubens: A Critical Catalogue* (Princeton, N.J., 1980), 380.
  49. As evidence of their fraternal love, when Castor was fatally wounded in fighting against the two men to whom King Leucippus had promised his daughters, the immortal Pollux prayed to Jupiter to share his immortality with his dying brother; Ovid *Fasti* 5.715–19. See also Plutarch, "On Brotherly Love," *Moralia* 478, 484, and 486. Plutarch commends the twins not only for sharing immortality but also for avoiding rivalry by seeking honors and power in different fields, so that they could "mutually assist and cheer for each other." See also *LIMC*, 3:567–68.
  50. The painting is first recorded in the collection of the Johann Wilhelm, Elector of the Palatinate, in Düsseldorf, in the mid eighteenth century; Johann van Gool, *De nieuwe schouwburg der nederlantsche kunstschilders*, 2 vols. (1751), 2:530–31 and 544. The first paintings by Rubens entered the Düsseldorf collections under the Elector's grandfather, Wolfgang-Wilhelm, duke of Neuberg and Count Palatine (1578–1653). On his relations with Rubens and other patrons of the artist in the years 1610–20, see Max Rooses and Charles Ruelens, *Correspondance de Rubens et documents épistolaires*, 6 vols. (Antwerp, 1887–1909), 2:95 and 227–30. The Elector Johann Wilhelm expanded the Rubens holdings he had inherited, and bought more paintings by the artist, particularly at the Arundel sale in 1684; Barbara Gaehtgens, *Adriaen van der Werff* (Munich, 1987), 59–60. When the *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus* first entered the Pfalz-Neuberg collections is not known, although it would not surprise me if it were even in the lifetime of Duke Wolfgang-Wilhelm, whose claims to Jülich Berg were effectively secured by the French-Spanish alliance of 1615 (discussed below). I am presently conducting more research on this matter.
  51. For the intertwined erotic and political imagery in the *Galerie François Ier* at Fontainebleau (c. 1540–50), see the special issue of *Revue de l'art* 16–17 (1972), especially essays by André Chastel, W. McAllister Johnson, and Sylvie Beguin (which nonetheless leave many interpretative problems unresolved).
  52. Simon Bouquet, *Bref et Sommaire Recueil de ce qui a esté fait et de l'ordre tenue à la ioyeuse et triomphante Entrée de . . . Prince Charles IX de ce nom Roy de France en sa bonne ville et cité de Paris* (Paris, 1572), "Queen's Entry," p. 6; the entry is discussed by Frances Yates in *Astraea, The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1985), 127–48.
  53. Following Guillaume Budé (above, note 8), the most important proponent of this

theory in the later sixteenth century is Jean Bodin; Keohane, *Philosophy and State in France*, 67–82; R. W. K. Hinton, “Husbands, Fathers, and Conquerors,” *Political Studies* 15 (1967): 295; and Gordon J. Schochet, *Patriarchalism in Political Thought* (Oxford, 1975), 18–36. Bodin endorses the coercive powers of husbands and fathers, as well as kings, in *Les Six Livres de la république* (Paris, 1576), esp. book 1, chaps. 3, 4, and 5. See also Sarah Hanley, “Family and State in Early Modern France: The Marriage Pact,” in *Connecting Spheres: Women in the Western World, 1500 to the Present*, ed. Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quatert (New York, 1987), 53–63.

54. Bouquet, *Recueil*, 33–34; Yates, *Astraea*, 135–37.
55. Andrea Alciati, *Emblemata* (Augsburg, 1531), facsimile reprint in Andreas Alciatus, *The Latin Emblems Indexes and Lists*, ed. and trans. Peter M. Daly et al. (Toronto, 1985), no. 43.
56. Trans. Daly, *Latin Emblems*, n.p. On the dioscuroi as the constellation Gemini and their cult as patrons of seafarers, see *LIMC*, vol. 3, part 1, pp. 567 and 610. The constellation Gemini was thought to be particularly propitious for sailors in calming storms at sea.
57. On Alciati’s interest in Roman law and his relations with Budé, see David O. McNeil, *Guillaume Budé and Humanism in the Reign of François I* (Geneva, 1975), 21; and Paul Emile Viard, *André Alciat* (Paris, 1926), passim.
58. Pierre Ronsard, “Sur le navire de la ville de Paris protégé par Castor et Pollux, ressemblants de visage au Roy et à Monseigneur le Duc d’Anjou” (On the ship of the city of Paris protected by Castor and Pollux, whose faces resemble the king and monseigneur the duke of Anjou), quoted in Yates, *Astraea*, 136:

Quand le Navire enseigne de Paris  
 (France et Paris n’est qu’une mesme chose)  
 Estoit de vents et de vagues enclose,  
 Comme un vaisseau de l’orage surpris,  
 Le Roy, Monsieur, Dioscures esprits,  
 Frères et Filz du ciel qui tout dispose,  
 Sont apparus à la mer qui repose  
 Et le Navire ont sauvé de perilz.

[When the ship, insignia of Paris (Paris and France are one and the same), was engulfed by winds and waves like a vessel caught in a storm, the king and monseigneur—spirits of the Dioscuroi, brothers and sons of heaven which disposes of all—appeared above the sea, it subsided, and they saved the ship from peril. My translation]

59. Instructions by Ronsard in Paul Guerin, ed., *Registres des délibérations du bureau de la ville de Paris*, vol. 6 (Paris, 1892), 242–43.
60. That Rubens was familiar with the emblematic association of the Dioscuroi with the French royal family is further indicated by his allegory for the Medici Series of the *Majority of Louis XIII*, in which the Dioscuroi/Gemini are again presented as the protectors of France. In the Medici canvas the twins, pictured as the constellation Gemini, shine down on the ship of state, with Louis XIII at the tiller; *KdK*, 258. See Jacques Thuillier and Jacques Foucard, *Rubens’ Life of Marie de’ Medici*, trans. Robert Eric Wolf (New York, 1970), 89.
61. An emblem on the birth of Louis’s younger brother in 1607 shows the ship of France sailing beneath the adult figures of Castor and Pollux, who recline on clouds, with a star over each of their heads; anonymous engraving in the Cabinet des estampes, *Histoire de France* no. 88625, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.

62. On the marriage negotiations, see René Zeller, *La Minorité de Louis XIII*, 2 vols. (1892–97), 1:311–38, 2:1–62. The festivities of 1612 were designed to present the alliance as a personal triumph of Marie de' Medici and to suggest the superiority of her nuptial strategies to the bellicose policies of her predecessors:

O qu'il nous eust cousté de morts  
 O que la France eust fait d'efforts  
 Auant que d'auoir par les armes  
 Tant de Prouinces qu'en un iour,  
 Belle Reine, auecques vos charmes  
 Vous vous acquerez par amour!

[Oh, how many deaths it has cost us; oh, how France made efforts to acquire by war so many provinces, which you with your charms, beautiful queen, acquire by love in a day. My translation]

Laugier de Porchères, *Le Camp de la place royale, où ce qui s'y est passé . . . pour la publication des mariages du Roy et de Madame avec l'Infante et le Prince d'Espagne* (Paris, 1612), 60.

63. Zeller, *La Minorité de Louis XIII*, 2:12; Thuillier and Foucard, *Rubens' Life of Marie de' Medici*, 24. Rubens referred to the double marriages in two subsequent commissions connected with the French royal house: the *Marriages of Constantine and Fausta and of Constantia and Licinius* for the tapestry cycle on the life of Constantine for (or at least referring to) Louis XIII (c. 1622), and the *Exchange of Princesses* for the Medici cycle (discussed below). On the Constantine cycle, see John Coolidge, "Louis XIII and Rubens," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, ser. 3, 67 (1966): 271–85; and Held, *Oil Sketches*, 65–72. According to Thuillier and Foucard, originally four paintings in the Medici series were to be dedicated to the marriages (23). See also note 70 below.
64. *La Royale Reception de leurs maiestez très-chrestiennes en la ville de Bordeaux, ou le siècle d'or ramené par les alliances de France et d'Espagne* (Bordeaux, 1615); Otto Von Simson, *Zur Genealogie der weltlichen Apotheose im Barock* (Strasbourg, 1936), 352–56; Thuillier and Foucard, *Rubens' Life of Marie de' Medici*, 23–24 and 87–88.
65. On Rubens and his patrons, Albert and Isabella, see Christopher White, *Peter Paul Rubens* (New Haven, 1987), 55; and on the friendship between the Infanta Isabella and Marie de' Medici, see L. Klingenstein, *The Great Infanta Isabel* (London, 1910), 157 and passim. Rubens's diplomatic activity in Paris in the early 1620s involved advancing Isabella's policy of preserving the franco-hispanic alliance, and of dissuading the French from supporting the Dutch Republic in its war against Spain; C. V. Wedgwood, *The Political Career of Peter Paul Rubens* (London, 1975), 29.
66. Pollux et Castor dont les Mariniers prenoyent jadis augre de bonasse, s'ils les voyoyent tous deux ensemble, & de la tempeste quand l'un se monroit tout seul comme nous prenons l'union de ces deux grands Monarques, pour presage de la tranquilité de toute l'Europe.
- [Sailors used to take Pollux and Castor as an omen of smooth sailing if they appeared together, and of a storm if one appeared alone. So do we take the union of these two great monarchs as a presage of tranquility for all of Europe. My translation]

Laugier de Porchères, *Le Camp de la place royale*, 15. In a later passage in this same book, a poem compares the eyes of Marie to the Dioscuri, and here with unmistakable erotic innuendo (65):

Vos yeux (par qui l'amour plus fort que le respect  
 Faict dessus tant de coeurs de secrettes conquestes)  
 Sont des Astres iumeaux de qui le seul aspect  
 Des tumultes Francois appaise les tempestes.

[Your eyes (by which a love that is stronger than respect makes a secret conquest of so many hearts) are the twin stars, which, at their sole appearance, appease the storms of French tumults. My translation]

67. The print, attributed to Jan Ziarnko, is discussed in Thuillier and Foucard, *Rubens' Life of Marie de' Medici*, 23 and n. 58.
68. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. James Harle Bell et al. (Boston, 1969). For an illuminating précis and critique of Lévi-Strauss's argument, see Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna B. Reiter (New York, 1975), 157–210.
69. My translation of the legend on fig. 9.
70. It is worth recalling Held's commentary on Rubens's arrangement of pairs of figures in his canvas for the Medici series, *The Council of the Gods for the Reciprocal Marriages Between France and Spain*: "Since its central theme is that of union between two great countries, symbolized by the two joined halves of the globe itself, it is surely a striking feature of the composition that it is made up (except for the 'dark' side) of pairs of figures in various degrees of friendly association. . . . One of the basic themes of the work is union—established on many levels and in many different forms—between two peaceful partners"; *Oil Sketches*, 114. An early instance of this pairing strategy may well be the foursome in the *Leucippus*, even if one hesitates to claim that Rubens intended the circularity of the composition to intimate global union.
71. *La Réponse de Guérin à M. Guillaume et les résouissances des Dieux sur les heureuses alliances de France et d'Espagne* (Paris, 1612), 49 (my translation).
72. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, 1977), 1–38.
73. Alpers, "Manner and Meaning," 286. On the *Escorial Deposition*, see Martin Davies, *Rogier van der Weyden* (London, 1972) 223–26.
74. *KdK*, 256; Thuillier and Foucard, *Rubens' Life of Marie de' Medici*, 87–88; and Susan Saward, *The Golden Age of Marie de' Medici* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1982), 137–42. For the historical background, see note 64 above.
75. On the *Visitation* by Dirk Bouts, see Max J. Friedlander, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, vol. 3, *Dieric Bouts and Joos van Gent*, trans. Heinz Norden, commentary by Nicole Veronée Verhaegen (Leyden, 1968), 22 and 59.
76. A recurrent theme in the marriage festivities and epithalamia was the expectation of the royal offspring who would issue from the marriages (see note 77 below).
77. At least one marriage poem that foretells the satisfactions that await the brides as mothers does so by way of consoling them for the pain that, it acknowledges, they will initially suffer (even addressing them at one point as "Sabinoises").

Celles pour qui se fait tant de resiouissance  
 Feront souspirs de coeur: ietteront larmes d'oeil:  
 Psyche l'ame d'amour a son Hymen en deuil:  
 C'est grand deuil de quitter le lieu de sa naissance.

Filles, voyez, oyez: pour vostre cognoissance  
 Vous trouuerez Maris demy-Dieux trionfans,  
 Pour vos souspirs, suiets & royalle puissance:  
 Bref, pour vos pleurs & fleurs, ris & beau fruit d'enfans.

[Those for whom there is so much rejoicing will sigh in their hearts, and tears will gush from their eyes. Psyche, the soul of love, entered marriage in mourning. It is a great bereavement to leave the place of one's birth. Girls, look, listen: for your understanding, you will find husbands who are triumphant demigods; for your sighs, subjects and royal power; in brief, for your tears and marriage-flowers, laughter and the beautiful fruit of children. My translation]

Alaigres de Navières, *Les Alliances royales et reïouissances publiques précédentes les solennitez du mariage des enfans des plus célèbres et augustes Roys de l'Europe* (Lyons, 1612), 30.

The undress of the daughters of Leucippus is of course entirely appropriate in a mythological scene, and particularly an erotic one. But in contrasting the nude women to the attired men, perhaps Rubens also meant to call to mind ancient and traditional marriage customs wherein the bride is stripped of the clothes she brings from her parents' home before donning new garments provided by the husband. As marriage ethnologists have shown, the bride's divestiture of her old garments signifies her divestiture of her old roles as daughter and sister in her family of birth, prior to her induction into her new roles of wife and mother in the household of her husband. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "The Griselda Complex," in *Women, Family, and Ritual*, 225.

78. The pose of the higher sister duplicates the coital pose of Michelangelo's *Leda* (as Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., notes, in *Masterworks from Munich*, 107), thereby heightening the sense of the erotic expectation of the moment.
79. Jean Héroard, *Journal de Jean Héroard sur l'enfance et la jeunesse de Louis XIII*, ed. E. de Soulié and E. de Barthélemy, 2 vols. (Paris, 1868), 2:183–86.
80. It was not until 25 January 1619 that he ventured to bed with his wife again (and this time, as well, with great reluctance); *ibid.*, 2:229–30. See discussion in Pierre Chevalier, *Louis XIII: Roi cornélien* (Paris, 1977), 101.

## EDWARD SNOW

### Theorizing the Male Gaze: Some Problems

WHEN FEMINISM CHARACTERIZES "the male gaze"—and some of the best recent feminist analyses of visual material, in my opinion, have been concerned to do so—certain motifs are almost sure to appear: voyeurism, objectification, fetishism, scopophilia, woman as the object of male pleasure and the bearer of male lack, etc. Masculine vision is almost invariably characterized as patriarchal, ideological, and phallogocentric. Whatever in the gaze and its constructions escapes this definition is usually assimilated to issues of female spectatorship. "Male," even in the most sophisticated analyses, remains a fixed and almost entirely negative term. At times it seems, as Gaylyn Studlar has observed, that the female can function for the male *only* as an object of sadistic spectatorial possession.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps all powerful critical positions have to be built with partial truths. And