

This is the text of the scene in Tasso's play "Aminta" which provides the subject for the painting by Dughet. Apologies for the extensive and lascivious descriptions of Silvia's nudity. It is relevant, however, because the youth in the monogrammist's etching is also effectively naked. Dughet seemed a bit embarrassed by this and covers Silvia in a thin dress, contrary to the text of the play.

---

Act Three, Scene One

... Then when at last  
the spring was near, O Lord, we heard a cry,  
a woman's cry, and at the selfsame time  
we spotted Dafne beating both her hands.  
As soon as she had seen us there, she yelled  
and cried, "Ah, run, for Silvia is raped."  
When amorous Aminta heard her word,  
he, like a leopard, ran; I came behind.  
And there we saw the sweet young girl tied to  
a nearby tree, and nude as she was born;  
her hair composed the cords that bound her there.  
was wrapped around the tree. The lovely bands,  
which guarded once her virgin breast from view,  
became an agent of the rape, for both her hands  
were fastened by it to the cruel trunk.  
The plant itself participated too  
in making ties to bind — a supple limb  
became a bond, which tightly held each of  
her tender legs. There face to face with her  
we saw a satyr — villainous was he —  
and he had finished binding her by then.  
She tried to screen herself as best she could,  
but in the long run what could she have done?  
Aminta, with an arrow that he held  
in his right hand, rushed at the satyr then,  
just like a lion, and I meanwhile had filled  
my arms with heavy stones: he saw and fled.  
The satyr's flight allowed Aminta's eyes  
to gaze upon her lovely form. He raised his eyes,  
desiring, longing for those lovely limbs,  
which seemed so soft and white, as milk is seen  
to tremble gently in the rush-wove cups.  
I saw these sweet sensations in his face.  
Then softly he drew close to her and said,  
all modestly, "O lovely Silvia,  
forgive my hands, if they must dare too much  
in drawing near the sweetness of your limbs,  
for hard necessity moves them to act,  
I hope the favor fortune grants them now  
will not prove so displeasing to your heart."

CHORUS

Such words would soften hearts made out of stone.  
But what did she reply?

TIRSI

She spoke no word;  
disdainful and ashamed, she dropped her eyes  
to earth and struggling sought to cover up  
her smooth, soft breast, so far as possible.  
Then he came up and started to untie  
her golden hair, and all the while he said,  
“Such rustic trunks were never worthy of  
such knots so fair, for what advantage have  
the slaves of Love, if such a precious snare  
is shared in common with the common plants?  
O cruel tree, how could you so offend  
her tresses, which have honored you so much?”  
Then with his hands he freed her hand, yet in  
a way that seemed to indicate he feared  
that he might touch, yet that’s what he desired.  
He bent then that he might untie her feet,  
but Silvia had seen her hands were free,  
and spitefully she spoke to him and said,  
“You shepherd, touch me not; I am Diane’s.  
I can untie my feet all by myself.”

CHORUS

Can so much pride rest in the nymph’s hard heart?  
Ungracious answer to a gracious act!

TIRSI

He reverently drew himself aside  
and did not dare to raise his eyes to her,  
denying to himself his great desire  
to save her from denying it herself.  
And I, who hid, saw everything she did  
and I heard all and was about to scream,  
but I held back. Now hear a thing that’s strange.  
She freed herself though it was hard; once free  
she did not pause to say good-bye to him,  
but fled as fast as flees the running deer,  
and not because she was afraid of him,  
for well she knew Aminta’s great respect.

CHORUS

Why did she run away?

TIRSI

Because she put her trust  
in flight instead of in Aminta’s love,  
however chaste.

...