Metaphors of Body in Shakespeare's Epyllia: A Feminist-Cognitive Study

Azal Fadhil Kadhim Aljawazari[a] iD, Pyeaam Abbasi[b*] iD, Zahra Amirian[c] iD

[a] *PhD Candidate of English Lg and Lit, University of Isfahan, Iran.*
Email: fadhilazal@gmail.com

[b] *Associate Prof. of English Lg and Lit, University of Isfahan, Iran. Email: abbasi@fgn.ui.ac.ir*

[c] *Associate Prof. of Teaching English as a Foreign Lg, University of Isfahan, Iran.*
Email: z.amirian@fgn.ui.ac.ir

Abstract
Shakespeare is diverse in his use of metaphors in his works, especially in his epyllia where he imitates the Ovidian style of writing. However, he maintains a twist of theme and approach to the depiction of female characters. Using bodily metaphors, it is argued in this article that Shakespeare's bodily metaphors mark the author's deviation from both the Ovidian and his contemporary epyllia, in that he characterizes Lucrece and Venus differently. In *The Rape of Lucrece*, through metaphors of body, Lucrece becomes a different female character compared to those constructed by his contemporary writers. Instead of becoming speechless and revenge-seeking in the shape of an extraordinary figure, Lucrece remains a human and heroically changes the gender conventions and biases while bodily metaphors are diligently at work to evoke the sympathy of the readers. Also, in *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare applies metaphor to show how Venus can stay human and heterosexual while also a suitor of a male character like Adonis. The characterization of Adonis changes the image of the conventional lover as a masculine and strong suitor as well as the expected image of the beloved to be an exclusively delicate feminine, weak persona. The results of this study indicate that Shakespeare's epyllia are more faithful to the Ovidian model, compared to those practiced by his contemporaries, with the difference that he does not change the nature of his female characters; he inflects the idea through the manipulation of such rhetorical devices as bodily metaphors that bestow unity upon his poems in favor of a more realistic style. Shakespeare proves original in creating a new version of epyllion in which he advocates the reversal of gender roles in heterosexual relationships.

Introduction

George Lakoff and Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980)—a seminal book on metaphor research that argues that human conceptual system is metaphorically structured—and Mark Johnson in *The Body in the Mind* (1987) claim that human thought processes are regulated by bodily experiences. The schemas formed during our experiences trigger the thought process linked to our power of imagination. Imagination and interpretations (modes of thought) are caused by the physical world of surfaces, forces, and distances (Miall, 1997). In this context, Johnson contributed to the significance of the schemas that constitute imagination and

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then the human thought process. He tried to link the imagination with the physical world of human bodily experiences. Thus, these experiences involve the patterns which the earlier philosophers such as Bartlett, Kant, and Johnson named as schemata. These bodily experiences structure the thought at all levels. The idea of body metaphors has given birth to a number of different symbolic beliefs, drawing parallel links between the physical and the figurative human bodies. This metaphorical tradition has gradually evolved as writers have artistically linked the bodily metaphors with dramatic expression.

The world, "as we recognize it by the sense" is merely a phenomenon, behind which "there is a hidden reality which the normal human sense and experience cannot recognize" (Hejaz & Singh, 2020). Cognitive theories help us to probe deeper into Shakespeare's epyllia and achieve a more profound understanding of his thoughts since his poetic images, like all poetic devices, activate the cognitive abilities needed to understand the text more appropriately. The application of a cognitive reading of metaphors of the body in this article, will depict the mechanism by which the concept of body and its related metaphors and techniques of representation, for example blazon among others, were modified and refashioned by Shakespeare as the master of this form in Renaissance England. In other words, a cognitive reading of bodily metaphors in *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Venus and Adonis* will reveal the trajectory of the epyllion with regard to particular treatments of the body and their place in the cognition of the sixteenth century and the British version of epyllion.

Theoretical Framework

The recent development of cognitive poetics in the study of literature has issued forth new research potentials and possibilities that undertake the difficult task of analyzing literary studies. In an attempt to understand the mechanisms of the brain, more precisely the cognition, of human beings as authors, readers, and fictional characters of literary works, cognitive poetics often consults other disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, linguistics, artificial intelligence, sociology, as well as other social sciences. In a similar fashion, researchers have selected the linguistic orientation, particularly the discussions of metaphors with a focus on bodily metaphors, to study Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece.*

Cognitive poetics is a new discipline grounded in cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology – forming a large part of the cognitive science – and deeply rooted in older forms of literary analysis such as classical rhetoric (Stockwell, 2002). Cognitive poetics views literature "as a specific form of everyday human experience and especially cognition that is grounded in our general cognitive capacities for making sense of the world" (Gavins & S., 2003). The main principle of cognitive poetics lies in the concept and claim that the human mind is "embodied," that is, our "biological circumstances embody our thoughts and linguistic expressions" (Stockwell, p. 4). The key figures who contributed to cognitive poetics, mainly with respect to metaphors, include George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Mark Turner, and Elena Semino, to name a few.

Being known as a form of verbal expression, metaphor is a substantially significant and ubiquitous figure of language. Not only is it used by educated individuals such as philosophers, linguists, psychologists and poets, but it also can be employed by ordinary people in their everyday life and conversations with each other. Considering this ordinariness and the language of metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson argue that "metaphor is not merely in the words we use—it is in our very concept of an argument. The language of argument is not poetic, fanciful, or rhetorical, but rather literal" (1980, 455-56). Although in some way similar to simile, metaphor is different in the sense that in metaphor "the comparison is not expressed but is created when a figurative term is substituted for or identified with the literal term" (Johnson & A., 2012). However, metaphor in cognitive linguistics is defined as perception of one idea, or a conceptual domain, with regard to another. The Cognitive Theory of Metaphor was first initiated by Michael Reddy and then was developed mainly by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. The existence of metalinguistic apparatus in the framework of this theory makes it appropriate for the analysis of all kinds of metaphorical expressions such as functional or poetic metaphors. Metaphors generally contribute to our understanding of complex ideas in very simple literary terms. Put differently, they are mostly used to provide insight to abstract ideas and theories (Ferrando, 2017).

Metaphor, the core issue of cognitive linguistics has always been an issue of theoretical studies—especially cognitive linguistics— among scholars. Mostly, it has been associated with poetic language, and defined as the use of one expression to refer to a different concept. However, in cognitive poetics, metaphor has been subjected to analytical studies of language and thought. Since the rise of cognitive linguistics, the above-mentioned elements are defined not as tenor and vehicle, but as "source" and "target" respectively (Stockwell, 106). As Lakoff and Johnson argue, metaphor is not a matter of mere language; human thought processes and "our ordinary conceptual system" are fundamentally "metaphorical in nature" (5). This is to say, we understand everyday speech through these metaphors as indispensable parts of our daily discourse. Since "metaphorical expressions in our language are tied to metaphorical concepts in a systematic way," Lakoff and Johnson (2003) argue that "we can use metaphorical linguistic expressions to study the nature of metaphorical concepts and to gain an understanding of the metaphorical nature of our activities" (Lakoff and Johnson, 7). They postulate that metaphor is recurrent to the extent that several of our everyday expressions

are metaphorical. For instance, "TIME IS MONEY" is a conceptual metaphor, an explicit evidence of which is when we say "How do you spend your time these days?" or "You are wasting my time" (456). A number of critics believe that metaphor is a surface phenomenon and the real thing is the (metaphorical) concept or the concepts inside the conceptual system, that manage to "dissipate the reader's notice," as Coleridge argued, "among the thousand [metaphorical] outward images" (*Biographia,* 61) that bring about the multi-layered ignition of the reader's and the poet's cognition. Using cognitive poetic rules of metaphorical expressions, the present study will examine metaphors of the body in Shakespeare's works, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*.

Discussion

Similar to many Renaissance poets, who imitated the ancients in their style of writing and poetry with regard to the craft of decorum, the English poet, playwright, and actor, William Shakespeare, imitated Ovid's forms of writing in Book Ten of *Metamorphoses* where Ovid recounts the story of *Venus and Adonis*. It should be noted that Shakespeare often uses metaphors, particularly metaphors of the body, as essential figures of speech in his texts. In Macbeth, for instance, the face of a character is metaphorically compared to a book; characters read faces as if they are books.

Similarly, in *Venus and Adonis*, Venus's desires overcome her controlling character, and the abrupt change in her manner is outstanding through both the descriptions, metaphors, and reiteration of words in the poem. Subsequently, the reader cannot help but read these rationales as Venus's manipulative devices to persuade Adonis into reciprocation. Shakespeare also depicts Venus's solitude as shallow through a number of metaphors. Adonis is encouraged and urged to marry and have children for the next generation to continue the "natural cycle of life," which is a metaphor for "cultivation." This is another "manipulative rhetorical device," used to convey that the heterosexual couple resembles the Ovidian Venus and Adonis with a slight alteration of roles as represented in the tragic myth (Waudby, 2010).

The pursuit of a man by a woman also occurs in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. Moralists condemned this inversion as "salacious and corrupting," whereas poets of the time manipulated this type of erotic content intentionally and consciously (70). A stanza in Shakespeare's poem strikes the audiences' attention as provoking the idea of a masculine and patriarchal lover Venus desiring the sweet Adonis. In Shakespeare's other epyllion, *The Rape of Lucrece,* the use of "publisher" for Collatine's act of boasting about his wife's "rich jewel" implies that Lucrece, the target domain, is likened to valuable news, the source domain, to be published for an audience. Here lies the parody when the treasure which is kept hidden is more exposed to be revealed and obtained by the intruders. In this work, the reader is obliged to relate Lucrece with the jewel that is the target of Petrarchan idea of conquering a woman and through this metaphor, Shakespeare conveys his attitude toward the ironic situation of protecting a city in a way that attracts greater attention towards it.

In his epyllia, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, Shakespeare opposes his contemporary modes of writing to imitate Ovid in terms of content, theme, and subject matter. What Shakespeare did gains significance when the social milieu of his time is taken into consideration. English Renaissance was a cultural age of patriarchal codes and biased gender constructs. By following Ovid, therefore, Shakespeare enriched his stories and narratives by reversing conventional gender roles. Hence, he deviated from his contemporaries to create a new form of epyllion with a small twist from the ancient epyllia. In what follows, we will attempt to confirm this hypothesis in the two above-mentioned works of Shakespeare, where gender biases have been portrayed through the unequal treatment of genders in form of metaphorical representations and cultural practices.

Historically, the female body has been portrayed as mortal, sinful, and foolish, while the male body has, ideologically, been shown to be the true representation of reason, logic, and immortality. Yet in Shakespeare's epyllion, Venus undertakes a reversal of gender roles by invoking a "mythic realm of abstraction, personification and analogy" (Shohet, 2002), in which Adonis is ironically inscribed as an archetypal object of seduction. Shakespeare deconstructs this long-held belief by simply replacing some parts of such ingrained attitudes so much so that his metaphors help establish the revered idea of gender presumptions.

Classical epyllion, also called a minor epic, consists of nearly 500 lines in the dactylic hexametric form with the theme of forbidden love. According to Reilly (1953), epyllion is typically defined as a poem not "longer than an average book of Homer, [...] approximately 650 lines. Poems claimed to be epyllion vary in length. The total number of verses in some is uncertain because of the scanty remains" (p. 111). Masciadri (2012) discusses that Friedrich von Finkenstein placed a series of essays on bucolic poetry at the beginning of his translation of selected bucolic poems in 1789. Masciadri continues:

The expression "kleine Heldengeschichten" ("short heroic stories") is striking here, as it sounds like a tentative anticipation of what the term "epyllion" would later encompass. Only rarely, however, do we find the opposite of this differentiation; that is, an association of late antique epic poetry with Theocritus, on the basis that a certain affinity between the two genres can be seen. (17)

Jackson (1913) posits that epyllion – as a type of epic poetry – encompasses themes related to human life and experience with a distinction in its association with character rather than story. The difference between epyllion and the epic type lies in the fact that the epyllion encompasses "strictly narrative poetry" which is concerned with the experience common in human beings (38). However, "the epyllion is descriptive in character rather than narrative, the narrative elements being used to aid in setting forth the descriptive. The name by which this minor form of poetry is designated is rather of modern than ancient currency" (38)

The modern sense of epyllion, however, went through several changes and was thus defined differently. The modern term epyllion was designated to the works of Tilg (2012) postulates that the contribution made by Most is of the greatest importance due to its general attention to the term epyllion in its classical sense (Tilg, 30). He states, "this attestation can be found in Friedrich August Wolf 's (1759–1824) edition of the pseudo-Hesiodic Scutum, published posthumously by Karl Ferdinand Ranke (1802–1876) in 1840" (30).

Critics like Allen Jr (1940) argue that it is rather difficult to categorize works under the genre of epyllion, since the classification is vaguely determined and defined through the notes of few modern scholars. He argues that the history of epyllion is ambiguous and many scholars have attempted to elaborate on it, shed light on its types, and have rejected its classification as a literary form without further explication on the issue.

The main difference between the ancient epyllion and the modern version of epyllion lies in the feministic, sentimentalist, and innovative approaches toward the genre. According to Magnelli (2008), the most significant "Hellenistic" writers did more than just composing short poems, and instead tried their hand at making important innovation in their epyllia. Among these innovations, one can find "female voices, sentimentalism, the world of humble workers, or great heroes in everyday contexts" (Magnelli, 162).

Elizabethan poets like Marlowe, Lodge, and Shakespeare, however, refused to adopt the ancient metric form: "The Elizabethan poets rejected this form, usually opting instead for the more accessible iambic pentameter and heroic couplets (Marlowe) or six-line stanza, something like a reduced *strombotto*, rhyming *ab ab cc* (Lodge and Shakespeare)" (Waudby, 2010). They also maintained "characters' lengthy monologues and digression from the main storytelling," among the rhetorical devices "intrinsic to the genre." These works are generally much longer than their Greek or Roman models and "apart from these differences the term is quite apt and it is useful to bear in mind the classical models when reading the Renaissance work" (Waudby, 64).

Ovid's *Metamorphosis* (translated by Arthur Golding) greatly affected the writings of young Elizabethan poets like Shakespeare, Lodge, and Marlowe in their choice of subject matter and structure. An outstanding characteristic of the Elizabethan epyllion accounts for the gender traditions as broken, with the erotic implications opposing cultural conventions. A reversal of gender roles is observed in *Venus and Adonis* by Shakespeare and *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* by Beaumont in which a number of of Ovidian themes recur. The erotic theme, however, condemned by social and cultural norms, persists in these works. Another gender reversed artistry is adopted by Shakespeare in his *The Rape of Lucrece* in which a parody changes the audiences' response to the idea of degrading women.

The Rape of Lucrece

Mathis believes that *The Rape of Lucrece*, as a psychological investigation of Lucrece's and Tarquin's actions and the motivation beyond the latter, is "already richer in metaphors than *Venus and Adonis*" (Ellrodt, 2007). In *The Rape of Lucrece,* where desire is the "pilot" (p. 279), gender conventions are broken through a parody. Lucrece's physical and bodily presence, the target, is likened to a hidden treasure and priceless wealth, the source, in a safe place in the heart of the city, which is consistently the target of speculation. "LOVE IS A TREASURE" is a dominant conceptual metaphor in Shakespeare's sonnets as well. Collatine's beautiful mate is compared to a "priceless wealth" that the heavens bestowed on him:

> For he the night before, in Tarquin's tent,
> Unlock'd the treasure of his happy state;
> What priceless wealth the heavens had him lent
> In the possession of his beauteous mate; (*Lucrece,* lines 66-69)

In the following stanza, both the spiritual and psychical beauties of Lucrece are analogous to an invaluable treasure that must be at all times kept in a distant and faraway fortress out of the touch of the thieves:

> An expir'd date, cancell'd ere well begun:
> Honour and beauty, in the owner's arms,
> Are weakly fortress'd from a world of harms. (26-28)

Tarquin who wishes to possess the other and practice his will of desire and power, in his speech, reveals his attempt at self-persuasion to justify his villainous attack and will to, metaphorically speaking, conquer

the other. Here, a parody casts doubt on the side of the readers about the assimiliation of Lucrece's beauty to a treasure that must be kept reserved, as opposed to what actually happens when Collatine boasts about his wife's virtues and beauty to "thievish ears" of strangers, and makes the third party even more greedy to try to have a hand on the treasure:

> Or why is Collatine the publisher
> Of that rich jewel he should keep unknown
> From thievish ears, because it is his own? (33-35)

The next lines are devoted to a description of Tarquin's sneaky movement towards Lucrece's bed. Metaphoric descriptions of Lucrece's body, i.e. the target, conjure up the image of a city being conquered by trespassers and aggressors. The rapist Tarquin attacks the land, which is the source, and attempts at owning it:

> His hand, as proud of such a dignity,
> Smoking with pride, march'd on to make his stand
> [...] the heart of all her land;
> Whose ranks of blue veins, as his hand did scale,
> Left their round turrets destitute and pale. (*Lucrece*, 437-41)

Moreover, Lucrece's body and dignity are linked to the image of a city through what is called "associative priming"; the walls which fall prey to the predator war, are the source domain for the target which is Tarquin himself, the "rude ram." The concept of dominating Lucrece is "activated and it instantly primes all associated concepts to be activated in turn" (Cook & F., 2019). The parody is the similarity between the female gender and the city with walls as an object of combating and maintaining conflict with the enemies:

> His hand, that yet remains upon her breast,
> (Rude ram, to batter such an ivory wall!)
> May feel her heart, poor citizen, distress'd,
> Wounding itself to death, rise up and fall,
> Beating her bulk, that his handshakes withal. (463-67)

In the poem, the meta-fiction of the attacked Troy parallels *The Rape of Lucrece* through the metaphor of body where Lucrece is the city of Troy, attacked and besieged:

> And from the walls of strong-besieged Troy
> When their brave hope, bold Hector, march'd to field,
> Stood many Trojan mothers, sharing joy
> To see their youthful sons bright weapons wield; (*Lucrece*, 1429-32)

The main emphasis "falls not on Tarquin, who effectively disappears about a third of the way through the poem, but on the feelings and fate of the heroine" (Roe, 2006). Shakespeare criticizes the idea of feminine gender as coy and reserved, and, hence, instigating passion and desire in the hearts of the suitors. Hence, in order to initiate a reversal in his heroine's characterization, he depicts her as being concerned with the "perpetuation of patriarchal values and forms, including honor and fidelity, as well as with women's role as sexualized objects in the reproduction of patriarchal values" (Newman, 1994). In a number of successive lines, Lucrece is metaphorically associated with a "thing," that is, an object, in the sovereignty of the king in which his pride resides:

> Perchance his boast of Lucrece' sovereignty
> Suggested this proud issue of a king;
> For by our ears our hearts oft tainted be:
> Perchance that envy of so rich a thing (36-39)

The difference between Shakespeare and his contemporaries lies in his open display of violence, which is an imitation of the ancient epyllion, itself being filled with visceral and abrupt violent scenes. For instance, Lucrece's body, as the target domain, is sometimes likened to a poor and helpless bird prey or "fowl," as the source domain, which evokes sympathy in readers. To Lucrece's "Fowl," Tarquin plays the violent, savage, and wild "falcon" with his "crooked beak:"

> This said, he shakes aloft his Roman blade,
> Which, like a falcon towering in the skies,
> Coucheth the fowl below with his wings' shade,
> Whose crooked beak threats if he mounts he dies: (505-508)

The impropriety of decorum in Shakespeare's epyllia is opposed to what was considered the norm in the works of his contemporaries. Unlike his fellow Elizabethan poets, Shakespeare rejected the idea that the Ovidian tale entertained, i.e. a Petrarchan treatment of women, implying that the transformation of Lucrece into a monster is due to the violent nature of a woman in a misogynist type of attitude. Shakespeare, on the

other hand, believes that through the metamorphosis, Ovid takes revenge against a wrong doing that was committed to the female character. Therefore, he follows the Ovidian tale in revenging the victimized woman; however, instead of turning her into a monster, he makes the audience sympathize with her through her eloquent, rightful, and innocent speech.

Thus, Shakespeare in *The Rape of Lucrece* criticizes Ovid's lack of concern with the trauma experienced by Lucrece, and narrates the story in such a way that the reader sympathizes with her. Also, there is no direct female revenge undertaken by Lucrece as is the case in the Ovidian myth. The female victim does not lose her speech and remains highly eloquent throughout the poem. Rhetoric and cognition tend to become harnessed, together depicting Shakespeare's Lucrece as thinking with and through her language. When Lucrece cries "how Tarquin must be us'd, read it in me/ myself thy friend will kill myself thy foe,/ and for my sake save thou false Tarquin so" (lines 1195-1197), she invokes an ability similar to that of Brutus, "to give an activist, political reading to the text of the rape and her suicide, a reading that distinguishes itself from her father's and her husband's passive reaction" (Newman, 306). The apostrophes to Night, Opportunity and Time "reveal a great deal about Shakespeare's representation of rape" (304), and of women's desire to gain authority through a reversal of roles. Whereas the Ovidian female victim loses her ability to enunciate what has happened to her, Lucrece narrates the truthful story and allows the audience to understand text, performance and also her cognition, leaving the revenge to others before committing suicide. In other words, she does not transform to a heartless vengeful creature.

The content and the theme of the different approaches toward the feminine code remain common between Shakespeare and Ovid. Accordingly, the major difference between these two poets is how they handle the resolution: one with and another without the feature of transformation. Quay (1995) mentions that "Feminist scholars have been especially interested in *The Rape of Lucrece*, because of the extent to which Shakespeare develops Lucrece" (3) through frequently used internal monologues, and explores the cognitive impact the rape has on her. Employing metaphors of the body, Shakespeare keeps the image of Lucrece as a pure and chaste woman who remains the same till the end. This triggers the reader's rightful sympathy, describing her as a harmless lamb in the hands (claws) of a violent Owl. In continuity to the latter argument, Catherine Mackinnon argues that rape is a socially produced construct; in other words, it is a social position rather than a biological one, and could define what a woman is. Determining "gender categories as socially produced" might be startling, for "it assumes that woman is not a victim of rape because of any natural vulnerability, but because she is constructed by society as an object that is *able to be raped*" (Mackinnon, 651). The metaphors of the body and by raising sympathy, Shakespeare calls for a change of attitude toward this gender.

Venus and Adonis

Shakespeare's other epyllion, *Venus and Adonis*, is believed to have been written during the early phase of the closure of the theatres in London, and "as such a claim for poetic reputation." Shakespeare's love story between Venus and Adonis is rooted in Ovid's work as well: Venus literally plucks Adonis in the same way that Ovid's Orpheus turns to "immature males" and plucks "the flower of a boy's brief spring before he has come to manhood" (Waudby, 74). Moreover, the Ovidian Venus (grazed by Cupid's arrow) forgoes Adonis and roams in the mountains and forests to ensure Adonis's safety. Shakespeare's Venus is "depicted by an amorous harlot" (74). Additionally, when dead and transformed, the target domain which is Adonis turns into a flower, as the source domain, which is plucked in the end by Venus, whereby the flower metaphor refers to men who are the target of female love before reaching their maturity: "A purple sunrise, the compound adjective quickly identifies Venus as 'sick-thoughted' and likens her to a 'bold-faced suitor'" (74). As mentioned earlier, *Venus and Adonis* represents the reversal of gender in several ways. For instance:

Thou art the next of blood, and 'tis thy right:
Lo in this hollow cradle take thy rest,
My throbbing heart shall rock thee day and night:
There shall not be one minute in an hour
Wherein I will not kiss my sweet love's flower. (*Adonis,* lines 1184-88)

Here, a metaphor of the body for Adonis pictures him as analogous to a flower which can be plucked, furthering Shakespeare's consideration of depicting "ethics of relationship between man and his natural environment" (Khosravi, Vengadasamy, & Raihanah, 2017). Her chest is like a cradling bed on which Adonis is kept and endeared. By "out-patriarching patriarchy," Venus becomes the fierce lover in pursuit of a passive and recalcitrant beloved (Waudby, 91). She has a desire to be loved by a boy, while she is the one that is aggressive and persuasive. This prompts her to "enumerate her own charms, as she would wish a more experienced lover to manage for himself" (91). Venus, in a prolonged speech aimed at highlighting her own charming characteristics, lists sixteen negative attributes that might prevent someone from loving someone else, and hints to the fact that she does not possess any of them. She concludes: "But having no defects, why dost abhor me?" (*Adonis,* 138). The author describes her speech as "pleonastic display" which includes "hard[harsh]-favoured, foul, wrinkled, old, ill-nurtured, crooked, churlish, thick-sighted and 'lacking juice'

(II.133-8)" (Waudby, 91). In the following stanza, her speech becomes more conventional in that she presents an egotistical blazon of her own perfectness. Her speech becomes adulterated by her sexual interests and, in this particular line, could be considered as illustrating the "interdependence of economies of language and desire in Lacanian analysis" (Shohet, 2002). This trajectory suddenly changes her manner of speech to one full of blazon, "delineating her charms through unwrinkled brow, bright grey eyes to her skin in conventional sonnet-manner," while "her control begins to slip into a more lascivious tone, however, as her own sexual desires intrude into the self-display" (91). This is the result of her desire to be chased and loved by Adonis, which Shakespeare manipulates to be the desire of a heterosexual woman, a digression from the ancient epyllion of the incestuous Venus.

The Elizabethan poets and playwrights were quite fascinated by tales about gods and goddesses who fell in love yet could not pursue and achieve the object of desire they yearned for without going through terrible transformations in the process. Shakespeare, on the other hand, was highly enthusiastic about the manifestations of an agitated lover's mental and cognitive state under the thrashing stress of emotion and desire. In a tradition in which the discourse of love is mainly masculine, and in a tradition whose love poetry captures "all furtive and lustful gazes resting on the female" (Velasco, 1996), Shakespeare undertakes the manipulation of such conventionality, and playfully reverts the stereotypical role of the female as the eternal receiving end of unquenchable desire.

Adonis claims that he does not lament love but lust. Shakespeare describes Venus's embraces as "the attack of a wild beast" which promotes Adonis to attempt to kill the boar as his psychological projection of Venus (81). Kahn's psychoanalytical interpretation of Venus's reflection is that there is a "grotesque parallel" between Venus and the boar, as Adonis in fear of Venus's devouring him tries to overcome this fear by hunting and killing the boar. Adonis tries, Kahn (2007) states, "to destroy the boar so that Venus will not destroy him" (81). And the final section of the poem focuses on Venus's grief and how she suffers through an unresolved love. This is presented "in a series of antithesis which are introduced by the excessive alliteration of paroemion" (81). Shakespeare's Venus is the reversed image of the patriarchal male hunter, and according to Dubrow (2019)

One sense in which this speech is characteristic is that the goddess of love is manipulating language to her own ends. Attempting to entrap Adonis verbally no less than physically, she is recasting the patriarchal image of the hunt into a more enticing form. She claims that she is not in fact a hunter at all, another predator whom the deer should evade but rather a park it should enjoy. Hunter's kill, parks nourish; hunters are by definition aggressive, while parks are as unmistakably passive. (22)

The sexual role-reversal, as witnessed in the poem, "entails a new perception of the conventional norms that govern love poetry and its conceptualization in the Renaissance tradition and the nature of female desire" (Velasco, 276). Thus, the experience of desire, leads to the formation of moments of burning madness and "highly irrational excitement, spoiling the perception of reality and becoming, then, wild and violent" (275). In the next stanza, Adonis's eyes are likened through a bodily metaphor to a glaring sun whose ray "darts" toward Venus's heart burning her with a flame of earthly desire, love and passion:

> The sun that shines from heaven shines but warm,
> And lo I lie between that sun and thee:
> The heat I have from thence doth little harm,
> Thine eye darts forth the fire that burneth me;
> And were I not immortal, life were done,
> Between this heavenly and earthly sun. (*Adonis,* 193-98)

As Adonis continues to resist and refuse Venus's demands of passionate love-making, Venus more frequently draws an analogy between Adonis and the dead by means of uncultivated metaphoric objects and creatures. It could be argued that Shakespeare uses metaphors to overcome the inability of expressing desire with the conventional language, and allow the metaphors to be freely associated in the reader's cognition as "sources" and "targets." Here, Adonis's dimples as elements of physical and bodily beauty are metaphorically compared to caves and pits which are almost unsightly elements in nature:

> These lovely caves, these round enchanting pits,
> Open'd their mouths to swallow Venus' liking (247-48)

There exist in the epyllion a number of instances where Venus's insatiable and insurmountable desire toward Adonis, and her chaotic state of mind is substantiated and externalized, among which one of the most memorable is the confrontation with the throbbing steed, whose

> Nostrils drink the air, and forth again,
> As from a furnace, vapours doth he send,
> His eyes, which scornfully glisters like fire,
> Shows his hot courage and his high desire. (273-276)

This raw intensity, and this unnatural vision of the horse could only find its origin in the lover's stressed mind as the result of the materialization of desire, whose association with a beast of such power and grandeur is potential of being primed with a web of similar metaphors within the reader's and the poet's cognitive mapping skills.

Another example shows how Venus as a female character is more transparent about her desires than the male character. A metaphor likens Venus to a predator and a bird of prey through whose kisses, she threatens that Adonis will be devoured as a quarry:

Shaking her wings, devouring all in haste,
Till either gorge be stuff'd or prey be gone: (57-58)

Another difference between the ways Shakespeare depicts Venus in comparison with Ovid's female character lies in human against supernatural aspects of Venus. Shakespeare's Venus is still human while Ovid's is extraordinary and beast-like. According to Eigler (2012)

The themes comprise mythological erotica Pathemata and psychologize erotic adventures of gods and humans. In the love story of Venus and Adonis, Venus acts like a human being, whereas the Myrrha episode stages a female character in an extraordinary way, to whom Helvius Cinna's neoteric epyllion Zmyrna is already dedicated. It appears as if Ovid stages Orpheus as a neoteric who composes his obligatory epyllion. (363)

Regarding the difference between Shakespeare's epyllion and those of his contemporaries, Jacobson (2014) examines "how an associative early modern discourse that included Arab and Turkish imports can be put to work to translate, adapt, and remediate Latin poetry in order to revise and resolve the violent conflicts and tragedies represented by Ovid in his *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*" (87)

In *Venus and Adonis*, gender roles are reversed and a lack appears in the character of Adonis. Venus's report of the death of Adonis conveys a cold and dull image. "By denying his corporeal, rosy presence and encasing him in the fantasy of her own poetic diction, Venus condemns Adonis to the same fate as the objectified lover of contemporary sonnets" (Waudby, 79).

According to Gold, Goodhart, and Lehnhof (2018), Venus's frustration is of the realization of the reversal situation, whereas Adonis seeks power over the body and soul of the beloved; here it is Venus, the woman, who undertakes such patriarchal role. They state

In 'The Frustration of Desire and the Weakness of Power in Venus and Adonis,' Sean Lawrence brings Levinas's critique of representation and his description of the erotic relationship to bear on '*Venus and Adonis*,' one of Shakespeare's little-studied narrative poems. The recalcitrance of the Other to power explains not only why Venus fails to win the love of Adonis, but also why she must fail, inevitably. (31)

Moreover, they posit that contrary to many critics, Lawrence's Levinasian study analyzes Shakespeare's Venus as the protagonist in pursuit of the love of a man and power over his will. They go on to say that "where recent critics have tended to understand most relations as relations of power, a Levinasian reading allows us to see how Shakespeare dramatizes the failure of power in the frustration of Venus's desire" (31).

Venus knows that Adonis is young and immature yet wishes he were an experienced young man. Here, Venus wishes that Adonis would go through a self-growth through the emotional experience, metaphorically in becoming a shaped and finished garment, although this is mere fantasy and Adonis would remain an unfinished garment:

Who wears a garment shapeless and unfinish'd?
Who plucks the bud before one leaf put forth? (415-16)

In the second line, in a parallel analogy, Adonis is like a bud which has not yet put leaves forth. Venus's inability to change Adonis to a full grown man, which is a vain desire, results in her regret and frustration. Shakespeare's use of bodily metaphors and the explicit description of Venus's body the same way Adonis's body is described, is the sign and the testimony of Shakespeare's attempt to reverse the Elizabethan decorum of gender roles.

Opposed to Venus's brutal attitudes stands Adonis's innocence which does not conform to conventional gender dynamics, either. Here, the theme of incest is also vaguely referred to by the fact that Venus is an elder woman in pursuit of a boy that resurrects the story of Adonis's mother Myrrha. Venus's predatory love for the innocent Adonis is associated with incest. Adonis's appearance and manner are portrayed through the myth as those of a more feminine, not masculine, figure. This is while his lover, Venus, plays the role of a cruel, brutal, and lustful pursuer, the characteristics which were mostly associated with patriarchal sense of a masculine figure. There is a conventional delicacy in his feminine behavior. Furthermore, the descriptions of his appearance bring to mind "the youthful androgynous beauty" that was the subject of admiration in Ancient Greece and Renaissance Europe (653).

It is argued that Adonis's resistance against Venus implies his inflexibility and desire to "preserve his own sense of identity." Among the ancients, the concept of mutability was promoted which renders Adonis's desire as unnatural and nonconforming. Adonis wishes to define his path to maturity within the hunt, whereas for Venus it is the "carnal knowledge" that will do the deed, a conflict that results in the fact that Adonis does not reciprocate Venus's intensifying passions. Adonis prefers the man-bonding relationships over the "amatory dalliance" with feminine passion and remains unmoved, even with the "blandishments" and "hackneyed invitations" (78). Adonis is depicted falling on Venus in an accident when on his way to hunt bores, an incident which also associates Venus with the replaced hobby of Adonis, i.e. hunting bores not chasing women. In the following stanza, Adonis's heart (the target domain) is compared to a "flint," or a hard rock (the source domain), for being stone-hearted and rejecting Venus's affections:

> Never did passenger in summer's heat
> More thirst for drink than she for this good turn.
> Her help she sees, but help she cannot get;
> She bathes in water, yet her fire must burn:
> "O! pity," 'gan she cry, "flint-hearted boy,
> 'Tis but a kiss I beg; why art thou coy? (91-96)

It seems that Adonis deems Venus's romantic advances as relatively artificial, saying: "I hate not love, but your device in love" (788). This shows his emphasis on the nature of true love and its moral connotations which he finds lacking in Venus. *Venus and Adonis* becomes a work dealing with the difficulties of "harmonizing physical and rational love, and Shakespeare, by splitting Adonis's metaphorical equivalent—reason—from its embodiment in Adonis" (Greenfield, 1994), depicts the challenges between the rational love and the sensual. In the following verses, Adonis rambles on about the distinction between true love and lust, giving a moral stature to the former:

> Love comforteth like sunshine after rain,
> But lust's effect is tempest after sun;
> Love's gentle spring doth always fresh remain,
> Lust's winter comes ere summer half be done;
> Love surfeits not, lust like a glutton dies;
> Love is all truth; lust full of forged lies. (799-804)

In the Elizabethan period, convention dictated that women remain reserved and hide their sexuality – an imposed image contrary to ancient cultural codes and norms. Shakespeare, however, refuses to follow his contemporaries in that his female characters like Venus are depicted as having no problem expressing their sexual desires, a notion that was considered improper according to the Elizabethan decorum. He situates the reader and his cognition in an "erotics of engagement" (Cook, 9), where Venus is openly desirous of Adonis and pursues him much like the Ovidian Venus, which shows how Shakespeare masterfully modelled Ovid while also deviating from his contemporaries to highlight his point of view regarding female sexuality and its expression.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that unlike Ovid's *Metamorphosis* in which the female character is transformed into a heartless revenge-seeking monster who devours the rapist and ruins him, Shakespeare's Lucrece remains innocent and maintains her human features. Moreover, Ovid's character becomes speechless, muted, and inarticulate as a result of the traumatic experience, whereas Shakespeare's Lucrece remains articulate and eloquent and, instead of taking revenge by herself, leaves it to the soldiers and her husband to claim back the lost honor. Instead of transforming Lucrece to a monster, Shakespeare, through the metaphors of the body, uses the comparison between Lucrece's body and a city to be protected followed by an immediate raising of sympathy that leads to the negative attitude of the audience. Similarly, in *Venus and Adonis*, gender reversal happens in the explicit and obvious passionate pursuit of the male lad by the female lover, as opposed to the words and concerns of Shakespeare's contemporary critics and moralists. Shakespeare's use of bodily metaphors highly charged with aggressive eroticism revived the ancient erotic aspect of the epyllion against the poetic practice of his age. Nevertheless, Shakespeare diverges from both Ovidian epyllion and contemporary ones by creating a more female-friendly plot resolution. His female characters including Venus and Lucrece do not undergo transformation like their Ovidian counterparts; nor are they similar to female characters in Shakespeare's cotemporaries in a patriarchal sense and perspective toward femininity.

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