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BESTIA ET AMOR: EQUINE EROTOLOGY IN SHAKESPEARE'S *VENUS AND ADONIS*

Abstract: *In his narrative poem* Venus and Adonis *(1593), Shakespeare advances two horses, a "jennet" and a "courser," as a means of commenting on human sexuality. The poem's equine terminology also gestures to commonplaces of sixteenth-century horsemanship. Shakespeare appropriates the literary symbol of the horse as representative of human sexuality in order to comment on contemporary political/national relations. Gender and animality in* Venus and Adonis *prove entirely congruent with the poem's classical republicanism. Examining Venus's almost-Spanish imperialism reveals that, more than just being aware of hippological discourse in the classical tradition, Shakespeare was incisively cognisant of the equestrian rule that the best manège was not at all about dominance. This paper traces the etymology of Shakespeare's equine terminology within the context of English-Spanish relations in the late sixteenth-century.*

Keywords: *horses, animal studies, hippology, equestrianism,* Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare*.

Introduction

William Shakespeare's first publication was a poem entitled *Venus and Adonis* (1593), which detailed Venus pleading to the youthful and beautiful boy Adonis to "love" her.[1] In detailing these desires, Shakespeare turns the image of the horse into the epitome of hetero-normative sexual drive. He accomplishes this seemingly random and dissociated metaphor through Venus' *epideixis*, or language of praise, of the horses' mating rituals, urging Adonis to follow the same behaviour. This hyper-sexualised characterisation of the horse pervades Shakespeare's later plays with minor transformations, especially in *The Tragedy of Othello: the Moor of Venice* (1603)— with the appearance of the Barbary horse, a north African breed, as embodiment of the African protagonist Othello—and reappears also in Shakespeare's Sonnets 50 and 51 (1609). What is most striking about the equine terminology in *Venus and Adonis* however is the stark connection between gender and animality. With an almost fabular quality in the poem, the Shakespearean horse makes equivocal the ideas of *amor* and *bestia*, connecting a disparity not just between "man" and "animal," but also between the non-human wild and human sexuality.[2]

However, the interconnectedness Shakespeare creates among these dichotomies is not a unique concept. Rather, Shakespeare draws his inspiration from two fields, or axes, as I shall refer to them. The primary field is a vertical axis, one that connects Shakespeare up to his literary predecessors and even sources of inspiration, comparing his works to those of Virgil, Ovid, and Petrarch. This vertical axis allows us to witness Shakespeare's awareness and sometimes altera-

[1] *Love* for Shakespeare was based on a complex literary tradition. It is the marriage of the Petrarchan ideal of *Laura* and Ovid's *amor...habienda,* the "love of having" that spurs Apollo and Pan to justify their respective rapes. Due to this complexity, my paper will use the word *amor* over "love." For more information on this complex notion of *amor*, please see Enterline's *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare*.

[2] *Bestia*, as used in this paper, is much more specific than the modern "animal." In this paper, it refers to mammalian quadrupeds that typically reside in the woods. This specification exists to illustrate to those unfamiliar with critical animal studies that one cannot read a bird in the same way that one reads a canid. Mammals in the woods breed a certain level of foreign, almost supernatural mystique in Elizabethan England. For more information on this idea of *bestia* and the Wild, please see Roberts' *The Shakespearean Wild: Geography, Genus, and Gender*.

tions of previous stories. This phenomenon is most apparent through the lens of *Venus and Adonis*. Shakespeare was incredibly cognisant of literary tradition, and he strove to make his own mark on that tradition as well. The second axis is horizontal, connecting Shakespeare to both his contemporaries and the culture of the late sixteenth century in England. With this axis, we see that Shakespeare also drew material from the world around him to further push literary tradition in new and sometimes startling directions. With this concept of the two axes (based on Ferdinand de Saussure's theories of semiotics, which detail the historical study as a diachronic or vertical axis compared to a horizontal, more cultural meaning; Harris and Komatsu: 125a), one can read Shakespeare's *bestia et amor* not just as a creative connection between animals' and human sexuality but also as the product of a vast literary and cultural awareness.

Most modern scholarship on critical animal studies with Shakespeare centres around Shakespearean drama, noting particularly the use of animals as anthropomorphic characters (as in the case of Bottom from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600)) and allegory (such as the animal omens in *Macbeth* (1606)).[3] However, exceptionally little research actually deals with animals in Shakespeare's poetry. The horse is certainly one of his most common animal images, and it is not a symbol devoid of authorial intent. As described by the two axes model above, the horse in this poem (*Venus and Adonis*) exemplifies Shakespeare's knowledge of literary tradition and contemporary culture by demonstrating his manipulation of the horse as a sexual metaphor for irrepressible desire incarnate. Still, most studies of the poem manage to avoid such analysis of the horses.

The existent research of horses in *Venus and Adonis* is often restricted to reductive allegorical studies, arguing that the horse is used merely as a representation of how Adonis should behave or that it is simply pastoral imagery invoked in the poem. C.S. Lewis, in his highly influential volume *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century,* brushed off the horse imagery thusly, "We get, with spirited pleasure, glimpses of real work-day nature, in the spirited courtship of Adonis's horse or the famous stanza about the hare" (Lewis: 498). In this way, Lewis performs only a specious analysis of the horse imagery present. Another scholar of Lewis' time, Robert Miller, looks more closely at the horse as a potential parody of courtly love. However, his base acknowledgment is still quite similar to Lewis'. "But if the horses are parallel to Venus and Adonis in a significant number of respects, the technique must yet be termed 'conditional parallelism.' That is, the Courser does not do what Adonis does; he does what Adonis *would* do *if* he were the kind of man Venus wishes him to be" (Miller, "Venus, Adonis, and the Horses": 255). This idea of the horse narrative as a pure fable or moral Venus is employing does not address many of the other multiple layers that lace the account, especially the intense gendering, intentional word choice, and political allegory throughout the poetic lines.

Shakespeare appropriates the literary symbol of the horse as representative of human sexuality in order to comment on contemporary political/national relations. Gender and animality in *Venus and Adonis* prove entirely congruent with the poem's classical republicanism. Examining Venus's almost-Spanish imperialism reveals that, more than just aware of hippological discourse in the classical tradition, Shakespeare was incisively cognisant of the equestrian rule that the best *manège* was not at all about dominance. This paper traces the etymology of Shakespeare's equine terminology within the context of English-Spanish relations and animal gendering in the late sixteenth-century.

Gender and Animality

Shakespeare's jennet and courser in *Venus and Adonis* are gendered animals, with the courser described in masculine imagery and the jennet in feminine imagery. As Miller mentioned earli-

[3] My cursory look at animal allegorical studies is not meant to be dismissive in any way. Especially when animals are used as omens in literature, they are often crucial devices of plot development. To see more in-depth scholarship of Shakespeare's omens, please see Harmer or Moore.

er, the horses do not and cannot exist in this poem without some sense of gender. If that were the case, the horses would be vague, faceless, and sexless beasts. However, as their genders are defined by their behaviour and epithets, readers can see the parallel Miller discussed with courtly love. Through the discourse of animal imagery with which Shakespeare is conversing, *Venus and Adonis* is able to blur the line between gendered humans and nameless animals. Much of this gendering is passed down from the authors and poets Shakespeare most often imitated.

One of Shakespeare's greatest and most drawn-from tutors was Ovid. Dr. Enterline, a scholar in sixteenth-century schooling, has said of Shakespeare's likely school, "...sixth-form boys concentrated on memorising and imitating Vergil and Ovid. By 1612....the 'Schoole Authores' boys were to have 'translated' or to 'have in hand' in the classroom....end with 'Ovid's Metamorphosis' and 'Vergil'" (Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom*: 75). While it may seem to some a logical fallacy to assume that Shakespeare had the same education, many of Shakespeare's works, especially *The Taming of the Shrew* (1594), include blatant references and quotes from various Ovidian works, including *Ars Amatoria* (2 CE) and the *Metamorphoses* (8 CE). Shakespeare's earliest narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), are calls to Ovid, as Shakespeare rewrites the Ovidian versions of these two legends. These invocations reinforce Shakespeare's schooling tradition of not just imitation but also of his attempt at betterment.[4]

In Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid gives instructions to both men and women on the art of love. Many of his explanations utilise and rely upon animal imagery, imagery onto which Shakespeare firmly latches. In the first book of *Ars*, Ovid says, "Mollibus in pratis admugit femina tauro: / Femina cornipedi semper adhinnit equo" 'In soft meadows lows the the heifer to the bull: / the mare always neighs to the hooved steed' (Ovid, *The Art of Love*: I. 279–280).[5] Ovid's mare is a horse that lusts and chases, sounding off a desiring plea. Ovid continues the imagery in the second book: "In furias agitantur equae, spatioque remota / Per loca dividuos amne sequuntur equos" 'Into a fury the mares are roused, and follow the stallions from far and remote places and through streams that divide them' (X. 477–478). Shakespeare references this particular passage of *Ars* in *Venus and Adonis* when Adonis' steed finds a younger and "lusty" horse.

> He [the steed] looks upon his love and neighs unto her;
> She answers him as if she knew his mind:
> Being proud, as females are, to see him woo her,
> She puts on outward strangeness, seems unkind,
> Spurns at his love and scorns the heat he feels,
> Beating his kind embracements with her heels. (Shakespeare: lines 307–312)

Here, we see Shakespeare lightly twist Ovid's genderising of love, as Shakespeare's version becomes male chasing female. However, the association between lust and horses remains present and strong.

One twist in meaning, however, comes about through the goddess Venus. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Venus is the opposite of Nature, if not the opposite of the Wild. "Non movet aetas nec facies nec quae Venerem movere, leones saetigeresque sues oculosque animosque ferarum" 'Neither Time nor Countenance nor that which moves Venus move lions and bristled boars and the eyes and minds of beasts' (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*: X. 547–549). Ovid pits Venus against Diana, making Venus the goddess of heterosexuality with Diana being the goddess of non-heterosexuality, if not abstinence itself. However, in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura,* "Venus is the inspiration of all nature, and nothing can come into existence without her. Indeed, Venus is synonymous with the very nature she inspires: she is life" (Taormina: 14). In this way, Shakespeare combines the Ovidian Venus with the Lucretian one, allowing Venus to control and manipulate nature. Once Adonis tries to escape

[4] In Tudor education, students entered a setting of extreme pressure, being called upon for what would be now deemed as nearly impossible exercises. "In such a setting, a boy's choice is stark: imitate 'some piece of an author' well or be beaten" (Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom:* 35).

[5] All translations in this paper are my own.

Venus on his horse, a mare suddenly appears, undoubtedly at Venus' will. "But, lo, from forth a copse that neighbors by, / A breeding jennet, lusty, young and proud, / Adonis' trampling courser doth espy" (Shakespeare: lines 259–264). The horses in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* become incarnations of Venus' hetero-normative desired relationship.

Another interesting point on Shakespeare, Ovid, and their fascination with horses is that horses also become connected to a silencing. While the horses in both Ovid and Shakespeare are capable of neighing throughout their respective narratives, all the horses come into being through the silencing of a character. Failure of speech is certainly a general characteristic of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: One Ovidian scholar has noted, "In Ovid's rhetorical view of life, discourse creates identity, and correspondingly, the failure of speech exemplifies the fact that the person transformed can no longer create his own identity or his present reality but becomes captured in the materiality of natural force" (Solodow). What happens with Ovid's horses is equally interesting. Book II of the *Metamorphoses* becomes a book about horses, one could argue. It starts with the myth of Phaeton struggling to keep his father's horses in command and leads to the tale of Ocyroe, a centaur prophet. After giving a prophecy, the centaur is turned by the gods into a full horse (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*: II. 633–675). One Ovidian scholar notes that "[h]er loss of human voice in this new manifestation will from now on be her defining characteristic" (Heath: 346). In this manner, Ocyroe loses her identity to become a full horse. In *Venus and Adonis*, Adonis finds himself incapable of using speech to dissuade Venus. In his frustration, he seeks escape. At his expense however, the entire dialogue is stopped so the horses can chase each other. Thus, while the horses start their own sub-narrative, they put an immediate halt on the previous narrative. This silencing ultimately becomes the antithesis to the main plot. What Venus cannot do with words alone, the mare can do without using *any* words. However, rather than this contradiction implying that silence is more productive, it actually explicates further on the *bestia et amor* connection, showing that, at least through Venus' eyes, humans should have a level of sexual desire almost equatable to that of the animal realm, with men chasing down their hearts' desires.

Looking more closely at Shakespeare's Venus, we witness this monstrous and monolithic figure, one with whom not even the reader wants to lay. Early in the poem, the narration describes her through Goliath imagery:

> "Being so enrag'd, desire doth lend her force
> Courageously to pluck him from his horse
> Over one arm the lusty courser's rein,
> Under her other was the tender boy." (Shakespeare: lines 29-32)

She is a controlling figure, taking what she wants with force if rhetoric and argumentation fail her. Her realm of greatest strength is when she can tease and lure the men as opposed to having to convince them herself. Most of the poem is ultimately about Venus' insistence that Adonis become part of her generative process. However, when he refuses, she (with her control of nature) sends the boar after him. Through his death, Adonis becomes a flower and is made to join the generative process of nature regardless of his will. The jennet and the courser act as an elegant representation of the generative process Venus expects from people, and perhaps also the generative process that Shakespeare is writing against due to its strict rules and orders.

Still, before entering the realm of the political and social analysis of the horses, let us examine hippology in sixteenth-century England and see how that might affect even the gendered reading of Shakespeare's horses.

Shakespeare's Contemporary Horse Culture

While Shakespeare was clearly aware of literary tradition around the horse, he was also very much influenced by real horse culture in the late sixteenth century. The terminology he employs in *Venus and Adonis* is both sharp and astute and generates new questions altogether about how we are to read the horse in Shakespeare's poetry. Furthermore, with the specific nature of the

horses' descriptions, readers see Shakespeare being much more than a poet and transforming into quite the horseman himself. By examining the etymology of the names of the two horses of *Venus and Adonis*, readers can see whole new layers to the horses in the poem.

Starting with the jennet as it has the richest or, at least, the most complicated etymology, the Oxford English Dictionary defines the jennet as a "small Spanish horse" (*Oxford English Dictionary,* under "jennet"). Initially, my research into the jennet and its history seemed to show that the jennet was actually a generic term for an arbitrarily defined horse at the time. I pored over Italian equestrian manuals and only sparingly noticed the jennet ("*ginecti*") associated with Spain.[6] Then, I went through the Early English Books Online (EEBO) database and found almost five hundred records of the word "jennet" in its various forms (*ginet, genet, gennet, jennet, ginnet, gynnet, genett, genette, ganet, gennett, iennet, iennette, ienete, ienate, iannet, ionet, ienet,* and *ienett*). Roughly a hundred of these records were published in the sixteenth century.

A few of the records gave their own captivating answers to the question of the jennet's definition. In *Huloets Dictionarie* (1573)*,* John Higgins includes one entry on the jennet, and, interestingly, it is the "Genet of Spayne, or Spanysh Horse. Astur equus, Asturco,nis" (Higgins: 240). I did not make anything of the "Astur" until I saw it appear again in a dictionary from 1542: "*Astur equus,* a spanyshe horse....*Asturco, conis,* a geldyng or genet of Spayne" (Elyot, under "Astur"). The Oklahoma State University Department of Animal Science has done research on the horses of the Asturian region of Spain. They give the following brief history of the Asturcón:

> "Centuries ago the existence of a small horse breed originating in the northwest of Spain was recorded. The Romans referred to these horses as asturcons and thought well of them - and they were popular with the French during the Middle Ages. Pliny (23-79 A.D.) described them as a small breed that did not trot, but moved in an easy gait by alternately moving both legs on one side.
>
> The ambling gait was natural for this small horse, and done in such a way that it gave a comfortable ride. As a result, they become popular as ladies' mounts. Known as palfreys in England, they were called haubini in France, a word that later became hobbye and eventually hobby horse. Much of this blood was taken to Ireland, where the "Irish Hobby" was greatly admired." (Oklahoma State University)

This history shows uncanny connections between the Asturcón and the sixteenth century jennet. Out of the hundred sixteenth century records of the jennet, over forty of them directly referenced Spain, fifteen referenced the horse being small, ten mentioned it being ambling, and two specifically equated the jennet with the Asturcón.

Now, the jennet is still not a *precise* or even *equestrian* term for the time. It was a loose, general, and, more importantly, cultural term that mostly stays out of Italian and British horse manuals, and usually only appears when discussing horses of different nationalities in general. Shakespeare's use of the term would not have implied a specific horse to a lot of people, possibly despite many dictionaries equating it with the Asturcón. However, the connection between the jennet and Spain may be strong enough for the general population to have imagined a horse that originated in Spain. The reasoning behind this is actually sound when one invokes recent research in semantics. One focus in semantics is the potential relationships between two nominals. One such relationship is hypernym-hyponym. A *hypernym* can be defined as a nominal that is a larger category, such that each individual item in that category is a *hyponym* for the overarching hypernym. An example would be that "jennet" is a hyponym for "horse," which is a hypernym ("Relations"). However, it is important to realise that not only are certain words semantically similar, but hypernym-hyponym pairs naturally have different connotational psychology. In this way, when sixteenth-century English people heard of

[6] I had started researching equestrianism in the sixteenth century through Italian horseman manuals first because Italy was one of the forerunners of equestrian training, breeding, and veterinary science at this time. Some of these notable equestrians were Federico Grisone, Federico Caprilli, Cesare Fiaschi, Claudio Corte, Giovan Battista, and Marco de Pavari.

a "Spanish horse," there probably was not an immediate connection with "jennet." However, it is extremely likely that upon hearing the word "jennet," they imagined a Spanish horse as that became the dominant cultural and literary context of the word, despite the generality with which the word was ascribed in many of the popular Italian horse manuals of the time, such as Claudio Corte's *Il Cavallarizzo* (1562).

Now, the other horse in *Venus and Adonis*, the courser, offers a completely different wealth of information. Ann Hyland describes the courser as a horse used for war and, occasionally, hunting, while the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as the following: "A large powerful horse, ridden in battle, in a tournament, etc."; "Since 17th c. usually taken as: A swift horse, a racer"; and "A stallion" (under "courser"). In Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* also, readers get the sense that Adonis' courser is noble. He is described as "strong-neck'd" (Shakespeare: line 263), with "compass'd crest" (272), and "gentle majesty and modest pride" (278). Furthermore, this courser receives much language regarding precise control of his steps, indicating great intelligence: "tramping courser" (261), "Sometimes, he trots, as if he told the steps" (277), and "Anon he rears upright, curvets and leaps" (279). Shortly after, he receives full epideictic praise:

> Round-hoof'd short-jointed, fetlocks shag and long,
> Broad breast, full eye, small head and nostril wide,
> High crest, short ears, straight legs and passing strong,
> Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide:
> Look what a horse should have he did not lack,
> Save a proud rider on so proud a back. (295-300)

All of this further serves to separate the courser from the jennet. The courser represents a certain kind of masculine strength and pride that does not match the jennet. However, the term "courser" has even more technical connotations at the time than present-day sources are aware.

Upon consulting EEBO, I discovered a few terms that appeared constantly with the word "courser." They are as follows, with the number of times used in the roughly 100 documents (1550–1600) in which they are used: "gallant," 46; "swift," 20; "mounted," 18; "trapped," 11; "Naples," 7; "barbed," 6; "spurs," 5; "reins," 4; "armed," 3; "Arabian," 3; and "harness," 2. Just by examining the relations between these references, one can understand connotations that clearly exist and ones that obviously do not. The courser was certainly a *good* and *respectable* horse. The terms that appear most often are "gallant" and "swift." Only a couple of the literary coursers actually failed or were ugly. Second, the courser is meant to be *ridden*. It is not a word for a wild horse. This is made evident through all of the equestrian terminology, such as "bridled," "mounted," "spurs," "trapped," and barbed." One major quote from *The first part of the life and raigne of King Henrie the IIII* combines these elements of the gallant and equestrianism perfectly:

> "About the time of prime, the Duke of Hereford came to the barriers of the lists, mounted vpon a white courser, barbed with blew & greene veluet, embroidred gorgiously with Swans and Antiops of Gold-smiths worke, anned at all points, & his sword drawen in his hand." (Hayward: 46)

Third, unlike the jennet, there is absolutely no strong correlation with nationality. Considering I found coursers of Spain, Naples, Arabia, and North Africa, the courser simply lacks the kind of nationality that the jennet has. This makes the nationalising of the jennet problematic: should we read the jennet as Spanish and the courser as non-national, or should we not read nation into the two horses at all? Before we delve into the political relations at the time, let us try applying the etymological differences to *Venus and Adonis* first.

Within the context of the poem, we become aware of a contrast between the two horses not of nationality but of wildness. The jennet and the courser are *not* just two arbitrary words Shakespeare chose. The type of horse corresponds *directly* to the two characters of the poem. The jennet is representative of the wild, the exotic, and the foreign, characteristics that easily become Venus in all her wildness. In the same manner, the courser becomes the epitome of controlled, civilised horsemanship. This high level of civilisation corresponds with Adonis in his par-

ticipating in the very civilised English pastime of hunting.

In terms of the latent horse sexuality, we see the courser succumbing to bestial sexual desire. The courser is not just "letting go" but also "taking control": "The iron bit he crushes 'tween his teeth / Controlling what he was controlled with" (Shakespeare: lines 269–270). He is deliberately choosing his sexuality, a lust driven by instinct, contrary to his owner's sexuality, or debatable lack thereof. Even the poetic structure of those two lines is questionable as far as gender is concerned. The volta, with its unstressed final syllables, is what would be called "feminine rhyme," rendering the courser's fight for control softer and more flowing than the typical abrupt stops of masculine rhyme (Tsur: 1). This softening of the courser appears again through feminine rhyme here:

"'Let me excuse they courser, gentle boy;
And learn of him, I heartily beseech thee,
To take advantage on presented joy;
Though I were dumb, yet his proceedings teach thee." (Shakespeare: lines 403–408)

This ultimately softens the courser much as Adonis is softened through Venus' descriptions of him.

The study of the etymology of the horse terms truly reveals these differences not just in the contemporary cultural animals but also in Shakespeare's characterisation of Venus and Adonis. He could have easily used the terms "stallion" and "mare," but he chose two quite distinct equine types (while relatively general terms, they are certainly separate enough in connotation) that further verify the connection between the horses and the characters as well as give the characters more layers of depth that complicate our readings of them. For example, with these new connotations of wildness and civilisation, contemporary readers would have interpreted the existence of the dangers of natural temptation. Adonis becomes more of the product of civilisation and less of just a handsome, mythological youth. Venus, likewise, transforms from just a sex goddess into the lustful wild. Furthermore, the lengthy descriptions of the horses become more than just biological descriptions thrown in just for Venus to have a practical metaphor. The horses become historically allegorical for entire structures that seem minimal in the poem otherwise, namely the natural and civilised worlds.

However, it is crucial to note that the distinction between the jennet and the courser is not about *control*. After all, in *Venus and Adonis*, the jennet ultimately has control over the courser, and Venus is incredibly dominant over Adonis, despite her failure to win Adonis over. As discussed in the "Gender and Animality" section, dominance does play a huge role in the poem though, especially with how we read gender. When we combine the etymological complications of the jennet and courser with the gender issues, a new dilemma emerges, the socio-political struggles of Anglo-Spanish relations.

Venus, the Barbarous Horseman

Federico Grisone, in his horse riding manual *Ordini di cavalcare: et modi di conoscere le nature de'cavalli* (1571), described how a horse and rider are connected: "....perche egli in ogni minimo cenno di aiuto, di briglia, e di sproni, intenderá il vostro core; e in ogni opera, che fará, egli accompagnerá voi, e voi accompagnerete lui...." 'Because he [the horse], in every slightest hint of aid and every minute movement of the bridle and the spur, will understand your heart; and in every way, so that it occurs that he will accompany you, and you will accompany him' (Grisone: 107). For centuries, it has been understood that good *manège* is about understanding this connection between the horse and the rider. Dominance is *not* the way to ride a horse.

Understanding this key maxim is crucial to understanding how equestrianism functions in *Venus and Adonis*. Imagine Venus as an equestrian. Throughout the course of the poem, she attempts to "ride" Adonis, controlling him so that he may do what she wants. She even compares him to his courser (Shakespeare: line 404). How she interacts with him physically is incredibly aggressive. One whole stanza is devoted to this powerful display of desperate control:

"Sometimes she shakes her head and then his hand,
Now gazeth she on him, now on the ground;
Sometimes her arms infold him like a band:
She would, he will not in her arms be bound;
And when from thence he struggles to be gone,
She locks her lily fingers one in one." (lines 223–228)

This high level of demanding and strict control exhibits more than just a fierce goddess: it is an exemplary display of poor *manège*. Venus is trying, and failing, to manage her horse. The harder she pushes on Adonis, the more he ultimately twists away from her, fighting against her every movement. Another line connects the horse-riding metaphor with Venus' stark dominance: "He will not manage her, although he mount her" (line 598). Venus can easily be divided into two intertwining personalities: the dominatrix and the genetrix. On the dominatrix side, we see Venus controlling and demanding as just mentioned. On the genetrix side, I refer back to Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*: "Aeneadum genetrix, hominum divomque voluptas, alma Venus" 'Genetrix of the Aeneans, pleasure to men and gods, nourishing Venus' (Lucretius: lines 1–2). Venus offers Adonis a generative choice: he can procreate with her or give his body to the earth to give birth to a flower at the end. Through domination, she strives to generate.

This incredibly forceful approach of hers begs further historical context, especially in lieu of the equine cultural study. If we do read the jennet as representative of Spain, let us narrow that focus down to a political structure. In Tudor England, there was an immense (and throughout Shakespeare's life, increasing) anti-Spanish sentiment, so strong that the horse actually became a frequent character who criticised Spain and Catholicism (de Ornellas: 85). The Anglo-Spanish War (1585–1604) forced everyone in England to despise the Spanish. For Shakespeare to intentionally create a horse of Spanish origin, not to mention a frequent war horse, could be quite pointed: the jennet became a symbol of Spanish savagery and rapaciousness that exists also in Venus under her honeyed words. When readers first see the jennet, Shakespeare says, "A breeding jennet, lusty, young, and proud" (Shakespeare: line 260). Already in that one line, Shakespeare uses two of the Seven Deadly Sins made popular by Dante: pride and lust. With this anti-Venutian reading, the polemic becomes against an excessive regression into almost bestial, indiscriminate sexuality. To narrow down these generalised possibilities, let us focus on the dominance of Venus. It would be absurd to just equate Venus with Spain. With Venus' dominance and generativity, a political term is evoked: Spanish imperialism. Alexandra Gajda of the University of Birmingham has written on England's view of Spain during the 1590s:

"Throughout the 1590s, Elizabeth's government had justified the queen's participation in the war as a struggle against the universality of Spain's imperial ambitions. Whereas previous justifications had emphasised the tyranny of Philip's governors and counsellors in the Netherlands, the aggressive proclamation of 1591....formally denounced the 'violence and malice' of the king of Spain himself, who waged 'a most unjust and dangerous war for all of Christendom'. Essex, however, had magnified this rhetoric of Spanish predations and violence into a complete vision of the conflict as a cataclysmic struggle for liberty from the 'fearful usurpation' of the Spanish tyrant himself, whose power must be crushed by offensive warfare." (Gajda: 859)

Gajda suggests that one of the greatest causes for the Anglo-Spanish War was British fear of Spanish imperialism. This fear existed up to and through Shakespeare's life. While I certainly think it would be a stretch to say that every Tudor British man heard the word "jennet" and grabbed the nearest weapon, I do not think the Spanish imperialist association is too far-fetched, since Shakespeare so strongly associated dominance and aggression (and poor horse-riding) with Venus and her jennet.

If the jennet is to be a representative of Spanish imperialism then, the courser evokes classical republicanism. The scholar Markku Peltonen wrote in *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570–1640* that, despite common academic belief, "classical republicanism (as a constitutional stance) had a limited but undoubted impact on English political thought in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries" (Peltonen: 11–12). While it is

clear that the courser cannot represent Britain as the term culturally has no national significance, with its connection to Adonis and his constant appeals to freedom of thought, the courser is connected with a political philosophy *antithetical* to that of Spanish imperialism. Adonis' few words against Venus focus on reason and freedom of thought against her physical and rhetorical domination. One example he manages to interject is, "'Fie, fie!' he says, 'you crush me; let me go;/ You have no reason to withhold me so'" (Shakespeare: lines 611–612). Ultimately, he resists her every appeal, not even through strong or powerful rhetoric but through mere desire for freedom. Venus, in her Spanish imperialist mindset, has as much disdain for Adonis' mode of thinking as he does for hers however. During the Anglo-Spanish War, likewise, Spain made equally strong claims against England, all while acknowledging its frightening power, as Venus worries Adonis will not succumb. One scholar of the Anglo-Spanish War notes, "Inglaterra es enemigo público nuestro por la religión, fortísima causa de la enemistad y, a juicio de los prudentes, la más poderosa de cuantas hay en las naciones y que más duras y perpetuas guerras causa" 'England is our public enemy through religion, the greatest cause of enmity, and, by the judgment of the wise, the most powerful that there is among the nations and that causes the longest and most perpetual wars' (Sanz Camañes: 269). This quote reflects how England's/Adonis' power exists in their fight for freedom. Through perseverance, both Adonis and England become intimidating forces against imperialism.

Conclusion

With the horses' obvious complexity, I propose not reading them solely as either sexual ideals or strictly even as nationalistic mascots, but understanding them as complex characters in *Venus and Adonis*. Making the horse represent just one idea becomes impossible as each horse calls attention to so many binaries: sexuality and abstinence; impetuosity and organisation; dominance and submission; masculinity and femininity; nature and civilisation; and imperialism and classical republicanism. Regardless of the political interpretations one could make of the horses however, the pair certainly signifies an in-depth understanding of horsemanship at the time, and, with such terminology lacing the poem, the sexual sub-narrative penetrates into the political one, as John Lyly (another sixteenth century poet) once said, "All is fair in love and war" (Manser: 355). The horses, through this horizontal lens of historicism, exemplify the blending of hunting, love, and war. Three separate conflicts become one and the same through the horseman terminology.

With this new approach of equine historicism, so many other layers to *Venus and Adonis* become apparent, from the sexual connections of the horses with the humanoid characters they represent to the etymological discourse with which Shakespeare was contributing, to the potential for political thought under the guise of improper *manège*. If scholars take the horses for granted in this poem, much like C.S. Lewis and countless others have done, so many levels of depth become completely lost to Shakespeare studies. The horses serve as so much more than a persuasive and rhetorical device. That is only one small approach Venus attempts to convince Adonis to lay with her. Ultimately, the horses exist as independent characters (though not necessarily independent of the narrative) and speak to readers of the poem probably more than they do to either Venus or Adonis.

Horses are real, biological, anatomical animals; they eat, breathe, drink, and sleep. However, just as readily, they are cultural animals as well. We, as humans, construct the cultural horse through constant reproduction and altering of its image. In this way, Shakespeare's horses become so much more than "simple" allegory or even a picture of real horses. As Kevin de Ornellas stated, "A text can construct a picture of a horseman on a good horse: through politically inflected language, we can suddenly feel that we are reading about the governance of a ruler who holds the reins of power as the rider holds the reins of his horse. The early modern material and metaphorical horse was turned by its rider, its breeder, or its painter" (de Ornellas: xx). I would

add "or to its writer" as Shakespeare has created two very complex characters that alter the entire reading of the poem. These are horses that were "turned" to meet certain poetic ends by Shakespeare, the literary horseman who actually *is* successful at effective *manège* as he controls his characters as an invisible narrator, flowing and merging with them. As the courser exceeds perfection, so does the poem and poet:

"Look, when a painter would surpass the life,
In limning out a well-proportion'd steed,
His art with nature's workmanship at strife,
As if the dead the living should exceed;
So did this horse excel a common one,
In shape, in courage, colour, pace and bone." (Shakespeare: lines 289–294)

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ЗВИЈЕР И ЉУБАВ: КОЊСКА ЕРОТОЛОГИЈА У ШЕКСПИРОВОЈ *ВЕНЕРИ И АДОНУ*

Резиме

У наративној поеми *Венера и Адон* (1593) Шекспир представља два коња, малог шпанског и хитрог галопера, као средство којим коментарише људску сексуалност. Поред тога, овом терминологијом указује се на општа мјеста коњаништва у 16. вијеку. Шекспир користи књижевни симбол коња као репрезента људске сексуалности да би коментарисао актуелне политичке и државне односе. Род и животињска нарав (свијет) у потпуном су сагласју са класичним републиканизмом поеме. Испитујући Венерин империјализам, готово у потпуности шпански, открива се да је Шекспир био и те како свјестан коњичког правила да се коњаништво као вјештина уопште не односи на доминацију, а не тек површно упознат са коњичким дискурсом у класичном облику. У овом раду трага се за етимологијом Шекспирове коњичке терминологије у свјетлу англо-шпанских односа крајем 16. вијека.

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