

Love & the Text

GENDER VS. GENRE IN VENUS AND ADONIS

Basic Allusion: Zeuxis vs. Parrhasius excelled in Deceiving Painting

- ▶ **Zeuxis:** portrayed Grapes (Birds were deceived flying toward his picture)
- ▶ **Parrhasius:** depicted a curtain Zeuxis was deceived begging him to draw it and reveal the picture behind
- ▶ Forced Perspective: **Trompe-L'oeil**
- ▶ **Visual Illusion**
- ▶ **The secret : The Promise of a Presence which is Denied**



Critical Moment in Venus & Adonis

Even so poor birds deceived with painted grapes

Do surfeit by the eye and pine the maw:

Even so she languisheth in her mishaps,

And those poor birds that helpess berries saw.

The warm effects which she in him finds missing

She seeks to kindle with continued kissing.(II.601-6)



The Goddess has succeeded in maneuvering her reluctant suitor into a physical position without any response

Gap(Third Dimension) Tantalizes the Desire

- ▶ Third dimension is missing
- ▶ Discrepancy between three-dimensional object & the fact that the object resolves itself into lines of canvas (in painting)
- ▶ We have to be deceived because of that missing thing
- ▶ Gap between the place of the object in the Reality & in our perception & this missing entity in our real world causes the Desire
- ▶ (the origin): The Desiring Object Tantalus: unable to reach the fruit that would allay his thirst after the curse of Zeus
- ▶ Venus outdoes T. in Frustration:
- ▶ “That worse than Tantalus’ is her annoy/ to clip Elizium and to lack her joy” ll. 599

Lack=Desire/ Origin of Desire

- ▶ **originating moment of desire**
- ▶ Venus: subjecting desire : “ she is love, she loves, and yet she is not lov'd”
- ▶ In her own law forlorn” : she cannot command her own desire nor Adonis
- ▶ So she curses all the romances to end tragically
- ▶ Like Troilus & Cressida, Pyramus and Thisbe, Dido & Aeneas
- ▶ Ovidian texts in the time of Shakespeare constitute perfect fables of desire (Metamorphoses) Daphne: unfulfilled desire

ovid's Metamorphosis & Shakespeare's Venus/ Definition

- ▶ Ovid & Renaissance & Shakespeare's Venus:
- ▶ Erotic metamorphosis
- ▶ The object of the desire possessed by the lover is a substitute
- ▶ At the moment of gratification something slips away, eludes the lover's Grasp, and lost
- ▶ In Shakespeare: Denial more Sever & Longer,

- ▶ Her lack of fulfilment makes her appear in an Authoritative manner: [Not only origin of so-called love/ but Definition of love: She defines how love should be:] First time

It shall suspect where is no cause of fear

It shall not fear where it should most mistrust

It shall be merciful, and too severe,

And most deceiving when it seems most just

Perverse it shall be, where it shows most toward

Put fear to valour, courage to the coward. (II, 1153)

It Defines and It escapes Definition

- ▶ **No fixed characteristic of love**
- ▶ **Not a typical love story**
- ▶ **Roles reversed/Gender indeterminacy**
- ▶ **Mixed genre: lyric, farce, oddly unresolved**
- ▶ **Love both material and insubstantial**
- ▶ **Gender:** Elizabethan heroines are more outspoken in love & permitted in love than Victorian counterparts: “ **Rose-cheek’d Adonis**” who **blushes and pouts**” “ **the tender boy**”/ Venus is like an “ eagle” 1.55 “ **Would thou wert as I am, and I am a man.** (l. 369) **Manly power**
- ▶ **But no Action:** (comic tone): : **Backward she push’d him, as she would be thrust/ And gover’d him in strength, though not I lust**” (ll. 41)/ “ **WHILE SHE TAKES ALL SHE CAN, NOT ALL SHE WANTS]** 1.564. Still more hopeless (a good Joke:

Now is she in the very lists of love

Her champion mounted for the hot encounter

All is imaginary she doth prove

He will not manage her, although he mount her(II. 595)

Swift shift to other genres

- ▶ Jumps to Elegiac lament:
(tragical-comical-pastoral-
mythical)

Alas, poor world, what treasure thou
lost!

What face remains alive that's worth
the viewing?

.....

The flowers are sweet, their colours
fresh and trim,

But true sweet beauty lived and died
with him. II.107

- ▶ Any consistent definition of love in all this indeterminacy?
- ▶ Is it Appetite of a “love-sick queen” or the effect of a delicate appeal to the finest senses?

Bid me discourse, I will enchant thine ear.

Or like a fairy trip upon green

Or like a nymph, with long disheveled hair

Dance on the sands and yet no footing seen

Love is a spirit all compact of fire

Not gross to sink, but light and will aspire (II.145)

Love personified : to what end?

- ▶ Personification of love as a goddess who leaves no imprint on the sand
- ▶ Is this Reiterated lightness an indication of lyric grace or triviality?

- ▶ **Appears as Classification**

- ▶ **Adonis: not love / Destructive simulacrum, Lust (ll. 789) : “Call it not love, for love to heaven is fled,/ since sweating lust on earth usurp’d his name” (Venus misrepresent her own love)**

- ▶ **Adonis disetangles the two:**

Love comforteth like sunshine after rain,

But lust’s effect is tempest after sun,

.....

Love is all truth, lust full of forged lies. (ll,799)

As the moral truth of the text Traditionally

Fixed, univocal THEME in Traditional Criticisms

- Traditional criticisms
- Coleridge: Lust/ Truth
- Pearson: Appetite/ Beauty
- Dubrow: Motherliness comingled with lust
- Male critics: lust of an old woman to a young to renew her lost beauty

All Targeting at a Fixed Theme not regarding the indeterminacy of the text

Problems: Attributing the central confirmation to a hero who is too young to know the meaning of love
: II.127-28/409, 806

Problem2: The text does not verify Adonis's View calling Desire Both Love & Lust indifferently

The studded bridle on a ragged bough

Nimbly she fastens-o how quick is love

The steed is stalled up, and even now

To tie the rider she begins to prove

Backward she pushd him, as she would be thrust

And governed him in strength, though not in lust. II, 37-42 (Narrative Voice)

- ▶ “ desire doth lend her force” , her language is “ lustful”. “she cannot choose but love” in her case “careless lust stirs up a desperate courage” but “ love” too lacks moral scruples and picks locks to get at beauty (ll. 556-576)

Narrative Voice: Historical Moment

- ▶ Early modern period love/lust are not consistently used Antithetical
- ▶ Synonymous for Desire
- ▶ William Baldwin: Mid-sixteenth: *On Moral Philosophy*: love/lust/lecherye together only to be controlled and by itself morally neutral not necessarily condemned , remained till 1564
- ▶ Adonis: marks a moment in the cultural history of desire(our cultural norms)
- ▶ Uncertainty by Bowesin 1594
- ▶ Immediately after: moral distinction as “ True love” by Humanists
- ▶ Lust was to lose its innocence during the course of Sixteenth century by mid 17th
- ▶ Love also had its own different meaning: Sometimes equal to charity sometimes as More considered could also suggest lust so it needs adjectives before it as did Erasmus

Ups & Downs in Cultural History

- ▶ Following Erasmus no such distinction remained
- ▶ Love was considered to be irrational, frivolous, form of madness
- ▶ Again no longer distinction detectable
- ▶ A new Taxonomy was about to be constructed
- ▶ That of Adonis(Antithetical) was only one option in 1590s (Neoplatonic)
- ▶ Indeterminacies of the Narrative voice in Shakespeare's poem reflect a more familiar cultural practice in the period
- ▶ Richard Linche: referred to a mid –sixteenth century Italian book on *Images of Gods* of the ancients: **so many classical statues and pictures of the goddess represent Several Natures and Conditions from lechery to holy matrimony**

History takes side with Adonis

- ▶ In 1615 (twenty years after the first publication) motivated by the **newfold valorization of marriage** in the course of the century : **love vs. Lust** (History was on the side of Adonis)
- ▶ In Grofts /a twentieth century point of view is revealed: **lust destroys family but (Unlawful lust / married /unmarried) as with “ true love” as a result of Cartesian crystallization of Cogito Identity as mind**
- ▶ Venus & Adonis reveals: the power and durability of the cultural change brought about by Adonis, Nicholes & Grofts and other, & Puritan believers
- ▶ **Major Body of Criticism:** A substantial number of twentieth-century criticism endorses Adonis’s voice to the advantage of Family values enlisting Shakespeare in support of it

Bate : Excess & Celebration

Venus; “ sick love” reveals Excess to Bate who also recognizes as sexual pathology

As Bate considers: a Perverse case of desire / while noting that it is a common element of love

The poem: is about Transgression as a component of passion:

“ a celebration of sexuality even as it is a disturbing exposure of the dark underside of desire”/

Venus does not want to get married: she is married already

Early in 1590 the idea of nuclear family was not that much popular

Tragic passion of the classic love stories bearing out the features of desire in the goddess's final curse for others and for herself

Bringing an emerging taxonomy into conjunction and conflicts with the residual indeterminacy (irrational but delicate)

Family & marriage as true love found in Sh’s Comedies obeying both gender & genre

What this heterogeneous Text reveals?

sub
ject

Perverse Desire or Passion is not subject to any law / outlaw

So not logical

So the good subject of imagination good for Tromp l'oil / not real but imaginary

Not the result of another person, Object/ not even by a goddess /Subject but By a Presence that promises and withholds :

So this brings Anger, anarchy, and repudiates the rule in the symbolic order

Desire rejects the taxonomies of both Gender and Genre

Wit
hol
ds

Love is then as texts confirms “ wise in folly, foolish witty” I, 838

Wants to Subject Desire to discipline, regulation ,legality

But, due to this being a Tromp l'oil ,the text offers many layers of genres REFUSES to yield the gratification of a secret meaning (Heterogeneous Textuality)

Obj
ect