HORSE-HANDLING IN SHAKESPEARE'S POEMS AND RENAISSANCE CODES OF CONDUCT

by

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To Temerita, ever faithful.

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ABSTRACT

Recent critical animal studies of Shakespeare address animals in his plays as anthropomorphic characters—Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602), or Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600), for example; and as allegories—the animal omens in *Macbeth* (1606), for instance. However, animals in Shakespeare's *poems*—in the Sonnets (1609) and the long narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594)—have drawn little scholarly attention. The figure of the horse in the poems blends Shakespeare's conversations with received classical material on the horse as a symbol of *eros* with contemporary practices regarding equestrian culture. Analysis of the horse trope in Shakespeare's poems demonstrates his manipulation of both sets of discourses (classical and contemporary) to political ends. The figure of the horse functions in late sixteenth-century England as a culturally embedded metaphor deployed in debates regarding conduct in both political and sexual arenas. In his sonnets, in *Venus and Adonis*, and in *The Rape of Lucrece*, Shakespeare uses the horse metaphor to advance linked critiques of imperialist and sexually heteronormative modes of manipulation. Despite the dismissal of the horse trope as the "too insistent horsification of desire" by scholars such as MacDonald P. Jackson and C. S. Lewis, Shakespeare deepens the thematic significance of the received classical trope (the horse as *eros*) by incorporating details of his culture's experience of contemporary horse and human relationships. In both narrative poems, for instance, Shakespeare advances the figure of the horse to promote ideals of Venetian republicanism and to critique Elizabethan and Spanish forms of tyranny. Far from trotting out an exhausted classical commonplace, Shakespeare's use

of the horse metaphor reveals just how deeply equestrian culture informs most expressions of codes of conduct in the Renaissance.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent critical animal studies of Shakespeare's plays address the use of animals as anthropomorphic characters—Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602), for instance, or Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600); and as allegories—such as the animal omens in *Macbeth* (1606). However, animals in Shakespeare's nondramatic *poems* have drawn little scholarly attention. The horse, one of Shakespeare's more common animal metaphors, exemplifies Shakespeare's conversations with received classical material and also contemporary practices regarding early modern horse culture, and demonstrates his manipulation of both sets of discourses to political ends. Yet, most critical studies of Shakespeare's poems manage to avoid engaged analysis of the horses altogether.

The limited scholarship on equine tropes in sixteenth-century literature reveals an anthropocentric lack of interest in *l'animot* and also a missed opportunity to read animals as historical registers of human interactions with the world around them.[1] Modern scholarship on the early modern horse limits its signifying possibilities by viewing the horse through a strictly allegorical lens. Through understanding—but reducing—the horse allegorically, this very real animal only functions as an invocation of general interpretative structures that are emptied of historical or cultural significance. Not only does this moral and allegorical form of reading ignore contemporary conceptions of

[1] Jacques Derrida argues in "The Animal that therefore I Am (More to Follow)" that there is a linguistic problem in saying singularly "the animal" as a means of grouping all animals together in one word, as if all animals are more similar to each other than they are to humans, e.g. a primate is more similar to a worm than it is to a human. He proposes a term that combines the plural "animals" in the singular sense, in French, *l'animot*, an idea that is almost impossible to express in English (416).

l'animot, but it also artificially limits the author's intentionality in sixteenth-century literary works in which animal imagery is abundant, especially in Shakespeare's works.

This thesis proposes an animal-historical approach to Shakespeare's poems, comparing both the literary use of *l'animot* to contemporary animal-human interactions, and *l'animot* in contemporary discourses of sexuality and politics. Shakespeare engages multiple discourses through his frequent invocation of the horse in his poems. His language of horses echoes classical works, such as those by Ovid. However, he also deepens and enriches classical equine topoi with contemporary equestrian knowledge. To make effective statements in the arenas of politics and sexuality in the late sixteenth century, writers summoned the metaphor of the horse. The horse trope appeared abundantly in contemporary discourses of politics, as it evoked diplomacy, rapport, dominance, and even levels of conformity. What Shakespeare does with the equine discourse he receives from literary culture allows us to see how culturally embedded in signifying systems the horse was to discourses of sexuality and republicanism in the sixteenth century.

Such an argument counters scholarship typically applied to this animal trope. Critical commentary on horses in Shakespeare's poems is often restricted to reductive, even didactic (if parodic), allegorical studies. Scholars frequently see the horse, in *Venus and Adonis,* for instance, as a representation of how Adonis should behave, or they argue that the horse in the poem simply invokes pastoral imagery. Lewis, in his enduring and highly influential volume on *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (1944), dispatched the horse imagery summarily: "We get, with spirited pleasure, glimpses of real work-day nature, in the spirited courtship of Adonis's horse" (498). He performs an

important but limited analysis of the horse's presence in the poem. Lewis essentially views in the horses echoes of the georgic tradition. While the suggestion is certainly valid, Lewis leaves unacknowledged the multi-faceted nature of the horse topos in the poem.

Some scholars have noticed the erotic nature of the horse in Shakespeare's poems. Robert Miller, another prominent scholar on animals in literature, looks more closely at the horse in Shakespeare as a vehicle for a parody of courtly love. However, Miller's perspective follows Lewis's limited and perfunctory recognition of the horse's significance: "[T]he 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" ("Venus, Adonis, and the Horses" 255). Miller's analysis is limited to understanding the tale of the horses as fabular. This idea of the horse narrative sequence as moral—Venus employing the animal to "teach" her young lover in the ways of love—does not address the rich layers of significance in Shakespeare's account of the horse in the encounter of Venus and Adonis in the poem.

Scholarship centering on Shakespeare's horse metaphor, even beyond the *Venus and Adonis* poem, remains predominantly concerned with the horse's allegorical and mythological significance, rather than the horse's historical prominence. MacDonald P. Jackson discusses the editorial decisions of modern editions of Sonnet 51, "Thus can my love excuse the slow offence," that regularize spelling, punctuation, and other nonverbal features of the text. In doing so, Jackson dismisses the erotological associations with the horse as annoying, calling them the "too-insistent horsification of desire" (13). What Jackson finds bothersome actually was a classically inspired commonplace that Shakespeare inflected within contemporary contexts of sexuality and politics, however.

More deeply interpreting Shakespeare's horse metaphor reveals that multiple discourses work in ways that mutually constitute each other to frame the horse as a figurehead for republican values, not as a cliché.

Given the lack of scholarly writing on Shakespeare's poetic and erotic horses, it becomes apparent that literary historicists have not fully engaged with the meaningful relationship between horses and humans in the late sixteenth century. By centering scholarly conversations on allegory, metaphor, and liberal humanism, Shakespeare's literary horse becomes a vague animal that is almost entirely restricted to being a symbol. Rather than being a concrete character, the horse is relegated to being an almost ethereal beast far removed from its own biology, physicality, and any real interactions between humans and animals in the sixteenth century. Aside from Miller and Lewis's acknowledgments that Shakespeare's figure of the horse at least partially is derived from classical sources, most scholars entirely ignore the depth of both the literary and historical contexts with which Shakespeare engages throughout his horse poems.

My response to this gap in the scholarship is to re-contextualize the horse more firmly in sixteenth-century literary and historical England. In Shakespeare's poems, the treatment of gender and animality proves relevant to themes of classical republicanism, a critical orientation that has received recent scholarly attention. From *Venus and Adonis*, Venus's "almost-Spanish" imperial qualities carry over into *The Rape of Lucrece*, as equine references to sexually dominant language; both poems reveal how Shakespeare blends classical and contemporary discourses on horses for political ends. Through *Venus and Adonis*, the Sonnets, and *The Rape of Lucrece*, Shakespeare adapts classical equine

topoi to contemporary historical contexts regarding English-Spanish relations to sympathize with republican political sentiments in the late sixteenth century.

The following chapters present the horse as more than an allegorical symbol, more than part of a beast fable, and more than just a mode of anthropomorphizing animal characters. Horses in Shakespeare's sonnets and narrative poetry embody Cupid, importantly, but also remind readers of actual historical pastimes of hunting and the chase. Through the mode of erotological discourse, Shakespeare also antiquates the tyrannical tendencies of contemporary English monarchy in favor of models of republicanism circulating in the era's political culture. Despite the dismissal of the horse trope as the "too insistent horsification of desire" by scholars such as MacDonald P. Jackson and C. S. Lewis, Shakespeare deepens the thematic significance of the received classical trope (the horse as *eros*) by incorporating details of his culture's experience of contemporary horse and human relationships into his poems. Shakespeare advances the figure of the horse to promote ideals of Venetian republicanism and critique Elizabethan tyranny. Shakespeare's use of the horse for his political critique embeds an upset of heteronormative sexual relationships as well. Far from trotting out an exhausted classical commonplace, Shakespeare's use of the horse metaphor reveals just how deeply equestrian culture informs most expressions of codes of conduct in the Renaissance.

Much of the purpose in exploring Shakespeare's poetic horses comes from a need to explore attitudes toward the Other. Donna Haraway compares *l'animot* to minority groups in her *Companion Species Manifesto*. One of her claims is that *l'animot* is necessary to understanding our own culture. Using Althusser's Marxist terminology, Haraway argues, "Today, through our ideologically loaded narratives of their lives,

animals 'hail' us to account for their regimes in which they and we must live. We hail them into our constructs . . . We also live with each other in the flesh in ways not exhausted by our ideologies" (17). She points out that, while humans have a certain dominion over *l'animot,* we are also culturally dependent upon *l'animot*. In his book *Horses in Shakespeare's England,* Anthony Dent claims that, in order to understand Elizabethan literature, one *must* examine the historical relations between *l'animot* and humans: "The learned glossator will cheerfully write 'fives, a disease of horses' without explaining *which* disease; or gloss 'riggish' as wanton without thinking it worthwhile to explain that it qualifies, literally, the behaviour of a rig" (ix).[2] The horse played such a prominent role in Elizabethan society that *not* acknowledging the horse in literary scholarship is distancing oneself from the cultural context with which Shakespeare frequently engaged.

Throughout this thesis, I discuss the art of *manège,* of "managing" one's horse. As I address concerns of submission and dominance throughout Shakespeare's poems, I refer back to *manège* as a reminder that overly strict or brutal correction was known to be ineffective in horse management: "A bullying, cowardly or uncertain leader . . . will inspire only an uneasy and perhaps resentful horse" (Walker 14). Shakespeare's horse poems echo the sentiment that a ruthless rider (ruler) breeds a weak horse (society). *Manège* is more than just an interspecies relationship; it is a code of conduct that becomes homologous for both sexual relations and the political climate of early modern England. In the sixteenth century, Shakespeare's figure of the horse is a cultural signifier for a level of balanced and respectful rapport regardless of differences in class, or species

[2] A rig is actually a horse that was improperly castrated or has an undeveloped testicle.

(between horse and human, for instance). He promotes a combination of empathy and awareness of the people in a political system without a tyrannical ruler (rider) controlling minds and bodies.

The first chapter of this thesis examines the presence of "equine erotology" in Shakespeare's Sonnets 50 and 51. By analyzing the classical sources for Shakespeare's poems, one can see that Shakespeare, rather than sexualizing or even fetishizing an animal appearance haphazardly, is actually contributing to a much larger and older discourse and tradition of the equine invocation of *eros* (namely as a substitute for Cupid himself). Then, the chapter will examine how the complex notions of the horse as *eros* affect contemporary ideals of sexuality and heteronormative sexual desire. The chapter will close by connecting much of the equine terminology present in the two Sonnets with contemporary equine knowledge.

The second chapter centers on *Venus and Adonis* and Shakespeare's dealing with classical representations of the tale as well as his own inclusion of the horse in the story. Part of this analysis will come through considering a brief history of the artistic representations of the tale. Next, the chapter will analyze the gendering and animality as these concepts appear in the poem, especially in the contexts of contemporary equestrianism and hunting. The chapter will conclude by connecting these equestrian and sexual ideas with contemporary political debates on republicanism and imperialism.

The third chapter focuses on the body politic invoked by horses in *The Rape of Lucrece*. In many ways, *Lucrece* presents the starkest representation of the horse as *eros* in the classical tradition, but it also uses the horse metaphor to present another, opposing or alternative, voice in the discourse of desire versus rape. Through equestrian

terminology and the trope of the horse, Shakespeare is able to combine discussions of dominance, gender, animality, rape, and politics.

The conclusion will bring together the Sonnets, *Venus and Adonis*, and *The Rape of Lucrece* to discuss the implications of this study and the future of research on the horse, and animals more widely, in Shakespeare studies. This is followed by a glossary of contemporary English equestrian and equine terminology.

With this historical approach to Shakespeare's horses, scholars can begin to see that Shakespeare was incisively cognizant of an entire culture of horse riding, equestrianism, and equine science as it was understood in the late sixteenth century. We see Shakespeare manipulating a mundane yet debated bestial figure by connecting it with its literary and mythological roots. This connection transforms the nobleman's steed / farmer's tool into a mascot for republican ideals by using contemporary equestrian terminology. While the lack of biographical information renders it impossible to say definitively whether Shakespeare was a "horseman" or not, this philological approach to Shakespeare's horses reveals an acute awareness of classical handling of the horse as a literary trope; contemporary practices of equestrianism; and contemporary horse-human interactions.

This project is by no means an exhaustive examination of Shakespeare's horse topoi. I also do not mean to denigrate previous allegorical studies of the horse—as they too have significant value. However, this study focuses predominantly on historical, linguistic, and cultural contexts of the horse in sixteenth-century England to explore more deeply a few of Shakespeare's themes, revealing more information about the horse-human connection in that setting as well as Shakespeare's manipulations of conventions.

CHAPTER I:

"NO DULL FLESH": EQUINE SEXUAL IMAGERY IN SONNETS 50 AND 51

Shakespeare appropriates the image of the horse in two of his consecutive sonnets, Sonnets 50, "How heavy do I journey on the way," and 51, "Thus can my love excuse the slow offence." In 1905, W. J. Rolfe pointed out that we do not definitively know the correct or intended ordering of Shakespeare's sonnets, and the claim still holds. However, certain stylistic and/or thematic correlations have prompted scholars and editors throughout history to place the sonnets in a predominantly standardized ordering, which is simply the order of the 1609 quarto. In this ordering, Sonnets 50 and 51 are placed together, likely for thematic purposes. In Sonnet 50, the narrator rides a horse away from his lover and begins to feel that the horse, rather than being managed, is managing *him.* The rider blames the horse for carrying him further and further away from his "joy." The language describing the horse in Sonnet 50 becomes increasingly insulting and degrading, labeling the horse "dull" and "a wretch." Sonnet 51 counters the previous sonnet's attitude toward the rider's pursuit of the unknown when the rider decides at last to submit to his overpowering love and return home, even if the reversal opposes the desires of his again "dull" horse. Factoring into the discussion of these two sonnets, the idea of "masculine love" is an increasingly prominent concept in scholarship of early modern sexual norms. The two sonnets manipulate equine imagery to promote the sexual ideal of masculine love in order to criticize the sexual culture of Shakespeare's time. In opposition to the horse as a powerful, cultural trope of heterosexual coupling / copulation, Shakespeare re-appropriates the horse to represent a form of *eros* that is removed from social constraints and psychosocial norms. Shakespeare's equine *eros*

thrives in male-male relationships as easily as male-female ones. His use of *manège* functions in the sonnets as a code of conduct applicable to these sexual relationships: the horse's way of carrying itself reflects the mood of its rider, and, in denying his own desire, the rider fails to manage his horse and becomes the reason for the horse's "trudging."

Before delving into the actual poems, it is crucial to trace the horse-as-*eros* trope through Vergil and Ovid and each author's sexualized representations of the horse in their respective writings. Lynn Enterline has written extensively on Shakespeare's early education, citing some of his models to have been Vergil, Ovid, Petrarch, and others, as they were standard subjects of study for the rhetorical curriculum (*Shakespeare's Schoolroom*). Imitation was the accepted mode of composition during the English Renaissance, and Shakespeare's classical equine figures appear throughout his writing as a result. In *The Light in Troy,* Thomas Greene defends the Renaissance tradition of imitation by claiming it reflects an emerging awareness of history: "Creative imitation in the Renaissance has to be seen as a challenge to the liturgical repetitions of an [earlier] age lacking historical consciousness" (38). Shakespeare's task in writing many of his plays and poems was to re-tell classical stories through a contemporary lens as a means of reviving literary history while still making it relevant.

One of Shakespeare's models was Vergil, who speaks about the breeding habits and rituals of horses in his *Georgics*. However, what starts as a technical manual for classical knowledge on equestrian breeding quickly becomes a cautionary tale of the dangers of desire. As Vergil describes a woman's lust, he remarks, "*Scilicet ante omnis furor est insignis equarum; / e mentem Venus ipsa dedit"* 'Surely the frenzy of mares is

conspicuous among them all: / Venus herself endowed them with passion' (III.266-67). After describing horses through both terrestrial and celestial language, Vergil then provides an in-depth description of the "poisonous" sexual desire of horses. In vilifying the horses' sex, Vergil states, the "*hippomanes . . . lentum destillat ab inguine urius"* 'poisonous *hippomanes,* the horse-madness . . . drip[s] slowly from their sex' (III.280-81). Vergil is centering our attentions on the poisonous effects of equine genitalia as a means of commenting on human sexuality as well to show that acting impulsively on sexual desire is bestial. Present scholarship on Vergil agrees that his sexual portrayal of the horse is toxic. Classicist Peter Knox points out that "*amor* is, as the portrayal of horses in the Third Book implies, a potentially destructive emotion" (52-53). Vergil's equine *amor* is quite destructive: it is aligned with nature, not civilization, and with toxicity, not purity. Vergil, at least in this book of the *Georgics,* advances the mares' *hippomanes* as a rhetorical instrument to argue *against* desire, presenting horses as subject to the corruptive effects of *eros*. By calling the horses' sexual fluids poisonous, Vergil vilifies—if not demonizes—the horses' metaphorically unbridled sexual desire. Vergil fixates on complete control of the horses' gene pool: rather than allowing horses to breed at will, Vergil advocates a society of fixed sexual practice and moral standards that prohibit promiscuity and sexual freedom.

Vergil's word *hippomanes* is both more somber and more spiritual than translators acknowledge. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) defines the Latin *manes* as "spirits of the dead." As *hippo-* means "horse," the word becomes "ghosts of the horse." Vergil associates sexuality with mortality in the word. The fluid of a horse's reproductive system functions as a rhetorical means of evoking an anti-undisciplined-

desire morality. As Knox suggests, this critique of the horses' sexual behavior seems indicative of Vergil's critique of lax human mores and not just animal behaviors. Vergil identifies *eros* as a manifestation of both an immoral temptation and a physical corruption, while ignoring any salubrious effects of embodied instincts or pleasures. Vergil advances the figure of the horse as a morality tale for abstinence.

However, Shakespeare's second great inspiration was the Italian poet Ovid. Of particular interest to this study are Ovid's two works, *The Metamorphoses* and *Ars Amatoria*. Frequently, horses function as literary subjects in these two works. In both works, horses become embodied commentaries on sex and sexuality. Starting with *Ars Amatoria* (translated as *The Art of Love*), Ovid educates his readers in the ways of courtship (both in *amor* and in *eros*). Much of the work allegorizes sexual activity in nature to comment on various sexual behaviors for humans. Ovid evokes both the cow and the horse in the first book. In referring to women's attraction to men, Ovid writes, "*Mollibus in pratis admugit femina tauro:* / *Femina cornipedi semper adhinnit equo*" 'In soft meadows lows the heifer to the bull: / the mare always neighs to the hooved steed' (Ovid, *The Art of Love,* I.279-80).[1] These lines reveal a fable-like quality that pervades *Ars Amatoria,* relaying human morals through animal guises or images. Ovid uses the animal world as a metaphor for human behavior. In this case, the horse becomes a gendered and sexualized representation of feminine lust in humans. However, unlike Vergil, Ovid claims that this interaction is merely natural (i.e. acting as nature dictates, or instinctive). Like Vergil's, Ovid's horses are hyper-sexualized: the mares vocally register

[1] This is my own translation, as the authoritative versions (such as Gibson's or Humphries'), in maintaining poetic voice and style, obscure the literal and etymological resonances.

their sexual need, though not necessarily in a way that expresses dominance or sexual control.

Ovid deepens further his equine sexual rhetoric in the second book, on the gender of the horses. Here, he describes how mares chase after stallions (never the other way around in *Ars Amatoria*): "*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.477-78).[2] Again, the mares express a "roused" and "fur[ious]" need for copulation with the opposite sex. However, Ovid's mares are active, while his stallions are passive. That is, Ovid's mares chase their mates and neigh, while the stallions flee. Notably, again, these concerns of active versus passive in embodied sexualities do not directly translate into sexual dominance versus sexual submission. In his horse metaphors, Ovid was not sexually empowering women in *Ars Amatoria*; rather, Ovid's active female horses connoting women's sexuality served a twofold purpose. On one hand, the females' desire flatters male readers, showing them how much they are desired. On the other hand, the poetry attributes socially negative connotations of sexual desire to women, degrading women for their uncontrollable lust within a treatment advocating sexual behavior as healthy. While feminist critiques of *The Art of Love* abound, what is important for the purpose of this thesis is the idea that Ovid's horses are assigned heteronormative gender roles in his erotological discourse. However, Ovid's horses should not be reduced to terms of dominance and submission in sexual relationships. The classical sense of *eros*, seen especially in Ovid, is much more about the vigor of the *chase* than the goal of actual

[2] This is my translation. See note 3.

copulation. Other binaries than dominance and submission come into play here, such as active-passive, vocal-silent, chaser-chased, and emotional-stoic. These binaries reveal that the Ovidian—and later, Shakespearean—equine discourses do not make meaning by the one-dimensional difference of dominance and submission. As Kevin de Ornellas shows, equine discourses are deeply multi-referential, contributing to the larger arenas in which sexuality and politics play out in nuanced rhetorical forms. In explaining the significance of equestrianism for political discourses, de Ornellas argues that dominance and submission are at the core of the figure of the horse as a political metaphor. However, the other binaries mentioned above are equally—if not more—relevant to scholarship regarding the classical horse metaphor.

One topic worth investigating further is Ovid's manipulation of the horse's level of communication. When Ovid describes horses in *The Metamorphoses, amor,* voice, and silence become intricately linked. Book II of the *Metamorphoses* includes the stories of Phaeton and Ocyroe, both of whom struggle with either the failure or total loss of voice. Phaeton, who is given the right to drive his father's celestial chariot, fails to communicate with the horses through speech commands and control them. The Ovidian scholar John Heath analyzes the results of Ocyroe's capacity for speech being removed. He claims that Ocyroe's "loss of human voice in this new manifestation [of the mute centaur] will from now on be her defining characteristic" (346). If we are to interpret Ocyroe's loss of voice as fundamentally definitive, then her metamorphosis is also a changing of identity from a "human with horse parts" to a "horse with human parts." Not at all a semantical distinction, Ocyroe's transformation problematizes the animal-human binary through her loss of language (*Metamorphoses,* II.633-75).

Ocyroe's fully entering the animal world necessitates her loss of speech and serves as a link between horses and silence. Connections between horses and language—failed or otherwise—are relevant to understanding the classical horse as a metaphor for *eros*. For Ovid, the appearance of a horse should immediately evoke questions of communicative sound and—by extension—rhetoric, the art of persuasion as taught in classical and Renaissance education. In a culture and era in which horses and humans lived intimately, the precise ways in which horses communicate with one another across distances would have been common knowledge.

Centuries later, when Shakespeare studies both Vergil's and Ovid's horses, he seems to make particular note of *eros* metaphorized in the form of the horse; he also seems fascinated by the connections between horses' communications with one another and the human art of rhetoric. Sonnets 50 and 51 connect so powerfully the imagery in Vergil to that of Ovid that the resemblance is uncanny (a form of what some Renaissance scholars have called "queer" time). The two sonnets use the horse trope as a means of discussing contemporary notions concerning homosexual desire and "masculine love."

Masculine love featured prominently in early modern England. In "'Masculine Love,' Renaissance Writing, and the 'New Invention' of Homosexuality," Joseph Cady discusses masculine love, one of the frequently used terms in sixteenth-century England for what is now called homosexual desire. He claims that masculine love is a term that more closely corresponds to the contemporary understanding of homosexuality as a level of relationship rather than simply carnal relations: "'Masculine love' exemplifies this procedure [of labeling concepts based on primary emotions] in its frank conjoining of a reference to erotic desire ('love,' clearly used in the sexual sense . . .) with a reference to

the male-male ('masculine') nature of that desire" (18-19). In other words, "masculine love" is a blend of romantic ideals and sexual attraction. The term "masculine love" appeared frequently in early modern literature to indicate the presence and defense of homosexual practices at the time. Mark Breitenberg, who has also commented on masculine desire in early modern England, argues that masculine love is culturally understood to be contradictory; that is, Shakespeare is, in many ways, playing off cultural discourses rather than combatting them. Like Haraway, Breitenberg uses notions from Althusser to argue that being masculine in this purist culture paradoxically involves succumbing to desire: "To know oneself as a man, to be interpellated by early modern culture as a male subject, is already to embody that culture's paradoxes—one of which is the self-destructiveness of desire" (128). Whether Shakespeare's male protagonist is the homosexually inclined rider in Sonnets 50 and 51, the pre-heterosexual Adonis, or the rapist Tarquin in *Lucrece*, masculine desire as a motivating force paradoxically thrives off the counterforce of self-destructiveness that Breitenberg proposes.

However, current scholarship on early modern homosexuality is as conflicted as scholarship more specifically concerned with homoeroticism in Shakespeare's sonnets. Scholars like Stephen Orgel have argued that homosexuality was indeed present, but that, in its simplest forms, early modern homosexuality was understood to be simply subtle effeminization. Furthermore, Orgel's entire analysis of homosexuality, restricted mainly to Shakespeare's plays, occurs only through the lens of hetero-normativity: "concepts of sodomy in the anti-theatrical discourse in fact depend on a heterosexual mode" (34). It is for this limited view of the larger culture's hetero-normative mindset that Jonathan Goldberg criticizes him in *Sodometries* (121). Goldberg focuses on how homosexuality

was much more pervasive and not so strictly controlled as Levine and Orgel would think: "Reading Renaissance texts for sodomy—and for sodomites—involves rather seeing the ways in which normative bonds that structured society also allowed for sexual relations" between men (23). However, while homosexuals certainly lived and thrived in sixteenth-century England, they still often experienced cultural persecution—although legally, they rarely suffered prosecution (Orgel 58). Gregory Bredbeck claims that homosexuals were heavily degraded linguistically: "Throughout the course of the Renaissance a large number of derogatory terms became associated with people who engaged in sodomy—pathic, cinaedus, catamie [*sic*], buggerer, ingle, sodomite—and legal writings of the time express a definite attitude of abhorrence" (5). Despite the strong taboos against it, evident rhetorically, and especially in theatrical performances, homosexuality thrived often in the formulae of "masculine love" found in early modern poetry, philosophy, and art.

Masculine love in Sonnets 50 and 51 functions through the figure of the horse. Much present scholarship on these two sonnets makes note of the horse as an instrument—and indicator—of *eros*. Most scholars note the connection purely incidentally, often using the phrase "erotic horse" or similar terminology. For some examples of this passing commentary on Sonnets 50 and 51 in the context of the erotic horses, see Nicolaus Delius, Edward Dowden, G. Bernard Shaw, and G. C. Moore Smith. Scholars W. G. Ingram and Theodore Redpath note in their critical edition of the sonnets the expression of sexual desire through voice: "Desire (pure *eros*) cries out with impatience. The word 'neigh' was evidently suggested by the fact that the poet is riding a horse, which often neighs from the impatience of sexual desire" (118). Ingram and Redpath reference Hebrew scriptures and *Venus and Adonis* as further evidence of the

connection between the horse and the erotic. The verse the editors cite is Jeremiah 5:8: "They were as fed horses in the morning; every one neighed after his neighbor's wife." Joseph Pequigney claims that Shakespeare was cognizant of the "neighing after another's wife" as a metaphor for adultery (53).

On the subject of concerns of voice and sexual desire, Ingram and Redpath claim that *sound* signifies the presence of sexual desire in the horses, as the trope appeared in Ovid. Just as Vergil in the *Georgics* related the vocalizations of mares to their impatient sexual desire, so too does Shakespeare connect the sexually regretful, impatient rider with the neighing horse. Joseph Pequigney, who remarks on the phallic imagery in the sonnets, makes the crucial point that "desire [is] conceived of as carnal and genitally stimulative" in these two sonnets (53). The erotic desire emerges physically in the sounds the horses make.

In both of the poems, the male narrator proclaims and critiques his feelings of love while on horseback. The two sonnets collapse the horse into an idea of *eros*, transforming the horse into an erotic image that mirrors the narrator's own sexual desire. Shakespeare relies on the cultural significance of the horse in the context of contemporary advances in equestrianism and consequent developments in notions of balanced horse and rider rapport—to evoke and comment on contemporary codes of sexual behavior. Shakespeare's figuring of the horse in the sonnets questions and critiques dominant (mainstream) social attitudes toward sexuality, demanding readers re-define "human" desire.

Sonnets 50 and 51 are occasionally—if not frequently—called Shakespeare's horse-riding sonnets. Sonnet 50 centers on a rider journeying on his horse and feeling

melancholy due to his separation from his lover. This poem is laced with suggestive sexual language and terminology. In describing the rider's urging the horse forward, the narrator claims the rider "thrusts [a spur] into his hide" (l.10). In response to this violent dominance, the horse "answers with a groan" (l.11). Later, still responding to the rider's assertion of power, the horse answers with "that same groan" (l.13). The latent sexual innuendo in the language of the poem suggests the subtext of a commentary on sexual relationship—represented through the metaphor of rider and mount. The levels of activity and passivity in this sonnet render the relationship between horse and rider more one of metaphorical *sexual dominance* than *manège.* Though labeling this sonnet as suggestive of the rape relationship may seem extreme, the language of the sonnet does evoke sexual aggression metaphorized through the rider/horse relationship.

The horse is introduced in the sonnet as being a passive character, taking the burden of his rider and absorbing his emotional violence: "The beast that bears me, tired with my woe, / Plods dully on, to bear that weight in me" (ll.5-6). The rider, upon suspecting the horse knows of his misery, becomes not just aggressive in his attempts to control the horse, but also *penetrative:* "The bloody spur cannot provoke him on, / That sometimes anger thrusts into his side," and, after the horse groans in soft protest, the rider drives the spurs in deeper (ll.9-12). The horse-rider relationship in this sonnet does not portray the asking and receiving aspects of skilled *manège*, but rather a brutal dominance. The struggle between active and passive personalities in a relationship is suggested.

The managing of one's horse often figures in poetry human conduct in intimate encounters. Amy Greenstadt points out that rape was directly linked—at least in the contemporary mind—with a man's response to human female's "power": "Renaissance

culture identified female beauty as a primary agent of such rapture, a ravishing power that seduced men's senses and over turned their higher mental faculties of reason and will" (311). By applying her claim to the context of the horse in Sonnet 50, one can see that the abusive relationship between horse and its rider reflects a larger cultural problem—enduring even in misogynistic aspects of society today—of so-called "victim blaming." Although called a "dull" horse (slow, or perhaps unintelligent), this animal intuitively understands his human rider's most secret feelings and goals. Although he guides the horse on the road away, the rider blames the horse for increasing the distance from his lover, and the horse, receiving contradictory messages, becomes sullen.

The metaphor of the horse as *eros* becomes most apparent through the *volta.* The closing couplet claims that the journey's "onward," inevitable end offers less reward than the return home. The horse figures as both the fault for the displeasure of the journey and the mutual victim of the suffering it causes: "For that same groan doth put this in my mind; / My grief lies onward, and my joy behind" (ll.13-14). The lines equate the horse's groan with the groan of the rider's own grief. While not necessarily feeling empathy with the horse, the rider acknowledges that both he and his steed are bearing—and sharing, in a sense—their mutual burdens. With words such as "heavy," "weary travel," "tired," "bloody," and "hide," the language of the body denigrates the physically depressive consequences of the rider's journey from the beloved. The sonnet indicates that, if the horse were closer to the lover, the rider and thus his horse would be happier.

Evidence of the horse—and the spur—as phallic symbols appears when the sequence is continued in Sonnet 51. This sonnet seems to commence where Sonnet 50 concluded: the rider decides to return to his lover, excusing himself (and his steed)

because the motivation is love. The rider becomes possessed by a metaphorical horse, the horse of *eros,* and he suggests running to his lover on foot if it means it will be a quicker return. The erotic imagery continues through the poem's suggestive phrases: "my dull bearer"; "mounted on the wind"; "can no horse with my desire keep pace"; and "no dull flesh." The phrase "my dull bearer" echoes the concepts of burden and slowness seen in Sonnet 50. However, the language shifts dramatically with the new, metaphorical horse. No longer does the rider have to rely on artificial aids (such as the spur) to assert his dominance and masculinity. His sense of *eros* becomes much more possessive and controlling, transforming his "dull bearer" into Vergil's description of the mares' destructive *hippomanes*. The rider's virility transcends the visceral moment of riding a horse away from his beloved and enters a cosmological realm of being "mounted on the wind."

Some scholars have directly connected Shakespeare's sonnet-horse with sexual desire. Scholar Martin Green focuses his research on many of the terminological decisions made in Shakespeare's sonnet sequence. He makes the interesting—albeit passing—linguistic claim that "horse and whores were homonyms, or almost homonyms, in Shakespeare's time" (95). Green reveals that Shakespeare's sonnet-horse is not just a conversation with classical discourses but also contemporary linguistic ones. By deepening the analysis of the sonnet's language, one can see that there are two horses present: one that acts *against* desire, and one that *embodies* desire. The former is described through primarily negative description: "Since from thee going, he went wilful-slow" (l.13). For the contemporary equestrian, a horse that is "willful-slow" is hardly worthy of riding. However, the pro-*eros* horse becomes a gallant courser with "no dull

flesh" (ll.10-11). This horse is strong, rapid, and virile. Hence, there are a real, tangible horse and a metaphorical, erotic horse. The presence and juxtaposition of these two horses create a two-sided coin that becomes *eros*.

The horse of desire from Sonnets 50 and 51 parallels the horse in the work of Sir Phillip Sidney and his employment of the classical trope. In the exordium to his *Apology for Poetry*, Sidney analyzes with an ironic stance the rhetoric of an esquire he met at the Emperor's Court in Austria to show how pompous and condescending he was. The riding instructor focuses on the fine techniques of equestrianism, portraying the practice as an accomplishment of highest nobility: "what a peerless beast a horse was, the only serviceable courtier without flattery, the beast of most beauty, faithfulness, courage, and such more" (19). Despite Sidney's focus on the trickery of the esquire's rhetoric, he is duly impressed and enchanted by the majesty of the horse in this description. Sidney's 49th sonnet in *Astrophil and Stella* centers on a narrator's comparison between the experience of love—whether apt or inept—and expert horsemanship. Sidney argues that being in love is comparable to allowing oneself to be ridden or "managed" by Love. Though not necessarily revealing the horse trope as a manifestation of the thematic presence of *eros*, Gerald Massey, in his 1888 commentary, calls attention to shared similarities between Shakespeare's Sonnets 50 and 51 and the opening line of Sidney's 49th sonnet in *Astrophil and Stella*: "I on my horse, and Love on me doth trie" (Rollins, *The Sonnets* I.136).

I would advance the comparison between Shakespeare's Sonnets 50 and 51 and Sidney's 49th sonnet. Two other lines develop the idea of parallel structures between handling erotic love and practices of equestrianism in these poems. The speaker, in

lamenting the woes of love, emphasizes the commonplace of erotic love metaphorized as a relationship between rider and mount: "A horsman to my horse, a horse to love" (49.3). The speaker advances his argument with the claim that, "[Love] spurres with sharpe desire my hart" (49.11). Personified Love acts as equestrian in this sonnet, relying on the equestrian equipment of the spur (in other sonnets, the "whip") to urge the speaker onward. This language is also apparent in Shakespeare's Sonnet 50, in which the narrator's nostalgic desire for his partner, awakened by the horse's "groan," is "More sharp to [him] than spurring to his side" (50.12).[3] In both Shakespeare's and Sidney's poems, the equestrian practice of "spurring" evokes the palpable sharpness of desire as a physically painful experience.

How are we to read the horse as a metaphor for sexual desire—and, more specifically, emotional urges—in the context of sixteenth-century English homosocial behavior? For the past hundred years, scholars have argued about the homoeroticism of Shakespeare's Sonnets. In his seminal work *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye*, Joel Fineman traces subjectivity throughout the sonnets. He relies on the increasingly frequently used categories of the sonnets: the "young man sonnets," which praise the young man, and the "dark lady sonnets," which deride the woman. Fineman claims the two sub-sequences are indicative of a "double Venus, with the young man taken to be the image of spiritual and intellectual desire as opposed to the dark lady's embodiment corporeality of lust" (57). Much of this idea of the "double" appears with the horses in Plato's *Phaedrus,* in which Plato discusses the metaphor of a charioteer driving two horses: one is "a lover of honour and modesty and temperance," while the other is "the mate of insolence and pride."

[3] See Donow 291.

These horses respectively represent modesty and lust, and the charioteer has to drive both of these horses (mental faculties) in unison in order to steer the chariot. This allegory represents the human struggle to balance both the higher and lower faculties: intellect versus instinct, temperance versus lust, and knowledge versus passion. These dichotomies thrive in *Venus and Adonis.* Fineman's claim reveals a more conservative view that, in comparison with the dark lady sonnets, the young man sonnets are devoid of eroticism and are more spiritual.

However, this thesis will align more with the opposite perspective, voiced best by Joseph Pequigney. Pe quigney argues in the introduction of *Such is My Love* that the young man sonnets are explicitly erotic "in both orientation and practice" (1). Much of Pequigney's work offers evidence from Sonnets 1-126 of the erotic, sexual, and often phallic language that evokes a deeper, more physically involved relationship than one of only a spiritual or intellectual desire. Neither Fineman nor Pequigney are the sole definitive voices for Shakespearean sexuality studies. However, they indicate the vast spectrum of those studies, from complete denial of homoeroticism to Pequigney's claim (echoing Auden's) that the sonnets are "the grand masterpiece of homoerotic poetry" (1). This thesis's siding with Pequigney in this scholarly debate has both a causal and an effectual relationship with contemporary discourses of sexuality: just as the sonnets reveal and affirm the subtleties of "masculine love" in contemporary England, they also critique and degrade the heteronormative ideologies that kept masculine love in suppression. In the larger context of the young man sonnets, the two "horse sonnets" relate the interactions between the speaker and the young man to contemporary modes of *manège.* The young man, in these sonnets, figures as the perfectly poised equestrian

Adonis, becoming the physically immaculate youth evoking the tradition of erotic epideixis. Stephen Orgel also addresses the homoeroticism of the sonnets in *Impersonations*. He claims that the act of homosexual intercourse is not *morally* problematic, despite the cultural disdain: "The difficulties of homosexual intercourse, as the sonnets present them, are technical, not moral . . . [and assure] the lover that it is perfectly all right to go on being passionately in love with the young man" (71). Shakespeare's literary interpretation of homosexual desire was largely celebratory, not just tolerant.

Scholars of early modern homosexuality and homoeroticism are fascinated by the wealth of homosexual and homoerotic references in contemporary literature. Stephen Guy-Bray claims that homoeroticism was plainly foregrounded in "culturally approved texts" of the period. He adds that writers looked to classical sources for literary standards of homoeroticism: "My argument . . . is that many Renaissance writers used classical models to construct their own homoerotic discourses" (5). The focus on both masculine beauty and masculine love became prevalent as a result of writers' humanist education. Claude J. Summers agrees with this notion of the literary prevalence of homoeroticism and homosexuality, but adds that homosexuality was often implied and not explicit: "Homosexuality, and even homosexual subjectivity, is writ large in the literature of the English Renaissance and Enlightenment, but its inscription in this varied discourse is only rarely direct and unambiguous" (2). Moreover, the sources that concur that homosexuality was a frequent theme in contemporary literature are seemingly boundless. Few modern scholars would argue that homosexuality was nonexistent in the literary

discourses of the time. So, what happens when we throw the classically hetero-normative horse trope into this implicitly homosexual discourse?

An examination of the sexual terminology is crucial: as seen in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* and the *Metamorphoses,* horses in classical literature often appear in cases of heterosexual love and/or desire. In *Clitiphon and Leucippe*, Tatius details a male lover who seeks revenge after a horse killed his male beloved, turning *equus* into a starkly literal enemy of homosexual desire (Smith, *Homosexual Desire* 120). The horse more often figures strictly heterosexual relations in Roman classical discourses. The horse trope in these discourses communicates that the horse's heterosexual copulation is "natural." This understanding of intercourse as strictly heterosexual pervades the classical horse *mythos,* and readers have to question what is meant by the term "natural" in these discourses. The behavior of horses is seen as symptomatic or representative of the way nature behaves. Rather than serving as anti-homosocial rhetoric, the trope of the heterosexual horse in classical literature became a model for the art of love. Reintroducing the horse trope to signify homosexual desire, as Plato had done, then, becomes at least problematic: would a horse signifying homosexual love be a disruption of hetero-normativity, an apology for homosexuality, or even just a satirical move of the author?

The two horses of Sonnets 50 and 51 (the "dull" horse and the equine *eros*) can also be understood as two sides of sexuality. In some ways, the two sonnets could be read as combatting—and ultimately accepting—a socially unacceptable mode of inner sexual affect and practice: homosexuality. More complexity exists in the horse metaphor of Sonnets 50 and 51, corresponding to Shakespeare's contemporary culture saturated with

equestrian terminology. When the rider of Sonnet 51 decides to return to his male beloved, he refers to his physical horse as a "jade": "But love, for love, thus shall excuse my jade" (l.12). Here, the metaphorical horse of *eros* becomes the horse the rider decides to ride instead of the physical "dull" horse. Glosses have defined the word "jade" as a "horse," but the *OED* has proven to be much more specific regarding a rich array of connotations. The first definition the *OED* provides explains the word "jade" as a "contemptuous name for a horse; a horse of inferior breed, e.g. a cart- or draught-horse as opposed to a riding horse; a roadster, a hack; a sorry, ill-conditioned, wearied, or worn-out horse; a vicious, worthless, ill-tempered horse; rarely applied to a donkey." The entry cites authors like Chaucer, Palsgrave (who, like Shakespeare, specifically calls the jade a "dull horse"), and King Charles II, who all connect the jade with derogatory and defaming connotations.

When the rider says that "for love" his beloved will "excuse" his "jade," he is not merely claiming that his beloved will pardon his "dull" performance; the speaker gives us as readers the spur just as he gives his horse, suggesting that his present horse, as a phallic metaphor, is *dull*. The physical horse of the sonnet performs unsatisfactorily just as its metaphorical counterpart. The thematic repetition is not an accident; rather, it is Shakespeare's practicing a rhetorical maneuver taught in Tudor education. As Lynn Enterline suggests in *Shakespeare's Schoolroom*, Shakespeare was trained in classical rhetoric (9-32). He would have been more than familiar with the Greek term *exergasia* (ἐξεργασία) as it appeared in many of the primary rhetoric textbooks.[4] *Exergasia* involves

[4] This term is also known in Latin as *expolitio*. The contemporary texts where this term appears with full explanation include Melanchthon, Sherry (who translated Erasmus), and Peacham.

a repetition of not necessarily a specific word, but a specific concept for rhetorical effect; it also involves altering the phrases and words to obscure the act of repetition (Burton). Throughout the two sonnets, *exergasia* is used to criticize the real horse in order to lead us to its metaphorical counterpart. The *exergasia* begins in Sonnet 50 with the phrase "beast that bears me, tired with my woe" (50.5). The connotations in this line are dismal and discouraging. The steed is denigrated to "beast," he is "tired," and the depressed rider only feels "woe." In this one line, the imagery evokes a particular mood, or unity of effect (as Poe would suggest). This same emotional evocation occurs repeatedly throughout the two sonnets. In the next line, the horse "plods dully," revealing to readers the slowness and stupidity of the horse while still contributing to the poems' ambience of depression (l.6). The rider's melancholic mood continues in the following phrases that reiterate the horse's incompetence as a means of evoking melancholy: "cannot provoke him on" (l.10), "heavily . . . .answers with a groan" (l.12), "same groan" (l.13), "slow offence" (51.1), "dull bearer" (l.2), "poor beast" (l.5), "dull flesh" (l.11), "jade" (l.12), and "wilful-slow" (l.13). With such emphasis on the emotional effect of sadness and weariness, Shakespeare's rider is doing more than complaining about a horse: the *exergasia* is a critique of socially expected feelings of sexual desire. The narrator is subtly emphasizing the inadequacy of the horse as a representation of hetero-normativity.

In the two sonnets, one equestrian term appears thrice: "spur." The spur is a metal device pressed into a horse's side in order to urge the horse onward. Federico Grisone, one of the influential equestrian writers of the early modern period, argues one should use the spurs so that the horse "will be forced to correct his errors, and will become balanced, and will always follow that mark that is necessary for him" (189). The spur becomes a

correctional instrument and also a means for the rider to communicate firmly and precisely. Tasso uses the spur metaphor through a discussion of his relationship with his patron, contributing to the wide cultural circulation of the trope: "I went so far with a thousand acts of observance, respect, affection, and almost adoration, that at last, as they say the courser grows slow by too much spurring, so his [the Duke of Urbino's] goodwill towards me slackened, because I sought it too ardently" (Tasso 298; qtd. in Lee 13). The early modern period saw the rise of more humane spurs (see Figure 1). Rather than the long spikes of the early Middle Ages or the sharp, pointed wheels of the late Middle Ages, the early modern period saw the advent of decorative and generally blunter spurs.

Through Shakespeare's apparent (perhaps common) knowledge of the types of spurs people rode with in his time, Sonnets 50 and 51 reveal a greater sense of frustration on the part of the rider. He relies on the artificial control of the spur, but the effect is minimal at best. In these sonnets, the rider's inability to manage his horse verifies the cultural prominence of Grisone's notion that *manège* is less about dominance and more about an intuitive and intimate rapport and responsiveness between rider and mount. Analysis of these two Sonnets reveals Shakespeare's ability to meld classical discourses of the horse as a metaphor for *eros* with contemporary practices of equestrianism. When Shakespeare revisits the horse in his long narrative poems, however, the trope expands beyond discourses of love to accommodate political relationship as well.

26. German spur in copper, about 10 inches long, of the end of the fifteenth century.
Söter and Ambras Collections.

27. English spur in copper, about 5 inches long, of the end of the fifteenth century.
Meyrick Collection.

28. Spur in gilt iron, of the sixteenth century.
Museum of Artillery, Paris.

29. Spur in iron, of the seventeenth century, with rounded branches.
Museum of Sigmaringen.

30. English spur in steel of the sixteenth century.
Meyrick Collection.

31. German spur in iron, of the sixteenth century.
Museum of Sigmaringen.

32 A. English spur in gilt iron. It belonged to Ralph Sadler in the reign of Edward VI. (1547—1553).
Meyrick Collection.

32 B. German spur, copied from one on a suit of armour for a man on horseback.

33. German spur, said to be of sixteenth-century date. It has three rowels, and is of a very rare shape. The author believes it to be of the seventeenth century on account of the rounded branches.

34. Large spur in blackened iron, the branches of which are hollow, and served as a receptacle for concealed despatches. The heel of the shank, which unscrewed, formed the mouth.

35. German spur of the sixteenth century.
Museum of Dresden.

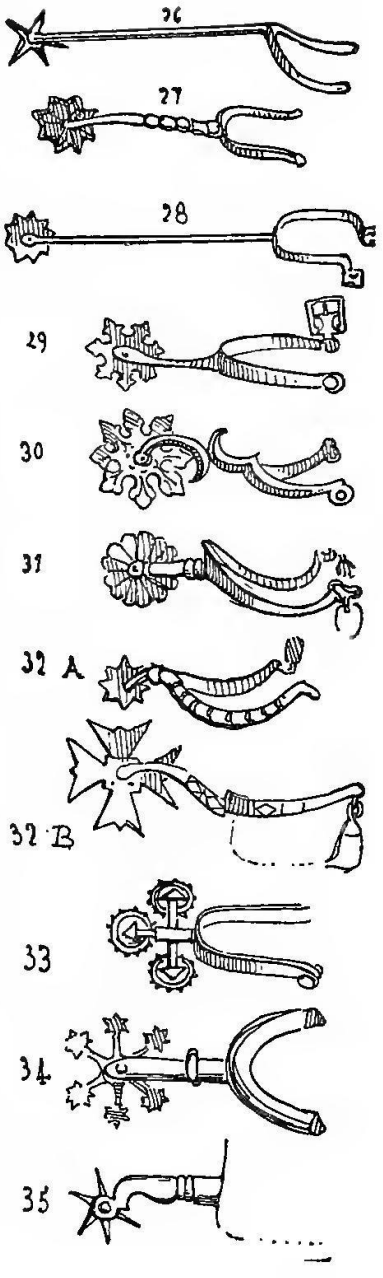

Figure 1. Early modern spurs (Demmin 347).

CHAPTER II:

"THE LUSTY COURSER'S REIN": THE HORSE AS POLITICO-SEXUAL METAPHOR IN *VENUS AND ADONIS*

Although perhaps less well known today than his sonnets, Shakespeare's most successful poem in his lifetime was *Venus and Adonis* (1593). Shakespeare adapts in the poem the classical tale of the young and very mortal hunter Adonis as he tries to escape the love-struck pleas of Venus. However, Shakespeare adds several unique elements to this tale that had become formulaic in his time: a focus on applied rhetoric (evocative of Shakespeare's education), even more pronounced homoeroticism than existed in classical versions of the tale, and, notably, the inclusion of horses where none had appeared in the tradition.[1]

At present, few studies address the horses in the poem at all, with many analyses focused on reductively allegorical, structuralist interpretations of what the horses represent.[2] In "Animal Rites," Lorraine Fletcher discusses numerous Shakespearean animals, from the dog to the snail, and argues that the horse is symptomatic of the poem's blurring the line between human and animal: "The animals in *Venus and Adonis* are surprisingly human, the speaking characters surprisingly animal" (2). Fletcher goes on briefly to connect the horses in the poem with sexual desire: "As to falling in love, the narrator records the ritualised lovemaking of the horses, which Venus offers as model of 'natural' heterosexual courtship, that is, of aggressive male and yielding female, though she usurps, as has often been noted, the male role in her courtship of Adonis" (5).

[1] For more information on horses in the tradition of *Venus and Adonis*, see Jacobson. In Chapter 4, she notes that horses are absent in Ovid's version of the tale.
[2] For more information on the studies of the horse in the narrative poem, see Thurston, "*Bestia et Amor*."

Fletcher's analysis points out the importance of "naturalness" when discussing animal metaphors for sexuality. In "The Myth of Mars' Hot Minion in *Venus and Adonis,*" Robert P. Miller interprets the horse metaphor in *Venus and Adonis* as indicative of love *and* war. Militaristic language parallels romantic language: "Hence Shakespeare can reflect his narrative context with the commonplace analogy of the horse-and-rider, or as a *militia amoris* which may be contested 'in the verie lists of loue' anatomically defined in st. 100" (481). Miller here refers to the hundredth stanza of *Venus and Adonis,* in which the courser is "mounted for the hot incounter, / All is imaginarie she doth proue, / He will not manage her, although he mount her." Miller's study uses the horse to further his argument that Mars is as important in this tale as Venus. While such studies as Fletcher's and Miller's are certainly valid, they do not acknowledge historical and philological scholarship that connects Shakespeare's horses to classical literature as well as early modern equestrianism.

This chapter will, after an overview of the literary tradition of the Venus and Adonis tale, analyze the classical horse-as-*eros* trope in relation to Shakespeare's poem. The chapter will conclude with a closer examination of the equestrian terminology that pervades the poem and how it affects interpretations of sexual relationships in the poem. Through the equestrian concept of *manège,* Shakespeare figures the interspecies relationship between horse and human as homologous to how one conducts oneself in romantic / sexual relationships.

One of the first literary representations of the Venus and Adonis tale was composed by Bion of Smyrna (c.100 BCE) in his *Lament for Adonis,* which details Venus's woe at Adonis's death. This version probably influenced the Roman poet Ovid

in his most renowned version of the tale. Ovid presents the story of Venus and Adonis in Book X of the *Metamorphoses* (c. 8 CE). Here, the hunt comes alive as Ovid gives Adonis a full pack of hounds. Venus tries to reason with Adonis to persuade him to "lie" with her, though he rejects every attempt, deciding to continue hunting the boar, Adonis's bane. Gored by the bore, Adonis is mourned by Venus through his transformation into a flower, making his beauty immortal in botanical form.

Both Ovid and Bion contributed to the massive popularization—noted by the frequent adaptations—of the tale throughout Renaissance Italy (Alciati, Sannazaro, Minturno, Tarcagnota, Lodovico Dolce, Girolamo Parabosco, and G. B. Marino), France (Meli de St. Gelais, Jean Passerat, Gabriel le Breton, and Ronsard), and Spain (de Mendoza, Juan de la Cueva, and Lope de Vega) (Rollins, *The Poems* 390-91). When Caruso analyzes the classical tale's appearance in the Italian Renaissance, he notes that the Italian tellers of the tale focus on the boar, ignoring Adonis's hounds and any possibility of a horse in the mix. None of the contemporary French or Spanish tellers of the Venus and Adonis story seem to mention Adonis's having a horse at all.

As fascinated as poets were by the Venus and Adonis story in the Renaissance, there was just as much an obsession in early modern visual art. Surviving in the *ARTstor* digital database are over 60 paintings of the Venus and Adonis myth between the years 100 and 1600 CE. Around half of the paintings include images of hounds, and probably a third portray Cupid in some form or fashion. In Walter Liedtke's catalog of equestrian paintings between 1500 and 1800, Venus and Adonis are not represented. Many scholars have connected Shakespeare's adaptation of *Venus and Adonis* with contemporary artistic renderings, but the horse is absent even in those representations (Packwood).

The most famous—and arguably most influential—contemporary painting of the tale was made by Titian for Phillip II, a painting "which spawned numerous autograph and workshop versions, as well as reproductive prints within years of its creation" (Georgievska-Shine 97). In Figure 2, Titian's *Venus and Adonis* centers around the failure of Venus's love and persuasive rhetoric to secure Adonis as he leaves her. Furthermore, the flipped poses of the two figures—as well as their very different skin tones—reveal the sharp distinction between goddess and mortal in this scene.

Titian's painting is starkly Ovidian in content: two iconographic elements from Ovid's version of the tale become prominent in Titian's work and throughout sixteenth-century artistic representations. One of these elements is completely removed from Shakespeare's literary adaptation, and the other is mentioned by Shakespeare belatedly in his account: the former is Cupid, and the latter, the hounds. Cupid appears early in Ovid's version as the cause of Venus's uncontrollable (and unmanageable) desire: "*namque pharetratus dum dat puer oscula matri, inscius exstanti destrinxit harundine pectus*" 'for while that boy, equipped with quiver, kissed his mother / he unknowingly pierced her breast with an arrow' (X.525-26).[3] While not named explicitly, Venus's arrow-bearing "boy" is Cupid, as can be seen in Titian's painting. In this way, *eros* is anthropomorphized as an innocent cherub. In both Titian and Ovid, it is Cupid's fault that Venus woos Adonis; this wooing is not an effect of natural attraction. By removing the character from his poem, Shakespeare gives Venus agency for her actions, making natural beauty the *culpa* for Venus's sexual compulsion. Shakespeare's Adonis is even more physically enchanting than in Ovid's version. In some ways, Adonis is *enrapturing.*

[3] Translation is my own.

As Greenstadt posits, "rape" entailed an abduction, a taking, and not just sexual ravagement. *Raptus* was a display of power, much like the power Adonis holds—albeit unintentionally—over Venus. The poem, at surface level, is *less* erotic than Ovid's—until one examines the horses. Shakespeare gestures to the horse as an incarnation of *eros* without angel wings and infantile features; an allegory of *eros* with hooves and a mane.

The second Ovidian element of Titian's painting is the prominence of the hounds. In the *Metamorphoses*, the hounds initiate Adonis's death sequence. Upon Venus's exit, Adonis tracks a boar with his hounds, and the boar fatally gores him (X.710). In Titian's painting, the hounds seem anxious to pull Adonis toward his grim fate, almost harbingers of death themselves. By including this bestial element of the hounds, Shakespeare conforms to a cultural and historical conception of the hunt. In early modern England, hunting nobles practiced venery (hunting with dogs). The presence of hounds in *Venus and Adonis* would have been expected by readers, especially with the literary appeal and prominence of the hunt. However, Shakespeare transforms the ordering of the story so that the hounds only appear near the end of the poem, mostly as a means for Venus to track her resistant lover.

What is evoked through this comparative study of Ovid's version, Titian's painting, and Shakespeare's poem is Shakespeare's knowledge of, and loose conformity to, the cultural vogue of the tale of "Venus and Adonis" as a narrative metaphor for the love hunt. While Shakespeare maintains much of Ovid's story, including the hounds, he makes very definite iconographic decisions. In replacing Cupid's function in the story with the horses, Adonis leaves Greek antiquity to become an early modern hunting noble. Cupid's transformation from anthropomorphic god to beast reflects an authorial decision

that reframes erotic desire in a more contemporary context. Shakespeare's characteristic incorporation of elements of his everyday experience, to make the tale more modern, also affects the meaning of gender in the poem.

An entire scene in Shakespeare's poem is devoted to the mating rituals of two horses: a "courser" and a "jennet." Adonis appears at the beginning of the poem with his male horse, the courser. By the middle of the poem, when Adonis tries to leave Venus, a female horse seemingly randomly appears to draw away the courser. The courser, in his mating arousal—impatient at being tied up—breaks loose from Adonis's control to chase the jennet, despite Adonis's countless calls and attempts to retrieve his mount. Venus uses the moment to advance her persuasive rhetorical claim that Adonis should be like the horses and give in to natural animal instinct—or in the case of humans, heterosexual desire.

The significant details Shakespeare lends these two horses reveal a vivid, verbal portrait of the two horses and their behavior. In this way, the horses become two distinct and separate characters in the poem rather than an incidental background of horses in a meadow. As the two horses exhibit separate personalities, behaviors, and even physical descriptions, they become comparable to—though not necessarily equivalent to—the titular protagonists, Venus and Adonis. This argument brings to the fore the question of whether the jennet and the courser are to be read as representative of "the animal," or rather as real animal mascots meant to deepen our reading of the relationship of lover and beloved, male and female, in Venus and Adonis. In the context of the foregrounded

Figure 2. *Venus and Adonis* by Titian, 1553.

presence of *l'animot* in the poem, interpreting the horses as just another indicator of Venus's affinity with nature is certainly valid. However, the stark differences between the horses suggest the necessity for more critical attention. Comparative literary scholars could delve deeper into the relationship between Venus and Adonis, and the two horses.

Venus and Adonis themselves occupy gender roles opposite of what might be expected of them. Although goddesses in Greek mythology can be aggressive, in Shakespeare's version of this tale, Venus becomes masculine in her domination of Adonis and in her size and physical strength. In one line, she becomes gargantuan and able to lift Adonis with ease: "Over one arm the lusty courser's rein / Under her other

was the tender boy" (ll.31-32).[4] While in the tradition she is characterized as loving, in Shakespeare's version Venus becomes driven: "Being so enrag'd, desire doth lend her force" (l.29). She becomes a dominating goliath who terrifies and, through both body and verbal language, drives Adonis away. Both her personality and her physique make her, paradoxically, the epitome of heteronormative masculinity in the poem, despite her being the female goddess of love.

Adonis, however, embodies feminine qualities. He is more emotional and less rhetorical than Venus, exhibiting all the qualities that Venus opposes through the poem. His demeanor is submissive, as he is made to stay with Venus but cannot be compelled to do more: "Forc'd to content, but never to obey" (l.61). Here, he is able to be contained but not manipulated; he becomes objectified but resists *Venus's* object. Fighting back against Venus's incessant rhetoric, his desire to protest is founded on embarrassment: "He burns with bashful shame" (l.49). This shame complicates this defiant character as it becomes a sign of Adonis's discomfort. Adonis's refusal to lie with Venus is about more than just a lack of interest in love; he refuses to lie with *any* woman. Adonis does not necessarily become *feminine* through his submission but *non-heterosexual*.

The non-heterosexual Adonis appears in the poem's constant language of comparison. Adonis is not struggling with a choice of lying with Venus or not; his decision is between love and *hunting*. Shakespeare describes Adonis as a lover of hunting more than love: "Hunting he lov'd, but love he laugh'd to scorn" (l.3). Edward Berry has commented that the sexualized imagery of hunting in this poem corresponds with and

[4] This passage closely resembles Spenser's characterization of Argante, the giantess of Book 3 of *The Faerie Queene*, who puts the "Squire of Dames" across her saddle.

echoes contemporary sentiments toward hunting: "Adonis's love of the heroic hunt of the boar, Venus's seductive attempts to deflect that love in the soft hunting of deer in parks or hare in the open field . . . such episodes achieve their witty resonance in large part because they draw upon the traditions, practices, debates, and values embedded in the Elizabethan world of the hunt" (59). As is seen by images such as Cupid's stalking his prey with arrows, and Actaeon's hunting before he spies the naked Artemis, the word "venery" is able to signify both hunting with canines and sexual indulgence. Hunting has a long tradition of acting as a metaphor for sexual pursuit. In finding himself choosing between hunting the boar, with its phallic tusks, and hunting the hare, Adonis is actually poised between two types of love.

One is the *masculine* love mentioned above, the love between two men. The other is *feminine* love. Joseph Cady approaches the term "feminine love" as a linguistic device for heterosexuality, defining it as a love for the female. Cady's two terms—masculine love and feminine love—indicate that contemporary conceptions of love were androcentric: males initiate love, but both males and females can receive it. An understanding of contemporary notions of desire makes it clear that Adonis's shame exists because, with Venus, he would not be the subject of desire but the object. However, by chasing the boar with its phallic tusks, Adonis becomes both the subject (the seeker and chaser) and the object—in this case, the victim.[5] Because Adonis seeks out the very prey that he knows—and Venus confirms—to be life-threatening, Adonis displays masochistic tendencies through his desire to pursue this metaphorical homosexuality.

[5] For more info on what I call the "homoerotic boar," see Asals, Enterline (*Shakespeare's Schoolroom*), and Hatto.

Lisa Starks-Estes has made a similar argument, that Adonis becomes a masochist—and a Christian martyr—through Venus's blazon of him and his imminent death (50).

Issues of gender conformity and sexuality arise also through the horses in the poem. The courser becomes a lustful character when he spies the jennet: "His eye, which scornfully glisters like fire, / Shows his hot courage and his high desire" (ll.275-76). Shakespeare's focus on the courser's experience of "desire" echoes the eroticism of horses in Vergil and Ovid. However, Shakespeare's courser is also dominant: "The iron bit he crushes 'tween his teeth, / Controlling what he was controlled with" (ll.269-70). This new focus on sexual dominance and the need to control in the horse evokes the motif of the sexually impatient horse, but it also makes clear the idea that masculinity in this poem *is* about dominance. In the same section that lends the courser such virile masculinity, Shakespeare makes the courser majestic: "With gentle majesty and modest pride; / Anon he rears upright, curvets and leaps" (ll.278-79). The courser is the antithesis of Adonis and the very ideal Venus argues for Adonis to become. The courser is deft, strong, and sexual, while Adonis is submissive and lacking the same desire as the courser.

The jennet, on the other hand, becomes seductive. Shakespeare describes the jennet as a sexual instigator: "A breeding jennet, lusty, young, and proud" (l.260). While the words "breeding," "lusty," and "young" suggest a clear image of a horse desiring intercourse, "proud" may seem the exception to modern readers. The *OED* defines "proud," in the context of animal descriptions, as "spirited, fearlessly vigorous." However, "proud" also means "sexually excited" or even "erect." Even this adjective, though seemingly "innocent," is evocative of sexual connotations for early modern

readers. Rather than being an indicator of majesty or nobility, as is seen in the courser, the jennet receives treatment through the sensual language of the body to make her the equine embodiment of feminine desire. The body of the jennet alone is enough persuasion to convince the courser to abandon the control of his rider and pursue her, making the jennet the voiceless temptress for the courser. The jennet's natural endowments succeed in controlling the courser, while Venus fails to "manage" Adonis even with the combined powers of her voice and body.

Venus compares her relationship with Adonis to the interactions of the two horses. This comparison is meant to serve as a lesson in love. "Let me excuse thy courser, gentle boy; / And learn of him, I heartily beseech thee, / To take advantage on presented joy" (ll.403-05). However, the two pairs are not interchangeable. In Shakespeare's version, the courser is more dominant than the jennet. Neither can the courser be comparable to Adonis, nor the jennet, the smaller, weaker horse, be equated with Venus. The inability to make these comparisons points out for readers of the poem the flaws in Venus's rhetoric.

The poem, in its criticism of contemporary gender constructions, compares a male-female binary to concepts of domestication. Kevin de Ornellas equates the domestication of the horse with contemporary masculinity: "the most ubiquitous symbol of early modern, masculinist dominance over the animal was the domesticated horse" (127). The courser and the jennet pose a dichotomy more important than that of male-female: they also echo contemporary discursive strains of dominance-submission and wild-civilized. The courser is capable of performing complex gaits and handling heavy equipment. In sixteenth-century England, the courser had connotations of being a good

and respectable horse meant to be ridden. Sixteenth-century writer John Hayward describes in his historical work the majesty of the courser: "[The noble was] mounted vpon a white courser, barbed with blew & greene veluet, embroidred gorgiously with Swans and Antiops of Gold-smiths worke" (46). The courser here is adorned with noble armaments, reflecting the elevated class of both the rider and the steed. What we understand, first and foremost, about Adonis's courser is that it is a civilized horse. Somehow, being controlled and "curbed" by training is a sign of true masculinity and dominance, whereas the jennet, in all her natural freedom, is submissive and somehow less regal—certainly receiving less *epideixis*—than her male counterpart. In terms of gender, the civilized, conformist male is better than the wild, unsocialized female. This comparison reveals that Adonis's struggle against heteronormative expectations for sexuality is more than just a struggle against temptation: it is about combatting nature itself.

Adonis prefers hunting the boar as opposed to deer or hares. Lauren Shohet writes persuasively on the relationship between Adonis's struggle on the "homosocial-homoerotic continuum" and the animal metaphors in the poem. She claims that the boar connotes the phallus: "The poem's presentation of the boar is, of course, quite phallic . . . More significant than this genitally suggestive imagery are the abstract qualities linking the boar not merely to the penis but to the phallus, with the full weight of cultural privilege which that term connotes" (88). Shohet observes here that the boar enables Adonis to become more of a sexual object. She engages a critical discourse that utilizes language centered on animal metaphor as a means for commenting on sexuality. Similar

parallels between commentary on sexual behavior and animal figures used as metaphor also occur with the courser and the jennet.

When comparing the horses to Venus and Adonis, there is a definite sense of competing modes of love—feminine love versus masculine love. The rhetoric involved in the themes of gender and politics in the poem become complex naturally, especially in the context of equine metaphors. To examine the gendered political arenas engaged through the poem's equine imagery, it is essential first to understand the terminology and etymology of some of the horse language used in the poem.

As stated in the introduction, much of equestrian and equine knowledge in sixteenth-century England spread orally, despite the increasing wealth of equestrian manuals that rose through the advent of print culture. As such, many of the terms surrounding horse culture were hardly definitive. One such word, which appears in *Venus and Adonis*, is "jennet." The *OED* defines it as a "small, Spanish horse." Any level of specificity or science regarding the term, however, is doubtful. The term is largely generic, possibly describing any horse.

A myriad of early printed texts, such as *Squyr of Lowe Degre* (1475), *Bibliotheca Eliotae* (1542), and *Huloets Dictionarie* (1573), associate the jennet with being a small, Spanish horse, typically used for riding. These sources also equate the jennet with a specific horse from the Asturian region of Spain, the Asturcón. While the jennet was probably not specifically associated with the Asturcón for the contemporary Englishman (being more of a generic term), it did attract certain stereotypes as a small and Spanish horse. The jennet, as she appears in *Venus and Adonis*, is wild and tempting, but still submissive as would metaphorically equate to her expected size.

The courser, on the other hand, possesses two types of control: control of movement, and control of self. The language of many of the poem's lines convey the courser's sense of intense training and mental control over his own actions: "Sometime he trots, as if he told the steps, / With gentle majesty and modest pride; / Anon he rears upright, curvets and leaps" (ll.277-79). In this example, the courser is aware of the different gaits and performs according to his equestrian training. Through this high level of body control, the courser becomes capable of communication and becomes the epitome of civilized masculinity. However, the courser also represents self-determined agency—a control of self: "The iron bit he crushes 'tween his teeth, / Controlling what he was controlled with" (ll.269-70). Able to ignore his rider's pleas and abuse the equipment meant to harness his energy, the courser becomes an independent thinker—self-directed despite his civilized, domesticated status.

Venus becomes a tyrannical force embodied in the small, Spanish horse. Her identity intersects with that of the jennet in such a way that her dominance becomes comparable to the contemporary stereotype of Spanish tyranny. Adonis, however, is a free-thinking independent who rebels against authority and social mores. He represents a more liberal system of thought and political freedom. Venus and Adonis—and their parallel horses—become comparable constructs to contemporary ideas of Spanish imperialism and classical republicanism.

Although imperialism was a prominent term in England in the 1980s to describe the move to expand the English Empire, the imperialism that was reason for terror in sixteenth-century England stemmed from the threat of empire and annexation from Spain and not England (Lorimer 7). The Anglo-Spanish War of 1585-1604 was one major cause

for this fear. However, Shakespeare saw the threat of imperial tyranny within England's own borders. Hence, his works promote a form of Venetian republicanism that developed early and can be seen in Plato's *Republic* and can be compared to that classical republicanism.

Plato stresses in the *Republic* the people side of policy-making, that the government should be focused on giving the people freedom of thought, even if at the expense of the government's organization (Wolin 47). Republicanism, for the sake of this thesis, is mostly about relinquishing monarchical—and, in the eyes of republicanism's proponents, tyrannical—power to the general community, so that the ruling body best represents the beliefs of its people. However, this is not to say, by any means, that republican and monarchical values are antithetical to one another. In his political manifesto regarding Elizabethan dictatorship, Patrick Collinson argues that the garbling of language, usually of republic versus monarchy, becomes problematic in modern scholarship regarding early modern politics. He claims, instead, that Elizabethan England was, in fact, both: "Elizabethan England was a republic which happened also to be a monarchy: or vice versa" (407). While Elizabeth was indeed the set ruler who had her hand in almost all of the political actions of England, England was still involved in an organized procedure of policy-making that very much made England a *state*.

Shakespeare's republican writing surfaces, therefore, as anti-Elizabethan. Andrew Hadfield, in particular, dedicated an entire chapter of his *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (2005) to the poem. Hadfield claims that Venus's words mimic the political situation of Elizabeth as she fears her demise: "Elizabeth, Shakespeare allegorically suggests, has neglected the rights of stable succession that her subjects expect, destroying them in

a ‘dark obscurity’, perhaps a reference to her refusal to allow the question of the next monarch to be discussed” (132). Hadfield reads Venus as a critical interpretation of Queen Elizabeth. With Venus’s colossal yet courtly manner, this is not a hard comparison to see. There is definitely a critique of female power at work here, and, with the very modern equestrianism that Adonis practices, seeing him as a noble in front of the Queen is not particularly difficult to imagine.

Republican values appear frequently in Shakespeare's plays and poems, Hadfield argues. However, he also claims that Shakespeare likely did not have high hopes for England adopting those values soon: "Shakespeare probably thought that republican values and virtues were unlikely to be adopted in England in his lifetime. Often, republican ideals of liberty, justice, and stability were simply not practical solutions to problems in a world that had never been able to rise above its dangerous divisions and prejudices, and had a complicated history which could not easily be unwritten” (603). With such skepticism toward having the ideal republic in his lifetime, it is no surprise that many of his republican works, such as *Venus and Adonis, Lucrece,* and *Othello,* end in tragedy.[6]

Echoing the debates of early modern political thought, the horses in the poem become mirrors—although, as previously discussed, not direct, exact replicas—of Venus and Adonis. By nationality alone, the jennet becomes a contradictory image: by 1593, the figure of the horse was seen as “anti-Spanish” (de Ornellas 85). The horse was frequently evoked in rhetoric against Spanish imperialism and Catholicism. The 1590s saw a huge

[6] See Wikander for a catalogue of early modern dramas that use elements of tragedy to critique English monarchy often in favor of republican ideals.

spread in xenophobia toward Spain and hatred toward Catholicism in general, and England repeated the motif of the horse that hates or ridicules Spaniards through authors like John Donne, Thomas Scot, and James Wadsworth (84). De Ornellas gives one example of a horse show known as the Banks and Morocco exhibition in which the horse Morocco "expressed disgust at the mention of the King of Spain—so famous was Morocco's contempt for Philip II that it had become proverbial. In his 1596 work, *Have with Yov to Saffron-Walden,* when Thomas Nashe needs a secure symbol to underscore the inevitability of a number of scenarios, Morocco's hatred of Spain is chosen as a yardstick of certainty: 'as true as Bankes his Horse knows a Spaniard from an English-man'" (83). These authors advanced the figure of the horse as an anthropomorphic character who would identify the Spaniard instinctively and insult him accordingly. The literary anti-Spanish horse was a frequent motif that embodied the national distrust of both Spain and Spanish Catholicism.

In a literary arena so hostile to Spain, Shakespeare made a daring leap in equating the Goddess of Love with Spanish imperialism. However, as Hadfield argues, Shakespeare considered Elizabeth little better than the Spanish rulers at the time. In Shakespeare's mind, the Spanish Armada and the Anglo-Spanish War were just reflections of England's own tyranny (especially Elizabeth's policies in Ireland).

While the poem is quite anti-imperialist, *Venus and Adonis* is also, correspondingly, a proponent of classical republicanism. The political implications are manifested in the form of Adonis's opposing rhetoric and his courser's desire to make his own decisions. First, Adonis makes it very clear that he despises not Venus but her system of manipulation and control: "I hate not love, but your device in love, / That lends

embracements unto every stranger. / You do it for increase" (ll.789-91). In many ways, by focusing on Venus's sole desire for "increase," Adonis critiques personal greed and Venus's desire to reproduce, despite such an instinct being "natural."[7] Second, Adonis claims independency and obstinacy against Venus's violence and rhetoric: "You hurt my hand with wringing; let us part, / And leave this idle theme, this bootless chat" (ll.421-22). He completely disavows her rhetoric as "bootless" and ignores it as if it were propaganda. He is appealing to an idea that a sense of community exists between them, that his opinion has weight. However, this ideal of republicanism is only the object of ridicule for Venus. Finally, as mentioned before, the courser "crushes" the iron bit in his mouth, giving himself control over his own body (ll.269-70). The horse becomes as much an instrument and mascot for republicanism as Adonis becomes its champion, despite his grisly demise at the tusks of the boar.

The trope of horse-as-*politikos* echoes the horse-as-*eros* trope: both tropes ultimately become two-sided. Just as *eros* can be masculine or feminine love, *politikos* can be republican or imperialist. In *Venus and Adonis*, the two tropes are intimately related. Questions of dominance, conquest, and power resonate with both tropes, and both become commentaries—if not critiques—of contemporary social practices or dominant mentalities. Shakespeare employs the horse as a means of working through larger concerns of polito-sexuality. Through a mode of distinct rhetoric, Venus, Adonis, the jennet, and the courser are able to create a poetic space in which gender, sexuality, dominance, power, and politics bleed together. In the same breath that Shakespeare

[7] "From fairest creatures we desire increase / That thereby beauty's rose might never die" (Shakespeare, Sonnet I, l.1).

criticizes contemporary sexual taboos, he attempts to dethrone and defame the Queen as a Spanish-type of emperor.

To further grasp the political horse, complicated in terms of sexuality, it would be beneficial to examine the final of the triad of poetry this thesis covers: *The Rape of Lucrece*. The poem of *Lucrece* combines the horse-as-*eros* and horse-as-*politikos* tropes to further critique the toxic culture of masculinity and hetero-normativity in Elizabethan England. This poem shapes Shakespeare's horse-as-*politikos* more fully into the republican steed.

CHAPTER III:

"CURB HIS HEAT": POLITICAL DOMINATION, THE BODY, AND THE HORSE IN *THE RAPE OF LUCRECE*

Few of Shakespeare's works blend concerns of sexuality with issues of politics in the way that *The Rape of Lucrece* is able to do. The poem concerns the Roman ruler Tarquin as he struggles with his inner lust for the noble Collatine's wife, Lucrece. This uncontrollable desire appears through Collatine's epideictic blazon of Lucrece in conversation with Tarquin. The words arouse Tarquin ultimately to give in to his base emotions and physically ravage Lucrece. Despite her protests against him, Tarquin gags her and finishes his heinous act. Upon Tarquin's exit, Lucrece laments her situation in a monologue that frequently references classical myths of rape and shame. She confesses what happens to Collatine and then kills herself, realizing she cannot continue living with the burden of her violation. In response to Tarquin's crime, Collatine and the people of Rome stand up to the imperial government, overthrowing and banishing Tarquin. Thus, the story in Shakespeare's time became a volatile analogue of political unrest toward republican outcomes.

In *Lucrece*, as in *Venus and Adonis*, human desire is allegorized as a horse rather than as Cupid. As desire becomes equine, notions of sexuality are further reworked as they were in the sonnets and in *Venus and Adonis*. Through contemporary equestrian language, Shakespeare engages the horse topos to explore issues of submission and dominance in the context of love, relationships, and even sexuality under the context of submission versus dominance. While the poem certainly critiques predatory masculinity, in the discourse on rape, the horse metaphor and the concept of *manège* are integral to

entering conversations about politics and the body to promote virtues of classical and Venetian republicanism.

Classical republicanism, the political system Plato had proposed to give the general body of people a voice in the affairs of government, has been a prevalent focus of recent Shakespeare scholars. In "Rape and Republicanism in Shakespeare's *Lucrece,"* John Kunat has drawn similarities between rape and tyranny in the poem, claiming that the idea of consent featured controversially in Elizabethan legal debates on governance. Kunat argues that rape is a tyrannical pirating of another's body: "As an instrument of patriarchal control and coercion, rape abjects the victim by subjecting her absolutely to the will of the oppressor and transforming her from a person in her own right into an object intended only for the pleasure of another person. This is the most extreme form of tyranny" (7). Seeing the rape in the poem as an allegory of tyranny, Kunat's analysis demonstrates that issues of agency function in both discourses of rape and tyranny.

However, the poem is allegorical for more than just tyranny. For example, in "Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece:* Honor and Republicanism," Robert Schaefer argues that rape can be seen as an allegory for the degradation of the Roman empire. He claims that Lucrece is the republican model for Rome in her undying virtue: "*The Rape of Lucrece* juxtaposes the general decadence of Rome to Lucretia, a woman of great virtue. She epitomizes what Rome ought to be" (152). Lucrece's feminine purity starkly contrasts with Tarquin's own predatory masculinity, and Lucrece's symbolism for the republican ideal bears on debates in arenas of politics and sexuality.

Shakespeare also draws from contemporary discourses on Venetian republicanism. The differences between Venetian and classical republicanism are largely

socioeconomic: while Plato's *Republic* promotes lending a voice to the "people" in general, in Renaissance Venice, aristocratic republicanism was an emerging political system. Machiavelli was perhaps the first to draw real differences between democratic and aristocratic republicanism. In "Not So Virtuous Republics," David Carrithers comments on Renaissance theories of aristocratic republicanism. Carrithers claims that aristocratic republicanism dominated contemporary political discourses, and the small ruling class of Venice served as an idealistic model for other European countries: "the concept of an aristocratic republic remained important from the Renaissance through at least the mid-nineteenth century" (247). The aristocratic republic of Venice holds such significance due to the city's historic origins in the Classical era and classical republicanism. Carrithers traces this history in detail, noting that Venice's success had been long-lasting: "According to the well established *mito di Venezia,* Venice could trace her origins back to the barbarian invasions of the Roman peninsula in the early fifth century A.D. Hence she represented a veritable bridge to the republicanism of the classical world" (249). Carrither reveals here that, although markedly different, classical republicanism heavily influenced the later Venetian model of aristocratic. The aristocratic republic of Venice was also distinctly unique among other European aristocratic republics. In *Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty,* William Bouwsma traces the prominence of Venetian republicanism in Renaissance political writings. He argues that the Venetian republic truly had equality among aristocrats: "Like Venice herself, the Venetian nobles recognized no superior, nor was there any legal hierarchy of status among them. Every noble was equal, and the members of the Great Council sat where they pleased, in no special order, at its meetings" (58). Equality among nobles was a

prominent feature of the Venetian republic, and Venetian republicanism functions prominently in *Lucrece* through concerns of agency and the subsequent violation of that agency.

Without necessarily having to call *Lucrece* a "republican poem," one can easily see how the plot evokes certain republican values. As Burrows points out in his introduction to *The Complete Sonnets and Poems,* monarchy is removed in favor of a Roman republic: "[Lucrece's] violation led to the banishment of the kings from Rome and the institution of government by consuls, and thus enabled the emergence of later forms of Roman republican government" (46). Lucrece becomes a progenitrix for this political liberation, though not necessarily the Venetian utopia envisioned by early modern political writers. As the violent rape represents a larger issue of tyranny present in the city, the poem conveys a political discord through its sexual language. Burrows, in arguing that the poem has republican virtues, claims that the discord is between monarchy and republic: "The moment of the rape in *Lucrece* dramatizes a collapse in the complex interrelationship between monarch and counsel" (53). However, Shakespeare does not attempt to offer a solution to the dangers of this relationship. He only offers readers the inherent and impending doom of such a political structure. Burrows adds that the monarchy presented in the poem always has potential for corruption: "A woman who speaks like a counsellor, and then is raped--this subject-matter darkly intimates that polity founded on the notional ability of counsellors to curb the will of the prince encounters a black and insoluble problem if the prince cannot control himself" (54). This dark and morbid view of monarchy functions on a general suspicion for corruption, which is equally apparent in *Othello,* as the Venetian government falls with ease.

Virginia Mason Vaughan, examining the cultural contexts of *The Tragedy of Othello* and the play's dichotomy of Venetians and Turks claims that Venice is quite comparable to England for viewers of the play: "Like England, Venice was a Christian nation with a mercantile economy, an island that depend on its navy for financial and political security, and a mixed government with imperial aspirations" (14). Despite these similarities, however, Venice was seen as almost utopian by Renaissance England's standards. Vaughan proceeds to address what James I called "the myth of Venice," labeling it "a widespread belief that Venice was the epitome of a rationally ordered and prosperous republic, its experience analogous in many ways to England's" (15-16). Part of the myth derived from the city's flourishing economy and trade market. Another part could be found in Venice's historical legacy of philosophy and law. Vaughan examines the precedent in England for seeing Venice as the paragon of rational thought: "Centuries of legal and governmental tradition have defined Venice as the locus of rational judgment" (22). As Vaughan realizes, however, this status could also be a source of cultural anxiety: "If Venice, the ideal commonwealth based on a rational government of checks and balances, could be subverted so easily, might not England in 1604, beginning a new dynasty with an unfamiliar Scottish king, be equally vulnerable?" (34). While *The Rape of Lucrece* was written well before *Othello*, Vaughan's argument reveals Shakespeare's mere acknowledgment of the problem of corruption, rather than actually providing a solution.

McPherson discusses the myth of Venice in detail, analyzing how it appears in Elizabethan culture and literature. He claims that Venice was seen as utopian: "A mixed state was thought to be the ideal form of government, and Venice was regarded as having

just the right mixture . . . The Republic had never been conquered" (27-28). Along with this concept of perfection, Venice was frequently associated with sexual purity, connecting the city even further to *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece:* "Writer after writer identifies her preservation of her liberty (freedom from domination by a foreign power) with sexual chastity" (33). In many ways, Adonis exemplifies this Venetian sexual and political liberty in his rejecting Venus's advances. Likewise, when Lucrece's chastity is taken from her by Tarquin, the destruction of her sexual liberty parallels Tarquin's corruption and violation of the city's political liberty.

Hadfield argues in *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* that Shakespeare frequently employs republican values and motifs in his works. Two particular works of Shakespeare's, *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Titus Andronicus,* are particularly republican:

> "Taken together, [*Lucrece* and *Titus*] argue forcefully that hereditary monarchy may be an undesirable form of government. Both represent tyrants who are conspicuously less virtuous and competent as rulers than other prominent Roman citizens, implying that England might suffer from equally bad rule. Both works are also quite clear that alternative forms of government, which would involve either dispensing with or curbing the power of the head of state, are possible and desirable for Rome." (111)

This critique reveals the anti-monarchal messages that underlie *Lucrece.* Hadfield claims that Shakespeare's interpretation of the tale sets Tarquin up as antagonistic toward and abusive of previously existing Roman laws and customs, adding that Lucrece identifies him not just as a monarch, but as one who abuses his power: "Lucrece argues that monarchs cannot rule happily without the support of their people" (117). Therefore,

Tarquin is not the figurehead of a political system that is inherently vile; rather, he represents the potential for corruption in monarchical structures of government.

More specifically, the Venetian republic involves a large political body of many people. Skinner describes the Venetian republic as a mixed government (mix of strict governmental control and freedom of the people). In describing this republic, he states, "The Venetian system . . . is based on a *Dux* who is elected for life and supported by 'about four hundred nobles and gentlemen who take part in public debates', as well as by 'an advisory body of forty leading citizens known as the *conciliarii*'" (34). While modern scholars might compare this form of republic to the government system instilled in American democracy, one key difference is that of scale: 400 representatives for one small area rather than the 535 members of Congress for the entire nation. Gasparini details the intricacies and complexities of the Venetian government in *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice.* He spends much of the introduction comparing this form of the republic with other forms of government, particularly monarchy. One of his critiques of monarchy in comparison to the Venetian republic regards the mortality of one man:

> "Neverthelesse I shoulde thinke that though the principalitie of one alone, that should lawfully, and by right challenge to himselfe the dignity of a king. If the matter be by it selfe considered, shoulde seeme of all other the best, yet in regarde of the brevitie of life, and mans fraile disposition, which for the most parte enclineth to the worser parte, the government of the multitude is farre more convenient to the assemblie of citizens, which experience the mistresse of all thinges doth elegantly teach us, because that wee have not read that there was

> among auncientes any soverainty of a king, neyther have wee in our time seene any that had not soone declyned into tiranny." (13)

With concerns of the "multitude" and representation inherent in the Venetian republic, Shakespeare critiques the tyranny of the English system in *Lucrece* as lacking this concern for the multitude.

Recent scholarship on *The Rape of Lucrece* also addresses the relationship between agency and rhetoric in the context of Tarquin and Lucrece. Colin Burrow comments in his introduction to the Oxford *Complete Sonnets and Poems* that contemporary readers of the poem would have been immediately persuaded by the rhetoric therein: "[Lucrece's] words would have won an easy nod of assent from early readers, who would instinctively feel that princes *should* seek to be feared through love, and *should* provide exemplary government" (52). Burrow provides a correlation between Lucrece's feminine power—and/or agency (or the lack thereof)—and rhetoric. This rhetorical focus appears in the works of other scholars too. Joseph Ward has recently labeled Lucrece a victim of rhetoric in the poem: "Lucrece does verbally defend herself, and at length. Yet the terms of her protest . . . simply reinscribe her subordination" (74). Lucrece's rhetoric is in many ways self-deprecating and implies the label of "victim." Ward exposes the practice of victim-blaming not just in Tarquin's or Lucrece's eyes, but also in the scholarship (Burrow 44).

Conversely, in *The Rhetoric of the Body,* Lynn Enterline has called Lucrece a hero of rhetoric. Enterline discusses the rhetorical strength Lucrece gains as a ventriloquist for Hecuba: "Lucrece is doing more than embodying the narrator's general desire for a poetic voice with the power of Orpheus' [*sic*]. She also becomes a surrogate

for the narrator since she is *repeating* his inaugural act" (181). In other words, Lucrece becomes as empowered as the narrator himself by going through the same rhetorical motions. Lucrece here is musical, an "instrument," but that transformation gives her both voice and beauty. She gains agency only *after* her ravishment. Miriam Jacobson, too, has acknowledged Lucrece is a hero, but she claims that much of this power occurs through Lucrece's battling societal concepts of feminine worthlessness: "[*T*]*his* woman's body is productive, generative, and will not stop until its story of violation is told" (95). Here, Jacobson identifies the generativity of rhetoric, a concept that appears in *Venus and Adonis* with the rhetorically trained Venus. Likewise, in *Lucrece*, the titular character suffers from failing to evoke persuasive rhetoric in time.

Most scholars, however, take the concept of desire in the poem for granted, focusing *solely* on either the function of rhetoric or the act of rape itself. In understanding Shakespeare's notion of desire, one does not, by any means, have to sympathize with Tarquin or see him as less of a villain. Understanding desire as part—though certainly not all—of the *culpa* for the rape entails grasping the emotional and physical force that drove Tarquin to act beyond reason, making himself a sudden patron and champion of *eros*. While Tarquin also has the "desire" to humiliate Collatine, his rival, his motivation is transformed into a bodily, erotic desire. In other words, the instinct for revenge shifts into a sexual instinct, completely erasing Tarquin's original intent.

One particular passage of the poem advances the horse metaphor to signify Tarquin's sexual instinct. After Tarquin fights with himself over whether or not to act on his carnal desires, he finds his way to Lucrece's room and decides to submit to those desires. During the rape scene, the poem focuses on animalizing desire, transforming it

into a starkly equine form to comment on politics and sexuality. The seven-line description of Tarquin's desire transforms Lust, Self-will, and Desire into horses:

> While Lust is in his pride, no exclamation
>
> Can curb his heat or rein his rash desire,
>
> Till like a jade Self-will himself doth tire.
>
> And then with lank and lean discolour'd cheek,
>
> With heavy eye, knit brow, and strengthless pace,
>
> Feeble Desire, all recreant, poor, and meek,
>
> Like to a bankrupt beggar wails his case. (ll.705-11)

Lust is the rash, impatient *eros* from Sonnet 51, in which "desire, (of perfect'st love being made) / Shall neigh, no dull flesh, in his fiery race" (ll.10-11). Self-will and Desire become the "dull" horse of Sonnet 50: "The beast that bears me, tired with my woe" (l.5). While it seems that Lust and Desire are two completely different figures here, they are actually the same, just at two different stages, denoted by the word "then." Impatient lust, once spent, leaves meek desire.

In specific lines in *Lucrece*, Shakespeare uses similar language in his horse sonnets and *Venus and Adonis*. Lust has "pride," and "no exclamation / Can curb his heat, or rein his rash desire" (ll.705-06). This almost directly imitates the line from Sonnet 51: "Then can no horse with my desire keep pace" (l.9). The lines focus on—pardon the pun—unbridled lust, a passion that cannot be controlled or measured by any standard. The lines from *The Rape of Lucrece* also reproduce equestrian language. "Curbing" is the practice of restraining and controlling a horse through pulling a curb bit in the horse's

mouth ("curb"). "Curb[ing] his heat" and "rein[ing] his desire" become figuratively synonymous here, both being equestrian metaphors for controlling natural instincts.

The seven lines also criticize the notion of Self-will, predominantly through equine imagery. Self-will is called a "jade" (l.707), a decidedly pejorative term (as previously discussed in Chapter 2). As a "jade," Self-will becomes the exhausted, "dull horse" of the sonnets, instantly tired once spent. The characterization of Self-will as the dull horse also indicates a shift in the poem, the climax where Tarquin has come to sexual release and is now at a point of exhaustion. His lack of control of the "horse" of his lustful actions subsides, and he is left with shame and guilt.

Desire, likewise, becomes the "dull horse" of the horse sonnets. Descriptors such as "lank," "lean," "discolour'd," and "strengthless pace" are similar to the melancholic language used in Sonnet 50 (ll.708-09). Shakespeare is relying on contemporary equine appraisals of a horse's conformation to measure Tarquin's "horse." While "lank" and "'lean" factor into the horse's weight and eating habits, the color and pace are affected by the horse's equestrian training. Adonis's horse is measured with similar terminology, although Adonis's horse has a much higher rank than Tarquin's: "So did this horse excel a common one, / In shape, in courage, colour, pace and bone" (ll.293-94). While Adonis's courser (practically a Bucephalus in quality) is superb, the "dull horse" and the horse Desire become mere jades in comparison.

The erotic metaphor of the horse relies on Tarquin's struggle with sexual impatience. Understanding Tarquin's rape in the context of notions of uncontrollable *eros* requires one to realize, as far as Shakespeare is concerned, that Tarquin is not dealing with the choice of whether to rape or not to rape. He is dealing with the decision to

maintain his purity while a corruption is increasingly gaining potency through its impatience. However, he is only forestalling what seems to be inevitable. Again, acknowledging the impetus of sexual impatience does not *excuse* the action of rape. However, the acknowledgment allows that, at least as indicated by Shakespeare's poem, desire is not a static emotion, but temporally changeable. Shakespeare's form of *eros* is pointedly different from contemporary versions of lust (such as Cupid and various flowers). In the shift from contemporary sexual symbols to the classical horse metaphor, Shakespeare makes a statement that desire, even in cases of rape, is something that grows and hastens, often not manageable by rhetoric alone.

The horse topos in this poem centers on erotic rhetoric. How we read the horse—and, consequently, how we read desire—is entirely dependent on an understanding of the rhetoric of the body. Erotic language laces the poem, raising questions of dominance and submission in the context of the horse metaphor of desire. In *Erotic Subjects,* Melissa Sanchez notes the importance of rhetoric and agency in *Lucrece*. She comments on the prevalence and power of the rhetoric used and concerns of agency that are affected by that rhetoric: "one cannot help but be struck by how much talking precedes the rape itself: 402 lines, in fact. This debate between Tarquin and Lucrece is characterized by . . . confusion of force and consent, activity and passivity" (98-99). Force, consent, activity, and passivity certainly blur together through the rhetorical twists of the poem. Activity and passivity factor into contemporary notions of rape as well as rhetoric. Force and consent also alter interpretations of Tarquin's desire. Lynn Enterline comments on the significance of Tarquin's rhetoric as a progenitor—and instigator—of his desire: "Shakespeare's narrator elaborates . . . the metarhetorical genesis of Tarquin's desire to

rape" (*The Rhetoric of the Body* 160). Tarquin's desire comes about through his mental discussions on the subject: *eros* is fed by his fight against it. This struggle against *eros* causes a dilemma of identity for Tarquin. Catherine Belsey has focused on Tarquin's loss of self in the poem, arguing that Tarquin is entirely possessed by *eros*: "Thus possessed, however, in the sense that he is impelled to act against his own judgment, Tarquin loses his self-possession and, in the process, his identity as friend, kinsman, prince, Roman lord" (315). Despite the increasing number of feminist scholars who vilify Tarquin, he, in many ways, becomes a victim of the classical *eros* and loses his identity and status through the failure of rhetoric, just as Lucrece becomes empowered through her success with rhetoric. Again, note that acknowledging this empowerment is neither a defense nor an apology for Tarquin's actions in the poem. Rather, this acknowledgment merely serves as a breaking down of Tarquin's emotional and mental struggles in the presence of Shakespeare's *eros*. It is not a matter of whether Desire is an external or internal force at work; it can best be seen as Tarquin's good nature struggling, and ultimately failing, with his capacity for evil, and he suffers for that failure. Some scholars who are paradigmatic for feminist studies of the *Rape of Lucrece* include Hansen, Arkin, Desmet, and Vasileiou. In general, they tend to focus on concerns of feminine agency and the empowerment of women through voice.

The horse metaphor of desire/lust further supports Belsey's claim, as desire succeeds and thrives at the expense of self-will. Tarquin struggles with his own nature and his bestial lust. Even apart from the horse metaphor per se, Tarquin's raping sequence is conveyed through almost exclusively animal language that transforms Tarquin into a predator, and Lucrece into the prey. One example of the predator-prey

language in the poem is the wolf and sheep metaphor: "The wolf hath seiz'd his prey, the poor lamb cries; / Till with her own white fleece her voice controll'd . . . " (ll.677-78). These two lines play on the trope of a wolf's hunger, making desire itself a bestial instinct. Furthermore, the lines emphasize the lamb's complaint and her subsequent silencing. The next set of animal lines transforms Tarquin into a literal *raptor*. Tarquin is now enraptured, raping, and raptor-like as Shakespeare incorporates all possible linguistic variations of *raptus:* "Look! as the full-fed hound or gorged hawk, / Unapt for tender smell or speedy flight, / Make slow pursuit, or altogether balk / The prey wherein by nature they delight" (ll.694-97). In this slow chase, the raptor revels in the hunt itself. The rape scene concludes in animal imagery, and Tarquin here becomes a dog, transforming Lucrece back into the lamb: "He like a thievish dog creeps sadly thence, / She like a wearied lamb lies panting there" (ll.736-37). Even Tarquin's retreat is bestial, while Lucrece's animal transformations are largely sympathetic, making Lucrece the martyr or sacrifice in the poem.

Tarquin figuratively transforms into an animal throughout the rape scene. Holly Dugan, in her account of ape-human bestiality—sexual intercourse between *l'animot* and humans—in early modern English literature, argues that literal bestiality factors into discourses of rape. She claims that "these accounts of when animals attacked fit uneasily between feminist histories of rape and queer histories of bestiality" (214). In discussing Lucrece's rape in terms of animal imagery, the scene becomes a case of figurative bestiality—that is, bestiality becomes an allusion to the savage violence of human rape. Later, Dugan connects bestiality further to rape in order to show how rape falls outside the standard mores of sexuality: "Rape violates species boundaries" (223). In the context

of the poem, this comment does not necessarily suggest that Tarquin *becomes* a beast, but that Tarquin is no longer human. He submitted to bestial desires and no longer follows the same laws and codes. What this ultimately means in terms of criticism of the poem is that the animal imagery is meant to be more than blur the lines between *l'animot* and human. It is also a call to Ovidian stories of animal-human carnal relations, lending an Ovidian epic voice to the poem.

Dugan reveals how Tarquin's rape of Lucrece enters a highly controversial area of academic study where, because Tarquin's actions are animalistic enough that he becomes an animal, the lewd act becomes a mixture of rape and bestiality. These two crimes possess different concerns however. Rape is predominantly an issue of consent. Anne Schotter argues that Medieval Latin comedies, for example, rely on gender stereotypes to comment on sexual consent: "Most of the comedies that deal with sexual violence justify it by assuming women's innate lustfulness, and therefore their consent" (24). The idea that it is "natural" for a woman to consent to men's sexual demands appears in much of Tarquin's own rhetoric as well. Bestiality concerns consent in a different manner, however. Gieri Bolliger and Antoine Goetschel have commented on the historical and cultural implications of bestiality and zoophilia. They claim that animal consent is, at best, problematic: "Because of the communication barrier between man and *l'animot*, it naturally remains unclear what exactly an animal feels during a zoophilic interaction if it does not show any evidence of pain, suffering or injury" (40). In the context of the *Rape of Lucrece*, Lucrece becomes an interesting adaptation of bestiality myth, in which the predator animal overtakes the female human. Shakespeare adapts the classical mythos of bestiality to accommodate issues of consent in the tale of Lucrece. Furthermore, the

communication barrier is a standard convention in the bestiality myth, whether it is the tale of Zeus and Ocyroe or Zeus and Ganymede. As Tarquin shifts from humanity into beastliness, he also becomes an instigator against moral law. Despite the predator imagery, however, the dominant animal figure in the poem is the horse.[1]

In labeling the lustfully possessed Tarquin a horse, we are confronted with concerns of dominance and submission. In human forms, Tarquin dominates Lucrece and stifles her sound: "For with the nightly linen that she wears / He pens her piteous clamours in her head" (ll.680-81). Even here, he "pens" her as if she were an animal. He is called a wolf, the highest of European predators, "carnivore incarnate" (Carter 110). He is called a hound, a beast for hunting, another carnivore. He is called a hawk with its murderous beak and claws. He is called a "thievish dog," carnivorous and taking that which does not belong to him. Finally, Tarquin is the lusty horse "in his pride." These animal images *center* on dominance and predation. These animals are penetrative, and this epyllion of rape still depicts a form of contemporarily comprehensible sexual desire, as it appeals to a hyper-masculinist, "phallic ordering" of sexuality (Enterline, "Embodied Voices" 144). The phallic ordering of sexuality is consonant with the gendered horses seen throughout Shakespeare's love poetry: apart from the jennet in *Venus and Adonis,* Shakespeare's erotic horses are notably male. Even while not penetrative, the horse becomes a figure of masculine sexuality that blends in with the predatory masculinity of the other animals.

[1] Note that I do not use the word "choice" as Shakespeare's version of Desire does not care for reason and/or rhetoric.

Shakespeare uses *Lucrece* to comment on early modern forms of tyranny (both in Spanish imperialism and the English monarchy) and to promote a form of classical republicanism, as it appears in Plato's *Republic*, much as he did in *Venus and Adonis. The Rape of Lucrece* ends with a couplet that gives voice and "consent" to the Roman people at the expense and figurative death of the long-lived tyranny: "The Romans plausibly did give consent / To Tarquin's everlasting banishment" (ll.1854-55). *Lucrece*'s notion that sexual consent parallels the political climate of tyranny unfolds through the pointed polemic against the imperialism that Tarquin represents. The trope of sexual violence was frequently a rhetorical device in political debates. Jennifer Airey claims that sexual atrocity was an instrument that promoted anti-imperialist sentiments throughout the early modern period. Airey comments that Lucrece's fall is *necessary* for the birth of the republic: "Lucrece's 'chaste blood,' rendered free from taint by the ritual of bloodletting, provides the impetus for the successful overthrow of the Tarquins, thereby righting the political realm" (131).

Airey's analysis demonstrates the significance of blood in the political discourse of the poem. Much of the post-rape language in the poem centers around disease, the body, blood, and stains. For example, Lucrece struggles internally with whether she should reveal her own "raped-ness" to her husband: "She dares not thereof make discovery, / Lest he [her husband] should hold it her own gross abuse, / Ere she with blood had stain'd her stain'd excuse" (ll.1314-16). Here, the rape is more than just a temporaneous act; it is also a metaphysical symptom, a figurative scarlet letter that Lucrece cannot hide. Probably the most significant stanza on Lucrece's blood centers on a binary distinction between Lucrece's sexual purity and Tarquin's violation. Her blood

becomes two distinct streams after the rape: “Some of her blood still pure and red remain’d, / And some look’d black, and that false Tarquin stain’d” (ll.1737-43). The blood becomes physical manifestations of chastity and rape simultaneously. If Lucrece is read as an anthropomorphic representation of Rome, these two streams of blood become the hybrid of classical republicanism and tyranny.

Shakespeare’s ideals of sexual and political freedom were precursors to an entire social understanding of passion. Throughout the seventeenth century in England, for example, controlling one’s passions was seen increasingly as a sure sign of masculinity. Many tragicomedies emphasized the significance of controlling one’s sexual passions. Early modern scholar Thomas King demonstrates that contemporary discourses favored a distancing between the mind and emotions, claiming that the self “was not a private, introspective self, accordingly, but a rational (and thus social) self engaged in the project of regulating the sensory experience (the passions) associated with the lapse from status to effeminacy” (150-51). King reveals that Shakespeare promotes a non-conformist understanding of masculinity. Shakespeare paints the passions in such a way that male protagonists in his narrative poems submit to their sexual passions.

Just as it was considered masculine to manage the passions, it was considered masculine to be “bridled,” socially and politically. Early modern English government expected its people to proudly serve the country. A man could feel proud and masculine to be a living instrument of the nation. Being bridle by one’s government was considered a positive attribute.

However, bridling also enters into the contemporary sphere of sexual politics. Holly Dugan comments on bridling as a social principle in “Aping Rape.” She claims that

bridling is part of the contemporary political discourses: "[A]pes, like asses, also connect with the sexual politics of bridling in the period" (217). The animal figures she references become rhetorical tools for political means. Her phrase "the sexual politics of bridling" relays the metaphorical significance of an individual's sexual domestication. The bridle becomes an essential equestrian aid in the art of *manège*. The bridle can also be symbolic of tyrannical dominance—control in *Lucrece*'s critical representation of Tarquin's ravaging of Lucrece. Through his *Lucrece* and *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare employs horse imagery to illustrate that the English people were "bridled" by a tyrannical monarchy—tyrannical in the same way that people conceived the Spanish empire. These two poems promote a politically free and *consensual* society comparable to the Venetian republic of the Elizabethan era.

Bridling was a specific equestrian practice that was also this complex metaphor for prideful submission to the nation's ruling body. Just as the courser was depicted as a noble steed for its loyalty, early modern English men were considered patriotic heroes for their devotion. Shakespeare's poetic works critique this political "bridling" as a practice symptomatic of tyranny and imperialism. The figure of the horse throughout his poems evokes this strong polemic regarding political and sexual domestication.

CONCLUSION: *EQUUS ET EROS*

This thesis had the exploratory goal of analyzing the prevalence and significance of the horse trope in Shakespeare's narrative and lyric poems as a necessary element for engaging in political and sexual discourses. As the field of animal studies is found to be increasingly relevant to early modern literature, the appearance of equestrianism in literature becomes a much neglected trope in modern scholarship. This study has proven not just that equestrianism functioned significantly in Shakespeare's narrative poems, but also that the allegorical horse is integral to comprehending the contemporary arenas of politics and sexuality. With these observations, this thesis sought to answer the question of how prominent the horse was in Shakespeare's criticism of imperialism.

The four poetic works—Sonnets 50 and 51, *Venus and Adonis*, and the *Rape of Lucrece*—maintained both equine and equestrian topoi in order to further their sexual and political claims. The first point of interest was Shakespeare's frequent allusions to the classical reception of the horse metaphor. Shakespeare stays in the tradition of the horse as a metaphorical invocation and representation of *eros*, advancing the horse as a manifestation and emblem for sexual desire in his poems to acknowledge classical writers, such as Vergil, Ovid, and Plutarch. The four poems frequently repeat or rephrase classical descriptions of the horse when it was allegorized as sexual desire. The second claim was that Shakespeare denounces contemporary ideologies of gender and sexuality, instead proffering a non-heteronormative society in which people are encouraged to pursue, rather than hinder, their desires. This condemnation of conformist sexualities occurs through Shakespeare's habitual juxtaposition and comparison of a dull, bridled horse and a free, joyous steed. The final argument was that Shakespeare critiques British

tyranny through the horse standing in for Venus's dominance and Tarquin's predatory masculinity. These three claims reveal that the horse is a multi-faceted metaphor that, in Shakespeare's narrative poems and sonnets, is an essential instrument for making political and sexual statements.

The major theoretical implication of the research provided in this thesis is that the horse metaphor merits further scholarly investigation. The horse has occupied a space in the academic fields of history and biology recently, but literary scholarship remains limited in implications of the horse as a political device. The horse metaphor involves multiple, connected topoi that serve as implications for diverse layers of interpretation in Shakespearean studies, if not early modern literature generally. A second implication of this thesis is that equestrianism possessed the larger metaphorical function of representing the practice of *manège* in contemporary political spheres. Early modern equestrianism produced equipment, techniques, and practices that entered into cultural and literary discourses, signifying equestrianism as a worthy focus of study for literary scholars as well.

The chapters of this thesis contain many unifying, connective threads. The first of these is that the horse topoi indicate conflicts of both sexuality and politics. More specifically, the horse acts as an instrument antithetical to the mores of the Spanish empire and British tyranny over its subjects. The horse's voice—and lack of speech—also unifies the poems by signifying distinctions in power: the one embodied by the vocal horse is much stronger than the one embodied by the silent jade. A final connector is that contemporary equestrianism functions as an indicator for conflicts in dominance-submission in Renaissance England.

Even at the narrowed scope of these four poems, the scale of this study is extensive and multi-faceted. Future research for this topic could easily piece out the precise distinctions between the topoi of horse-as-*eros* and horse-as-*politikos*. Another possibility would be to delve deeper into the concept of *manège* in *Venus and Adonis,* as there is still much to be said for the comparisons between Venus's handling of Adonis and Adonis's handling of his horse. A comparatist study between Italian equestrian manuals and Shakespeare's language that is descriptive of the horse is also warranted. The numerous directions in which the study of the horse and equestrianism metaphors could proceed are numerous and necessary for garnering a more exhaustive understanding of early modern political discourses.

Consistent with scholars of Shakespearean animal studies, such as Robert Miller, Andreas Hofele, and Sharon O'Dair, this thesis has shown that Shakespeare's treatment of *l'animot* is meaningful. The horses have allegorical weight that allows Shakespeare to make polemic statements against the contemporary systems of government. However, unlike those same scholars, this thesis has shown that horses cannot exist exclusively as literary figures: they are intrinsically associated—to the contemporary reader—with the equestrian practice of *manège*. Shakespeare's poetic horses are more than literary characters; they are poetic incarnations of erotic desire and political critiques of the tyrannical monarchy that governed Shakespeare's world.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF EQUINE AND EQUESTRIAN TERMS

Barb: a protective piece placed on the breasts and flanks of horses, later used ornamentally.

Barbary horse: a north African breed of horse, referred to metaphorically in Shakespeare's *Othello.*

Bit: a metal piece placed in the mouth as a means of managing the horse; typically iron.

Bridle: head-gear for a horse; consists of three parts: head-stall, bit, and reins; used to guide or steer the horse.

Colt: a young horse.

Courser: a male horse that was considered particularly regal, judged such for its coloration, strength, speed, and control.

Covering: synonymous with "mating" for horses; for example, in Shakespeare's *Othello,* Iago claims that Desdemona is "covered by a Barbary horse" (I.i.110).

Curb: a specific type of equipment that served as a strap under the bit to further control the horse.

Curvet: a form of leap in which the horse raised its forelegs simultaneously and the hind legs raise before the forelegs touch the ground.

Draft horse: a work horse; usually large and bred to pull a plow or other large weights.

Dressage: frequently used synonymously with equestrianism; involves obedience training with a horse to make it execute specific maneuvers.

Dull: used to describe a horse that moves slowly.

Equestrianism: the art of riding a horse.

Gait: specific types of movements and maneuvers that the horse is trained to make.

Girth: a leather belt that is secured under the horse's belly; keeps the saddle tightly in place.

Hobby-horse: 1) a small horse or pony formally trained; 2) a toy horse; 3) the Medieval term for the horse known as the Irish Hobby.

Irish Hobby: frequent Irish cavalry horse in the Middle Ages; now an extinct breed; see "Hobby-horse."

Jade: a derogatory term for a slow horse, a horse of a lower breed, or a cart-horse.

Jennet: a small Spanish horse, potentially the Asturcón.

Manège: the art of "managing" one's horse.

Pace: in Shakespeare's time, used interchangeably with "gait."

Reins: the part of the horse's bridle that goes over the horse's neck and is placed in the rider's hands; pulling the reins with various strengths and directions communicates demands to the horse.

Rig: a horse that was imperfectly castrated or was born with one undescended testicle

Roiles: typically stereotyped as Flemish draft horses.

Spur: metal pieces attached to the rider's boots, used to stab the horse's sides to encourage certain movements.

Steps: individual movements in the gait of a horse.

Tack: equestrian equipment.

Trot: a particular gait that is halfway between walking and running.