"Within her bosom it shall dwell" – Remembrance and Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*

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"Death makes no conquest of this conqueror,
For now he lives in fame, though not in life."
(*Richard III*., 3.1.87–88)

TRAGICALLY MISREPRESENTED?

I was planning "to begin with the beginning" as Lord Byron did and Antal Szerb after him, following the poet's good example. Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* spans the course of one day, gradually proceeding from the morning the goddess decides to chase the boar-chasing Adonis to the morning she discovers his gored corpse. It seemed logical to follow the chronological order of the storyline in my analysis; at first. The more time I spent thinking and writing about the poem, however, the clearer it became that I needed to start writing at the end, contemplating Adonis' death. Although his tragedy is foreshadowed earlier in the poem, the part that intensely concerns itself with his death starts with Venus discovering the dead body and ends with her leaving for Paphos: 165 lines altogether. A 165 is a modest number compared to the preceding 1029, the number of lines in which the story of a conflicting relationship unfolds, deploying all that humour and eroticism the poem is famous for. Why does this paper still focus on the last scene in which Venus is lamenting her lover's death, whose body – as is the general view – turns into a flower?

Before answering this question, it seems necessary to remind ourselves of the poem's Renaissance reception history. Published in 1593, Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* swiftly became "the bestselling volume of single-authored poetry of the Elizabethan age."[1] It excited the Elizabethan's imagination to such an extent that their persistent enthusiasm created the need for "16 editions before 1640."[2] Men viewed the poem as a guide in their courting practices, a fact known to us from a handbook of good manners reporting

[1] Jonathan Bate, "Shakespeare's Lovers", Transcript of Lecture, Gresham College, London, January 23, 2018, 1.

[2] Raphael Lyne, "Texts, Editions, Reception of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*," in *The Complete Poems of Shakespeare*, eds., Cathy Shrank and Raphael Lyne (London / New York: Routlege, 2018), 23.

gentlemen keeping a copy of *Venus and Adonis* "even in their naked bosoms."[3] The *Parnassus Plays* (1597–1603) mention the poem along with *Romeo and Juliet,* and one of the characters even promises to keep it in his bed to "worship sweet Mr Shakespeare."[4] That V*enus and Adonis* was also the poem that presented an Adonis for whom love was a nuisance and who was reluctant to stay with Venus, was either overlooked or perceived as a matter of laughingstock in 17th century England. That his constant complaining may not have only been the comical result of being inexperienced in love but possibly a perspicuous effect of his ambitions, floating away from him with every minute he spent with the goddess, was given little attention. Shakespeare's contemporaries were ignoring the fact the same way as Venus did. Although criticism has somewhat changed this tendency since then, the poem is still generally viewed as a humorous piece drenched in love.

This study's aim is not to doubt that the poem has rightfully earned its place in the steamily erotic section of Renaissance literature but to place some of its more obscure parts under the lens to see what is to be gained by observing them. There is an unasked question hovering above the events of the poem, and the problem it contemplates culminates in the last 165 lines. The question could be phrased as follows: "How is it possible to live even after one's death?" The two protagonists have different answers to the question, which affects their attitudes to love as well. The goddess of love tries to persuade Adonis to beget children who would remember him and in whom he could continue living, while Adonis wants to become a hunter and a warrior to gain glory and fame. The first approach to symbolic living involves leaving behind one's "lance",[5] "battered shield"[6] and "uncontrolled crest",[7] while the other demands perfect mastery of them. In Venus' version, Adonis would be a "prisoner in a red-rose chain"[8] like the god of war, Mars before him; in the second, he should show bravery in hunting to make him worthy of being remembered by posterity. At the end of the poem, Venus becomes the first person to mourn Adonis and the first poet to sing his life, pouring her memories of him into form: a development neither of them wished for. Remembered by Venus as a flower of love in a 17th century poem revisiting the Ovidian Venus and Adonis story, Adonis seems to have

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3 Ibid., 25.

4 Bate, "Shakespeare's Lovers," 1.

5 This citation, as well as all successive citations from Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* are from the following edition: William Shakespeare, "Venus and Adonis," in *The Complete Poems of Shakespeare,* eds. Cathy Shrank and Raphael Lyne (London and New York: Routlege, 2018), line 103.

6 Shakespeare, "Venus and Adonis," line 104.

7 Ibid., line 104.

8 Ibid., line 110.

failed in his quest to gain glory both within the realms of literature and in the real world. Or did he? Did Venus violently misrepresent him after his death, or did she make a compromise to symbolically fulfil both desires? This essay examines the iconography of the protagonists' opposing views concerning life after death, the consequences of those views on how Venus and Adonis view love, and the significance they have on how Adonis is remembered.

LOVE OR HUNT

Venus has an extended repertoire of courting techniques. Resulting from the high intensity of her words and gestures, critical understanding of her character ranges from what we could call "a comical desperate woman in love" to "a vampish manipulator of innocent youth." No critic doubts that what she wants is love, requited or at least consummated, and that she desires it so much, it makes her completely miserable. She is "sick-thoughted"[9] already at the very beginning of the poem, at dawn, implying a sleepless night spent tossing and turning. She is running through the fields looking for Adonis and on finding him, she, "like a bold-faced suitor 'gins to woo him"[10]. Loveable and laughable, she calls Adonis "Thrice fairer than"[11] herself, "The field's chief flower",[12] a "Stain to all nymphs."[13] She claims he is "more lovely than a man",[14] what is more, "More white and red than doves or roses are."[15] Venus flatters, begs, invites and touches; she snatches Adonis from his horse and carries him as she would carry a little boy to lay down with her. She initiates kisses and all kinds of positions and gestures and tries to persuade Adonis to do the same.

To her great disappointment, however, Adonis is reluctant. He "smiles in disdain",[16] jumps out of Venus' way and winks at her instead of giving her the promised kiss.[17] At times he expresses himself as a boy would: "You hurt my hand with wringing. Let us

9 Ibid., line 5.

10 Ibid., line 6.

11 Ibid., line 7.

12 Ibid., line 8.

13 Ibid., line 9.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., line 10.

16 Ibid., line 291.

17 Ibid., line 90.

part."[18] Trying to understand his behaviour, she suggests that he might be afraid of being seen: "Be bold to play, our sport is not in sight."[19] Then she urges him to "Make use of time, let not advantage slip."[20] Later she accuses him of being like Narcissus, in love with his own image: "Is thine own heart to thine own face affected?"[21] She cannot comprehend why he is not stimulated by her charms: "having no defects, why dost abhor me?"[22] She finds this possibility so incomprehensible that she even enumerates the "defects" she does not have, and the charms she has in no less than 24 lines. This "proclivity for self-praise" is what Cantelupe calls one of "Shakespeare's most happy touches."[23] Despite all of Venus' efforts, however, Adonis is unmoved, and aptly and unkindly, he makes his point: "Fie, no more of love! ...I must remove."[24] When even his stallion leaves, without which he cannot go hunting, he completely forgets courtesy toward the goddess: "Give me my hand",[25] "let go, and let me go;"[26] "my horse is gone, / And 'tis your fault I am bereft him so."[27] What are his reasons for behaving so? Is the answer truly as clear-cut as Cantelupe artfully claims that Adonis is "manifesting the ridiculous naivete and annoying priggishness that accompany virtually complete disinterest in and ignorance of love and sex"?[28] What else does Adonis say apart from the occasional impudences?

In fact, what he says should not come as a surprise to Venus, as the Adonis she stops at the beginning of the poem is Adonis the hunter who is in the middle of a chase. "Hunting he loved, but love he laughed to scorn"[29] – his preference seems to be common knowledge, and he himself reaffirms it when he says: "I know not love... nor will I know it, / Unless it be a boar, and then I chase it."[30] Hard as it is for Venus to accept, Adonis' immunity to her charms is rooted not in unsuitable circumstances or that he would not find her attractive but in his deep desire for boar hunting. The problem is that "he

18 Ibid., line 421.
19 Ibid., line 124.
20 Ibid., line 129.
21 Ibid., line 157.
22 Ibid., line 139.
23 Ibid., line 143.
24 Ibid., lines 185–86.
25 Ibid., line 373.
26 Ibid., line 379.
27 Ibid., lines 380–81.
28 Ibid., line 145.
29 Ibid., line 4.
30 Ibid., lines 409–10.

can, she cannot choose but love."[31] Their opposing attitudes remain opposing throughout the poem and "constitute the central 'action'."[32] Becoming involved in love would distract Adonis from his most desired goal, killing a wild boar, an act symbolic of what he truly wishes to achieve. Rebhorn remarks that "works in the heroic tradition all involve an opposition between a life to be spent in unremitting toil for an often elusive future goal... and a life to be spent in a warmly protective environment of pleasure and ease."[33]

But why does Adonis insist on boar hunting, instead of turning toward "the timorous flying hare",[34] "the fox"[35] or "the roe",[36] prey that Venus suggests as less dangerous alternatives? What does the boar hunt signify and how does it affect Adonis' attitude towards Venus?

HUNTING THE BOAR

Shakespeare's version of the Venus and Adonis story begins with a hunt. Before it is interrupted by Venus, however, the time of day is artfully described: "Even as the sun with purple-coloured face / Had taken his last leave of the weeping morn."[37] It is dawn, the traditional time of day for hunting, and it is the "Rose-cheeked Adonis" who hurries "to the chase."[38] Interestingly enough, the description does not recall what is known to be Shakespeare's direct source, Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* Book X., but another famous work, Homer's *Odyssey* and the boar hunt on Mount Parnassus: "But as soon as early Dawn appeared, the rosy-fingered, they went out to hunt [...] Now Helios was just striking on the fields, as he rose from softly-gliding, deep-flowing Oceanus."[39] The Parnassian hunt continues as follows: "Now nearby a big wild boar was lying in a thick lair [...] first of all Odysseus rushed forward, raising his long spear in his stout hand, eager to stab him; but the

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31 Ibid., line 79.

32 Donald G. Watson, "The Contrarities of *Venus and Adonis," Studies in Philology* 75, no. 1 (1978): 33.

33 Wayne A. Rebhorn, "Mother Venus: Temptation is Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis," Shakespeasre Studies: An Annual Gathering of Research, Criticism, and Reviews* 11 (1978): 10.

34 Shakespeare, "Venus and Adonis," line 674.

35 Ibid., line 675.

36 Ibid., line 676.

37 Ibid., lines 1–2.

38 Ibid., line 3.

39 Homer, *The Odyssey,* trans. A. T. Murray (Cambridge, MA / London: Harvard University Press / William Heinemann, Ltd., 1919), 19.427–34, Perseus Digital Library, accessed August 19, 2022, https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0136%3Abook%3D19%3Acard%3D405.

boar was too quick for him and struck him above the knee."[40] Hollingsworth points out that in the entirety of the Homeric epics this is the only incident that shows Odysseus injured.[41] The great hero, always bringing his fights to victory, could not defend himself against the boar's tusk. That boar hunt is dangerous is stamped into the cultural memory of peoples who hunt this beast; even in Hungary, the deaths of Miklós Zrínyi and Saint Prince Imre, both gored by a boar, are well-known tragedies.[42] The poem's first two lines, by alluding to the opening lines of the Homeric story telling the events on Mount Parnassus, remind the reader of that danger and foreshadow a possible tragedy.

In his essay "Love, Death and the Hunt in *Venus and Adonis*", Farrel presents Adonis as someone who is "obsessed with the hunt",[43] who wants to become "the master killer",[44] while the boar is "his final adversary... death itself",[45] because what he wants is "apotheosis."[46] Although Farrel has a point in claiming that the poem thematizes "mortality and grief"[47] and that it exhibits "crucial fantasies of immortality",[48] Adonis' attempt to kill the boar can be duly interpreted as a young man's attempt to gain worldly glory; that is, a symbolic triumph over death not because, or not solely because he views the boar as a symbol of death, but because he would be known a master-fighter, and his glory would be sung by a poet. His ambition is not so much about who defeats whom, playing a game of "kill or be killed"[49] by the boar but rather about securing fame. Fame provides one a symbolic life after the unavoidable seizure happens. To achieve fame, one's life needs to meet three criteria: "great deeds, a record of them, and remembrance by posterity."[50] For Adonis the boar hunt symbolizes training, the first step toward military glory. Surviving a boar hunt is not evident; it is an achievement, as even experienced warriors

40 Homer, *Odyssey,* 19.439–51.

41 Cole S. Hollingsworth, "A Dangerous Game: Boar Hunting Symbolism from the Ancient Greeks to Romans," (Research Seminar Paper, Eau Claire: McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin, 2018), 10, accessed September 11, 2022, https://minds.wisconsin.edu/handle/1793/79133?show=full.

42 I owe this remark to dr. Miklós Péti, who kindly reminded me of the fact.

43 Kirby Farrell, "Love, Death and the Hunt in *Venus and Adonis,*" in *Play, Death, and Heroism in Shakespeare* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 117.

44 Ibid., 117.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 29.

are known to have received injuries or died in the process. However, if boar hunting is indeed so dangerous, why does Adonis stubbornly cling to it? "Hunting", wrote Xenophon in his *Cynegeticus,* was supposed to be an "excellent training in the art of war [...] Our ancestors knew that hunting was the source of their success over their enemies and made the young men practice it."[51] As Szőnyi points out, "cultural representations are at the same time the representations of cultural traditions."[52] Considering this, the boar hunt can be viewed not only as a symbol of death, but as the cultural representation of the quest for glory in the poem. Being undefeated, however, is not the touchstone of bravery and it is not among the requirements for attaining glory. Most great warriors fight a final combat in which they, after many victorious fights, are overcome by their opponent. The example of great warriors before him shows Adonis the way toward fame, the way to keep his name alive forever.

In the National Museum of Athens stands a stunning piece of artwork, the *Anavysos Kouros,* the sculpture of the glorious and brave soldier par excellence. This claim needs an immediate correction, as the sculpture put on display is not an artwork but the cenotaph of a young Athenian warrior from the 6th century BC. The sculpture of Kroisos is carved from marble and has traces of red paint on it. It displays a muscular, young nude warrior, standing proud and brave, ready to act, with an archaic smile on his face. It is placed on a pedestal displaying the epitaph inscription, which is phrased as follows: "Stay and mourn at the tomb of dead Kroisos | Whom raging Ares destroyed one day, fighting in the foremost ranks."[53] Although the sculpture is one of many in the line of kouros figures, the cenotaph is impressive and touching in a unique way. It is the result of a family's attempt at creating a tangible and readable reminder of their beloved son and brother, both on a personal and a social level. Nagy points out that "in Archaic Greek thought [...] the death of a young man is not merely a tragedy, but the fulfilment of the *condition humane*. Being a warrior is a man's fate [...] A thought that served as a starting point for his loved ones when they created his cenotaph. This thought made them capable of overcoming their grief and create the cenotaph for the immortalization of the youth'

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[51] John Kinloch Anderson, *Hunting in the Ancient World* (Berkley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press, 1985), 17–8.

[52] György Endre Szőnyi, "A szövegen belül és kívül, avagy a kultúra medialitása," in *Társadalmi változások – nyelvi változások Alkalmazott nyelvészeti kutatások a Kárpát-medencében, A XXII. MANYE Kongresszus előadásai Szeged, 2012. április 12–14.* (Budapest / Szeged: MANYE / Szegedi Egyetemi Kiadó Juhász Gyula Felsőoktatási Kiadó, 2013), 65, (the citation is translated by the author of this paper).

[53] Translated by Jeffrey A. Rydberg-Cox, accessed August 19, 2022, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/artifact?name=Athens%2C+NM+4754&object=Sculpture.

figure."[54] The figure of the slain warrior Kroisos, powerful and impressive, recalls the image formed in our minds while reading Venus' outburst to Adonis:

> Fie, liveless picture, cold and senseless stone,
> Well-painted idol, image dull and dead,
> Statue contenting but the eye alone
> Thing like a man, but of no woman bred.[55]

Venus says these words early in the poem, long before Adonis dies. She is projecting forward the image of a future possible kouros figure, a cenotaph sculpture of a young and brave warrior. Naturally, nothing could be further from this paper than suggesting that Shakespeare have seen kouros figures and he wrote these lines with those in mind. Looking at the matter from a different perspective, however, it can be argued that the lines describing a "Well-painted idol" behave like images that "resemble nomads in the sense that they take residence in one medium after another."[56]

Venus' words suggest that she knows exactly what Adonis is after: glory and fame attained in combat. She probably has known it from the beginning, and that is why she argues for a different way of immortality Adonis could achieve:

> By law of nature thou art bound to breed,
> That thine may live, when thou thyself art dead;
> And so in spite of death thou dost survive,
> In that thy likeness still is left alive.[57]

For someone who wants a lover, her argument completely makes sense; what could she do with a piece of "cold and senseless stone"? In what way is it useful for her if he dies being brave? But Adonis knows very well that "fame is a secular form of self-immortalization, and it has a great deal to do with the image that a person creates of himself",[58] and the image he wants to create is that of the brave warrior, not the beautiful lover of a

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[54] Árpád Miklós Nagy, "Kroisos: Egy athéni ifjú síremléke," in Judit Horváth, ed., *Tengeristennő az Olymposon: Mítoszok szóban és képben* (Budapest: Gondolat, 2015), 141, (this and all following citations from the study are translated by me).

[55] Shakespeare, "Venus and Adonis," lines 211–14.

[56] Hans Belting, "Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology," *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 2 (2005): 310.

[57] Shakespeare, "Venus and Adonis," lines 171–74.

[58] Assmann, *Cultural Memory,* 23.

goddess. He wants to be remembered as a soldier, fighting in the front lines and not as "the field's chief flower."[59]

DEATH

Death, the exact time of which nobody knows, ends all plans and ongoing activities. Still, what some people fear the most is not death itself but the possibility of being forgotten. Funerary rites try to complete the incomplete on a symbolic level, they try to give a soothing ending to what was suddenly interrupted. In a way, a funeral service puts a full stop at the end of a sentence. If burial rites are like a full stop, then funerary orations, commemorative speeches or images of the dead are like colons: they create a pattern for remembrance. They evaluate the past and create something like a meta pattern for the future. To a certain extent they build a bridge over the rapture caused by death. Aleida Assmann calls the tomb "a 'place of remembrance' as echoed in the Greek word for the grave, mnema...Through the image of the deceased."[60] In the history of mankind "the dead called upon the living to give them place in their memory."[61] The image of the deceased could be a death mask or a cenotaph sculpture, the dead person's image on a stele or, to remember our own age, a photograph of the deceased carefully picked for the funeral service. Belting points out that in Archaic societies

> Images, on behalf of the missing body, occupied the place deserted by the person who had died. A given community felt threatened by the gap caused by the death of one of its members. The dead, as a result, were kept as present and visible in the ranks of the living via their images.[62]

Does Adonis have a funeral? Is there an image that could take the place of his dead body to be integrated into society? The following part of the study approaches Adonis' death and the "metamorphosis" scene in the light of what it means for an immortal to mourn the loss of her mortal beloved, and how it influences posterity's remembrance of Adonis. Is it truly a metamorphosis, a transformation that happens? What is the significance of the flower and why does Venus pick it and put it in her bosom?

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59 Shakespeare, "Venus and Adonis," line 8.

60 Assmann, *Cultural Memory,* 96.

61 Ibid.

62 Belting, "Image, Medium, Body," 307.

Adonis' death shocks Venus. Although she had foreboding visions about his death previous to the tragedy, causing her to be "overcome by doubt and bloodless fear";[63] calling death a "Hard-favoured tyrant",[64] a "Hateful divorce of love",[65] hope is never far from those who love, consequently she apologizes right after[66] and rebukes herself saying "'Fie, e, fond Love... Thy coward heart with false bethinking grieves."[67] With these hopes in her heart, when she sees "The foul boar's conquest on her fair delight",[68] Adonis' gored body, it is too much for her to take in. Her eyes are "murdered with the view"[69] and "Like stars ashamed of day"[70] sink "Into the deep dark cabins of her head",[71] connoting "graves."[72] Those "dark cabins" can equally evoke the black eye-sockets of skulls or death-figures in memento mori paintings or in the dance of death paintings of Elizabethan England. With Adonis, part of the goddess dies as well.

But then she opens her eyes again and begins to mourn Adonis. She weeps heavily then looks so "steadfastly"[73] that her eyes become "mad."[74] She sees the wound tripled; his limbs doubled. She looks at the wound and it cries tears of blood,[75] an example that all " ower... grass, herb, leaf, or weed"[76] follows; it looks as if they "stole his blood."[77] The sight warms Venus' heart and in her grief she begins to draw the outlines of an Adonis she wants to remember. A "treasure"[78] without whom no "face remains alive that's worth

63 Shakespeare, "Venus and Adonis," line 891.

64 Ibid., line 931.

65 Ibid., line 932.

66 Ibid., lines 997–98.

67 Ibid., lines 1021–24.

68 Ibid., lines 1029–30.

69 Ibid., line 1032.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid., line 1038.

72 Henry Woodhuysen, "Footnote to *Venus and Adonis,*" in Shrank and Lyne, *Complete Poems of Shakespeare,* 188.

73 Shakespeare, "Venus and Adonis," line 1063.

74 Ibid., line 1062.

75 Ibid., line 1054.

76 Ibid., lines 1055–56.

77 Ibid., line 1056.

78 Ibid., line 1075.

the viewing"[79] without whom there is no "music"[80] and no "beauty."[81] Her lament may not be how Adonis wanted them to sound, as she talks about his lovely figure and not about his great deeds, still, these are the words that make people remember him. She could not have Adonis in his life the way she wanted to; she wants to form his memory in her own way. What is more, she starts to create his post-death identity, how she wants other people to remember Adonis. She tells stories about his childhood, how the sun and the wind were competing to get close to his lovely face, how his beauty tamed the lion,[82] his singing the tiger,[83] his speech the wolf[84] and how even the boar probably killed him only by accident, trying to kiss him.[85] Then, from the realm of idealizing memories she returns to reality and is finally able to acknowledge the truth: "he is dead",[86] they never became real lovers[87] and now they never will.

The next moment she "stains her face with his congealèd blood",[88] which is, as Shrank and Lyne point out,[89] analogous to what Collatine does in *Lucrece*.[90] Although in both cases the gesture can be interpreted as a sign of mourning, it is also reminiscent of how Venus was born, from the waves after her father's, Uranus' phallos was cut off and fell into the ocean. Covering one's face with the dead person's blood can also be seen as a desperate attempt for a last physical contact with the deceased, in Venus' case a symbolic consummation of her love for Adonis.

After "theoretically" accepting his death, Venus, like a Doubting Thomas inspects the beloved's body by touching it limb by limb. The poignant reality is, however, that while the Apostle touched the body of the resurrected Christ to experience that he was truly alive, Venus touches the corpse of Adonis to be able to fully accept that he is dead. "She

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79 Ibid., line 1076.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid., line 1080.

82 Ibid., line 1093.

83 Ibid., line 1096.

84 Ibid., line 1097.

85 Ibid., lines 1114–18.

86 Ibid., line 1119.

87 Ibid., line 1120.

88 Ibid., line 1122.

89 Raphael Lyne and Cathy Shrank, "Footnote to *The Rape of Lucrece*," in Shrank and Lyne, *Complete Poems of Shakespeare,* 459.

90 in key–cold Lucrece' bleeding stream / He falls, and bathes the pale fear in his face." William Shakespeare, "The Rape of Lucrece," in Shrank and Lyne, *Complete Poems of Shakespeare,* lines 1774–75.

looks upon his lips, and they are pale; / She takes him by the hand, and that is cold",[91] while his eyes are like "two lamps burnt out."[92] With this, Venus arrives to a mental and emotional turning point, and by uttering "'this is my spite, / That thou being dead, the day should yet be light",[93] she stops dwelling on the past and starts to look to the future, to the coming generations who must not forget Adonis.

THE FLOWER, THE POET, AND REMEMBRANCE BY POSTERITY

> I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him;
> The evil that men do lives after them,
> The good is oft interred with their bones,
> So let it be with Caesar.[94]

Antonius' famous funeral oration at the burial of Julius Caesar does the opposite of what Adonis wants for himself after his death: it says it wants to bury even the memory of what Caesar did, together with his body. The worst thing that can happen to a statesman and a warrior is that people forget him with time and that he does not receive the glory and fame he wishes. To be forgotten is to die a second, a symbolical death. Antonius' speech is known to be composed in a way that its true meaning would be contradicted, in fact, hidden by the rhetoric of its text. It needs to give Brutus seeming respect and go along with the rhetoric that Caesar is someone better be forgotten. The same way as Adonis, Venus also wants the opposite: she wants Adonis to be remembered till the end of time. Kroisos' cenotaph is an excellent example of how memory can take form in art. It is important to remember that visual or written carriers of a dead person's memory, from death masks to cenotaphs, from epitaphs to funeral orations, reflect the creators' personality as much as that of the deceased. Just "as in the case of Kroisos' cenotaph", made for posterity to look at and then remember, "the starting point of the epitaph's time structure... is the future: all those moments [in the future] in which someone starts reading the poem."[95] This is what happens in the case of the Adonis-Venus-Shakespeare-reader relationship as well. Every time we read Shakespeare's poem, we remember Venus and Adonis.

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91 Shakespeare, "Venus and Adonis," lines 1123–24.

92 Ibid., line 1128.

93 Shakespeare, "Venus and Adonis," lines 1133–34.

94 William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar,* ed. John Dover Wilson, The Cambridge Dover Wilson Shakespeare, vol. 15 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.2.75–8.

95 Nagy, "Kroisos," 143.

Antonius' speech is part of Caesar's funeral service, and it does two things: it gives an overall view of Caesar's character, representing Antonius' opinion as opposed to Brutus', and it also hints at whether he agrees with Brutus in that Caesar's legacy should be buried with his bones or on the contrary: it should be remembered. Venus lists her favourite, exaggerated memories of Adonis during the mourning process. She claims that Adonis' beauty was unparalleled while he lived, that it had affected even the wind and the sun, that it tamed wild animals. A physical experience of Adonis' dead body ends her looking to the past and starts a new phase in which she turns towards the future: "Since thou art dead, lo here I prophesy" she begins. But it immediately becomes clear that her speech is less of a prophesy and more of a curse, foreboding relationships burdened with "sorrow",[96] "jealousy"[97] and too much "woe."[98] She pronounces that love "shall be ckle, false, and full of fraud",[99] that it will be toxic,[100] financially disadvantageous,[101] and it could be continued. As if she wanted future generations to feel her pain, as if this was her way of revenging his death. What is evident even on first reading is that there is no word of hunting or glory but only about love as suffering. Certainly not what Adonis wished for, although according to Farrel, "love can no more guarantee immortality than the hunt can",[102] meaning the immortality of the body. In the poem, both characters seem to know the impossibility of that venture, and the conflict between them is not about physical immortality but the immortality of one through memory.

Adonis died, Adonis was mourned, his body was inspected by the goddess and declared to be truly dead. And, in a way, his death was revenged, we could say, on all humanity. What happens after that is from the point of view of this paper a key moment in the poem:

> By this the boy that by her side lay killed
> Was melted like a vapour from her sight,
> And in his blood that on the ground lay spilled
> A purple ower sprung up, chequered with white,

96 Shakespeare, "Venus and Adonis," line 1135.

97 Ibid., line 1136.

98 Ibid., line 1140.

99 Ibid., line 1141.

100 Ibid., line 1143.

101 Ibid., line 1150.

102 Farrel, "Love, Death and the Hunt," 120.

Resembling well his pale cheeks and the blood
Which in round drops upon their whiteness stood.[103]

Reading carefully the lines above, it is evident that contrary to general belief, Adonis' corpse does not transform into a flower; or, better to say, it is not his corpse that transforms into a flower. Then, what happens exactly? In my view, the event that the line "melted like a vapour from her sight" suggests, is visually and symbolically analogous with a cremation or a burial, during which the body evaporates or is lowered into the grave and covered with earth. It is only after this, the disappearance of the body that the flower appears, growing from the blood-covered ground. If we consider that "images, preferably three-dimensional ones, replaced the bodies of the dead, who had lost their visible presence along with their bodies"[104] then we may see the flower in an entirely new light. Belting points out that the dead person is given "an immortal body in the image; that is, a symbolic body in which they are resocialized while their mortal body dissolves into nothing. The image that represents the dead thus acquires a counter-meaning to that other image, the corpse."[105] The image has a counter-meaning, because after the body dies, that intangible something that makes all the difference between a body and the corpse is transferred to the image. It is the image that lives on, and the image of Adonis, in the form of a flower, growing from Venus' memories, lives on literally.

The mourner's memory of the dead person is never identical with the objective identity of the person who lived and the same way, the image always represents something that is remembered. After the flower appears, Venus "bows her head" to smell it and compares its smell "to her Adonis' breath."[106] Then picks the flower so that "within her bosom it shall dwell, / Since he himself is reft from her by death."[107] Having been picked, a "Green-dropping sap"[108] begins to drop from the stalk, which Venus "compares to tears."[109] Then, she says the following: "Poor ower... this was thy father's guise, / Sweet

103 Shakespeare, "Venus and Adonis," lines 1165–70.

104 Belting, "Image, Medium, Body," 307.

105 Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body,* trans. Thomas Dunlap (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 85.

106 Shakespeare, "Venus and Adonis," line 1171.

107 Ibid., lines 1173–74.

108 Ibid., line 1176.

109 Ibid.

issue of a more sweet-smelling sire."[110] She then claims that he used to "wet his eyes"[111] "For every little grief."[112] Her description is clearly not an objective description of the Adonis who once lived. It is fair to say that it rather matches the Adonis of her memory and that the flower is the visual display of Venus' memories about Adonis; realized in tangible form for future generations.

The Ancients knew that "immortality of the name... [did] not require family members, priests, monasteries or acts of charity, but singers, poets and historians"; they were conscious of the fact that "worldly fame entails social remembrance by posterity."[113] Farrel takes it as axiomatic that Shakespeare is the poet to sing Adonis' memory and suggests an interpretation in which Shakespeare "impersonates the goddess too. For the prophesy Venus speaks is also the voice of the poem."[114] Although the metaphor he uses is an interesting one, observing Adonis' death and the poem from the point of view of remembrance, an interpretation of Venus as the first poet to sing Adonis' life and death can be argued. In Venus, Adonis gets the poet he needs to become famous, even though the created memory does not praise him for being brave or going against the wild boar. Instead of a kouros figure, Adonis gets a flower; instead of an epitaph or a heroic poem, he is written into the memory of mankind as the epitome of a beautiful young male lover. The goddess sings Adonis' life, and because she is a goddess who places Adonis' memory in the form of a flower on her chest, to stay in the bosom of love for eternity, she makes sure people will remember him forever and they will always remember him in the context of love.

110 Ibid., lines 1177–78.

111 Ibid., line 1179.

112 Ibid., lines 1179.

113 Assmann, *Cultural Memory,* 29.

114 Farrel, "Love, Death and the Hunt," 376.