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NARRATIVES OF EROS AND DESIRE
IN SHAKESPEARE'S POETRY

By

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Abstract

Through a detailed analysis of two outstanding discourses on love: Plato's *eros* and Lacan's desire, this thesis studies the narratives of desire in Shakespeare's poetry. My reading of Shakespeare's poetry is an interpretation of three major themes of procreation, sublimation, and idealisation that not only reflect the discourse of desire but also establish its formulation. In each chapter a tradition of the theme has been respectively incorporated to demonstrate its context. Part I (Chapters One to Three) reveals Plato's concept of *eros* in terms of logocentricism and its egocentric nature. Part II (Chapters Four to Seven) concentrates on the cause, nature and object of desire from Lacan's perspective.

In Part III, Chapter Eight focuses on the metaphor of procreation as an egocentric desire that creates the irrevocable mark of loss. Through the act of regeneration, the lover not only establishes the beloved as an other but also denies any sense of unity. In Chapter Nine, the paradoxical nature of sublimation demonstrates a mode of auto-eroticism that constitutes desire as a metonymy of want-to-be. By elevating the beloved, the lover maintains his transcendence. Finally, Chapter Ten explores the unrepresentability of beauty and the inexpressibility of desire in the movement of idealisation. The dematerialisation of the beloved presents an iconic image of her and the language of desire, like the language of hieroglyphics, becomes indecipherable. Accordingly, the image of death in Shakespeare's poetry characterises the impossibility of desire. In a concluding chapter, I demonstrate how Shakespeare's lover in articulation of his desire, faces a dilemma.

Introduction

I

In recent decades, certain ideas of negativity, decentralisation of the subject and transgression have become associated together to represent a crisis. It seems that the language of analysis has become involved with an 'impossibility' that leads me to view the last decade of the twentieth century as the decade of the 'impossible'. The debates on the unnamability, the unrepresentability, unattainability of desire, and beyond all deconstruction in modern theory all point to a dynamic field of analysis, a state that Jonathan Dollimore refers to as 'the perverse dynamic in western culture'.¹ In this connection, one of the essential terms that assumes a central position in the critical debates of this time is 'desire'. Post-Freudian theories characterise desire as the dialectic of loss. In the post-modern era, desire is the converging point of gender, self, sexuality and the other. Nevertheless, despite the introduction of discontinuity and heterogeneity in the configuration of subjectivity, we may recognise a fundamental rupture (displacement), a form of renunciation in the nature of desire. The essential trait of such representation of desire can be viewed in the early modern period. It seems that the rhetoric of desire in the Renaissance period constitutes a criterion of male subjectivity in Western culture.² Such a discourse of desire marks a

¹ Jonathan Dollimore, 'Desire Is Death,' in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 369.

² Schiesari argues how ironically enough these criteria and analyses of the male subject are considered to be exemplary of the 'human condition' by modern critics. Juliana Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 265.

critical moment in the cultural history of eroticism. It is in this context that I have represented Shakespeare's discourse of desire entangled in the webs of auto-eroticism. I attempt to explain how the enigma of desire is reflected in the egocentric nature of the lover's movement of sublimation. Can we interpret the lover's regeneration of self as the denial of any form of unity? Does the beloved as the image of the other carry the mark of loss in the idealisation movement of the lover? These are some of the questions I shall consider throughout my study. As the ground for my analysis, I have incorporated a detailed study on the notion of Plato's *eros* on the one hand and Lacanian theory of desire on the other in order to reflect the complexity of this dilemma in Shakespeare's poetry.

In this part of my introduction, I would like to elucidate the context of the concept of desire in modern theory and its relation to Lacan's formulation of desire which forms the methodology of my work. The word desire, though originating as a term in psychoanalysis, is now extended to other areas of study. The association of desire with ideas such as death, loss (lack) and identity, innovated by Lacanian psychoanalysis, have provided an extensive ground in other fields that relate desire to various issues: desire-language, desire-the unconscious, desire-gender, desire-semiotics, desire-the Other, desire-sexuality. In this regard, prominent figures such as Foucault, Kristeva, Irigaray, Girard, Barthes and classicists such as David Halperin have formulated their theories based on this relation. On the other hand, the analysis of desire in these fields has opened a particular perspective towards the 'history' of love or the space of *amour*. In this regard, we can refer to invaluable works such as Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse*, Kristeva's *Tales of Love*, Irigaray's *i love to you*, and Derrida's *The post card* as analytical discourses on love.

Michel Foucault studies desire more in a historical context of sexuality. On the genealogy of the desiring man, he moves from classical antiquity to Christianity, where he locates the modern obsession with a recondite desire. Foucault's main argument is that Christian culture in its conception of sex takes a 'hermeneutic of the

self' to unriddle. Thus, in his theory of sexuality, he tries to determine the recognition of self as a subject of desire.³

In the formulation of Derrida, desire is deconstructed by the theory of *différance* which provides a new meaning for the notion of desire. In fact, desire is generated in the alternate space between presence and absence. In her speculations on Derrida, Catherine Belsey explains that *différance* gives rise to desire and at the same time prevents its fulfilment. According to Derrida, she maintains, *différance* makes the opposition of presence and absence possible. The paradoxical feature of *différance* makes the desire of presence possible. However, this means that desire carries in itself the destiny of its non-satisfaction. *Différance* produces what it forbids, makes possible the very thing that it makes impossible.⁴

In the area of feminism, the ideas of desire were linked to issues of sexual difference and gender in general. For Irigaray, contemporary theories of sexuality too often reproduce the Platonic model which omits any question of feminine sexual difference.⁵ She elaborates on this form of desire as the pursuit of masculine mastery through the spiritualisation of the power of reproduction.⁶ In the relation of desire and gender, the ability to draw any strict correspondence between masculinity, rationality, active desire and mastery on the one hand, and femininity, matter, passive desire (or desirelessness) and masterability on the other becomes more difficult and obscure.⁷

In any feminist formulation of desire, the dominant view is that the feminine is always excluded from the modes of male eroticism. In line with the ideas of the French poststructuralist critic René Girard, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that desire is structured by a triangular relation of rivalry, that in Western discourse, relationships are most commonly structured in terms of what she calls 'homosocial desire', a desire

³ John Rajchman, *Truth and Eros: Foucault, Lacan and the Question of Ethics* (Routledge, 1991), pp. 88-9.

⁴ Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), p. 71.

⁵ Barbara Freeman, 'Irigaray at The Symposium: Speaking Otherwise,' *The Oxford Literary Review* 8:1-2 (1986), p.171.

⁶ Judith Butler, 'Desire,' in *Critical Terms for Literary Theory*, Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, eds. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 377.

⁷ Judith Butler, p. 377.

for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power; even narratives that structure the desire of a man for woman are in essence concerned about the relationship between two males, either as rivals or as colleagues. The women tend to be tokens of exchange, effaced in this triangular structure even from relations of desire.⁸

One of the other challenging areas that investigates the idea of desire is in relation to language. Though influenced to a great extent by Lacanian theory of desire as a signifier, this field of analysis studies literary texts as they generate desire and the paradox of reading as an endless desire. If there is a crisis of representation, if desire is transparent, if the signified (writing) has lost its relation to 'the referent' and if the codes of signification are approximate, how can, then, desire make itself plain through a more direct linguistic representation? According to Butler, there is a tension between a conception of language that forms or produces desire and without which desire itself cannot exist and a conception of language that is the vehicle through which desire is displaced, that founders to present desire. Do narratives of desire presume heterosexuality and its patterns or homoeroticism?⁹

In Lacan, desire emerges in language. The unconscious is structured by language and language is structured as desire to the extent that the subject is formulated by and in language. The role of language in Lacan is paradoxical: on the one hand, it forms the subject by generating its individuality and relates it to the Other and on the other hand, it binds the subject to the system of signification and limits him in its relation to the realm of fantasy. In this context, therefore, desire is the movement of displacement in contrast to the substitutive movement of love. Lacan defines desire in terms of metonymy where every object of desire becomes only an association rather than substituting the lost object of desire. Thus, the act of signifying and the representation of desire becomes transparent in language though it is generated by language.

⁸ Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory: Key Critical Concepts* (London: Prentice Hall, 1995), pp. 144-45.

⁹ Judith Butler, p. 370.

Thus, it seems that all these formulations of desire imply that desire can not be signified in any system of signs whether in language, gender or culture. This conclusion may remind us of the first formulation of desire initiated by Freud that placed desire as a structure determined by social boundaries having essentially no essence and no proper object.¹⁰

II

Recent Shakespearean criticism in general, and the critical studies on Shakespeare's poetry, in particular, have been directed towards a new area of analysis whose object of research challenges both the text and the reader. The references of post-structuralist thought, semiotic approaches, gender studies, and the framework that structural history has provided lead us to a new era of interpretation and representation of literary texts. Before explaining the outline of my work and the methodology I have used, I shall briefly review the state of the critical studies on Shakespeare's poetry from the sixties and its changes up to the present time. My review is an attempt to sketch the main features of Shakespearean criticism as it has developed over the last forty years.

The criticism of the sixties can more or less be construed as a reaction to earlier biographical/moralistic interpretations on the one hand, and deprecatory readings of Shakespeare's poetry on the other. Considering the work of art as an object in itself, the former group is generally limited to generic criticism that fails to appreciate the genuine character of these poems.¹¹ As a response to the previous form of criticism, the latter group recognise the ambivalence and the paradoxical structure of Shakespeare's poetry and do not limit his poetry to an enactment of the neoplatonic theme. While the previous decades under a mythical or allegoric framework provided a black and white representation of Shakespeare's figures (such as Venus and Adonis

¹⁰ Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, p. 138.

¹¹ Among the latter group of scholars, I can refer to critics like Douglas Bush, C. S. Lewis, and Lu Emily Pearson who do not find Shakespeare's poetry worthy enough or maintain that it 'fails egregiously'.

in terms of good and evil), the literature of the sixties began to present a realistic mode in Shakespeare's poem where Venus, for example, is regarded as the goddess of love and beauty who sometimes shows lustful gestures. Nevertheless, despite its anti-didactic approach, the criticism of the sixties constructs its own doctrinal interpretation. A poem like *Venus and Adonis* becomes the enactment of the mystery and creation of the Fall.¹² As a reaction to the latter group of scholars mentioned above, the critics of the 1960s attempt to recognise the poetic merits of Shakespeare's works by a close reading as Kenneth Muir interprets *The Rape of Lucrece* in the category of the genre complaint.¹³

In the seventies, the direction of interpretation does not take a drastic change. What distinguishes the critical studies of this period is more inclination towards the form and structural merits of the poems in favour of the critic's argument. In this connection, I can refer to Robert Griffin's article on Shakespeare's narrative poems which, elucidating and annotating Coleridge's criticism of Shakespeare, focuses on certain reiterative motifs and patterns of imagery that contribute to both the complexity and unity of the poems.¹⁴ Furthermore, there is a tendency to recreate the poems in their textual analysis. This is mostly a documentative reading of the poems that would relate us to Shakespeare's first readers, as Michael Platt's interpretation of Shakespeare's *Lucrece* in its context sounds like a defence of Shakespeare's intentions.¹⁵ Even the psychoanalytical reading of Alan Rothenberg, in its extensive accumulation of predator imagery and chains of metaphors, becomes confessional. The mother-child conflict in different forms is a projection of a latent oral rape fantasy which altogether reveals for us some aspects of Shakespeare's childhood.¹⁶ Nevertheless, there are still some hard grounds for neoplatonism but with a thorough

¹² A. C. Hamilton, 'Venus and Adonis,' *Studies in English Literature: 1500-1900* 1 (1961).

¹³ Kenneth Muir, 'The Rape of Lucrece,' *Anglica* 5 (1964).

¹⁴ Robert J. Griffin, '“These Contraries Such Unity Do Hold”: Patterned Imagery in Shakespeare's Narrative Poems,' *Studies in English Literature: 1500-1900* 4 (1964).

¹⁵ Michael Platt, 'The Rape of Lucrece and the Republic For Which It Stands,' *The Centennial Review* 19:2 (1975).

¹⁶ Alan B. Rothenberg, 'The “Speaking Breast”: A Theory of Shakespearean Creativity,' *Psychocultural Review* 3 (1979).

reliance on the text: neoplatonic hierarchy of the senses in the character of Venus¹⁷ or the divine and transcendent form of love in the *Sonnets*.¹⁸ Among the well-documented readings of Shakespeare's *Lucrece*, I can refer to Saad El-Gabalawy whose juxtaposition of Christian formulation of the myth with some distinct writers' (from Chaucer to Carew) adaptation of the myth of *Lucrece* involves complex issues of honour, consent, free will or sexual compulsion.¹⁹

During the eighties, the prevailing attitude of the critics towards Shakespeare's poems became more individual. Whether taking a psychoanalytic, feminist, historical or formalistic approach, it seems that the critic has undertaken his own insights which mostly result in appreciating the structure of the poems as well as the poet's unique transformation of the myths. In this regard, Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* has been very challenging for critics who have replaced the negative and biased interpretations of the past with a positive, heroic image of *Lucrece* where the philosophical and psychological nature of chastity are explored.²⁰ Nancy Vickers argues that the canonical legacy of description in this poem is a legacy shaped predominantly by the male imagination for the male imagination in the context of a contest generated by rhetorical strategies of the poem.²¹ Richard Levin's article is another attempt in a historical reconstruction of the ideals of chastity and fidelity (in *Lucrece*) as opposed to the ironic readings of the past.²² The other poems are also discussed with individual taste though updated with the critical theories of the time. Jackson Barry, examining the rhetoric of Shakespeare's sonnet 129, dismisses the conventional Renaissance idea of mutability (before-after) in favour of an intensely active view of time that involves past, present and future.²³

¹⁷ Heather Asals, 'Venus and Adonis: The Education of a Goddess,' *Studies in English Literature: 1500-1900* 13 (1973).

¹⁸ Dayton S. J. Haskin, 'Pardon as a Weapon Against Time in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*,' *Xavier University Studies* 11:3 (1972).

¹⁹ Saad El-Gabalawy, 'The Ethical Question of *Lucrece*: A Case of Rape,' *Mosaic* 12 (1979).

²⁰ Laura G. Bromley, 'Lucrece's Recreation,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34 (1983).

²¹ Nancy J. Vickers, 'This Heraldry in *Lucrece*' Face,' *Poetics Today* 6:1-2 (1985).

²² Richard Levin, 'The Ironic Reading of *The Rape of Lucrece* and the Problem of External Evidence,' *Shakespeare Survey* 34 (1981).

²³ Jackson G. Barry, ' "Had, Having, and in Quest to Have, Extreme": Shakespeare's Rhetoric of Time in Sonnet 129,' *Language and Style: An International Journal* 14:1 (Winter, 1981).

Entering the nineties, the critical literature takes a new direction. Two significant features of this period have almost revolutionised our understanding and conception of the Renaissance. One of the profound changes in the criticism of Shakespeare's poetry is that the predominant literary theories of the time approach the texts in a manner as if the texts have provided the basis of analysis for some serious debates. The extensive terminology of the recent theories has become to a great extent revealing in our understanding of the texts. In this regard, I can refer to Raymond Waddington's article on Shakespeare's sonnet 20 which is a reading of the young man's androgynous beauty through blazon. The evidence he provides is a documentation of medical attitudes towards sex transformation and the sixteenth-century interpretation of the myth of bisexual that indicates the development of gender studies in recent times.²⁴ Joseph Cady's article is another recent investigation on the connotations of the word love in the context of Renaissance sexuality. By proposing the existence of some terms, he disputes the dominant tendency of the new inventionists who deny the existence of any conception nor any language for the phenomenon of sexual orientation as a whole. Furthermore, he maintains the awareness of a definite male-female eroticism as the norm which proves a repressive, constricting and hazardous picture of the Renaissance sexuality.²⁵

The second feature of the critical studies on Shakespeare's poetry at the present time is that one of the areas of criticism that was introduced in the eighties becomes cultivated. Freudian theories yield to a vast reading of theories of post-Freudian, Feminist psychoanalysis and cultural psychology. In this regard, we can point out Sara van den Berg's analysis of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* under the formulas of post-Freudian object relations theory. She develops the mother-child motif (as a pre-

²⁴ Raymond B. Waddington, 'The Poetics of Eroticism; Shakespeare's "Master Mistress" ' in *Renaissance Discourses of Desire*, Claude J. Summers, and Ted-Larry Pebworth, eds. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993).

²⁵ Joseph Cady, 'Renaissance Awareness and Language for Heterosexuality; "Love" and "Feminine Love" ' in *Renaissance Discourses of Desire*, Claude J. Summers, and Ted-Larry Pebworth, eds. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993).

oedipal love) in the *Sonnets* to delineate the relation of self and language.²⁶ David Willbern's study of Shakespeare's *Lucrece* propounds his theory of hyperbolic desire with references to the characters' soliloquies and ends with an association of rape with the process of writing.²⁷ Finally, we can refer to Dollimore's analysis of desire as death - with references to Freud - that investigates the Renaissance ideas of mutability, death and desire in the context of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and the *Sonnets*.²⁸

III

Having explained the context of desire and the broad areas of investigation it covers in Part I, I shall focus on certain aspects of Lacanian desire that I have discussed in my work. The first two parts of my work are dedicated to explaining the complexity of two theories: Plato's theory of *eros* and Lacan's formulation of desire. These two notions form the methodology of my analysis of Shakespeare's poetry. Lacan's terminology on the one hand and his reinterpretation of the idea of desire on the other, will enable me to note the underlying meaning of the images and motifs in Shakespeare's poems that represent love and desire. The ideas of time, idealisation, death, procreation, transformation and immortality all become associated in the context of desire. These images not only form the essential elements of love and desire, but they maintain an integral part of Shakespeare's poetry. Lacan's formulation of desire provides a framework that leads me to interpret the significance of these images in relation to the representation of desire in his poetry. Under this broad context of analysis, we can articulate these images in relation to the efforts of a poet-

²⁶ Sara van den Berg, '“Mutual Ordering”: Subjectivity and Language in Shakespeare's Sonnets,' in *Contending Kingdoms: Historical, Psychological, and Feminist Approaches to the Literature of Sixteenth Century England and France*, Marie-Rose Logan, and Peter L. Rudnytsky, eds. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991).

²⁷ David Willbern, 'Hyperbolic Desire: Shakespeare's *Lucrece*,' in *Contending Kingdoms: Historical, Psychological, and Feminist Approaches to the Literature of Sixteenth Century England and France*, Marie-Rose Logan, and Peter L. Rudnytsky, eds. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991).

²⁸ Jonathan Dollimore, 'Desire Is Death'.

lover whose desire strives to establish his 'self' in language, a language that idealises his object of desire and sublimates his identity as a lover.

In discussing Plato's doctrine of *eros*, I have concentrated for my analysis on Plato's *Symposium* for two reasons. First, it is the most detailed analysis of the concept of *eros* in Plato, a mode of eroticism that still forms our conception of love and gender. Second, the integral features of *eros* serve as the essential background for the study of a Renaissance text. Plato's *Symposium* in its formulation of *eros* as desire provides a context where different images and motifs of Shakespeare's poetry are developed. It is in the context of Renaissance neoplatonism that the concepts of procreation and immortality find a new expression. In the study of Shakespeare's poetry, what is regarded simply as a lover who yearns to immortalise his beloved is formulated differently in the context of the *Symposium*. In this context, the beloved is replaced by the idea of immortality as the main object of love. Despite the integral role that Plato's *eros* plays in the representation of desire in Shakespeare's poetry, I do not intend to elucidate the platonic features of his poetry or even the extent of those characteristics. What the overall understanding of my work should reveal is the implication that Shakespeare's poetry is beyond any formulated theory even if that theory lies in the background. In fact, in many respects, his poetry can be anti-platonic - if I can use this word. One of the essential features of the representation of desire in Shakespeare's poetry is its presentation of a dilemma caused by the movements of desire that is lacking in Plato's *eros*. In this regard, the ambivalent mode of the poems, the ideal image of the beloved, and the significant image of death serve as some of the characteristics that move beyond platonism.

My analysis of the *Symposium* is based on an interpretation of Plato's definition of *eros*. Here, Plato has provided a discourse on love from different perspectives that reflect the thoughts of his contemporaries in general and outlines for his readers the Greek view of love in particular. Such a structure enables Plato to define *eros* in the context of Greek love. This means that Platonic love is a development of Greek love (the dualistic feature of Greek philosophy is still

dominant) yet it proposes some new elements that make it distinct: 1) *eros* is primarily a desire; it yearns for something it lacks 2) the object of *eros* is good and beauty 3) *eros* generates itself in beauty to achieve immortality.

In discussing the function of beauty as the object of *eros*, I shall explain that beauty in the lower stages is the corporeal beauty that attracts the lover. However, such beauty is merely an image that represents the Idea of Beauty. Beauty in the highest stage of the ascent is indeed the Form that is eternal, absolute and a separate entity existing on its own. Furthermore, the significant point in Plato's theory of ascent is that it is a cognitive process. At every level, the lover becomes more detached from the materiality of beauty and his cognition of the essence of beauty increases up to the last stage where he attains the knowledge of Absolute Beauty. Therefore, this account of *eros* reveals that to possess everlasting beauty is to know beauty. Platonic love is a contemplation of the forms. And this implies that the lover is a philosopher who creates thoughts and discourses of wisdom.

The definition of love leads to the notion of hierarchy in beauty. On the lowest level, the lover produces replicas of himself to immortalise himself. On the level of spiritual beauty, the lover obtains the knowledge of beauty that is graded as well: the beauty of soul in the beloved, the beauty of laws and sciences and finally the Idea of Beauty itself. Accordingly, in all these stages, the lover either immortalises his 'self' by genetic reproduction or sacrifices the beloved to elevate his own 'self'. In the highest state of the ascent, the lover desires to become godlike and creates not the images of beauty but real Beauty. In response to the opposed view that interprets Plato's *eros* not as an egoistic but a creative and productive love, I shall argue that the erotic philosophy of Plato is primarily based on lack. The lover strives to replace something he does not have and in this search the beloved is merely a step. In the last stage, the prime object of the lover is also the development of his own 'self' or purification of his soul rather than the education of the beloved. Platonic love is a solitary spiritual journey that not only perfects the lover modelled on the Forms but

also holds less significance for the love of the beautiful bodies, minds and dispositions respectively.

Coming to Part II, I have analysed Lacan's theory of desire with reference to the origin or cause of desire, the nature of desire, the relation between desire and love, and finally the desire of the Other. Lacan made some important contributions in developing the meaning of the unconscious in the light of structuralism. His recognition of the split subject, the powerful force of the signifier in representing the subject, the distinction between the ego as the product of the Imaginary and the subject as the structure of the Symbolic, and his definition of the Real order (which was expanded in his later Seminars) to name only a few, influenced his theory of desire.

In analysing the complexity of desire, Lacan refers to two dimensions of loss: the biological and the social lack. As I shall elucidate this point, Lacan's interpretation of loss sets it apart from the idealist view of the origin of man's state of loss since Lacanian psychoanalysis does not provide any account of unity inside the subject. In the structural/social lack, language alienates the subject as it never represents the subject's identity and causes a division inside the subject: a split between the conscious and the unconscious. The real lack, as the other dimension of loss, looks at the subject as a sexed being who by coming into existence through sexual reproduction loses its essence. In both sides, the subject can not get back to the unconscious truth or its essence. This rupture transforms the original lack into desire, an absolute condition which can be neither formulated nor fulfilled. Lacan explains the concept of desire by distinguishing it from need and demand. Desire is not sexual and is metonymic in its representation of want-to-be. Such characterisation of desire refutes the state of opposition that Plato's theory of desire formulates.

Lacan argues for the difference between love and desire too. Man who is constituted by lack always yearns to obtain what he/she lacks in love. This narcissistic feature of love dissociates it from desire that can never be signified. To love always is a wish to be loved. Lacan's interpretation of love shows the narcissistic identifications

of the lover in the ladder of the sublimation in Plato. Nevertheless, desire is the desire of the Other. The Other is both the cause and object of the subject's desire. And the subject is dependent on it for both its existence and recognition of itself.

Desire, thus, presents itself in the form of an enigma and different subjects' reply to that enigma constructs different individuals.²⁹ Psychoanalysis does not present us with an ideal/original picture of the subject. The only solution for the analysand is to face its loss in the form of a pure state of desire. One of the examples Lacan provides in his discussion on desire in Seminar II is the example of Oedipus who says, I am made man in the hour when I cease to be.³⁰ It is only in this confrontation that the subject comes to experience the original rupture where he became separated from its 'self'.

Coming to Part III, I have analysed Shakespeare's representation of desire in the context of his poetry under three chapters. In these chapters, I have attempted to analyse the dominant motifs of procreation, sublimation, idealisation and the discourse of desire that would manifest the structure and representation of desire between the lover and the beloved. My arguments mainly rely on the analysis of desire from two perspectives - Lacan's and Plato's - that I have provided as the framework of my study. I have also included a brief review of the tradition of these motifs in love lyrics before Shakespeare in order to have a better understanding of the context Shakespeare is providing.

In the first chapter on Shakespeare's poetry, I attempt to analyse the dominant concept of immortality and the motif of procreation which play a significant role in the discourse of desire. As the motif of procreation is associated with the movement of time, I have started my investigation with a brief explanation on the tradition of temporality in love lyrics before Shakespeare. Time that has always been an essential element of love poetry has found a wide scope of modes: from a destructive force

²⁹ Alenka Zupancic, 'What's Love Got to Do With Id,' in *Lacan and Love*, Renata Salecl, ed. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1994), p. 62.

³⁰ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II; The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-55* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 232.

acting against love in classical antiquity to the negotiable power in *carpe diem*. In fact, the principle of mutability, inherited from Greek philosophy, dominates time and space. The poets tried to rationalise the brevity of life as a lapse of time compared to their verse that celebrates and prolongs their fame. With Petrarch, time - though still a symbol of negativity - interrogates the subject of love. It becomes an integral part of the process of sublimation of the lover-poet. However, there is a new mode of time introduced in Petrarch's poetry that later develops in Shakespeare's love poems. This mode of time alludes to a time in the future that signifies fear and hopelessness. This state of atemporality in the spiritual movement of the lover projects the fulfilment of presence in the future. Such linear movement of time that opposes the present with the future becomes more distinct in Shakespeare's poetry where a deferred immortality (future) defies the temporality and deathliness of the present.

The imagery of time in Shakespeare's poetry varies from the brutal personifications of time as the agent of death to the images of nature that imply the sequence of time. What the lover-poet counteracts relates more to the beloved rather than to conquering time. Time is not a valuable commodity for the compensation of our youth and beauty. Time is a harsh necessity. Through this conceptualisation of time, the effects of subjectivity revive in the lover-poet's challenge. In fact, in determining the relation between the subject (the lover) and love, the images of time move from the temporal beauty of the beloved to its eternal state through regeneration. This sequential pattern of time is accompanied by the analytic structure of the lover-poet's arguments. Therefore, what we are confronted with here is not the description of the beauty of the beloved but an analysis of self-love embodied in the beloved that produces an argument against mortal course of love - or any obstacle for the lover's desire. Therefore, time serves as a mediator that relates beauty to death. In other words, the mortal function of beauty disrupts the lover's discourse on immortality.

By describing the images of time, I shall illustrate the lover's arguments that exemplify the theme of procreation on the one hand, and the theme of self-love on the other. The images of procreation lead me to my analysis of the motif of procreation

and the desire for immortality. All these arguments that subordinate the idealisation of the beloved signify the power of regeneration against the force of time and sanctify the lover's desire. In the linear structure of time, the immortality signifies a state of rebirth separated from death by regeneration. In other words, the reproduction image is the conjoining part of life and death in a temporal sequence. And in this process, the beloved who carries the mark of death (since s/he is the embodiment of mortal beauty) eases the transformation of the lover.

With reference to the word 'conception' in the *Symposium*, where the begetting of physical beauty is extended to begetting of the knowledge of beauty, and the expression of 'copulation' used in Renaissance treatises, I shall explain the metaphorical layer of the procreation image in Shakespeare's poems and how the presence of the beloved by means of procreation becomes an alternative to death in the chain of birth-death. How does the cosmic force of regeneration as a sacred gift represent the identity of the lover in the discourse of desire? Furthermore, the metaphorical function of the regeneration of beauty through verse reveals the double role of the lover who takes on the attributes of both maternity and paternity: the lover not only creates (gives birth to) the beloved but educates him/her too. However, to love is to regenerate which means that the lover conceals the egocentric nature of his desire through the metaphorical expression of *eros*. The significant form of immortality by verse places the beloved as the source of his inspiration on the one hand, and reflects the fear of the lover from his own lack on the other. The function of verse (language) as a means for immortalisation, beyond its metaphorical layer, proves the formation of the lover-poet's desire in and of language that establishes his identity in the Symbolic order.

The other issue that I have questioned in relation to the immortality of the beloved is to recognise the beloved as the Other that stands as the source and cause of love for the lover. As the beloved is merely a representative of love (the lost object of desire), the lover owes his existence as a lover to her/him. This can be confirmed since the beloved is neither part of the lover nor his/her complement. As such, the

lover does not yearn to be united with the beloved but merely to substitute the lost object of his desire. The process of immortalisation merely guarantees the lover's establishment as the lover's egocentric nature. The ungendered descriptions of physical beauty of the beloved fortifies this function of the beloved as an object of love, *objet a*. Furthermore, the external lack symbolised by the image of time is taken up by the internal lack inside the lover that causes desire on the one hand, and denies its fulfilment projected by the death of the beloved on the other. The objectification of love represents the obstruction of the pure state of desire.

Chapter nine is mainly the analysis of a paradox in the underlying conception of the sublimation or ascension in Shakespeare's poetry. In discussing the notion of sublimation as basically a movement, which creates a duality between flesh and spirit, I have provided a brief review of the tradition of transcendence. This background enables me to manifest in a more speculative manner Shakespeare's treatment of such untenable dualism and its connotations in the discourse of desire. The idea of transcendence, that serves as another preoccupation of the Renaissance era, has been reflected in different forms and images all of which generate a division, or rather an opposition between matter and spirit. The tradition of such dualism can be traced to Greek philosophy that in its account of the purification of soul (catharsis) maintains its imprisonment in the body. Plato's assumption of the movement of ascension, as explained in the *Symposium*, recognises a hierarchical structure where corporeality is despised in the pure and rational stages of the upper levels. In resolving this dichotomy, the Christian doctrine of word and flesh is also a history of doctrinal conflict itself. It was through the impact of these polars of thoughts that a distinction was established between human love and spiritual love in the domain of love poetry. In this realm, the language of metaphor and allegory has always sought to establish a reconciliation between these two modes of love by elevating the modes of eroticism, that is, minimising the role of sexuality and corporeality. In this connection, the relation between sexuality and ascension has found different forms of representation.

The unrepresentability of such a relation has caused a dilemma in Shakespeare's poetry, a conflict that reveals itself in the tension between the lover and his beloved. In delineating Shakespeare's representation of the idea of sublimation, I have characterised the transcending movement of the lover from beauty (embodied in the beloved) towards immortality in terms of a strife and a struggle that is manifested in the images of hunting, war or rape signifying wooing (an erotic struggle). In explaining these images that pervade Shakespeare's poems, I have characterised the strife in terms of a conflict between love and desire that is reflected in different layers: beauty vs. impurity, sacred vs. profane, conscience vs. will, chastity vs. sin and finally lover vs. beloved. The clash or the combat between the lover and beloved, despite the change of gender roles, is portrayed not only through the images of war and hunting but through the language of metaphor (heraldry, shield), internal conflict revealed in soliloquies.

In my analysis of Shakespeare's representation of the clash between love and desire, I have attempted to interpret the movement of sublimation in Shakespeare's poetry: does this horizontal movement signify elevation of his self or is it taking place in the arena of his ego? Can we interpret this desire for sublimation as narcissistic and libidinal investment or a genuine desire that redirects itself in the process and articulates an internal lack? Or is it simply a neoplatonic reunion? I have categorised the lover's language as the language of idealisation that seeks to expose the image of his ego through identification with an ideal rather than real image. On the other hand, I have projected Shakespeare's portrayal of the beloved in parallel to the picture of Narcissus who becomes victimised in the lover's movement of auto-eroticism. Shakespeare's protagonists represent purity and beauty of a self that seeks self-knowledge, an erotic individuation that yearns to identify itself with the internal loss. The beloved does not yield to the give and take chain of love which thereby predicts her/his tragic death. However, the tragic death is a manifestation of the beloved's transformation since in her/his affinity to death, s/he can perceive the lack that causes a pure state of desire. In Shakespeare's triangle of love, self and beauty, the duality

does not find a platonic image of ascension through an illusive reunion or a one-way transformation of the lover, but a conflict, a state of unfulfilment, and a narcissistic struggle to transcend the fear of loss and death, and the confrontation with loss and lack.

The last chapter on Shakespeare's poetry explores mainly the picture of the lover and the features of the beloved in their discourse of desire, that is in the language of idealisation, the role of the beauty image and the mode of sublimisation of the beloved. Similar to the other two chapters on Shakespeare, I have provided a brief study of the role of feminine beauty in the tradition of love poetry in order to interpret the function of beauty and the idealisation mode of Shakespeare's poems in its background. The representation of feminine beauty in the love poetry before the Renaissance is in the form of *blazon* that can be traced as early as The Song of Songs. This is a very statuesque and stereotypical form of feminine beauty that dissects different parts of the female body in its depiction of beauty and fragments it through sets of brutal metaphors that eventually lose their relation to the represented object. This form of representation not only gave the impression of a substance, but also disclosed the formation of a discourse.

Contrary to this mode of representation, beauty is not equated to feminine beauty in Shakespeare's poetry. Beauty is a general abstract concept rather than concrete physical feature. That is, beauty serves as a metonymy where female beauty is only an association. Therefore, what we see in his poems are passages analysing the idea of beauty rather than describing it. One of the reasons for this reactive mode to the predominant form of representation of feminine beauty is the prevailing theories of representation in both painting and poetry according to which beauty can neither be defined nor described. What the poets were seeking to establish was an elevated and perfect form of beauty created by the artist's mind that would repair that imperfect (defected) form of beauty existing in reality. The result is that in Shakespeare's poems, the feminine beauty embodied in the beloved becomes a sign that represents the elevated image the lover yearns to identify. Furthermore, she becomes an icon that

can not signify what it stands for, the original reference being lost. In this regard, we can refer to the function of metaphor that is depicted in the line of the poet-lover's argumentation on beauty rather than merely a depiction of beauty. In this manner, beauty becomes associated with the images of reproduction as the lover-poet encapsulates his idea that beauty multiplies itself by nature, thus referring to its reproductive function of beauty. Shakespeare uses the language of metaphor and symbolic images to convey both the purity and the beauty of the beloved as the emblem of perfection. One of the significant symbolic images that is associated with the idea of beauty is the image of death and decay that pervade his poetry. What can we conceive of such association in Shakespeare's poetry? Is it a neoplatonic formulation to see the beauty and the beloved as merely an image? If so, in this manner, the beloved becomes an object of sight, a surveyed who is victimised by the lover-poet's desire whose role is the male spectator. Furthermore, the image of death of the beloved on its own reveals the structure of a paradox through which the lover-poet idealises the beloved on the one hand, and destroys her/him on the other. Towards the end of the lover's transformation, beauty that is an integral part of love dies and thereby the beloved who was its embodiment. The same view can be explained in painting where feminine beauty is projected and disembodied at the same time.

The image of the lover can be paralleled with Plato's lover-philosopher who not only defines love for the beloved but creates him/her, too. It is through the process of idealisation and the rational arguments on the nature of love that the lover establishes his identity as a lover. He has the knowledge of love; he demands for the elevated form of beauty and purity that represents the ego ideal. I would conclude that the role of the lover as both philosopher and creator of the beloved is a powerful indication of male procreation. In every form that the lover immortalises the beloved, s/he is a possessed image. In this connection, her/his death guarantees the process of mastery over the imaginary object. But does she transform him in the platonic sense of the word? Or is she an integral part of his transformation? Does her death imply the

primacy of the viewer over the viewed? If she represents the ideal ego of the lover, is her death a symbolic signification of the death of his ego resulting in a metamorphosis? Is the image of death that of the ideal ego or of the image or of self-love? Does it stand for loss and the internal lack? Is it fetishism and annihilation? Is it petrification of flesh and symbolic portrayal of mortality of beauty? In the end, I shall reinforce the idea that there is not any sense of unity or platonic transformation for the lover and argue that his poems are the projection of auto-eroticism.

Thus, in representing love and desire in Shakespeare's poetry, I have invoked Lacan's and Plato's theories of desire in order to reflect the complex structure of desire that was otherwise impossible without relying on the language of philosophy and psychoanalysis. Furthermore, my analysis is not an attempt to psychoanalyse Shakespeare's poetry neither have I confined myself to an attempt to trace a certain meaning for his poetry, since his poetry is not confessional. Instead, Plato's *eros* that serves as the background reading of the poems on the one hand, and Lacan's formulation of desire on the other provide a context where the dilemmas, identities, language of eroticism, dynamics of fantasy and the paradoxical movements of desire are articulated. Under structural analysis, the image of the beloved is not limited to the emblem of virtue. Rather, the beloved is an identity whose enactment of desire is in contrast to the lover's. In my analysis, Shakespeare's lover does not merely present a picture of homoeroticism. The lover-poet whose identity is structured by language projects his desire into language and identifies with the created object of desire. However, in the metonymic structure of desire, he confines himself in elevating his ego rather than structuring his lack, and becomes imprisoned by fantasising his ego ideal. The diverse imagery of sublimation, idealisation, procreation, and their discourses provide a challenging space for the theories of *eros* and desire.

PART I

PLATO'S THEORY OF EROS



The Concept of Eros
Eros and Logocentrism
The Egocentric Nature of Eros

Plato's erotic philosophy has provided a contested ground for scholars with different points of view. There are scholars who study the concept of *eros* in the framework of Plato's philosophy, the imprint of hellenism and Greek materialistic philosophy; others are critics who investigate Plato's *eros* in the broad context of Greek love that extends to issues from pederasty to Christian *agape*. Such an extensive range of studies and diversity of research on Platonic love in itself reflects to a great extent its distinction from other doctrines of love. *Eros* in Plato is not merely an account of the human experience provided with a mythological background. In the metaphysics of Plato, *eros* occupies an important place; it is the manifestation of an internal struggle, a desire for something eternal. This means that Plato's *eros* is a way of life, a confrontation with immortality. Therefore, any analysis of the concept of *eros* should reconstruct its meaning in the context of Plato's philosophy. Thus, it is not surprising to see such a wide range of research on the erotic philosophy of Plato. In my attempt to investigate the concept of *eros* and analyse its different features, I shall concentrate on Plato's *Symposium*, as the idea of *eros* is a subordinate topic in his other works. Furthermore, the significance of the *Symposium* lies in the fact that it is the only analytical text that formulates Plato's doctrine of love thoroughly.

The *Symposium* or the *Banquet* is originally a celebration of Agathon's victory in the festival that later turns into a discourse on *eros*. As it is the norm of a symposium to talk over a serious subject, they decide to praise *eros* and discuss its nature. Here Plato, unlike his practice in other works, expounds the nature and

function of *eros* not in the form of a dialogue but a discourse. All the characters define *eros* from their own perspectives that represent the thinking of Plato's contemporaries. To involve different figures, who reflect their character in their definitions of *eros*, gives a literary effect to the *Symposium*. The conversations finally lead to Socrates who through a dialectic method presents a formidable and unique characterisation of *eros*.

The *Symposium* is regarded as both a work of art (drama) and a philosophical treatise. It is a drama in that it endows each character with a different speech in terms of style that reveals his disposition. However, it is primarily a philosophical work in that it explores the philosophy of love through dialectical method. Plato's theory of love in general and the *Symposium* in particular has been notably debated by critics, and we may locate two basic categories of discussion. There are many arguments that take a literary point of view. This approach covers themes such as character analysis; the order of speeches; political, historical and mythical references; the importance of allusions, setting and the question of whether Socrates positively or negatively exemplifies Plato's idea of *eros*.

The second approach endeavours to formulate Plato's notion of love philosophically. These include discussions that claim to present a definition of Platonic love by comparing it with Plato's other related works and locating the date of its composition. Logical and systematic arguments on horizontal or ontic level in the ascent forms the main line of these arguments. These analyses usually search for Plato's contradictory statements or judgmental views about his philosophy in general in their conclusions. In my study of Plato's *eros* as a background for my analysis of desire in Shakespeare's poetry, I shall concentrate on the complexity of this concept. I shall, therefore, elaborate on its distinction from Greek love and the term *agape* that has caused misinterpretations and characterise its two significant features: logocentricity and egocentricity.

CHAPTER ONE

The Concept of *Eros*

Any analysis of the *Symposium* involves a clear definition of *eros* for our understanding of the erotic philosophy of Plato. In my attempt to fulfil this purpose, I shall first present the genesis of Eros as a mythic figure. Greek mythology provides us with a picture of Eros whose fundamental role lies in the creation of the universe. In the prehellenic period, *Eros* has a metaphysical significance; he represents the force of attraction who causes existence. In the formation of the world, Eros co-ordinated the elements out of chaos and constituted the universe.¹ He brings harmony to chaos and permits life to develop. However, the significance of Eros in Greek mythology exceeds that. The story of his encounter with Psyche (a beautiful mortal) discloses the exceptional human feature of Eros; he is the embodiment of human wishes and sorrows. The importance of this myth demonstrates the erotic role of Eros that later structures not only a human feature called desire in Greek philosophy but also the decisive role he plays in the life of mankind. According to this myth, Eros is attracted to Psyche. Out of jealousy, Aphrodite punishes Psyche to become the prey of a monster. In counteraction to Aphrodite's decision, Eros with an unknown appearance takes her to a palace as his wife and informs her that his identity should not be revealed. Under the temptations of her sisters, Psyche disobeys him and reveals his

¹In the Orphic theology, Eros is also an ancient god of life and generation, and on the same level in antique ritual, there is the picture of an egg as the beginning of a cosmogony from whom emerges a bird-god, a winged thing, a source of life, more articulate than the egg yet near akin to it in potency. Eros is but a specialised form of the Ker (little winged bacilli that are fructifying or death-bringing) who moves upward. Thus, the role of Eros as god of life and generation is connected to the element of purification in the myth of egg (Jane Ellen Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), p. 631).

face by a torch. Being unfaithful, she is sent to the underworld as punishment. Eros asks Zeus's permission for Psyche's repentance. Eventually, she is released and conferred immortality. Beyond a revelation of love and beauty or a story of love, the myth of Eros and Psyche presents man's fate. To view this myth from the perspective of Platonic love, the myth implores a desire in man's nature represented by Eros that seeks love. The presence of Eros manifests the power that gods gave to man's soul under disguise to relate them to the immortal. On another level, Psyche represents mankind who was condemned for revealing the source of his love. This reminds one of the story of Adam who was expelled from the garden of Eden because of his thirst for the knowledge of truth. However, man can only achieve repentance through love that will ensure the union of man's soul with Truth. In this interpretation, the role of Eros is a mediator that connects man to divinity.

Greek love

My starting point in examining Platonic love is the interpretation of the five speeches in Plato's *Symposium* that on the one hand represent the views of his contemporaries, and on the other dissociate Platonic love from Greek love. Plato incorporates the ideas of the other speakers, to some degree, into his own conception of love. This clarifies the importance and sequence of these speeches. However, this does not suggest that Platonic love is a continuation of the Greek's view of love. *Eros* in Plato is highly original in liberating itself from Greek notions of love and in fact it puts forward a new doctrine whose rules still structure our moral views.

The first speaker is Phaedrus, who praises *Eros* as the eldest, noblest and mightiest of the gods. His view reflects the role of *Eros* in mythology where *Eros* is the cause of creation and generation. What is significant in his speech - and later picked up by Socrates - is that love is the source of our desire to perform good and the

cause of our ambition to accomplish noble deeds (178a-180b).² The next speaker is Pausanias, who developing the previous speech, maintains that our actions are neither noble nor ignoble outside of the context of our motives. Moreover, there are two Aphrodites and therefore two kinds of love: vulgar love that pursues the pleasures of the body and honourable love that educates the mind. Pausanias is the first speaker who establishes a division in the nature of Eros in relation to body and mind that is later developed in Socrates' theory of the ascent. His theory of love serves as a justification of contemporary Athenian standards where he generally dismisses the role of women, articulates a submissive role for the beloved and approves the superiority of regulated relationships between men and boys over degenerate and sensual love in heterosexual relations (180-185c). The speech of Eryximachus, the next speaker, is characteristic of Greek physics of the time. His hypothesis is an original synthesis of Empedoclean and Heracleitean cosmology, and Pythagorean medical theory³ according to which he propounds the theory of harmony of the opposites as a general theory for love (185e-188e). The fourth speech Aristophanes', as a comic poet, is a parody of Eryximachus wherein harmony is not of opposites but of similars; there is an original complete man and what man strives for is his other half, the primordial state. Plato's *eros*, however, reconstructs Aristophanes' desire for union in the last stage of *eros* where the philosopher obtains the Idea of Beauty and gets close to immortality as far as possible. Plato establishes the concept of *eros* as a desire for good and beauty (189a-193d) rather than sexual union. Agathon, the last speaker, describes *eros* as the young, virtuous and the most beautiful of gods who emanates good. Agathon's speech is a self-glorification that identifies the beloved with love rather than the lover and equates passion with the object of passion (194e-197e).⁴ Socrates in his formulation of *eros* retains the universality and cosmic feature

² All citations from the *Symposium* are from *The Dialogues of Plato*, R. M. Hare and D. A. Russell, eds., Benjamin Jowett, trans. (London: Sphere Books, 1970). The references are given in parentheses in the text.

³ John A. Brentlinger, ed., *The Symposium of Plato* (Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), p. 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

of *eros* (Eryximachus), the dualistic view of love: earthly and divine love (Pausanias), desire for union (Aristophanes), cause of ambition for noble deeds (Phaedrus), passion for beauty (Agathon). Nevertheless, Socrates' definition of *eros* deviates from the materialistic and mythic view of man's nature and generates some new elements to this feature of human experience.

Platonic love

Having explained the function of Eros the god in Greek mythology and its diverse roles in Greek love, I shall expound the meaning of *eros* in Plato's *Symposium*, which defines love according to his philosophical framework. However, before going further, the important point which I should like to emphasise here is the exact meaning of the word *eros*. There are other words like *philia* and *epithymia* used in Plato's texts that connote almost the same meaning. In the English translations of Plato's texts, love is the only word that transfers the meaning of these terms. There has been a controversy over the distinction of *eros* from *philia* and *epithymia*. Critics like Hyland and Cummins have discussed this issue. Hyland distinguishes *eros* from *philia* and *epithymia* by examining two passages from *The Symposium* (200a-201b) and *Lysis* (221-222) and maintains that *epithymia* as the lowest faculty of the soul is the brute desire that yearns to possess what one lacks. *Eros* also desires, but unlike *epithymia*, it both desires and loves. Finally, *philia* in its purest form is the modification of the desire for possession by rationality and contemplation. In other words, the object of *epithymia* is pleasure while the object of *eros* is beauty and good.⁵ On the other hand, Cummins, refuting Hyland's arguments, maintains that we should resist finding verbal consistency in Plato's texts and persuades us to rely on the context for an exact meaning instead.⁶ And the best text that defines *eros* explicitly and clarifies its boundaries is the *Symposium*.

⁵ Drew A. Hyland, 'Eros, Epithymia and Philia in Plato,' *Phronesis* 13 (1968), p. 40.

⁶ W. Joseph Cummins, 'Eros, Epithymia and Philia in Plato,' *Apeiron* 15 (1981), p. 16.

The conclusion I should like to draw here is that Eros as the figure of god appears in different literary and philosophical texts with different faces and connotations. Furthermore, comparing the word *eros* with other similar words in Plato's works does not provide us with a single stable meaning. Therefore, though used intermittently, we can concede that in Plato's texts the affective aspect of desire in *philia* exceeds the pleasure (sexual) feature of *epithumia*. Opposed to both these, *eros* is a strong desire (love) that seeks beauty represented in different forms.

The brief distinction of these terms in Plato's text that connote the meaning of love clarifies the boundaries of *eros* and its distinct features. After disclosing facets of love in the thoughts of his contemporaries, Plato reveals their shortcomings, which eventually leads to his own theory of love through the character of Socrates. Socrates, as the text shows, is a wise figure who claims to know nothing better than the knowledge of love (177d) and thereby serves as a model for Plato's lover. Following his usual method, Plato defines a concept by disclosing its nature in contrast to what is normally realised as its effects. Thus, through cross-examination with Agathon, Socrates describes *eros* as 'a desire for everlasting possession of beauty and good' (206a). In this chapter, I would like to concentrate on the main features of *eros* as a desire and its demonic⁷ character.

In Socrates' speech, *eros* is called a 'desire': love is by nature love of something (199d) which one does not have. By describing *eros* as desire, Plato deviates from the dominant picture of *eros* as god and therefore from its divine attributes. Socrates seeks to present a totally different picture of *eros*. First, he depersonalises *eros* (202d). Therefore, in contrast to the other speakers, who eulogise *eros*, Socrates denies any divine origins for it. *Eros* is neither a mythic figure nor divine but a desire. This brings down *eros* from its elevated state and associates it with human nature. This feature of *eros* will later result in two important principles in Plato's doctrine of love. It allows Plato to perceive of *eros* as an individuation, a journey of

⁷ The word demon in Plato's text does not connote any negative meaning. It is a spirit whose role is to intermediate between the divine and the mortal (202e).

the human soul, and to structure it as hierarchical. If *eros* is desire in human nature rather than divine, it is submitted to the laws of nature wherein everything proceeds to change and this guarantees a state of hierarchy in nature.

Later Socrates expands the concept of *eros* as desire and structures it on a lack. *Eros* is always desire for something lacking that we yearn to possess: 'everyone who desires, desires that which he has not already, and which is future and not present, and which he has not, and is not, and which he lacks' (200e). It is in this manner that Socrates eliminates divinity from *eros*: if *eros* is love of something lacking 'how can he be a god who has no portion in what is good and fair' (202d). This view of desire as lack inherits the dualistic notion of Greek philosophy which we can note in Phaedrus' distinction between the two Aphrodites. There is always a struggle between two opposed forces of nature. However, to this cycle of lack-desire as absence-presence, Plato introduces the element of immortality, an eternal presence that ends the cycle of mutability. In Plato, the movement of *eros* is towards a state of everlasting 'presence'.

The other feature that Socrates stresses is that *eros* is a link, an intermediate between gods and man. It is a spirit, a daemon (202e). The demonic feature of *eros* also fortifies its first characteristic as desire. If it was a divine source, it could not be an intermediate. However, it can be inferred from Socrates' speech that since *eros* is always the desire of the good and the beautiful, its movement is always in an upward direction, that is towards eternal divinity. Friedlander recognises this intermediary role for demon in Plato's *Timaeus*; 'the god gives to everybody a demon as part of his soul. Its seat is the head, which is akin to heaven and, therefore, raised toward it. And this divine element . . . must be cultivated so that man keep the demon in an orderly habitat, and become "eudaemonic".'⁸ The mediatory state of *eros* means that it relates two poles of the universe: the mortal (the low state of life) to the immortal (higher state of existence):

⁸ Paul Friedlander, *Plato: An Introduction*, Hans Meyerhoff, trans. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 37.

He interprets between gods and men, conveying and taking across to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands of the gods and the benefits they return; he is the mediator who spans the chasm which divides them, and therefore by him the universe is bound together. . . . For God mingles not with man; but through Love all the intercourse and converse of gods with men, whether they be awake or asleep, is carried on. (202e-203a)

In Plato's theory of Form, *Idea* represents the high form of existence that is eternal. The conclusion that can be drawn from the demonic role of *eros* is that it becomes a guide to the *Idea*; *eros* does not designate a complete being, but a movement leading toward the perfect state of being. In accordance with Plato's system of hierarchy, the man below is the 'banausic' man; above him, implied though not explicitly stated, is the man endowed with divine wisdom and in between is placed the 'demonic man'.⁹

The mythic account that Socrates gives of *eros* supports its demonic nature. Eros is conceived of Poros or Plenty, the son of Metis, and Penia or Poverty at the birth feast of Aphrodite in a vineyard. If we assume that Poros is the divine source and Penia the human source in the nature of *eros*, then the intermediary role of *eros* is confirmed. *Eros*, inheriting from both his parents has two opposed natures: on the one hand like his mother, he is poor and anything but fair and therefore always in need. On the other, like his father, he is keen in pursuit of beauty and wisdom, and is therefore a philosopher (203 b-d).

This account of Plato's *eros* as desire and mediator implies some close similarities between *eros* and the character of Dionysus. Albert Henrichs elaborates on the polymorphous nature with which the Greeks endowed Dionysus. Dionysus presents the paradox of the human and the divine. He has the identity of a god yet conceals his divinity behind a deceptively human mask. Dionysus has a transformative power; his physical presence as an anthropomorphic god empowers him to interact with mortals. And it is this sense of ambivalence and polarity in Dionysus that has

⁹ Paul Friedlander, *Plato: An Introduction*, pp. 41, 50-3.

become significant in modern perceptions of Dionysus: he is an immortal mortal, a god who is reduced to extremely human dimensions, which include suffering and even death; however, his ultimate immortality confirms his divine status. In modern interpretations, Dionysus is the myth of dismemberment and rebirth, a sacrificial victim; he is a suffering god whose worshippers are temporarily transformed into a god and united with him.¹⁰ Very similar to the polaristic character of Dionysus, *eros* is an 'immortal mortal'. Although Plato defines *eros* as primarily a desire and depersonalises it, *eros* is a mediator and therefore a transformative power that helps Plato's lover-philosopher to transcend.

Eros and agape

Having explained the difference between Platonic love and Greek love, I shall discuss its distinction from *agape*. This juxtaposition enables me to characterise some distinct features of Plato's *eros* that have become controversial. Another aspect of *eros* as an egocentric love is clarified when it is compared to Christian love, *agape*. Both terms are translated as 'love', and they are only distinguished when accompanied by the adjectives 'biblical', 'Christian' or 'Platonic'. The opposition between *eros* and *agape* as two distinct formulations of human desire and different doctrines of love is not a new topic and was given currency by A. Nygren's famous book, *Agape and Eros* (1953). Nygren draws a sharp distinction between *eros* as an essentially acquisitive and self-centred love and *agape* as an unselfish, gratuitous, and generous love. It has been argued, however, that Nygren presents an oversimplification of both Platonic and Biblical concepts of love.

I shall start with the essential features of *agape* as non-egocentric love. The word translated as 'love' or 'charity' in the New Testament is *agape*. Though completely absent from Greek philosophy and little used in classical Greek with no

¹⁰ Albert Henrichs, ' "He Has a God in Him": Human and Divine in the Modern Perceptions of Dionysus,' in *Masks of Dionysus*, Thomas H. Carpenter and Christopher A. Faraone, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 19, 26-8.

religious or philosophical importance, the word *agape* is used a great deal in the Greek translation of the Old Testament.¹¹ What the word implies to us is that it is 'not supposed to have a sexual component, it is essentially benevolent, and it is supposed to be constant and abiding'.¹²

Irving Singer has summarised Nygren's description of *agape* in terms of four basic points: it is spontaneous and unmotivated, that is love arises for no reason external to God; it is indifferent to value, the sinful may receive God's love; it is creative, that is God created all things with benevolence; finally it is the initiator of fellowship with God.¹³ The essential feature of *agape* which distinguishes it from Platonic *Eros* is that it is 'sacrificial'. That is, the uniqueness of Christian love lies in the image of Christ. The mere existence of Christ as a mediator who is sacrificed to relate the sinful man to God characterises the notion of love in Christianity. The crucifixion of Christ is the symbol of divine love for man. Armstrong in his distinction between faith in Christ and the philosophical speculation of Plato about God's love points out that whether we take the Protestant teaching (where the emphasis is laid on the total undeservingness and the worthlessness of the sinful men) or the Catholic view (where man is still God's creature and bears the image, however dirty and defaced) the picture of Christ as the supreme revelation of God's love is preserved. Christ died for sinners.¹⁴

Christ was sacrificed for man and the theme of sacrifice is so crucial in *agape* as it covers man's relation to man as well. The sacrificial feature of *agape* is largely for the reason that Christianity is a God-centred religion. Man as a sinner is not the centre of the creation. Thus, *agape* is basically the love of God for man rather than man's love for God. The reason for such a definition of love lies in the supposition that, as

¹¹ A. H. Armstrong and R. A. Markus, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1960), pp. 79, 80. It is significant to note that *agape* is Paul's word in the famous hymn to love in the first Epistle to the Corinthians (Thomas Gould, *Platonic Love* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 3).

¹² Gerasimos Santas, *Plato and Freud; Two Theories of Love* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 8.

¹³ Irving Singer, *The Nature of Love; Plato to Luther*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 275-77.

¹⁴ A. H. Armstrong, 'Platonic Eros and Christian Agape,' *Downside Review* 79 (1961), p. 119.

Cornford has pointed out, man is a rising animal rather than a fallen spirit.¹⁵ God's love of man is confirmed by the crucifixion of Christ which describes a love that is based on generosity. Through this form of love, God provides man's salvation. This reminds us of what Abraham was supposed to do (sacrificing his son) to prove his love to God.

The entity of Plato's Absolute Beauty is different from the God of Christianity. There is a (ideally speaking) twofold relation between man and God; though needless, God loves man. This structures a model for the love of mankind: a benevolent love regardless of value in its object. In this connection, Thomas Gould refers to St. Paul's explication of God's supreme good: 'Paul speaks of the overflow of God's goodness which does not deny benevolence to the most wretched of sinners. . . . Paul implies that our salvation is not in our own power at all, but subject to a will which may be neither understood nor encouraged'.¹⁶ On the contrary, the Idea in Plato exists on its own with no relation towards man. Plato's lover goes through an individuation to complete himself; knowledge of the Idea is not supposed to make him a benevolent person; a moral quality does not make him a philosopher. Man's upward search for Beauty and Good is a one way direction.

This leads me to a fundamental dimension of *agape* which assumes that the beloved is prior to the lover. In biblical love, the philosophy of creation is centred on man: love is not only the central and indispensable harmonising theme from Genesis through Revelation but also man is God's beloved for he was created in the image of God by a special love.¹⁷ God created man because God loved him or according to a radical version because God wanted to love. In other words, man is created to be loved, to be God's beloved. Therefore, in *agape* 'improving the beloved is primary, the principal end to which the whole erotic enterprise is directed, and imitating the god is secondary, a means to that end'.¹⁸ Man is God's beloved as He created the world for

¹⁵ F. M. Cornford, 'The Division of the Soul,' *Hibbert Journal* 28 (1930), p. 219.

¹⁶ Thomas Gould, p. 4.

¹⁷ Douglas N. Morgan, *Love: Plato, the Bible and Freud* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), pp. 47, 53.

¹⁸ A. H. Armstrong, 'Platonic Love: A reply to Professor Verdenius,' *Downside Review* 82 (1964), p. 201.

him and sacrificed his Son. Man is not left alone in the world. Here lies the dynamics of faith. The Christian lover has faith in God not because God exists but because God created him for love and to love. This brings us to the important distinction between the Greek's idea of the divine and Christian idea of the creator:

The term "craftsman" need suggest nothing more than someone who makes something rationally and well according to a plan or pattern: it need not imply anything about either the craftsman's relationship to the pattern he follows or his motives for making. . . . [However, in God's love of creation] It seems to me that, not only in creating it, but in re-creating it in Christ, the object of his loving will is not badly expressed by saying that he generously intends to make, restore and perfect the best possible image of his divine goodness; and an image is a work of art.¹⁹

The disinterestedness of Plato's Form is the continuation of the tendency of Greek philosophers in general to prefer impersonal ways of speaking about God and Plato in particular who always presented the highest divine perfection as an impersonal Form, not a god.²⁰ What we see in neoplatonists like Plotinus reflects to a considerable extent the core of Plato's philosophy rather than the influence of Christian doctrines. It is through this interpretation of Plato that neoplatonism emerges and affects Christian thinkers. Plotinus structures a solitary union with the One:

Plotinus exhorts the lover of absolute beauty to go on working on "*his own statue*" so as to make himself perfect and fit for the final vision. . . this effectively rules out the idea that the highest form of *eros* is essentially productive and creative. And further study of *Enneads* confirms that for Plotinus the *eros* of aspiration to and union with the Good is a solitary love, a love of one for One.²¹

Furthermore, the picture of God for neoplatonists is to a great extent modelled on Plato's Idea. God created man not because He needed him. There is no sense of

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 205, 207-08.

²⁰ A. H. Armstrong, 'Platonic *Eros* and Christian *Agape*,' p. 112.

²¹ Ibid.

reciprocity in their doctrine. The universe exists on its own and man can only transcend if he cares for himself. There is no transcendental source to guide him in his journey of soul.

In contrast with *agape*, Platonic *eros* is defined as self-centred, acquisitive and desirous. *Eros* 'is embedded in the nature of the lover, in his radical insufficiency and need; this manifests itself as desire, passion impulsive love, not deliberately chosen, not capable of being commanded. . . . the loved object is desired as "that which would meet my need, fulfil my desire" '.²² The lover is in fact making the beloved like himself. His knowledge and instructions are merely an excuse to accept himself as a perfect model. He is still a philosopher and thereby the beauty of his spirit is an image of the Idea of Beauty. The role of the beloved merely serves as a step in his journey. Vlastos elaborates on the impersonal features of *eros* and maintains that individuals are impersonal objects of love and therefore they are lower in the ascent than the beauty of minds or dispositions. Plato does not have any

respect for the integrity of the beloved, as essential ingredients of the highest type of interpersonal love. Not that Platonic *eros* is as "egocentric" and "acquisitive" as Nygren has claimed; it is only too patently Ideocentric and creative. . . . What Plato's lover loves in persons is the image of the Idea in them. Only their virtues and beauty is the prime object rather than their individuality or uniqueness. This is the reason why personal affection ranks so low in Plato's *scala amoris*.²³

In Plato's definition of *eros*, it is noticeable then that *eros* is primarily a desire. Here love is characterised as a natural phenomenon; it is universal and cosmic, but not divine. It is in man's nature to desire beauty and generate itself. In other words, Plato reduces the level of *eros* to instinct. In this manner, Plato's *eros* becomes close to Freud's formulation of love as originally sexual. However, *eros* is later categorised into higher and lower stages in the ascent. *Eros* 'being perfect in itself and having nothing

²² A. H. Armstrong and R. A. Markus, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1960), p. 84.

²³ Gregory Vlastos, *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 30-1.

lacking to itself, being static and devoid of movement, has no *eros* for anything outside itself: it is, however, the *object* of desire to less perfect things. . .'.²⁴ Love is a means to fulfil a perfect state and to attain perpetual immortality that belongs to gods. This reflects a deep and persistent feature of the Greek attitude that Thomas Gould describes as imitation of divinity.²⁵

Armstrong argues that Plato's theory of ascent is very reminiscent of the language of Greek mystery religion where the journey of *eros* is a purification, a preparation for the disclosure of the divine vision. In the stage of its gradual ascent through fragmentary intimations, the soul is united with the perfect archetypal Beauty in a blaze of light wherein it beholds the ultimately real.²⁶ The lover, therefore, aspires to something higher than what he is to overcome his lack. It is only in the last stage of the ascent that the lover can perceive the Idea of beauty which purifies him.

²⁴ A. H. Armstrong and R. A. Markus, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1960), pp. 81-2.

²⁵ Thomas Gould, p. 163.

²⁶ A. H. Armstrong, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy*, pp. 66-87.

CHAPTER TWO

Eros and Logocentrism²⁷

In the previous chapter, I explained the wide scope of meaning that the concept of *eros* has taken in Greek literature from mythology to philosophy, its difference from *philia* and *epithumia* in Plato's texts, and its distinct features that separate it from *agape*. Furthermore, I concluded that Plato's *eros* is neither a divine spirit nor a human instinct. A clear understanding of the Platonic love will pave the way for an analysis of the nature of *eros*. *Eros* is structured upon a lack, because it is demonic by nature and thus always in want of something. Accordingly, *eros* is essentially a desire whose object is 'the everlasting possession of beauty'.

Two significant points, however, are taken as facts for which Plato does not provide any philosophical justification in the *Symposium*. The first point is that we have no knowledge of where lack originates; second, the object of *eros* is beauty and that is a cosmic desire which rules over the universe: 'love is the love of beauty and not of deformity' (201a). There is no exact definition of beauty in the *Symposium*. The only explanation we can presume is that 'this desire to possess beauty' is not only cosmic whereby every living being follows the universal law but it is divine too as generating beauty is considered an immortal principle in the mortal life (206c). In other words, the nature of lack and beauty remains unexplained. Therefore, beauty as the

²⁷ The term logocentrism that is associated with Derrida's notion of deconstruction denotes basically the primacy of logos (logic, reason, thought, word or even meaning) in western philosophy. In my analysis of Plato's *eros*, logocentrism refers to the centrality of logos as wisdom in Plato's theory of ascent. The knowledge of beauty as the object of *eros* is equated to wisdom. Therefore, wisdom as the autonomous or rather transcendental signified replaces beauty in the last stage of the ascent.

object of *eros* becomes the ultimate reality, something that is immortal that can relate the human with the divine:

Beauty, then, is the destiny or goddess of parturition who presides at birth, and therefore, when approaching beauty, the procreating power is propitious, and expansive, and benign, and bears and produces fruit: at the sight of ugliness she frowns and contracts and has a sense of pain, and turns away, and shrivels up, and not without a pang refrains from procreation. (206d)

Beauty has the power to give an everlasting identity to the mortal man. Later, Diotima distinguishes different stages or, more precisely, ranks in beauty and categorises them. These stages are, however, reflections of the Ultimate Beauty that was first explained as the object of *eros*. Absolute Beauty is 'that is alone itself, unique, eternal, and such that all beautiful things partake of it'.²⁸ The characteristics of the Absolute Beauty are in fact attributes of the Forms. This will lead me to the most fundamental doctrine of Plato's philosophy, the Idea of Forms. Plato divides the world into the world of ideas and the world of appearances: the ordinary world is the world of natural processes where nothing is constant, nothing endures. Nature is a flux. Nothing is limited to any point in space or moment in time since all things in space and time are subject to change. On the contrary, the world of ideas is the world of essence, the ultimate being of a thing. Ideas are therefore universal rather than particular.²⁹ Nothing exists outside the cycle of change. Everything has to go through the process of growth and decay. Nevertheless, there is a dominant form in every entity that maintains its essence and Plato calls this the Idea.

The theory of Forms formalises, the dualistic philosophy from a new perspective. The opposition between matter and spirit is now transformed into Form and its image. The world of Form is the world of the unchangeable and eternal state of things; it is the world of truth where essence exists on its own without its image. On

²⁸ Terence Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 57.

²⁹ Ibid.

the opposite side stands the world of matter which does not have any reality without its universal essence. With the theory of Forms, it becomes clear how in Plato beauty is presented not only as a Form but also as the highest Form. To understand the beauty of things, we should grasp the essence of beauty since it is the true stable reality of things. Whatever happens to objects, their essence remains the same. 'Existence is merely actualization of a form; the form, however, is real whether or not anything does exist'.³⁰

Vlastos maintains that the theory of Forms shapes every subject in Plato's philosophy; knowledge, love, word-order and the interrelations of particular and universal, time and eternity, the world of sense and the world of thought are all structured on the same theory:

the transcendent Form [is always] at one extreme, the temporal individual at the other, and, in between, the individual's immanent characters, projections of eternity on the flickering screen of becoming. And everywhere Plato gives the Form pre-eminence. In epistemology it is *the* object of knowledge; sensible particulars can only be objects of that low-grade cognitive achievement, opinion. In cosmology only the Forms represent completely lucid order; physical individuals, enmeshed in brute necessity, are only quasi-orderly, as they are only quasi-intelligible. In ontology there are grades of reality and only Forms have the highest grade.³¹

Therefore, beauty is neither a concept nor a representation of matter. As in Plato's ontology, there are grades of beauty that are connected to the Form, here called Absolute Beauty. In the *Symposium*, the mere function of beauty is that it is the object of *eros* and the lover is urged to perceive different signs of beauty until he can achieve the vision of the Absolute beauty.

This will lead me to the hierarchical notion of beauty. In the second part of her speech, Diotima reveals the greater and hidden mysteries of love. These mysteries presented in a highly instructive spirit are supposed to guide the lover in his journey.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 58.

³¹ Gregory Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*, pp. 33-4.

Here Diotima, in presenting beauty as the goal for the lover, classifies beauty. The first stage of love is perceiving corporeal beauty. Under the guidance of his instructor, the lover is attracted to one beautiful body which is later equated to all beautiful bodies. In his pursuit of beautiful body, the lover should come to this knowledge that the beauty of body is merely a representation of Beauty (210a-b). The next stage of beauty is the beauty of the soul. After the lover learns to 'despise and deem the beauty of the body as a small thing and abate his violent love,' he can see the beauty of a virtuous soul. However, he becomes compelled to leave the beauty of the soul for the beauty in institutions and laws. Nevertheless, as the lover learned how to despise beauty of the body representing matter in general, in his next step he contemplates the beauty of the soul and understands that the beauty in soul, institutions and laws are the same. All these are manifestations of 'personal beauty' and thus 'trifle' (210c). Towards the end of his journey, the lover is no more a slave of beauty and he is no more attached to the bounds of matter. He is ready to contemplate 'the vast sea of beauty' until its vision is revealed to him only through the science of beauty (210d). Thus, there is an essence, in Platonic terms a Form, behind the existence of things in the world. This essence embodies the reality of the world, the only one reality and the rest are shadows of the real. Accordingly, what Diotima is concerned with is that beautiful objects serve as a stimulus to our perception of Absolute Beauty in general. The earthly beauty serves as a means for the perceiver to ascend to a higher reality which is the essence of Beauty.

Next we come to the important part of Diotima's speech where she describes what she means by the 'vast sea of beauty' as the real object of love. The nature of beauty in the last stage is that it is absolute as she calls it later; it is 'everlasting, knowing not birth or death, growth or decay' (211a). The beauty discussed in lower stages is corporeal, personal and unstable. This means that the function of beauty is what we refer to as relative and its perception changes in different situations. On the contrary, the absolute beauty that the lover should yearn for is the source of all beauties and exists on itself; it is not

fair to some and foul to others, or in the likeness of a face or hands or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, or existing in any individual being, as for example, in a living creature, whether in heaven, or in earth, or anywhere else; but beauty absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which is imparted to the ever growing and perishing beauties of all other beautiful things, without itself suffering diminution, or increase, or any change. (211a-b)

At the end of her speech, Diotima confirms that the true beauty she is describing is something divine and eternal. It is a stage where the lover beholding the true beauty will be able to create not images of beauty (as he was procreating before) but realities - the real beauty which is 'pure and clear and unalloyed, not infected with the pollutions of the flesh and all the colours and vanities of mortal life' (211e).

Thus, the greater mysteries of love reveal that first, beauty is the mere object of *eros*; second, beauty is hierarchical and graded according to Plato's theory of Forms. There is a variety of beauties for the lover: beauty of the body, the soul, institutions, laws and sciences. However, there exists only one true eternal Form for every entity that is characterised generally as corporeal. Beauty is the highest of the Forms and the lover starts from the beauty of the matter and ends with the knowledge of beauty itself. This illuminates for us Plato's theory of ascent. In the ascent of the lover from the lowest stages of beauty up to the highest state, we can trace Plato's dualistic philosophy: the basic binary opposition between matter and spirit. In his upward movement from the beauty of body to the beauty of soul, the element of cognition is increased while the element of matter is being reduced. And the cognition increases up to the last stage where the lover, cut off from the 'pollutions of the flesh' (211e), obtains the knowledge of Beauty. This leads me to the contested view that the beauty or Absolute Beauty that Plato is devising as the ultimate reality and the object of *eros* is wisdom. In other words, by characterising the element of cognition in the ascent, we can identify *eros* with wisdom since the lover's ultimate object is the knowledge of beauty. Therefore, the lover who strives for this knowledge is in fact the philosopher who searches for wisdom. Thus we can conclude that Plato's lover who uses *eros* can,

indeed, be called a philosopher. The essential feature of the ascent here is that it is cognitive.³² In each stage of his journey, the lover comes to this recognition that all reflections of beauty on earth are ephemeral. The state of knowledge of the lover increases as he finally comes to contemplate the Absolute Beauty. Therefore, as Cummings has pointed out, the theory of ascent in the *Symposium* proves that to love is to know. In his analogy of the idea of ascent in the *Republic* and the *Symposium*, Cummings maintains that both accounts of the ascent to the form of the good in the *Republic* and the ascent to the beauty in the *Symposium* acknowledge the fact that to possess the good is to know the good, and to know the good is to be aware of the form of the good. This implies that Platonic *eros* is the desire for eternal contemplation of the Forms.³³

Anne Carson also recognises the resemblance between the way *eros* acts in the mind of a lover and the way knowing acts in the mind of a thinker. Such correlation between the two activities of knowing and desiring may be already implied in a certain usage of Homer, for epic diction has the same verb (*mnaomai*) for 'to be mindful, to have in mind, to direct one's attention to' and 'to woo, court, be a suitor.' Both mind and wooer reach out from the edge of what is known to something different, possibly better, desired.³⁴ In the *Symposium*, the lover obtains the knowledge of Beauty through its corporeal representation. The philosopher is the lover of the knowledge of Beauty. Demos adopts the same view that thought is a manifestation of *eros* and refers to it as an inductive process leading to more and more generalised loyalties; *eros* is the ascent from the love of the individual to the love of the collectivity, from the love of the concrete to love of the abstract which culminates in the mystical vision of Absolute

³² To critics like Crombie, Diotima's speech is even a pedagogy with *epopteia* as its literary device rather than a mystical revelation. Such interpretation of Plato's theory of ascent is not limited to the *Symposium*. In Plato's other works such as the *Republic*, and the *Phaedrus*, isolated instances culminate in the vision of an idea. Thus in the ascent of the lover, we are confronted with an intellectual cognition, a knowledge obtained by *logoi* (reasoning) without which the whole logical system may be an error (I. M. Crombie, *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines: Plato on Knowledge and Reality*, vol. II (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 47-9).

³³ P. W. Cummings, 'Eros as Procreation in Beauty,' *Apeiron* 10:2 (1976), pp. 24-5.

³⁴ Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet; an Essay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 71.

Beauty.³⁵ The inductive process of the ascent from love of the images of beauty to the Idea of beauty reflects not only the centrality of Idea as logos but also the logocentricity of the process of the ascent. I shall refer to this point in my discussion of Shakespeare's poetry: how Shakespeare's lover plays the role of the philosopher and his characterisation of the concept of beauty.

Any analysis of the word *eros* and its function in other works of Plato reveals the fact that the philosopher is also a lover. This means that as the philosopher is in search of truth and wisdom, the lover should desire the knowledge of Beauty or, more precisely, wisdom. The *Symposium* not only expounds this interpretation of the lover but focuses on the generation of beauty called wisdom in the last stage of the ascent. David Halperin demonstrates that the philosopher in Plato's different works signifies the role of the lover:

In the *Republic* (501d) philosophers are said to be *erastai* of being and truth, inasmuch as it is the philosopher's nature to love [*eran*] the kind of learning that reveals something of eternal being (485a-b); earlier in the same work, the philosopher's *eros* is expected to beget understanding [*nous*] and truth (490a-b). In the *Timaeus* (46d) the physicist is similarly described as an *erastes* of understanding [*nous*] and knowledge [*episteme*]. In the *Phaedo* (68a) death brings the philosopher to a place where he may expect to find what he has loved [*eron*] all his life - namely, wisdom [*phronesis*]. . . ; furthermore, Socrates confesses that he and his friends desire and claim to be *erastai* of wisdom [*phronesis*] (66e).³⁶

Furthermore, Halperin, who advocates the notion of reciprocity in Plato's *eros*, relates the sexual desire to the desire for wisdom; he describes *eros* as the dynamic process of thought and strongly suggests that in Plato the erotics of sexuality, the erotics of conversation, and the erotics of philosophical inquiry are not separated but identified and fused.³⁷

³⁵ R. Demos, 'Eros,' *Journal of Philosophy* 31 (1934), pp. 342-43.

³⁶ David Halperin, 'Plato and Erotic Reciprocity,' *Classical Antiquity* 5 (1986), p. 72.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

The procreation of beauty in the lower stages is the generation of body. Generating an image of oneself in another body is in fact an act of creation. And that is the reason Plato considers it as a participation in immortality. In the last stage, the lover creates thoughts and discourses of wisdom (210d); the knowledge of beauty enables him to create not images but real beauties. Cummings argues that '[t]he creation stressed in the *Symposium* is an intellectual copying of the rational structure of the world of forms. The creation attacked in the *Republic* is a copying of things in the world of appearance and more particularly the worst aspects of it, at least from Plato's point of view'.³⁸ The main point here is not that whether the procreation of wisdom in the last stage of the ascent is or is not copying the images of beauty condemned in the *Republic*. What the procreation of wisdom suggests beyond its egoistic nature (since it reproduces the lover's self in another form) is that it is an act of creation. And as the desire of the philosopher-lover is for an intellectual copying, he is identifying himself with the original creator. As Friedlander maintains, love in the soul of the lover makes him create, in the view of Zeus, the eternal Form:

Thus love makes the soul conscious of its innate divine element, the highest type of soul, a follower of Zeus, conscious of its destiny for philosophy and ruling. Love compels it to look toward Zeus and shape itself according to his image. Zeus means the highest form of divine existence in the view of the eternal forms.³⁹

Therefore, the image that Plato's lover strives to identify with is the highest form of divine existence. By shaping himself according to this powerful image in the final stage of the ascent, he is enabled to create eternal forms of Beauty.

Relating Plato's theory of Forms to the notion of beauty as the object of *eros*, I explained how the knowledge of beauty is equated to wisdom. The stages of the ascent are directed towards the recognition of Absolute Beauty and generating wisdom. The lover eventually contemplates the Ideas. Therefore, the cognitive feature

³⁸ P. W. Cummings, p. 27.

³⁹ Paul Friedlander, *Plato: An Introduction*, p. 52.

of the ascent on the one hand, and the desire of the lover-philosopher to create eternal forms determine the logocentricity of *eros*. Such a dynamic structure in the erotic philosophy of Plato identifies the lover with the philosopher. I shall discuss this feature of *eros* in detail in Part III, where I elaborate on the function of the image of beauty and its significance in relation to the role of the lover. This will lead me to the question whether we can interpret the beloved, who is the emblem of beauty, as the creation of the lover-philosopher. Furthermore, this view of the lover will determine the function of the motif of procreation that prevails Shakespeare's poetry.

CHAPTER THREE

The Egocentric Nature of Eros

In the previous chapter, I explained the function of beauty in Plato's ascent and concluded that according to Plato's theory of Forms beauty, characterised as the object of *eros*, can be identified with wisdom. In pursuing my argument on the other principal feature of *eros*, I shall concentrate on the phrase 'everlasting possession' in the definition which is later on expounded by the word 'immortality' in the *Symposium*. The significance of this aspect of *eros* will be highlighted later in the egoistic nature of sublimation in Shakespeare's poetry.

After Diotima convinces us that the good (beauty) and only the good (beauty) is and can be the object of *eros*, she develops the conception of *eros* that love is not just love of the beautiful but of generating the beautiful (206e). She explains how lovers maintain this continual possession; in other words, how lovers may achieve immortality (206e-207a). In this manner, Diotima relates possessing the good and the beauty to immortality. It is a fundamental principle in Plato's philosophy that man strives for immortality. By defining immortality as generation and birth in beauty, he is recognising desire for immortality in the nature of love. Accordingly, immortality is the direct object of *eros* and beauty (the knowledge of beauty) becomes its indirect object: 'to the mortal creature, generation is a sort of eternity and immortality, and if, as has been already admitted, love is of the everlasting possession of the good, all men will necessarily desire immortality together with good; whence it must follow that love is of immortality' (206e-207a).

As I explained in the previous chapters, immortality as begetting in beauty characterises the essential feature of Platonic *eros*. By propagation, the lover gets close to immortality, which is the realm of Divinity. And as beauty is hierarchical, its begetting should be graded too. The general category for propagation is generating in both body and soul. This is a universal desire where every living being desires union and in this struggle tolerates every torment and agony and sacrifices his most dear things to 'maintain [his] young' and become immortal (207a-b). In this way, all the universe participates in divinity through reproduction.

The lowest stage in the ascent, generating beauty of the body, pictures those lovers 'who are pregnant in the body only, betake themselves to women and beget children - this is the character of their love; their offspring, as they hope, will preserve their memory and give them the blessedness and immortality which they desire for all future time' (208e). The other category in beauty is that of the soul which is placed in a higher state in the ladder of ascent. Lovers who are pregnant in their souls are more creative than conceiving bodies since what they bring forth is wisdom and virtue in general. What Diotima distinguished before as the different stages of beauty (beauty of the body, soul, institutions, laws and sciences) is divided into the general category of body and soul. Accordingly, when the lovers of soul (like poets, artists, men of state) propagate themselves, their offspring can be wisdom, virtue, temperance and justice as such. Temples and noble works preserve their memory and give them everlasting glory (209a-e).

At first sight, it seems that propagation in the final course of development in *eros* is highly dynamic and creative. In each level of the ascent, the lover creates a form of beauty close to the Absolute Beauty which eventually elevates both his 'self' and his beloved. However, all the three forms of procreation are different ways for immortalisation of the lover's 'self' and reveal the egocentric nature of Platonic *eros* that I will discuss in this chapter.

Eros in Plato is a process of individuation; it is a desire that purifies the lover's 'self' in his ascent towards the knowledge of beauty. Therefore, one can say that *eros*

in Plato is merely a means for an end: to achieve the Idea of Beauty. Everything produced by the lover serves as a means not an end in itself. In the lowest stage, the lover begets children. As his creation, the children are the only trace of his memory who through inheriting 'his name' will immortalise him: the lover desires 'to become immortal by producing replicas of oneself inspired by the beauty of a woman . . . [however] the beauty of the woman is not a reason for having children by her: they cannot inherit her beauty, but can at most be affected environmentally by her womb'.⁴⁰ Plato's account of *eros* is egoistic, because it searches to revive the lover's 'self' by physical reproduction. The image of the child not only outlasts but also extends his own image. Plato interprets man's natural instinct to survive through propagation as survival of the individual's soul in another body. This is a cosmic law that all living beings partake of immortality by genetically reproducing themselves.

On the higher level of immortality that Diotima characterises generally as the immortality of soul, the egocentric feature of *eros* is reflected in a different form. The begetting of soul as the higher state of immortality is egoistic in the sense that the lover-philosopher manipulates the youth for immortalising the beauty of his soul to satisfy his thirst of knowledge. In other words, the beloved becomes the victim of the lover's ascent. Vlastos, in his very elaborate interpretation of the egoistic nature of love in Plato, begins his argument with the theme of Plato's *Lysis* where a person will be loved if, and only if, he produces good. He emphasises that this is straightforward utility-love where the beloved should benefit the lover. The basis of Vlastos's arguments lies in the theory of deficiency in the *Symposium* where love is defined as lack. The lover Socrates has in view seems positively incapable of loving others for their own sake as he says 'if one were in want of nothing, one would feel no affection, . . . and he who felt no affection would not love'.⁴¹ Vlastos strongly argues that Plato's *eros* is an impersonal love, not love of persons and individuals but love of the Idea. And all the erotic attachments directed to an individual are not to the whole person but

⁴⁰ P. W. Cummings, p. 25.

⁴¹ Gregory Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*, pp. 7-9.

to a complex of qualities that originate in the lover's sense of beauty which the lover temporarily locates in that person.⁴² The core of the journey of *eros* is not the beloved but the ascent of the 'self'. The beloved is merely a representation of earthly beauty that just incites the lover to perceive beauty (211b). That the lower reflections of beauty should be despised and the beloved is only a step is explicitly mentioned throughout Diotima's speech:

And the true order of going, or being led by another, to the things of love, is to begin from the beauties of earth and mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty, using these steps as steps only, and from one going to two, and from two to all fair bodily forms, and from fair bodily forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair sciences. . . . (211c)

In its final form of immortality, *eros* finds its most egocentric tone where the lover in achieving the knowledge of Beauty gets close to divinity. Though immortality in the sense of divine eternity 'which is wholly and eternally the same' (208b) is impossible for man, the lover-philosopher in his last stage becomes godlike and creates realities of beauty (212a). And this is the sense of everlasting possession of beauty that Diotima points out in her definition of *eros*. I shall concentrate on this aspect of procreation or the generation of beauty as a central feature of love and desire in Shakespeare's poetry in Chapter Eight. Furthermore, I shall relate the metaphorical function of the image of procreation in Shakespeare's poetry to the idea of copulation and conception of beauty in Plato. Such an interpretation not only incorporates the idea of reproduction to the definition of love in Shakespeare's poetry but also designates the role of procreation in the lover.

One of the most decisive passages in Diotima's speech that forms the focal point of my argument on the egocentric nature of Platonic *eros* is where she uncovers the motives behind the desire for immortality in the lover. She assures the 'astonished'

⁴² Ibid., p. 28.

Socrates, 'with all the authority of an accomplished sophist', how men strive to retain their 'self' through fame:

think only of the ambition of men, and you will wonder at the senselessness of their ways, unless you consider how they are stirred by the passionate love of fame. They are ready to run all risks, even greater than they would have run for their children, and to pour out money and undergo any sort of toil, and even to die, "if so they leave an everlasting name". (208c-d)

Discussing the nature of the mortal man, Diotima concludes that this desire is universal as a way to partake of immortality. This desire includes every stage in the ladder of love. Laws, inventions and noble deeds all spring from the love of fame. Not only those who die to save their children preserve themselves but also those who conceive the beauty of the soul hope for 'the glorious fame of immortal virtue' (208d).

Though there are elements in the nature of *eros*, and in the relationship between the lover and his beloved that determines its egocentric features, the essence of immortality itself structures the egoistic love more than any other feature. That is the notion of identity in immortality. Achieving the highest stage of philosophical development, does the lover keep his identity or do the boundaries raised by the power of *eros* affect the lover and shatter his identity? Going through the individuation of *eros*, the lover loses his 'self' and finds a new identity that fills what was lacking before. But is this a modified or developed form of the same identity? Accordingly, a thorough study of egoism involves an analysis of the notion of 'identity'. What I am going to suggest is that there are grounds within the dialogue itself where Diotima explaining the creative force of generation brings up the problem of identity. The law of change and inconsistency rules over everything and Diotima can not dismiss it. However, she demonstrates a new viewpoint to this principle, that is, generation:

the mortal nature is seeking as far as is possible to be everlasting and immortal: and this is only to be attained by generation, because generation always leaves behind a new and different existence in the place of the old. Nay, even in the life

the same individual there is succession and not absolute uniformity: a man is called the same, and yet in the interval between youth and age, during which every animal is said to have life and identity, he is undergoing a perpetual process of loss and reparation. . . . (207d)

Man's identity is called the same though his existence undergoes a perpetual change. This process is not limited to his physical identity. A person's soul, composed of habits, tempers, opinions, pleasures and pains keeps changing (207e). Furthermore, the state of knowledge and science is not permanent in our minds either. This is exactly the meaning of recollection when the forgotten knowledge is renewed and thus preserved. Man's identity in both body and soul is 'preserved', as Diotima puts it, by substitution and that is the 'law by which all mortal things are preserved, not absolutely the same, but by substitution, the old worn-out mortality leaving another new and similar existence behind - unlike the divine, which is wholly and eternally the same?' (208a-b). Diotima finally gets back to her first point that the motives for immortality and thus *eros* are egocentric: 'Marvel not then at the love which all men have of their offspring; for that universal love and interest is for the sake of immortality' (208b).

As Socrates says, *eros* is a desire for something one does not possess and it originates in lack. It is the experience of lack that disturbs 'self' and exposes it to change. It seems that love can not exist without lack or in other words loss of the self. Aristophanes explained the notion of lack as an essential part of the self that should be obtained through love. Through love, the two lacks become one. Socrates defines desire (*eros*) in terms of lack but does not tell us where it is originated. The most probable explanation for this is to consider lack in the metaphysical framework of Plato, where every lack is described as a sign of desire for the Idea. Ann Carson traces this characterisation of love to the Greek mythical tradition where castration (loss) gives birth to Aphrodite (love):

Eros is expropriation. He robs the body of limbs, substance, integrity and leaves the lover, essentially, less. This attitude toward love is grounded for the Greeks in oldest mythical tradition: Hesiod describes in his *Theogony* how castration gave

birth to the goddess Aphrodite, born from the foam around Ouranos' severed genitals (189-200). Love does not happen without loss of vital self. The lover is the loser.⁴³

My attempt in demonstrating the relation between 'self' and immortality was to explain how *eros* breaks the boundaries of self and how desire emerges out of procreation to fill its lack; the lover replaces his old, disturbed self with a new one and thereby keeps his identity. This view led me to some of the egocentric features of Platonic *eros* in terms of immortality. There have been many replies to this interpretation, either supportive or critical. Briefly, we may discern two main categories of objection among critics who do not interpret Plato's conception of immortality as egocentric. They approach the idea of procreation as an extension of the lover's 'self' in each layer of immortality where he creates something in the 'other' physically or spiritually.

Markus, extending the meaning of *eros*, finds a new perspective where the lover's act of begetting is not interpreted as a satisfiable desire for the possession of its object. Rather, the generative nature of desire is an act that extends itself. Therefore, desire is not any more thought of as lack. From this point of view the beloved is not therefore the object of *eros* but the beautiful or the good in the presence of which the lover performs his creative power to regenerate.⁴⁴ According to Markus, Platonic love is creative rather than acquisitive. The power of *eros* elevates both the lover and the beloved.

On the same ground, Armstrong argues that desiring the good is in itself a procreative feature by which the lover increases good and beauty outside himself; being good for Plato means doing good. Good and beauty are meaningful in relation to other. Thus, *eros* is not a subjective desire to satisfy one's own need by acquiring something good or beautiful; the true lover does not possess nor use his beloved,

⁴³ Ann Carson, p. 33.

⁴⁴ R. A. Markus, 'The Dialectic of Eros in Plato's *Symposium*,' in *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays, II: Ethics, Politics, and Philosophy of Art and Religion*, Gregory Vlastos, ed. (New York: Anchor Books, 1971), pp. 138-39.

physically or even spiritually. The lover adorns his beloved as an image of divine beauty and it is in trying to make his beloved more like the god that he becomes more like the god himself.⁴⁵ Furthermore in defining Platonic love, Armstrong discusses the role of the beloved as primary. In Plato, love is merely an excuse, a pretext for self-perfection. The main object of *eros* is to improve the beloved and imitating the god is considered as secondary, a means to that end.⁴⁶

The other interpretation which is urged by Halperin points to reciprocity in the nature of *eros*. Halperin obliterates the distinction between the lover and the beloved by distinguishing Plato's departure from the Greek paederastic love. Contrary to the conventional Athenian paederastic relationship, where the younger partner was expected to submit to the advances of his older lover out of a feeling of mingled gratitude, esteem and affection, Plato's lover does not seek sexual consummation and the beloved is free to return his older lover's passion without shame or impropriety. Since Halperin defines Platonic love as reciprocal rather than egoistic, the relationship between the lover and the beloved is like the relation between two souls and not bodies. Therefore, according to him, the relationship should not be conceived as hierarchical.⁴⁷

Cummings criticises the egoistic accounts of *eros* from another perspective. He agrees that the philosopher obtains pleasure in philosophising and that the awesomeness of the good and the beautiful is self-certifying. However, the philosopher does not and can not desire to possess the good forever since goodness, as a Form, does exist forever and the philosopher knows that. What the philosopher yearns is to bring this world as close as possible to the world of forms by realising and imitating goodness. Furthermore, Cummings rejects the egocentric nature of *eros* when he discusses rational thought as the highest state the lover can obtain. What the philosopher wishes is not just the contemplation of beauty but to make goodness and

⁴⁵ A. H. Armstrong, 'Platonic *Eros* and Christian *Agape*,' pp. 108-09.

⁴⁶ A. H. Armstrong, 'Platonic Love: A Reply to Professor Verdenius,' *Downside Review* 82 (1964), p. 201.

⁴⁷ David Halperin, 'Plato and Erotic Reciprocity,' pp. 63-8.

beauty possible in a higher degree; to possess goodness is to have a rational discussion with other beautiful souls, to philosophise beauty.⁴⁸ Cummings' interpretation of Platonic love not only provides a committed view of love which is in conflict with the process of individuation that Plato's lover goes through, but also misinterprets the notion of everlasting possession that is confirmed in the text as immortality.

It seems that the objection of the critics I discussed above is primarily a misinterpretation of Plato's definition of *eros* as a desire for the everlasting 'possession' of beauty. Their argument, instead, concentrates on the idea of propagation or generation of beauty. It is in this connection that they interpret the relation between the lover and the beloved as reciprocal rather than egoistic. And it is in this connection that *eros* is described as a creative power that increases good and beauty rather than being perceived as an extension of lack. However, as I discussed in the previous chapter, the egocentric feature of *eros* lies in its ideocentricity. *Eros* is primarily a desire for the Idea. The Platonic ascent is an impersonal love. In all the hierarchical forms of immortality, the lover fills his lack by extending his image through either another body or soul. *Eros* is a means for immortality that retains only the lover's self rather than the beloved's. *Eros* does not create a sense of loss but is structured by it; it transforms lack to desire, to want and to possess beauty.

⁴⁸ P. W. Cummings, pp. 26-7.

Summary

The main object of Part I is to provide an analysis of Plato's concept of *eros* through a reading of the *Symposium*. The significance of Plato's formulation of *eros* as desire will enable me to highlight some aspects of desire in Shakespeare's poetry. In the first chapter, I attempted to clarify the notion of Platonic love in its opposition to Greek love and *agape*. In the light of this juxtaposition, main features of Plato's *eros* are revealed. Though Plato's *eros* takes on the dualistic features of Greek love, it is distinct in being characterised primarily as desire. Such depersonalisation of *eros* does not only dissociate it from a divine source but also characterises it as a human feature. This enables Plato to present *eros* as an individuation. The other important aspect of *eros* is its demonic feature: it is an intermediate, a link between gods and man. Therefore, *eros* has a transformative power that can relate the mortals to the immortal. This leads to Plato's systematic theory of ascension where hierarchical stages maintain the demonic feature of *eros*.

In contrast to *agape*, *eros* is characterised as an essentially acquisitive and self-centred love. According to this juxtaposition, which addresses love generally as an individual journey for the purification of soul, on the one hand, the impersonal feature of *eros* is emphasised, and on the other the disinterestedness of Plato's final stage of the ascent is recognised. Thus, the Absolute Beauty is contrasted to the sacrificial feature of *agape*.

Analysing Plato's definition of *eros* as primarily a desire for the everlasting possession of beauty, I argued that not only beauty is described as the object of *eros*

but also Plato's theory of ascent is logocentric. Plato schematises a hierarchical system for the ascent whereby beauty is graded. Beauty is considered as the highest of the Forms. However, the movement of the ascent is structured by the element of cognition: in the upward movement from the beauty of the body to the beauty of the soul, the corporeality of beauty is decreased while the element of cognition increases. Accordingly, beauty that is the object of *eros* is equated with wisdom.

The other significant feature of *eros* is its egocentricity. *Eros* is perceived as a desire not just for beauty but for its everlasting possession. This characterises generation in beauty, or more precisely immortality, as the object of *eros*. In the hierarchical stages of the ascent, Plato also categorises the propagation of beauty where the dichotomy of body and soul is central. However, I argued that in every form of propagation whether genetically or intellectually, *eros* is egocentric since it aims at immortalising the lover rather than the beloved. This clarifies once more that *eros* is structured as desire-as-lack. *Eros* therefore is an impersonal love that wants to procreate itself.

PART II

LACAN'S THEORY OF DESIRE



Desire as Lack

The Nature of Desire

Desire and Love

Desire is the Desire of the Other

In the previous part, I investigated the definition of *eros* in the context of Plato's most elaborated account of love, the *Symposium*. The conclusion I drew was that the conception of *eros* in Plato, as an endless desire that does not seek to satisfy but to perpetuate itself, is not merely a philosophical interpretation of love with a metaphysical basis, neither is it an idealistic vision reflecting our desire for immortality. As a response to the dominant trend of Greek philosophy, Plato's *eros* formulates a basic feature of human nature. What we find at the core of Platonic love is the conception of *eros* as desire. Though, in the *Symposium*, Plato's Socrates does not concentrate on the origin of desire and does not explain how it is constituted, he elaborates on the notion of desire-as-lack. Furthermore, I discussed the main features of what is called Platonic love and its complicity with egoism and logocentrism and concluded that *eros* is a process of individuation where the self moves on an upward direction on the ladder of subjectivity. The hierarchy in love or the ladder of subjectivity in Plato is, in fact, the labyrinths of desire that are classified. In other words, the stages of the ascent are the stages of formation and development of desire though in an upward direction. *Eros* is the movement through which the 'self' transforms itself in the labyrinths that are nothing but the veils of matter. Finally, I explained how *eros* can be assimilated with wisdom and how the notion of immortality can be interpreted as an externalisation of 'self'.

What Plato presents in his definition of *eros* brings him close to a psychoanalytic theory of desire, especially in his analytic approach towards the human

soul and the role of desire. What breaks the gap between the psychoanalytic interpretation of desire and Plato's is that they both assimilate transference (in Lacan's terminology) or sublimation (using Plato's word) to knowledge; a knowledge that uncovers the secret of our formation/creation. Moreover, love is considered as the medium of transformation in both views. Both regard desire as a powerful (though enigmatic) force in human nature that directs our instincts toward a knowledge of our true primordial being (psychoanalysis) or as in Plato's doctrine toward the Absolute Beauty. In contrast with *agape*, they share the wish to restore the individual in its internal conflicts. Finding such compatible structures, we might be persuaded to disregard the gap between philosophy and psychoanalysis and with no hesitation draw the conclusion that the modern psychoanalytic theory of desire is no more than a realistic version of Plato's theory of desire. John Brenkman is one of the critics who argues that the psychoanalytic theory of desire has shaped itself as a critical reversal of the idealist theory simply by not attaching the concept of loss to some original or final fullness or completeness.¹ The difference between Lacan's theory of desire and Plato's conveys the difference between two varied areas of analysis, psychoanalysis and philosophy. Interpreting Lacan's theory as merely a reversal of idealist theory by simply erasing the original state of completeness is rather a simplification of the antagonism between idealism and realism. Although Lacan's theory of transference is an attempt toward the knowledge of the unconscious, the negativity of the *Spaltung* does not characterise any form of a 'unified subject'. I shall discuss this point in detail where I explain Lacan's theory of lack.

In the pursuit of my argument, I will be mainly concerned with Lacan's interpretation of desire. By introducing the principles of Saussurian linguistics into psychoanalysis, Lacan opens up a new vantage point from which to consider human nature, i.e. the formation of the subject through language. His profound and subtle analysis of the concept of desire concentrates on desire as lack, and elaborates the

¹ John Brenkman, 'The Other and the One: Psychoanalysis, Reading, the Symposium,' *Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading: Otherwise*, Shoshana Felman, ed., Yale French Studies 55/56 (1977), p. 414.

formation of the subject and the relation between desire and love. Moreover, the significance of Lacan's formulation of desire lies in his complex analysis of the object of desire in the notion of the 'Other', highlights of which are very responsive to any study on the discourse of love. Lacan's analyses of the idea of sublimation and the role of reproduction in the chain of signification are no less radiant. Briefly, Lacan assimilated the structure of the unconscious with the structure of language. Such a revolutionary formulation of the unconscious led to the idea of language as the privileged part of the Symbolic order and therefore a different view of the subject, desire and sexual difference. Lacanian psychoanalysis is regarded as a revision of Freud's theories in the light of structuralist linguistics and anthropology. Generally, the critical readings on Lacan can be divided into two categories: those who interpret his theories in the context of the dominant ideas of his time that influenced him such as Hegel, Freud, the surrealist movement, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Saussure, Heidegger, Kojève, Bataille, and Jaspers. Such interpretation, however, does not dismiss his originality. Other critics analyse his formulas with regards to psychotherapy and psychopathology.

Having said all this, my intention is not to juxtapose Plato's *eros* with Lacan's desire and draw the conclusion that their construction of human beings is different or similar. In fact, as Price puts it in his article on Plato and Freud '[i]f one looks for similarities between the thoughts of two distant and disparate thinkers, the danger is not that one will fail, but that one will succeed'.² Although I shall not venture into this tempting field, I utilise its general guidelines. What I attempt to provide in this part is a thorough understanding of the complex notion of 'desire' from Lacan's point of view. Lacan's explanation of the theory of desire is scattered in his articles and seminars and this is due to the fact that Lacanian psychoanalysis is multidimensional. That is, all his analysis concerning the structure of the unconscious, different stages of the subject and characterisations of desire, and different levels of the imaginary, the

² A. W. Price, 'Plato and Freud,' in *The Person and the Human Mind: Issues in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, Christopher Gill, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 247.

symbolic and the real are interrelated and can not be verified as separate issues. In my attempt to formulate Lacan's idea of desire, therefore, I shall explain a range of matters on desire under the following chapters: the origin or cause of desire, the nature of desire, the relation between desire and love, and finally the desire of the Other.

CHAPTER FOUR

Desire as Lack

Plato's *Symposium* is an effort to present different perspectives on *eros* through interlocutors all of which mark an opposition in the nature of love. Plato's *eros* can be considered as an extended definition of those perspectives that are later reflected in the hierarchical stages of love. The point I would like to make here is that such a hierarchy becomes the foreground of a duality between desire and lack. Socrates refers to the idea of lack as the cause of desire. However, he does not explain where this lack originates. Brenkman suggests that there are two alternatives in answering this question: one is to suppose the source of lack inherent in desire; the other refers to the opposition between the human and the divine in Plato's metaphysics that conceives of the human as a derivation from the divine.³ This suggests that lack is caused by being cut from the divine source. That Plato leaves no explanation to the source of lack or refers to it implicitly is hardly surprising. In the *Symposium*, Plato is merely concerned with analysing the nature of *eros* rather than lack. Moreover, his metaphysics is clearly stated in his other books that views man's life as an image of the Idea.

Contrary to Plato, psychoanalysis traces the source of lack to biological and social conditions where the process of the formation of a primordial lack is analysed. Lacan describes desire in terms of lack and his most famous axiom 'desire is lack' appears quite often in his works: 'Desire is a relation of being to lack. This lack is the lack of being properly speaking. It isn't the lack of this or that, but lack of being whereby the being exists. This lack is beyond anything which can represent it. It is

³ John Brenkman, p. 414.

only ever represented as a reflection on a veil.'⁴ It is only in its lack, Lacan confirms, that the subject comes to being: 'being arises as presence from a background of absence'.⁵ Desire-as-lack, indeed, forms the framework of Lacan's psychology as it uncovers the formation of the subject. Very close to the notion of Eros, desire is the want of something it does not have. Lacan's theory of desire, however, moves further than that; it is lack in the organisation of the unconscious:

desire in Lacan is more fundamentally something lacking: the unconscious, which is itself built up around loss. Desire is also a principle of structuration in the genesis of the subject. It points to that void or real in human existence around which interpretation in the registers of the imaginary and/or symbolic grows up.⁶

Lack explains man's genesis. Life or, more precisely, birth is a separation in itself. It is separation since by entering the world, man has to succumb to a system he does not belong to; he has to translate himself. Lacan explains the cause of lack by referring to the absence of a physical unity before birth, something that reminds us of Aristophanes' myth of completeness. For Lacan, lack is the void or the gap, as Lemaire discerns, which precedes the instinct and also the desire expressed in a signifier: 'Lack implies the idea of the lived drama of an irreversible incompleteness rather than that of some erotic appeal'.⁷ Therefore, in Lacan's interpretation of desire, the notion of lack is coincident with the formation of the subject. Being incomplete, the subject has to maintain its existence through the system of language that Lacan calls the system of signification. The 'signifier is that which represents the subject for another signifier'.⁸ This means that there is no subject without signification: 'This signifier will therefore be the signifier for which all the other signifiers represent the subject: that is to say, in the absence of this signifier, all the other signifiers represent

⁴ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II*, p. 223.

⁵ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II*, p. 224.

⁶ Henry Sullivan, p. 40.

⁷ Anika Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan*, David Macey, trans. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1977), p.162.

⁸ Jacques Lacan, 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious,' in *Écrits*, Alan Sheridan, trans. (London: Tavistock, 1997), p. 316.

nothing, since nothing is represented only *for* something else'.⁹ Coming out of its shell, the subject faces the outside on which he is totally dependent. It has to communicate itself to satisfy its basic needs. The role of the signifier is to represent the subject to another subject who is also a signifier. The signifier derives from the realm of an order named the Symbolic in Lacanian terminology. This realm is the realm of signs, symbols and representations. The Symbolic order is the institution of language, discourse, and consciousness; it 'mediates'¹⁰ the subject as it is a medium for representation. In other words, language serves as a mediator between the subject and the truth of the unconscious. The Symbolic order performs the way a symbol does. It can not define the nature of the real for us neither can it be related to it; it merely stands for the real and represents it.

In Lacan's psychoanalysis, language plays an important role. It is the privileged part of the Symbolic order. Moreover, the unconscious is structured by language through the signifier. 'Speech is a "relation", the possibility of dialogue, of demand, of community, reciprocity, love'.¹¹ Language is more than a medium of communication in Lacan. The significant dimension of language is that it allows the subject to enter into the chain of signification. And this is exactly what can be called 'individuality' or identity which later builds up the ego. Individuality is the gift of language: 'the human being acquires his individuality only on condition of being inserted into the symbolic order which governs and specifies humanity'.¹² The result is what Lacan calls 'becoming': 'What is realized in my history is not the past definite of what was, since it is no more, or even the present perfect of what has been in what I am, but the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming'.¹³ What the subject is seeking through language is 'recognition'; it is

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Jacques Lacan, 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious,' in *Écrits*, p. 67.

¹¹ Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture*, p. 56.

¹² Anika Lemaire, p. 67.

¹³ Jacques Lacan, 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis,' in *Écrits*, p. 86.

constantly building up its image or identity. As such, neither past nor present is identical with the identity that the subject is seeking but becoming.

However, there is a paradox hidden in the role of the Symbolic order and its relation to the subject. The relation of language to the subject is the same as the relation between the Symbolic order and the Real. The symbol always entails the absence of the object as it merely substitutes it: 'the being of language is the non-being of objects'.¹⁴ Language both grants individuality to human subject and restrains it to the extent that it loses access to reality and becomes no more than a signifier in the chain of signification: 'Language erases even as it creates. The signifier *replaces* the object it identifies as a separate entity; the linguistic symbol supplants what it names and differentiates, relegates it to a limbo beyond language, where it becomes inaccessible, lost.'¹⁵

It is the paradoxical role of language and the Symbolic order that causes separation of the subject, on the one hand, from the unconscious and, on the other, from any relation to reality except through the signifier. 'Mediated by language, the subject is irremediably divided, because he is at once excluded from the signifying chain and "represented" in it'.¹⁶ This structural role of language in the subject leads Lacan to his famous theory of *Spaltung*, a split in the human subject.

The *Spaltung* (from the German *Spalte* + split) is the division of being revealed in psychoanalysis between the self, the innermost part of the psyche, and the subject of conscious discourse, behaviour and culture. . . . It results from this phenomenon of division that consciousness and reflection are to be situated at the level of discourse, whereas the unconscious is to be placed on the side of the true subject.¹⁷

Basically, the assertion of individuality by the Symbolic not only divides the subject but it also entails a sacrifice. That sacrifice is the loss of the true part of the

¹⁴ Jacques Lacan, 'Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power,' in *Écrits*, p. 263.

¹⁵ Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture*, p. 55.

¹⁶ Anika Lemaire, p. 68.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 69.

subject. Presence of the subject as an individual necessitates the absence of the 'self', or better to say, its destruction: 'I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object'.¹⁸ Therefore, the loss of the 'self' is the result of division in the subject caused by insertion into language. Lemaire explains this disruption in terms of the impossibility of representation. That is, any mediation disrupts a true representation of self, on the one hand, and a true relation of self with reality on the other:

Accession to the symbolic is, however, balanced with what Lacan calls "the division of the subject", with the loss of an essential part of himself, since, in the symbolic, the subject can be no more than represented or translated. . . . he becomes, on the other hand, lost to himself, for any mediate relationship imposes a rupture of the inaugural continuity between self and self, self and other, self and world.¹⁹

Insertion of the subject into the Symbolic order necessitates the loss or death of the true side of the subject (the unconscious). The important point, however, that should be emphasised here is the distinction between division and alienation. In Lacan's analysis of the subject, division occurs first due to the insertion of the subject into language. Thus, division is assumed as the cause of alienation and splitted subject is the consequence of that process. The division in the subject establishes an alienation where the subject becomes alienated in his discourse: 'Alienation is the fact of giving up a part of oneself to another. The alienated man lives outside himself, a prisoner of the signifier, a prisoner of his ego's image or of the image of the ideal'.²⁰

The subject being divided and alienated in his discourse loses its true relation with the unconscious. The process of alienation can be described as the destruction of a part of the self. This forces the subject to form an identity, an image to represent itself no matter how indirectly. This image is the ego. The subject's alienations lead to

¹⁸ Jacques Lacan, 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis,' *Écrits*, p. 86.

¹⁹ Anika Lemaire, p. 68.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

the formation of the ego. In other words, the ego is the outcome of alienation. The subject in its contact with the Symbolic order produces an image of itself as a defence mechanism. 'The ego is that which opposes itself most surely to the truth of the being. The ego concentrates in it all the person's ideals, all the person wants to be or thinks himself to be. The ego is the other of our self, assimilated and stuck on to the self, rather like an inadequate mould'.²¹ However, one can say that the invention of the ego through the Symbolic order gives a selfhood - no matter how delusive - to the split subject. The formation of the ego is not just a structuring of identity, rather it provides the subject with a complete image. Nevertheless, this sense of wholeness is not based on the Real order (the ego is the seat of the Imaginary) and as such it fails to cope with the desire of the unconscious (which asks for the primordial self).

The alienated subject strives to stand upon a firmer ground than being merely a signifier. However, instead of searching for the lack in the unconscious, the subject substitutes it by a series of narcissistic identifications. And he 'finally recognizes that this ego was never anything more than his work in the imaginary. In analysis he finds once more the alienation which made him construct his ego as another and for another'.²²

Having explained the notion of subject, the process of its formation and the function of the signifier, Lacan elucidates the centrality of the social structure that produces lack. In Lacan, social structure or language is not the only source or cause in the formation of the subject. He believes in another lack which precedes the structural lack and calls it 'real'. By 'real', Lacan refers to the reality of an event that occurs in the life of a human subject. Man comes to existence by losing her/his being through sexual reproduction. Thus, s/he is subject to the cycle of reproduction and death:

Two lacks overlap here. The first emerges from the central defect around which the dialectic of the advent of the subject to his own being in the relation to the Other turns - from the fact that the subject depends upon the signifier and that

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-3.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

the signifier is at first in the field of the Other. This lack takes up again the other lack, which is the real, earlier lack, to be situated at the advent of the living being, that is to say, at sexed reproduction. The real lack is what the living being loses, that part of himself *qua* living being, in reproducing himself through the way of sex. This lack is real because it relates to something real, namely that the living being, by being subject to sex, has fallen under the blow of individual death.²³

Lacan's explanation of an earlier lack brings him close to the boundaries of philosophy with regards to man's genesis. In the social lack, the subject loses the true part of its self which is associated with its essence in the real lack. The structural lack is what Lacan explains in terms of the formation of the subject being dependent on the signifier. In both cases, what the subject loses represents its essence and lack of it causes death. In the real lack, man is considered as a sexed being who *falls under the blow of death* and in the social lack, desire is nothing but death in the sense of the impossibility of a unified subject (in Lacan the subject is always considered as a split subject). And this recalls man's genesis in the Bible where man loses his wholeness in terms of purity. These two lacks, according to Lacan, occur simultaneously. There is a primordial state of being later known as the libido that goes through a rupture by coming into existence through sexual reproduction. Lacan in explaining his definition of libido compares it to lamella:

Lamella is something that is related to what the sexed being loses in sexuality. . .

It is the libido, *qua* pure life instinct, that is to say, immortal life, or irrepressible life, life that has need of no organ, simplified, indestructible life. It is precisely what is subtracted from the living being by virtue of the fact that it is subject to the cycle of sexed reproduction. . . . The *objets a* are merely its representatives.²⁴

²³ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans., Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), pp. 204-05.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 197-98.

Libido is defined in terms of an immortal life; it is compared to lamella to represent the pure instinct of life. Thus, Lacan's formulation of desire as lack more than a narration of the genesis of man is the interpretation of a fundamental rupture. As Shullenberger puts it: it is breaking away from 'a timelessness of pure existence, in which there is neither self nor other, into a condition of self-exile, in which the 'self' is constituted *as other*'.²⁵ In "Position de l'inconscient," Lacan explains the idea of lack and division in the subject with the image of an egg: the sphericity of the primordial man is compared to an egg in the womb which has no need of a shell. However, with the cutting of the cord, what the new-born loses is not its mother but its anatomical complement. Thus, the pure life instinct separated from the living being, who owes its existence to sexual reproduction, is no more immortal. Libido becomes an organ attached to erotogenic zones.²⁶

I shall focus on the importance of Lacan's idea of the real lack in relation to the image of procreation in Shakespeare's poetry in detail in Part III (Chapter Eight). I will explain how sexuality in the guise of the idea of procreation is incorporated into Shakespeare's formulation of love and how the Platonic idea of reproduction as a device for immortality can be interpreted as death in the light of Lacan's theory of lack. The function of libido and the role of sexuality in love dismisses any sense of immortality or unity for the subject.

As explained before, Lacan refers to the *Symposium* frequently in his account on desire. Discussing the role of sexuality, he utilises the myth of Aristophanes not to reconstruct his theory of desire as Freud did, but rather to differentiate the notions of love and desire. Establishing the dynamics of lack, Lacan contrasts Aristophanes' myth which pursues one's sexual other half through love with the search of the subject for the part of himself/herself that is lost forever.²⁷ Two significant points can be drawn from Aristophanes' definition of Eros. The first is that human beings are

²⁵ William Shullenberger, 'Lacan and the Play of Desire in Poetry,' *Massachusetts Studies in English* 7:1 (1978), p. 34.

²⁶ John Brenkman, p. 420.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

originally considered as sexed beings: they are classified according to three different sexes who search for the right type to complete a whole. Lacan's theory of real lack is also based on the same view: though human beings are doomed to the cycle of reproduction, the sexual drives are not the single ruling force. As in the Imaginary level, our identifications are sex oriented. Later in the process of narcissistic identifications (ladder) we search for the other half of ourselves. The second point in Aristophanes' discussion is Zeus' punishment. Zeus puts human beings in the traps of love and sexuality. Aristophanes finds it an endless deception where man can not find her/his lost half. Lacan interprets it as endless series of narcissistic identifications for the satisfaction of the ego. Therefore, we can conclude that if sexuality is death, love is in essence an obstruction for transference.

Although in the dualistic definition of Socrates' *eros*, the system of hierarchy divides the divine love from the earthly love and considers everything on the side of the former as inferior, the movement of transformation or sublimation in Plato is a return to a pre-existent (and ideal) state. On the contrary, psychoanalysis, even in its arguments for achieving the truth of the unconscious, does not believe in a return to the primordial state of wholeness. Thus, as Cornford maintains, in Plato man was originally immortal and through falling his soul was ensnared in the flesh; man is a fallen spirit rather than a risen animal.²⁸ Moreover, the object of desire in Plato, the Absolute beauty, lies outside the subject. Contrary to this in psychoanalysis, the truth of the unconscious (even *objet a* at the level fantasy) is inside the subject.

It is in this perspective that Lacan breaks the boundary of psychoanalysis and enters the domain of philosophy. His narration of man's creation reminds us of both Plato and Bible. Brenkman's interpretation of Lacan's theory of desire is that Lacan rewrites the *Symposium* from a materialist viewpoint and forms the dialectic of desire in the unconscious. He finds Plato's theory of desire a misrecognition organised in a philosophical framework whose set of oppositions is never open to question. Thereby, according to Brenkman, Lacan's theory of desire overturns Plato's metaphysics of

²⁸ A. W. Price, *Plato and Freud*, p. 252.

presence and offers a new perspective for the enigma of desire. I agree with Brenkman's deconstructive reading of the scheme of oppositions in the *Symposium*. However, I am not entirely persuaded by his remark that Lacanian desire is a reversal of the idealist theory of desire. The clash between Plato and Lacan resides in the conflict between idealism and realism on the one hand, and the boundaries of philosophy and psychoanalysis on the other. If we map out the boundaries of each of these perspectives, it becomes clear that they are not aiming at a similar object nor do they provide a similar understanding of human nature. What dissociates the two viewpoints lies in their theory of lack. Plato's idealism is less concerned with the origin of lack as it is with the ideal object of desire. On the contrary, the main concern of psychoanalysis is the nature and function of desire. As such, the cause of desire becomes important as it reveals its nature and thereby some possible resolutions. Psychoanalysis repudiates any state of return either to primordial state of being or to an ideal nature for human being.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Nature of Desire

The insertion of the subject within the system of signification and the alienation resulting from it inscribes a sense of loss in the unconscious which causes a desire in return. The moment of loss is constituted in the subject, desire is born. Thus, Lacan's famous formula: desire is lack. Such an observation makes it clear why Lacan assimilates the transition from lack to desire to the subject's exposure to language: 'Desire always becomes manifest at the joint of speech, where it makes its appearance, its sudden emergence, its surge forward. Desire emerges just as it becomes embodied in speech, it emerges with symbolism'.²⁹ Only it is in the process of alienation of the subject that desire is formed. The splitted/alienated subject desires the (primordial) object that is lost forever. 'In the movement whereby the child in one form or another translates his need he alienates it in the signifier and betrays its primary truth'.³⁰

In his analysis of the formation of desire, Lacan distinguishes between need, demand and desire. Such a differentiation clarifies what Lacan means by signification of desire and clears away the overlapping margins. Once again, we return to man's genesis. In his earliest relation to others, the child is unable to make a connection for the satisfaction of its basic needs.³¹ In other words, to survive, s/he has to

²⁹ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II*, p. 234.

³⁰ Anika Lemaire, p. 163.

³¹ Catherine Belsey in her discussion of Lacan comments rightly on the general scope of the 'subject' that 'Lacan's theory is not a version of child-psychology, and is not usefully read as an account of the roles of mothers and fathers. The stages of psychosexual development have a mythological status: the "story" of the child is important only in so far as it is perpetually recapitulated in the experience of the adult. The Father is a signifier, and it is the Name-of-the-Father which authorizes meaning, the paternal-

communicate. Though it is totally dependent on others, it is not equipped with the tools of the system of signifiers to convey her/his needs: 'The language or, as Lacan puts it, "the storehouse of the signifier" is in the possession of the Other'.³² As Brenkman explains, in response to its specific need, the child's demand is interpreted as a general appeal by the signifier and this transmutes needs into a proof for love. The child not only is cared for his needs but receives love as well. Such a gesture transmutes the response into a proof of love, silences him and so deprives him of establishing a simple signifying relation and produces a desire that exceeds simple biological need.³³

And that is how need is transformed into demand. What the subject receives is not the same as what he requested: 'signification causes a "deviation" of organic needs in the process of transforming them into demands. Subjected to the signifier, these needs return to the speaking subject "alienated," other than they are'.³⁴ In return for his request, he receives satisfaction of his needs together with love. Thus, needs are transmuted into a demand for love. However, the object of love is the Other who as the subject of lack can not give love: 'That which is thus given to the Other to fill, and which is strictly that which it does not have, since it, too, lacks being, is what is called love'.³⁵ This is how Lacan distinguishes need from demand by differentiating their object: 'Since demand is articulated and addressed to another in a situation where the other has nothing to give, it is distinguished from need (for an object will satisfy a need) by the fact that the object involved is nonessential; thus any demand is essentially a demand for love'.³⁶

signifying Law which holds in place the ordering mechanisms of the symbolic. The Mother, too, is crucially a signifier, not a person, "the signifier of the primordial object" ' (Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture*, p. 59).

³² John Brenkman, p. 417.

³³ Ibid., p. 416-17.

³⁴ Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture*, p. 58.

³⁵ Jacques Lacan, 'Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power,' *Écrits*, p. 263.

³⁶ Anthony Wilden, 'Lacan and the Discourse of the Other,' in Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*, Anthony Wilden, trans. (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), p. 189.

What was called alienated need changes into a demand for love which is also abandoned and unsatisfied. Therefore, being repressed and transformed, it seeks for the primordial satisfaction. Lacan calls this search for replacing the loss (lack) to satisfy the subject 'desire': 'Desire is the effect of the lost needs: loss returns and presents itself as desire'.³⁷ Desire can be seen as the efforts of the subject to reconstruct the lost object. However, this reconstruction is everlasting, but not in the sense that Plato describes it. Plato's desire is an eternal state of 'possession', while Lacan's desire is eternal because it can not be satisfied: 'To say that desire is beyond demand means that it transcends it, that it is eternal because it is impossible to satisfy it. By articulating desire with its own conditions as a linguistic form, demand necessarily betrays its true import'.³⁸ Any articulation of desire limits its reference to a basic loss and that is the nature of language or any linguistic structure. All the objects that can potentially satisfy desire are in fact mere substitutes offered by the Symbolic. Such a structure guarantees the inevitable absence of wholeness sealed by desire.³⁹ The Symbolic system led to the formation of desire because the subject did not have the access to the unconscious on the level of the Real order. As such, it can only offer substitutes to the subject's desire rather than the real lost object of desire. In the course of his argument on the subversion of the subject, Lacan elaborates on the graph of desire which formulates all the developments of the subject in the unconscious. There, he explains very systematically the distinction between need, demand and desire: 'desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second, the phenomenon of their splitting (*Spaltung*)'.⁴⁰ Need is situated at the level of instincts that can be satisfied with an object outside the subject. Demand, on the other hand, is not a request for an object but for love and can only articulate itself through language. Finally, desire is the deduction of need from demand; it does not yield itself to any

³⁷ Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture*, p. 58.

³⁸ Anika Lemaire, pp. 163-64.

³⁹ William Shullenberger, p. 34.

⁴⁰ Jacques Lacan, 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious,' *Écrits*, p. 287.

object as it is absolute and can not be signified. With reference to Laplanche and Pontalis, Wilden summarises Lacan's distinction of desire from need and demand:

Desire is born from the split between need and demand. It is irreducible to need, because it is not in principle a relation to a real object which is independent of the subject, but a relation to phantasy. It is irreducible to demand, insofar as it seeks to impose itself without taking language or the unconscious of the other into account, and requires to be recognized absolutely by him.⁴¹

Desire not only is beyond demand as its object is absolute and independent of the subject but also it is a striving for the unnameable: 'Desire, a function central to all human experience, is the desire for nothing nameable. And at the same time this desire lies at the origin of every variety of animation'.⁴² The course of development of the internal energy of the subject from need to desire demonstrates a form of elevation as if desire is the sublimated form of need. That is, the inarticulate lack eventually restores itself in the unrepresentational characteristic of desire. This brings us to another feature of desire as metonymy. Metonymy is the representation of something through an association. This means that as there is no object that can signify desire, each signifier as the object of desire stands as a metonymy for it. Everything is merely an attribute to the desire-as-lack since nothing can represent it completely. 'Desire seeks continually to replace that which was suffered in the original displacement; but each substitute object, each "signifier" available from the symbol-system, reconfirms its difference from what was lost, and so sustains desire in its metonymic inertia'.⁴³ Shullenberger asserts that the chain of signifiers is endless and this constitutes desire as the metonymy of the want-to-be. Moreover, not only does desire represent lack through association, but the state of ego is also metonymic for desire.⁴⁴ Therefore, desire is a structure of repression when Lacan distinguishes it as metonymy rather than metaphor: 'metaphor superimposes two terms without the repression of either,

⁴¹ Anthony Wilden, p. 189.

⁴² Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II*, p. 223.

⁴³ William Shullenberger, p. 35.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

whereas metonymy displaces the energy or interest bound to an original term upon a term or idea associated with it, thus effacing the original term by the process of association'.⁴⁵

From the above account, we now understand that desire only partially represents the want-to-be and in this way effaces any access to lack. Catherine Belsey explains the metonymic feature of desire in terms of a split both in the subject between the Real and the Symbolic and in desire itself:

Desire is a metonym (a displaced version) of the want-to-be that necessarily characterises a human life divided between the unmasterable symbolic and the unreachable, inextricable real. And desire itself is split between the quest for satisfaction in the real, "refusal of the signifier" on the one hand, and the desire of (for) the Other, the origin of meaning, which entails "a lack of being". This must be so because if the subject longs to find the real again, it also yearns to find the self which is perpetually created and destroyed by the signifier.⁴⁶

In other words, desire yearns for something which is denied. And this conveys exactly the opposite nature of *eros* where *eros* desires to have something which it does not have though accessible.

The other feature of Lacanian desire which should be stressed here is that desire is asexual. Shullenberger remarks that though the commonplace notion of desire is sexual instinct or appetite craving for satisfaction, desire in Lacan 'is not bodily instinct but an expression of loss; even more, desire is the linguistic institutionalization of loss, for desire itself, organized around the "desire of the Other," is structured as the very alienation which it forever seeks to overcome'.⁴⁷ Accordingly, although the cause of desire at the stage of its articulation as need and later as demand is reduced to satisfaction of an instinct, it is not sexual. The object of sex is definite and conditional (for satisfaction), while desire is absolute: 'Sex

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 39.

⁴⁶ Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture*, p. 60.

⁴⁷ William Shullenberger, p. 34.

addresses itself, rather to the Other whose object each subject is, albeit unawares . . . aiming not at reproduction, but at being in the circuit of the drives'.⁴⁸

Having explained the nature of desire, we can strongly suggest how Lacan deconstructs *eros*. The binary state of opposition governs every dimension of Plato's philosophy. Continuing the tradition of Greek philosophy (pre-Socratic), Plato's philosophic system is structured on the principle of opposition and change that forms our existence: 'There is a perpetual tension in a process of dissolving and becoming in the universal condition'.⁴⁹ The tension between matter and spirit serves as a microcosm of a macrocosm that presupposes the constant struggle between diverse elements in the universe. Plato's *eros* is by nature dualistic. Eros is conceived from Poros and Penia: two opposed elements. Illustrating the definition of Eros, Poros (Plenty) represents desire while Penia is the symbol of lack. Diotima describes the dual nature of Eros in terms of time when she says that Eros is flourishing in one moment and dead at another moment (203e). The other feature of *eros* that stresses its dualistic nature is that it is a daemon. Diotima describes *eros* as a mediator (202e) that binds the mortal with the divine. The demonic feature of *eros* paves the way for the subsequent oppositions between the human and divine love in general and mortal/immortal, matter/spirit, lover/beloved, male/female in particular. The state of opposition not only justifies but guarantees the logocentric feature of *eros* in the Platonic ladder. On one side of the ladder, there is the man who lacks wisdom and merely propagates itself in matter. At the other extreme side stands the philosopher who searching for the Absolute beauty propagates his soul.

Contrary to Plato's *eros*, the nature of desire in Lacan can not be explained in terms of binarism. Loss in Lacan might be interpreted as the cause of desire but that is merely in the linearity of cause and effect. This position does not define the nature of desire. Desire and lack are co-existent. Such representation of desire as lack seems to

⁴⁸ Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, 'Plato's *Symposium* and the Lacanian Theory of Transference: or What Is Love?', *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 88:4 (Fall, 1989), p. 738.

⁴⁹ A. J. Smith, *The Metaphysics of Love: Studies in Renaissance Love Poetry from Dante to Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 3.

eliminate dualism in the nature or mechanism of desire; it undoes the linear understanding of desire fixed in the fluctuation of time. Presence of desire does not indicate absence of lack or loss; desire does not start where lack stops. In other words, desire is not the development of lack neither is lack the continuation of desire. Desire constituted in the subject does not substitute lack since it continuously represents loss or lack in our being. As a result, nothing (no signifier) may satisfy desire since its object is primordially lost. To explain the nature of desire, its distinct features and its differentiation from Plato's notion of desire especially in terms of the binary system of opposition will pave the way to the important issue of love and desire in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Desire and Love

One of the important issues that Lacan has raised in his discussions on the theory of desire is the distinction between love and desire. It is in this connection that Lacan and Plato can be juxtaposed. Lacan's reading of Plato's the *Symposium* in his Seminar XVIII (*Le Transfert*) stands behind his theory of desire.⁵⁰ In this chapter, I will discuss the relation between love and desire from three directions: love and narcissism, love and *objet a*, and love as the sublimation of the ego. This chapter will provide a background for my analysis of the idea of sublimation in Shakespeare's poetry. In Chapter Nine, I will explain the function of beauty in sublimation; how the lover sublimates his lack by strengthening his ego; how all images of sublimation are indications of auto-eroticism.

In Lacan's view, love is by nature narcissistic. Such a definition of love in Lacan is structured by his theory of desire-as-lack. If man is constituted by lack, all he looks for in love will be fascination at things he yearns to have yet he does not. This is due to the fact that what we love and seek in the other is actually what we lack: 'There is no ideal love, only the love of ideals in their painful affinity to narcissism and death. What one loves concerns what one has lost, the mark of loss constituting the Real as an excess, a beyond or limit that Lacan named *jouissance*'.⁵¹

⁵⁰ I have consulted the unpublished English translation of this seminar of Lacan by Professor Bruce Fink who kindly provided me with his draft.

⁵¹ Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, 'Plato's *Symposium* and the Lacanian Theory of Transference: or What Is Love?', p. 737.

While desire is an effort for recognition of the true side of 'self,' love is merely a struggle for the satisfaction of self through replacement of the original lack: 'Love is a consolation, on the side of everyday narcissism; desire a passion, on the side of jouissance'.⁵² As the result of alienation, the ego in the guise of the subject tries to fill its lack by a series of identifications. It identifies itself with someone who is both ideal and close to the image of the ego: 'Indeed, the subject is a headless robot, spoken by repetitions and drives that try to reduce differences to some alien sense of the same. . . . Friendship concerns love, narcissism, identificatory familiarity, similarities in jouissance'.⁵³

Objet a is the original lost object that caused desire. It plays a fundamental role in Lacan's theory of desire both at the level of the formation of the subject and later in relation of the subject to fantasy. In the distinction that Lacan appears to make between desire and love, the former always strives to displace any object of desire (desire is metonymy) while the latter continuously looks for replacement. The object of love is therefore closer to the ideals of the ego than to the true image of 'self'. 'Lacan suggests that not only do we not seek the other for beauty, the "object" sought in love is not the other *qua* person either. There is, instead, a *Schadenfreude* produced by the *objet a* that Lacan characterizes as an "extreme barrier forbidding access to a fundamental horror"'.⁵⁴ Thus, the relation of love to *objet a* is that of a barrier to protect the ego and feed its narcissistic wishes against the unsatisfiable desire. While fantasy in the subject is an effort to restore the lost object, love becomes a lawful operation to dismiss it in the domain of the Symbolic order. Everything we seek in the other person reinforces the image of the ego and supports its identity without which the subject would be shattered. This is part of the nature of the ego. Love as a supposed agent of the ego causes a distance as much as possible from *objet a* by replacing it with the other (loved person). This barrier opposes a sexual love in order to escape the interference of fantasy: 'While love intends its object fully, it does so by

⁵² Ibid., p. 747.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 737-38.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 738.

sublimation, largely disclaiming the beloved object's kinship with the *object a*. In sexed love the object and its double collide.'⁵⁵

The subject in its struggles between love and desire never fully realises its real position and its true intentions in relation to the other. The subject does not have a full knowledge either of itself or of the other. However, the quest of the subject to associate its ideal ego with the other's desire can be interpreted as a quest for knowledge. In this sense, love becomes close to Lacan's notion of transference: 'Lacan insisted that love (and its more truthful sister, hate) must be taken into account in any knowledge quest . . . love tries to bridge the gap between desire and jouissance by encompassing the *objet a* that makes the word flesh'⁵⁶. Thus, no matter how far the subject goes in his quest for knowledge of the self, it always bars itself from *objet a*. This changes the direction of love to an illusive search. This illusion is to the extent that any individual's confrontation with desire can be interpreted as one of the symptoms of this dilemma:

That the "beauty" to which individuals cling is narcissistic illusion, alienated desire, mechanically repeating symptoms, the fables of the Other's signifying chains, and the chaotic void around which these fables weave themselves, makes each human "subject" a Symptom (rewritten by Lacan as *sinthome* in order to express the particularity specific to this order) of her or his life encounters with love and desire.⁵⁷

The third difference between desire and love lies in the segregation that ego produces in its movements of idealisation. The idealisations of the subject can be seen as a process of sublimation of the ego. The subject maintains this by identifying itself with ideals. What distinguishes love from desire here is that the former sublimates the ego while the latter, as an unsignifiable structure, denies any object of love. Such a

⁵⁵ Juliet Flower MacCannell, 'Love Outside the Limits of the Law,' in *Lacan and Love*, Renata Salecl, ed. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1994), p. 41.

⁵⁶ Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, 'Plato's *Symposium* and the Lacanian Theory of Transference: or What Is Love?', p. 749.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 738-39.

movement is paradoxical, Sullivan points out, since on the one hand the subject idealises itself (strives to be recognised through a new/real identity), and on the other, it alienates itself from its true being:

The paradox is that humans cling to jouissance, and idealize and eternalize their being (narcissism or ego) which is a structure of alienation - a second death, the first death being our animal death. . . . The space between these two deaths is veiled by beauty and by desire.⁵⁸

In sublimation, love elevates the object of love to represent the ideals of the ego just as a signifier represents an object. With reference to Lacan, Sullivan argues that the kinship between father and son (as the most hidden and radical articulation of love) represents the sublimated power of the paternal metaphor where love is the love of a name or a lineage: the love of self reflected through naming. Sullivan even goes further and suspects if each child (as the immortality of a name is retained through the child) can be seen as an *objet a* in a family.⁵⁹ As such, the search for immortality whether by procreation in lower stages or immortality of soul in upper levels in Platonic love is the sublimation of the ego and thus narcissistic. In both stages, it is the ego that is elevated.

In Plato's the *Symposium*, the distinction between love and desire is also at work though on a different ground. Diotima's speech sets up a series of oppositions that eventually leads to the opposition of love and desire. The basis for such a distinction is the original definition of love as lack. The distinction that proceeds accordingly is a state of hierarchy in love: the love of generating corporeal beauty and the love of procreation of beauty by soul. According to Diotima, the first love is the inferior type where the lover immortalises his 'self' through sexuality. This is exactly what Lacan characterises as narcissism in love. The lover satisfies her/his ego by loving the other not for the person but for reconstructing/immortalising her/his 'self'.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 750.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 738-39.

The superior kind of love, however, is that the lover searches through the ladder of sublimation for the knowledge of Absolute Beauty. The second type of love, or the divine love so to speak, to the extent that it is an effort towards the purification of 'self' and dismissal of alienations of the ego can be compared to Lacan's notion of desire. What reinforces the difference between love and desire in the *Symposium* is the complete characterisation of Socrates that follows his speech on *eros*. This picture is presented through Alcibiades who suffers from the enigmatic role of love in Socrates. Reading the *Symposium*, we are faced with the question whether Socrates' picture of love is a representation of *eros* in Plato. Is he the lover-philosopher in search of the knowledge of the Absolute beauty? Sullivan points out that according to Lacan it always takes three to love: the lover, the beloved, and the *objet a* that causes the fantasy of love. Having the knowledge of love, Socrates could not find himself in the position of the beloved, that which is worthy of being loved.⁶⁰ What we are confronted with in the *Symposium* is the paradoxical role of the lover. On the one hand, he yearns to give love, and on the other, he wants to be loved. In Lacan's view, this means that the lover, acting on the basis of a delusion, wants to give something he does not have: 'To love is, essentially, to wish to be loved'.⁶¹ This is Socrates' picture in the eyes of Alcibiades. What Socrates is playing is actually the dilemma of desire. He is described

as a Siren, whose words promise wisdom but whose gift is death (216a); as a Silenus, but one whose sexuality is a sham; as a Marsyas, whose flute-playing stuns his hearers, but who is essentially hubristic, aspiring to emulate the gods and therefore scorning his fellow man.⁶²

Socrates is playing the role of both the lover and the beloved. We should search this paradox in his definition of *eros*. The lover is a philosopher who builds up his knowledge until he achieves the vision of Beauty. At another level, he is the beloved

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 744.

⁶¹ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 253.

⁶² J. L. Penwill, 'Men in Love: Aspects of Plato's *Symposium*,' *Ramus* 7 (1978), p. 166.

who should learn the knowledge of love. The position of beloved gives Socrates the status of ignorance and nothingness. And that reminds us of the Socratic irony where he continuously displays his knowledge and claims himself as ignorant.

While the character of Alcibiades reveals the narcissistic features of love where loving means being loved, Socrates presents the complicated movements of desire. Lacan compares the model of Socrates to the hysteric who

[b]y unconsciously identifying herself with a defective being, transforms herself into a sign of something Real (an *objet a*) in which the Other can believe, and which marks the Other for her as well, guaranteeing her existence even as nothing. Lacan calls the thing (*objet a*) she identifies with the void, or density of emptiness which puts her into the position of being only for others. Yet she is always at risk of learning that she does not constitute this sign of the gift (or giver) for everyone. Since she lives the paradoxical dilemma of being something and nothing at the same time, she readily understands the emptiness of desire.⁶³

In obtaining the pure state of desire, the subject should reveal the love hidden in the unconscious and identify itself with the void. The subject should come to acknowledge its desire as nothing that desire is lack situated within itself. This situation constitutes the subject as a being for the 'Other'. By identifying with a lack within itself, the subject can destroy the structure of the ego which denies a state of being for the Other. Such an operation fulfils the dynamics of desire. This identifying with nothing which thereby approves of being something for the Other is the position Socrates chooses to play. The problem raised here, however, is the dilemma of identity: by denying the identity of the ego, the subject maintains the identity of the Other and becomes the object of the Other's desire. On this point, Sullivan suggests that,

Socrates' beauty arises from his position of sustaining himself by nothing. Not "no-thing" as nullity, but by the *nothing* that Lacan defines as pure desire: *la*

⁶³ Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, 'Plato's *Symposium* and the Lacanian Theory of Transference: or What Is Love?', pp. 744-45.

chose as the *objet a*. Perhaps one begins to see why Socrates could represent a possible model for the Lacanian analyst.⁶⁴

Desire is beyond a demand for love. If the lover comes to recognise her/his desire as lack, s/he will establish an identity beyond a demand for being loved. In a way, s/he will be able to fantasise the state of loss. 'Lacan argues that Socrates does not love. Instead of producing metaphor - a substitution/someone or something else - he produces metonymy/desire as it fades into the Real.'⁶⁵

Thus we can conclude that Lacan presents a negative picture of love by contrasting it with desire. The narcissistic nature of love is structured on the ego as it strives to replace the original lack. The identificatory process taking place in love both reinforces and restores the image of the ego. Love separates itself from the *objet a* by elevating its own object while desire displaces its object by fantasising the state of loss. Desire moves beyond the identification and alienations of the ego. The paradoxical dilemma of desire lies in its lack that has constructed it. However, Lacan utilises the positive role of love in his theory of transference. In this sense, Socratic dialectics serves as a model for the Lacanian analyst.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 745.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 748.

⁶⁶ In fact, religion has the same assumption on love. Zupancic in her discussion on the coexistence of love and guilt in Christianity maintains that Christian ideology acknowledges the existence of an inborn guilt which causes a debt to God. To repay that debt, Christianity offers love as an escape from guilt (Alenka Zupancic, p. 67).

CHAPTER SEVEN

Desire is the Desire of the Other

Explaining the source or cause, and nature of desire, I shall now turn to its object, that is the Other. One of the most elusive phrases in Lacan is 'man's desire is the desire of the Other'⁶⁷ which recurs throughout his texts. As Lacan's theory is multidimensional, one encounters the notion of the Other from the very beginning when he discusses the structure of the unconscious and the formation of the subject. When the subject is constituted, it is faced with the enigma of desire. However, if the object of desire is lost and there is no return to the primordial *objet a*, how can the Other be considered as the object of desire? As discussed before, the subject needs to differentiate between demand and desire. The subject is nothing without the Other; therefore it seeks to be the object of the Other's desire (or the mother as the first representative of the Other). Accordingly, if the child wants to be the object of her desire, s/he should desire the desire of the Other (the mother). In fact, every side of the subject is influenced by the Other and that is what makes it a fundamental concept in Lacan. In the Imaginary level started by the mirror phase, the subject identifies itself with an image outside itself. Although the initial image of the subject later builds up the structure of the ego, the identification procedure continues in every stage of the subject's life. Identification is part of the nature of the ego. Even in narcissism where the subject is supposed to identify with itself, the subject is entering into bondage with the ideal ego. The ego is not the same as the subject; therefore, it stands as 'Other' to it. That is why the subject sees itself other than what it really is. Thus, from the beginning the

⁶⁷ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 158.

identification process takes place with an image *other* than the subject. On the Symbolic level, however, the role of the Other is apparent. The Symbolic introduces the subject with language, alienates it in language and limits the identity of the subject since language can never represent the subject thoroughly. Any representational form of the Symbolic order is considered as other to the split subject. Thus, in every stage, the role of the Other is fundamental to the extent that the subject is never pure even inside the ego. In this sense, the Imaginary and the Symbolic order share in limiting the subject through the Other.

The notion of the Other appears in different contexts: the relation of the subject and the Other as the Symbolic; the subject and the Other as the unconscious; and finally the Other as the other side of the subject. Now the question is what exactly Lacan means by structuring desire as the desire of the Other:

if desire is an effect in the subject of the condition that is imposed on him by the existence of the discourse, to make his need pass through the defiles of the signifier; [and] if . . . we must establish the notion of the Other with a capital O as being the locus of the deployment of speech . . .; it must be posited that, produced as it is by an animal at the mercy of language, man's desire is the desire of the Other.⁶⁸

Accordingly, in the context where the discourse is imposed upon the subject as the only way he can transfer his needs and where this discourse is only in the locus of the Other, Lacan concludes that any desire in the subject should be the desire of the Other. In relation of the subject to the signifier, the Symbolic Order is considered as the cause of desire in the subject whose first representative is the mother. As such, if the Other (here presented by the Symbolic Order) is the cause of desire in the subject, it (the Other) should be the object of desire in the subject, too. As Lacan explains, 'the subject has to find the constituting structure of his desire in the same gap opened up by the effect of the signifiers in those who come to represent the Other for him, in so

⁶⁸ Jacques Lacan, 'Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power,' *Écrits*, p. 264.

far as his demand is subjected to them'.⁶⁹ In other words, the Other is interpreted as both the cause and the object of desire.

The other context that Lacan describes man's desire as the desire of the Other is where he formulates the unconscious as the discourse of the Other. Wilden argues that the nature of desire is absolute (desire for recognition) in that the subject requires the Other to recognise its desire. He concludes that, in this sense one desires what another desires and since desire is unconscious, one desires what the unconscious (the Other) desires.⁷⁰ In Lacan, the unconscious does not have any identity and is presented as a structure:

This is what I mean by my formula that the unconscious is "*discours de l'Autre*" (discourse of the Other), in which the *de* is to be understood in the sense of the Latin *de* (objective determination): *de alio in oratione* (completed by: *tua res agitur*). But we must also add that man's desire is the *désir de l'Autre* (the desire of the Other), in which the *de* provides what grammarians call the "subjective determination", namely that it is *qua* Other that he desires.⁷¹

The unconscious is recognised as the discourse of the Other. Lacan is again providing the same logic: if the unconscious is structured by language, its desire should be the desire of the Other since the Other (here the unconscious) has articulated it. In the graph of desire, desire is both of the Other and for the Other. Lemaire in her interpretation of Lacan's formulation of the subject's desire as the desire of the Other goes back to the stage of splitting where the subject confronting the Other realises its loss in the unconscious:

I think that this sentence can be interpreted as follows: the subject, articulated with language, alienates his primary unconscious desire in the signifier. But this alienated desire does nevertheless reflect the truth of his unconscious desire and does in some way satisfy it with a substitute (the fetish for example). "The desire

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Anthony Wilden, p. 189.

⁷¹ Jacques Lacan, 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious,' *Écrits*, p. 312.

of man is the desire of the Other” would thus also signify the wanderings of the true desire caught in the nets of the signifier, where it is no more than a shadow of its former self.⁷²

Lemaire points out that although the unconscious desire is alienated by language, its wanderings can still be dimly reflected in the signifier.

In Lacan, the Other is also taken as the other side of the subject. The subject comes into existence through a division and recognises its ‘self’ in facing the loss. Yet being dependent on the Other, the subject knows itself as part of the Other. In other words, since the subject is structured by the Symbolic (the Other), the Other becomes part of its existence and can not be separated from it. While the Other is seen as part of the subject, the ego created by the Imaginary is the obstruction that separates the subject from its cause: ‘That the Other should be for the subject the site of its significant cause merely motivates the reason for which no subject can be said to be its own cause. . . . The alienation resides in the division of the subject from its cause’.⁷³ Now it is clear how the subject is dominated by the Other in every layer: the other as the Symbolic, as the unconscious, as the other side of the subject and desire as the desire of the other.

From the above account, we can pursue the deviation of Lacan’s notion of the Other from the philosophical Other that Lacan raises in the article “Pour une logique de fantasm,” in *Scilicet*. In Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory, there is no clear distinction between the signifier and the signified. There is always a barrier between an object and its related concept. Words or signifiers are related and linked together in a chain called the chain of signification. The important point that should be stressed, however, is that the signifier has priority over the signified. The primacy of the signifier justifies the imposing power of language and the Symbolic order. Every part of the subject carries the mark of signification.

⁷² Anika Lemaire, pp. 170-71.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

Contrary to this view, the concept of the Other in philosophy attests to the primacy of the signified which guarantees the metaphysical status of a transcendental Other. In Plato, the signified precedes the signifier. This is so because the dynamic role of the signified presupposes the existence of a reality outside man's consciousness. This reality in Plato is transcendental. Brenkman elucidates this divergence between philosophy and psychoanalysis concerning the notion of the Other by arguing that the philosophical Other should transcend the material signifier and the philosopher's discourse in order to establish a signified without any mark of signification. This will enable the subject to dismiss the event of *Spaltung* and castration. Finally he draws the conclusion that the discourse of the philosopher should be viewed as ideological which (belonging to a particular social class) secures the illusion of his discourse for a privileged truth.⁷⁴ Having reached this point, it seems that the priority of the signified over the signifier provides the framework of the binary system of opposition in Plato's philosophy.

In my reading of Lacan's fundamental notion of the 'Other,' I distinguished between the different contexts of the 'Other' as the Symbolic, the unconscious, and the other side of the subject. At every level, the subject who is split after the *Spaltung* has to communicate or identify with an image other than itself. In the Imaginary level, the other is the alter ego; in the Symbolic, it is, generally speaking, the Name-of-the-Father or the law; in the unconscious, it is the signifier that builds up the unconscious desire. From these contexts of the notion of the 'Other', I discussed what Lacan means by formulating desire as the desire of the Other: since there is no unified subject in Lacan's theory and since the Other is the cause of the subject's desire, the Other then should be the object of the subject's desire. The notion of the 'Other' will be discussed in more detail in Part III (Chapter Ten) where I shall examine the discourse of desire in Shakespeare's poetry. Lacan's idea of the other will illuminate the state of lover in his relation to the beloved. Perceiving the lover as the subject who seeks to identify with an ideal image in his own mind establishes the state of the beloved as the

⁷⁴ John Brenkman, p. 443-44.

Other. The portrayal of her fragmented beauty and her absence proves that the beloved is merely a representative of the *objet a* on the one hand, and a narcissistic state of love in the lover on the other. The idealisation of the beloved and her immortalisation in poetry is the effort of the lover to master his own creation.

Summary

The object of this part was to examine the complexity of Lacan's theory of desire in relation to its cause as lack, its nature and distinction with love and finally its object as the other. As I explained in Chapter Four, desire is primarily characterised as lack. In other words, desire is formed out of lack. In Lacan, however, lack is formulated as two-sided: there is the external or biological lack that is caused by the advent of living being through sexual reproduction and the other is the structural (internal) lack that is formed by the exposure of the subject to language (the Symbolic order). The significance of the desire-as-lack in Lacan lies in the dynamics of loss whereby any complete primordial state of being is repudiated.

Furthermore, the nature of desire is distinct from both need and demand. It is not need since it can not be satisfied by an object outside the subject. It is different from demand as it is not a request for love and can not articulate itself through language. Desire is absolute; it can not be signified. Desire is beyond demand. It strives for the unnameable. This unrepresentational feature of desire explains the cause of it and shows that lack is unsignifiable. Therefore, desire is metonymic. This means that no object can signify it; everything is only an association to its object that is lost.

It is in these features that desire can be distinguished from love. By associating love to the realm of the ego, Lacan presents a narcissistic picture of love. To love is the want to be loved. The object of love, therefore, is close to the ideals of the ego. The subject always strives to identify in order to reinforce its ego (identity). Love,

then, becomes the agent of the ego that distances the subject from the *objet a* by replacing it with a similar image. On the contrary, desire does not replace but displaces its object. Since desire is constructed on a lack, the subject should acknowledge the essence of its desire by identifying itself with the void, that is the state of loss. The subject is formed by desire-as-lack. By denying the identity of the ego, the subject can face the dynamics of desire.

Finally, we come to Lacan's most complex phrase: 'desire is the desire of the other'. Despite the fact that the notion of 'other' appears in different contexts in Lacan, the other can simply be explained as both the cause and object of desire. Furthermore, the unconscious is structured by language (the Other). As such, the desire of the subject should be the Other. This does not mean that what causes desire can signify it by being its object since there is no such a thing as a unified subject in Lacan. The Other only represents the Symbolic order. And it is in this respect that philosophical Other can be distinguished from the psychoanalytic Other.

PART III

REPRESENTATION OF DESIRE IN SHAKESPEARE'S POETRY



The Metaphor of Procreation
Egoism and the Paradox of Sublimation
The Movement of Idealisation

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Metaphor of Procreation

Renaissance poets were exceedingly attracted by the concept of time and the theme of immortality. Time represents an important and almost central element in lyric poetry. Though Renaissance poets continued using the images and concepts of time from the classics, they presented a new perspective of time; that is, immortality. Among many famous humanists, we can refer to Ficino who had an important role in the development of classical philosophy and formulation of the doctrine of immortality. The theme of immortality along with the theme of fame dominates Renaissance poetry. This reflects certain elements in the Renaissance era that attracted so much attention to the issue of immortality. Man's dignity, secularism, and individualism, have become almost clichés in Renaissance studies. The individual's experiences and thoughts of after life became the centre of attention for Renaissance writers and scholars. As Kristeller elucidates, there is the firm belief that the personal experience of the individual writer is worth recording for the future, preserving his fame and thus prolonging his life. To a great extent, this seems to explain the fact that the widespread and prominent concern of Renaissance thinkers with the immortality of the soul was on the metaphysical level another expression of the same kind of individualism.¹

The main interest of this chapter is to analyse and disclose the theme of immortality under three layers: to trace the concept of time and immortality in love

¹ Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Concepts of Man and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972), p. 25.

lyrics before Shakespeare, to formulate the desire for procreation and its images in Shakespeare's poetry, and to deconstruct the notion of immortality in terms of Lacan's theory of lack.

The Tradition of temporality

Time is almost an inseparable element of love lyric poetry. From Latin poets to Renaissance lyricists, time served as a dominant motif that poets could not disregard. Its significance is so indisputable as the subject of love that one can even say that time formulates love. In other words, time determines the nature of love and its meaning for the lover. In the lyrics of classical antiquity, time has an exceedingly negative function as it challenges the poet's temper. Time is pictured as an evil power that destroys the formation of love. While love belongs to human nature, time is identified as a powerful destructive force beyond nature. This fatalistic feature of time is presented at a mythical level. The essential role of time acts as a counter-discourse in poetry of this era. However, later in the Latin period, the picture of time changed from a negative fatal force to a negotiable power controlled by man - what we refer to as the *carpe diem*. Ovid's *Art of Love* is a portrayal of the consummation of love despite the war of time. Time is considered as a valuable treasure or 'commodity' as Yandell puts it.² However, the poet presents different standpoints towards time and transience, as Leishman argues: 'There is first a distinction between Devouring Time (Ovid's *tempus edax rerum*) and the brief span of time (Horace's *vitae summa brevis*) allotted to human life, and there is a further clear distinction between the brevity of human life in general and the (as it were) yet briefer brevity of youth and beauty'.³ Moreover, when *carpe florem* mingles with *carpe diem* in a text, it does not necessarily follow

² Cathy Yandell, 'Carpe Diem, Poetic Immortality, and the Gendered Ideology of Time,' in *Renaissance Women Writers: French Texts/American Contexts*, Anne R. Larsen, and Colette H. Winn, eds. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), p. 115.

³ J. B. Leishman, *Themes and Variations in Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1961), p. 95.

the pleasure principle; rather it presents a permanent attitude to life: to make the best use of Time, to be in time.⁴

Classical philosophy formulated a similar conception of time as the images that poetry projected. In both Greek philosophy and literature, the principle of mutability governs time and space. Every living being is subject to time and change. And in this confusion, the poet's inner 'self' and his emotions are not exceptions to this principle. Ovid, in his *Metamorphoses*, presents ideas from Pythagoras that: 'the eternal substance of things persists and nothing utterly perishes, the appearance of things is being perpetually altered by *tempus edax rerum*'.⁵ The power of transience as a theme constructed a tradition that remains for centuries as defier of time and thus the theme of fame. Fame and the glories of people celebrated in poetry is everlasting. Their memory remains like a lapse of time in verse. The theme of fame in verse, though limited to famous people, sometimes serves as an adoration of the beauty of the beloved. Poetry becomes the gift of the lover to his beloved to immortalise her beauty and thereby his own love. In fact, the motif of *carpe diem* is the continuation of the theme of fame. The Latin poet portrays the brevity of life and rationalises it as a philosopher does and advises his beloved that her reticence will end in death unless she responds to his love.

Later with Petrarch, time is still preserved as the enemy of love, yet the quality of time undergoes a profound change; it loses the dominant role it occupied against the lover/beloved. Time is neither the subject nor the object of poetry any more. Though the transient power of time destroys 'the mightiest monuments of stones,' it affects the emotions and sensations of the poet. Therefore, it is not simply the fatalistic view of the beloved's mortality that concerns the poet but his love. And this introduces a new stage in the development of love lyrics that analyses the emotions of the subject (poet).

⁴ Ibid., pp. 96-100.

⁵ J. B. Leishman, p. 39.

In the poetry of Dante and Petrarch, time reveals some shades of subjectivity. In other words, time becomes subjective, an element of the sublime that is capable of changing the lover. The poet is affected by the influence of time which leads him to question the nature and object of love. However, this process of questioning does not go beyond the emotional level. The emotional tensions of love indicate the poet's analysis of his 'self' affected by love. Accordingly, time becomes as integral to the poet as the source of love, that is the beloved. It elevates the poet's/ lover's emotions.

Heather Dubrow in her articulate analysis of English Petrarchism recognises atemporality and subjectivity as two distinct characteristics of the lyric. Lyric poetry, she maintains, is timeless, as the poet does not ponder upon an event or the narration of its sequence. The lyric poet, rather, pursues his thoughts and emotions. Accordingly, the poetry of Petrarch introduces a mode of time which alludes to the future; a time that signifies uncertainty, fear, and helplessness. The speaker is in constant state of 'futuristic wish' but on the other side of the clash hopelessness proceeds. As Dubrow explains, presence is repeatedly promised, and then denied.⁶

The feature of atemporality in Petrarch's poetry gives him the freedom in narration; first, he speaks of his beloved, next of his emotions, and later of sublimation. These shifts of time that mingle subjectivity with atemporality imply a spatial movement:

narrativity both describes and enables the movement from earthly to heavenly love. It is precisely the ability to contrast *then* and *now* that permits him to contrast *here*, the world of secular love that at its best encourages him to seek the divine, and *there*, the world of heavenly love. And it is the ability to tell a story that synecdochically represents the possibility of spiritual change and growth.⁷

Although the element of movement and narrativity explains the spiritual change and the process of sublimation in the lover, his constant struggles to overcome the state of

⁶ Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and Its Counterdiscourses* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 19, 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

uncertainty cause a linearity in the pattern of now and then. As Roland Greene states, the temporal mode in Petrarch establishes the then/now pattern which is essential to his poetry, however, 'that pattern is blurred by the admission that in the psyche of the speaker, *then* and *now* collide and elide'.⁸ Some critics associate the calendrical patterns and features of narrativity with lyric, as they indicate movement. Movement is considered as a potential part of narrativity, as the movement towards God in Petrarch: 'For that movement depends on distinguishing a past of loving Laura, a present of moving towards God, and a future of achieving spiritual peace'.⁹ The contrast between now and then in Shakespeare's poetry, as I shall explain later, becomes more distinct and deeper. The present in Shakespeare's imagery implies temporality and death while the future signifies immortality through procreation.

The imagery of time in Shakespeare's poetry

The influence of Petrarch upon Shakespeare goes beyond the mere imitation of a few images of time. His effect, in fact, is not limited to the adaptation of some rhetorical devices or even the structure of the sonnet. Petrarch introduced the narrative element in lyric and changed the objective mode of time to a personal perspective as his poetry sometimes describes his emotions on love like a vision. Shakespeare wrote most of his poems in the late sixteenth century at a time when the vogue of Petrarchism was diminishing. This fact qualifies the extent of Petrarch's influence on Shakespeare. Shakespeare's poetry, not very different from his plays, illuminates the most abstract ideas into the highly concrete framework of lyric. The image of time pervades Shakespeare's poetry as he contemplates the issues of love and death. The diversity of the images of time extends from cruel and brutish descriptions where time is personified as the agent of death to successive images of nature reflecting the sequence of time. Though Petrarch is to the same extent obsessed with time, there are

⁸ Roland Greene, *Post-Petrarchism: Origins and Innovations of the Western Lyric Sequence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-32.

some elements in the poetry of Shakespeare that makes it unique and that is the relation he makes between time, love and the subject (poet). This is what defines the mode of time as subjective in his poetry. Shakespeare does not attempt to defy time's 'ravages' by utilising it as Ovid does. He never persuades his beloved to follow his desires to conquer time. One of the peculiar features of his poetry is that the subject connects himself with the beloved not through the beloved's feelings but through his own. The vast changes of the lover's sensations - his sense of devotion that at times turns to despair and loneliness, his feelings of deception or betrayal finding peace in forgiveness - all form his vision and conception of love. The beloved is merely absent from all these discourses of love.

Shakespeare implies the passage of time through images of nature; nevertheless, the word 'time' is used fifty-seven times in the whole *Sonnets* which fortifies the significant role of time as an antagonist. The addressing of time and its personification enables him to approach his subject more analytically. Furthermore, the personification of time creates a dramatic situation. Time is a natural phenomenon whose law governs both nature and humanity. Images such as 'bloody tyrant, time' (16.2), 'never-resting time' (5.5), 'time's scythe' (12.13), 'Devouring time' (19.1), 'swift-footed' (19.6), 'sluttish time' (55.4), 'time's spoils' (100.12), 'time decays' (65.8), 'time's pencil' (16.10), 'Time will come and take my love away' (64.12), 'this most balmy time' (107.9), 'reckoning time' (115.5), 'fools of time' (124.13), 'May time disgrace, and wretched minutes kill' (126.8), invite a war against its cruelties of change and decay that bring destruction and death.¹⁰ Time is not a valuable commodity for compensation of our youth and beauty as the theme of *carpe diem* concedes. It is an enemy and the poet schematises, though subjectively, different strategies to prevent its course. Time is a harsh necessity, as Grivelet suggests.¹¹ And Shakespeare visualises the concept of time to achieve the powerful impact of time

¹⁰ All quotations cited are from Katherine Duncan-Jones' edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1998). The number of lines follows the reference to the sonnet.

¹¹ Michel Grivelet, 'Shakespeare's "War with Time": The Sonnets and "Richard II"', *Shakespeare Survey* 23 (1970), p. 69.

through these images. Compared with the other poems, the image of time in the *Sonnets* is presented contentiously and with more aggression since the effects of death and mortality are as is suggested by the words: grave, famine, tomb, wrinkles, worms, wane, plagues, dearths, and decay. Gloomy images of deterioration abound in nature: the violet past its prime, lofty trees barren of leaves, stormy gusts of winter's day, frost and lustrous leaves, sullied night, winter's ragged hand, and a house fallen to decay challenge mortal beauty of his love with the images of feeble age, forty winters besieging his brow, his deep-sunken eye, his beauty oversnowed and bareness, his sable curls silvered with white; everything barrenly perishing by the barren rage of death's eternal cold, issueless and vaunt in youthful sap.

Thus, time determines the subject's conception of love. In other words, images of time determine the relation between the subject and its love. Shakespeare's attitude towards time is highly analytical. To invent the analytical mode in the structure of lyric is something that Shakespeare could not have maintained without the subjective features of Petrarchism. Through his analysis of time, we come to know Shakespeare's conception of love. Shakespeare does not ponder his love as much as he analyses the character of his beloved and his concern with her/his life. As such, if he describes the beauty of the beloved (as it does not often happen in the Petrarchean sense) he merely does so to provide a pretext to warn her/him against death with a high tone of reasoning. The beauty of the beloved does not provoke his love to the extent of a ceremonial courtship as Petrarch does. Shakespeare's analysis of the beloved's character is meant to encourage her/him to abandon self-love in favour of a true sense of love. I shall discuss this paradox in the next chapter as a feature that entails a duality in the love poetry of Shakespeare.

The language and rhetorical devices employed in the poems emphasise Shakespeare's analytic attitude concerning the idea of time. Throughout the *Sonnets*, the use of conjunctives is meant to form a single thought that produces an argument. The speaker often starts with connectives such as if, as, while, when, thus, how: 'If the dull substance of my flesh were thought' (44.1), 'When I consider everything that

grows' (15.1), 'Whilst I alone did call upon thy aid' (79.1), 'As a decrepit father takes delight' (37.1), 'Thus can my love excuse the slow offence' (51.1). However, most of the arguments occur in the concluding couplets of the sonnets. After preparing his beloved with his argument about the ravages of time and sinful nature of the self that destroys itself, the poet, in the last couplet, suddenly concludes with an advisable tone that the youth should perpetuate his 'self' to pay his debt to nature; or the poet ends the sonnet with the power of his verse that can immortalise the beauty of his beloved despite the mortal forces of nature. In other words, the analytical attitude of Shakespeare necessitates a conclusive part usually in the concluding couplets so that the poet can forcefully decipher his fear of losing his love. Therefore, time as a metaphysical force, something that stands against his love becomes a preoccupation for Shakespeare. In his portrayal of time, the poet questions the justice of a power which mixes beauty with impurity and sends time as its agent to fulfil that purpose. Whether we interpret time in terms of Platonism or regard it as a dominant motif continuing the tradition of love poetry, time yields a conflict over the theme of love. To the course of mortality, Shakespeare's poetry offers immortality to the beloved in some form either in procreation, in his verse or even by the rival as in Sonnet 123.

Though the love poetry of Shakespeare becomes at moments very subjective as it explores the lover's thoughts or emotions, the conception of time is not fragmented. The sequence and course of time are linear in his poems. There is always a beginning and an end to every object: 'Aristotle had conceived of time as a succession of instances based on the physical principle of movement, where each instant is the end of the before and the beginning of the after, where events follow each other without reference to past or future'.¹² Time helps things to flourish; it develops and carries them to the stage of death: Time makes 'our minutes hasten to their end' (60.2), causes 'the brave day sunk in hideous night' (12.2), 'leads summer on / To hideous winter' (5.5-6), 'December's bareness' (97.4) and 'beauteous springs to yellow autumn turned' (104.5). As Wilson Knight maintains, 'time' normally means

¹² Cathy Yandell, p. 115.

'sequential time'.¹³ The sequence of time is not only signified by the passage of time in hours, days, months and seasons but also in the objects of nature: the violet past its prime (12.3), lofty trees that are barren of leaves (12.5) and the waves towards the pebbled shore (60.1).

Furthermore, the obsession with temporality is not limited to sequential time and its course. Temporality, as an obstacle to the changeless state of beings, takes a spatial form as well; temporality is non-existence. Shakespeare reflects this course of deterioration not just by the description of time with months and seasons but with spatial objects being destroyed; in other words, he describes not only with 'when' but with 'where': 'Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes, shall out-live this powerful rime' (55.1-2). Lofty towers, brass, stone, earth, boundless sea and rocks all crushed and vanished (64), (65). What these variable images of time, that dominate the poems, imply is the portrayal of a natural phenomenon that is fatal and destructive. The power and the influence of this fatalistic power causes a deep impression on the poet which consequently affects his relationship with the beloved. The power of time provokes both fear and anger in the subject to defy its authority. The death of the beloved and the deterioration of his youth and beauty divide his concern with love and time.

This movement of the lover from death to immortality establishes an opposition between time and eternity. The poet begins with the cruel images of the decay of beauty, next advises his beloved to regenerate himself, or rather his beauty, which leads him to the stage of immortality. The structure of the movement, here, is from the absence of beauty towards its eternal presence. The opposition between time and eternity becomes more important when the poet-lover involves the beloved. The beloved's conception of purity and chastity is considered as self-love. By submitting herself/himself to time, s/he is, in fact, glorifying it instead of eternal love just as Narcissus did. The narrative, as John Brenkman recognises in Socrates' discourse in

¹³ G. Wilson Knight, 'Time and Eternity,' in *Discussions of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Barbara Herrnstein, ed. (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1964), p. 58.

the *Symposium*, breaks the two sides of the dialectic joining death and reproduction into separate moments in a temporal sequence.¹⁴ The linearity of time in Shakespeare characterises the oppositional structure of life and death. The linearity of such movement from temporality (of the past) to an eternal state (of the future), though retaining an oppositional structure, can be linked to Platonic and Christian views of time. The element of recurrence, that formed the character of Greek philosophy, signified a cyclical movement of time. As Patrides maintains, in the Graeco-Roman tradition, temporality was viewed as the meaningless cycles of flux and reflux; like the legendary phoenix, everything dies periodically in order to revive again.¹⁵ Contrary to this view, are the Christian and Platonic views of time. In Plato, time is the moving image of eternity. Furthermore, past and future are considered as the created species of time, that we wrongly refer to as the eternal essence, wherein the element of change or rather temporality of our 'being' is located.¹⁶ In Christianity also, there is a cosmic force, not an impersonal abstract but a divine wisdom, that interferes and directs human life. Patrides explains the Christian view of time and therefore history in terms of a ladder (Jacob's ladder) that ascends by degrees towards the Eternal City with the ever-presence of Christ in every step and the ladder itself.¹⁷ In this view, neither the past nor the future are real but only the eternal presence of the divine. There is a direction in this flux of time from temporality towards immortality. Augustine identified eternity with the present.¹⁸

As a transfiguration of Christian and Platonic time, the linearity of time in Shakespeare's poetry forms the state of desire. Though the fear of time and the death of love personified in the beloved pervade his poetry, the lover can not bestow any pure form of life to his beloved. The immortality that he offers is a rebirth through regeneration that only separates it from death. Death still inhabits the life of the

¹⁴ John Brenkman, p. 423.

¹⁵ C. A. Patrides, *The Grand Design of God: The Literary Form of the Christian View of History* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 9.

¹⁶ Frederick Turner, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Time: Moral and Philosophical Themes in Some Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 176.

¹⁷ C. A. Patrides, p. 9.

¹⁸ Frederick Turner, p. 180.

beloved as she is merely an other, a sexed being. The beloved is merely an objectified source of desire; it is not a pure life devoid of human signification. She is the erotic manifestation of his desire. The image of reproduction is merely the conjoining point of life and death. It already carries the mark of death when the lover in the second sequence of the *Sonnets* goes through moments of transformation, and when the beloved can not represent the pure state of life and what he is yearning for, or at the end of the other poems where the death of the beloved represents the impossibility of the pure state of desire in love. In Shakespeare's poetry, the emphasis is on procreation as a dominant image rather than on the immortality or the power of his verse. The process of procreation of the beloved in verse gives the lover the power to establish his identity. This means that the emphasis on procreation signifies the eternalisation of the present moment. The metaphor of reproduction precedes immortality in the linearity of the movement of ascension. The act of procreation not only cherishes the eternal present but also takes place in the present moment. Therefore, it is neither the past nor the future but the eternal present. We can even go further than this by saying that the present can be regarded as the delayed future when the lover-poet attempts to prolong the eternal moment of gaze. I shall explain more on this point in Chapter Ten.

Time is pure absence as it destroys everything. What remains for the lover is to desire the presence of love in the absence of time. In the sequential order of time, past is absence and future is the absence to come. It is only the 'to be,' the present, that gives things the chance for existence. This eternal state of being is expressed in the simple present tense in his poetry. Referring to what George Wright describes as the 'lyric present,' Heather Dubrow explains that lyric has traditionally been seen as an unmediated expression of the subjective and of subjectivity itself. Furthermore, it is frequently associated with the absence of a specific time and place while, as many critics would agree, narrative is generally structured in a specific time and place.¹⁹ While the future in Petrarch is described by the fear of death and hopelessness, the

¹⁹ Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, p. 28.

future in Shakespeare is immortality. The subjective mode of time and the analytical attitude of Shakespeare, to the same extent, create an eternal presence. That is how time is destructive to beauty as it destroys the poet's source of inspiration. However, as the beauty of the beloved merely represents the objectification of his desires, time sometimes interferes with the inner feelings of the lover-poet. This changes the objective mode of time as a personified metaphysical force to a subjective internal struggle. In the subjective mode, the lover constantly tries to defeat the feelings of illusion, deceit and despair intermixed with his desire for love and seeks the ever present 'to be'. Jackson Barry's analysis of Sonnet 129 is an attempt to read the poem as transcending the conventional notion of (Renaissance) mutability. Concentrating his analysis on the structure and language of the sonnet, he explains that the language of action (of lust) throughout the poem reflects all the faces of desire in constant interplay. The present action is one of contemplation; the main verb in the quatrains is 'to be'.²⁰

The negative and destructive power of time that leads to the arguments on procreation in the *Sonnets* (explained above) are adopted in *Venus and Adonis* too. Continuing the line of argument in the *Sonnets*, the lover in *Venus and Adonis* encourages her beloved to make use of time: 'Make use of time, let not advantage slip; / Beauty within itself should not be wasted. / Fair flowers that are not gather'd in their prime / Rot, and consume themselves in little time' (VA. 129) or complimenting his beauty warns him of the effects of death: 'O never let their crimson liveries wear; / And as they last, their verdour still endure, / To drive infection from the dangerous year, / That the star-gazers, having writ on death, / May say the plague is banished by thy breath' (VA. 506-10).²¹ As in the *Sonnets*, the images of time illustrated by Venus are meant to exemplify the theme of procreation on the one hand, and contest the

²⁰ Jackson G. Barry, ' "Had, Having and in Quest to Have, Extreme" : Shakespeare's Rhetoric of Time in Sonnet 129,' pp. 7-8.

²¹ All quotations of Shakespeare's poems are from John Roe's edition: *The Poems: Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Lucrece, The Phoenix and the Turtle, The Passionate Pilgrim, A Lover's Complaint, The New Cambridge Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

theme of self-love of the youth on the other. As such, only by following the lover's advice, the beloved can be immortalised by generating his beauty.

Apart from time, the image of the boar in *Venus and Adonis* is a very strong destructive image that occurs towards the end of the poem. The boar may represent time as it not only destroys the beauty of the beloved but also fights him to death. Venus addresses the boar in the same aggressive manner as the poet of the *Sonnets* threatens time: 'But this foul, grim, and urchin-snouted boar, / Whose downward eye still looketh for a grave, / Ne'er saw the beauteous livery that he wore' (VA 1105-7). In the passage where Venus warns Adonis of the fatal confrontation with the boar, the description reminds one of the fatal effects of time upon beauty in the *Sonnets*. Both time and the boar do not appreciate the beauty that the lover notices:

'Alas, he naught esteems that face of thine,
To which love's eyes pays tributary gazes;
Nor thy soft hands, sweet lips and crystal eyne,
Whose full perfection all the world amazes;
But having thee at vantage - wondrous deard!-
Would root these beauties as he roots the mead. (VA 631-36)

By using the boar instead of time as the mortal power who mutilates beauty, Shakespeare has used a more objectified force than the personified time which clearly suggests killing (a more powerful image than death by time). Furthermore, death is personified to fortify the effects of fear. There is a passage, very similar to the role of death in *The Rape of Lucrece*, where Venus exclaims on death in order to relieve herself of despair and sorrow as if she is mourning for herself: 'Dost thou drink tears that thou provok'st such weeping? / What may a heavy groan advantage thee? / Why hast thou cast into eternal sleeping / Those eyes that taught all other eyes to see' (VA. 949-52). Moreover the image of time serves as a mediator that relates death and beauty together. There is a passage in *Venus and Adonis* where Venus arguing with Adonis tells him of Cynthia who for shame obscures her silver shine because of the

'forging nature'. Venus tells him of the secret of nature that mingles beauty with infirmities and by this foresees his death:

'As burning fevers, agues pale and faint,
Life-poisoning pestilence, and frenzies wood,
The marrow-eating sickness whose attaint
Disorder breeds by heating of the blood.
Surfeits, imposthumes, grief, and damned despair,
Swear nature's death for framing thee so fair.
'And not the least of all these maladies
But in one minute's fight brings beauty under;
Both favour, savour, hue, and qualities,
Whereat th' impartial gazer late did wonder,
'Are on the sudden wasted, thawed, and done,
As mountain snow melts with the midday sun. (VA. 739-50)

And towards the end of the poem when Adonis is killed by the savage power of the boar, Venus mourns his death and through mourning reminds us once again of the nature of her love and the function of his beauty in relation to his love. Adonis was the symbol of beauty and thereby with his death 'Beauty' dies or rather true beauty dies as he represented the truth of love in the lover's heart: 'For he being dead, with him is beauty slain, / And beauty dead, black chaos comes again' (VA. 1019-20), 'The flowers are sweet, their colours fresh and trim, / But true sweet beauty lived and died with him' (VA. 1079-80).

In the other poems of Shakespeare, the image of time is not used specifically in relation to the theme of procreation as it is in the *Sonnets*. Though the fear of time implies the death of the beloved, the poet does not engage his line of argument with the theme of procreation. Accordingly the image of time is directly connected to the beloved's beauty rather than the idea of immortality. One of the reasons for this shift in the structure of his argument seems to be a change in the point of view of these poems. That is, sometimes the poem is written from the point of view of the lover while at other times the beloved is the speaker of the poem. Accordingly, it is only

through the lover's voice that time is opposed to immortality and therefore to the idea of procreation. Contrary to the *Sonnets* and *Venus and Adonis*, the image of time is not related to procreation in *A Lover's Complaint*. Through the maid's mourning (complaints), the image of time is related to her beauty. Here beauty is described as a carcass; it is already dead. Though some traces of beauty might be observable, age has replaced youth: 'The carcass of a beauty spent and done: / Time had not scythèd all that youth begun, / Nor youth all quit, but spite of heaven's fell rage / Some beauty peeped through lattice of seared age' (11-14). We can observe the same conception of time in *The Rape of Lucrece*. The poem begins with an image that describes the death of beauty without referring to the theme of procreation. The image of death is treated on a broader ground that not only implies the mortal function of beauty with a sarcastic tone but also serves as a foreshadowing of the death of Lucrece at the end of the poem:

O happiness enjoyed but of a few,
And if possessed, as soon decayed and done
As is the morning silver melting dew
Against the golden splendour of the sun:
An expired date cancelled ere well begun.
Honour and beauty, in the owner's arms,
Are weakly fortified from a world of harms. (RL. 22-28)

Similar to passages in the *Sonnets*, time is here personified and treated with utmost insult and threat. The description of time is accompanied by two other forces, Night and Opportunity, who carry out Time's orders. However, what makes these passages more distinct from other poems is that Lucrece not only seeks death with the help of time but also she conceives of time to be guilty of her death because of the crime that he caused. Here again, presenting time through the beloved's viewpoint, time is related not to the procreation but to the death of beauty. Time is called the watchman of men's woes, snaring virtue and carrier of sin:

'Misshapen Time, copesmate of ugly Night,
Swift subtle post, carrier of grisly care,
Eater of youth, false slave to false delight,
Base watch of woes, sin's pack-horse, virtue's snare;
Thou nursest all, and murd'rest all that are:
O hear me then, injurious shifting Time,
Be guilty of my death, since of my crime. (RL. 925-31)

She challenges time's servants Night and Opportunity and calls them guilty of murder, theft, perjury, subornation, treason, forgery, incest and finally guilty of her misfortune and helping her enemy (876-924). Later she questions time about its course of action and advises time of an opposite direction it could take by showing a kind face to the miserable and amending its mischievous actions. These thoughts relieve her and encourage her to ask time to curse the evil and keep the stain laid upon him (925-1001). Towards the end of the poem in the scene of painting, again she observes time's hand on despairing Hecuba whose beauty was disguised with wrinkles and whose blue blood changed to black in every vein, which recalls for us the description of the maid in *A Lover's Complaint*:

In her the painter had anatomised
Time's ruin, beauty's wrack, and grim care's reign:
Her cheeks with chops and wrinkles were disguised;
Of what she was no semblance did remain.
Her blue blood changed to black in every vein,
Wanting the spring that those shrunk pipes had fed,
Showed life imprisoned in a body dead. (RL. 1450-56)

Like the boar who is the agent of time in *Venus and Adonis*, Tarquin might be taken as the agent who destroys beauty and stands against purity (540-553). There is a passage where Tarquin confesses his motives for evil action, that is Lucrece's beauty. This reveals the mortal function of beauty once again in the poem: 'Under that colour am I come to scale / Thy never-conquered fort. The fault is thine, / For those thine eyes betray thee unto mine. . . . Thy beauty hath ensnared thee to this night' (481-85).

There is impurity in beauty which one can not save; it is part of the beauty. And finally, we hear a pleading voice addressing time to reconsider its course of action by saving the feeble souls and destroying the strong: 'O time, cease thou thy course and last no longer, / If they surcease to be that should survive. / Shall rotten death make conquest of the stronger, / And leave the falt'ring feeble souls alive' (*RL*. 1765-68). Therefore, despite the negative and destructive picture of time, the movement of time for the lover is described differently from that of the beloved. In the lover's arguments, time is directed toward immortality through the procreative power of beauty. On the contrary, for the beloved being victimised, time is not only death of beauty but also death of identity. By the mutilation of beauty and virtue, as the symbolic essence of the beloved, she is losing her identity.

Procreation as the mark of loss

Against the powerful force of time and the course of death and decay, the lover prompts his beloved to act. The lover promises to immortalise his beloved against any force that would obstruct the memory of her/him. Such a persuasive tone that sometimes even goes beyond a convincing gesture - except in the *Sonnets* where the beloved is absent and all the lover's struggles seem internal - dominates the whole speech of the lover to the extent that the idealisation of his beloved becomes subordinate in the poem. In fact, the immortality of his beloved on the condition that s/he returns his love affects the love and identity of the lover. The general line of the lover's argument is to persuade his beloved to regenerate himself against time. The images of procreation recur constantly in the *Sonnets* and the other poems of Shakespeare. One of the images of procreation that presents the structure of the lover's attitude and the way he relates the ideas of death, time and beauty to procreation and immortality of the beloved occurs in *Venus and Adonis*. I will quote this passage in full, as the structure of this argument recurs in the other poems too:

'Torches are made to light, jewels to wear,

Dainties to taste, fresh beauty for the use,
Herbs for their smell, and sappy plants to bear:
Things growing to themselves are growth's abuse.
Seeds spring from seeds, and beauty breedeth beauty;
Thou wast begot, to get it is thy duty.
'Upon the earth's increase why shouldst thou feed,
Unless the earth with thy increase be fed?
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.' (VA. 163-74)

The lover begins his argument with a stoic notion of beauty. Here the law of nature determines its course and confines it to the repetitive cycles of regeneration. Beauty is not the sign of eternity; it is ephemeral. Nothing is perfect in nature. As such, beauty has to regenerate its copies to survive. And this is the duty of the beloved who 'was begot' himself. This powerful conviction of the lover invites the beloved's submission: to grow with blessing and to fall with gratefulness. In this manner, therefore, his beloved will be immortalised.

In *A Lover's Complaint*, the poet follows the same argument: nothing is ours; not only the beauty but our love and affections do not belong to us. Everything is temporarily bestowed and will be taken away: '... what labour is't to leave / The thing we have not, mast'ring what not strives, / Paling the place which did no form receive,' (239-41). Nothing can act against the destiny that Nature has appointed for us; we can not save or store anything for ourselves. The lover in *A Lover's Complaint* uses the same logic as Venus (in *Venus and Adonis*) and finally sanctifying his desire, the lover dedicates his affections to the beloved who is the source of his life and death in the temple of love:

' "Lo, all these trophies of affections hot,
Of pensived and subdued desires the tender,
Nature hath charged me that I hoard them not,
But yield them up where I myself must render:

That is, to you, my origin and end;
For these, of force, must your oblations be,
Since I their altar, you enpatron me. (*LC*. 218-24)

The *Sonnets* presents the theme of procreation with a more variant imagery which appears in the first eighteenth sonnets. The desire to regenerate as the only way to defy time is put in the first line of sonnet 1: 'From fairest creatures we desire increase, / That thereby beauty's rose might never die' (1.1-2). The lover constantly compares the temporality of his beloved's beauty to the course of beauty in nature, that is growth and decay. Immortality ensures the presence of love and beauty in the absence of time. This eternal state of being can only be sought by what the poet calls 'increase' (11.5). The poet encourages his beloved to increase his 'self' by reproduction. Through reproduction, his substance (self) can live and be present eternally; and that is how he can save the only copy of his self (11). It is the nature's law that 'gives nothing, but doth lend' (4.3), and the beloved should show her sense of gratitude to this generosity of nature. The poet's tone is quite often dismissive towards the beloved as he is characterised as a deluded self-centred youth who has fallen in love with his own image: 'But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes, / Feed'st thy lights flame with self-substantial fuel' (1.5-6). The authoritative voice of the poet reaches its climax when he considers his beloved's gestures as sin. To act against the lover's advice is truly a sinful act as the poet implies in sonnet 3: 'Or who is he so fond will be the tomb / Of his self-love, to stop posterity' (3.7-8). In fact, by not regenerating his image, the beloved rather than time carries the weapon of murder: 'But beauty's waste hath in the world an end, / And kept unused the user so destroys it: / No love toward others in that blossom sits / That on himself such murd'rous shame commits' (9.11-14). The idea that beauty should serve a purpose rather than sanctifying its own death in sonnet 4 reminds us of the lover's argument in *A Lover's Complaint*: 'Thy unused beauty must be tombed with thee, / Which used, lives th'executor to be' (4.13-4). The use of beauty is not 'forbidden usury' (6.5) in the lover's view. That brings the compelling voice of the lover to ask for reproduction for

the sake of the lover: 'Make thee another self for love of me, / That beauty still may live in thine or thee' (10.13-14). Even the lover goes further by seeing his beloved's beauty as a gift of nature: 'She carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby / Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy die' (11.13-14). According to the lover, procreation means giving while self-love is death: 'Against this coming end you should prepare, / And your sweet semblance to some other give' (13.3-4).

There are some other images that the poet uses for the theme of reproduction such as the image of husbandry and harmony in the strings of music in sonnet 8 or the image of distillation that stands as a metaphor for procreation: 'But flowers distilled, though they with winter meet, / Leese but their show; their substance still lives sweet' (5.13-14). As James Winny explains, this image provides 'an equally potent means of representing the perpetuation of personal essence through a child'.²² In sonnet 54, the poet compares the power of his verse to that of nature where his verse can distil the truth and essence of his love just like the sweet odours of roses: 'And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth; / When that shall vade, by verse distils your truth' (54.13-14).

What we discover in these images of procreation is the effortless urge of the lover to his beloved to beget himself. The lover finds regeneration to be a cosmic force, a law in nature that attracts every living being towards itself. The rejection of such wisdom ends in death. The function of procreation in these poems is the immortalisation of the beloved. However, is immortality the only function of this dominant image? How can we interpret the desire of the subject for propagation as an image representing immortality? Can we interpret the repetitive theme of increase as metaphorical? Does the poet use this image as a metaphor displaying human participation in divinity or is it merely a realistic picture presenting the process of life in nature? Is the everlasting presence of the beloved by means of procreation (copulation) an alternative to death in the chain of birth-rebirth? In fact, the image of

²² James Winny, *The Master-Mistress: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1968), pp. 155-56.

procreation forms an integral element of Shakespeare's poetry that defines the lover's discourse of desire. Shakespeare's response to the everlasting destructive force of time is what Plato found in the *Symposium* as the only solution to the process of mutability in nature: reproduction. The generation of beauty stands as the synthesis of the process of birth and death. And this cosmic force of nature is represented as a sacred gift in Shakespeare that should be cherished. But whose identity is the procreation image retaining? Is the procreation image in favour of the immortality of the lover or the beloved? These are the questions that I address in this part of the chapter.

In this connection, I shall refer back to the idea of Plato's *eros* and the function of procreation as this comparison will throw some light on my analysis. The collection of procreation images in Plato clarifies both the metaphorical function of the images and their etymological roots. James Edie argues that the word *conception* serves as a metaphor in the dialectics of Plato.²³ We might say that the lover-philosopher potentially has the knowledge of ideas but to perceive them he needs to beget them through hard labour and effort. This means that he can not form them on his own; in every level conception needs another body or soul. Therefore, in the *Symposium*, Plato extends the begetting of beauty through beautiful bodies to the begetting of the knowledge of ideas through beautiful souls and uses procreation in the beautiful as a metaphor. As James Edie maintains, pregnancy of the soul is not the result of remembering but it is through the active confrontation of two intellects that beauty in its highest level (virtue) is conceived: the necessity of impregnation in order to conceive is even more stressed in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* though here the fruit of dialectical intercourse is virtue, the good, or spiritual beauty which is simply an other way of saying 'true knowledge' in Plato's sense. In the *Republic*, Plato also applies the metaphor to the knowledge of reality where the soul approaches and

²³ James Edie contrasts between the two terms *idea* and *concept* and maintains that the former comes from the word for sight while the latter is something produced by effort and requires the assistance of another, if not for its creation, at least for its production. In fact, he says, ideas are the eternal, subsistent objects of thought (James M. Edie, 'Expression and Metaphor,' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 23 (1963), p. 554).

marries being and through this union it 'begets' knowledge.²⁴ Furthermore, in many ancient languages even the word for *knowing* is also used for the most intimate personal relationships; in knowledge we are 'together with' what we know. However, in the case of the conception image, we are dealing not with etymology but with metaphor. In Plato's technical philosophical vocabulary the term '*koinonia*' was used for any conception whether through sensation or intellectual intuition. The actual word for conception, '*kyein*' though used in the relevant passages where this metaphor is developed, never became in Greek, as it did in Latin and in our language, a technical philosophical term and this indicates why the physical imagery should be taken as metaphorical.²⁵

The expression of 'copulation' is also used in Renaissance treatises where the direct relation of human intellect and desire with the divine beauty is discussed. As I explained in Part I, the definition of *eros* in Plato is logocentric as the ultimate object of *eros* is not beauty but its knowledge. The everlasting possession of beauty does not imply an immortal state for the lover. *Eros*, rather, is a desire to possess the knowledge of beauty. Plato's *eros* is the love of wisdom. In most Renaissance treatises, love and knowledge are so much interrelated that one can hardly discern which necessitates or precedes the other. God is the supreme source of wisdom. The expressions 'copulation' and 'copulative knowledge' mean

the union of the human mind with God. Here more than ever knowledge and love are in intimate relation to each other. . . . Strong love and desire, say Leone, cause the intellect to lose itself in contemplation and to rise, enlightened by divine grace, to a superhuman knowledge and union with God.²⁶

The point I am emphasising on the usage of the word 'copulation' for knowledge is to highlight the similarity between, what Diotima considers, the act of begetting in beauty as the object of *eros* and copulative knowledge. In both, it is through the

²⁴ James M. Edie, pp. 555-56.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 552, 554.

²⁶ John Charles Nelson, *Renaissance Theory of Love: The Context of Giordano Bruno's Eroici furori* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 176.

confrontation with the beauty objectified in another that the knowledge of beauty can be produced. The usage of the term in Renaissance literature implies that the contemplation of divine beauty is achieved through copulation between minds: 'Copulative knowledge is intermediate only between angelic and human intelligence'.²⁷ Such a definition of copulative knowledge is very close to the demonic role of *eros* in Plato where love is a mediator between the human and the divine.

The image of procreation potentially enables the lover to immortalise himself through the beloved. The beloved is a means to immortalise the lover's essence through regenerating his image. Thus, love becomes a medium in the structure of the poem. By relating beauty to death, the lover extends his contemplation of beauty to the knowledge of love which paves the way for his ascension. The metaphorical function of the image of conception finds its way easily in Shakespeare's motif of procreation. The lover's persuasion of the beloved to perpetuate his beauty by begetting becomes metaphorical if we dismiss the heterosexual role of the beloved. His beauty is more than merely physical beauty and the lover's emotions become an intellectual way of educating the beloved. In other words, the procreation of the beloved by the lover and the change of gender roles in Shakespeare facilitates the metaphorical interpretation of the image. Plass, in his analysis of the image of pregnancy in Plato's *Symposium*, discusses the close link between the lover's dominant image of pregnancy and philosophic *Eros* and interprets the image as a doubly transferred epithet wherein 'pregnancy' is not only shifted from female to male but its sense is also shifted from "carry a child" toward "be full of desire to father a child".²⁸ According to Plass, the immemorial crisis of human birth in Plato conveys the crisis of philosophic *eros* where sexual language easily takes on the appearance of metaphor. Plato is 'sliding' not only from the physical to the intellectual sphere but also from youth to man and from pregnancy to impregnation. The main distinction here lies between the intellectual and physical rather than the biological

²⁷ John Charles Nelson, p. 275.

²⁸ Paul C. Plass, 'Plato's "Pregnant" Lover,' *Symbolae Osloenses* 53 (1978), p. 47.

differences. Therefore, the language of biological reproduction can be caught up in the language of intellectual reproduction and Plato uses this image to describe the experience of the lover, who is his chief concern.²⁹ The process of the immortalisation of the beloved is Shakespeare's main concern through which he can form his object of desire rather than describing the physical beauty of the beloved. This gives him the privileged position of the lover as the creator of the beloved in terms of the intellectual reproduction.

In the *Symposium*, the link between sexuality and death, Brenkman maintains, becomes more decisive when Diotima proceeds to distinguish the procreation of the soul from the procreation of the body. The mortal offspring (children) that the lover was seeking for the sake of immortality are replaced by a spiritual offspring. Spiritual fatherhood entails not only a change in the nature of the offspring, wisdom instead of children, but also in the nature of the beloved, who is no longer a woman but a young man to be educated by the philosopher-lover. The beloved, however, is not strictly parallel to the woman in sexual reproduction in that he is not designated as the 'mother' of the wisdom and discourse that his education produces; he is not given the role of procreation either. The philosopher-lover himself takes on the attributes of maternity as well as paternity; while his ambitions motivate him to beget in beauty rather than ugliness, he is thereby 'delivered of the burden he has labored under all these years' (209 c). In the shift from bodily to spiritual procreation, the role of the body is not excluded altogether. Diotima makes this clear in her description of the ascent where the philosopher-lover starts his first step in the journey with the love of a beautiful body 'so that his passion may give life to noble discourse' (210 a). What the shift from the material to the spiritual has excluded is not the body but the *maternal* body. Not only has the feminine body been replaced by the masculine body of the beloved but also maternity has been absorbed into the spiritual paternity of the philosopher-lover. Finally Brenkman concludes that in this manner Socrates'

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 48-52.

discourse succeeds in uniting the hierarchical relations masculine/feminine, spirit/matter, soul/body into a coherent system of interlocking oppositions.³⁰

The double role of the lover (paternal and maternal) in Shakespeare's poetry through the metaphor of procreation enables him to establish a hierarchical relationship between the lover and the beloved. Furthermore, the ungendered descriptions of physical beauty of the beloved in Shakespeare's poems convey and fortify the role of the beloved as merely an object of love. All the pictures of the beloved combine female beauty with male features. The changing of gender roles is another factor that refutes the unity of the lover and the beloved. Although the lover idealises his beloved and attempts to immortalise him/her, the metaphorical function of the image of procreation proves the opposite. Such an interpretation subverts the notion of unity in the poems. There is no implication in the poems that the beloved completes the lover. The lover creates the beloved through an elevated form of love in his poetry to oppose time and death. This might be called begetting beauty by the soul in the terms of the *Symposium*. However, this form of love does not imply a sense of unity between the lover and his beloved. Therefore, we might ask if love is a vehicle to introduce the motif of reproduction to the lover to immortalise himself. In both Lacan and Plato, love is merely a means to an end but is that end a unified complete being? Plato with the introduction of the reproduction element to the definition of *eros* gives a new meaning to the completeness of being. In Plato, the human soul is a 'fallen' spirit and therefore already complete in itself. This fallen spirit is restrained in the body and only through an individual ascension can retain its original complete state. The essence of love is to procreate itself through an Other. Regeneration is an integral part of human nature. Such a prolific nature, as Diotima puts it, in itself acts against the idea of unity in love. Procreation does not imply unity even in the metaphorical layer; procreation is one-sided. Therefore, love is a mediator that relates only the lover to a pure state of desire. To this purpose, the lover uses love to reach that state by philosophising for the youth. Thus, he has to move beyond the

³⁰ John Brenkman, pp. 426-27.

objectification of love in a beloved, that is beyond unity. The objectification of love signifies the mutilation of pure desire from the perspective of the lover. This view of love clarifies why there is no sense or theme of complement with the beloved in Shakespeare's poetry as unity will obstruct the lover on his path for desire. Both the egocentric nature of love, sometimes defined as Platonic love, and the death of the beloved mark a philosophy of love that plays a significant role in the development of love lyric poetry. I shall refer to this point in detail in the Conclusion where I discuss Shakespeare's *Phoenix and the Turtle*.

From this perspective we may interpret the other form of immortality in Shakespeare's poems in which the lover bestows immortality to his beloved in his verse: 'When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st: / So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.' (18.12-14). The metaphorical function of the regeneration of beauty in verse reveals the double role of the lover. As explained before, the cult of fame created a tradition in love lyrics. Poets immortalised a hero, their patron or beloved by immortalising their 'name' in verse. Though continuing the tradition, it seems that Shakespeare has his own unique perspective on the theme. As the concept of time gradually becomes subjective, the element of subjectivity affects the cult of fame. While in Homer, for instance, famous people and their heroic actions are immortalised, in Petrarch's poetry, Laura's beauty and the poet's love is immortalised. The poet uncovers the complexities and changes occurring in his self as he is affected by love, and this individuation finds expression from his source of love, Laura. In Shakespeare's poetry, the beloved (rather than her/his eyes) is the source of the lover-poet's inspiration. And this is so because the beloved is the embodiment of love. Even the poet's muse becomes inspired by the presence of the beloved. Without the creation of the beloved, love would not exist. The fear for the loss of this source is the fear for his own absence as the lover: 'Then the conceit of this inconstant stay / Sets you most rich in youth, before my sight' (15.9-10) which leads him to glorify and procreate his beloved in his verse: 'And all in war with time for love of you / As he takes from you, I engraft you new' (15.13-14). The

lover immortalises not only the youth and his beauty but his love as well in his eternal lines:

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st: (18.9-14)

Yet do thy worst, old Time, despite thy wrong,
My love shall in my verse ever live young. (19.13-14)

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time. (55.1-4)

And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand. (60.13-14)

His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
And they shall live, and he in them still green. (63.13-14)

The poet, in fact, receives his power from the beloved as the source of inspiration. The relation of the glories and immortality of the beloved serves as a means to immortalise his poetry and thus the lover. From another perspective, love does not exist without the beloved. Thus, if it were not for the beloved, there would not be any poetry about love and consequently no poet: 'O, none unless this miracle have might, / That in black ink my love may still shine bright' (65). In the triangle of love, there are three powers involved: the lover-poet, the beloved (beauty), and verse. Time symbolising the lover's internal lack evokes his desire for the beauty of the beloved. However, beauty merely serves as the symbol of the beloved; it represents love and relates the lover to it. In this scale, verse undertakes the process of idealisation of the beauty of the beloved in order to establish his identity. In this

manner, verse defies time that symbolises the lover's sense of loss. Therefore, if beauty can not resist the destructive process of time, it is the nature of love that is deceased but not the beloved. Accordingly, love should always remain an inaccessible source of inspiration for the poet to guarantee the everlasting presence of love.

In this form of immortality, the metaphor of verse becomes significant. The power of verse not only gives the lover an identity but also establishes him as the poet. Verse as the language of the poet mediates the lover. Language is merely the realm of signs; therefore, it can only 'represent' the lover. It can not relate nor define the nature of the lover's desire. As the privileged part of the Symbolic order, language, in the hands of the lover, enables him to establish his identity. Verse is paradoxically claimed to immortalise the beloved but instead enables the lover to master the beloved. Language is the territory of the lover-poet. Only through verse, he can dominate the beloved and immortalise himself. It is the signifier that represents the lover and brings the poet into existence. Without signifying himself, the poet is nothing; he does not exist. Language, in fact, signifies him, represents him and gives him identity. Without language, the lover is also incomplete. The lover has to succumb to this dynamic structure in order to maintain his existence-identity not only as a poet but as a lover. As the poet does not exist outside the system of signification, the lover can not exist without signifying his desire. Without language, the poet-lover can not represent himself. However, the beloved is a signifier too. Every subject is bound to signification. In the absence of the lover, the beloved represents nothing. It is in the lover's struggle for identity that the (ideal) image of the beloved is being formed. Since language is the realm of signs and the lover does not exist without it, we can say that the lover by representing his desire through language succeeds in mastering the beloved. Through verse, the lover manages to confirm his identity as the lover-poet signifies his state of desire, identifies with the ideal image of the beloved outside himself, elevates her with language, makes an unreal image of her and finally destroys her. However, language merely replaces the lost object of desire and loses access to the reality of the unconscious desire. Therefore, the insatiable desire

maintains its impossibility. In this regard, *The Rape of Lucrece* is one of the instances that illustrates the function of language/verse not only in elevating the beloved but also in dominating and finally destroying her. Lucrece's *unmatched* beauty is *published* by the poet as well as Collatine (RL. 11, 33). By revealing his rich jewel (RL. 34) in oration, Collatine establishes himself as the possessor. Likewise, describing Lucrece's beauty, the poet motivates a desire that signifies his identity on the one hand, and challenges his rivals to combat on the other. This explains the reason, as René Girard maintains, for Shakespeare's distortion of the Latin source, Livy's *History of Rome*. In Shakespeare, Tarquin's desire is already evoked by Collatine before meeting Lucrece. Girard refers to this male envy as mimetic desire: a false desire that is never equal to the level of the original. In other words, mimetic desire is borrowed from its mediator who generates envy.³¹ Thereby, Lucrece's canonisation at the beginning of the poem foreshadows her death in the final scene.

This urging of the beloved to beget himself and the theme of procreation will become clear if we clarify its relation to the other images such as time, death, and the role of sexuality. This will lead us to a better understanding of the meaning of love that is revealed through the eyes of the lover-poet. The relation between the lover and his beloved is structured like the relation of the subject to the Other. The beloved as the Other stands as the source and cause of love for the lover. The lover owes his existence though not his identity to love. In this regard, the function of the beloved is merely as a representative or an embodiment of love. The beloved represents the *objet a*, the lost object of desire. In Shakespeare, beauty is the emblem of love; beauty is the only thing that can entice love in the lover. As such, the image of beauty in nature and physical descriptions of the beloved's beauty and purity pervades his poetry. Nevertheless, beauty and the beloved are only representations of love; they are objects of reflection. However, beauty in Shakespeare's poetry does not signify a reflection of the Platonic Idea. What beauty conveys in the lover's discourse of desire is that it is a

³¹ René Girard, 'Envy of So Rich A Thing: Collatine and Tarquin in *The Rape of Lucrece*,' in *A Theatre of Envy: William Shakespeare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 24, 26.

symbol of the objectification of his love. Beauty in the beloved serves as the projection of the lover's ideal ego. And the poet clearly conveys this idea in his arguments with the beloved. The poet urges the youth to marry and reproduce his image or persuades him/her to respond to his love so that he can immortalise him in his verse. The lover never desires to be united with the beloved and there is no imagery to confirm such a view (even the theological interpretations of a few sonnets do not yield to such a view). He is very well aware that his beloved is merely a reflection and does not survive. All the lover yearns for is love since it is only by loving *a beloved* that love can remain and this guarantees the lover's existence too. In fact, urging the beloved to procreate does not immortalise the individual beloved he loves; rather, it is the continuation of his beauty that will inspire him for love. Even by immortalising her/him in his verse, he is in fact immortalising love rather than his beloved. Thus, when the beauty of the beloved is regenerated in another body, as the image of procreation implies, or her elevated beauty remains in verse, the lover is immortalising love rather than the object of his love since in both ways it is the concept of beauty that is saved. Therefore, the metaphorical layer of the immortalisation of the beloved leads us to the egocentric nature of love. By immortalising the beloved, the lover eternalises the identity of love for himself and immortalises his own existence as lover. In this manner, the relation of the beloved as an other to the subject (lover) reveals the egocentric nature on the one hand, and rejects the unity between the lover and the beloved.

In his attempts to immortalise his beloved, then, the lover fails. Despite the efforts of the lover-poet, his verse does not decipher the transparency of his desire. As I explained above, the lover fails to represent his desire by identifying with an image that does not signify him. The embodiment of this loss is reflected in the beloved's death. We can, therefore, infer that not only procreation but desire is death. Referring back to Plato, we can see that Lacan's equation of erotic drive with the death drive disrupts the metaphysical distinction of life/death in the *Symposium*. Citing from his speech, Brenkman continues that, according to Socrates loving necessarily involves

procreation: to love is to bring forth upon the beautiful both in body and in soul. Man is prolific by nature which urges us to procreate. Later, he defines such an act as something immortal in the midst of man's mortality which is incompatible with any kind of discord. And the only element that promotes and justifies this desire is beauty though it is not the object of love.³² Though the opposition between the beautiful and the ugly, male and female, the lover and the beloved is occasionally drawn in Socrates' speech, the opposition between mortality and immortality forms the main duality. It is the disjunction between the mortal and the immortal that later characterises the fundamental distinction between the earthly love and the divine love. Having this opposition in the background enables Socrates to build his definition of *eros* as an individual path to join life and death. *Eros* is basically a desire to procreate. *Eros* is the extension of mortality; it relates the lover not to his beloved but the mortal lover to the immortal. This testifies to the original motives of the lover who loves to regenerate himself though the metaphorical expression of *eros* conceals the egocentric nature of the lover's desire.

According to Brenkman, the basic definition of *eros* in the *Symposium* as a desire founded on a lack permits him to reaffirm the already established opposition between the temporal and the eternal. Love, even the relatively devalued love for a woman, is situated on the path between the temporal and the eternal since its main object is immortality. Human love, through procreation, puts him in touch with the divine and the eternal. Socrates succeeds in securing this reconciliation of the notion of lack with the metaphysical oppositions underlying the entire dialogue only by producing a kind of narrative, a fictive temporality:

Whereas the relation to death and the relation to reproduction are actually enfolded in a single moment, Diotima separates them and distributes them along a narrative line. The recognition of death comes first, and the idea of becoming a father comes afterward as a means of surpassing that recognition. In other words,

³² John Brenkman, pp. 423, 424-25.

the relation to reproduction follows upon and triumphs over the relation to death.³³

The element of reproduction connected to love and beauty is a view that looks at man originally as a sexed being. According to Lacan, as Brenkman explains, the sexual being loses its share in life in order to live. What the living being loses in having to pass through sexual reproduction is the libido, the pure instinct of life - immortal life, irrepressible life, life without need of any organ, simplified and indestructible life. This is precisely what is subtracted from the living being when it is submitted to the cycle of sexual reproduction. Libido is the pure instinct of life as opposed to death instinct. All the forms of the *objet a* that could be enumerated are the representatives or equivalents of the lost object of desire. Such a state of loss is referred to by Lacan as the biological lack. This develops our argument towards a consideration of the issues of sexuality, reproduction and death. It is through the structure of lack that we can note the equation, or rather the essential affinity, of the life instinct to the death instinct in Lacan. Man as a sexed being by coming to life through sexual reproduction falls under the influence of individual death, as Lacan puts it. And when the two sides of the drive are brought together, it at once manifests sexuality in the unconscious and represents, in its essence, death.³⁴

There is a lack or a continuous destructive force of mutability and death imposed from the outside that is symbolised in the image of time. Symbolised by Time, this lack is presented as an external power outside the lover. However, the effects of this power causes the lack to intervene between the lover and his beloved. In fact, the death of the beloved is a projection of the unfulfilment of desire in its pure state. Recalling Lacan's theory of desire, the notion of lack is two-dimensional: there is a lack caused by the signifier and a real lack by which the subject owes its existence to the cycle of sexual reproduction. Therefore, the external lack symbolised by time takes up the other lack which is internal, that is a lack inside the lover. The lover's

³³ Ibid., pp. 425-26.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 419-23.

feelings are no exception to this movement of fluctuation as deceit or betrayal of the beloved constantly changes the lover's emotions. This inner destruction and lack motivates an inner desire to refuse and deny death through love. Thus, the theme of love becomes a means in the hands of the lover to persuade his love to propagate. Love is the creation of the lover. However, the generation of beauty is to the same extent cyclical too: the cycle of birth and rebirth is a continuous and everlasting death. Man is not immortal; he can only retain his 'self' in another body. Thus, the lover can not immortalise his beloved except in his poetry. The metaphorical function of the image of procreation on the one hand, and the double role (maternal and paternal) of the lover on the other confirms the relation of the beloved as an other to the lover. The beloved is not part of the lover neither is s/he his sexual complement. What he is searching for is not unity with the beloved but something that is lost inside his soul. However, it is the immortalisation of that desire within him that gives him his identity not the beloved. And the only thing that makes this possible is love. With the image of a lover, he can search inside himself through the other's existence as the beloved to find the real emptiness of his identity.

Therefore, love is a mediator that can relate only the lover to a pure state of desire. To this purpose, the lover uses love to reach that state by philosophising for the youth. Thus, he has to move beyond the objectification of love in a beloved, that is beyond unity. The objectification of love signifies the mutilation of pure desire from the perspective of the lover. This view of love clarifies why there is no sense or theme of complement with the beloved in Shakespeare's poetry as unity will obstruct the lover on his path for desire. Both the egocentric nature of love, sometimes defined as Platonic love, and the death of the beloved mark a philosophy of love that plays a significant role in the development of love lyric poetry. And it is in this sense of the impossibility of desire and the egocentricity of love that the theme of *The Phoenix and the Turtle* is focused on. I shall refer to this point in the Conclusion in detail.

CHAPTER NINE

Egoism and the Paradox of Sublimation

Sublimation is a complicated notion and defining it as a movement transcending the material universe needs reinterpretation, since the borderline of human nature as a corporeal entity is not clear. The words sublimation, transcendence and ascension are all different terms implying the same phenomenon: flight from some place lower to a higher place. Such a movement comprises a division in its nature - a division between two ends of the movement. Furthermore, it leads to a pattern that is not only divisional but hierarchical as well. The concept of sublimation is constructed upon a division between the world of the human and the divine that finds its expression in the known dualism of body and soul, or flesh and spirit. And this dichotomy can be carried on to an endless series of oppositions: male/female, moral/immoral, profane/sacred, origin/image, self/other, earthly love/heavenly love, mortal/immortal, and even lover/beloved.

The idea of sublimation is, however, one of the distinct notions that attracted Renaissance writers in general and Shakespeare in particular. Sublimation or ascension is the channel through which immortality can be obtained. There is always this tendency in the poet-lover to transcend the temporality of the illusory world. Every sight of pleasure or the joys of life implies destruction and negativity. Accordingly, the lover finds power in despising flesh and matter. Such a sense of contempt sometimes goes so far that human love is described as the expression of flesh. In other words, human love is a profane love that obstructs his flight to the world of spirit. Thus, human love serves as the microcosm of a macrocosm which is

flesh. The separation of flesh and spirit, or rather body and mind, therefore celebrates the animosity between the earthly and the divine love. The borderline between these two identities is very clear in the mind of the sixteenth-century poet and leaves no doubt. The fulfilment of physical desire is a false vision that generates suffering and death while spiritual experience displays the knowledge of beauty and promises transcendence.

The nature of eroticism and its role in divine love has always varied in the history of the love lyric. What I intend to do in this chapter is to review the background of this duality which creates a concept called 'sublimation'. Concentrating on the secular and spiritual imagery of Shakespeare's poems, I shall discuss how eroticism has been transformed according to this dualism. And finally, I shall analyse the notion of sublimation in terms of narcissism, that is the idealisation of self in a series of identifications and alienations.

The tradition of transcendence

The idea of transcendence is basically constructed upon a division between matter and spirit. The division, however, has found different expressions as in Greek philosophy, Christian doctrines or even in some poets who attempt to resolve this duality. This leads us to trace the tradition of transcendence to the untenable dualism in Greek philosophy which later structured Western philosophy. As Henry Staten points out, there is a strong tendency in European intellectual history that finds human love 'stigmatized, depreciated, or at least subordinated as vulgar or mortal eros'.¹ Not only human love but everything associated with the 'flesh' or body is inessential. Every other movement for or against the idea of transcendence does not offer any alternate solution and pursues the same end: 'the end of avoiding a certain terminal conflagration of flesh'.²

¹ Henry Staten, *Eros in Mourning: Homer to Lacan* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. xii.

² Henry Staten, p. 1.

In the history of Greek philosophy, there are two main trends of thought that present two different views of the concept of soul both of which establish a duplicity. According to the Orphic view, the soul is a divine creature. Yet, the reason for the soul being imprisoned in the body is that it is condemned for the sin it has committed. The only way to its salvation from the wheel of death and reincarnation will be purification (*katharsis*) of the soul. On the other hand, the Ionian philosophers conceived of soul not as something divine but merely a part of the cosmic *arche* that is enclosed in the body for a short time. As such, the individual soul and its purification was not essential in the Ionian tradition.³ Whether we interpret the soul as divine or part of a cosmic force, a clear account of the division between body and soul is provided in both views. The only difference one can maintain is the interference of the moral element when body putrefies the soul.

In the formation of his conception of soul, Plato recognises three parts: reason, spirit and appetite. There have been some debates concerning the heterogeneity and unity of the Platonic soul. However, I will not pursue the controversy as it would take us far from our main theme. The main point, as Scolnicov recognises, is that Plato, very much influenced by the Pythagoreans who combined the Ionian and the Orphic view, formed the doctrine of the unified soul.⁴ However, Plato clearly categorises some parts as rational and some as irrational whether we place this antagonism inside or outside of the soul. The struggle between the rational and the irrational elements in the search for truth is grounded in the system of his thought. The image of the charioteer's struggle with the horses in *Phaedrus* is one of the examples. What concerns us here in this dispute is the place of body and its corporeality with regards to the soul. As I discussed above in my analysis of the *Symposium*, the element of cognition (rationality) increases in the ascent of soul from lower levels to upper levels while the body and its attributes decrease. Yet this hierarchical movement always maintains the impurity of the soul rather than the pollution of the body. Samuel

³ Samuel Scolnicov, 'Reason and Passion in the Platonic Soul,' *Dionysius* 2 (1978), pp. 36-7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

Scolnicov explains the complexity of this movement in Plato through a contrast with Freud's assumption of ascension. According to Freud, the upper levels sublimate the lower levels while in Plato the lower levels lead to a degeneration of the upper level. Later Scolnicov explicates what Plato means by degeneration of soul:

The soul's pollution is not restricted to the communion with the body, this communion is only one of its symptoms. But this means that the incarnation of the soul is a sign of its corruption, not the cause of it. It would not be true, then, to say that the soul degenerated because it fell into the body, but conversely: because it degenerated, it fell into the body.⁵

Such dualism or division is reflected in different layers in the *Symposium*. The distinction in the nature of Eros (between Penia and Poros) prefigures the opposition between human love and spiritual love in the levels of ascension. Eros is conceived from two distinct sources and this dual nature establishes the later distinctions. Penia, his mother, is the emblem of lack and absence. Following the nature of his father, Poros, Eros represents wisdom, and fertility (*Symposium* 202d-203e). Based on the definition of *eros*, Plato develops the distinction in the ascent, that is procreation in beautiful bodies in lower levels which later leads to begetting in beautiful souls. Mortals have to propagate to partake in immortality while the divine is already eternal (208b). Some beget merely children; this is a lower level of immortality as it just saves the image of the body. Some beget wisdom and virtue, which is a higher level of immortality, by saving the soul or purifying it (208c- 209e). And this distinction continues: as Diotima says in the beginning of her discussion, there are two different kinds of knowledge, spiritual (knowledge of *eros*) and vulgar (ordinary knowledge) (203a). The levels of ascension which separate the human love from spiritual love are structured based on the degrees of corporeality and its equivalents.

In the *Symposium*, human love merely appreciates the beauty of the body. And as this beauty is mortal, it obliterates the process of desire and lack in Diotima's

⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 43, 47.

formulation of *eros*. Human love involves the attachment of the subject to a mortal object which never promises the satisfaction of desire. Such a state of desire (perpetual lack) creates a further distance from immortality. Desire is lack. In this regard, Staten refers to the Renaissance neoplatonist Leone Ebreo's interpretation of Diotima's doctrine of the desire for continuity of possession that there is 'always some lack' of the thing possessed, and this obliterates any difference of essence between desire of an absent object and love of an apparently present one. Staten in his analysis of 'transcendental eros' in the *Symposium* defines this higher level of love as 'libidinal investment' where the lover detached from objects is not trapped in the possibility of loss.⁶

In the tradition of transcendence, the Bible as a text that expounds Christian doctrines contributes to the division between body and soul. There is no value in physical pleasure and even our physical needs are limited on a moral basis. The only value in anything material is measured in relation to its function in the eternal life. One of the most complex statements in the Bible that challenges any interpretation concerning the place of man with regard to divinity occurs at the beginning of John's gospel, when John says, *ho logos sarx egeneto*, 'Logos became flesh' (John 1.14). Despite the clear differences between Logos (Word) and flesh, the only key to understand the meaning of the statement lies in its immediate context. All we can say is that man is made in the image of God. But, how can we interpret this complex notion? Staten points out that the history of Christianity is the history of doctrinal conflict in how to interpret the humanity/divinity of Jesus:

That the Logos is divine means for all parties in the dispute that it is transcendent, eternal, and impassible; which is to say that its predicates are negations of the predicates that define the flesh. Conversely, flesh in its doctrinal sense is conceived by its contrast with Logos; it is all the things that Logos is not. The sense of the two concepts is derived from their contrast. And this is the most fundamental of metaphysical oppositions.⁷

⁶ Henry Staten, pp. 2, 5.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 50, 51.

What one can conclude here is that the meaning of each concept lies in its opposition. Yet, how does the Word become flesh? The phrase should not imply, Staten concedes, any degradation of the Word but only the exaltation of the flesh. This is so because as Paul insists, flesh and blood, *sarx kai haima*, cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; the perishable cannot inherit the imperishable (I Corinthians 15:50). Therefore, for every side of the parties, Jesus' incarnation indicates his humanity (not a symbolic death) and his resurrection shows his divinity.⁸ The death of Jesus is supposed to evade the division and separation between human and divinity; Jesus is the mediator whose death creates love and salvation. Both Platonism and Christianity place transcendence upon love with the difference that Jesus does not serve as the human love in Christianity. He is a mediator though human. One might say that the union of the divine and the human is merely manifested in Jesus; nevertheless, the role of Jesus as a mediator confirms the presence of the dichotomy and the necessity of his mediation.

Coming to poetry, courtly love gave a new expression or rather direction to the dichotomy. The language of metaphor and allegory idealises human love by sanctifying the body. Dante serves as one of the examples that reconcile human love with the idea of ascension: 'In so thoroughly sublimating sexual love into love of God, however, Dante backs away from the problem of how libidinal investment in general and sexual eros in particular can be approached without recourse to the transcendence of mortality'.⁹

Speaking of the opposition between human love and spiritual love in the tradition of transcendence, the question of the role of sexuality might sound irrelevant. In both Platonism and Christianity, human love is mortal and flesh is despised accordingly. Plato seeks to minimise the role of corporeality especially in the communion between souls in the higher levels of the ascent. Similarly, St. Augustine

⁸ Ibid., pp. 50-2.

⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

takes every material attachment as the source of sin. According to Staten, St. Augustine even goes further than Plato in eroticizing mental activity, and it is not simply metaphorical when he stigmatises the love of this world as fornication against God. And sexual relation is considered as the most clear instance of the deathliness that lurks in all libidinal relation to temporal existents.¹⁰ In moderate versions of Christianity, too, the function of body or pleasure, in general, is devised conditionally.

However, in poetry the relation of sexuality and ascension, though crucial, still seems to be a dilemma. Courtly love treats the relation through allegory while Renaissance poetry approaches it in terms of a conflict. As Clive Hart remarks, the experience of love, both in human and divine form, is unrepresentable. This forces the poet or artist to transform it through the language of metaphor or some other medium:

Such experiences elude direct verbalisation. When the erotic arts attempt to express desire rather than the consequences of desire, they have to recourse to a seemingly endless series of transformations, and the same is true when they attempt to represent the experience of the divine. Indeed, it is because both experiences can be at once so intense and so inexpressible that they are frequently coupled.¹¹

Though these two forms of eroticism have been associated in the poetry of different eras, still the difference between the language of aspiration and the language of fulfilment, as Clive Hart refers to, is a problem. In the poetry of Petrarch, both the vertical and horizontal modes of eroticism become essential to the poem. Therefore, the simplest and most idealistic response to this opposition or dilemma is presented as the hope of replacing painfully frustrated physical desire with spiritual fulfilment. Usually the fulfilment of physical desire and the consequent feeling of sin is expressed in horizontal imagery. In the case of creative artists, the antithesis of earthbound sexuality and the hope of heavenly bliss is subtler and less easy to define. Sometimes

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

¹¹ Clive Hart and Kay Gilliland Stevenson, *Heaven and the Flesh: Imagery of Desire from the Renaissance to the Rococo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 1.

erotic desire for the lady may itself be understood as a kind of spirituality. At other times, the spiritual salvation is seen as undisguised transformation of eroticism.¹²

The imagery of sublimation in Shakespeare

Turning now to Shakespeare, the division between the spiritual world and the material world finds a highly complicated expression. Unlike other Elizabethan lyric poets such as Sidney or Spenser, Shakespeare does not explore the division directly in the mould of neoplatonism. Shakespeare's poetry reflects the division more as a dilemma rather than a moral statement though the original duality lies in the background. As a result with all its rich portrayal of myths, the reader is left with a sense of uncertainty and ambivalence regarding the nature of love. Shakespeare writes his poetry in the frame of mythology upon whose images he implies the concept of division. As these famous myths have been approached by other Renaissance poets, Shakespeare's treatment reveals a distinctive representation of love and desire. The idea of sublimation, here, entails a (horizontal) movement of love from beauty to immortality. Such a movement dissociates the beloved who is characterised as the emblem of beauty from the lover who searches for immortality outside love. Therefore, there are two loves, or rather two oppositional forces. The opposition is reflected in the form of a struggle through powerful images of hunting, wooing or even war. There is a strife between self-love or narcissistic love (recognised by the lover in the beloved) and a true form of love (defined as Platonic by some critics) that is advocated by the lover. Shakespeare's love lyrics present different layers of the division, some of which I shall explain in this chapter: beauty vs. impurity, sacred vs. profane, chastity (innocence) vs. sin. And finally, I will discuss the notion of 'idealisation' in terms of sublimation with its narcissistic tone. This will disclose a paradox in the representation of love in Shakespeare's poetry where the lover's

¹² Clive Hart and Kay Gilliland Stevenson, pp. 3-4. In Hart's interpretation of the imagery of sexuality, the term 'horizontal' refers to the kind of movement that is initiated by the subject himself while the 'vertical' movement has spiritual implications brought about by external powers.

narcissistic idealisation is described as a true manifestation of love while the beloved's pursuit of purity (inner beauty) can, in fact, be defined as a sublime search for the 'self'.

Among Shakespeare's poems, *Venus and Adonis* serves as one of the clear examples where the duality of body and mind is predominant. The lover and the beloved do not stand on the same side and the dominant image that suggests the pursuit of love is that of hunting. The struggle between Venus and Adonis, though different from that between Lucrece and Tarquin, represents the opposition of two different forms of passion: love and desire. The prevailing image that lasts up to the end of the poem is the image of hunting that represents wooing. As an idyllic poem enacted with rural nature in the background, *Venus and Adonis* intermixes wooing and hunting in a broader scale. As such, there are many instances of animal imagery and even the last scene of hunting serves as a simile to the scene of love. Sometimes Venus's erotic gestures are compared to an eagle who tears ravenously with her beak on feathers, flesh and bone, just as Venus kissed Adonis' brow, cheek and chin endlessly (I: 55-60); or when in the hunting atmosphere of the poem, Adonis' victimised state is described as that of a tangled bird in a net who is fastened in the arms of Venus (I: 67-8). These erotic descriptions disguised with the image of hunting reach their climax towards the middle of the poem where Venus expresses her loving emotions towards Adonis like the enjoyment and pleasure that a deer can receive from a green park:

'Fondling', she saith, 'since I have hemmed thee here
Within the circuit of this ivory pale,
I'll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer:
Feed where thou wilt, on mountain or in dale;
Graze on my lips, and if those hills be dry,
Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie . . .
To shelter thee from tempest and from rain:
Then be my deer, since I am such a park,
No dog shall rouse thee, though a thousand bark.' (VA. 229-240)

All these images of pursuit (the eagle's ravishment, the tangled bird, the deer) imply the sense of a strife as if the beloved is the victim of the lover's desire especially when she recalls the 'direful god of war' (VA. 98) who became her captive and slave in wooing, 'And begged for that which thou unasked shalt have' (VA. 102). In the strife between the lover and the beloved, Shakespeare does not change the conditions in wooing. In *Venus and Adonis*, in a reversal of gender roles, Venus is given the privilege of being the lover. Although Venus is a female and a goddess of love, the poet does not hesitate to remind us of the lover's intentions and the nature of her love: Venus 'governed him in strength, though not in lust' (42), or Adonis is 'Forced to content, but never to obey' (61). Venus's hunting for Adonis is presented as she is taming him by love: 'Like a wild bird being tamed with too much handling, / Or as the fleet-foot roe that's tired with chasing, / Or like the froward infant stilled with dandling' (560-2). Moreover, the vocabulary of the poem also strongly suggests the dominating and masterful role of the lover in words like war of looks, siege, battery, fight.

In *The Rape of Lucrece*, the opposition between love and desire is also reflected in the strife between the lover and the beloved. The internal struggle between two opposed forces inside the characters describes the central aspect of the poem that Shakespeare maintains through their soliloquies. Furthermore, there are two dominant images of war that indicate both the psychological and the more universal layer of the opposition through the language of metaphor. The first powerful image of war that occurs at the beginning of the poem is the image of Lucrece's face described as a shield. The description of Lucrece's face idealises both her outward and inward beauty. As the mode of idealisation recognises the beauty of the beloved in its perfection, so is Lucrece's beauty disclosed by her husband and the other warriors (8-21). She is the emblem of chastity: 'Lucrece the chaste' (7), 'priceless wealth' (17), 'the treasure' (16) and Collatine 'publishes' 'that rich jewel he should keep unknown' (34) out of pride.

Following Shakespeare's image of the beloved, Lucrece's face reflects both virtue and beauty. Her inward and outward beauty are represented like two powerful metaphysical forces that strive to gain sovereignty over her self. Such animosity causes a crude division within her that later destroys her self. The perfect state of her beauty is expressed through a strange simile: that of heraldry. The beauty of Lucrece's face compared to a shield enables the poet to initiate a combat between beauty and virtue. I shall quote this passage in full as the significant function of this combat in her face illustrates and develops the thematic structure of the poem:

Within whose face Beauty and Virtue strivèd
Which of them both should underprop her fame.
When Virtue bragged, Beauty would blush for shame;
When Beauty boasted blushes, in despite
Virtue would stain that o'er with silver white.

But Beauty in that white entitulèd
From Venus' doves, doth challenge that fair field.
Then Virtue claims from Beauty Beauty's red,
Which Virtue gave the golden age to gild
Their silver cheeks, and called it then their shield;
Teaching them thus to use it in the fight,
When shame assailed, the red should fence the white.

This heraldry in Lucrece's face was seen,
Argued by Beauty's red and Virtue's white;
Of either's colour was the other queen,
Proving from world's minority their right;
Yet their ambition makes them still to fight,
The sov'reignty of either being so great
That oft they interchange each other's seat. (*RL*. 52-70)

In the next stanza, the image of war between Virtue and Beauty is extended to Lucrece's face that is compared to a shield whose colours red and white challenge 'that fair field'. Beauty is described as white which reminds us of the legacy of white

colour in the traditional descriptions of female beauty. Virtue, on the contrary, is red which prefigures shame. As Nancy Vickers argues in her essay 'This Heraldry in Lucrece's Face' (1985), the function of this warlike metaphor in the context of heraldic convention, more than a rhetorical invention, reinforces the patriarchal structure of society. Shields and colourful heraldry merely reflected a nostalgia for a period of knighthood where male line ancestry was traced by genealogists and heralds.¹³ Like a herald or a shield that is inherent, Lucrece truly represents a valuable possession though she is later 'stained'. From another point of view, virtue and beauty in her face, as the personification of two internal forces, remind us of medieval morality plays and such a feature, according to Willbern, derives 'from much earlier conventions, such as medieval allegory and psychomachia, and contemporary Renaissance practice of extended allegory'.¹⁴

The analogy of heraldry in Lucrece's face as a scene of war foreshadows the victory of beauty over virtue which foretells the incident of rape. 'This silent war of lilies and roses' (71) intensifies the conceit of colour and imagery of war and continues up to the end of the poem. The war between beauty and virtue is in fact the warfare between body and spirit. The opposition between body and spirit covers every layer of the story of Lucrece. On the level of narration and action, it is the battle between innocence and impurity or saint and devil: 'This earthly saint adored by this devil' (85). On another layer, which forms the structure of the poem, it is the battle between psychic forces presented mostly through soliloquies.

In *The Rape of Lucrece*, the idea of division indicates a psychological struggle, a struggle between internal opposed forces that have been personified through passionate discourses of desire. As such the word 'desire' occurs thirty times in the poem. Shakespeare's treatment of the myth of Lucretia is a subjective approach toward man's psychological problems. Accordingly, the act of rape is not described as much as the dilemma of the characters caused by the action of rape. Even the

¹³ Nancy J. Vickers, 'This Heraldry in Lucrece's Face,' p. 172.

¹⁴ David Willbern, p. 203.

narrator's voice is very limited and this intensifies the dramatic structure of the poem as well as the dramatic role of its characters (which reminds us of the image of Lucrece as a Shakespearean tragic heroine). The poem portrays man's efforts to overcome internal struggle and yet his inevitable failure. It is here that Lucrece and Tarquin share the destiny of Macbeth, Othello and Shakespeare's other tragic figures. In fact, the dramatic features of the poem such as its tragic tone, the presence of a heroine, and chivalric/erotic images, are so dominant that many critics have studied the poem from the point of view of a tragedy.¹⁵

I shall therefore concentrate on these soliloquies which explain the nature of the inner clash and opposition. Although in action Tarquin is a rapist, he presents the universal features of human nature where he struggles within himself and 'Is madly tossed between desire and dread: / The one sweetly flatters, th' other feareth harm' (171-2). The colours, white and red, that described the conflict on Lucrece's face are repeated to characterise Tarquin's inner struggle; he is pale (white) when he fears (183) and red when his desire fires the torch (315). In one of these moments of inner struggle considering the consequences of his action, Tarquin ponders the divinity and purity of Lucerce. He begins to despise what motivates him: 'His naked armour of still-slaught' red lust' (*RL*. 188). He is aware of the power of his desire; yet, he also knows that his armour is naked (as lust is no real armour) and that he is slain to his lust since it perishes in its fulfilment.¹⁶ Addressing his thoughts, Tarquin thinks how 'fair humanity' can save purity and chastity:

And die, unhallowed thoughts, before you blot

With your uncleanness that which is divine.

Offer pure incense to so pure a shrine.

Let fair humanity abhor the deed

That spots and stains love's modest snow-white weed. (*RL*. 192-6)

¹⁵ In this regard, I can refer to the following articles: Harold Walley, 'The Rape of Lucrece and Shakespearean Tragedy,' *PMLA* 76 (1961); Roy Battenhouse, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 1957; M. C., Bradbrook, *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry: A Study of His Earlier Work in Relation to the Poetry of the Time* (London: Chalte and Windus, 1951).

¹⁶ John Roe, ed., *The New Cambridge Shakespeare: The Poems*, p. 153.

As a knight and man of war, he feels the degradation of his 'impious act' (199) and predicts the consequences of his deed as a curse upon his posterity (204-10). What he is seeking is 'A dream, a breath, a froth of fleeting joy' (212) which resembles selling eternity for a toy (214). He questions his fear by reason but 'extreme fear can neither fight nor fly, / But coward-like with trembling terror die' (230-1). Later, we witness his struggle between conscience and will:

Thus graceless holds he disputation
'Tween frozen conscience and hot burning will,
And with good thoughts makes dispensation,
Urging the worsen sense for vantage still;
Which in a moment doth confound and kill
All pure effects, and doth so far proceed
That what is vile shows like a virtuous deed. (*RL*. 246-52)

However, despite all these inner tensions, and meditations upon the effects of his action, Tarquin finally failed to conquer his evil wishes and rationalised his desire: 'Affection is my captain' (271) and 'Desire my pilot is, beauty my prize; / Then who fears sinking where such treasure lies' (279-80).

While for Tarquin the fight is between fear of conscience and the powerful will, for Lucrece, honour is the key word. Though her body has committed the sin, her soul has become impure and stained as well (1740-3). Like Tarquin, she ponders the consequences of the action which finally leads to her decision for suicide. To Lucrece, death is the only solution to her dilemma. Through suicide, she can clear the stain of impurity from her soul: 'Her body's stain her mind untainted clears' (1710). Thus, she yearns for death:

Even here she sheathèd in her harmless breast
A harmful knife, that thence her soul unsheathèd:
That blow did bail it from the deep unrest
Of that polluted prison where it breathèd.
Her contrite sighs unto the clouds bequeathèd

Her wingèd sprite, and through her wounds doth fly
 Life's lasting date from cancelled destiny. (RL 1723-29)

The other image as powerful as the image of face that portrays the notion of division is the image of painting that appears toward the end of the poem. The painting is a dreadful scene of the war of Troy in which Lucrece identifies herself with Priam in the picture. The painting, on the one hand foreshadows the war that is going to happen as a revenge for Lucrece, and on the other hand, it reveals the reality of the evil side of man's nature that causes the war: 'And one man's lust these many lives confounds / Had doting Priam checked his son's desire, / Troy had been bright with fame and not with fire' (1489-91) or 'For one's offence why should so many fall, / To plague a private sin in general' (1483-84). She identifies herself in the wounds, sorrows and sin of the picture; by looking at it she is mourning herself: 'To this well-painted piece is Lucrece come, / To find a face where all distress is stelled' (1443-4). She laments until she finds Priam: 'In her the painter had anatomised / Time's ruin, beauty's wrack, and grim care's reign' (1450-51).

The image of hunting in *Venus and Adonis* and the image of war both in Lucrece's face and the painting in *The Rape of Lucrece* and finally the internal strife of the maid in the *A Lover's Complaint* all demonstrate a duality portrayed in different layers of body/mind, profane/sacred love, impurity/purity and finally lover/beloved. However, in the case of the *Sonnets*, the clash is developed differently. In this regard, the *Sonnets*, as a whole, is quite a unique poem in terms of structure. Lacking the narrativity and dramatic features of the other poems, the *Sonnets* can be read as a long monologue of love. The poet constructs the poem as the identity of a lover who challenges his beloved (the youth) to be immortalised by his verse. Therefore, the identity of the lover and the poet become united. When the poet desires to immortalise the beloved in his verse, it is as though the lover is immortalising her/him by his love. In other words, they create a unified self that is dependent upon the beloved's response to love. Such a unique structure relates the poet to the lover by endowing

them with the same identity. However, this dominating role of the poet-lover results in the absence of the beloved while in the other poems, we can note the presence of the beloved. All we know of the thoughts and emotions of the youth/dark lady is through the lover's point of view. If he shows any sign of passion or contempt, it is through the poet's reaction to the beloved's emotions whom he has created. Thus, the strife in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* finds a different image.

Reading the *Sonnets* as one poem, we can note the movement of an individuation. The poem presents the state of the lover going through a unique experience. The lover of the first sonnets is not the same as the lover we see in the final sequence. He is transformed. As such, there is a continuous strife in the poem: sometimes a strife against the self-love of the youth, sometimes against the hypocrisy and falsehood of the dark lady, and sometimes against his own self-deception. In the first eighteen sonnets, he warns the youth of the deathliness of beauty and the sin of self-love and advises him to regenerate himself. Moreover, admiring his beauty, he promises to immortalise him by his verse. Later, he becomes agitated by the betrayal of his beloved which makes him disillusioned. Experiencing failure and loneliness, he still illusively identifies with his love; yet, in this state of loss, he finds peace in the lustful love of the dark lady. Later, conscious of his self-deception and feeling guilty of sin, he tries to redeem it by retaining his love of the youth. In the end, while the lover is feeling confused at being the slave of love, the sonnets end with a statement suggesting that since the holy fire of love is not in the hand of its god (Cupid), desire (that we inherit from warm water) can not be satisfied. In other words, desire is death since we can not see the light of Cupid's torch quenched in the water.¹⁷ These oscillating movements in the lover that yield a subjective mode to the poem disclose the struggles of the lover to establish his identity as a lover through identification with the youth and later with the dark lady. However, in structuring his ego, he confronts a state of loss. He faces his lack of being as a lover that continuously denies his desire

¹⁷ In a symbolic interpretation of the myth, Cupid's torch is a double symbol of love as both light and desire; the nymphs and Diana represent the chaste Eve before the fall; and the water represents the instinctive drives that are now awakened by the warmth of the torch.

to be recognised as a lover. To love is the want to be loved. He recognises the deception in the nature of love and the myth of everlasting desire that men have inherited.

In another layer, we can trace a duality on a broader scale in the *Sonnets* that is sometimes referred to as the dualism between love and lust or the permanent state of love that the poet continuously confirms against any force. This opposition is that between two kinds of love that sonnet 144 calls love of comfort and love of despair. There is one love that makes the lover-poet abandon his reason, distorts his judgement and like the fever of a disease preserves the ill in him (147). Yet, he feels doubly betrayed both sexually and by self-deceit. He calls himself most perjured (152). In an odd simile, he compares himself to a child pursuing a woman who prefers hunting a feathered creature (143) and this testifies to a scornful and deceptive relationship. The love of the dark lady is a true sensual love that gives him both sin and suffering (141). Contrary to this is the love of the youth whom the lover refers to as his 'next self' (133). Similar to the image we have seen of the beloved in the other poems, the youth is the emblem of beauty: '... mine eyes' due is thy outward part, / And my heart's right, thy inward love of heart' (46.13-14). His excessive merits bring such profound emotions that make the lover meditate on him in his sleepless nights (27), (28) when his memory relieves him of his solitude (30). In his pure thoughts, the lover tries not to describe him in comparison as it might betray the truth of his beloved (21). This is the love of comfort that has inspired the lover-poet in his journey of love. Poems 129 and 146 describe the clash between these two loves in terms of the duality between body and soul.

The conflict between love and desire

In the above account, I discussed Shakespeare's imagery of war, hunting and sometimes a strife not only between the lover and the beloved but also between two opposed conceptions of love. The dominant role of these images implies a clash

between love and desire. The lover is portrayed in a continuous clash with another conception of love (*Venus and Adonis*), with internal forces (*The Rape of Lucrece*), with external forces embodied in the image of time and his own self-deception in love (the *Sonnets*). And the poet presents such a struggle towards fulfilment of love in terms of the movement of sublimation and idealisation. The function of beauty for the lover is also very different from his/her beloved's view. This prefigures the opposition between two distinct loves: a love that is human, sincere and pure; and a love that is possessive, selfish and impure. I shall discuss the distinction between the love of the lover as narcissistic and that of the beloved as the pure state of desire, though the poet implies the opposite.

Shakespeare's protagonists in his poems are the embodiment of Narcissus where the poet explores the triangle of love, self, and beauty. Shakespeare argues that the beauty of his narcissistic figures is merely an image, a reflection that is not their own. Beauty is a gift that should propagate itself under the law of nature so that in this manner beauty will be immortalised. The poet persuades his beloved in this with all its metaphysical implications and pictures the other side of nature (morbidly, death and decay) where the rule has not been followed. I shall briefly provide an outline of the myth of Narcissus and its essential features that I believe elaborates to a great extent on Shakespeare's portrayal of his protagonists.

According to the myth, Narcissus is the son of the river Cephissus and the nymph Liriope (*leirion*, the lily). He is the emblem of beauty and never responds to anybody's love until he finds a reflection of his image in the water in the person of the nymph Echo. Finally Narcissus' deluded lovers ask of Nemesis for his punishment. Thus, when he wants to quench his thirst during a hunt, he falls in love with an image without a body.¹⁸

The myth of Narcissus first taken up by Ovid attracted the Renaissance writers for the same reasons that the theme of immortality did. Plotinus, as an example, saw

¹⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, Leon S. Roudiez, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 104.

the story of man's fall in the myth as he believed that the corporeal beauties are merely images, or reflections of the original Beauty. Accordingly, Narcissus is a failure and thereby is condemned as he did not see that the reflection is that of his self, an image perishable in its own. Narcissus's sin is that he falls in love with a double reflection of his 'self'.¹⁹

There are some mystical features in this myth, a hidden paradox, that the myth of Narcissus and all the versions of the story share. Narcissus might be pictured as an egoist by one poet and lonely by another. However, there are some basic features or facts in the story that can not be changed: his beauty, his falling in love, and his metamorphosis into a flower. The paradoxical point about this myth is that on the one hand he has all the features of a self-centred character. He does not respond to others' love. He is young and immature. On the other hand, he is pure and rejects any touch of sexuality as if it will destroy his chastity. Shakespeare's portrayal of Adonis and his arguments is a clear illustration of such a conviction. Narcissus is the son of the river Cephissus and the nymph Liriope, that is water and flower. Water represents purity and the flower is the symbol of beauty. Thus, he is both beautiful and pure. He does not yield to others' love since he desires purity. What he is searching for is not a more beautiful body than his to fall in love with. As such, what astonishes him at the sight of his image is not his beauty but his 'self'. It is the moment of self-knowledge like a revelation:

After many frustrations Narcissus gathers that he is actually in a world of "signs": "You nod and beckon when I do; your lips, it seems answer when I am talking though what you say I cannot hear." The exertion for deciphering leads him to knowledge, to self-knowledge: "He is myself! I feel it, I know my image now".²⁰

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 105-07.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 104.

The image that reflects his 'self' represents his spirit. The image that attracts him is devoid of substance; it is 'nonobject'.²¹ What he was looking for was purity of his spirit, and he could not find it except in an erotic individuation, that is a journey of self through love. And finally he drowns himself to reach his self. In this regard, the role of the river can be significant in our interpretation of the myth as by drowning himself in the water, Narcissus finds his origin, his father. This is what can be defined as the sublimation of self. Narcissus transcended his imprisonment in the body, and in a very mystic manner, his body is transformed into a flower. There have been many interpretations of the representation of the flower. Kristeva suggests some resemblance between the image of Narcissus and Dionysus and the theme of sight:

There has been much emphasis placed on the morbid, narcotic, chthonian meanings of this legend, as of the flower that bears its name. The humid, subterranean torpor of narcissistic space links the fable to the vegetative intoxication of Dionysus; the theme of sight points in the same direction (Narcissus dies after he has seen himself, Pentheus dies for having seen the mysteries of Dionysus), as does even more explicitly the character's genealogy.²²

In the myth of Narcissus, sight is the metaphorical expression of self-knowledge. Therefore, the language of myth links the ideas of self-knowledge, sexuality and death. Narcissus rejects 'others' until he finds the image he 'knows' and dies when he comes to know it. It is interesting to note that in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the prophet Tiresias predicted 'that if Narcissus were to gain self-knowledge his doing so would destroy him. Love brings the boy self-knowledge and with it comes a grief that hastens his death'.²³

²¹ Ibid., p. 104.

²² Ibid., p. 105.

²³ A. D. Cousins, 'Towards a Reconsideration of Shakespeare's Adonis: Rhetoric, Narcissus, and the Male Gaze,' *Studia Neophilologica* 60:2 (1996), p. 197. Despite recognising Adonis being foregrounded as the object of male gaze in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, Cousins interprets Adonis' rhetoric of chastity as Platonic and thereby opposite Narcissus, pp. 195-96.

In *Venus and Adonis*, Adonis is a self-centred character who merely follows what his 'self' drives him at: 'Hunting he loved, but love he laughed to scorn.' (VA. 4). He represents the youth, in the first eighteen sonnets of Shakespeare, who has been overcome by his beauty. Adonis is the emblem of Narcissus who falls in love with his own self. Not conforming to the lover's advice to regenerate, the beloved is described as a lifeless picture, a senseless stone, an idol, a statue. The beloved appears as an image and therefore devoid of any real existence or identity. Venus characterises him as coy and selfish: 'Fie, lifeless 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!' (211-14). He is 'frosty' in desire, too (36). Even Venus reminds him of the myth of Narcissus which foreshadows his destiny. He is in love with himself. This is considered as deception by the lover since Adonis is falling for an image which is not a real entity:

Is thine own heart to thine own face affected?
Can thy right hand seize love upon thy left?
Then woo thyself, be of thyself rejected;
Steal thine own freedom, and complain on theft.
Narcissus so himself himself forsook,
And died to kiss his shadow in the brook. (VA. 157-62)

And the last scene of hunting where he is killed is a clear illustration of the theme of Narcissus. Similar to the mythic figure Narcissus who drowns himself in the water for the love of his self, Adonis dies, too, because of his possessive love:

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 flower sprung up, check' red with white,
Resembling well his pale cheeks and the blood
Which in round drops upon their whiteness stood. (VA. 1165-70)

The metamorphosis of Adonis' body into a flower is an important part of the poem that determines our general interpretation. The flower, with regard to the general perspective of the poem, epitomises Adonis' beauty and purity, as becomes apparent when Venus compares the smell of the flower to Adonis' breath (1171-2). However, it is significant to note that the flower is a symbol of fleeting beauty. In traditional mythic terms, as Robert Merrix maintains, the anemone symbolises the spirit of annual vegetation.²⁴ Furthermore, the image of metamorphosis can be interpreted as procreation, 'a kind of metamorphic perpetuation of the self'.²⁵ The prevalent attitude of critics, despite their recognition of Venus' domineering character, suggests Adonis' metamorphosis as the signal (terminal) point for Venus's transformation. This critical perspective as a modified form of neoplatonic interpretation raises three issues: it testifies to the self-love in the character of Adonis that ironically justifies his death; it recognises a final resolution that is a unity though in a symbolic manner; it accounts for Venus' transformation. Contrary to what most critics maintain, I suggest that the pessimistic tone of the poem and Venus' final mournful prophesy on the death of love defies such interpretation. Not only Venus' flight is not a sign of transformation but also her plucking of the flower and her seclusion to Paphos recapitulates the emptiness and void of desire. Therefore, Adonis does not die in love of himself. Rather, his death stands for an erotic transformation of 'self'. In James Schiffer's susceptible interpretation of the poem in terms of the absence of a heterosexual male desire, plucking the flower presents a second castration. The flower, that is itself a substitution, stands for the process of substitution and signification, that is for the language itself. However, the difference between the flower and Adonis is the gap between the signifier and the signified. The flower, then, becomes the poem itself forged in the dialectic of desire.²⁶

²⁴ Robert P. Merrix, '“Lo, In This Hollow Cradle Take Thy Rest”: Sexual Conflict and Resolution in *Venus and Adonis*,' in *Venus and Adonis: Critical Essays*, Philip C. Kolin, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), p. 353.

²⁵ James Schiffer, 'Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*: A Lacanian Tragicomedy of Desire,' in *Venus and Adonis: Critical Essays*, Philip C. Kolin, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997). p. 373.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 363, 373-74.

In *The Rape of Lucrece*, the scene of her suicide is very significant. She commits suicide to purify herself from a sin that has been committed by somebody else. She is quite conscious of the subject of the crime, yet she believes that her soul, like her body, is impure. Why is that so? Many critics have considered this dilemma as an ethical question. Donaldson argues that there are two conflicting ethics at issue: the moral standards of ancient Rome and those of Christianity. He explains that according to Roman ethics, she dreads a public dishonour while in Christianity, she is guilty of murdering herself.²⁷ Although there are many references in the text that allude to Christian beliefs and although the context of the myth of Lucrece reveals some facts about Roman culture, there are some elements (one might even call ethical) in Shakespeare's treatment of the myth that justifies her action. Honour is a key word here and as Lucrece says honour is more than life to her. Honour is the symbol of purity and everything that violates it is considered as sin. Therefore, committing suicide seems the only way that she can redeem her honour. Furthermore, it is through her death that she can take her revenge upon the agent of crime. The law of nature is more powerful than any human principle. This law governs over both sides of the action: Tarquin and Lucrece. He will pay for the crime he has committed and she has already paid. Only death can redeem and save her fame for honour. David Willbern interprets this law as hyperbolic desire: 'a before-and-after design of a powerful desire followed from impulse to drive to fulfilment to reaction'.²⁸ And in the final scene, the same division that characterised her dilemma is shown in the division in the flow of her blood and its colour:

And bubbling from her breast, it doth divide
In two slow rivers, that the crimson blood
Circles her body in on every side, . . .
Some of her blood still pure and red remained,
And some looked black, and that false Tarquin stained. (*RL*. 1737-43)

²⁷ Ian Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia: A Myth and Its Transformations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 44-6.

²⁸ David Willbern, p. 203.

In my analysis of the beloved in Shakespeare as a protagonist victimised by the lover's discourse of desire, Adonis' speech serves as a key passage since the image we are given of the beloved in Shakespeare's poems mostly relies on the lover's discourse. In poems like *The Rape of Lucrece* or *A Lover's Complaint* where the structure of the poem is based on a tragic event or rather a catastrophe, the beloved's speech is mostly concerned with her/his dilemma that is caused by the tragedy rather than participating in an argument with the lover. And finally in the *Sonnets*, not only is the beloved totally absent from any form of discourse on love but also the sonnet sequence comprises a unique voice (identity) for the lover and the poet. Accordingly, Adonis presents a clear image of the beloved described as Narcissus who defends himself and formalises his own sublime view of love. Adonis believes that he does not know love and neither will know it. To him, Venus' erotic words appear as an idle theme, a bootless chat. He describes love as 'a life in death, / That laughs and weeps, and all but with a breath' (VA. 413-14). In other words, love is a chain of give and take. It is a deceptive cycle of loss and death that the lover submits himself to. As such, Adonis strives to fight against it. The only passion he has is 'love but to disgrace it' (VA. 412). In this connection, whether the boar symbolises lust or the agent of time, it is the only thing that Adonis desires to remove in his search for his self. The boar represents the element of destruction and death. Furthermore, in opposition to Venus' transgressive and horizontal picture of love, Venus perceives a different function of youth and beauty:

'Who wears a garment shapeless and unfinished?
Who plucks the bud before one leaf put forth?
If springing things be any jot diminished,
They wither in their prime, prove nothing worth; (VA. 415-18)
Before I know myself, seek not to know me:
No fisher but the ungrown fry forbears;
The mellow plum doth fall, the green sticks fast,
Or being early plucked, is sour to taste. (VA. 525-8)

Beauty for Adonis represents body which should not be 'plucked'. Beauty of the body is the image of 'self' by which he can know himself. Everything that is used early in nature is doomed to death and decay. Adonis never idealises his beauty as the lover does since for him beauty is an affinity to death. For Shakespeare's protagonists, beauty is linked to impurity. He recognises the cyclical course of life and death in nature. We can note the same line of argument in *The Rape of Lucrece*. Before the tragedy happens, her body and soul were both pure and 'the one pure, the other made divine' (RL. 1164). Yet, when her body becomes stained, she decides for murder: 'For in my death I murder shameful scorn: / My shame so dead, mine honour is new born' (RL. 1189-90). Later, she questions the law of nature:

Why should the worm intrude the maiden bud?
Or hateful cuckoos hatch in sparrows' nests?
Or toads infect fair founts with venom mud? . . .
But no perfection is so absolute
That some impurity doth not pollute. . . .
The sweets we wish for turn to loathèd sours
Even in the moment that we call them ours. . . .
'Unruly blasts wait on the tender spring;
Unwholesome weeds take root with precious flowers; . . .
What virtue breeds iniquity devours.
We have no good that we can say is ours,
But ill-annexèd Opportunity
Or kills his life, or else his quality. (RL. 848-875)

From the above account on Shakespeare's portrayal of the beloved as a victim of his/her own selfish convictions, we can note the paradoxical nature of love in his poetry. Shakespeare explicitly concedes that his protagonists are the emblem of narcissistic love. However, a close reading of the beloved's soliloquies and their strong arguments reveals the pure nature of desire in the beloved. They look at their own beauty not because of fascination as the lover claims. Beauty for Shakespeare's

protagonists is a painful affinity to loss that they yearn for in their 'selves'. Beauty serves as a mirror, or an image that reflects and bears their lack just as Narcissus could see the reflection of his self in the river. Narcissus' passion for his self indicates a true and human sense of love that can not necessarily be contrasted with divine love. And here lies the paradox: while the beloved's search for his self is described as 'prodigal' and 'fruitless chastity' (VA. 55,751), the lover's fear of mortality and the illusive sublimisation of his desire embodied in the beloved, in fact, manifests the narcissistic tone of his idealism.

In *Venus and Adonis*, Venus is the goddess of love, an immortal. She is the emblem of love and beauty yet she is not loved. This characterises the distinction between Venus and Adonis and therefore between love and desire. Venus wants to be loved, she demands a lover while Adonis' sense of desire purifies him of self-love, of demand for love. This feature of Venus, as João Froes maintains, explains her dual character as both maternal and sexual.²⁹ She is a lover, in love with Adonis' beauty who is like her champion (596). Though she is beautiful herself, Venus describes Adonis as the most beautiful. This movement of idealisation by Venus strongly establishes the process of sublimation in the lover:

'Thrice fairer than myself', thus she began,
'The field's chief flower, sweet above compare,
Stain to all nymphs, more lovely than a man,
More white and red than doves or roses are:
Nature that made thee with herself at strife,
Saith that the world hath ending with thy life. (VA. 7-12)

As mentioned before, her passion is not lustful and all the descriptions of his heavenly beauty is conveyed through her speech when she compares his breath to heavenly moisture (64). However, her romantic description of both inner and outer qualities of Adonis' beauty gradually become hyperbolic towards the middle of the poem where

²⁹ João Froes, 'Shakespeare's Venus and the Adonis of Classical Mythology,' in *Venus and Adonis: Critical Essays*, Philip C. Kolin, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), p. 306.

Venus says if she were deaf, his outward parts would move him and if blind, she could love his invisible inward beauty (433-6). Heather Dubrow in her analysis of *Venus and Adonis*, describes Venus's idealisation of Adonis as an attempt to transform the material into spiritual.³⁰

Continuing the same structure of arguments in the *Sonnets*, the lover tries to win the love of his mistress by advising him on the sins of self-love and brevity of beauty. Venus reminds her love of the nature of beauty. That everything in nature is for a purpose; torches made for light, dainties for taste and beauty for its use: 'Things growing to themselves are growth's abuse. / Seeds spring from seeds, and beauty breedeth beauty; / Thou wast begot, to get it is thy duty' (VA. 166-68).

What is thy body but a swallowing grave,
Seeming to bury that posterity
Which by the rights of time thou needs must have
If thou destroy them not in dark obscurity?
If so, the world will hold thee in disdain,
Sith in thy pride so fair a hope is slain. (VA. 757-62)

To reinforce her arguments, Venus brings up the theme of 'increase' to Adonis:

'Upon the earth's increase why shouldst thou feed,
Unless the earth with thy increase be fed?
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.' (VA. 169-74)

'So in thyself thyself art made away,
A mischief worse than civil home-bred strife, (VA. 763-4)
'Therefore despite of fruitless chastity, . . .
Be prodigal: the lamp that burns by night
Dries up his oil to lend the world his light. (VA. 751-6)

³⁰ Heather Dubrow, *Captive Victors: Shakespeare's Narrative Poems and Sonnets* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 28-9.

Love is by nature narcissistic since the lover constructs his identity based on a lack. In other words, his desire is structured on a loss; he desires something he lacks. This is due to the fact that, as Lacan explains, what we love and seek in the other is actually what we lack. The mark of loss is always recognised as part of the lover's desire. However, there is a gap between love and desire. Love is merely a struggle for the satisfaction of self by replacing the original lack. On the contrary, desire is an effort for recognition of the true side of 'self'. This relates love to narcissism and desire to a passion for self. Love is connected to narcissism and the structure of the ego since it seeks to identify with someone or an ideal close to itself that represents the image of his ego. The lover obliterates any taint of alienation in favour of similarities and identification. As Lacan sees it, the distinction between love and desire lies in the difference between replacement and displacement. The lover continuously looks for *replacing* the object of his love in order to find the ideal image of the ego. Shakespeare's lover does not seek the beauty in the beloved for beauty itself, neither does the philosopher-lover in the *Symposium*. Beauty and the beloved as its embodiment simply objectify what the ideal image of his ego is seeking. As I discussed in Part II, the relation of love to *objet a* (the lost object of desire) can be described in terms of a barrier that protects the ego against the unsatisfiable desire. Beauty in the other reinforces the ideal image of the lover and thereby supports his identity without which the lover would be shattered. Love acts as the agent of the ego to produce a distance as much as possible from *objet a* by replacing it with the beloved (the other). To fulfil his purpose fully, the lover by elevating his object and disclaiming sexuality, that is idealising the beloved as the emblem of beauty and purity, sublimates his love. He elevates his object of love so that it may signify and represent the (ideal) image of his identity. Therefore, ironically by elevating the beloved, the lover is, in fact, sublimating himself. In other words, the movements of idealisation in the lover present a process of sublimation of his ego. No matter how far his sublimating acts go, he always bars himself from a quest for the lost object of desire. This manifests the narcissistic and illusive direction of love. On the contrary,

Shakespeare's protagonists (the beloved) strive to *displace* any object of desire or rather objectification of their desire. Desire is not signifiable since nothing can represent the original lost object of desire. This justifies, on the one hand, the reason that the beloved does not yield to the lover's efforts to transform herself/himself to the level of identification with an image that does not represent her/him. On the other, this form of desire in the beloved reveals her/his view of beauty as an affinity to loss and death. I shall refer to this point in my conclusion where I discuss the function of the image of the beloved's death in Shakespeare's poems. Desire is beyond a demand for love. Shakespeare's protagonists recognise the desire as lack and this establishes their identity beyond a demand for being loved. In a way, they fantasise the state of desire-as-lack in themselves which reflects itself in the image of purity. Though purity does not represent the true object of desire as it is lost, as opposed to beauty, it fantasises the purity of desire. By looking at his image in the water, Narcissus identifies with a void that acknowledges the emptiness of his desire. By identifying with the lack within themselves, Shakespeare's protagonists destroy the structure of the ego which continuously denies their state of being for the Other. This dynamic operation of desire in the beloved discloses the paradoxical state of the lover. Though the lover presents himself as a being for the beloved through his means of identification, the beloved's denial of his/her ego proves the opposite. This is what Lacan describes as the metonymy of desire. Instead of producing metaphor, that is substitution, the beloved produces metonymy. This means that every signifier as the object of desire stands as a metonymy for it; it is merely an association for her/his desire as it can not represent it. As I discussed in Part II, this constitutes desire as the metonymy of want-to-be.

Lacanian analysis of the ego maintains the features of narcissism in man's endeavours towards sublimation. In the search to construct and define himself as a lover, the lover tries to identify himself with the beloved. This leads him to confront a series of identifications in the process of the establishment of self. He struggles to eliminate his lack in relation to 'other'. And these series of identifications start from

an early stage as in the mirror stage up to later idealisations that adults make. In an effort towards recognition of his 'self,' the subject tries to eliminate the lack. However, he does this by identifying with other imperfect/lacked beings which will merely give him an incomplete image of himself. In fact, these series of identifications serve as continuous replacements; the subject replaces a previous ideal image with another one to satisfy partly his sense of lack. That is, the process of recognition of self through identification with ideals merely fulfils some aspects of lack. However, as Lemaire points out, 'every genetic phase of the individual, every degree of human achievement, reveals the constitutional narcissism in which the subject assumes a frustration of being or becoming in a normative sublimation'.³¹ Furthermore, she expounds the meaning of the death instinct in Lacan in relation to the subject's movement of sublimation. The alienation of the ego is an act that separates the ego from the true part of the 'self' (the unconscious). Although this dynamic gesture of the ego constructs a strong identity (individuality), it comprises the death of the truth of ourselves:

*The alienation of the ego always has as its corollary a sacrifice: the sacrifice of the truth of ourselves. The progressive discordance between the ego and the being is accentuated throughout the course of psychical history, a history which is no more than a cycle of attempts at resolving this discordance by consummating it. Each stage of the subject's history will be marked by a transcendence, a normative sublimation of a desire, corollaries of a destruction. Man devotes himself to his own death and consummates it in the movement whereby he seeks to assert himself in the social and cultural world.*³²

This is exactly the narcissistic state with which the lover becomes involved in the horizontal movement of sublimation. In constructing his identity as a lover, he alienates himself from his unconscious (his image as a whole) and devotedly identifies himself with a beloved. Through identification, he sublimates his identity (love) that will partly satisfy his desire for love. Yet, this is not only narcissistic but characterises

³¹ Anika Lemaire, p. 181.

³² Ibid., pp. 181-82.

death as well. It is narcissistic because the lover is using the beloved as an object for the fulfilment of his desire and therefore sublimation of his own self. It is the manifestation of the death drive since the alienation of his ego prefigures the death of his true self.

How can we interpret the movement of sublimation in the lover? What can we perceive of the change that is taking place in his ego separating him from his true self? Does this change from physical beauty elevate his self? The idea of interpreting cultural activities as a consequence of repressed sexual instincts was initiated by Freud. However, this process of change that leads to a different aim takes place in the territory of the ego. As Francette Pacteau maintains, Freud calls this capacity to divert sexual energy to cultural aims, the capacity for sublimation. The 'desexualised' drive of sublimation is situated on the plane of the ego (that is, of the sexual) but that portion of the sexual which is kept in check, bound to, invested in, an object. As such, the diversion of sexual energy towards non-sexual aims could be contingent upon the withdrawal of the libido onto the ego, and the transformation of object-libido into narcissistic-libido. Therefore, sublimation would depend on the narcissistic dimension of the ego (taken as love-object). Pacteau in her critical analysis of Freud's views assumes that in the process of sublimation, the object of libido could be the same as the object of sublimation though with different aims and this manifests itself clearly in the representation of the female body in a work of art. The beauty of the female body, here, indicates as the same object though for different purposes.³³

As I indicated in the previous chapter, the desire for immortality is a reflection of narcissism whereby the lover wishes to immortalise his self. Similarly, the desire for sublimation is rooted in narcissistic-libido. Whether we accede to the assumption that sublimation is merely a redirection of sexual instincts to cultural aims or their repression, sublimation is a process taking place in the ego. In its formation, the subject is forced to go through identifications and *Spaltung* to minimise the extent of lack. Images of sublimation in Shakespeare's poetry illuminate the same struggle of

³³ Francette Pacteau, *The Symptom of Beauty* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1994), pp. 88-92.

the subject-poet to transcend the fear of death, to idealise beauty against the threat of 'time' and mortality, to sublimate his mortal beloved in his verse, to redirect his sensual desire in the preservation of beauty according to the laws of nature. All these images of sublimation are indications of auto-eroticism. To the Renaissance poets, the lover transfers his erotic emotions to something elevated while Shakespeare's treatment of this movement implies a strife between the lover and his beloved on the one hand, and a conflict concerning the nature of desire from the poet's point of view. There is a conflict in the poet's mind concerning the dualism inherited in love: what he desires on the one hand and what the object of his love reveals in this confrontation. In any case, the speaker in Shakespeare's poems does not respond to this dualism by simply transcending the lover's idealistic movement of sublimation through elevation of his beloved.

CHAPTER TEN

The Movement of Idealisation

Shakespeare's poetry, being dynamic in imagery and diverse in its description of love and beauty, creates a complicated situation between the lover and the beloved. Many critics have formulated Shakespeare's conception of love based on the duality of love and lust in favour of the former. Yet the dynamic features of eroticism as a new mode during the Renaissance on the one hand, and religious motifs on the other have led most critics to make a distinction between lustful imagery and a sublime view of love in his poetry. However, the relation between the lover and the beloved seems to reflect a far more revealing picture of the enigma of desire that is often referred to as love. Though Shakespeare's poetry has inherited many of the features of the tradition of love poetry - such as platonism, stoicism, petrarchism, Ovidian eroticism, to enumerate just a few - his poetry presents different psychological layers of love and its agents (lover-beloved) that can not be easily characterised. There is always a sense of ambivalence in his poetry that escapes a clear statement about love; it is only in the relationship between the lover and the beloved, the soliloquies of Lucrece or the maid in *A Lover's Complaint*, and the arguments of Venus and Adonis that the discourse of desire can be elaborated. No matter how far his poems rely on mythical sources (which is a restriction in some sense), Shakespeare creates a new relation between the lover and the beloved which influenced the direction of love poetry. Such a variation and complexity and, in a sense, ambivalence reminds us of the techniques of narration in modern fiction and cinema where boundaries of time and space are broken to enable the reader to observe a story or a character from different points of view which

is otherwise impossible in reality. This is the effect one receives in reading Shakespeare's poetry. All the elements of love are displaced like chess pieces. Sometimes the lover is male and the beloved female; in the next poem he reverses the situation, the lover is changed to an enthusiastic female and the beloved becomes a male. The relation that has been characterised as master/slave is also variable in terms of gender. Sometimes the beloved is the victim and another time s/he is the object of salvation. The tone of the poems is the tone of love varied from joyful and erotic to lamenting and mournful or even sarcastic and ironic. Such a wide perspective view of love in terms of the gender of the lover or the beloved and the tone of the poems reveal the complexity of desire Shakespeare is manifesting. This fully analytical and psychological treatment of desire in man's nature brings Shakespeare close to a modern understanding of the workings of desire. What I shall explore in this chapter is a clear picture of the lover and the characteristics of the beloved through their discourse of desire. Thus, I have divided the subject into the following topics: the function of beauty in the beloved, sublimisation of the beloved, the lover as philosopher.

The tradition of the elevation of feminine beauty

In the tradition of love poetry, we have a clear-cut or framed picture of the beloved. What beauty implied in poetry before the Renaissance was solely female beauty. Nevertheless, despite the extent of these descriptions, we hardly know about the feelings and thoughts of the female figure. She is absolutely absent by her silence in these poems. What we are given is a long list of similes that compare the beauty of her body to perfect elements of nature. However, the structure of analogy sometimes becomes complicated where the object of description (the beloved) is replaced by the attributions of beauty. In other words, the poet's description replaces her. Such a way of describing the beloved which is dominant in the love poetry before Shakespeare is known as blazon. In blazon, Francette Pacteau maintains, different parts of the female

body from head to navel are described in their beauty as different parts of the body are dissected in anatomy. The term blazon itself comes from the earlier tradition of heraldry. It was the name given to a painted miniature of a particular shield which was accompanied by a brief description and interpretation of its features.¹

The earliest form of blazon can be traced to the Song of Songs (chapter 4) where female beauty is celebrated in a highly descriptive style. The beauty of the beloved's hair is compared to a flock of goats, her lips to a thread of scarlet, her neck to the tower of David, her breasts to young roes and so on. What is quite peculiar in these so-called Canticles is the structure of analogy. The metaphors invest a strong sense of identification between the beloved and the attribution. In other words, the association sometimes carries a meaning beyond resemblance. The complexity of comparison as in 'thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus' invokes a sense of either humour or absurdity. Francis Landy explains the elaborate and remote structure of comparison in terms of a paradox. The metaphor here both renders the object palpable and distances it. On the one hand, the associations develop the image and on the other detract from it.² The representation of the feminine beauty or more precisely the blazon does not reflect an insensitive artistic portrayal of the beloved. It seems that the multiple function of metaphor in associating and differentiating the feminine beauty not only generates the peculiar identity of the beloved through association but also dissociates her from the attributions. In other words, such form of representation defamiliarises the distinct identity of the beloved rather than dissecting the beauty of her body.

After the Songs of Songs, we can note the form of blazon in the medieval tradition of descriptive poetry. In the love poetry of this era, the representation of the feminine beauty does not imply the elevation of the beloved in its metaphorical sense (not to speak of her identity). Ironically, it is not she who is the object of love poetry but her beauty. While in the Songs of Songs, the beloved's beauty is beyond

¹ Francette Pacteau, *The Symptom of Beauty*, p. 60.

² Francis Landy, 'The Song of Songs,' in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, eds. (London: Fontana Press, 1989), pp. 309-10.

description (higher than the attribution) which fortifies her individuality, in the poetry of dominant figures like Petrarch or Dante, the beloved is the embodiment of perfection yet for a different reason. Here, she is transferred by the poet into an ideal picture in order to transform the lover-poet. The beloved, as Pearson maintains, is a symbol of something higher than what she actually signifies in reality.³ Therefore, the presentation of the feminine beauty in the hands of the poet becomes a means for an end other than what it seems. It is after these descriptions that the poet shows his passion for love. This function of feminine beauty justifies its form of representation and consequently the effect it evokes which leads to a statuesque form of beauty.

The late medieval models of the *canone lungo* and the *canone breve*, Pacteau explains, produced a highly stereotypical feminine beauty in art which she later refers to under the term statuesque beauty. In the linearity of discourse, words failed to keep the glory of the female beauty. Therefore, this poetry strove to free the poetic portrait of female beauty from the restraint of linearity. What the poets were looking for was to give an impression of continuous substance to their depiction by creating an imaginary space. Accordingly, the feminine body is constructed by a careful organisation of linguistic elements such as alternance, repetition and mirroring which remind one of the formal procedures of drawing and painting rather than evoking the forms of the woman's body. On the level of semantic structure, the same rules of symmetry and proportion were employed. A selective set of metaphors, for instance, were often arranged to create a pattern of correspondences though not at the level of the signifiers, but at the level of the signifieds - the level of visualisation.⁴ This system of symmetry and proportion and a structured pattern in the depiction of beauty undoubtedly affected the representation and image of the feminine beauty both in poetry and painting during the Renaissance. Though Renaissance poetry shared many

³ Lu Emily Pearson, *Elizabethan Love Conventions* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd, 1966), p. 13.

⁴ Francette Pacteau, pp. 27-8. On the other sources of influence on the Renaissance poetry and painting, Pacteau mentions the medieval portraits of Christ's body. Polychrome statues of the dying Christ, rendered in its finest details, attempted to depict his body in extreme agony. However, it was not the body but of the pain inscribed in the flesh that was supposed to move the beholder to faith (Francette Pacteau, f. 19, p. 213).

elements of the blazon and utilised some regulations of descriptive poetry concerning the feminine beauty, it deviated from the mainstream of the statuesque beauty.

The function of metaphor is very significant in this era as it gradually dissociates the female body from her identity. In the late medieval portrayal of female beauty, metaphor became a substantial means in the depiction of the feminine body by producing a form of life that does not exist in Nature. As different parts of her body become selected and elevated by the power of metaphor, the beloved turns into a portrait for both the male creator and the male patron to visualise. Of the most important of these physical features that gradually developed into a standardised poetic eulogy of the beloved, we can refer to 'wavy tresses gleaming like gold, white skin compared to marble, alabaster, or lilies and roses, eyes outshining the sun or stars, whose gentle gaze nevertheless wounds the lover like arrows, and ruby lips, pearly teeth, and ivory hands'.⁵

The effect of such portrayal of the feminine beauty is a gradual disappearance of the beloved. In the process of analogy, the objects in comparison or rather signs (i.e., roses, snow, pearls, rubies, marble and so on) replace not only the beloved but also her beauty. While in the Songs of Songs, the blazon leads to a divine form of beauty of the beloved, here the representation of beauty leads to the formation of poetry. The object is, as Francette Pacteau recognises, not a description of the feminine body, but rather a discourse in the process of representing *itself*. This form of representation that she calls 'effective evacuation of the feminine body' was most fully achieved in the evolution of the sonnets from the fourteenth century onwards into a compilation of brute metaphors, that not only did not suggest a sense of simile, but had also lost their relation to the supposed referents. In this regard, Pacteau refers to Mario Pozzi's article in *Lettere Italiane* (1979), where he sees such representation of beauty as a kind of 'still-life' or rather an assemblage of essentially heterogeneous elements. The effect of the presented body is like a cold metal, a stone or ice-crystals

⁵ Mary Rogers, 'Sonnets on Female Portraits from Renaissance North Italy,' *Word and Image: A Journal of Verbal / Visual Enquiry* 2:4 (1986), p. 291.

that are in control and possession of the lover. Pozzi in his elaboration of this kind of poetry recognises no prioritization of a painted portrait over the living woman, but rather an *undoing* of the woman in the very act of writing about her or her 'evacuation' to the level of the poetic discourse itself.⁶ This reminds us of Roland Barthes' analysis of blazon as fetishism. Barthes in his analysis of blazon as a method of describing beauty defines very critically how accumulation of adjectives turns into fetishism. What the poet does by employing different methods of explanation is destroying both the beautiful object and the sense of beauty:

language undoes the body, returns it to the fetish. This return is coded under the term blazon. The blazon consists of predicating a single subject, beauty, upon a certain number of anatomical attributes . . . the adjective becomes subject and the substantive becomes predicate . . . as a genre, the blazon expresses the belief that a complete inventory can reproduce a total body, as if the extremity of enumeration, could devise a new category, that of totality: description is then subject to a kind of enumerative eroticism: it accumulates in order to totalise, multiplies fetishes in order to obtain a total, defetished body, thereby, description represents no beauty at all.⁷

In reading medieval poetry, two layers of the poem are unfolded. On the one hand, the metaphorical *act* itself is disclosed, and on the other, we can note a process of incarnation or internment, as a living being is progressively enclosed within a precious casing, a gilded and lacquered shell. Finally, Pacteau, maintaining the obstinate reappearance of the imperfection of the woman's body in the very structure of the language which celebrated her transfiguration by art, questions the nature of this poetic representation: is this a failure of the poetic representation or is it a support and guarantee of a sustained voyeuristic gaze?⁸ According to the state of art, the

⁶ Francette Pacteau, pp. 27-9. Except the imaginary fragmentation of the woman's body in the poetic form of blazon anatomique, Pacteau refers to spiritual anatomies in the moral works that aimed at purifying by cutting away the sins. Though the body here is not the human body but that of the religious text, she maintains that the violence performed here can be read as violence done to the sexual body, and as a mortification of that flesh which Christianity perceived as 'diseased' (pp. 61-2).

⁷ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, Richard Miller, trans. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), pp. 113-14.

⁸ Francette Pacteau, pp. 29-30.

transfiguration of female beauty certainly does not connote a failure of poetic representation. The artists intentionally attempted to represent an elevated form of beauty despite its artificiality. However, it does guarantee a sustained gaze as enclosing this unreal beauty in the hands of its creator turns her into a possessed object. Furthermore, one might even suggest that this eternal possession not only confirms the role of the creator as absolute master but also transforms him as I shall explain later in this chapter.

The idealisation of the beloved in Shakespeare

To explain the process of the idealisation of the beloved in Shakespeare's poetry, I will provide a brief account of the idealisation of woman in the Renaissance painting since the relation between poetry and painting has been profound during this period. Renaissance theories of the representation of female beauty and descriptions of beautiful bodies had a great impact on both poetry and painting of this era. The persistent tendency to follow the Classics' formulation of art on the one hand, and the medieval initiation in the depiction of beauty on the other led to a new field of representation. In their treatises, Renaissance painters like Alberti or classical theoreticians like Lucian discuss the impossibility of representation of beauty. In their attempt to formulate a theory of art, they were concerned with an essential dilemma, the unrepresentability of beauty. In their theories, as Elizabeth Cropper has pointed out, they argued that the physical beauty of the beloved is necessarily beyond representation, or that the representation of her intrinsic beauty is specifically beyond the painter's reach, and finally, while the subject becomes necessarily absent, the painting of a beautiful woman, like its representation in the lyric poem, may become its main object.⁹ Therefore, it is the task of the artist, in its broad sense, to complete or more precisely to amend nature's beauty. According to Nicholas Hilliard, a sixteenth-

⁹ Elizabeth Cropper, 'The Beauty of Woman: Problems in the Rhetoric of Renaissance Portraiture,' in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, Nancy J. Vickers, Margaret W. Ferguson, and Maureen Quilligan, eds. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986) p. 181.

century artist and art theoretician, the highest form of painting is that in which the best features of the subject - both grace and countenance - are displayed to the onlooker. Hilliard's theory of 'imitation' indicates neither a crude realism nor naturalism; rather his notion of imitation implies 'faithfulness to an idea and an ideal in a painting'.¹⁰ This idea of beauty led to a form of representation that eulogised female beauty based on perfect standards. The result of this approach toward beauty was the problem of identity in the Renaissance portraits and the fragmentation of beauty in poetry. Many portraits of beautiful women are unidentifiable not because of the artist's intention but since they signify representations of an ideal beauty in which the question of identity becomes totally insignificant.¹¹ In poetry, too, the image of beauty becomes 'fragmented': the glorified woman gradually disappears from the poem. She is replaced by selected parts of her body. The aim of the poet, as I mentioned before, changes from the adoration of the beloved to the process of description.

In this field of challenge for the possibility of representation, the imperfection of beauty in nature implied the existence of a perfect ideal beauty in the mind of the poet-painter. In this regard, we may refer to Leonardo da Vinci who determined to express the beauty of the soul through the representation of the elegant movements of the body. He succeeded in representing both the form and character of an individual woman as the 'effigy' of the perfect idea in the lover's heart.¹² What we see in Leonardo da Vinci is a clear state of the idealisation of the beloved whose external and internal beauty he claims to reflect.

In a parallel structure, the sixteenth-century representations of the feminine body in poetry attempted to master their represented object. Renaissance poetic discourses, as Pacteau demonstrates, appealed to ordering and categorising the body fragment in a context which led to the formulation of the theory of proportions and the articulation of the scientific system of 'anatomy'. Through fragmentation of the body,

¹⁰ Michael Leslie, 'The Dialogue Between Bodies and Souls: Pictures and Poesy in the English Renaissance,' *Word and Image: A Journal of Verbal / Visual Enquiry* 1 (1985), p. 22.

¹¹ Elizabeth Cropper, p. 178.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 189.

they could discover a unified truth.¹³ Plato's idea of perfection had a strong influence on feminine beauty in painting. For Plato, elements such as measure and harmony 'are the defining principles of the good and the beautiful. Measure forms the ideal standard to which all creation that aspires even to beauty must conform'.¹⁴ Here again, the female body is an image. She is just the reflection of the original beauty since she is a false copy. We can not find beauty in reality but only in the picture being perfected, according to the ideal Form.

In this form of representation, it seems that beauty does not exist on its own anymore. Beauty needs to be projected on the one hand and disembodied on the other. Pacteau, referring to the fragmentation of beauty, explains how organising, ordering and formulating the body led to its abstraction as the highest form of perfection. In accordance with the principles of the Platonic tradition, the human body was measured and nature was discovered to be perfectly rational. In this manner, reason became naturalised, while nature became rationalised. The human figure was against regularity. By imposing the regularity of geometrical form, the artist was, in fact, emphasising his intellectual and spiritual power rather than the physical presence of the represented. Therefore, there was no absolute relation between the standards of human proportion and physical beauty. Systems of proportion, instead, established ideals of different physical types. These types were not always described as beautiful; however, contemporary notions of beauty recognised the idea of purity and absoluteness in them. The artist attempted to uplift and elevate the human body. This total dissolution of phenomena into abstraction was considered as the highest form of perfection. The mathematization of the 'well-proportioned' body offers a privileged instance of sublimation. Conforming to mathematical equivalences, the material body dissolves into the abstraction.¹⁵ It seems that in this manner, the artist maintains control over the body as the microcosm of a macrocosm is defeated and surrendered.

¹³ Francette Pacteau, p. 61.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-91.

As I elaborated on the paradoxical feature of sublimation, the lover - or the artist in general - sublimates himself by elevating the represented object.

From what I explained concerning the theories of representation of female beauty in the Renaissance visual arts, it should be reasonable to conclude how this function of beauty paves the way for the sublimisation of the beloved in Shakespeare's poetry. Just as Leonardo da Vinci challenged the painting of that era to portray the character and soul of the beautiful woman, Shakespeare and many poets of the time, to a great extent under the influence of Platonism, attempted to describe their beloved's virtues. There are many passages in Shakespeare's poems where the inward beauty of the beloved equates his/her external beauty: 'Had I no eyes but ears, my ears would love / That inward beauty and invisible; / Or were I deaf, thy outward parts would move / Each part in me that were but sensible' (VA. 433-6). However, among the virtues of the beloved, chastity is described most by the poet as the sign of faith to his gospel of love. The beloved is the symbol of purity as opposed to sin against love. In the idealisation of the beloved, the poet-lover associates his beloved with chastity: 'Lucrece the chaste' (RL. 7). In the case of Lucrece, chastity forms her identity without which she can not exist. This has been confirmed in the beginning of the poem where the colour white defies the colour red in the heraldry of her face (RL. 57-70). Like the shield that is inherited as a possession, she does not belong to herself but to Collatine:

'If, Collatine, thine honour lay in me,
From me by strong assault it if bereft;
My honey lost, and I a drone-like bee,
Have no perfection of my summer left,
But robbed and ransacked by injurious theft.
In thy weak hive a wand'ring wasp hath crept,
And sucked the honey which thy chaste bee kept. (RL. 834-40)

In *Venus and Adonis*, Adonis is the emblem of chastity who more clearly than Lucrece defends his purity. He presents the theme of Narcissus in Shakespeare and

accordingly opposes the deceitful power of reason that preaches the idea of procreation as the object of love: '... O strange excuse, / When reason is the bawd to lust's abuse!' (VA. 791-2). As the antagonist, Adonis defines love and distinguishes it from lust:

'Call it not Love, for Love to heaven is fled
Since sweating Lust on earth usurped his name,
Under whose simple semblance he hath fed
Upon fresh beauty, blotting it with blame; ...
'Love comforteth like sunshine after rain,
But Lust's effect is tempest after sun;
Love's gentle spring doth always fresh remain,
Lust's winter comes ere summer half be done;
Love surfeits not, Lust like a glutton dies;
Love is all truth, Lust full of forgèd lies. (VA. 793-804)

In Shakespeare's poetry, the role of the images of beauty is different. The analogy that relates the beauty of the beloved to the beauty in nature through metaphors succeeds to praise the source of beauty, a beauty that is not definable. As such, the poet constantly reminds us that the beauty of his beloved is merely a gift. Thus, beauty becomes a general, abstract concept rather than a physical feature. There are many passages where the poet ponders the nature of beauty itself as in the *Sonnets* or *Venus and Adonis*. Accordingly, beauty serves as a metonymy where female beauty is only an association. Shakespeare, therefore, describes beauty rather than its associated objects. And this intensifies the subjective mode of his poems since the beauty of the beloved stands for the state of beauty in the material world (Plato's Form). This leads us to Shakespeare's conception of beauty: there is never a perfect beauty and all beauty is imperfect and fatal. Therefore, there is not a perfect description for it as every comparison does not represent beauty in its origin. Beauty can neither be described nor defined. Earthly beauty or rather generally beauty in nature is merely a signifier. Yet, it is a signifier in the hands of the lover who presents

it through a series of attributions. Though it refers to a sign for the lover, it can not be signified. There is a paradox in the nature of beauty. It describes its object but can not be described itself. Such an assumption of representing beauty was dominant among the Renaissance painters. When beauty is defined as infinite number of codes with no origin, then perfection becomes meaningless. Barthes refers to beauty as an infinity of codes, its origin being lost. In describing a beautiful image, we always attribute its features to another image; there is no perfect explanation in our descriptions. As Roland Barthes maintains, beauty can not be explained:

in each part of the body it stands out, repeats itself, but it does not describe itself. . . . The discourse, then, can do no more than assert the perfection of each detail and refer "the remainder" to the code underlying all beauty: Art. . . . deprived of any anterior code, beauty would be mute. Every direct predicate is denied it; the only feasible predicates are either tautology . . . or simile. . . . Thus beauty is referred to an infinity of codes: *lovely as Venus?* But *Venus lovely as what?*¹⁶

To stop this endless chain of signifying beauty by its representatives or to end the replication of beauty, Barthes returns it to silence, to the ineffable. By referring the referent back to the invisible, he tries to affirm the code without realising its original. And the only rhetorical figure which fills this blank in the object of comparison is catachresis, a more basic figure perhaps than metonymy, since it speaks around an empty object of comparison: the figure of beauty.¹⁷

Speaking of the objectification of woman, Pacteau refers to Mary Ann Doane's analogy of woman to the hieroglyphic. There is a duality in the hieroglyphic in the sense that it is both an indecipherable language in a signifying system and an immediate, pictorial language. According to Doane, on the one hand the woman harbours a mystery, an inaccessible otherness, and on the other, to speak or think of the woman instantly and inevitably evokes the woman's *body*. This (always already

¹⁶ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, pp. 33-34.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

given) corporeality suffuses the woman's relationship to the environment of signs. Later, Pacteau traces these beliefs back to the Renaissance where the inception of the myth of hieroglyphics is considered as the iconic embodiment of a lost knowledge. The hieroglyphics is the language of a desire for the unmediated communication of a unitary truth. The Renaissance humanist's explanation of the hieroglyph goes back to Classical literature, and particularly to Plato's doctrine of the 'two worlds'.¹⁸

In Shakespeare's poetry, we can note these two aspects of the beloved. On the one hand, the beloved is a sign that signifies the elevated image with which the lover yearns to identify. On the other hand, she is inaccessible like an icon. She can not represent what she is expected to since she is an other outside the lover's self. This loss of mediation could stand for the image of her/his death in Shakespeare's poems. Although in portraying the beloved, Shakespeare devotes some stanzas where the beauty of the beloved is described, references to her/his physical beauty are very limited throughout the poem. The notion of beauty is not necessarily equated with female beauty in Shakespeare's poetry. Beauty is always supposed to be related to an idea that the lover strives to make. Even in those limited passages where the physical beauty of the beloved is presented, the descriptions are far from cliché which therefore fortify a different effect. In fact, the metaphor used in the descriptions of beauty in Shakespeare's poems is not a privileged means in the depiction of the feminine body, neither does it produce the impression of a compilation of different parts of the body. Though the poet's descriptions evoke a visual effect, metaphors in Shakespeare primarily suggest the poet's idea and concern with beauty in relation to love. In *Venus and Adonis*, Adonis's beauty is elevated by a lover who is herself the goddess of love and beauty:

'Thrice fairer than myself', thus she began,
'The field's chief flower, sweet above compare,
Stain to all nymphs, more lovely than a man,
More white and red than doves or roses are:

¹⁸ Francette Pacteau, pp. 99-100.

Nature that made thee, with herself at strife,
Saith that the world hath ending with thy life. (VA. 7-12)

Adonis' beauty is not comparable. His superior beauty has even *stained* the nymphs. In sum, he is the emblem of beauty and that is confirmed not in terms of excessive physical description that led to the fragmented body of the beloved in the previous era. Rather, Adonis' beauty, on the one hand, reveals the state of perfection of the beloved for the lover, and on the other, directs his arguments. In Shakespeare's poems, beauty is treated as a concept. Therefore, the beauty of the beloved is analysed rather than described. Most often his inner and outer beauty is referred to by colours: 'Being red, she loves him best, and being white, / Her best is bettered with a more delight' (VA. 77-8). The colours red and white, symbolising the two aspects of the beloved's perfect beauty, recur like a motif constantly throughout the poem, reminding us of the function of beauty in relation to love. The use of these symbols liberates the poet from practising excessive physical descriptions. The same colours appear at the end of the poem when Adonis is transformed into a purple flower.

In *The Rape of Lucrece*, Lucrece's beauty is described in the line of the argument of the poem. Her lily hands, rosy cheek, azure veins, alabaster skin, coral lips, snow-white dimpled chin are all metaphors to convey the purity of her beauty as well as the beauty of her purity. Though she is presented as the emblem of beauty, these images are contrasted with the dazzling eyes of death gazing on her: 'Showing life's triumph in the map of death, / And death's dim look in life's mortality' (RL. 402-3). This emblem of beauty lies on her bed but like a 'virtuous monument' lying to be admired (RL. 386-420). She is a monument that associates her beauty with death. Her eyes like marigolds, her breasts like ivory globes and her hair like golden threads played with her breath; yet the poet immediately utters in a tone of despair: 'O modest wantons, wanton modesty!' (RL. 401). Though the poet elevates Lucrece, we look at her beauty through the eyes of Tarquin who as the agent of death desires her

destruction. It is according to this conception of beauty that Tarquin says, 'Thy beauty hath ensnared thee to this night' (*RL*. 485).

In this poem, too, the colours red and white describe beauty and virtue through her face. Lucrece represents the ideal beauty; she is a most beauteous and priceless jewel 'unmatchèd red and white' (*RL*. 11). Another instance of the role of metaphor in Shakespeare's poetry occurs in this poem where Lucrece's face is likened to a shield. This is a multilayered metaphor through which the poet not only implies the traditional conventions of heraldry but also the inner strife that is tormenting Lucrece. Accordingly, she is an object to be possessed like an inherited shield. Furthermore, the metaphor effectively demonstrates the war between beauty and virtue represented by the colours red and white (*RL*. 50-77).

In this manner, we can note how the physical descriptions of the beloved are located in the line of the lover's argument. Beauty becomes an abstract concept when the lover is arguing about its reproductive role. In many instances, the lover directly refers to the perfect beauty of the beloved but suddenly relates it to human mortality and expounds the reproductive role of beauty against the destructive power of time: 'The tender spring upon thy tempting lip / Shows thee unripe; yet mayst thou well be tasted. / Make use of time, let not advantage slip; / Beauty within itself should not be wasted' (*VA*. 127-30). The descriptions such as tenderness of his lips or the likeness of his breath to heavenly moisture scattered throughout the poem are supposed to signify, on the one hand, the perfection of beauty represented by the beloved, and on the other, they disclose, at the service of the lover's discourse, the function of beauty. Beauty is meaningless on its own: 'Look in mine eye-balls, there thy beauty lies: / Then why not on lips, since eyes in eyes?' (*VA*. 119-20). The essence of beauty lies in regeneration which therefore perceives of beauty as a phenomenon signifying mortality; beauty by its nature multiplies itself: beauty breedeth beauty (*VA*. 167).

The role of metaphor lies in relation to the idea of the poet. As such, the theme of immortality and the neoplatonic conception of *eros* as procreation of beauty provided substantial sources of material for poetic metaphors. Furthermore, the

dominant theories of painting that advocated the imperfection and defects of beauty in painting reinforced a new form of the representation of beauty in the Renaissance. This, however, does not mean that the place of the beloved changed in relation to the representation of desire. In Renaissance love lyrics, the beloved still signifies an essential element that develops the lover's idealistic movement of sublimation. Yet, feminine beauty is not elevated and later fragmented per se. In his historical account of the development of the metaphor, Terence Hawkes considers the use of metaphors in Renaissance poetry as neither sensual nor artificial. For the Renaissance poet, he argues, metaphors were selected by *appropriateness* rather than *accuracy*. Illustrating his point by a poem from Thomas Campion, Hawkes maintains that describing the lady's face in terms of a garden is not because of a physical resemblance. Rather, this metaphor enables the poet to associate her beauty with the Garden of Eden which links her virginity to a state of holy innocence. For the Elizabethan poet, metaphor represents an act of ordering imposed on Nature. It had a didactic role to manifest truths, ideas and values that maintained public assent.¹⁹

The dominant imagery that pervades Shakespeare's poems is not found in the passages where feminine beauty is idealised but in the images that convey the death of beauty or its association with death. In fact, beauty and desire are two fundamental elements of Shakespeare's poetry and their association with death structures his conception of love. Except for the image of the death of the beloved who was the emblem of beauty as in *Venus and Adonis* or *The Rape of Lucrece*, the relation of beauty and death is intricately analysed in the other poems. And these analytical treatments of beauty as a natural phenomenon that revives itself only through regeneration is best illustrated in the *Sonnets*. In the *Sonnets*, the image of time successfully relates the beauty of the youth with death and decay. The lover in his analysis of the cycle of birth and rebirth compares the beauty of his beloved to the glory of the sun and describes the 'feeble age' of the utmost reality of nature (sonnet 7.10). Although the lover-poet often condemns the narcissistic attitude of the youth

¹⁹ Terence Hawkes, *Metaphor* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1972), pp. 19-20.

that somehow celebrates death and destruction, he constantly fights against time and tries to protect the youth by making him reproduce his beautiful image: 'Pity the world, or else this glutton be, / To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee' (sonnet 1.13-14). In some other sonnets, the lover-poet, opposing the traditional description of feminine beauty, sarcastically elevates her ugliness. In the sonnets related to the dark lady, the poet strives to construct a meaning of love in accordance with her inward beauty: 'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun; / Coral is far more red than her lips' red; If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun; / If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head; / I have seen roses damasked, red and white, / But no such roses see I in her cheeks' (sonnet 130.1-6). In *A Lover's Complaint*, the poet deliberately associates the idea of beauty with the reality of mortality to convey the loss of purity. The maid's beauty is described as 'The carcass of a beauty spent and done' (11) or 'her levelled eyes', her loose hair, 'pale and pinèd cheek' (22-35) remind us of the tragedy of Lucrece.

This seems to be the role that beauty is given in the Platonic conception of *eros*. In the Platonic sense, beauty represented in the beloved is only an image, a reflection. Beauty lacks a real essence thereby it multiplies itself. Furthermore, beauty is hierarchical; there are gradations of beauty. Shakespeare's lover follows the philosopher-lover of Plato in the stages of beauty. He desires beauty personified in the beloved since *eros* is basically the desire of the beautiful. Yet, in his perception of the corporeality of this beauty, he associates it with death. In his ascent, the lover begins to sublimate himself by elevating the beloved. Despising the pollutions of the flesh, he elevates the perfect state of her beauty by adding the element of chastity. The idealisation movement of the beloved is a stage where he can identify his ideal image with the beloved. The result is that the lover is elevated in the movement of idealisation while the beloved loses her/his reality and identity. She becomes absent or an image that does not exist. At this stage, her beauty becomes the object of *eros*, that is the lover's desire. The death of the beloved is a dominant image that testifies to the absence of the beloved in the lover's ascent.

We can note a structure of contrast in the lover's arguments with the beloved. The contrast is made to reinforce the relation of beauty to death in a shocking manner. This structure later reveals a hidden paradox where the lover idealises the beloved and at the same time destroys her. Venus in her arguments with Adonis tries to convince him of the frailty of his stubbornness while in the previous stanza, she is talking of nature's treason against the divine for framing him. After praising Adonis' beauty in such a exaggerated way that makes earth in love with his 'footing trips' (722), Venus concludes that not only beauty but his chastity will lead to destruction:

'What is thy body but a swallowing grave,
Seeming to bury that posterity . . .
'So in thyself thyself are made away,
A mischief worse than civil home-bred strife,
Or theirs whose desperate hands themselves do slay,
Or butcher sire that reaves his son of life.
Foul cank'ring rust the hidden treasure frets,
But gold that's put to use more gold begets.' (VA.757-768)

'Therefore, despite of fruitless chastity,
Love-lacking vestals and self-loving nuns,
That on the earth would breed a scarcity
And barren dearth of daughters and of sons,
Be prodigal: the lamp that burns by night
Dries up his oil to lend the world his light. (VA. 751-6)

In all these instances, it is through the eyes of the lover or the poet that we perceive the representation of beauty. Beauty is an essential part of love and therefore the transformation of the lover. Beauty is characterised with the beloved. Therefore with the death of beauty, the beloved dies too. However, in the poems where we can indicate the presence of the beloved, another notion of beauty is presented. In *The Rape of Lucrece*, Lucrece becomes the victim of beauty; she truly represents the destruction of beauty. Whatever the agent of destruction be (time in the *Sonnets*, the

boar in *Venus and Adonis*), the lover or the poet manipulates beauty. And in *The Rape of Lucrece*, Lucrece questions the power that has polluted beauty with impurity:

‘Why should the worm intrude the maiden bud?
Or hateful cuckoos hatch in sparrows’ nests?
Or toads infect fair founts with venom mud?
Or tyrant folly lurk in gentle breasts?
Or kings be breakers of their own behests?
But no perfection is so absolute
That some impurity doth not pollute. (RL. 848-54)

As the victim of the law that the poet-lover has devised for her to die, she questions the justice of the law that creates a wolf for the lamb (877-8). In other words, she interrogates her creation and the tragic fate she is given by the poet. She blames Time and Opportunity in betraying her honour and fate (876-1029). Was her beauty a mistaken gift that mixed the purity of the divine with the impurity of the human? Thus, in her soliloquies, her mourning turns to a serious dilemma:

‘So then he hath it when he cannot use it,
And leaves it to be mastered by his young,
Who in their pride do presently abuse it.
Their father was too weak, and they too strong,
To hold their cursèd-blessèd fortune long.
The sweets we wish for turn to loathèd sours
Even in the moment that we call them ours. (RL. 862-8)

Beauty, then, is impure. In the process of representing the beloved, beauty mutilates her. Furthermore, it does not signify the lover’s desire. Shakespeare’s poetry, therefore, in its attempts to dematerialise the beloved not only demonstrates the unrepresentability of beauty but also reveals the inexpressibility of desire. Shakespeare’s poems reflect this sense of negativity in their portrayal of the frustration, anguish and strife of the lover to establish his identity as lover in his movements of idealisation. The lover-poet not only presents his failure to express the

utmost beauty of his beloved but also fails to express his desire. The theme or topos of the unspeakability of love, as Werner Habicht interprets it, is best illustrated in the *Sonnets* where the lover-poet facing the crisis of love begins to question the power of his muse. The muse that is identifiable as his poetic capability is criticised for its failure: 'truant Muse' (101), 'tongue-tied Muse' (100), 'O, how I faint when I of you write' (80), 'my verse so barren' (76); often the poet compares himself to a wrecked worthless boat (80) or an empty book (77).²⁰ The discourse of desire, therefore, betrays its emptiness in representing both the object and the subject of desire. In other words, the poem fails in representing the truth of the beloved as well as the lover's complexity of desire.

The paradox of idealisation and denial

In analysing Plato's *eros* in the first part of my work, I drew the conclusion that Platonic *eros* is an everlasting desire to possess beauty, and that beauty in Plato is equated with wisdom. Therefore, Platonic love is characterised as a highly intellectual movement towards attaining the knowledge of beauty which exists, theoretically speaking, in the Idea of Forms. Accordingly, the lover is a philosopher who searches for wisdom. In most of Plato's works, the image of the philosopher is associated with the lover: 'In the *Republic* (501d) philosophers are said to be *erastai* of being and truth, inasmuch as it is the philosopher's nature to love [*eran*] the kind of learning that reveals something of eternal being (485a-b)'.²¹ In the *Symposium*, the dominant notion that turns the image of the enthusiastic lover into an intuitive philosopher is the idea of ascension. In defining *eros*, Socrates (Plato's spokesman in the *Symposium*) subsumes some hierarchy in the attainment of the knowledge of beauty. The lover should pass different stages of love starting from physical love to a totally spiritual love where he can *see* Beauty itself with the eye of wisdom. Cummings in his

²⁰ Werner Habicht, '“My tongue-tied Muse”: Inexpressibility in Shakespeare's Sonnets,' in *Shakespeare's Universe: Renaissance Ideas and Conventions*, John M. Mucciolo, et al, eds. (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), pp. 196-200.

²¹ David Halperin, 'Plato and Erotic Reciprocity,' p. 72.

discussion on the way the philosopher-lover possess beauty through rational thought points out that: 'Platonic *eros*, as it is most purely manifested, in the philosopher, is the desire for eternal contemplation of forms. . . . The philosopher, then, after he has attained to knowledge of the good or of beauty wishes, not just to contemplate goodness or beauty, but to philosophize'.²²

The best illustration that Plato provides for the striking analogy between the lover and the philosopher in the *Symposium* is the figure of Socrates. As the main character, Socrates' image is elaborated more than any other character as if Plato meant to illustrate his theories through him. He gives a definition of *eros* which is different from the other interlocutors. His definition is neither like an eulogy (Agathon's) nor historical/mythological (Erixymachus') description of love. In fact, he constructs a theory of love: that *eros* is merely a desire which seeks an everlasting possession of beauty. Moreover, he philosophises it by distinguishing an opposition in the nature of *eros* in terms of a desire-as-lack and thus maintains a system of hierarchy for the final vision of Beauty. And finally, he contemplates on the knowledge of beauty as the last stage in the ascent.

Having made this reference to Platonic love, I think that the hierarchical relationship between the lover and the beloved in Shakespeare's poetry establishes the lover as the philosopher. In Shakespeare's poetry, the lover is characterised not only as philosopher but as the creator of the beloved. It is the lover who defines love for his beloved; he is knowledgeable in this field. Venus as the lover, in *Venus and Adonis*, defines love: 'Love is a spirit all compact of fire, / Not gross to sink, but light and will aspire' (VA. 149-50). In his relationship with his/her beloved, the lover rationalises the concept of love. Accordingly, in his discourses with the beloved, he does not describe her/his physical beauty as much as he ponders the idea of beauty. And as I discussed above, beauty is described as a power that dominates man and nature against the power of time. However, as the lover has the knowledge of love, he analyses the nature of beauty in a rational and argumentative manner. He discusses with the

²² P. W. Cummings, pp. 24-6.

beloved that his/her beauty as part of the beauty in nature obeys the same law: 'Beauty within itself should not be wasted. / Fair flowers that are not gather'd in their prime / Rot, and consume themselves in little time' (VA. 130-2). There are many passages such as the first fifteen sonnets, where the lover compares the beauty of the beloved to beauty in nature and through this analogy confirms that beauty is not everlasting:

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,
Will be a tattered weed of small worth held: (sonnet 2.1-4)
For never-resting time leads summer on
To hideous winter, and confounds him there, (sonnet 5.5-6)

Following his argument concerning the nature of beauty, the lover advises the beloved to immortalise his/her beauty through procreation: 'Things growing to themselves are growth's abuse. / Seeds spring from seeds, and beauty breedeth beauty; / Thou wast begot, to get it is thy duty' (VA. 166-8). However, in all his arguments, the lover equates beauty with death. The lover feels pity for the inescapable death of beauty in his love upon which he has no power to control:

'Upon the earth's increase why shouldst thou feed,
Unless the earth with thy increase be fed?
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.' (VA. 169-74)

The lover approaches this dilemma in various ways: the war of beauty against time (sonnets 63-5), the cycle of desire/lack (sonnets 52, 59), immortalisation of the beloved by procreation (sonnets 1-15), immortalisation of the beloved in his verse (sonnets 79-84), and finally despising the beloved's narcissistic attitude toward love. Thus, Shakespeare brings the traditional theme of *carpe diem*, where the idea of the

consumption of beauty is positioned against the metaphysical power of time, in the context of religion of love. In other words, the fulfilment of love is maintained through the immortality of beauty (the beloved).

In the other poems such as *The Rape of Lucrece* and *A Lover's Complaint*, similar descriptive passages on the eulogy of beauty, chastity and the discourses of desire are dominant. Although the motif of desire in terms of a strife is stronger, the same structure of argumentation is depicted. The presumed lover persuades the maid to fulfil his wishes:

‘Lo, all these trophies of affections hot,
Of pensived and subdued desires the tender,
Nature hath charged me that I hoard them not,
But yield them up where I myself must render:
That is, to you, my origin and ender;
For these, of force, must your oblations be,
Since, I their altar, you enpatron me. . . .
‘But, O my sweet, what labour is’t to leave
The thing we have not, mast’ring what not strives, (LC. 218-40)

In *The Rape of Lucrece*, Tarquin rationalises that the source of his desire has been her beauty. Thus again, it is beauty that persuades him yet in a different way. And in this battle for the possession of beauty, Love and Fortune are his assistants (RL. 351):

. . . ‘The colour in thy face,
That even for anger makes the lily pale
And the red rose blush at her own disgrace,
Shall plead for me and tell my loving tale.
Under that colour am I come to scale
Thy never-conquered fort. The fault is thine,
For those thine eyes betray thee unto mine. (RL. 477-83)

Having said that beauty is the source of desire and love in the lover, I will suggest that the lover is indeed the creator of his beloved. There are many passages in

the *Sonnets* where the lover addresses his muse as a creative power. It seems that contrary to the conventional image of the beloved's eyes as a source of inspiration for love, the lover-poet in the *Sonnets* gives an important role to his muse instead. This change of the image is due to the change of the function of beauty in Shakespeare's poetry that I discussed before. Beauty is merely the embodiment of the image of the lover's ideal ego. It is the muse that directs his emotions and creates the beloved: 'Then do thy office, Muse: I teach thee how / To make him seem long hence as he shows now' (sonnet 101.13-14). In sonnet 100, the lover asks his muse to give an immortal life to his beloved faster than time. As such, the poet strives to immortalise his beloved in his verse (sonnets 17-21). The muse revives the image the lover-poet wishes for; it represents the ego that yearns to possess its creation. As the creator of his beloved, the lover immortalises her/him in different ways: through procreation, his verse or in his heart. However, not only is the beloved merely an image based on the lover's ego, she is also presented like an image. Her presence can not be noted in the lover's talks; she seems relatively absent. Furthermore, she is an image in terms of her unreal state of perfection and beauty. What we can note here is the movement of the lover's desire that seeks to identify with an ideal image. The desire of the amorous poet, as Francette Pacteau argues, is for an image since,

[u]nlike a living woman, an image would not be able to evade him. . . . The image, then, promises the peace of undisturbed possession to the tormented lover; as image, the fair tormentor has been captured and disarmed. But although it is an image whose beauty even nature envies, it remains inert, and the poet passionately wishes - to the point of hallucination - that, Pygmalion-like, he might bring it to life. . . . The beloved is thus, no more than an image and this blurs the distinction between the sign and the referent.²³

Therefore, the beloved becomes the object of the lover's desire. In fact, she replaces, as I shall explain later, the lost object of desire (*objet a*). Comparing the representation of feminine beauty in the visual and verbal art of this period reveals the

²³ Francette Pacteau, p. 25.

close tie between word and image. In both realms, she is not the perceiver but the perceived. She is the inferior in the lover-philosopher's ascent in the *Symposium* and here she is the object of the other's desire. She carries the ideal image of the lover's ego and is the unreal representation of her beauty. Similarly, the woman presented in the Renaissance painting is subject to the same theories of perspective. John Berger, in his book *Ways of Seeing*, gives a thorough analysis of the picture of woman in the painting of this era. He states that woman is both the surveyor and the surveyed yet only within herself. Man's identity or his social presence is always exterior while woman's is intrinsic. She always carries her own image. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. The conclusion that Berger draws here is that since the woman is always surveyed, she becomes an object of vision: a sight. This view of the woman being seen and judged as a sight leads him to question the role of feminine beauty in this era as the principal, ever-recurring subject of painting on the one hand and her nudity on the other. Berger argues that since the sexual imagery is frontal, the woman becomes identified with the surveyed. Although the illustration of the first nudes (i.e., Adam and Eve) in the medieval period is more narrative like and the nude look shameful, later in the Renaissance with the advance of secularity, more themes were offered and nudity became a common feature. Whatever the subject of painting is, they look at the spectator/the painter. Though most of the subjects of the paintings are love, the woman does not look at her lover. All her attention is given to the spectator who is the male subject.²⁴ It seems that there is a distance between the lover and the spectator. And this distance reveals clearly the position of the female in the Renaissance painting.

In a parallel structure, we can note similar representations of feminine beauty in the poetry of the time. In Shakespeare's poems, the hierarchical relation, the vague presence of the beloved and the domination of the poet-lover's point of view in the poems remind us of the frontal imagery in the paintings where she is completely

²⁴ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1981), pp. 45-56.

exposed in order to be surveyed. The painter does not provide any dimension and she is portrayed with a distance; there is no relation. This form of representation suggests the primacy as well as dominance of the subject over the object or more precisely the viewer over the viewed. According to Berger, the convention of perspective, which is unique to European art and which was first established in the early Renaissance, centres everything on the eye of the beholder. The perspective makes the single eye the centre of the visible world as if the visible world is arranged for the spectator. In the convention of perspective there is no visual reciprocity.²⁵ The male onlooker, therefore, is the male creator who holds the truth. This leads me to the idea of the multiplicity of male identity as the creator, the poet-painter, the lover and the spectator. The poet is not only creating the beloved (the feminine beauty) but establishes himself as the lover in his discourse of desire. Furthermore, in his creation, he becomes the spectator who challenges his art rather than relating to it. This reminds me of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's notion of homosocial desire that I sketched in my introduction. Desire is structured by a triangular relation of rivalry, a desire for maintaining and transmitting the patriarchal power where the woman is effaced in this triangular structure even from the relations of desire. Just like the idea of the triangle of desire, the male is both the producer and the receiver and the female here serves merely as the object of that connection. She is the object of that survey.

In the representation of the beloved as the object of the lover's desire on the one hand and as an elevated image on the other, we can refer to the paradoxical nature of the image. Despite the rhetorics of desire in Shakespeare's poem, the image retains a power. The more the lover-poet idealises the beloved to the state of a perfect idol, the more deceived he becomes: 'Even poor birds, deceived with painted grapes / Do surfeit by the eye and pine the maw; / Even so she languisheth in her mishaps, / As those poor birds that helpless berries saw' (VA. 601-4). Richard Halpern in his reading of *Venus and Adonis*, refers to the myth of Pygmalion and Zeuxis' successful painting as instances that represent the metamorphic power of the image. Pygmalion created a

²⁵ Ibid., p. 16.

statue and Zeuxis' portrayal of grapes is so real that birds flew towards his picture. Both Pygmalion and Zeux created an image (statue/painting) that is not real. In other words, the image is a shadow, an ontological nullity that can not come to life. However, there is a kind of metamorphic inversion between the viewer and the object (image) which reflects the emptiness of the creator.²⁶ It seems that though the image becomes stunted and nullified for the domineering role of the creator, it retains a power to transform him not in a neoplatonic sense but to dislocate his identity. In representing the conflict of desire, Shakespeare's lover comes to recognise the image as the signifier of a lack.

It seems that these poetic manoeuvres in presenting a perfect beauty can not simply be regarded as the elevation of the beloved. The creation of an ideal beauty that only exists in the lover-poet's mind enables him to master the object of his own creation. By describing her beauty, the poet brings her to life. Yet, she is no more than an image; her life lies in the hands of the poet, or more precisely, in the lover's desire. He defines the nature of his desire and destroys her when necessary. The poet-lover is the master of his own creation. He not only articulates the object of his desire and dominates it but also enjoys the pleasure of a double act by creating both poetry and the beloved.

Such interpretation of the beloved as merely an image and the lover as the creator of perfect beauty in his discourse of desire raises in itself two important issues. First, the act of creation is an indication of male procreation. The lover by elevating and immortalising the beloved in his verse is actually giving birth to her by the power of his verse. The reproductive role of the female is replaced by the male power of procreation. And as I explained in Chapter Eight, the symbolic function of the transference of procreation from the female to male endows a double role to the lover-poet. He both gives birth to her and forms her identity or, as Plato's lover puts, it educates him/her. Therefore, the lover-poet can not only create the beloved through

²⁶ Richard Halpern, '“Pining Their Maws”: Female Readers and the Erotic Ontology of the Text in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*,' in *Venus and Adonis: Critical Essays*, Philip C. Kolin, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), pp. 382-83.

the power of his muse, but he can also immortalise her/him by the power of his verse. Secondly, the act of creation manifests a desire on the part of the lover to compete with Nature. This recalls the final movement of ascension in Plato where the lover begins to *create* not the images of beauty but the real Beauty itself. Plato's lover-philosopher becomes the craftsman by identifying himself with the divine vision. Shakespeare's lover creates an image of the beloved that is perfect (she is the embodiment of beauty and purity) in contrast to the blemished forms of her in Nature. In this regard, by taking the role to engender life, man poses a challenge to his own creator.

Not only does the lover create the beloved according to the image of his ideal ego but he also sublimates himself. The movement of her idealisation paradoxically articulates his sublimation. By creating her according to the object of his own desire, the lover partially succeeds in satisfying his ego. By engendering life to the image of the ideal ego, the lover's ego that forms his self is sublimated. Therefore, the lover, by elevating the beloved and creating a perfect image, not only masters his object but also sublimates himself. Furthermore, through this he can reassert his own identity as a lover. Laplanche explains the same tendency in the subject: that the distance between the viewer and the viewed gradually disappears when the viewer takes the viewed into itself and this internalisation always involves mastery.²⁷ In the process of the lover's ascension, to use Plato's term, the beloved becomes internalised. And this guarantees a structure of completion at the level of the ego. This structure of completion, however, should not be interpreted as a state of unity with the beloved as I explained this point in detail in Chapter Eight.

This powerful creative role of the lover, however, involves some consequences. Upon these reflections or consequences, Shakespeare's poetry endorses a challenging paradox. On the one hand, the lover elevates the beloved and idealises her to a perfect image. On the other, he destroys the beloved. The image of death or even desire for death dominates most of the poems. In all these poems, the beloved is

²⁷ Francette Pacteau, p. 104.

eventually destroyed. Is the beloved the victim of the lover's false idealisation or is she the scapegoat for the crime the lover committed against divinity? In the relationship between the lover and the beloved, there is a stage when the beloved dies or seeks to die. To explore the complexity of the image of death in the poetry of Shakespeare, I have provided different interpretations. The clearest examination of the image can be given from *Venus and Adonis*. The last three hundred lines of the poem are dedicated to the fears and anguishes of Venus and her conversation with Death concerning the death of Adonis. The last scene is one of the most beautiful parts of the poem where Adonis is metamorphosed into a purple flower reminding us of Narcissus' metamorphosis. As the goddess of love, she professes the death of love because of beauty's death. And finally Venus embracing the flower leaves it and flies away. She alienates herself in Paphos and takes the flower as the symbol of a sacred love that is impossible to obtain even for a goddess:

Thus weary of the world away she hies,
And yokes her silver doves, by whose swift aid
Their mistress, mounted, through the empty skies,
In her light chariot quickly is conveyed,
Holding their course to Paphos, where their queen
Means to immure herself, and not be seen. (VA. 1189-94)

In *The Rape of Lucrece*, Lucrece eventually dies, too. The act of rape in Lucrece signifies a symbolic murder and therefore death. Both Adonis and Lucrece represent perfect beauty of the beloved. Their beauty is beyond description as Mother nature even envies them; they are the emblems of chastity and purity which make them close to divinity. In other words, the picture of the beloved is the picture of the divine beauty cased in human body or flesh. One of the most likely explanations for the death of the beloved is that she was created according to the lover's desire. The beloved represents the ego of the lover. She is the product of his ideal ego. When the beloved dies, it is the ego of the lover that dies away. Her death is a state of

transformation or metamorphosis where the lover purifies himself. The lover also reminds us here of Plato's philosopher-lover who desires sublimation and it is only through the death of his beloved representing material beauty that he can perceive the ultimate Beauty. Very similar to the beauty of the beloved being dematerialised by the lover-poet's descriptions, she is deobjectified by the image of death. As the object of the lover's desire, the beloved always stands as the other to the lover's identity (ego). Her death, therefore, can be viewed as the negation of otherness. In this perspective, her loss or rather her negation becomes a necessity.

Juliana Schiesari, in her analytic study on the establishment of melancholy ethos, in the Renaissance tradition, *The Gendering of Melancholia* (1992), describes melancholia as the knowledge of a loss, that is recaptured by the cognition of that loss. She argues that,

melancholia is a gendered form of ethos that is empowered by notions of lack.... [It] works as a form of possessive individualism that allows one both to publicize and privatize one's specific eros at the expense of other marginalized positions by a conspicuous display of privileged subjectivity. . . . Not only does the melancholic credit himself with a value based on gender and class, but melancholia also points to a particular way in which eros and sexuality are recuperated within the male subject via a given aesthetics.²⁸

Accordingly, we can note to what extent Renaissance characterisation of male erotic subjectivity, specifically the neoplatonists' contribution, revived the classics' ethos of male auto-eroticism. And the 'marginalised position' in this paradigm is the beloved whose eventual removal from the lover's quest becomes a sacrificial element. In terms of Lacanian theory, Schiesari interprets this negation or denial as a moment whereby the subject can repeat a symbolic castration in order to unite himself with the paternal authority.²⁹

²⁸ Juliana Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 131, 264-65.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 265.

Therefore, there is always a sense of ambivalence between the idealisation and the destruction of feminine beauty in Shakespeare's poetry. On the one hand, the poet idealises beauty and praises his idol and on the other, he destroys her. From a different perspective, Francette Pacteau elaborates on the annihilation of the object of desire. In the libidinal entrapment of the subject's helpless gaze, the woman is momentarily displaced by her 'image'. In other words, the movement of the gaze is interrupted by a mental *décopage* which creates an image of the woman, detached from her corporeality, petrified, and arrested in time. In this manner, the image becomes neutralised, annihilated and the object of the gaze rejected. The beautiful woman is associated with death. Death is a spectacle - rather than annihilation - that can always be sustained by the viewer in the arena.³⁰ It seems that the beloved loses her/his reality as well as identity by taking part in the spiritual experience (libidinal investment) of the lover. She becomes unreal and therefore annihilated. She symbolically dies as she is merely a sustained image that will never come to life.

This state of rejection, abstraction and later annihilation that I explained above is to some extent similar to Lacan's notion of the desire as lack. Visualising and framing beauty according to the wishes of the ego is only temporary as desire is never fulfilled and turns to its own death which in this case is the death of beloved. Although the movement of idealisation of the beloved in Shakespeare's poems is not by fragmentation or evacuation of her/his physical body, she still remains as the object of the lover's desire. The conclusion I would like to draw here is that the paradoxical feature of this movement does not imply the reaffirmation of the lover's identity in the destruction of the beloved. That is, the presence of the lover in the absence of the beloved, though I explained it as a possible Platonic interpretation. The paradox indicates a conflict since Shakespeare's poetry is not simply modelled on the neoplatonic theories of love. Shakespeare's poetry manifests the confrontations of the lover's identity in the formation of his desire; that is, how male desire reflects itself in

³⁰ Pacteau even suggests that what the poet-lover does to the feminine body by fragmenting it on the paper is in fact a sort of grown-up version of the 'fort-da' game and thus mastering over the object (Francette Pacteau, pp. 72, 108-09).

the discourse of desire within the tradition of love lyric and against the background of neoplatonism. It is through such confrontation that the lover recognises his dilemma, the conflicts of his desire. As such, he idealises an image to establish his identity. Yet, since the desire is basically formed according to his ego, this leads him to destroy the unreal image. The beloved is pictured on the one hand as the perfect beauty and purity, and on the other hand as the image of Narcissus who has fallen in love with his own self. The self-indulgence of the beloved destroys her ideal image for the lover which articulates her symbolic death. Therefore, the dual image of the beloved suggests an internal battle, an internal conflict in the formation of desire.

Summary

In Part III, I attempted to examine closely the representation of desire in Shakespeare's poetry by analysing three major themes of procreation, sublimation and idealisation. The integrality of these themes does not only reveal the representation of desire but also establishes the formation of desire. Furthermore, I provided each chapter with a background of the themes in order to illustrate the context of these motifs in Shakespeare's poetry.

Chapter Eight is an analysis of the metaphor of procreation in terms of Lacan's idea of lack. Studying the motif of time in the tradition of love poetry demonstrates that Shakespeare's poetry inherits the negative and destructive image of temporality as well as the subjective mode of love lyrics. However, the lover-poet analyses the idea of time in relation to love. This approach leads to a sequential picture of time. The poet begins with the death and decay of beauty, advises his beloved of the regenerative power of beauty and ends with the idea of immortality. This linear movement of the lover establishes an opposition between time and eternity. The implication of such linearity is, therefore, the movement of the lover from the absence of beauty towards its eternal presence. In this manner, time becomes the symbolic projection of an external lack which leads to the internal loss.

The linking point between these two sides of the movement is the power of procreation. The lover-poet urges the beloved to procreate himself/herself. Therefore, the image of reproduction is merely the conjoining point of life and death (past and future). This motif which is a manifestation of the lover's state of desire precedes

immortality. The process of procreation that the lover presents in different forms not only takes place in the present moment but also cherishes the eternal present. In other words, the moment of 'to be' epitomises the presence of desire for the lover through his regenerative powers.

The significance of this motif in my argument lies in its metaphorical function. The regeneration of beauty stands as the synthesis of the process of life and death. The lover-poet uses this cosmic law of nature to possess beauty. The metaphorical function of the procreation image expounds two important implications. The first inference of the metaphor is that by procreating the beloved, the image of procreation becomes a doubly transferred epithet whereby the lover is capable of reproducing. This gives him the privileged position of the lover as the creator of the beloved in terms of intellectual reproduction. In the shift from bodily to spiritual procreation, the lover takes on the attributes of maternity as well as paternity. Secondly, by establishing a hierarchical relation, the lover denies any sense of unity. The lover does not attempt to be united with the beloved; his sublimation does not connote any unity. In the process of procreation, the beloved becomes the object of the lover's desire. In other words, through procreation, the lover's desire becomes objectified. However, the beloved does not complete the lover nor unites with him. The objectification signifies the mutilation of desire. Through language, the lover-poet strives to idealise and immortalise her. However, verse can not relate the lover nor define the object of his desire. Language only mediates the lover. Through verse, the lover only identifies with his ideal ego. Language can only replace the lost object of desire. The beloved as the source of the lover's desire represents the other. Beauty and love are only a projection of the lover's ideal ego.

Chapter Nine is an analysis of the nature of sublimation as auto-eroticism. Tracing the tradition of the idea of transcendence reveals that Shakespeare's poetry reconstructs the dualistic structure of sublimation in its depiction of the imagery of strife, war, hunting and wooing. However, there is a paradox hidden in the nature of sublimation here that is epitomised in the strife between the lover and the beloved.

The dynamics of this strife are introduced in the dramatic structure of his poems where the beloved is marginalised. The opposition between beauty and virtue, sacred and profane, love and desire demonstrates different layers of the dichotomy. By opposing the lover's narcissistic love with the purity of desire in the beloved, the nature of the paradox is characterised. The beloved in his poems is the embodiment of Narcissus. S/he is the victim of the lover's desire. However, s/he represents the pure state of desire. In confrontation with her/his desire, s/he strives to alienate herself/himself from any sense of identification with the lover since desire can not be signified. Instead, s/he searches inside herself for the lost object of desire. Narcissus, Venus, Lucrece, and the maid all identify with a void that represents the emptiness of their desire. In other words, they face the lack that is within themselves.

On the contrary, Shakespeare portrays the lover who continuously tries to replace the lost object of desire. The lover does not seek the beauty in the beloved. Beauty is only an objectified image of his ideal ego. The lover elevates this objectified form and idealises it without any taint of sexuality in order to sublimate himself. Therefore, by elevating the beloved's beauty and purity, the lover elevates his ego. And this reveals the paradoxical nature of sublimation. The lover's movement of ascension is egocentric. However, this portrayal of auto-eroticism reflects the metonymy of desire. That is, in his attempts to objectify and later identify with the object of his desire (the beloved), the lover does not succeed in signifying his desire. The beloved becomes a substitution for a desire that is insatiable and unsubstitutable.

The final chapter examines the movement of idealisation with regard to the unrepresentability of beauty and inexpressibility of love in Shakespeare's poetry. As in the other chapters on Shakespeare, I have provided a brief sketch of the tradition of the depiction of feminine beauty in love poetry. From this background, Shakespeare's poetry inherits the elevation of beauty in the beloved. However, what transformed the female beauty to a statuesque/evacuated form of beauty and poetic clichés or even a fetish, in Shakespeare fulfils the theories of representation. Under the influence of Renaissance theories of art, Shakespeare dematerialises the beloved in favour of an

iconic representation of beauty. Therefore, beauty is not described but analysed. In this manner, beauty serves as a metonymy. The beloved is the embodiment of beauty and purity but she is only associated with the lost object of desire. Describing it leads to an endless chain of signifiers that can not define beauty in its origin. Thereby, the role of metaphor here is not for the depiction of beauty but in relation to the idea of love.

In a parallel structure to the unrepresentability of beauty, I examined the inexpressibility of desire in Shakespeare's poetry. Despite the objectification of his desire in the beloved, the lover-poet fails to represent his insatiable desire. The beloved becomes an icon. The language of desire like the language of hieroglyphics becomes indecipherable. It is in this connection that the image of the beloved's death can be interpreted. Her death represents the death of the ideal ego. However, the lover fails in the process of metamorphosis. The image of death reflects the paradox of idealisation. The lover idealises the beloved on the one hand and destroys her on the other. Death stands for the loss of mediation. The language, or more precisely, verse fails to represent the lover-poet's desire. The beloved was created according to the lover's desire; yet, her death mutilates the lover's ego. The dual image of the beloved (being idealised and then destroyed) not only recognises the unrepresentability of desire but indicates also a dilemma in the confrontation of the lover with desire.

Conclusion

I

In my study of love and desire in Shakespeare's poetry, I started with an analysis of two complex notions of *eros* and desire that would illuminate my investigation of Shakespeare's poetry. The first two parts of my work were dedicated to the analysis of Plato's notion of *eros* and Lacan's theory of desire. I examined Plato's theory of desire based on his major text on that issue, the *Symposium*, since not only Platonic elements of desire are extensively reflected in the erotic layer of Shakespeare's poetry as a Renaissance poet where neoplatonism was at its blooming state but also a study of Plato's erotic philosophy displays the structure of modern conceptions of love together with its tone of cultural eroticism. In the second part of my work, I chose Lacan's study of desire as a modern psychoanalytic perspective on the complexity of such a notion to elaborate on the nature and features of desire. I have discussed these two theories of desire separately to avoid any sense of juxtaposition. Furthermore, any critical inquiry on a judgmental level would have been beyond my intention. My study of these two theories is an attempt to recognise more clearly the features of *eros* and desire that are reflected in Shakespeare's poetry sometimes directly (as in the motif of procreation and desire for sublimation) and often indirectly (as in the discourse of desire between the lover and the beloved). To illustrate these features, I have invoked Lacan's notions to highlight those features and mainly to throw light on some aspects of desire as the major motif of Shakespeare's love poetry.

Reading the *Symposium*, I argued that Plato's erotic philosophy as a dualistic definition of *eros* builds hierarchical stages for the achievement of real Form - and for

the lover who goes through this solitary individuation - presents an egocentric character towards its object, and performs a logocentric configuration of the ascent. Plato's conception of *eros* is structured on a lack. Though there is no direct reference to any explanation concerning a metaphysical source for the cause of lack, lack is an essential element of desire. It causes *eros* and remains with it as it is a perpetual state of being. The nature of lack is conceived in terms of a separation by birth whether we interpret this separation metaphysically or explain it with reference to *Spaltung*, it signifies the mark of loss. Eros-as-desire is merely a response to this state of loss. Nevertheless, *eros* is structured as a desire based on lack and is proceeds from such dual nature. *Eros* is an everlasting desire for something lacking that we yearn to possess: 'everyone who desires, desires that which he has not already, and which is future and not present, and which he has not, and is not, and which he lacks' (200e).

Therefore, eros-as-desire is a relation of being to lack. It is a lack that belongs to the past and present and thereby continuously delayed or postponed for a moment in the future. In this manner, the fulfilment of such a state of desire is conceived in relation to a linear conception of time - a conception of time that interprets immortality as a moment where time does not exists. As such, lack is placed on the other side of the line opposed to the fulfilled eros-as-desire, that is, the state of immortality. This lack is lack of being whereby the being exists. As in Lacanian theory, being arises as presence from a background of absence. Lack is a void or a gap that precedes desire; therefore, we are faced with a cyclical and dualistic definition of *eros*. It is beyond representation. It is in this respect that *eros* is regarded as a demon. In Plato's account of *eros* contrary to the Greek conception of love, *eros* is a mediator rather than a perfect divine figure. *Eros* has a transformative power that can relate the temporal side of our being to the atemporal due to its polaristic nature. This means that *eros* as lack is not a state of fulfilment. It is merely a relation that tries to represent itself through desire. And it can relate our being to the atemporal by regeneration. In Plato, the pure state of desire is conceived as immortality which relates the temporal to the atemporal. However, immortality is described as

regeneration. In other words, procreation or sexuality is the only device to eliminate lack though at its physical level it is equal to death. At a higher level, regeneration of our identity relates us to the immortal where time does not exist and thereby our existence is not bound to regeneration.

Therefore, we can say that the duality between desire and lack in terms of cause and effect is the foreground of later stages of hierarchy that is discerned for *eros* in Socrates' speech. According to Plato's Socrates, there are stages in this movement towards a perfect state of fulfilment: anything ephemeral can not truly represent this desire since our lack is not simply material. Therefore, in his speech, Socrates considers different stages where the lover-philosopher can attain a form of desire close to its real Form based on the levels of cognition. *Eros* emerges out of lack just as it becomes embodied in desire for something. In other words, *eros* yearns for an identification with something that would relate it to its object. And here lies the difficult moment where the representability of the object of *eros* goes under question. And here, moreover, is the moment where we refer to platonic love as egocentric. What is conceived of the object of Platonic *eros* is a conception of immortality that is equal to regeneration. That is, the lover in his movement of individuation through *eros* replicates himself (his essence or identity) whether physically or spiritually. What is here obtained as everlasting and immortal, though not eternal, is, in fact, the identity of the lover through his replicas. The lover preserves his identity by reproducing himself. This is defined as substitution in the text in order to dismiss any ambiguity. *Eros* as desire becomes an effort to satisfy the loss through replacement or substitution as Socrates puts it. Such an affinity of *eros* to lack recognises its relation to narcissism. The lover tries to identify his 'self' with the beloved close to the image of his ego. In the guise of the lover, the ego tries to fill its lack by a series of identifications. Therefore, love continuously replaces its object while a true state of desire should displace any objectification of desire. This is what Lacan means by desire as metonymy.

Furthermore, in this everlasting possession movement of *eros*, beauty is merely a sign that signifies a form of objectification of the object of *eros* while the direct object of *eros* is immortality or replication of the self. What we can conclude from such a definition of *eros* is that though it is a desire which purifies the lover's self in his ascent towards the knowledge of beauty, *eros* becomes a means for an end. And every object that embodies *eros* and elevates the lover in his ascent becomes a means or a victim, too. The begetting of soul as the higher state of immortality is egoistic in the sense that the lover-philosopher manipulating the youth, sacrifices the beloved for immortalising the beauty of his soul to satisfy his thirst for knowledge. The core of the journey of *eros* is not the beloved but the ascent of the self. The beloved is merely a representation of the beauty that incites the lover to perceive the Form of beauty. Though the procreative aspect of *eros* has been taken by some critics as the positive feature of Platonic love, this generative power which is the only means in the hands of the lover to obtain a form of immortality replicates only the lover's self. Love in Plato is an excuse, a pretext for self-perfection. In his contemplation of beauty in its highest form, the lover imitates the act of creation. And finally, Platonic love is an impersonal love, not love of individuals but love of the Idea. The disinterestedness of Plato's Form - inherited from Greek philosophy - is further evidence for the impersonal character of *eros*. There is no sense of reciprocity between the lover and the object he is about to achieve, no transcendental source for guidance.

II

In my study of Shakespeare's poetry, I have mainly concentrated on three dominant images that explain the idea of desire and the perplexity of its discourse in his poetry: atemporality and the motif of procreation, the paradox of sublimation and egoism and finally the discourse of desire. In each chapter, I provided a brief survey of the discussed theme in the tradition of love lyric not only to illuminate the position that

Shakespeare's poetry takes in terms of its difference and genuine character but also to perceive and demonstrate the role of desire in its background.

In the first chapter of my analysis of Shakespeare's poetry, I provided a background study of the image of time where the movement of time in Shakespeare is sequential. Such a movement establishes an opposition between time and eternity. This means that the structure of movement is from the death or the absence of beauty towards immortality or the presence of beauty. Here time determines the subject's conception of love. The present time implies temporality and death in contrast to the future that signifies immortality through procreation. The lover has to desire in the sequential order of time where he seeks the presence of love in the absence of time, in the eternal moment of the present. The destructive power of time is presented in different forms from harsh images of time to personified figures. These images represent the fatal effects of time on beauty which consequently mutilates the beloved. They enable the lover to rationalise the mortal function of beauty and analyse his complex emotions of fear and anger in an analytic tone. Through this contrasting structure of linearity of time that relates beauty to death, the lover can challenge his beloved to immortalise her/his beauty through procreation. The general line of the lover's argument is the persuasion of his beloved to regenerate herself/himself against time. In other words, the lover emphasises the regenerative function of beauty by maintaining its temporality through a parallel structure. The eternal state of being, that he constantly ensures his beloved of, can only be achieved by what he calls 'increase'. In this manner, beauty functions against narcissism.

There is a lack or a continuous destructive force of mutability and death imposed from the outside (Nature) that is symbolised in the image of time. As such, the external lack caused by time follows the other lack which is internal, that is a lack inside the lover. This inner destruction and lack generates a state of desire to refuse and oppose death through love. Thus, the theme of love becomes a means in the hands of the lover to persuade his love to propagate. Love is not only the essence but also the creation of the lover. Since the cyclical movement of birth and rebirth is a continuous

and everlasting death, the lover creates the beloved or a sense of love in his poetry to oppose the process of time and death. By immortalising his beloved through his verse, the lover is reproducing her beauty or more precisely her image in verse. This image reminds me of the state of begetting beauty by soul in the *Symposium*. Plato with the introduction of the element of reproduction to his definition of *eros* provided a new perspective to the completeness of our being or rather identity. In Plato, human soul is a fallen spirit and therefore already complete in itself. The fallen spirit is restrained in the body and only through an individual ascension can retain its original complete state. Not only human nature but also beauty is prolific by nature, as Diotima describes it, and procreation forms the essence of love. Such a definition of love is a contradiction in terms that refutes the idea of unity in love. Procreation does not imply unity even in the metaphorical layer since it only revives the identity of the subject, that is the lover. Therefore, love is a mediator that relates only the lover to a pure state of desire. To this purpose, the lover uses love to reach that state by philosophising for the youth. In this regard, the beloved objectifies the lover's desire. Since, from the perspective of the lover, the objectification of love signifies the destruction of pure desire, the lover moves beyond any sense of unity. This view of love clarifies why there is no theme of unity with the beloved in Shakespeare's poetry.

The other feature of time is its linearity, which characterises the oppositional structure of life and death. Despite the harsh images of time and death that evoke the lover's fear and anger, the lover can not bestow any pure form of life to his beloved. It seems that the form of immortality he is offering is merely a temporal revival that only distances it from death. Death still inhabits the life of the beloved as she is merely an other, a sexed being. Her temporality is reflected clearly in the images of her death. The beloved is merely an objectified source of desire; it is not a pure life devoid of human signification. She is the erotic manifestation of his desire. The image of reproduction is merely the conjoining point of life and death. It already carries the mark of death when the lover goes through moments of transformation, or when the death beloved represents the impossibility of the pure state of desire in love. This is a

narrative that breaks the two sides of the dialectic joining death and reproduction into separate moments in a temporal sequence. Here the opposition between mortality and immortality comes to form the main duality that later expands to the other layers. *Eros* is an individual path that joins life and death. *Eros* is basically a desire to procreate. *Eros* is the extension of mortality; it relates the lover not to his beloved but the mortal lover to the immortal. This testifies to the original motives of the lover who loves to regenerate himself though the metaphorical expression of *eros* conceals the egocentric nature of the lover's desire. On the path between the temporal and the eternal, love or rather love of the beloved is situated. Human love, through procreation, puts him in touch with the divine and the eternal. It is in this manner that fictive temporality secures the underlying opposition.

What we conceive of these images of procreation is the effortless urge of the lover to his beloved to beget herself/himself. The lover finds regeneration as a cosmic force, a law in nature that attracts every living being towards itself. Any rejection of such wisdom of the lover will end in death. The desire of the subject for propagation serves as the constructive element of Shakespeare's poetry that should be taken metaphorically. The everlasting presence of the beloved by means of procreation is an alternation to death in the cyclical chain of birth-rebirth. The regeneration of beauty stands as the synthesis of the process of birth and death. However, this cosmic force of nature that is represented as a sacred gift retains the identity of the lover. Both procreation images (either the physical or the spiritual form) in Shakespeare's poems remind us of the stages of ascent in the *Symposium*; very similar to the expression of 'copulation' in Renaissance treatises, they celebrate the idea of immortality in a metaphorical layer. In fact, procreation of the beloved by the lover and the change of gender roles in Shakespeare's poems facilitate the metaphorical interpretation of the image. It becomes a doubly transferred epithet where not only the image is shifted from the physical to the intellectual but from pregnancy to impregnation. Furthermore, the metaphorical function of the regeneration of beauty reveals the double role of the lover: the lover immortalises both his beloved and himself through his verse. The

beloved is the embodiment of love. Without the beloved, the lover would not exist. In the triangle of love, there are three powers involved: the lover-poet, the beloved (beauty), and love. Since beauty merely serves as the symbol of the beloved; it represents love and relates the lover to it. Accordingly, love should always be an inaccessible source of inspiration for the poet to guarantee the everlasting presence of love. The metaphorical function of the image of procreation on the one hand, and the double role (maternal and paternal) of the lover on the other confirms the relation of the beloved as an other to the lover. The beloved is not part of the lover neither is s/he his sexual complement. What he is searching for is not unity with the beloved but something that is lost inside his soul. However, it is the immortalisation of that desire within him that gives him his identity not the beloved. And the only thing that makes this possible is love. With the image of a lover, he can search inside himself through the other's existence as beloved to find the real emptiness of his identity that is attached to the beloved.

This urging of the beloved to beget himself and the theme of procreation will become clear if we clarify its relation to the other images such as time, death, and the role of sexuality. The relation between the lover and his beloved is very much structured like the relation of the subject to the Other. The beloved as the Other stands as the source and cause of love for the lover. The lover owes his existence though not his identity to love. In this regard, the function of the beloved is merely a representative or an embodiment of love. The beloved represents the lost object of desire. Though descriptions of the beloved's beauty and purity pervade his poetry, beauty and the beloved are only representing love. They are objects of reflection. And the poet clearly conveys this idea in his arguments with the beloved. The poet urges the youth to marry and reproduce his image or persuades him/her to respond to his love so that he can immortalise him in his verse. The lover never desires to be united with the beloved and there is no imagery to confirm such a view. He is very well aware that his beloved is merely a reflection and does not survive. All the lover yearns for is love since it is only by loving *a beloved* that love can remain and this guarantees

the lover's existence too. In fact, urging the beloved to procreate does not immortalise the individual beloved he loves; rather, it is the continuation of his beauty that will inspire him to love. Furthermore, the ungendered descriptions of physical beauty of the beloved fortifies the role of the beloved as an object of love. All the pictures of the beloved in Shakespeare's poetry mix female beauty with male features. The changing roles of gender is another factor that dismisses the unity of lover and beloved. Therefore, the metaphorical layer of the immortalisation of the beloved leads us to the egocentric nature of love. By immortalising the beloved, the lover eternalises the identity of love for himself and immortalises his own existence as lover. In this manner, the idea of the beloved as an other to the subject (lover) reveals the egocentric nature of the lover's desire on the one hand, and rejects the unity between the lover and the beloved.

In chapter nine, considering the structure of duality in the nature of transcendence, I provided a brief survey of the tradition of duality in different versions: starting with platonism between body and soul, between word and flesh in Christian doctrines, and consequently between human love and spiritual love in love lyrics beginning with Dante that generally reflected a dilemma known as the conflict between sexuality and ascension in love poetry. Since then, we have witnessed different transformations of eroticism emerging in poetry. Coming to Shakespeare, the division between the spiritual world and the material world finds a highly complicated expression. Shakespeare does not explore the division directly in the mould of neoplatonism. Shakespeare's poetry reflects the division more as a dilemma rather than a moral statement. The idea of sublimation, here, entails a horizontal movement of love from beauty to immortality. Such a movement dissociates the beloved who is characterised as the emblem of beauty from the lover who searches for immortality outside love. Therefore, there are two loves, or rather two oppositional forces. The opposition is reflected in the form of a struggle through powerful images of hunting, wooing or even war. Shakespeare's poems present different layers of the division: beauty/virtue, conscience/will, sacred/profane, chastity/sin, and finally lover/beloved

as the main strife through imagery, soliloquies, or allegorical figures. However, I discussed the sense of duality in terms of an opposition between love and desire. This will disclose a paradox in the representation of love in Shakespeare's poetry where the lover's narcissistic idealisation is described as a true manifestation of love while the beloved's pursuit of purity (inner beauty) can, in fact, be defined as a sublime search for the 'self'. The oscillating movements of the lover disclose his struggles for the establishment of his identity as a lover through identification with the youth and later with the dark lady. However, in structuring his ego, he confronts a state of loss. He faces his lack of being as a lover that continuously denies his desire to be recognised as a lover. To love is the want to be loved. The lover is portrayed in a continuous clash with another conception of love (*Venus and Adonis*); with internal forces (*The Rape of Lucrece*); with external forces embodied in the image of time and his own self-deception in love (the *Sonnets*). And the poet presents such a struggle towards fulfilment of love in terms of the movement of sublimation and idealisation. The function of beauty for the lover is also very different from his/her beloved's view. This prefigures the opposition between two distinct loves: a love that is human, sincere and pure; and a love that is possessive, selfish and impure.

In view of the theme of strife, I noted that Shakespeare's protagonists in his poems are the embodiment of Narcissus where Shakespeare explores the triangle of love, self, and beauty. Shakespeare argues that the beauty of his narcissistic figures is merely an image, a reflection that is not their own. Beauty is a gift that should propagate itself under the law of nature so that in this manner beauty will be immortalised. Shakespeare persuades his beloved upon this with all its metaphysical implications and pictures the other side of nature (morbidness, death and decay) where the rule has not been followed. Love is by nature narcissistic since the lover constructs his identity based on a lack. In other words, his desire is constructed on a loss; he desires something he lacks. The mark of loss is always recognised as part of the lover's desire (identity). Love is merely a struggle for the satisfaction of self by replacing the original lack. On the contrary, desire is an effort for the recognition of

the true side of 'self'. This relates love to narcissism and desire to a passion for self. Love is connected to narcissism and the structure of the ego since it seeks to identify with someone or an ideal close to itself that represents the image of his ego. The lover obliterates any taint of alienation in favour of similarities and identification. The lover continuously looks for *replacing* the object of his love in order to find the ideal image of the ego. Shakespeare's lover does not seek the beauty in the beloved for beauty itself. Beauty and the beloved as its embodiment simply objectify what the ideal image of his ego is seeking. Beauty in the other reinforces the ideal image of the lover and thereby supports his identity without which the lover would be shattered. Love acts as the agent of the ego to produce a distance as much as possible from *objet a* by replacing it with the beloved (the other). To fulfil his purpose fully, the lover by elevating his object and disclaiming sexuality, that is idealising the beloved as the emblem of beauty and purity, sublimates his love. He elevates his object of love so that it may signify and represent the (ideal) image of his identity. Therefore, ironically by elevating the beloved, the lover is, in fact, sublimating himself. In other words, the movements of idealisation in the lover present a process of sublimation of his ego. No matter how far his sublimating acts go, he always bars himself from a quest for the lost object of desire. This manifests the narcissistic and illusive direction of love. On the contrary, Shakespeare's protagonists (the beloved) strive to *displace* any object of desire or rather objectification of their desire. Desire is not signifiable since nothing can represent the original lost object of desire. This justifies, on the one hand, the reason that the beloved does not yield to the lover's efforts to transform herself/himself to the level of identification with an image that does not represent her/him. On the other, this form of desire in the beloved reveals her/his view of beauty as an affinity to loss and death. Shakespeare's protagonists recognise the desire as lack and this establishes their identity beyond a demand for being loved. In a way, they fantasise the state of desire-as-lack in themselves which reflects itself in the image of purity. Though purity does not represent the true object of desire as it is lost, as opposed to beauty, it fantasises the purity of desire. By looking at his image in the

water, Narcissus identifies with a void that acknowledges the emptiness of his desire. By identifying with the lack within themselves, Shakespeare's protagonists destroy the structure of the ego which continuously denies their state of being for the Other. This dynamic operation of desire in the beloved discloses the paradoxical state of the lover. Though the lover presents himself as a being for the beloved through his means of identification, the beloved's denial of his/her ego proves the opposite. This is what I discussed as metonymy of desire. Instead of producing metaphor, that is substitution, the beloved produces metonymy. This means that every signifier as the object of desire stands as a metonymy for it; it is merely an association for her/his desire since it can not represent it.

In my last chapter on Shakespeare's poetry, I analysed the relation between the lover and the beloved in terms of the function of beauty, the idea of sublimisation and the philosophic (mastering) role of the lover. Shakespeare's representation of feminine beauty stands in contrast to the traditional presentation of feminine beauty as in the form of blazon where by a stereotypical form of beauty, her body was dissected through the implantation of metaphors. The more she was visualised, the more effective the process of evacuation until the references to the referent were lost as she faded away in the hands of her creator. It seems that the object of this discourse is the process and act of representation itself rather than the description of the beautiful beloved. The artists intentionally attempted to represent an elevated form of beauty despite its artificiality. Beyond a voyeuristic gaze, her transformation wins two goals: this eternal possession not only confirms the role of the creator as absolute master but also transforms him as well.

In Shakespeare's poetry, the function of the image of beauty is different. The analogy that relates the beauty of the beloved to the beauty in nature through metaphors succeeds in praising the source of beauty, a beauty that is not definable. The poet constantly reminds us of the beauty of his beloved as merely a gift. Therefore, beauty becomes a general, abstract concept rather than a physical feature. The poet ponders the nature of beauty. Accordingly, beauty serves as a metonymy

where female beauty is only an association. Shakespeare describes beauty rather than its associated objects. And this intensifies the subjective mode of his poems since the beauty of the beloved stands for the state of beauty in the material world. This leads us to Shakespeare's conception of beauty: there is never a perfect beauty and all beauty is imperfect and fatal; therefore, one can not attain a perfect description for it as every comparison fails to yield the origin of beauty. Beauty can neither be described nor defined. Earthly beauty or rather generally beauty in nature is merely a signifier. Yet, it is a signifier in the hands of the lover who presents it through a series of attributions. Though it refers to a sign for the lover, it can not be signified. There is a paradox in the nature of beauty. It describes its object but can not be described itself. Such an assumption of representing beauty was dominant among the Renaissance painters. Furthermore, I characterised two distinct features of feminine beauty in Shakespeare's poetry. On the one hand, the beloved is a sign that signifies the elevated image that the lover yearns to identify with. On the other, like an icon, she can not represent what she is expected to. The notion of beauty is not necessarily equated to female beauty in Shakespeare's poetry. Beauty is always supposed to be related to an idea that the lover strives to make. Even in those limited passages where the physical beauty of the beloved is presented, the description is far from cliché which therefore fortifies a different effect. In fact, the metaphor used in the description of beauty in Shakespeare's poem is not a privileged means in the depiction of feminine body, neither does it produce the impression of a compilation of different parts of the body. Metaphors in Shakespeare primarily suggest the poet's idea and concern with beauty in relation to love. Beauty is a concept, therefore it is analysed rather than described. The role of metaphor lies in relation to the ideas of the poet. As such, the theme of immortality and the neoplatonic conception of *eros* as procreation of beauty provided substantial sources of material for poetic metaphors. Furthermore, the dominant theories of painting that advocated the imperfection and defects of beauty in painting reinforced a new form of representation of beauty in the Renaissance. This, however, does not mean that the place of the beloved changed in relation to the representation

of desire. In Renaissance love lyrics, the beloved still signifies an essential element that develops the lover's idealistic movement of sublimation.

This seems to be the role that beauty is given in Platonic *eros*. In the Platonic sense, beauty represented in the beloved is only an image, a reflection. Beauty lacks a real essence thereby it multiplies itself. The lover desires beauty personified in the beloved since *eros* is only desire of the beautiful. She is an image. The poet-lover creates a perfect beauty that does not exist in reality so that by this he can master the object of his own creation. This is not simply a state of the elevation of the object of desire. By celebrating the feminine body, the lover-poet is, in fact, celebrating the act of *creation* itself. The lover-poet following the model of mastery in Pygmalion creates a woman in the image of his desire. By describing her unrepresentable beauty, balancing her physical beauty with her spiritual beauty and transformation (metamorphosis), all these movements suggest a desire to remain locked in the *act* of making. It maintains a perpetual act of creation that prolongs the pleasure in the imaginary domination of the actual. Yet, in his perception of the corporeality of this beauty, he associates it with death. In his ascent, the lover begins to sublimate himself by elevating the beloved. The idealisation movement of the beloved is a stage where he can identify his ideal image in the beloved. The result is that the lover is elevated in the movement of idealisation while the beloved loses her/his reality and identity. She becomes absent or an image that does not exist. At this stage, her beauty becomes the object of *eros*, that is the lover's desire. The death of the beloved is a dominant image that testifies to the absence of the beloved in the lover's ascent.

Such interpretation of the beloved as merely an image and the lover as the creator of perfect beauty in his discourse of desire raises in itself two important issues. First, the act of creation is an indictment of male procreation. The lover by elevating and immortalising the beloved in his verse is actually giving birth to her by the power of his verse. Second, the act of creation manifests a desire on the part of the lover to rival gods. In other words, by taking the role to engender life, not only does he challenge creation but he also excludes the reproductive role of woman. Therefore, the

lover creates the beloved according to the image of his ideal ego in order to sublimate himself. That is, the lover, by elevating the beloved and creating a perfect image, not only masters his object which is imaginary and passive but also sublimates himself. Furthermore, through this movement the subject can actively reaffirm his own integrity.

This powerful creative role of the lover, however, invokes some consequences. Upon these reflections or consequences, Shakespeare's poetry endorses a challenging paradox. On the one hand, the lover elevates the beloved and idealises her to a perfect image. On the other, he destroys the beloved. The same movement of the idealisation of woman can be seen in painting. Leonardo's projection of beauty is based on a disembodied form of what we see as beauty in reality. The artist attempted to uplift and elevate human body. This total dissolution of phenomena into abstraction was considered as the highest form of perfection - a privileged instance of sublimation. It seems that in this manner, the artist controls over the body as the microcosm of a macrocosm is being defeated and surrendered. As I elaborated on the paradoxical feature of sublimation, the lover - or the artist in general - sublimates himself by elevating the represented object. The image of death or even desire for death dominates most poems. Is the beloved the victim of the lover's false idealisation or is she the scapegoat for the crime the lover committed against divinity? In the analysis of the relation between the lover and beloved, there is a stage when the beloved dies or seeks to die. To explore the complexity of the image of death in the poetry of Shakespeare, I have provided different interpretations. One of the most likely explanations for the death of the beloved is that she is created according to the desire of the lover. The beloved represents the ego of the lover. When the beloved dies, it is the ego of the lover that dies away. And the death is a state of transformation or metamorphosis where the lover purifies himself. The lover also reminds us here of Plato's philosopher-lover who desires sublimation and it is only through the death of his beloved representing material beauty that he can perceive the ultimate Beauty. In

terms of psychoanalysis, we can note the symbolic layer of the image of death or rather the annihilation of the object of desire as an act of fetishism.

III

At this stage of my conclusion, I would like to provide a brief analysis of Shakespeare's *The Phoenix and the Turtle*. This poem occupies a significant place in the love poetry of Shakespeare and I have chosen to discuss this poem here for two reasons: contrary to the themes of love and desire in the other poems, *The Phoenix and the Turtle* portrays a peculiar and different relationship between the lover and the beloved that does not characterise any sense of idealisation nor sublimation of the lover; secondly, this poem seems to provide a final statement on the discourse of desire which serves to define what I would regard as Shakespeare's mature conception of love. In a sense, this poem serves as a conclusive poem in Shakespeare's canon. Despite the problem of its authorship and a wide range of biographical and historical interpretations of the poem in its evaluation, Shakespeare's *The Phoenix and the Turtle* is still one of the most complex of his poems. Although it is considered as a love poem, *The Phoenix and the Turtle* is not an endorsement of love through the lover's viewpoint. Rather, it is an elegy on love. The poem mourns all that the lover strives for through his desire since love does not exist anymore. The poem questions the existence of human love, that is the impossibility of desire.

This is a very short poem that is divided into three parts: the requiem, the anthem and the threnos. It begins with a mourning rite of birds on the death of two splendid mythical birds: the phoenix and the turtle. It is significant to note that among several birds mentioned in the poem, the phoenix and the turtle are mythical birds in the history of love poetry. I would resist the temptation to identify these two birds according to biographical facts since it not only limits the mythical layer of the poem but it also disregards the unique feature of these two birds. Among the few birds such as the eagle, the swan and the treble-dated crow that are summoned for the requiem, only the phoenix and the turtle are mythical birds. The uniqueness and mythical status

of the phoenix and the turtle reinforces their representation as lover and beloved. *The Phoenix and the Turtle* is an elegy on the death of two lovers that do not exist anymore as if they were mythical. Furthermore, lack of specification for the gender of the birds is another significant point that leads us to the purity of desire that Shakespeare is portraying. However, by the end of the poem when the birds sigh, we recognise the death of a unique love that once existed.

Reading the poem as one written on love, on its own, suggests that more than any allegorical interpretation this is a poem on the death of human love. In this case, the phoenix and the turtle do not represent unidentifiable lover and beloved whose unique relation is beyond human: 'Love and constancy is dead; / Phoenix and the turtle fled / In a mutual flame from hence' (*PT.* 22-24).¹ The poem describes an ideal/human form of desire but an ideal that does not exist anymore. Since the death of love, human desire has become futile. Contrary to the egoistic relation we witness in the other poems, the beloved here is not characterised as the essential part of the lover neither is s/he an essential element for his sublimation. They do not complete each other: they were 'love in twain' (*PT.* 25). Neither of them represents the desire of the 'other' since neither their existence nor their desire is structured on a lack.

The anthem is the song of praise where not only the perfect form of relation between the lover and the beloved is celebrated but the nature of love is also praised. As such, it should not sound astonishing that almost half of the poem is dedicated to the anthem where the nature of love is characterised in terms of a paradox. The structure of this paradox is gradually unfolded while each stanza reveals some aspects of this unique love in a tone of admiration rather than the usual analytical mode of Shakespeare's poems. The first feature of this unique mythical love is the issue of unity and essence. The theme of possibility of complement or unity between the lover and the beloved is one of the conflicts in the poems of Shakespeare where a sense of ambivalence is felt between the process of idealisation of the lover and his movement

¹ All the references to this poem are from *The Poems: Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Lucrece, The Phoenix and the Turtle, The Passionate Pilgrim, A Lover's Complaint*, John Roe, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

of sublimation. The phoenix and the turtle are united here but not as the traditional motif of complement implies. They have kept their identities; they are 'two distincts'. Yet, they are comprised of one 'essence' that makes them one: 'So they loved, as love in twain / Had the essence but in one: / Two distincts, division none; / Number there in love was slain' (*PT.* 25-28). The structure of such a paradox continues to the next stanzas. The love between the phoenix and the turtle does not recognise any sense of possession; 'property was appalled'. Love has bounded their selves together and they belong to each other. This means that there is no hierarchy in the nature of *eros* here. The beloved is not part of the lover because there is no sense of complement. The phoenix is the turtle and the turtle is the phoenix. Neither stands as an essence to the other. They are the 'essence'; together they are Love. Despite all these, 'neither two nor one was called' (40) and number was slain there in love. The duality of two in one also takes the form of a spatial unity: 'Hearts remote, yet not asunder; / Distance, and no space was seen' (*PT.* 29-30). The clarification of this stanza of what was described before as essence and an indivisible love explains the nature of their unity. This wonder, this unique relationship that the mourners are praising is definitely not the platonic unity that the Renaissance treatises advocated or the unity that some poets of the time practised. The conflict between ascension and sexuality has not suddenly found an explanation in this poem. *The Phoenix and the Turtle* is an elegy on a spiritual love that can not be found again - a love where lovers can retain their individual identities in their unity. Thus, they are separated in terms of distance but not their souls. The lover does not complete the beloved through love or vice versa. As confirmed by the poet, the phoenix and the turtle are complete identities. They are two yet in one. Therefore, reason is confounded. This is a complex feature of love - an unsignifiable paradox. It is a relation that can not be easily formulated by human reason. In other words, this is an idealistic relation between two individual identities: 'Neither two nor one was called' (*PT.* 40). Such a unique form of love can neither be understood nor described. This reminds us of the concept of beauty that is attributed

but can not be defined itself. Human reason can not justify this concordant one, this simple that is compounded.

Therefore, this time we hear 'reason' making the threne for the phoenix and the turtle dove. The poem ends with a threnos, a lamentation on the death of such a unique love. The phoenix and the turtle are described by reason as co-supremes and stars of love which puts both of them in the position to be supreme and unique in what they were. The word star confirms the mythical status of lovers as I mentioned previously. It evokes a sense of deity and idolatry to these birds that are being worshipped. They belong to the eternal life: 'Death is now the phoenix' nest / And the turtle's loyal breast / To eternity doth rest' (*PT.* 56-58). Once more the poet characterises the nature of this love and builds a pyramid where beauty, truth and rarity comprise the essence of love. What was pictured as a strife and duality between beauty and truth (virtue) is transformed into a harmonious identity. These qualities together make the essence of love.² Furthermore, there is no posterity in this relationship, not because of a physical defect but because of chastity. In other words, these lovers did not have to reproduce themselves in order to be immortal. Chastity here epitomises the purity of desire, the independence of their identities and yet the profoundness of their unity.

The final stanza, very pessimistically refers to the fate of love for humans. After the death of the phoenix and the turtle, we can not see truth anymore; it will only be a mirage, an image of truth. There is no beauty either; every sense of beauty is only a representation of it. The unrepresentability of truth and beauty is best illustrated in other poems of Shakespeare. The phoenix and the turtle were the real emblems of truth and beauty and by their death, beauty and truth are dead too. Now the only thing that is left is their 'urn'. At this stage, whether we interpret the poem according to its religious connotations, or simply take its universal/mythical layer, the tone of the poem gradually turns into a religious elegy. The urn becomes sacred and the birds'

² There is a sense of imbalance felt in the qualities that are ascribed to love. The words beauty and truth refer to the physical and spiritual features of love while the word rarity suggests merely a general remark on love rather than implying any quality for it.

prayer is a mediator that wishes for our salvation. Through this urn, those who are either 'fair' or 'true,' as both do not exist together anymore, can hope to 'repair' or regain their purity in eternal life. The allusion of the threnos to immortal love reminds us of the state of purity that Adam and Eve had before their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The poem addresses we human creatures - the deprived - and calls to the urn that can ritualistically offer us salvation as long as these holy birds sigh a prayer.

The Phoenix and the Turtle is considered to be a complex poem not necessarily because of its symbolism but because of its distinction from Shakespeare's other poems and its pessimistic viewpoint. What makes it special and unique as a love poem is that considering the time of its composition, it disrupts the line of the traditional elements of the love lyric. The hierarchical relation between the lover and the beloved, the desire for immortality and the motif of procreation, the victimisation of the beloved in the creative role of the lover, the idealisation of the beloved in the movement of the lover's sublimation and all the themes that were established in other poems of Shakespeare are transformed into an elegy on the death of love. Birds are summoned to mourn for two perfect emblems of desire whom we yearn for. This poem is very significant as a poem written in 1601 since it captures for us Shakespeare's conception of love.³ With this poem, all the duality that has become an integral part of the love lyric, the ambivalence and the unfulfilment of desire that we see in his poems find a new viewpoint. The essential death of the beloved together with the lack of any sense of complement receives a new meaning in relation to the idea of the impossibility of desire in this poem. What I pictured as the sense of ambivalence in Shakespeare's poetry becomes clear here. In a very symbolic language, this poem clarifies what I would characterise as the conflict of desire in the Renaissance representation of love. The famous phrase 'to be or not to be' that epitomises the sense of a dilemma or a conflict in the Shakespearean tragedy is best pictured in Shakespeare's representation of desire as an enigma. There is no sense of

³ John Roe, p. 49.

fulfilment of desire, no unity between the lover and the beloved. What exists instead is a strife to achieve something that is impossible. The lover, as I discussed before, yearns to identify with the other (beloved) or an image outside himself but that image is idealised according to the lover's ideal ego to sublimate his narcissistic desire. What is described as immortality is a cyclical movement of birth-rebirth that prolongs the mastering role of the lover while delaying the mark of loss. Different from the representation of love in the other renaissance poems, there is no perfect form of Platonic love where desire is fulfilled. This means that what I characterised as the duality between sexuality and ascension presents a dilemma in Shakespeare's poetry. What is usually defined as a paradox is indeed a conflict.

Love is pictured as *trompe-l'oeil*, as Catherine Belsey argues in her profound reading of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. *Trompe-l'oeil*, as a mode of painting that deceives the eye by its simulation of nature, tantalises by promising a presence that it fails to deliver. This feature is best portrayed in Venus who cajoles and entreats. Furthermore, the poem itself is also tantalised by its lack of closure. As a literary *trompe-l'oeil*, *Venus and Adonis* is a text of and about desire that both promises and withholds a definitive account of love.⁴ In the idealisation movement of both poetry and painting, it seems that not only the unrepresentability of beauty is advocated in the theoretical treatises of the time but the impossibility of desire is also maintained in terms of its articulation. The futility of desire can be noted not only in the lover's attempts to represent his desire but also in the projection of death on the image of the beloved. The lover-poet in his search for the representation of desire becomes entangled between the alienation movements of his ego and the unrepresentability of his lost object of desire. Furthermore, the death of the beloved recognises the failure of the lover in his confrontation with the dynamics of desire. And the poem succeeds in presenting this void of desire as an unresolvable dilemma.

⁴ Catherine Belsey, 'Love as *Trompe-l'oeil*: Taxonomies of Desire in *Venus and Adonis*,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46 (1995), pp. 257-58.

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