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**"UNKNIGHTLY WOUNDS":  
RENAISSANCE ROMANCE AND THE BODY IN CRISIS**

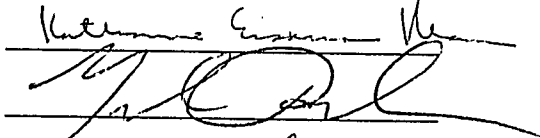
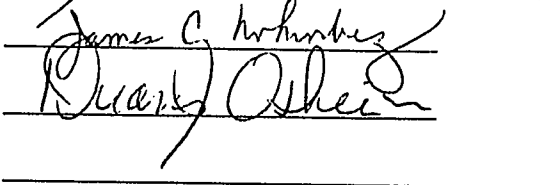
Ian Fenton MacInnes  
Albion, MI

B.A., Swarthmore College, 1987  
M.A., University of Virginia, 1989

A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Faculty  
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University of Virginia  
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Katherine Cisneros  
  
James C. Cochran  


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## ABSTRACT

The long romances of Tasso, Spenser and Sidney frequently lavish an extraordinary amount of attention on wounded bodies: the blood drenched Clorinda, the mutilated Amoret, and the languishing Parthenia, among others. In a series of three close readings framed by theoretical discussion, I argue that this rhetorical elaboration is part of these texts' response to a deep uncertainty about the status of the wounded body.

The most influential wounds in sixteenth-century European thought were the wounds of Christ. I begin by demonstrating that in the sixteenth century, the wounds of Christ were at once a point of religious contest, and a place where spiritual energy and doctrinal orthodoxy were often at odds. Torquato Tasso's Gerusalemme Liberata is the product of one of the most spiritually and physically anguished writers of the Counter-Reformation period; its depictions of wounds emphasize the opposition between sacred and profane versions of the heroic body.

Secular versions of erotic love also frequently compared it to a wound, a tradition that had its origins in classical literature. In Book III of The Faerie Queene, Spenser both challenges and attempts to redefine the role of wounds in the construction of virtuous sexual love. Drawing on several episodes of wounding in Book III, I show how metaphorical and real wounds become increasingly confused, and how this confusion leads to a potentially destructive confusion between mind and body, love and violence, and even subject and object.

Spenser uses physical wounds as part of his allegorical construction of virtuous sexuality, but real wounds, particularly those that occurred

on the battlefields of early modern Europe, were themselves the focus of aristocratic anxiety about the status of the body. Ironically, Sidney himself fell prey to the very kind of wound that typified class anxieties about the body in the Renaissance. Using in part the biographical and elegiac material surrounding Sidney's death, I explore the ways in which the New Arcadia attempts to reinscribe the wounded body as part of the aesthetics of the heroic self.

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## INTRODUCTION

1

"we seek out other bodies in society as mirrors of ourselves... because our own bodies are the permeable ground of all social behavior; our bodies are the very flesh of society."<sup>1</sup>

The wounds I probe in this dissertation occur in the bodies and the imagined bodies of Early modern men and women, and their idealized representations in long narrative romance. The long romances of Tasso, Spenser and Sidney frequently lavish an extraordinary amount of attention on wounded bodies: the blood drenched Clorinda, the mutilated Amoret, and the languishing Parthenia, among others. In a series of three close readings framed by theoretical discussion, I will argue that this rhetorical elaboration is part of these texts' response to a deep uncertainty about the status of the body. This uncertainty is historically specific; it is founded in the changing theological, social, and medical conditions of early modern Europe. It is also heuristically important because it allows us to investigate the pressures that were altering the idea of the heroic self in the period. Wounds, which had an established role in the ethos of European aristocratic culture, had become increasingly ambiguous. They were no longer only signs of martial effort or zealous sacrifice, but of potential threats to the integrity and continuity of both body and self.

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<sup>1</sup> John O'Neill, Five Bodies: The Human Shape of Modern Society, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985) 22-3.



There are at least three separate issues that converge in Renaissance literary depictions of wounds. Each of these issues corresponds, roughly, to a certain kind of wound.

The most influential wounds in sixteenth-century European thought were the wounds of Christ. Yet the meaning of these wounds was changing radically. Drawing on Medieval and Renaissance religious writers such as St. Augustine, St. Bernard, and Martin Luther, I will demonstrate that both Reformation and Counter-Reformation writers drew heavily on the interiorized and individual spirituality characterized by contemplation of the Passion in the late Middle Ages. Even the Counter-Reformation Church, however, which perceived its emphasis on the passion as one of its greatest strengths and attempted to draw mystics like Teresa of Ávila into the main stream of doctrinal writing, remained ambivalent about the most deeply embodied forms of devotion to Christ's wounds, such as stigmata and other paramystical phenomena. Yet this sensational spirituality had great power in the popular imagination, as Richard Crashaw's obsessive and often erotic interest in Christ's wounds demonstrates. In the sixteenth century, the wounds of Christ were thus at once a point of religious contest and a place where spiritual energy and doctrinal orthodoxy were often at odds.

The erotic potential reflected in the sensational spirituality of the Renaissance corresponded with another way of perceiving wounds in the period. Secular versions of erotic love frequently compared it to a wound, a tradition that had its origins in classical literature. Drawing on emblems, on neoplatonic and medical theories of love, and on Renaissance love poetry, I will show that the "wound of love," second in

importance only to Christ's wounds in the Renaissance imagination, was thought of as both metaphorical and real. Those who theorized about love in the Renaissance reflected this ambiguity in their attempt to contrast the philosophical ideal of Neoplatonic love with the medical description of erotic melancholy. Those who wrote love poetry, on the other hand, used the ambiguity between real and metaphorical wounds to express anxieties about the difference between chaste and unchaste love.

Real wounds, however, particularly those that occurred on the battlefields of early modern Europe, were themselves the focus of aristocratic anxiety about the status of the body. Therefore I will also analyze the changing medical and political role of the wounded body in the period. Drawing on the work of Renaissance surgeons such as Ambroise Paré, and on handbooks of military medicine in the period, I will demonstrate how with the increasing use and effectiveness of firearms in the sixteenth-century, war wounds became a less effective means for distinguishing noble from common bodies. Because the humoral body in the period was conceived of in moral and political as well as medical terms, the dangers of putrefaction attendant on gunshot wounds were as socially and politically threatening as the changing circumstances of Renaissance warfare as a whole.

Much of the most recent literary work on the body in Renaissance literature has centered on drama, which has a clear stake in the way actual bodies are represented. I have chosen to concentrate on the longer narrative forms of Renaissance romance, however, because these works, designed for an aristocratic audience, take as their subject the same issues

that govern Renaissance attitudes toward wounds. First, because Renaissance writers often turned the classical epic into an explicitly Christian form, the wounded bodies of individual characters sometimes adumbrate the wounded body of Christ. Their wounds thus play a role in determining the spiritual value, and sometimes even the orthodoxy, of the positions they represent. Second, because Renaissance epic often focused explicitly on aristocratic love the wounds of individual characters could also echo the conventional metaphor of love as a wound. Hence the physical wounds that occurred during the chivalric plot could also be evidence of an inward experience. Finally, because Renaissance writers often used epic as a way of defining and encouraging the ideals of an aristocratic class, they sometimes depicted wounds in ways that reflected distinctions between noble and common bodies.

I have chosen to explore these three issues by looking at three separate texts: Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, and Philip Sidney's *New Arcadia*. All three issues play a part in the way each author depicts wounds, but each work is especially concerned with one aspect of the wounded body.

Torquato Tasso was strongly affected by changing spiritual attitudes toward the body in late sixteenth-century Europe, and I use his work to investigate the religious meaning of wounds in the period. His *Gerusalemme Liberata*, derived from accounts of the first crusade, is a Christian epic in the Counter Reformation tradition. It also reflects his own anxieties about the spiritual value of the body, especially the wounded body. For Tasso, the road to Jerusalem is fraught with difficulties, many of which arise out of the Christian forces themselves.

Tasso took the many side ventures that occurred in the historical crusade and dramatized them as threats to the unity of the Christian army. In the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, the Christians could easily overcome the city if they were unified. However, Godfrey, the Christian commander, must constantly struggle to keep his men from dashing off into episodes of chivalric romance. The language Tasso uses to describe wounds helps represent this struggle as a conflict between sacred and profane bodies. The wounds that characters incur as part of the crusade are badges of sacred purpose, and Tasso suggests that they are rendered beautiful by divine grace. The wounds that occur in the romance episodes, on the other hand, are evidence of the danger of misguided passion, and Tasso suggests that these wounds are beautiful only in the diseased eye of the beholder. Tasso's emphasis on the opposition between sacred and profane dominates the *Gerusalemme Liberata's* depiction of the wounded body.

Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is also concerned with the religious meaning of the body, but it is even more dominated by the erotic potential of wounds. The misguided passion that results in wounds in Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* is usually erotic passion, but for Tasso this passion is primarily a sign of profane intention. For Spenser, it becomes a subject of concern in its own right. Since *The Faerie Queene* is the most allegorical poem ever written, it is appropriate that it should be so concerned with the erotic implications of wounds. The "wound of love" in the Early modern period was both metaphorical and real. It occupied a prominent spot in the iconographic conventions of love, but it also derived from specific medical theories

about the genesis of erotic melancholy. Book III of *The Faerie Queene*, the legend of Chastity, deals with the wound of love not as a profane emblem, nor as a marker of social class, but as a source of uncertainty about the nature and value of inwardness. Spenser dramatizes the dangers of confusing metaphorical and real wounds. He attacks the conventional metaphor by emphasizing the violent implications inherent in wounding. Ultimately, however, he seeks to reaffirm wounds as markers of the inwardness of love, but a love that is sublimated in dynastic and seasonal metaphors.

Philip Sidney, in the revised version of the *Arcadia*, is almost as interested in the love wound as Spenser. Sidney, however, incorporates questions about this kind of wound into his attempt to represent nobility as a quality specific to a social class. For Sidney, as for many of contemporaries, most of the distinctions between aristocratic and common bodies originated on the battlefield. Once the proving ground of the chivalric class, however, the early modern battlefield had become a place where noble bodies, perforated with dangerously septic gunshot wounds, putrefied as rapidly and repulsively as common bodies. So it was to prove for Sidney himself. The way Sidney depicts the physical wounds of battle in the *New Arcadia* shows that he perceives them as the central events in the struggle to distinguish nobility from degradation. The *New Arcadia* is dominated by attempts to define the nature of nobility and to describe how it can be achieved by an aristocratic class that in many of Sidney's examples is quite ignoble. The work reaches a crisis in its depiction of Amphialus' rebellion, which pits nobles against each other in a series of bloody encounters. The wounds

suffered in this section of the narrative are by turns grotesque and attractive. In each case Sidney suggests that the aesthetic aspect of the wound reflects the nobility of both victim and observer.

The wounds of Christ, of love, of war, run through all three of these long narratives. Together they show an aristocratic literature deeply concerned with the ways that its ideals could be physically embodied, and with the possibility that this embodiment might undermine these ideals.

CHAPTER 1  
STIGMATA ON TRIAL:  
THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST IN THE RENAISSANCE

1

On the twenty-seventh of May, 1588, Philip II's Invincible Armada was preparing to attack England, under the command of the Marquis of Santa Cruz.<sup>1</sup> Before he would let it leave, however, the king ordered the entire fleet to assemble in the port of Lisbon, in front of the Dominican convent of the Annunciation, which was situated a few hundred paces from the beach. There the entire fleet was to be blessed by the young, well born prioress of the convent, Sor Maria de la Visitación, one of the most famous holy women of her time, and a professed stigmatic.<sup>2</sup> A few months later, however, the Marquis was dead, and the Armada defeated, scattered, and destroyed. Amid the hysteria and fear that swept Spain after the defeat of the great Armada, Heironimo Lippomano, the Venetian ambassador in Spain, wrote, at the end of one official letter to the Doge:

The Nun of Portugal who was universally held for a saint has been found out at last. The stigmata are proved to be artificial and the whole trick invented to gain credit in the world. She was induced to act thus by two friars of her Order of St. Dominic, with a view to being able some day to tell the King that unless he handed Portugal over to Don Antonio he would be damned for ever, and with the further object of raising a rebellion against the King. The friars are in the prisons of the Inquisition, the nun in a convent awaiting sentence.

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<sup>1</sup> When the Marquis died before the Armada set sail, he was replaced by The Duke of Medina Sidonia. According to Thomas Wright, the Marquis of Santa Cruz died of melancholy, after being disgraced by Philip II. Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in General* (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1971) 62.

<sup>2</sup> R. P. Mortier, *Histoire des Maitres Généraux de l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs* (Paris: Alphonse Picard et Fils, 1911) 5: 646.

Sor Maria's trajectory, from universal religious renown to acute political disgrace, illustrates the changing understanding of religious wounds in the Renaissance. Her story, I argue, shows both the extraordinary amount of popular religious sentiment attached to the wounded human body in the early modern period, and the deep cultural anxieties it could elicit. The most influential wounds in sixteenth-century European thought were the wounds of Christ; arguments over the meaning of these wounds contributed to the great religious and political struggle between Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Stigmatics were powerful agents in this contest because they provided sensational and visible evidence of divine favor, but their influence over popular opinion often led to anxiety and suspicion about the value of their sanctity. Sor Maria offers us an example of the peculiar combination of conviction and suspicion that characterized late sixteenth-century spiritual attitudes toward wounds.

Given Sor Maria's widespread reputation in the years preceding her downfall, we know surprisingly little about her. The only substantial documents consist of a short *Life*, written by the well-known fray Luis de Granada and reported in several Italian and French works, and the account of her investigation and sentencing by the Inquisition. Sor Maria was born into a relatively well-to-do Portuguese family in 1556.<sup>3</sup> Sometime between the age of eleven and twelve she entered the

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<sup>3</sup> Montague Summers, *The physical phenomena of mysticism, with especial reference to the stigmata, divine and diabolic* (New York: Barnes and Noble, c1950) 218. Luis de Granada's *Life* puts her birth much earlier, in 1550.



Dominican Convent of La Annunciada in Lisbon.<sup>4</sup> Five years later she took the veil, and from then on began to have an increasing number of mystical and visionary experiences. Her stigmata appeared as the result of a series of visions of Christ. In 1575, according to Luis de Granada, Christ came to her wearing the crown of thorns and “bathed in blood.”<sup>5</sup> In her vision Christ took the crown of thorns from His own head and placed it on hers, resulting in a series of marks which persisted after the vision. Several years later she had another similar vision that left a red mark on her side. As a result of her mystical experiences, but also in part because of her family connections, she was elected prioress of the convent in 1582, apparently against the wishes of a number of the other nuns. Thereafter, in March of 1584, she had a climactic vision which resulted in the full stigmatization of her hands and feet as well as her side. This time, Christ appeared to her nailed on a cross, looking at her with “loving eyes” (*ojos amorosos*). From his five wounds came five rays of light which pierced her hands, feet, and side. In the midst of her exquisite pain she saw on herself the visible signs of Christ’s wounds.<sup>6</sup> These wounds also persisted; eventually her hands and feet even developed “nails” emerging from the wounds.

All of these events contributed to Sor Maria’s reputation, but she eventually became most famous for the special quality of the wound in her side. This wound was not only larger than the wounds on her hands

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<sup>4</sup> Summers, 218. Herbert Thurston, *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism* (London: Burns, Oates, 1952) 83.

<sup>5</sup> “bañado en sangre” Luis De Granada, “Vida de Sor Maria de la Visitacion,” *Monjas y beatas embaucadoras*, ed. Jesus Imirizaldu. (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1977) 128.

<sup>6</sup> Granada 131.

and feet, but also bled periodically, a feature which eventually enhanced Sor Maria's reputation in this peculiar way:

Every Friday there come out of the side wound five drops of blood, ordered so as to form a perfect figure of a cross, and each drop of blood is no bigger around than a lentil, and to gather them she puts over the wound a cloth, the thinnest and most worn that she can find, doubled with four folds, through all of which these five drops of blood penetrate and pass from part to part, so that each Friday the wound produces four cloths.<sup>7</sup>

Because they were distributed widely, these cloths became one of the means by which most people encountered Sor Maria, who herself remained at the convent of the Annunciada. By all accounts the bloodstained rags were highly sought after, and treasured by their owners. Mary, the wife of Diego de Guzman, Count of Alba, and Viceroy of Sicily, apparently kept her cloth even after the Inquisition had "exposed" Sor Maria and demanded that all these cloths be destroyed.<sup>8</sup> They were also credited with miraculous powers of healing, particularly of healing wounds. One woman's gangrenous lip, for instance, was cured when she applied a cloth to it.<sup>9</sup> These cloths which were so regularly printed off of Maria's body, combined with more conventional portraits and printed versions of Granada's *Life*, eventually made her, as Ludovico Paramo describes it "famous throughout all the provinces of

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<sup>7</sup> Granada 133-4. My translation. "tudos los viernes les salen de la llaga del costado cinco gotas de sangre puestas por orden en una perfectisima figura de cruz, y cada gota de sangre es redonda poco mayor que una lenteja y para recojerlas pone ella encima de la llaga un lienzo, el más delgado y más usado que puede hallar, doblado con cuatro dobleces, los cuales tudos penetran estas cinco gotas y pasan de parte a parte, de modo que cada viernes salen cuatro paños de éstos."

<sup>8</sup> Thurston 88.

<sup>9</sup> Summers 220.

Spain and Italy and indeed even as far as the most distant confines of the eastern ocean."<sup>10</sup>

At the same time that her religious reputation was gaining ground, however, Sor Maria began to attract some unfavorable attention from secular authorities. Philip II had taken the throne of Portugal in 1581. In 1582, the same year in which she was elected prioress of her convent, Sor Maria became an advocate of the exiled Portuguese pretender Don Antonio. Initially, at least, her political opinions remained muted, and in any case they were not exceptional. Many of the Portuguese Dominicans sympathized with Don Antonio, and resented Spanish domination. During his visit to Portugal in 1587, the general of the Dominican order, father Sisto Fabri, even thought it necessary to warn members not to challenge Philip's claim to Portugal.<sup>11</sup> During this same visit, Sisto Fabri also investigated Sor Maria's stigmata, not because of her political sympathies, but because her sanctity had been repeatedly challenged by other members of her order. Father Fabri certified her wounds as genuine, increasing her reputation even further. In addition, despite her well-known sympathy for Portuguese nationalism, Sor Maria remained extremely popular in Spanish aristocratic circles. In May of 1588, according to Mortier, she was "at the apogee of her reputation," venerated as a Saint by no less than Cardinal Albert of Austria, the viceroy of Portugal.<sup>12</sup> When the Armada was defeated, however, Portuguese nationalism reappeared, and Sor Maria began to champion

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<sup>10</sup> Cited in Thurston 89.

<sup>11</sup> Mortier 643.

<sup>12</sup> Mortier 645.

the cause of Don Antonio more openly. According to Mortier and Kagan, she used her status as a stigmatic to enhance her support for the Portuguese cause. Since Christ's wounds figure in the arms of Portugal, Sor Maria attempted to present herself as "the symbol of Portuguese suffering under the Spanish yoke." By the Autumn of 1588 she had become increasingly outspoken, and apparently made several public statements in support of Don Antonio. One of these, Mortier reports, was to the effect that "The kingdom of Portugal does not belong to Philip II, the king of Spain, but to the Braganza family. If the king of Spain does not restore the throne that he has unjustly usurped, then God will chastise him severely."<sup>13</sup> By the time Sor Maria began making such statements, the political atmosphere was already dangerous.

Lippomano's letters written during his final months as ambassador to Spain convey a vivid picture of a nation overcome by confusion and paranoia. Although preparations were underway for a second Armada, they bore "the stamp of defence rather than of offence," as Lippomano puts it in the same letter in which he reports Sor Maria's disgrace. The consternation that swept Spain and Portugal when news of the Armada's defeat began to arrive, combined with Sor Maria's inflammatory statements, were enough to reopen her case. On August 9, 1588, Cardinal Albert decided to allow the Inquisition to initiate an investigation.

From August 9 to the conclusion of its investigation on December 7 the Inquisition interviewed Sor Maria at length, as well as several members of her convent, and a confidante, Sor Madalena de la Croix.

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<sup>13</sup> Cited in Mortier 646.

According to the sentence published by the Inquisition, Sor Maria began by asserting her sanctity, despite being repeatedly confronted by the accusations of fellow nuns. On October 14, however, the investigators managed to wash off the stigmata with soap, thus proving to their satisfaction that "said signs of the wounds were painted with red color and the nails with black color and faked and not simulated and were neither miraculous nor gifts from gods." At this point, Sor Maria was reportedly "very disturbed and confused," but said she was not up to confessing anything that day. The next day, "with many tears and many signs of repentance, she threw herself at the feet of all and began to confess her sins."<sup>14</sup> As the succeeding passages make clear, Sor Maria was made to admit the falsity not just of her stigmata, but of every vision she had ever claimed, particularly those having to do with Iberian politics. The Inquisition considered her faults a "great offense of Our Lord and of his wounds and of the Catholic Church" and "worthy to be seriously punished," but it also claimed to be lenient in its sentence. Sor Maria was condemned to perpetual seclusion in a remote convent; images of her, and any of the handkerchiefs stained with her blood, were to be collected and burned. Her friend, Sor Madalena de la Croix, was whipped through the streets of Lisbon for her obstinacy in supporting Sor Maria.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Inquisition, "Sentencia de Sor Maria de la Visitacion," *Monjas y beatas embaucadoras*, ed. Jesus Imirizaldu. (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1977) 187-8. Translations by Anne Sussman.

<sup>15</sup> Mortier. Subsequent opinion about the validity of the Inquisition's case has varied extensively. Many contemporaries, like Lippomano, accepted the sentence without question, and as a consequence, Sor Maria's international reputation plummeted. Modern writers on stigmata have also tended to approve the Inquisition's sentence, so that Sor

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Maria is most frequently cited among examples of fraudulent stigmatics. Some, however, have taken her side. Montague Summers apparently believed fervently, although without much evidence, in her innocence and saintliness. For Summers, Sor Maria was the victim of envious members of her order. He calls the Inquisition's sentence "obviously written to order," and dismisses the charge that Luis de Granada died because he was ashamed of being deceived by Sor Maria as the "basest canard" (Summers 220). Others have been more reserved. Herbert Thurston declares that her cause must have been prejudiced by her open political sympathies. When he discusses Sor Maria's confession, one of the strongest points against her, he points out that by confessing to fraud, Sor Maria managed to avoid the more serious accusation of heresy, an accusation that would have led to her death if she had persisted in maintaining her saintliness (Thurston 85-88).

Sor Maria's trajectory from renown to disgrace tells us, I will argue, a great deal about the changing religious understanding of wounds in the late sixteenth century. But to understand the popular force of her spirituality, we must first look at the origins of that spirituality in Medieval Christianity, not only during the late Middle Ages, when stigmatics first began to appear, but in the writings of earlier theologians as well, beginning with those of Augustine of Hippo. While Christian spirituality did not become heavily focused on the Passion until the high Middle Ages, the notion that Christ's humanity was spiritually crucial stretches as far back as Augustine. To theologians, the quality of the Incarnation had always been a subject of debate, but according to Margaret Miles, Augustine was the first to perceive the question of Christ's body as central. His work on the Incarnation, Miles claims, has "an urgency which occurs neither in the earlier patristic authors, nor in the philosophers."<sup>16</sup> The task that Augustine saw as necessary, Miles argues, was to express the Christian model of a person as a unity of soul and body. Of course, Augustine has since acquired the reputation of one who celebrated the soul at the expense of the body, and one who denigrated the body in all its aspects. But Miles argues that this reputation derives from Augustine's own unconscious revolt against his efforts to unite soul and body: in other words, his work is philosophically rather than emotionally consistent.<sup>17</sup>

Augustine's many allusions to the body support Miles' assessment because he uses wounds both as a trope for sin and as a way of describing

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<sup>16</sup> Margaret Ruth Miles, *Augustine on the body* (Missoula MT: Scholars Press, 1979) 92.

<sup>17</sup> Miles 131.

salvation. In the *Confessions*, the metaphor of sin as a wound appears almost accidental. Remarking on his delayed baptism, he criticizes the attitude that says "Leave him alone; let him do as he likes; he is not baptized yet," by comparing physical and spiritual health: "we do not say: 'Let him have a few more wounds: he is not well yet.'"<sup>18</sup> Later, Augustine links wounds and sin with more theological sophistication. In the *Tractatus in Johannem*, for example, he uses the notion of a wound to describe the spiritual limitations and distractions of the body. The reason that a person may fail to "grasp God," is that "he did not have the eye of the heart ... Therefore there was a thing within, wounded, and a thing without, healthy. He has healthy eyes of the body, he has wounded eyes of the heart."<sup>19</sup> At the final Judgment, according to Augustine, the wound in Christ's left side, by signifying his humanity, renders his divinity invisible to those sitting on his left.<sup>20</sup> By calling sin a wound, however, Augustine also allows Christ to be "the complete physician of our wounds."<sup>21</sup> Christ's own wounds not only guarantee that the body can be redeemed, but also constitute the treatment by which such redemption occurs: "Now my brothers, in the mean time, that we may be healed of sin, let us look upon the crucified Christ... so they who look with faith upon the death of Christ are healed of the biles of sin."<sup>22</sup> On the one hand, Augustine uses wounds to symbolize mortal blindness

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<sup>18</sup> Saint Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine* trans. Rex Warner (New York: NAL, 1963) 1.11 (p. 29).

<sup>19</sup> Saint Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* trans. John W. Rettig (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988) 14.12(3).

<sup>20</sup> Augustine, *Tractates* 21.13(4).

<sup>21</sup> Augustine, *Tractates* 3.3(1).

<sup>22</sup> Augustine, *Tractates* 12.11(5).



to the spirit. On the other hand, he uses them to symbolize an opening for immortal longings. These two potentials are always in tension throughout his work.

Elsewhere, Augustine uses wounds as metaphors for the process by which the body gets included in a transcendental self. Wounds are not only both symptom and treatment of sin: they also become part of God's providential plan. The Lord, Augustine argues, is the one who "shape[s] sorrow to be an instructor, who give[s] wounds in order to heal, who kill[s] us lest we should die away from [Him]."<sup>23</sup> Likewise, Christ's wounds at the crucifixion are the basis for the Church as well as individual salvation. "From the lance-pierced side of Christ hanging on the cross," Augustine says, "the sacraments of the Church flowed forth."<sup>24</sup> These references show wounds to have an important place in individual and social redemption. They show the body as more than something to be oppressed and denigrated at every opportunity, because God both causes and heals wounds (both metaphorical and real). Augustine conceives of the redeemed self in bodily terms. "Perfect health of body shall be the ultimate immortality of the whole man."<sup>25</sup> Finally, Augustine also gestures toward a view that will become common in the late Middle Ages: that wounds can become a metaphor for divine love. In an extended passage at the end of the *Confessions*, he describes his missionary zeal as a wound:

You had shot us through our hearts with your charity, and we carried about with us your words like arrows fixed deep in our flesh; stored up in the recesses

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<sup>23</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* 2.2 (p. 42).

<sup>24</sup> Augustine, *Tractates* 15.8(1).

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Miles.

of our thought were the examples of your servants whose darkness you had turned to light and whose death to life, and so that heavy sluggishness of ours that might have dragged us down again to the depths was utterly burned up and consumed.<sup>26</sup>

While Augustine had hinted at the importance of Christ's wounds in his attempt to understand the redemption of the body, the later Middle Ages made these wounds the center of what Ewert Cousins calls an "emerging devotion to the humanity of Christ," a devotion that was itself a part of an increasingly inward and meditative spirituality.<sup>27</sup> The iconographic record gives a broad historical perspective on this interest in Christ's humanity. Vladimir Gurewich, for example, in tracing the development of images of the crucifixion from their first appearance in the fifth century, notes that, from the eleventh century, the triumphant Christ began to be replaced by the suffering Christ.<sup>28</sup> Christ's wounds no longer demonstrate simply his participation in a redemptive history; they begin to act aesthetically. They involved devout Christians in an attempt to duplicate the Passion within themselves as an event of feeling. As Cousins puts it, "the one meditating perceives this event [the Passion] not as something in the distant past that is being viewed from the standpoint of the present. Rather he enters into the event, either as an eyewitness or as an actor in the drama of the event... His involvement in the event opens to him its meaning and value."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Augustine, *Confessions* 9.2 (p. 185).

<sup>27</sup> Ewert Cousins, "The Humanity and Passion of Christ," *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt. *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 17: 375-91.

<sup>28</sup> Vladimir Gurewich, "Observations on the iconography of the wound in Christ's side, with special reference to its position," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 20 (1957): 358-62.

<sup>29</sup> Cousins 383.

Saints were supposed to make this sympathetic duplication into a broad reaching imitatio Christi in which wounds were not merely a sign of divine interiority but direct access to that interiority. This emphasis on sympathetic contemplation correlated with an explosion of interest in relics, fueled in part by the enormous number of relics sent back to Europe during the crusades. Reliquaries, which before the end of the twelfth century were closed receptacles, began to display relics to view, often in elaborate chambers of gold and crystal.<sup>30</sup> New holidays, such as the feast of the lance (festum lanceae, 1354), and new images, such as Christ as man of sorrows, also tended to center around the physical details of the Passion.

Many medieval religious writings contributed to the growing interest in Christ's humanity. Of these, some of the most influential for later understanding of Christ's wounds, particularly for female mystics, were Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the Song of Songs. To some degree Bernard echoes Augustine's metaphor of Christ's wounds as a medicine for human sin, itself conceived of as a wound. At one point, Bernard calls meditation on the wounds of Christ a "cure for the wounds of conscience."<sup>31</sup> At another point, he reflects "I have sinned gravely, my conscience is disturbed but not confounded because I shall remember the wounds of the Lord. What sin is so deadly as not to be forgiven in the death of Christ?" (61.3). By Bernard's time such an understanding of

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<sup>30</sup> Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art* (Greenwich CT: New York Graphic Society, 1972) 2: 190.

<sup>31</sup> of Clairvaux Bernard Saint, *On the Song of Songs* trans. Kilian Walsh (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications, 1971) 62.7 Subsequent references are from this edition and will be noted by sermon and chapter.

Christ's wounds was relatively common. Bernard helped add to the Medieval understanding of the wounds, however, the sense that these wounds provide objects for personal meditation. An individual Christian soul, according to Bernard takes joy in the "bitterness" and "ugliness" of the passion. "All her affections are preoccupied with the wounds of Christ; she abides in them by constant meditation" (61.7). While Augustine wanted to explain the salvific importance of Christ's wounds, Bernard sought to make them the center of an individual and mystical spirituality.

"Constant meditation" on the Passion, as Bernard describes it, also has more mystical and emotional benefits than rational ones. One passage in particular from the *Song of Songs* prompts Bernard to discuss wounds at length. Among the bridegroom's many exhortations to his beloved in the biblical text, he says to her, "My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the wall, show me your face, let your voice sounds in my ears" (*Song of Songs*, 2:14). Drawing on an exegesis by Gregory the Great, Bernard glosses the "clefts of the rock" as the wounds of Christ and proceeds to examine the implications of such an interpretation (61.3). His thoughts lead in two directions. First, by imagining Christ's wounds as openings, Bernard can interpret them as windows onto the loving nature of God:

The nail that pierced him has become for me a key unlocking the sight of the Lord's will. Why should I not gaze through the cleft? The nail cries out, the wound cries out that God is truly in Christ, reconciling the world to himself ... he is no longer one who cannot sympathize with my weaknesses. The secret of his heart is laid open through the clefts of his body: that mighty mystery of loving is laid open, laid open too the tender mercies of our God, in which the morning sun from on high has risen upon us. Surely his heart is laid open through his wounds! Where more clearly than in your wounds does the evidence shine that you, Lord, 'are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love'? (61.4).

Bernard imagines this revelation of divine love in more than simply visual ways. "Through these fissures [the wounds]," he says, "I can suck honey from the rock and oil from the flinty stone-- I can taste and see that the Lord is good. He was thinking thoughts of peace and I did not know it" (61.4).

Second, because the dove in the *Song of Songs* is described as being *in* the clefts of the rock, Bernard also portrays them as a refuge or hiding spot, and consequently as a source of emotional comfort:

And really where is there safe sure rest for the weak except in the Saviour's wounds? There the security of my dwelling depends on the greatness of his saving power. The world rages, the body oppresses, the devil lays his snares: I do not fall because I am founded on a rock (61.3).

The image of a person, or even of a soul, actually inhabiting a wound may seem incongruous, but it only extends the more general notion of "dwelling" in the Lord. Bernard's paradoxical association of affliction and comfort reaches its greatest extent in the martyr, who actually desires to imitate Christ. At the moment of his greatest agony,

The martyr remains jubilant and triumphant though his whole body is mangled; even while the steel is gashing his sides he looks around with courage and elation at the holy blood pouring from his flesh. Where then is the soul of the martyr? In a safe place, of course; in the heart of Jesus, of course, in wounds open for it to enter (61.8).

By describing the emotional comfort of Christ's wounds, and by attributing to them a message about the extent of divine love, Bernard directs attention away from the purely theological understanding of the Passion. For him, as for late Medieval Christianity as a whole, the wounded Christ is nurturing and comforting rather than triumphant.

Eventually, Bernard of Clairvaux's work, and that of other religious writers such as Anselm of Canterbury and Gueric of Igny, led to a gendered understanding of Christ's wounds. By the late Middle Ages,

Christ's wounds were often depicted as female attributes. In part, these depictions coincided with the Church's overall emphasis on Christ's vulnerability because a patriarchal culture often associates suffering with the female. But as Caroline Walker Bynum explains, people also perceived Christ's wounds as feminine because they saw Christ's sacrifice as physically nurturing in a way that was analogous to maternal care. They treated "Christ's flesh as female, at least in certain of its salvific functions, especially its bleeding and nurturing." Bynum turns this attitude around to help her answer her primary question about women's bodily spirituality. "This fact," she says, "helps us understand why it was women more than men who imitated Christ bodily, especially in stigmata." "Women mystics often simply became the flesh of Christ, because their flesh could do what his could do: bleed, feed, die, and give life to others."<sup>32</sup> The blood of communion could be interpreted as motherly nourishment (coming from the breast of Christ), and images of Christ's blood dropping onto a dragon at the crucifixion were designed to illustrate the fulfillment of God's promise to Eve about "bruising the head" of the serpent.<sup>33</sup> Of course, Bynum also cautions that "medieval thinkers used gender imagery fluidly, not literally."<sup>34</sup> But by the end of the Middle Ages, the spirituality of the Passion was firmly identified with female religious experience, particularly with paramystical phenomena like stigmata.

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<sup>32</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and redemption : essays on gender and the human body in Medieval religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991) 204 and 222.

<sup>33</sup> Schiller 105.

<sup>34</sup> Bynum, *Fragmentation* 218.

Maria de la Visitacion had many ties spiritual ties to this Medieval tradition. Beginning with St. Francis in the middle of the thirteenth century, Western Europe saw an increasing number of professed stigmatics, many of whom eventually became canonized.

Demographically, Sor Maria's case is typical of Medieval stigmatics. Like the majority of these earlier stigmatics, Sor Maria was a member of a religious order. Like most of them, she was a woman, and as was the case for most Medieval stigmatics, she received her wounds as the product of a series of visions. Many Renaissance stigmatics also consciously saw themselves as the spiritual descendants of the famous stigmatics of the late Middle Ages. For most of them the key figure was not St. Francis, but St. Catherine of Sienna, who had repeated visions of nursing from the side of Christ. Imbert Gourbeyre's historical list of stigmatics repeatedly mentions stigmatics who received their wounds "à l'instar de Catharine de Sienne" (in imitation of Catherine of Sienna).<sup>35</sup> St. Catherine was also a popular subject for artistic representation in the Renaissance.<sup>36</sup> Sor Maria herself, while she did not directly imitate St. Catherine, had numerous visions of the Saint, who appeared to her "with a sorrowing face and eyes full of tears."<sup>37</sup>

Other aspects of Sor Maria's wounds are also typical of both earlier and later stigmatics. Such wounds appear suddenly in all of the documented cases, and often can disappear just as suddenly. Like Sor Maria, many other stigmatics experienced periodic bleeding from their

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<sup>35</sup> Antoine Imbert-Gourbeyre, *La Stigmatisation* (Paris: Clermont-Ferrand, 1894) 1: 576.

<sup>36</sup> Bynum, *Fragmentation* .

<sup>37</sup> Summers 218.

wounds, usually on holy days. Even the nails which Luis de Granada saw emerging from her wounds are paralleled by such phenomena in a number of cases from the thirteenth into the twentieth century.<sup>38</sup> Sor Maria was relatively unusual in being so completely stigmatized, with both the “crown of thorns” and the five wounds, but, as Ian Wilson notes, the location and type of wounds vary wildly from one stigmatic to another.<sup>39</sup> The deciding factor in such cases seems to be the person’s own imagined version of Christ and of the crucifixion. Stigmatics often reproduce the wounds on their favorite crucifix, for example. Modern clinical assessments of this psychosomatic phenomenon stress the subjective connection between the wounds and the vision which precipitates them. According to René Biot, the ecstatic vision “sets in motion the mental mechanism through which the subject represents past events to himself.”<sup>40</sup> Sor Maria’s stigmata, like those of others before and after her, were a function of increased interest and imaginative investment in the life of the historical Christ.

## 3

When the Church alleged that Sor Maria had been manipulated by men, it echoed Medieval suspicions about holy women. Yet the speed

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<sup>38</sup> Ian Wilson, *The Bleeding Mind: An investigation into the mysterious phenomenon of stigmata* (London: Wakefield and Nicholson, 1988) 126.

<sup>39</sup> Wilson 124.

<sup>40</sup> René Biot, *The Enigma of the Stigmata* trans. T. J. Hepburne-Scott (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1962) 140.



and force of the Inquisition in her case were relatively new, and they demonstrated a new attitude toward such types of spirituality. According to Bynum, women's "affective" spirituality of the late Middle Ages was something "against which both Protestant and Roman Catholic reformations reacted."<sup>41</sup> They never reacted univocally or consistently, however, since each reformation drew heavily on Medieval Christianity. The Protestant Reformation might seem to have offered the most direct challenge to the late Medieval obsession with Christ's wounds. Protestant suspicion of images, complex ceremonies, sensational demonstrations of religious fervor, and the doctrine of salvation through works, all seemed to distance and attenuate the physicality of the Passion. Artistic representations of the Passion in Protestant areas of Europe declined, and images of the triumphant Christ became more common than those of the suffering Christ.<sup>42</sup> Yet Protestant theologians also thought of themselves as more Christocentric than the Church of Rome, a tendency that only increased as the sixteenth century progressed.<sup>43</sup> More radical reformers, such as the followers of the "bitter Christ" who advocated the imitation of Christ (*die Nachfolge Christi*), constantly insisted on the theological importance of Christ's suffering "in

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<sup>41</sup> Bynum 121.

<sup>42</sup> Schiller.

<sup>43</sup> Eric Lund, "Second Age of the Reformation: Lutheran and Reformed Spirituality, 1550-1700," *Christian Spirituality: Post Reformation and Modern*, eds. Louis Dupré, and Don E. Saliers. *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 18: 213-239.

Head and Members.”<sup>44</sup> This ambiguity about the nature and importance of Christ’s body is almost paradigmatic of the relationship between late Medieval and Protestant spirituality. The contemplation of the Passion in the late Middle Ages was characterized by the same kind of interiorized and individual spirituality that the Reformation encouraged, but it could also lead to the kind of sensational physical demonstrations of faith that most Reformation writers abhorred.

Luther himself was careful both to defend and to define his valuation of the Passion. In his sermon at Coburg on “the Cross and Suffering” (1530) for instance, he responds directly to those “many false fanatics abroad... who say that we have nothing else to preach except faith alone, that we leave out the doctrine of good works and the holy cross and suffering.”<sup>45</sup> This was precisely the claim that the Catholic Reformation was to use most effectively against Protestantism in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. In his defense, Luther explains that suffering itself is “true holiness,” but that one must suffer at God’s will, and not as a personal choice “as the fanatics choose their own suffering” (“Sermon at Coburg” 198). Those who meditate too flamboyantly on Christ’s Passion, according to Luther, have a kind of works-righteousness:

But they are wrong, not only with respect to their choosing their own cross, but also in that they flaunt their suffering and make a great merit of it and thus

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<sup>44</sup>Timothy George, “The Spirituality of the Radical Reformation,” *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt. World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest, (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 17: 334-371.

<sup>45</sup>Martin Luther, “Sermon at Coburg on Cross and Suffering, 1530,” *Sermons I*, ed. Helmut T. Lehman. trans. John W. Doberstein. *Luther’s Works*, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959) 51: 198. Subsequent references are from this edition and will be noted by title and page number.

blaspheme God, because it is not a true suffering but a stinking, self-chosen suffering ("Sermon at Coburg" 199).

And thus, paradoxically, Luther advises his audience to "drive the suffering and cross from your heart and mind as quickly as you can" ("Sermon at Coburg" 204).

Elsewhere, however, Luther insists equally strongly on the value of contemplating the suffering Christ. In "A Meditation on Christ's Passion," he explains the impact of such meditation in personal terms:

When Christ is tortured by nails penetrating his hands and feet, you should eternally suffer the pain they inflict and the pain of even more cruel nails, which will in truth be the lot of those who do not avail themselves of Christ's passion.<sup>46</sup>

In emphasizing the suffering of the individual believer Luther harks back to the Medieval notion of *imitatio Christi*, but he is already modifying it by suggesting the fate of those who "do not avail themselves" (properly) of the Passion. For Luther, the Passion should not just create physical suffering in the believer, and certainly not the exquisite pain of the stigmatic, but mental terror. "They contemplate Christ's passion aright," he says, "who view it with a terror-stricken heart and a despairing conscience" ("on Christ's Passion" 8). The physical dimension the Passion corresponds to the emotions of the believer. "The real and true work of Christ's passion is to make man conformable to Christ, so that man's conscience is tormented by his sins in like measure as Christ was pitifully tormented in body and soul by our sins" ("on Christ's Passion" 10). In this equation, Luther relies on a purely

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<sup>46</sup> Martin Luther, "A Meditation on Christ's Passion," *Devotional Writings*, ed. Helmut T. Lehman. trans. John W. Doberstein. Luther's Works, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959) 42: 9. Subsequent references are from this edition and will be noted by title and page number.

Augustinian account of wounds as a metaphor for sin. The risen Christ, according to Luther, has “no wounds, no pain in him, and no sign of sin” (“on Christ’s Passion” 12). Unlike late Medieval accounts of Christ’s wounds, which emphasized the parallels between bleeding and nurturing, Luther’s work makes the wounds into a source of profound desolation. The “natural and noble work” of the Passion, according to Luther, is “strangling the old Adam and banishing all joy, delight, and confidence which man could derive from other creatures, even as Christ was forsaken by all, even by God” (“on Christ’s Passion” 11). Thus, Luther’s real objection to Catholic holy people who meditated on the Passion was the comfort they took from this activity. “Christ’s suffering is thus used to effect in them,” he complains, “a lack of suffering contrary to his being and nature” (“on Christ’s Passion” 7).

Protestant theologians reacted particularly strongly to the popular devotional practices of the late Middle Ages, but in the post Tridentine world of late sixteenth-century Catholicism, these devotional practices were already out of favor. The Catholic Church had embarked on its own reformation. What had once been a religion that was “often public, emotional, and organized around groups, such as the confraternities,” according to Keith Luria, became “individualized, interiorized, and austere rather than collective, public, and emotional.”<sup>47</sup> Those whom Luther condemned for “flaunting” their suffering were also condemned

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<sup>47</sup> Keith P. Luria, “The Counter-Reformation and Popular Spirituality,” *Christian Spirituality: Post Reformation and Modern*, eds. Louis Dupré, and Don E. Saliers. *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 18: 93-120.

by the Catholic church in its attempt to encourage what the Bishop of Nimes describes as “fervor, veneration, silence, and order.”<sup>48</sup> Even the sometimes flamboyant efforts of “internal missionaries” accentuated individual spirituality. The “*esercizio devoto*,” a meditation on a devotional object, while performed in a communal setting, was nonetheless distinguished as an “individual act.”<sup>49</sup> This emphasis on interiorized spirituality was partly the result of direct action by Church authorities. New observances, new saints, and new hierarchies were all designed to replace the diffuse authority of the Medieval church with centralized control. But many of the organizational changes mirrored changes in spirituality that were already taking place throughout Catholic Europe. In Spain, efforts to reform religious life (not popular devotion but life in the religious orders) created a heightened interest in spirituality among lay people. As for the Counter-Reformation as a whole, Spanish spirituality during the last quarter of the sixteenth century was characterized by “the passage from an objective spirituality based on vocal prayer and external works to another vital and subjective one based on personal experience.”<sup>50</sup>

## 4

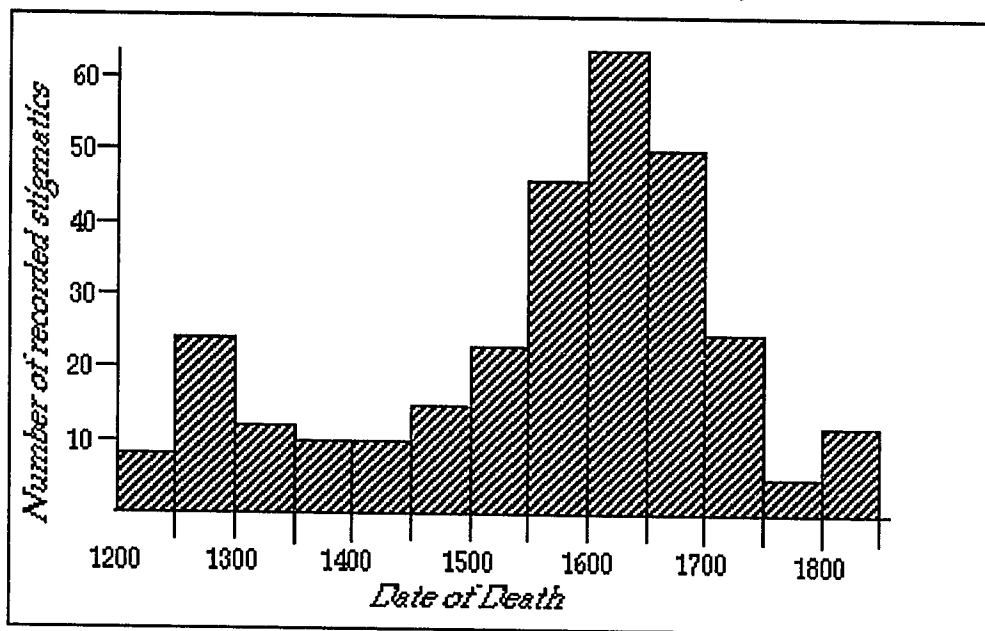
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<sup>48</sup> Luria 105, quoting the bishop of Nimes.

<sup>49</sup> Luria 100.

<sup>50</sup> Kieran Kavanagh, “Spanish Sixteenth Century: Carmel and Surrounding Movements,” *Christian Spirituality: Post Reformation and Modern*, eds. Louis Dupré, and Don E. Saliers. *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 70.

Although the Counter-Reformation turned away from “objective spirituality,” however, it did not discourage such paramystical phenomena as stigmatism. The number of ecstasies and stigmatics actually increased dramatically in the late sixteenth century. According to Imbert-Gourbeyre’s list of historical stigmatics, for example, there were a greater number of living stigmatics in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries than at any other period in history.



Historical distribution of recorded stigmatics.<sup>51</sup>

This increase had its roots in Counter-Reformation theology. Because the austere and interiorized spirituality of the Counter Reformation had certain surface resemblances to Protestant spirituality, Catholic religious writers sought to contrast themselves with Protestants less on the kind of spirituality than on the quality of an individual’s

<sup>51</sup> Based on data from Imbert Gourbeyre.

relationship with God, and particularly the quality of divine love. To Luther's idea of "faith alone" (*sola fides*), the Counter Reformation saw itself as offering "faith informed by love." And given the language of late Medieval Christianity, the greatest evidence of divine love was Christ's Passion. Hence the interpretation and importance of the wounds of Christ became the center of one of the key religious battlegrounds at the end of the sixteenth century. Stigmatics were a powerful weapon in this battle because they allowed Catholicism to claim visible and miraculous access to the divine. Consequently, as part of its effort to regain ascendancy in Europe, the Church recognized holy people, especially stigmatics and ecstasies, more openly. Of course, this process was not always, or even often, a positive one, as Sor Maria's experiences demonstrate. But even notorious cases of failure and scandal reflect the heightened imaginative and spiritual investment in the body that was characteristic of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The details of Sor Maria's history underscore this imaginative investment. The handkerchiefs on which her wounds were printed, in triplicate or quadruplicate, made her a religious reflection of Renaissance print-culture as a whole, with its emphasis on duplication and distribution. To her contemporaries, Sor Maria was distinguished at first by her universal renown, and later by her universal disgrace. Many of those who wrote of her, like Lippomano, considered the amount of widespread attention she received more a source of wonder than the details of her paramystical experiences themselves. Also, unlike earlier holy women, whose fame grew slowly, if at all, Sor Maria's reputation

was created, and then destroyed, in a comparatively short time. The speed with which Sor Maria's deeds became known throughout Europe, and the amount of popular interest she enjoyed, reflect an increasing popular interest in a bodily kind of spirituality, but they also speak to more general changes in the way information and attitudes were communicated in Early Modern Europe, in anticipation of modern notions of the evanescence of "public opinion."

Sor Maria's failure shows how much anxiety was focused on bodily holiness in the period. Those few holy women who succeeded show how influential such holiness could be. Of these the most famous and influential was Teresa of Àvila, someone whose fame paralleled that initially given to Sor Maria. St. Teresa's popularity was partly responsible for the exceptional speed of her canonization. She even shared with Sor Maria the "printed" relic. In 1595, 13 years after her death, Diego de Yepes, who had previously supported Teresa, was moved to begin the canonization process when he witnessed blood from her corpse soaking into handkerchiefs.<sup>52</sup> Unlike Sor Maria, however, Teresa managed to convey her mystical understanding of Christ's body in a form acceptable to the Church.

Christ's wounds were especially important to Teresa of Àvila because of the role they played in her own spiritual journey, and specifically for their effect on the techniques of prayer for which her journey was most well known to contemporaries. Teresa was an early and strong advocate of what has been called mental prayer, or in the

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<sup>52</sup>Gillian Ahlgren, "The Canonization of Teresa of Avila: Re-writing the Life of a Saint," (St. Louis, MO: unpublished, 1993).



language of Spanish mystics, the “prayer of silence.” In the *Way of Perfection* she describes the means by which one accomplishes such prayer, and its contribution to one’s larger spiritual journey.<sup>53</sup> In her *Life*, she recounts the extent to which her own personal experiences helped her develop this technique of prayer. Images of Christ were always central for her. Knowing that she could not achieve her spiritual goals through reason, she says that her own chief method of prayer, was to “make pictures of Christ inwardly” (1:54). The image of the wounded Christ affected her most strongly of all. To this she attributes her first conversion experience. She reports seeing a real image of Christ in the oratory of her convent:

It represented Christ sorely wounded; and so conducive was it to devotion that when I looked at it I was deeply moved to see Him thus, so well did I picture what He suffered for us. So great was my distress when I thought how ill I had repaid Him for those wounds that I felt as if my heart were breaking, and I threw myself down beside Him, shedding floods of tears and begging Him to give me strength once for all so that I might not offend Him (1:54).

The simplicity of this vision does not do justice to the complexity of St. Teresa’s later thought, but it does suggest what was to be the emotional center of her spiritual life: the experience of suffering in response to the divine.

This human suffering became the focus of Teresa’s life and work. It replaced her relatively simple experience of distress before a piece of art with a complex philosophy of prayer. Although Christ’s wounds were never far off, they soon ceased to guide her spiritual experience directly. In later life, she tells us, the image of the wounded Christ came to her

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<sup>53</sup> Saint Teresa of Avila, *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus* trans. Peers, E. Allison (London: Sheed & Ward, 1946) 2:93. All subsequent references are to this edition and will be noted by book and page number.

only rarely, in moments of great spiritual crisis. Instead, Teresa describes human religious suffering as a wound caused by God, and also healed by God. The wound itself symbolizes the soul's distance from God, and sometimes even human sin, as it does for Augustine. But Teresa also describes the soul as wounded by its desire for God, a desire which God inflicts, and which only God can cure (2:417). By describing the soul's wound in so many different ways, Teresa suggests the confusion and questioning that are essential to her spiritual quest. The soul does not really know why it suffers:

The soul does not try to feel the pain of the wound caused by the Lord's absence. Rather an arrow is driven into the very depths of the entrails, and sometimes into the heart, so that the soul does not know either what is the matter with it or what it desires. It knows quite well that it desires God and that the arrow seems to have been dipped in some drug which leads it to hate itself for the love of this Lord so that it would gladly lose its life for Him. No words will suffice to describe the way in which God wounds the soul and the sore distress which He causes it, so that it hardly knows what it is doing. Yet so delectable is this distress that life holds no delight which can give greater satisfaction. As I have said, the soul would gladly be dying of this ill (1:191).

In some sense, this experience could derive from the guilt and suffering of one who, like Teresa, has looked with pity on the wounded body of Christ. But she no longer conceives of this suffering as a direct response to the Passion. Unlike other ecstasies of the period, St. Teresa does not conceive of human "wounds" primarily as a reflection or imitation of Christ's wounds, but as part of a process by which God makes humans fall in love with the divine.

The counterpart to humans' confused and frustrated desire for God, of course, is God's love for humans. When Christ's wounds do return in her work, Teresa portrays them as healing rather than causing human wounds. Echoing late Medieval religious writing she speaks of "living streams issuing from the wounds of my God" which produce the "true

medicine for the soul wounded by Thee" (2:410). According to Teresa,

God wounds the soul in such a way that only He can cure it:

For the heart that loves deeply can receive no counsel or comfort save from Him Who wounded it, and from Him it awaits the remedy for its distress. When it is Thy will, Lord, Thou dost quickly heal the wound Thou hast inflicted; till then there is no hope of health or rejoicing save that which is found in suffering so well employed (2:417).

But being healed is not necessarily more desirable than being wounded. The soul suffers with its wound, and cannot rejoice, but it can know that its suffering is "well employed." In addition, the course of prayer that Teresa imagines does not lead to a final cure in this life. Instead, the believer navigates from one excruciating moment to another, simultaneously aware of his/her distance from God and of God's healing love. While she finds it easy to describe the act of healing as loving, Teresa also depicts the act of wounding as part of the same love. In terms that echo secular love poetry, she exclaims,

O true Lover! How pitifully, how gently, with what joy, with what comfort and with what exceeding great signs of love dost Thou heal these wounds that Thou has inflicted with the arrows of love itself! (Exclamation XVI p. 417 v. 2)

Ultimately, Teresa sees wounds as part of an ongoing process by which God makes the believer partake of divine love.

St. Teresa derived the language of her spiritual writings from her own paramystical experiences. These dramatized not only the connection between divine love and human suffering, but also the degree to which human suffering was deeply embodied and not simply metaphorical. In the most famous moment of her autobiography, she describes a visionary experience that later became celebrated as the "transverberation" of her heart. The language she uses, in its parallels with the secular understanding of erotic love, makes clear her intimate

and physical understanding of divine love. She reports that an angel appeared to her left: a short beautiful seraph with his face aflame.

In his hands I saw a long golden spear and at the end of the iron tip I seemed to see a point of fire. With this he seemed to pierce my heart several times so that it penetrated to my entrails. When he drew it out, I thought he was drawing them out with it and he left me completely afire with a great love for God. The pain was so sharp that it made me utter several moans; and so excessive was the sweetness caused me by this intense pain that one can never wish to lose it, nor will one's soul be content with anything less than God (1:193).

She goes on to explain that the pain is spiritual, but that "the body has a share in it--indeed a great share." Strictly speaking, Teresa of Àvila was not a stigmatic, since she never showed outward physical symptoms of this ecstatic vision. But historically she has been "counted" as a stigmatic because after her death her heart was discovered to have a "fissure" in it corresponding to her experience. It is fitting that Teresa's stigmata should be paradoxically "inward," however, because her writing as a whole attempts to reconcile the physical (and sensational) manifestations of divine love with its intellectual and spiritual significance. In her narration of this famous experience, for example, she concentrates more on the subjective quality of her experience than on its physical details. And because the wounded Christ does not appear in her mystical vision, Teresa's experience does not center on sorrow and pity (as was the case for many earlier stigmatics). Instead, she manages to convey the sense of divine love unalloyed by the sin and guilt attendant on the contemplation of the passion.

Teresa of Àvila was unusual in the degree to which she was accepted by the Church. Her popularity, however, like that of less fortunate women such as Maria de la Visitacion, shows how attractive her kind of embodied spirituality was in the late sixteenth century. Teresa's life and work inspired men and women all over Europe, not only those who were already devout Catholics, but also those who wavered on its boundaries. One of these was the Englishman Richard Crashaw.

Crashaw, who began life as the son of a preacher with puritan sympathies, attributes his own conversion experience at least partly to the work of St. Teresa, something that would have gratified the architects of the Counter-Reformation. Crashaw was introduced to Teresa's work in 1638, while he was the Curate of Little St. Mary's in Cambridge. It was not until 1646, a year after he had officially converted to the Church of Rome, that Crashaw published his "Hymn to the Name and Honor of the Admirable Sainte Teresa," but in his "Apologie" attached to the poem, he links his spiritual journey to her message. The "Apologie" begins as a humble defense of Crashaw's right, as an English poet, to praise Teresa at all, since her reputation has already been "tun'd so high" in "other tongues." Crashaw excuses himself by saying that Teresa's own work is "guilty," since it has taught him "that love is eloquence."<sup>54</sup> This simple equation becomes more complex in the rest of the poem as Crashaw attempts to explain his sympathy with this foreign woman.

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<sup>54</sup>George Walton Williams, ed., *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw*, (New York: New York University Press, 1972). All subsequent citations of Crashaw are from this edition, and will be noted by poem and line number.

First he invokes "love" as a principle that transcends nationality. "Souls are not SPANIARDS too," he says, "one freindly floud / Of BAPTISM blends them all into a blood" (ll. 16-17). Then he argues that Teresa's eloquence makes her readers aware of this principle:

O 'tis not spanish, but 'tis heav'n she speaks!  
 'Tis heav'n that lyes in ambush there, and breaks  
 From thence into the wondring reader's brest  
 Who feels his warm HEART hatch'd into a nest  
 Of little EAGLES and young loves, whose high  
 Flights scorn the lazy dust, and things that dy (ll. 23-8).

This passage locates the source of Crashaw's own poetic praise of Teresa in a conversion experience. He is one of her "wondring readers" and the eagles that hatch in him represent not just thoughts, but poetic expression. The concluding section of the poem confirms Crashaw's spiritual debt to Teresa. In an extended metaphor of spiritual intoxication, he calls her a "Seraphim" to whom he will pledge "Bowles full of richer blood then blush of grape" (l. 33).

Like many others, Crashaw was most affected by Teresa's stigmatic experience. The most famous of his three "Teresa" poems, "The Flaming Heart," reacts to this experience, and to the tradition that had already grown up around it. As the extended title tells us, Teresa is now "usually expressed with a Seraphim beside her." The speaker begins by criticizing a conventional picture of the event, not only to justify his own interpretation, but also to explain why Teresa has the power to affect others so strongly. According to the speaker, the artist has made Teresa look too much like a woman:

Why man, this speakes pure mortall frame;  
 And mockes with female FROST love's manly flame.  
 One would suspect thou meant'st to paint  
 Some weak, inferiour, woman saint (19-26).

Luckily another character is available, the Seraphim, and the picture can be fixed if one is willing to switch the two, or "Read HIM for her, and her for him:"

Since HIS the blushes be, and her's the fires,  
Resume and rectify thy rude design;  
Undresse thy Seraphim into MINE.  
Redeem this injury of thy art;  
Give HIM the vail, give her the dart (3-42).

I think this portion of the poem is partly humorous. It has certainly been taken as less valuable than the rest. George Williams condemns it as "facile 'exercises.'"<sup>55</sup> But Crashaw's attempt to alter the gender of this paradigmatic experience helps us understand how he perceives the action of divine love. His desire to see Teresa as masculine is not historically unusual. C.W. Bynum notes that male biographers of female saints often "romanticized and sentimentalized female virtue more than male," and that they "sometimes complimented saintly women by describing them as 'virile.'"<sup>56</sup> The reason for this, according to Bynum, may have had something to do with the attitude that female saints were "models of suffering" while male saints were "models of action."<sup>57</sup> Thus, when Crashaw calls Teresa masculine he suggests that her spirituality actively penetrates (the action of the Seraphim in her vision) rather than passively receives. She is active, according to Crashaw, because her work affects others so strongly:

Sends she not a SERAPHIM at every shott?  
What magazins of immortall ARMES there shine!  
Heavn's great artillery in each love-spun line.  
Give then the dart to her who gives the flame (54-7).

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<sup>55</sup> Williams 61.

<sup>56</sup> Bynum 136 and 218.

<sup>57</sup> Bynum 131.

If this seems a paradoxical inversion of Teresa's vision, it is because Crashaw perceives divine love as something to be passed on in ways that require a constant alternation of passive and active roles.

This alternation dominates Crashaw's use of the spiritual metaphor of the wound. He depicts spiritual wounds, divine and human, as both passive and active. In the conclusion to "The Flaming Heart," he narrows his focus from the penetrating effect of Teresa's writing (her "love-spun lines") to the penetrating effect of her stigmatic narrative.

For in love's feild was never found  
A nobler weapon than a WOUND.  
Love's passives are his activ'st part.  
The wounded is the wounding heart.  
O HEART! the aequall poise of love's both parts  
Big alike with wounds and darts . . .  
Live here, great HEART; and love and dy and kill;  
And bleed and wound; and yield and conquer still (71-80).

Teresa received her wound from God and communicates this wound to those whom Crashaw calls her "love-slain witnesses." Ultimately this passage privileges active over passive. Every line that begins with the victim ends with the aggressor. "Wounded" becomes "wounding," "wounds" become "darts," "dy" becomes "kill," "bleed," and "yield" become "wound" and "conquer." Despite the "aequall poise" Crashaw speaks of in line 75, he is less interested in the value of suffering itself than in the capacity of the suffering body to aggressively transform others. Unlike late Medieval theologians, who saw Christ's wounds as attributes of a "feminine" nurturing body, Crashaw depicts them, and other religious wounds, as primarily "masculine" weapons which enable the victim to convert others.



The power that Crashaw sees in Teresa's work reflects the power and influence of the mystical understanding of Christ's wounds in the period, and the place of such understanding in Counter-Reformation spirituality as a whole. But Crashaw wrote at a time when Teresa's orthodoxy could be taken for granted. In an earlier time, his devotion to her would also have shown how dangerous the new conception of religious wounds could be. Teresa was not typical of Renaissance holy women in the period. If experiences such as hers were increasingly popular, they also inspired an increasing amount of suspicion in the Church. Fewer stigmatics were canonized in the sixteenth century than previously, and more of these women were subject to critical investigation. Bynum foresees this suspicion in her work on late medieval religious women. According to her, "Male suspicion of women's visionary and charismatic experiences, like male distrust of the female body, was never absent. It seems to have increased in the later fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries."<sup>58</sup> The new and more rigorous standards for sainthood that the Council of Trent enacted also contributed to a growing atmosphere of skepticism.

At this point, it appears that Maria de la Visitacion's failure is in many ways more typical of contemporary attitudes toward the physical phenomenon of mysticism than St. Teresa's success. Modern critics who

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<sup>58</sup> Bynum 215n.

have written on her life, however briefly, have confirmed this possibility. Even those who believe firmly in her guilt consider her a paradigm of sixteenth-century spirituality. Imirizaldu, for example, calls her “the most outstanding and resonant case of pseudo mysticism and fraud of this century ‘abounding with deceit in life and in history.’”<sup>59</sup> I don’t think the question of her guilt or innocence is relevant to this argument. Whether Sor Maria was guilty as charged by the Inquisition or not, the popular version of events reveals the source of sixteenth-century anxieties about religion and the body. Two details of Maria’s story are particularly revealing. First, after her disgrace it was rumored that she was the tool of several monks of her order, although the Inquisition’s written sentence does not report this. Second, although the Inquisition based its case entirely on her alleged fraud, the whole case against Sor Maria was well known to be motivated by her dangerous political sympathies. Thus, what “everyone” knew about Sor Maria (and what Heironimo Lippomano reported home) elaborated considerably on the official version of events.

When popular opinion accused Sor Maria of being the pawn of several unscrupulous men it did not necessarily perceive her as weak or incompetent, but rather as the product of a criminal misappropriation of the system by which true stigmatics were validated. Like earlier stigmatics, Sor Maria depended on the reaction of her male confessors and counselors for acceptance. Historically, female stigmatics had been announced and denounced, celebrated and investigated, by men.

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<sup>59</sup> Jesus Imirizaldu, *Monjas y beatas embaucadoras* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1977) 123. My translation.

Ironically, one of the ways by which a stigmatic or ecstatic could be approved was specifically by submission to male direction. C.W. Bynum notes that the importance of male direction and counsel was gradually increasing by the end of the Middle Ages: "In later hagiography, women are more isolated and 'male-oriented.' The figure of the confessor is more central, as a spiritual advisor or guarantor of orthodoxy."<sup>60</sup> In discussing the canonization of St. Teresa of Àvila, Gillian Ahlgren remarks on the way that her advocates stressed, and even exaggerated, her continual and patient submission to the will of various confessors and counselors.<sup>61</sup> The number of such counselors, their theological orthodoxy, and their reputation in the Church all helped validate the experiences of the women they advocated. As Sor Maria's case demonstrates, however, the virtue of obedience could be turned against a woman. By alleging that she was a product of evil counsel, the authorities managed to portray her as a parody of the accepted version of a holy woman. Her disgrace also reflected strongly on the men who had been involved with her. Fray Luis de Granada, who wrote her vita and could thus be thought of as one of her advocates, did his best to distance himself from Sor Maria as soon as she was exposed. Many have seen his final sermon "Contra los Escandolos en las Caidas Publicas" [Against those who fall from public trust], as a direct reaction to Sor Maria's sentence.<sup>62</sup> Luis de Granada's opinion carried considerable weight in sixteenth-century Spain, and his support of Sor Maria was one of the

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<sup>60</sup>Bynum 129

<sup>61</sup>Ahlgren.

<sup>62</sup> Imirizaldu.

strongest points in her favor. The readiness with which popular opinion challenged his impression of her shows how tenuous the value of male counsel had become by the late sixteenth century. There were few alternative methods of validating paramystical phenomena, but the traditional process had become a source of suspicion. Sor Maria's disgrace thus reflects a larger crisis in the methods by which the sanctity of bodily experiences was substantiated.

The political motives behind Sor Maria's case show how threatening such bodily experiences had become in the late sixteenth century. That the voice of a holy woman should be heard in political circles was not entirely unheard of. In the Renaissance, holy women such as Luca da Narni, Osanna Andreasi, and Stefana Quinzani, were adopted as "spiritual advisors" by political leaders who wished to increase enhance the authority and reputation of their court.<sup>63</sup> Although no single aristocrat laid claim to Sor Maria, she did develop a impressive clientele among the Spanish and Portuguese aristocracy, among them the ill fated Marquis of Santa Cruz. But Walter Kagan, in his study of Lucrecia de León, notes that most holy women involved with figures of secular authority did not get involved directly in politics, and that when they did, as in the case of Bridgit of Sweden, such involvement seriously challenged their spiritual claims in the eyes of the Church.<sup>64</sup> This fact leads Kagan describe Lucrecia's own political visions as an "anomaly." But politics had become an increasingly

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<sup>63</sup>Richard Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams: politics and prophecy in sixteenth-century Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) 5.

<sup>64</sup> Kagan 6.

important part of religious discourse in general by the last quarter of the sixteenth century, and the status of Catholic holy women depended partly on their utility to the aims, both religious and political, of the Counter-Reformation. The power that had been invested in Sor Maria was not just spiritual, any more than the conflict between Reformation and Counter-Reformation was just spiritual. In many ways the political claims of women like Sor Maria typify the atmosphere of the late sixteenth century. They were accused and convicted primarily because they made the *wrong* political statements, and not simply because they entered politics. The physical aspects of their spirituality were the sign of great power and consequently created both great excitement and great anxiety.

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Of course, holy women like Sor Maria and Teresa of Àvila were exceptional even in the sixteenth century. No matter how popular the tradition of stigmata became, there was never a statistically significant number of them in terms of the general population. Nevertheless, as I have tried to show, these charismatic figures generated an exaggerated amount of attention and interest, both popular and official. The wounds of Christ were the center of religious and political contest in the sixteenth century, and stigmatics represented the most extreme and sensational, position in this contest. The ways in which they were depicted and the ways they were treated by the male authorities show how spiritual energy and doctrinal orthodoxy were often at odds during this period.

Most of all, I have concentrated on stigmatics because they demonstrate how sixteenth-century anxieties about the religious significance of wounds derived from their presumed power to transform others, spiritually and politically. From its cloistered origins in late Medieval spirituality, the notion that the human body could visibly imitate the body of Christ became, in the Renaissance, a source of popular obsession, capable of sweeping Europe like wildfire, threatening governments, and converting unbelievers.

## CHAPTER 2

TASSO'S "BELLE PIAGHE":  
SACRED AND EROTIC WOUNDS IN THE *GERUSALEMME LIBERATA*

One of those strongly affected by the changing spiritual attitudes toward the body in late sixteenth-century Europe was the Italian Torquato Tasso. Tasso became famous not only for writing the epic *Gerusalemme Liberata*, but also for his sensational melancholic madness which led him to be confined in the Sant'Anna of Ferrara (1579-86). During this period, and the years preceding it, Tasso was tormented with depression, fears of persecution, and anxieties about his own religious orthodoxy. He even sought the counsel of the Inquisition several times.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Tasso was often physically ill. He frequently pleaded with doctors to help relieve him of headaches, digestive disturbances, and numerous other physical symptoms. This combination of psychological and spiritual crises with physical symptoms reflects the degree to which Tasso's anxieties were rooted in the body. His own narrative of bodily illness shows how physical and mental states blended into one another. In one letter, for instance, pleading for the assistance

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<sup>1</sup> William Boulting, *Tasso and his times* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1968) 168-206.

of the Paduan physician Girolamo Mercuriale, he describes the symptoms of his illness:

I have been sick for several years and the nature of my sickness is unknown to me; nonetheless I am certain that I have been bewitched. But whatever the cause of my illness, the effects are these: a gnawing in my intestines, with a little bloody flux; ringing in my ears and in my head... continual visions of various things, and all displeasing; which disturb me to such a degree that I cannot apply my mind to my studies not even for a few minutes; and the more I try to hold to my intent, the more I am distracted by various imaginings, and sometimes by enormous rages, which occur in me according to the various fantasies which arise in my mind. In addition to this, always after eating I am extraordinarily befuddled, and my head is hot; and in all that I hear, as it were, I fantasize some human voice, such that it seems to me often enough that inanimate objects talk....<sup>2</sup>

In this passage, the physical symptoms of Tasso's illness, such as the bloody flux and the ringing in the ears, merge imperceptibly into the severe mental disturbance of a man who hears voices coming from inanimate objects. From a modern viewpoint we might say that Tasso's hypochondria simply mirrored the fragility of his mental state, but for Tasso himself his ill health was of a piece with the periodic crises, intellectual, artistic, and spiritual, that he saw himself as undergoing. For him, body and mind were inextricably bound. Usually, the body was a liability for Tasso, rather than a source of triumphant power. Its crises demanded attention and distracted him from other concerns. But Tasso's

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<sup>2</sup> Torquato Tasso, *Opere*, ed. Bruno Maier (Milano: Rizzoli, 1963) 5: 783. [my translation]. "Sono alcuni anni ch'io sono infermo e l'infermità mia non è conosciuta da me; nondimeno io ho certa opinione di essere stato ammaliato. Ma qualunque sia stata la cagione del mio male, gli effetti sono questi: rodimento d'intestino, con un poco di flusso di sangue; tintinni ne gli orrecchi e ne la testa... imaginazione continua di varie cose, e tutte spiacevoli: la qual mi perturba in modo ch'io non posso applicar la mente a gli studi pur un sestodecimo d'ora; e quanto più mi sforzo di tenervela intenta, tanto più sono distratto da varie imaginazioni, e qualche volta da sdegni grandissimi, i quali si muovono in me secondo le varie fantasie che mi nascono. Oltre di ciò, sempre dopo il mangiare la testa mi fuma fuor fi modo e si riscalda grandemente; ed in tutto ciò ch'io odo vo, per così dire, fingendo con la fantasia alcuna voce umana, di maniera che mi pare assai spesso che parlino le cose inanimate... "



suffering had a flip side. The visions which tormented the poet and kept him from his work occasionally offered hope. In a letter to his friend Maurizeo Cataneo, for example, Tasso describes such a vision:

And among so many terrors there appeared to me in the air the image of the glorious Virgin with her son in her arms, in a half circle of color and vapor: whereof I must not despair of her grace.<sup>3</sup>

The image of the Virgin “with her Son in her arms” appears to be a sort of hallucinatory Madonna-with-Child, but it could also be a *Pietà*: the virgin with the bleeding Christ in her arms.<sup>4</sup> The passage suggests that Tasso’s hope for grace rested in an image of the body that is both painful and redemptive. In his greatest work, the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Tasso had already dramatized a similar ambivalence toward the body. The poem is haunted by the image of the body in crisis: splintered, dismembered, wounded through the fortunes of war. Individual wounded bodies, however, are often depicted as beautiful and desirable objects. And when their beauty reflects sacred purpose rather than provoking erotic desire, wounds become a sign of the redemption that is the subject of the work as a whole.

Whatever the influence of Tasso’s personal history on the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, the work, the poem itself was was immensely

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<sup>3</sup> Tasso, *Opere* 5: 789. [My translation]. “E fra tanti terrori e tanti dolori m’apparve in aria l’immagine de la gloriosa Vergine co’l Figlio in braccio, in un mezzo cerchio di colori e di vapori: laonde io non debbo disperar de la sua grazia.”

<sup>4</sup> The Italian “Figlio” is not restrictive. In any case the image of the Madonna with Child foreshadowed the image of the *Pietà*. Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art* (Greenwich CT: New York Graphic Society, 1972) 2: , notes that depictions of the *Pietà* often echo depictions of Adoration associated with the nativity. The *Pietà* would actually have been more appropriate to Tasso’s state of mind at this point, since as a devotional image it referred to redemption through suffering. As we shall see, the image of someone sorrowing over the wounded body of another occurs more than once in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

popular in educated circles, not just in Italy but across Europe. In England, Queen Elizabeth is reputed to have memorized passages from the poem, Francis Meres considered Tasso one of his favorite poets, and in 1592 Gabriel Harvey lamented the lack of an “English Tasso.”<sup>5</sup> When Edward Fairfax published his translation of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* in 1600, he gave an English voice to a poet whose work had already had an influence on English literature. Tasso's work was valued for a number of reasons, many of which have been well documented, but one general feature of contemporary appreciation for the work was the attention given to those passages in which the poem's depiction of the heroic self involves the body. There is some indication, for instance, that Tasso's contemporaries particularly enjoyed the poem's elaborate depictions of wounding. Rensselaer Lee, in a survey of contemporary visual art inspired by the poem, records that among paintings whose subjects were drawn from the poem, those concerned with the death of Clorinda and Erminia's discovery of Tancred (both major scenes of wounding) are equalled in popularity only by the famous sequence in the garden of the pagan seductress Armida.<sup>6</sup> Fairfax, while he adds a good bit of concrete detail to the poem, remains relatively faithful to its depiction of wounds. To some extent, thus, Tasso's own concern with the meaning of the body in crisis reflected the interests of his contemporaries as well.

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Peter Brand, *Torquato Tasso, a study of the poet and of his contribution to English literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965) 226.

<sup>6</sup> Rensselaer Wright Lee, *Poetry into painting: Tasso and art* (Middlebury, Vt.: Middlebury College, 1970) .

A good place to begin an examination of the body in the *Gerusalemme Liberata* is in the "Allegory to the poem," a short piece that Tasso added to the work after it was substantially complete. Here the poet hints at the importance of the body to the meaning of the poem as a whole. According to the "Allegory" the whole crusader force is to be interpreted as if it were a single person: "The *Army* compounded of diuers Princes, and of other Christian souldiers, signifieth *Man*, compounded of soule and body."<sup>7</sup> The idea that the crusaders represent a single individual echoes the doctrine of the Church as a body, and other metaphors, political as well as religious. In the "Allegory" Tasso uses the metaphor of the body primarily to show how the varied characters and plots of the poem are parts of a unified whole. The primary threats to the Christian army are dispersal and distraction, both terms that lend themselves to bodily metaphors. Tasso knew enough about the history of the first Crusade to be aware that the crusaders engaged in many side ventures and much consolidation of territory on their way to Jerusalem, and he chose to portray these events as a threat to the purposeful liberation of the holy city. Thus, at the beginning of the poem, the Crusader army is literally falling apart. Its members are getting dispersed (following the pagan seductress Armida) or turning against one another (Rinaldo kills Gernando in a duel and then flees). The poem is therefore not simply about a body, but a body in danger of fragmentation.

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<sup>7</sup>Torquato Tasso, *Godfrey of Bulloigne*, eds. Kathleen Lea, and T.M. Gang trans. Edward Fairfax (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981) Allegorie ll. 23-4. All future references will be noted in parentheses by Canto and Stanza.

The overall threat of fragmentation in the poem is echoed, on a small scale, by the recurring images of wounded individual bodies. Wounds are, in fact, a good bodily analog for the dispersal and fragmentation that threaten the Christian forces. The medical definition of a wound, a definition that survived unchanged into late medieval and Renaissance treatises, was a "solution in continuity." "A wound," says John of Vigo at the beginning of his first chapter on wounds, "(as ancient and later doctors testify) is a solution of continuity, fresh and blodye, and wythout putrifaction, chefli made in softe partes."<sup>8</sup> "Continuitye" was what characterized the healthy human body, and what the surgeon had to restore in order to heal the wound, hence the emphasis in all texts of the period on the proper "binding" of the wound. As the famous sixteenth century surgeon Ambroise Paré put it, "union is the care of wounds."<sup>9</sup> The wounds of individuals can thus duplicate the lack of unity that afflicts the larger "body" of the Christian forces. Francesco Savoia, in an article on the metaphor of the body in the poem, maintains that this connection between individual and general well being dominates every reference to the body: "The minute descriptions of the gestures and movements of the individual bodies in battle, or of the mutilations of individual members of

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<sup>8</sup> Joannes De Vigo, *The Most Excellent Workes of Chirurgerye The English Experience: Its record in Early Printed Books Published in Facsimile* (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1543) 3.1.

<sup>9</sup> Ambroise Paré, *The works of Ambrose Parey chyrurgeon to Henry II, Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III, Kings of France [microform] : wherein are contained, an introduction to chirurgery in general : a discourse of animals and the excellence of man: the anatomy of man's body : a treatise of praeternatural tumors ... /illustrated with variety of figures and the cuts of the most useful instruments in chirurgery : recommended by the University of Paris to all students in physick and chirurgery ...* (London: Jos. Hindmarsh, 1691) 236.

those bodies, are significant, not in themselves, but rather as projections of the One Body, as materializations of that image."<sup>10</sup>

Yet the problems that confront individual characters have less to do with whether or not they themselves are wounded than with their reactions to wounded bodies. The wounds that Christians suffer, for instance, hardly correspond to lack of purpose. As we shall see, the Norwegian prince Sven becomes more heroic and more virtuous when he dies of his wounds, and his death strengthens the Christian cause. The key to Tasso's depiction of wounds lies in that part of the "Allegory" where he tells us that "*Rinaldo, Tancred, and the other Princes are in lieu of the other powers of the soule; and the Bodie here becomes notified by the souldiers lesse noble*" (Allegorie 23-4). These "lesse noble" members of the army get very little attention in the poem itself; all the major characters are part of the soul and not the body of the metaphorical being. As powers of the soul, the central characters are not threatened by physical violence itself as much as they are by the temptation to give in to the excesses of the body. They are distracted from pursuit of the Christian quest by things like anger, or, more commonly, sexual desire. In many of the central scenes of wounding, as we shall see, the observer of the wound is more important than the victim. Depending on the context, the elaborate rhetoric of these passages can reveal the observer's preoccupation with the flesh as destructive and

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<sup>10</sup> Francesca Savoia, "Notes on the Metaphor of the Body in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*," *Western Gerusalemme: University of California Studies on Tasso*, ed. Luisa Del Giudice. (New York: Out of London Press, 1984) 57-70.

unredemptive, or, alternatively, it can show the beauty of the body that has submitted itself to a sacred purpose.

Often wounds that get a great deal of attention in the poem are actually physically inconsequential. Clorinda's first wound, for instance, is almost irrelevant from both medical and military points of view. It occurs during a minor skirmish when a Christian knight aims a blow at Clorinda's head (she has taken her helmet off):

...the cutting steele arrived theare,  
Where her faire kneck adjoin'd her noble head,  
Light was the wound... (3.30)

This wound poses no danger to Clorinda or to the Pagan forces. Tancred, who has witnessed the blow, chases the Christian knight, while Clorinda goes on to lead her party back to Jerusalem. Not only is the wound "light," but also it has little effect on Clorinda. She does not pale, nor does she appear weakened from loss of blood. Unlike many other wounds in the poem, this one does not receive any medical treatment that we hear about, nor does Clorinda immediately seek to revenge herself, as happens elsewhere in the poem when a character is significantly wounded. Her wound does, however, mark the point at which she decides to retreat to the city, and she may not seek revenge because Tancred has already chased away her assailant. But Clorinda's behavior makes too much military sense to be forced upon her by her wound. From the start her attack on the Christian forces is conceived as a small scale harassment rather than a large tactical move. As a good commander, she must draw back before her small force can be cut off and destroyed by the bulk of the approaching army. Thus, the attention Tasso

gives her wound must reflect something other than the immediate martial events.

As it turns out, the description of the wound emphasizes Tancred's desire for Clorinda. Her wound has little effect on her, but it elicits a passionate reaction from him.

...Lord Tancred pale with rage as lead,  
Flew on the villaine, who to flight him bound;  
The smart was his, though she received the wound. (3.30)

The first and last lines of this passage are actually Fairfax's addition to the Italian. They make clear Tasso's hint that Tancred is the real victim of this wound. The results of Tancred's reaction are not happy, especially in the context of the Crusade. We read in the first Canto that Tancred's "fault" (in the Italian an *"ombra di colpa"*) is love, and we have heard how this love was "Bred in the dangers of adventrous armes"(1.45). The episode of Clorinda's wound begins to show why that love is a fault in a Christian warrior. To begin with, Clorinda's wound causes Tancred to abandon the battle he should be fighting. His withdrawal with Clorinda from the center of the skirmish is not in itself a problem, since individual duels between Pagans and Christians are an accepted part of the campaign for the Holy land. But Tancred never intends to fight Clorinda, and eventually attacks one of his own men and pursues him away from the center of combat. His distraction nearly ends in disaster for his men,

From vaine pursuite at last [he] returned bake,  
And his brave troope discomfite saw welneare (3.36)

Only his swiftness and valor saves them. Fairfax's "discomfite" translates the Italian *"lunge troppo è trascorsa [la sua gente audace]"*, a description that reveals how Tancred's force is threatened by the same tactical blunder that

Clorinda is careful to avoid. The Italian also makes an allegorical point: the literal danger threatening his men, who have gone “too far,” mirrors Tancred’s moral plight.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the events surrounding Clorinda’s wound show Tancred’s love for her to be a potentially dangerous distraction.

It is no accident that the wound itself is so effective in intensifying that distraction. Tasso’s description of it suggests that Clorinda is extraordinarily beautiful when she is wounded,

Light was the wound, but through her amber here  
The purple drops downe railed bloodie read,  
So rubies set in flaming gold appeare (3.30)

This language reflects Tancred’s own perception of Clorinda’s wound more than anyone else’s. The narrator betrays this partiality when he describes the aggressor knight as a “villaine,” since this knight is only a villain from Tancred’s point of view. As a Christian, he is doing his duty in attacking Clorinda! Also, the poet’s emphasis on Clorinda’s hair echoes an earlier moment in the episode when Tancred, having knocked off her helmet, recognizes her “sunnie locks.”<sup>12</sup> Of course, Clorinda’s appearance does have literary antecedents. The image of “rubies set in flaming gold” echoes similar terms in Virgil and Dante.<sup>13</sup> Tasso is

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<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere in the poem Tasso also invokes linear distance to suggest Tancred’s moral error. The hermit Peter, for instance, tells Tancred “how far different from thy beginnings good these follies be” (12.86)

<sup>12</sup> In the Italian Clorinda’s hair is what identifies her as female in the sight of others. As soon as her hair appears, “giovane onna in mezzo’l campo apparse.”

<sup>13</sup> The river of light at the end of the *Paradiso*, for instance, sends up “living sparks” which

d’ogne parte si mettien ne’ fiori,  
quasi rubin che oro circunscribe; (Dante, *Paradiso* 30.66)

Virgil describes the beauty of Aeneas’ son in similar terms:

Ipse inter medio, Veneris justissima cura,  
Dardanius caput, ecce puer detectus honestum



unique, however, in invoking this imagery to describe a wound. Elsewhere the terms are more generally associated with supreme beauty, divine or human. If anything, the literary echoes imply that Clorinda's wounded body is supremely beautiful. That Tancred enjoys Clorinda's wound in this way may seem peculiar, but it makes literal sense out of the poem's earlier claim that his love is "nurst with grieves, with sorrowes, woes, & harmes" ("*si nutre d'affani*" 1.45). Her wound thus does not simply provoke his aberrant behavior, it actually feeds his love. Of course, Tancred hardly wants to cause Clorinda's wound. Were it not for the gorgeous description that follows, his horror and rage at the injury of his beloved would be enough to explain why he seeks to avenge her. His enjoyment underlines the destructive nature of this version of eros, but it is not self consciously sadomasochistic. The beauty of Clorinda's wound in Tancred's eyes demonstrates the extent to which his "follia d'amore" endangers his participation in the Christian quest.

We are alerted to Tancred's "follia" by the violence of his reaction to a wound that scarcely bothers its victim. A similar gap between reality and imagination characterizes Erminia's reaction to Tancred's first wounds, even though her "follia d'amore" takes a different course. Erminia watches Tancred's initial duel with Argantes from a high tower in Jerusalem. Her most anxious moments, however, come after the fight, when the two warriors have retired for the night. As a loyal pagan, she is

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qualis gemma micat, fulvum quae dividit aurum  
aut collo decus aut capiti... (Virgil *Aeneid* 10.134)

forced to care for Argantes, but she dreams of Tancred, seeing “his blood from his deepe wounds distill”:

Her idle braine vnto her soule presented  
 Death, in an hundred vglie fashions painted,  
 And if she slept, then was her greefe augmented,  
 With such sad visions were her thoughts acquainted;  
 She saw her Lord with wounds and hurts tormented...

Now, this vision is not entirely farfetched. Tasso does his best to suggest that the duel between Argantes and Tancred is unusually ferocious. Their armor gets strewn around, and the ground is covered with their “warne blood.” When the heralds halt the fight at dusk, both parties agree to delay the next encounter, “for their wounds of rest and cure had need” (6.53). On the other hand, Tancred does not seem to be as severely wounded as Erminia imagines. The figure of six days is largely token, sufficient for minor wounds to heal and for lost blood to be made up, but not enough time to heal any major wound. Furthermore, we never get a description of how serious Tancred’s wounds actually are. Elsewhere in the poem Tasso devotes careful attention to critical wounds, a fact which suggest that Tancred’s injuries aren’t significant. Finally, when Tancred hears that Clorinda has apparently been attacked on her way to the Christian camp (it is actually Erminia in Clorinda’s armor), he manages to leap on a horse and dash after her without a word from Tasso about his wounds getting in the way of such precipitate action. Thus, like Tancred’s reaction to Clorinda’s wound, Erminia’s vision of the wounded Tancred is primarily the product of her own feelings.

Erminia’s passion for Tancred, like Tancred’s for Clorinda, is also fueled by the image of the beloved’s wounded body. The “deepe” wounds

she sees Tancred suffering from in her dream evoke a powerful response from her. She imagines

How he complain'd, call'd for her helpe, and fainted,  
And found, awakt from that vnquiet sleeping,  
Her hart with panting, sore; eies, red with weeping.6.65

Her vision is certainly nightmarish (*horribile* in the Italian), but it is also erotic. The man calls out her name and collapses; she is left gasping and wet. In some ways Fairfax's translation obscures this possibility. The Italian, for instance, emphasizes Erminia's flood of tears (rather than her "eies, red"), tears which moisten not only her eyes but her breast as well: "*si trova gli occhi e'l sen molle di pianto.*" Fairfax's description of her "panting" heart is more effective. The verb "pant" had a slightly wider meaning in the Renaissance than it does today, since it included the throbbing of the chest due to the exertions of the heart as well as those of the lungs. But this meaning often had erotic overtones.<sup>14</sup> Of course, Erminia does not really enjoy her vision of Tancred's wounds. Her emotional reaction is too deeply tinged with horror and fear for that. But the dream does gratify her desire for Tancred to respond to her, to need her as she needs him.

In fact, when Erminia imagines Tancred calling for her help, she reveals an essential difference between her response to his wounded body, and his response to Clorinda's. For her, Tancred's wounds are the context for a larger fantasy in which he expresses his love for her. Since we know that Tancred does not love Erminia, nor even know that she loves him, the idea that he would call on her when in distress is purely wish fulfillment on her part. But it

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<sup>14</sup> In *Antony and Cleopatra*, for example, Antony tells Cleopatra to leap "Through prooffe of Harnesse to my heart, and there Ride on the pants triumphing" (4.8.16).

does show, however, that Erminia envisions love as potentially healing rather than wounding. This attitude corresponds to her professional role in the war, since she is the chief surgeon to the pagan nobility. She even treats Argantes, albeit unwillingly, for the wounds that Tancred has given him. Tasso phrases her desire to help Tancred in terms of her technical prowess:

And for her mother had her taught before  
The secret vertue of each herbe that springs,  
Besides fit charmes for euerie wound or sore  
Corruption breedeth, or misfortune brings,  
(An art esteemed in those times of yore,  
Beseeming daughters of great Lords and kings)  
She would herselfe, be surgeon to her knight,  
And heale him with her skill, or with her sight. (6.67)

Consequently, she sees Tancred's wounds in her dreams with the eyes of a physician as well as of a lover. But her professional and emotional concerns are finally inextricable. She wants to have a personal hand in the healing process because healing can be a metaphor for love. Fairfax makes Tasso's subtlety in this passage obvious by adding the words "or with her sight" to the last line, as if Erminia is actually confusing surgery and love. Her love for Tancred has its origins in the accidents of war, but its terms include healing as well as wounding. As we shall see, Erminia gets a chance to make these terms a reality when she encounters Tancred after his second duel with Argantes, near the end of the poem.

Of course, wounds in the *Gerusalemme Liberata* are not always erotic. Sometimes they occur as part of the larger story of the Crusade, with all its theological implications. Tasso's depiction of the Norwegian prince Sven's death, in particular, shows that the wounded body can be a source of sacred as well as erotic imagination. Despite their heroic context and literal severity, Sven's wounds are nearly as insignificant militarily as were Clorinda's and Tancred's. Sven has longed to join the crusade,

presumably to aid the Christian cause, but when his small force is ambushed by Soliman long before it reaches Godfrey, Sven does not seem in the least disappointed. Instead he looks forward to a glorious death. On hearing of the large number of the enemy, for instance, he tells his followers “a crowne prepare you to possess / Of martyrdome, or happie victorie; / For this I hope, for that I wish no lesse” (8.15). Victory or death are of equal value in Sven’s mind: hardly the attitude of a practical commander! Likewise, when Sven sees his followers slaughtered in great numbers he shows no compassion but encourages others to follow “the path to heau’n their blood / Marks out” (8.21). Sven himself manages to get wounded “from top to toe” (8.22) or as Tasso himself puts it “*fatto è il corpo suo solo una piaga*” (his body is made into one single wound). Sven’s attitude makes it clear that the real value of the wounds he suffers has more to do with the sacred cause espoused by the crusaders than with the practical military aims of the Crusade.

From the narrator’s point of view, Sven’s lack of military sense is an asset rather than a liability. Of course, the narrator does not necessarily approve of a rash desire for glory in itself. Later in the poem, for instance, he will criticize Godfrey for the putting himself in the front ranks of an assault (where he gets wounded). But Sven’s sacrifice is different, since it does not jeopardize the whole Christian campaign, and since it does not result from an intentional blunder. His heroism is also assured by the overwhelming odds against which he fights, an echo of the praise Roland gets in the medieval Chanson de Roland. Ideally, Sven’s death helps demonstrate the true meaning of the Crusade. Francesco Savoia calls the whole account of Sven’s death “hallucinating [sic] and

hyperbolic" and argues that it is a sign of the body in crisis.<sup>15</sup> But Sven is merely pursuing to a logical conclusion one of the theological underpinnings of the crusades: that the blood spent on the way to Jerusalem is as spiritually desirable as victory over the pagans. His death, like the medieval Roland's, also inspires the Christian forces, and reminds them of the appropriate context for their wounds. After hearing the story of Sven's death, Godfrey tells his men that those who died with Sven now sit in heaven "Where each his hurtles I thinke to other showes / And glorie in those bloodie wounds and blowes" (8.44). In the Italian the dead heroes actually take pleasure ("*ciascun... se n'appaghe*") in beautiful wounds ("*belle piaghe*").

The terms that Tasso uses to describe Sven's wounds reinforce their spiritual value. His wounded body, like Clorinda's, is extraordinarily beautiful. But Sven's beauty derives from a different source. The one Christian knight who survives the carnage tells Godfrey how he awoke on the field of battle and, at the prompting of a holy hermit, saw Sven's corpse,

With that I saw from Cinthias siluer face,  
Like to a falling star a beame downe slide,  
That bright as golden line markt out the place,  
And lightned with cleere streames the forrest wide,  
So Latmos shone when Phebe left the chace;  
And laid her downe by her Endimions side;  
Such was the light, that well discerne I could  
His shape, his wounds, his face (though dead) yet bolde (8.32)

Fairfax actually misses most of the Italian's emphasis on Sven's wounds. Instead of the classical allusion that Fairfax inserts to describe the divine light, Tasso writes that "*ogni sua piaga ne sfavilla e splende*" (it makes each wound

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<sup>15</sup> Savoia 62.

sparkle and shine). Lest we mistake the image's highly artificial qualities, Tasso openly compares the beam of light to the stroke of a painter's brush (*tratto di pannel*). Unlike Clorinda's flesh wound in Canto three, the artistic qualities of which suggest its capacity to distract the observer, Sven's wounds become beautiful as part of his own heavenly translation. They owe their beauty to divine intervention in the form of the golden beam, rather than to the passion of a human gaze.

Clorinda's death in Canto Twelve fulfills both the threat implicit in the erotic potential of her earlier wound and the divine promise inherent in Sven's gorgeous corpse. Like her flesh wound in Canto Three, Clorinda's mortal wound sends Tancred into paroxysms of guilt that undermine his effectiveness as a Christian hero. For Clorinda herself, however, the wound is an opportunity for Christian redemption. The beauty of her dying body is a mark of divine favor.

Tasso's depiction of the battle between Tancred and Clorinda at first seems to confuse love and war just as much as earlier scenes of wounding had. Tasso holds out the image of the two combatants as lovers even as he reminds us that they are not. In the course of the battle, Tancred grapples closely with his adversary several times but is always repulsed:

For she disdain'd to be so embraste,  
 No louer would haue strain'd his mistresse soe:  
 They tooke their swords againe, and each enchaste  
 Deepe wounds in the soft flesh of his strong foe,  
     Till weake and wearie, faint, aliue vneath,  
 They both retirde at once, at once tooke breath; (12.57)

The words "no louer" (*Non d'amante*) seem to deny any sexual overtones, as if to emphasize how different Tancred's behavior would be if he knew the identity of his opponent. But the description of the battle

that follows is extremely sensual. Fairfax, in his fondness for conceits based on contrast, manages to emphasize this sensuality. What in Tasso are many wounds "*molte piaghe*" become "Deepe wounds in the soft flesh of his strong foe." When Fairfax chooses the Spenserian "enchaste" to replace the verb *tingere* (they 'dye' their blades in many wounds) he suggests affinities between the physical act of wounding and conscious artistic production.

Clorinda's final, mortal wound is the most beautiful of all, even though its details verge on the grotesque:

His sword into her bosome deepe he driues,  
And bath'd in lukewarme blood his iron cold,  
Betweene her breasts the cruell weapon riues  
Her curious square, embost with swelling gold (12.64).

The contrast between the "iron" (*ferro*), which in Fairfax's translation is cold and cruel, and the "lukewarme blood" (*un caldo fiume*) underlines the living vibrance of Clorinda's body. Also, for the first time in the battle, Clorinda's body becomes explicitly female. What Fairfax translates as Clorinda's "curious square, embost with swelling gold" is, in the Italian, a garment that confines her breasts. The target of Tancred's blow is thus more than an ungendered anatomical area: it is an aspect of Clorinda that is confined and hidden by the exigencies of her knightly career. In retrospect, Tancred's blow is distinctly phallic, penetrating Clorinda's suddenly gendered body. Fairfax's use of the word "curious," and "swelling" to describe Clorinda's garment, while perfectly applicable (in their Renaissance senses) to fine clothing, also heighten the sexual overtones in their other senses of mystery, fascination, and



tumescence.<sup>16</sup> At the same time that the passage brings Clorinda's physicality forward, however, it places this physicality in an artificial context. By describing the wound in terms of its effect on Clorinda's clothing, Tasso stresses its outward appearance. The wound enhances the splendor of her garment and the beauty of the scene of which it is a part. Clorinda's wounded body, like her gorgeous apparel, becomes part of a total artistic effect. Besides the attractive stain on her chest, the only other symptom of her wound is a pallor that overtakes her as she dies:

As Violets blew mongst Lillies pure men throw,  
So palenes midst her natiue white begonne. (12.69)

The floral image turns Clorinda into a classical picture of the dying beauty, and made her death one of three most popular scenes from the poem for contemporary painters.<sup>17</sup>

The beauty of Clorinda's wound in this passage recalls Tasso's depiction of her earlier flesh-wound, and Erminia's vision of the wounded Tancred. In this case, however, the point of view is not that of the participants in the action. These wounds are not beautiful solely in the distracted minds of lovers. In fact, Tasso goes to some lengths to stress the difference between Tancred's resolute attitude and the sumptuous rhetoric describing wounds. Because Tancred does not know who Clorinda is, he views her wounds with satisfaction rather than horror:

Tancred beheid his foes out streaming blood,  
And gaping wounds, and waxt proud with the sight,

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<sup>16</sup> The Italian description of the cloth, "*d'or vago trapunta*," carries some of the same double meaning. The word "*vago*" carries the sense of interest or desire as well as beauty.

<sup>17</sup> Lee. The other two popular scenes are Armida's discovery of Rinaldo, and Erminia's cure of the wounded Tancred.

O vanitie of mans unstable minde,  
Puft up with everie blast of friendly winde! 12.58

The narrator continues to dwell on Tancred's ignorance as a way of suggesting the knight's perspective without directly invoking it. We, who know Clorinda's identity, are asked to imagine the response Tancred would have to these wounds. To some degree the rhetoric of this passage is influenced by these references to Tancred's misguided passion. But Clorinda is as important as Tancred here. Unlike the earlier passages, where the victim of a wound is unconcerned or absent, this one depends as much on the response that Clorinda will have to her death as on Tancred's reaction. The Canto begins, for instance, with Clorinda's life story, in which we hear that she is destined to die, and that her death will be her Christian salvation. The stanza describing her fatal wound reminds us of the role that Providence plays in her death: "now the fatall howre arrives, / That her sweete life must leave that tender hold." In this context, the beauty of her wounds has as much in common with the kind of sacred heroism we see in Sven's death as with Tancred's erotic imagination. Since the passage as a whole never commits to a single point of view, the beauty of Clorinda's wound is potentially both erotic and sacred.

In the aftermath of Clorinda's wounding, the two possible interpretations of her wound become even more clearly identified with the *folia* of Tancred, and with the Christian message, respectively. Once he learns Clorinda's identity, for instance, Tancred reacts to her wound with the same horror he did to her earlier wound at the hand of another Christian knight. He immediately abandons himself to a sympathetic imitation of the corpse:

His manly courage to relent began,  
 Greefe, sorrow, anguish, sadnes, discontent,  
 Free empire got, and lordship on the man,  
 His life within his hart they close vp pent,  
 Death through his senses and his visage ran:  
 Like his dead Ladie, dead seem'd Tancred good,  
 In palenesse, stilnesse, wounds and streames of blood. (12.70)

Tasso describes this process, which is really nothing but a swoon, in a way that captures the threat that the erotic wound offers to the Christian quest. Not only is Tancred abandoning his "manly" qualities (actually, Fairfax's addition), but he is losing his selfhood as well. The poem's use of empire or rule (*l'imperio di sê*) to describe Tancred's loss of self control echoes the poem's larger concern with Christian and Pagan empires, and with the rule of the soul over the body. In the "allegory" to the poem, for instance, the chief use that Tasso makes of his analogy between the Christian forces and an individual human is to make success in the Crusade synonymous with self control. This is why Tasso characterizes all the delays in the attack on Jerusalem as distractions, and why Armida, who consciously intends to distract the Christian warriors, plays such a large role in the pagan strategy. Clorinda's wound continues to affect Tancred for some time. When he has partially recovered back at the Christian camp, he goes to see Clorinda's body, and, on catching sight of "that deepe and cruell wound," he nearly faints again and concludes by cursing his hands and eyes for their complicity in the wounding (12.81-2). Eventually, the poem treats Tancred's sympathy for Clorinda as if it creates a similar wound in him. His friends' efforts to comfort him fail because, "a mortall wound the more doth smart / The more it searched is, handled or sought" (12.85).

Tancred's obsession with Clorinda's wounded body directly affects his performance as a Christian champion. It results, for instance, in his disastrous encounter with the enchanted forest. This forest is one of the primary obstacles that the Christians face in their attempt to capture Jerusalem. It is not, however, an obstacle that can be destroyed, but something that must be incorporated into the crusader forces, since they need the timber to make their siege equipment. The spells that Ismen has cast on the forest like Armida's attempts to seduce Christian knights, distract and divert the purpose of those who are brave enough to enter it. In Tancred's case, the forest plays to his erotic obsession. He has no difficulty ignoring the threats surrounding the forest, but when he attempts to cut down a tree he finds himself in his own particular nightmare:

He drew his sword at last and gaue the tree  
A mightie blow, that made a gaping wound,  
Out of the rift red streames he trickling see  
That all bebled the verdant plaine around,  
His haire start vp, yet once againe stroake he,  
He nould give ouer till the end he found  
Of this aduenture... (13.41)

Eventually the tree identifies itself as Clorinda. Tancred thus finds himself apparently repeating the terrible act that obsesses him. Fichter argues that Tancred's hesitation in the face of this grisly vision shows that "romance enchantment derives its power from the hero's own inability to accept death's finality," a limitation that highlights the Christian vision which "breaks the enchanted circle."<sup>18</sup> But what torments Tancred is not so much the death of Clorinda in itself, but his own involvement in her death. Her wound returns for him because it is his own creation. His distraction shows the degree to which one's involvement in erotic wounding is obsessive and destructive. The

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<sup>18</sup> Andrew Fichter, *Poets Historical: Dynastic Epic in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1982) 153.

trees must be cut for Jerusalem to be “liberated,” but for those caught up with the horror of the wound itself, the goal has lost its meaning. As Peter the hermit tells Tancred, “how farre different / From thy beginnings good these follies bee” (12.86).

What Tancred fails to see, both in his woefull contemplation of Clorinda’s wound and in the enchanted forest, is that her death is also the opportunity for her Christian redemption. Before Clorinda sets out on this fateful sally she learns from her guardian Arsetes that she is the child of Christian parents raised as a pagan by him, and that a divine messenger has repeatedly asked him to baptize her. But Clorinda does not change her intent as a result of this knowledge. Just as the enchanted forest must be cut down before Jerusalem can be captured, so Clorinda must be mortally wounded to accept Christianity:

low on earth the wounded damsell laith,  
And while she fell, with weake and woefull speach  
Her praiers last, and last complaints she saith,  
A spirit new did her those praiers teach,  
Spirit of hope, of charitie, and faith (12.65)

Her new religious conviction is not only prompted by her deadly wound, but even increased by it. As Tancred baptizes her

The Nymphe to heau’n with ioy her selfe pepard;  
And as her life decaies, her ioyes encrease... (12.68)

Clorinda’s cheerfulness in the face of her death contrasts with Tancred’s horror stricken reaction to the same event. He complies with her wish for baptism but he is clearly oblivious to her message of comfort. Later, while Tancred is still bewailing her fate, Clorinda appears to him in a dream to tell him how happy she is. Unlike the central figures of other visions of the poem, the dream Clorinda appears woundless, but Tancred does not understand the implication; he still thinks she is suffering from the wound he has caused, as his experiences in the enchanted wood make clear.

Clorinda's transformation from wounded pagan to woundless Christian reflects the pivotal function of the individual wound in the whole poem's understanding of the body. She leaves Jerusalem as the heroine of a romance, bearing a past that recalls Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*,<sup>19</sup> and involved unwittingly in a chivalric encounter of love and mistaken identity with Tancred. She returns to a heavenly Jerusalem, translated by the very wound that consummates her career as a romance heroine. What begins as a manifestation of the erotic qualities of the romance body, ends as a demonstration of the sacred qualities of the Christian epic body. The beauty Tasso attributes to her wounded body is thus an attribute of her sacred conversion as much as it is a reflection of Tancred's passion.

The last major passage dealing with wounds is Erminia's discovery and treatment of the wounded Tancred in Canto nineteen. Like Clorinda's death, this passage fulfills the promise of an earlier moment. In her dreams of Canto Six Erminia fantasizes that Tancred calls upon her to heal the wounds he has received from Argantes in their duel. In reality Tancred is not so seriously wounded, and Erminia never even sees him. In Canto Nineteen, however, Tancred fights Argantes again and kills him, but this time he is seriously wounded himself, and Erminia comes upon his unconscious body, some way off from the battleground. Initially Erminia reacts to the wounded body of her lover with the same kind of excess that characterizes her dream version of the meeting, a folly that parallels Tancred's own reaction to Clorinda:

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<sup>19</sup> Like the heroine of the *Aethiopica*, Clorinda is born white, to black parents (the result of her mother's constant meditation on a picture of Perseus and Andromeda!).

At Tancred's name thither she ranne with speed,  
 Like one halfe mad, or druncke with too much wine,  
 And when she sawe his face, pale, bloodlesse, dead,  
 She lighted, nay, she tumbled from her stead. (19.104)

Thinking Tancred dead, she begins a lament that echoes Tancred's own reaction to Clorinda's death: she wishes she herself could suffer the same fate as her lover:

'O let me kisse thee first, then let me die!  
 Receive my yielded spirit, and with thine  
 Guide it to heav'n, where all true love hath place' (19.108-9)

At the moment that Erminia's tears fall on Tancred's face, however, the scene begins to diverge from her dream version of this meeting, and from any similarity with Tancred's grief for Clorinda. This victim is, after all, not yet dead, and he revives enough, at this point, for Erminia's companion Vafrine to advise her, with some sarcasm, to "cure him first, and then complaine" (19.111)! Now, the chance to "cure" Tancred was precisely what made Erminia's dream in Canto Six so erotic. In her dream, however, Tancred's need for her, although based on her sense of herself as a surgeon, never called for any specific detailed treatment. It remained suitably vague and ambiguous. The real meeting is entirely different: Erminia's passions interfere with the practical assistance that Tancred needs. As Vafrine puts it, "Med'cine is lifes chiefe friend; plaint her most foe" (19.111). The result is that Erminia's treatment of Tancred forces her to revise her love for him. She moves away from plaintive contemplation of the wound and toward a more practical reaction to the body of her beloved.

The details of her treatment dramatize this change in attitude.

Lacking the proper equipment in this faraway spot, for instance, Erminia must make shift with what she has at hand:

Nought but her vaile amid those desarts wide  
 She had to binde his wounds, in so grat neede,  
 But love could other bands (though strange) provide,  
 And pitie wept for joy to see that deede,  
     For with her amber lockes cut off each wound  
 She tide: O happie man, so cur'd, so bound! (19.112)

Tancred's "strange" bandages depend on Erminia's love for him, but they underline the practical and healing aspect of that love rather than its complicity in the beauty of the wound. The result is a mixture of hair and blood far different from the "rubies set in flaming gold" of Clorinda's riveting flesh-wound of Canto three. In addition, Erminia's willingness to sacrifice her hair recalls the ceremonial haircutting that marked a nun's renunciation of worldly passion. Elsewhere in the poem women's hair is not just a mark of their femininity but of the dangerous passions they can inspire. By cutting her hair, Erminia symbolically renounces any complicity in this kind of passion. Contemporary visual representations of the scene accent the almost sacred quality of Erminia's response to Tancred. Guercino's *Tancred and Erminia*, for instance, depicts the moment as a *Lamentation*: Erminia has her hands raised in the traditional gesture of Mary Magdalen over the body of Christ.<sup>20</sup>

Even as Tasso suggests that Erminia's passion for Tancred has changed for the better, however, he leaves the conclusion of the episode tantalizingly uncertain. It is certainly tempting to view the passage as a happy end to the unfortunate love triangle that includes Erminia, Clorinda, and Tancred.

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<sup>20</sup> Lee, 20.



Murtaugh, for instance, takes this position, arguing that love in the passage is “now a positive, healing, unifying force, no longer a principle of dispersion and disorientation.”<sup>21</sup> Yet it is equally possible that Erminia has learned the folly of love and has given up her pursuit of Tancred. The poem simply does not give us much information, since it nearly abandons the Tancred/Erminia story at this point. The fragments of information we do receive are themselves ambiguous. When Tancred regains consciousness and sees Erminia, for instance, she blushes and asks him to “prepare my guerdon meete.” But we never find out exactly what she intends her guerdon to be, nor does Tancred respond to her claim. She is firm in her intention to remain with the Christian army, and Vafrine finds a place where “the damsell might sojorne, / A chamber got, close, secret, neere his owne” (19.119). “His owne,” in this context, may refer to Tancred rather than Vafrine, and hence to future love for the couple, but this possibility vanishes before it even begins. At this point in the poem the coming capture of Jerusalem overshadows all else.

Yet in many ways Erminia and Tancred’s story does not need to come to a romantic closure. Its final scenes combine the spiritual conversion of a pagan maid with the healing of a wound. Both of these events accomplish what the death of Clorinda fails to do. Clorinda goes to heaven, it is true, but hers is a tragic conversion; Erminia looks forward to a life as a Christian. Clorinda’s wound is not only fatal to her, but, as we have seen, also metaphorically afflicts Tancred. Erminia’s treatment of Tancred’s physical wounds alerts us to the possibility that wounds can be healed as well as caused. Given Tasso’s emphasis on the

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<sup>21</sup> Kristen Olson Murtaugh, “Erminia Delivered: Notes on Tasso and Romance,” *Quaderni d’Italianistica* 3.1 (1982): 12-25.

dangers of fragmentation and separation to the Christian endeavor as a whole, the possibility that love could heal wounds rather than cause them has far reaching significance. In the context of the poem as a whole, the missing ending to Erminia and Tancred's story underlines the contingent and subsidiary role of the erotic body. By treating Tancred's wounds Erminia has already amended the spiritually destructive aspect of eros that menaces the liberation of Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER 3

A "DOUBLEMALADY":  
THE WOUND OF LOVE

In the first book of his *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid runs down a list of places which he says are conducive to love. One of these places is the Circus:

Such aids to new love, will the Circus bring,  
And the sad gladiator's sandy ring.  
Love oft in that arena fights a bout,  
Then it's the looker on who's counted out.  
While chatting, buying a programme, shaking hands,  
Or wagering on the match intent he stands  
He feels the dart, and groaning 'neath the blow  
Himself becomes an item in the show.<sup>1</sup>

The *Ars Amatoria* was not one of the most popular of Ovid's works in the sixteenth century, and the casual tone of this passage makes could make it appear unimportant. But as a down to earth hint about the relationship between real physical wounds and the traditional metaphor of "the wound of love," the passage helps explain the status of the traditional metaphor of the love wound, both in other Ovidian texts, and in the Renaissance, which took Ovid as the source for so much of its understanding of love. In this passage, Ovid locates the connection between real wounds and metaphorical ones in the element of spectatorship, or aesthetic distance. The lover becomes, like the wounded gladiators, part of the display. His interior emotional state, represented

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<sup>1</sup> Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.164-70. trans.\*\*

by the love wound, oscillates with the exterior physical “show” around the difference between spectating and being a spectacle. The hypothetical lover is at first a spectator, presumably watching the gladiators, and performing innocuous and unremarkable tasks. But something replaces the wounded bodies in his field of view, presumably a woman,<sup>2</sup> and turns him from an active watcher into a passive victim. Although Ovid is not always this explicit in his other works, he frequently brings love, violence, and aesthetic distance together in the same scene. Of the many reasons for his popularity during the Early Modern period, one is certainly that he depicts the relationship between these three things so clearly. The “wound of love” was second in importance only to Christ’s wounds in the Renaissance imagination, and at least as prevalent in popular art and literature. And in Renaissance theories of love, as in the literature of the period, love was assumed to originate in sight: when a normally active gaze returned or rebounded from a beautiful love object. Because it was supposed to represent the inward effect of an act of spectatorship, the love wound was tied both to inward feeling and to the outward show that produced this feeling. As a result, poetic depictions of love in the period often played real and metaphorical wounds off against each other in the same way as the passage from the *Ars Amatoria*. Those who theorized about love in the Renaissance reflected this ambiguity in their attempt to contrast the philosophical ideal of Neoplatonic love with the medical description of erotic melancholy. Those who wrote love poetry, on the other hand, used the

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<sup>2</sup> The love Ovid talks about in the *Amores* is usually heterosexual.

ambiguity between real and metaphorical wounds to express the difference between chaste and unchaste love.

In the tradition that the Renaissance inherited, depictions of love as a wound already mixed metaphorical and real wounds. Love was supposed to be a metaphorical “inward” wound, but it often behaved as a real wound. For Renaissance writers, the most well known Classical description of love in the Renaissance was Dido’s passion for Aeneas in the *Aeneid*. Initially, Virgil describes Dido’s love in purely metaphorical terms. He calls it a “wound” to indicate the violence of her passion and the way it alters her interior state in ways beyond her control and against her will:

Too late, the queen is caught between love’s pain  
and press. She feeds the wound within her veins;  
she is eaten by a secret flame.<sup>3</sup>

Yet this metaphor becomes more extended, and closer and closer to a literal truth. First, Virgil juxtaposes the metaphorical wound with real wounds. Driven by her desire, Dido sacrifices to Juno as the guardian of marriage, but the sacrificial wounds she studies are robbed of their effect by the “silent wound” within her. Immediately afterward, Dido guides Aeneas around Carthage like a wounded deer “the shaft of death still clinging to her side.” Later, the image of a wounded deer becomes real in the hunt scenes, during which Dido is consummating her passion in a cave with Aeneas. These juxtapositions of metaphorical and real

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<sup>3</sup> Virgil, (4.1-3). “At regina gravi iam dudum saucia cura  
volnus alit venis et caeco carpitur igni.”

wounds culminate in Dido's suicide, where her love wound leads to a real, and mortal, injury. Her real wound alters the expression of her passion. While her metaphorical wound is always "secret" and "silent," her real chest wound has a grating voice ("infixum stridit sub pectore volnus"); it is the center of a spectacular public display. But since her real wound is the logical endpoint of the passion that has consumed her, it is a product of the earlier metaphorical wound. Her "wound" has migrated outward from the unseen and metaphorical workings of interior life to literality and voice. Dido's suicide suggests that the concept of the wound links an interiority that can only be metaphorically described with visible external signs. This kind of spectacular emotional display, however, is something from which Virgil seeks to isolate Aeneas. Throughout the Dido episode, Virgil treats her "wound" much differently from the way he treats wounds in the rest of the poem. Elsewhere they are usually a sign of male heroic sacrifice and participation in successful imperial design, not of destructive irrationality. That the episode with Dido is necessary at all suggests that Virgil is displacing the debilitating nature of the wound of love onto Dido in order to allow subsequent male wounds to be fruitful and sacred.

Medieval chivalric romance also insistently plays off of the difference between real wounds and the wound of love. Marie de France's Lais treat with paradigmatic brevity themes that weave in and out of longer Medieval romances. "Guigemar," for example, tells the story of a knight who is perfect in all respects except that he has never been interested in love. Masculine identity is thus immediately contingent on more than martial prowess, a fact that conditions the

Romance response to wounds into the Renaissance. As it happens, Guigemar's "education" comes about through a wound. An arrow that he shoots at a stag during a hunt rebounds and strikes him in the thigh. The stag, who is mortally wounded by the same arrow, pronounces a curse on his slayer. "You who have wounded me," he says, "let this be your fate. May you never find a cure, nor may any herb, root, doctor or potion ever heal the wound you have in your thigh until you are cured by a woman who will suffer for your love more pain and anguish than any other woman has ever known, and you will suffer likewise for her..."<sup>4</sup> When Guigemar finds this woman, it turns out that while she cures the hunting wound (through a treatment that like much modern medicine seems to depend for its efficacy on the cost of the equipment: golden basins, fine linen etc.!) she gives him another more serious wound that shakes his identity:

love had pierced him to the quick and his heart was greatly disturbed. For the Lady had wounded him so deeply that he had forgotten his homeland.<sup>5</sup>

Here love, as a wound, is directly opposed to the classical ideal of martial wounding, which is generally offered up in defense of one's homeland. In order to mature, Guigemar must surrender to the very threat that Aeneas escaped by leaving Dido. Marie de France, however, insists on the physicality of this alternate wounding in a way Virgil does not. "Love," she says, "is an invisible wound within the body, and, since it has its source in nature, it is a long lasting ill."<sup>6</sup> Even "visible" wounds

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<sup>4</sup> Marie De France, *The Lais of Marie de France* trans. Glyn S. Burgess Keith Busby (New York: Penguin, 1986) 44.

<sup>5</sup> Marie de France 48.

<sup>6</sup> Marie de France 49.

have a way of coming to signify sexual desire in Medieval Romance. The male hero is frequently injured as he tries to get to the woman. In Marie de France's "Yonec" the knight impales himself on sharpened stakes in a window as he enters his lover's chamber and then leaves a trail of blood for her to follow. In Chretien de Troyes' Le Chevalier au Charette, Lancelot injures his hand while bending the bars in the window to Guenevere's chamber. His blood, on the sheets of Guenevere's bed, allows the villain Meleagant to accuse her of infidelity, because Kay has been sleeping nearby, badly wounded. Although Kay's wounds have been obtained in the traditional way, through armed combat, Meleagant perceives their function as betraying desire (as Lancelot's wounds really do). This whole bizarre and legalistic scene emphasizes the degree to which wounds as signs of sexual desire have supplanted wounds as signs of male heroic action in the Romance imagination.

By the Renaissance the metaphor of love as a wound had become so firmly entrenched in European culture that it dominated most depictions of erotic love. The number of emblems devoted to love in contemporary emblem books shows how conventional, and even how trivial love's wound had become. Alciati's *Emblemata* devotes several different emblems to the "pain of love." All of them feature Cupid, usually with his bow and arrows, and all turn on the apparent paradox of something that gives both pain and pleasure at the same time. Emblem 207 depicts Venus picking the "bittersweet" ("glukupikros") fruit of a citron tree, with Cupid in the background, sitting on a beehive. The bees are not mentioned in the epigram, but they occur in several other love



emblems, because their stings and their honey make them a natural image for the way that “*Dulcia quandoque amara fieri* [sweet things sometimes become bitter],” (the motto from emblem 112). These emblems seek to portray love (Amor or Eros) as a part of the natural order whose painful effects are inseparable from the pleasure it generates. They also trivialize the pain of love by comparing it with bee stings or lemon juice. But the apparent insignificance of bees sometimes allows this kind of emblem to make a point about the disproportionate effects of love. In the epigram to Alciati’s 113, Cupid complains that a bee, a tiny creature, “could itself inflict such hurtful wounds.” Venus tells him, “you too my son imitate this creature, for though small, you also inflict so many hurtful wounds.”

The way emblems represented love’s violence did have a sinister side as well. One of the familiar conceits of Renaissance emblems was the comparison between Eros and Death. Since Death was also supposed to shoot people with arrows, the two were sometimes imagined as having exchanged quivers, with tragic results. This exchange could be used to describe the death of a young person, as in the case of Alciati’s emblem 156, “*In formosam fato praereptam*” (On a beautiful girl snatched away by fate). Here Death has replaced Cupid’s arrows with his own, while the god is sleeping. This emblem shows Eros and Death as both equally inscrutable from a human perspective. The epigram, which simply asks why Death should practice this deception, reinforces the sense of human powerlessness. But since Death deceives Cupid, the emblem also suggests that Eros’ intentions and its actual effects are not necessarily the same. Cupid does not intend for the young girl to die, but

he kills her nonetheless. In another emblem on this theme (155), the connection between Eros and Death becomes more persistent, if still accidental. The picture shows Cupid, having mistakenly exchanged arrows with Death, killing a young man, while Death causes an old man to fall in love with a young woman. Like emblem 156, this one seems simply to stress the irrationality of love and death. The epigram is ostensibly a poem by the young man who is already dead in the picture, although the "I" appears only at the end of poem. He tells how Death and Cupid managed to exchange arrows, comments on the irony of an old man in love, and then laments:

I, because Eros with borrowed bow has struck me,  
Grow weak, and the fates are laying their hands on me.  
Spare me, boy; and you, Death.<sup>7</sup>

Because the victim here knows that the god who has "killed" him is Cupid, and not Death, the cause of his death is more complex than in the emblem on the young woman. His lament sounds like the petrarchan convention in which the lover protests that he is "dying" from love, and he has, after all, been wounded by Cupid. This emblem focuses our attention on the young man's subjective confusion: he ought to be in love, but he feels as if he is dying. Ultimately the emblem suggests that the "wounds" Eros inflicts are more than just painful bee stings.

The more serious scholarly and philosophical tradition that produced the Renaissance *Tratatti D'amore*, used the metaphor of love as a wound as part of its attempt to distinguish between chaste and

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<sup>7</sup> At ego mutato quia Amore me perculit arcu,  
Desicio, deciunt & mihi fata manum.  
Parce puer, Mors signa tenens victricia parce:  
Fac ego anem, subeat fac Acheronta senex.

unchaste love. Ficino's commentary on the *Symposium* was the central Neoplatonic work of the period and it associates ideal love with health and beauty. "When we say 'love,'" Ficino says, "understand 'the desire for beauty.'"<sup>8</sup> The kind of love which could be metaphorically described as a wound, on the other hand, led in the other direction: "the stormy passion by which we are swept into lewdness leads us to ugliness" is "the opposite of love" (Ficino 41). The beauty which inspires love, according to Ficino, is produced in bodies by a harmony of "colors and lines." This harmony, in turn, is a sign that "the body's constitution in the four humors is well-balanced" (Ficino, 95). In his insistence on love's affinity for harmony and health, Ficino follows Agathon's depiction of love in the *Symposium* itself. According to Agathon, love always leads away from violence: "Mutilation, imprisonment, and many other like deeds of violence could never have occurred among the gods if Love had been there; all would have been peace and friendship ... violence never touches Love, and when he is active he never employs it."<sup>9</sup> Because the metaphor of the wound implies violence, mutilation, and bodily dysfunction, it is not suitable to such love, except perhaps as a way to refer to the frustration of being distant from the true good. Not until the end of the *Symposium*, when the drunken Alcibiades appears, does love get described as a wound. In the story Alcibiades tells of tempting Socrates, he repeatedly complains that he is wounded in his heart. Ficino, among many others, takes Alcibiades as a representative of

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<sup>8</sup> Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love* trans. Sears Jayne (Dallas, TX: Spring Publications, 1985) 40. Future references are from this edition and will be noted parenthetically, by page number.

<sup>9</sup> Plato, *The Symposium* trans. Walter Hamilton (New York: Penguin, 1951) 68-70.

a passion entirely opposed to ideal love. In Ficino's commentary, his analysis of erotic melancholy coincides with Alcibiades' appearance. He thus displaces the wound of love onto the discourse of medical dysfunction.<sup>10</sup>

The kind of love that most easily lent itself to being described as a wound was not the heavenly or spiritual variety, but physical love. Those Renaissance writers who chose to treat love as a medical phenomenon always restricted their focus to this kind of love, even when they drew heavily on Neoplatonic material. Thus, in the beginning of his encyclopedic *Treatise of Lovesickness*, Jaques Ferrand recalls Pausanias' assertion in the *Symposium* that there are two kinds of love which correspond to the two Venuses: Urania and Pandemia.<sup>11</sup> "Metaphysicians and theologians discourse of the essence and properties of the first, while physicians deal with ordinary physical love, which is either honest or dishonest." Although he brings up the possibility of "honest" love, Ferrand, like many others, concerns himself almost exclusively with its pathological side. Love is "nothing other than a passion or a violent and dishonorable perturbation of the mind, intractable to reason."<sup>12</sup> Contemporary theories about the passions as a whole stressed their physical pathology, and compared them to wounds

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<sup>10</sup> When Ficino comments on the few passages in which Plato himself describes love as a wound, he does not elaborate on the metaphor. For Plato wounds are a useful metaphor for human frustration with being so far from ideal love. While Ficino comments on Aristophanes' famous speech in which he describes the origins of love (in the wound caused when the gods split our original androgynous form into two sexes), he pays little attention to the pain and violence of love.

<sup>11</sup> Ferrand 225.

<sup>12</sup> Ferrand 226.

and disease. In *The Passions of the Mind In General*, for example, Thomas Wright calls passions “the maladies or sores of the soule,” and compares them to wounds which can be healed by (among other things) divine “oil and wine.”<sup>13</sup> Also, although the passions were considered one of the “six non-naturals” (the other *res non naturales* were diet, air, exercise and rest, fullness and emptiness, and sleep and waking) they were often thought of as an immediate rather than antecedent cause of illness. Wright claims that,

The passions of our minde are not unlike the foure humours of our bodies ... for if blood, flegme, choller, or melancholy exceed the due proportion required to the constitution and health of our bodies, presently we fall into some disease: even so, if the passions of the Minde be not moderated according to reason (and that temperature vertue requireth) immediatly the soule is molested with some maladie. But if the humours be kept in a due proportion; they are the preservative of health, & perhaps health itself.<sup>14</sup>

Wright thinks the passions affect the health of the body, and that unrestrained they will have a bad effect. Unlike the humors, which can be regulated by carefully controlling the six non-naturals, the passions require “vertue” and “reason” to temper their inherent tendency to excess. This pathology which Renaissance writers attribute to the passions helps explain why the metaphor of love as a wound should be more prevalent in medical than in philosophical discourse.

In its most extreme form, love could turn into erotic melancholy, a disease whose symptoms depends on the connection between physical and mental processes. Erotic melancholy, according to Ferrand, proceeds “from an inordinate desire to enjoy the beloved object, accompanied by

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<sup>13</sup>Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in General* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971) 8, 88.

<sup>14</sup> Wright 17.

fear and sorrow.”<sup>15</sup> This inordinate desire results in kind of “dotage” or wandering of the mind (Ferrand mentions the Greek “paraphrosunen”),

When one of the powerful faculties of the soul, such as the imagination or the judgment, becomes depraved-- a condition to be found in all melancholiacs insofar as they fashion a thousand fantastical chimeras an imagine objects that neither exist nor ever will. Fear and sorrow are the inseparable symptoms of this miserable passion that prevents the immortal soul from exercising its faculties and virtues.<sup>16</sup>

Thus far love appears to be a purely mental disturbance. But its antecedent causes are physical. Ferrand categorizes love as “hypochondriacal melancholy, because it is the liver and the surrounding parts that are principally affected and because the essential faculties of the brain are corrupted by the black vapors that rise from the hypochondries to the citadel of Pallas, that is to say the brain.”<sup>17</sup>

Likewise, the effects of love fall under the domain of internal medicine:

Such love gives rise to a pale and wan complexion, joined by a slow fever that modern practitioners call amorous fever, to palpitations of the heart, swelling of the face, depraved appetite, a sense of grief, sighing, causeless tears, insatiable hunger, raging thirst, fainting, oppressions, suffocations, insomnia, headaches, melancholy, epilepsy, madness, uterine fury, satyriasis, and other pernicious symptoms.<sup>18</sup>

The conditions under which the passion of love was thought to occur also help explain why love should be conceived of as a wound rather than purely as a disease. All of the passions were thought to be generated by some kind of sensory impression,<sup>19</sup> but love was the only passion that

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<sup>15</sup> Ferrand 238.

<sup>16</sup> Ferrand 235.

<sup>17</sup> Ferrand 237.

<sup>18</sup> Ferrand 229.

<sup>19</sup> The imagination receives an impression which passes through judgement and is passed on to the heart. Wright (33) and Timothy Bright, *A treatise of melancholy* (London: 1586) (37) both describe the heart as the “seat” of the passions. This organ either dilates or contractes, drawing spirits (and humors) to it, and consequently modifying its own

writers consistently describe as an invasion, sometimes as an invasive substance, and sometimes even as a self-conscious agent. Ferrand's narrative is a representative example:

Once love deceives the eyes, which are the true spies and gatekeepers of the soul, she slips through the passageways, traveling imperceptibly by way of the veins to the liver where she suddenly imprints an ardent desire for that object that is either truly lovable, or appears so. There love ignites concupiscence and with such lust the entire sedition begins ... But fearing her own powers insufficient for overthrowing the reason-- the sovereign part of the soul-- love turns directly upon the citadel of the heart, and once that salient stronghold is made subject, she attacks the reason and all the noble forces of the brain so vigorously that she overwhelms them and makes them all her slaves. Then all is lost: the man is finished, his senses wander, his reason is deranged, his imagination becomes depraved, and his speech incoherent.<sup>20</sup>

Here love does not arise merely from a sensory impression which gratifies or provokes it but from a carefully coordinated attack. This kind of love, in Ferrand's personification is entirely hostile and violent.

Initially it is also external to the subject. Elsewhere, however, Ferrand discusses theories in which the "invasion" of love arises from the individual's own glance. He reports Ficino and Valleriola's theory that certain "animal spirits radiate from the lover toward the beloved and are returned again where, because of their great thinness and subtlety, they enter the lover's entrails and spread throughout the body by means of the veins and arteries, troubling the blood and thereby bringing on this disease."<sup>21</sup>

temperament, but then sending humors back out to stir up "every part of the body" (Wright).

<sup>20</sup> Ferrand 252.

<sup>21</sup> Ferrand 253.

In Ficino's commentary on the *Symposium*, the theory of radiating spirits connects the notion of love as a disease with the conventional idea that love is rooted in vision: that it all begins with a glance. Ficino explains the process as follows. Since the spirit is a particularly light substance, it tends to fly spontaneously out of the high parts of the body, particularly out of the eyes "since they themselves are transparent and the most shining of all the parts" (Ficino 159). The ray that the eyes emit in order to see things draws such spiritual vapor with it, and this vapor in its turn draws blood with it, in a rarefied form (Ficino 160). This is why, Ficino says, a menstruating woman will leave blood on a mirror that she has looked into, and why bleary red eyes are contagious. The eye beam of the beloved, suffused with blood, becomes a "poisoned dart" that pierces through the eyes of the lover. Finally, "since it is shot from the heart of the shooter, it seeks again the heart of the man being shot, as its proper home; it wounds the heart, but in the heart's hard back wall it is blunted and turns back into blood. This foreign blood, being somewhat foreign to the nature of the wounded man, infects his blood" (Ficino 160). The infection leads to pain because the thin warm blood of the beloved "plucks to pieces" the lover's viscera. It also draws him toward the beloved constantly because like seeks like. The exchange of blood does not always run in one direction, however. Ficino refers to Lucretius to show that "the blood of a man wounded by a ray of the eyes flows forward into the wounder, just as the blood of a man slain with a sword flows back onto the slayer" (Ficino 163). Thus while the lover's wound contaminates him with the blood of the beloved, it also returns that contamination to the beloved. For an analogy Ficino cites the well



known belief that the wounds of a corpse will bleed in the presence of the murderer. The murderer's blood, Ficino says, has been transformed by the blood of the victim. The victim's blood, recognizing its like in the murderer, seeks to join it (Ficino 50-1630.<sup>22</sup> In all of these interpretations, love acts with violence or in connection with violence. It is a disease, but a disease which is imposed by a coherent attack from the outside.

When it entered the lyric tradition, the medical discourse of erotic melancholy could often make love into an accusation rather than a plea. In some cases the wound of love could become something that the lover wished upon his beloved rather than part of his pose of passive suffering. One such poem is Drayton's venomous "Remedie for Love." This sonnet plays off of the traditional conceit in which the lover complains that no physician can heal his wound, because the only cure is the lady's goodwill. Drayton's poem shows how easily the desire for love to be requited can elide into the desire for absolute possession of the object, dead or alive, and preferably dead.

Since to obtaine thee, nothing me will sted,  
I have a Med'cine that shall cure my Love,  
The powder of her Heart dry'd, when she is dead,  
That Gold nor Honour ne'r had pow'r to move;  
Mix'd with her Teares, that ne'r her true-Love crost,  
Nor at Fifteene ne'r long'd to be a Bride,  
Boyl'd with her Sighes, in giving up the Ghost,  
That for her late deceased Husband dy'd;  
Into the same then let a Woman breathe,  
That being chid, did never word replie,  
With one thrice-marry'd's Pray'rs, that did bequeath  
A Legacie to stale Virginitie.

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<sup>22</sup> The corpse's blood was also supposed to retain the impulse for revenge that the victim apparently felt at the moment of the murder. See also Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* 4.1047-051.

If this Receipt have not the pow'r to winne me,  
Little Ile say, but thinke the Devill's in me.

A dead woman is more easily manipulated: dried, ground up, and sold over the counter as a remedy. Ironically, Drayton constantly describes the subjectivity of his object. The women he depicts all have desires and opinions. But he also denies their subjectivity, by referring to their feelings in a series of negatives: "ne'r," "ne'r," "Nor," etc. These words allow him to express his anger at the woman's unwillingness to be "moved" by him. But they also correspond with the references to death that run through the poem, because the speaker accuses the women of *not* feeling things. These phrases subtly equate a woman's resistance with death itself, as if to say, "if you can't love me, you might as well be dead." The speaker's directions to the apothecary intensify the poem's vicious misogyny. Not only is the woman's body being turned into a purely material substance, but women's feelings themselves are materialized and thrown into the pot: first the tears, which are a sign of suffering as much as a physical substance, and then the sighs, which although they are a spiritual substance in Galenic doctrine, certainly cannot be "boiled."<sup>23</sup> These feelings, of course, are the same ones that the petrarchan lover usually suffers, so in addition to criticizing the woman for not returning his love, the speaker wishes her to suffer as he does. The speaker's pose of being wounded and in need of a remedy becomes the route by which he expresses his desire to see the beloved suffer. At this point, being wounded and wounding are in danger of

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<sup>23</sup> Although a cold glass or mirror might condense moisture from a sigh, and thus distill its spiritual vapor into a form that could be boiled, I don't think that the poem's conceit extends to such a complicated alchemical procedure.

becoming indistinguishable. The metaphor of the love wound shows itself to be less a means of expressing the vulnerability of the individual than of actualizing the fantasy of controlling and dominating the Other.

Poems such as Drayton's "Remedy" are rare, but Medical theories of love, with the destructive emphasis they placed on the image of the love wound, could undermine the easy association of Neoplatonic and petrarchan traditions. Edmund Spenser uses such theories to expose the tension between chaste and unchaste love (and between virtue and fulfillment). Spenser refers to the love wound constantly in his lyric poetry. One of the sonnets of the *Amoretti* is similar to Drayton's "Remedy," but much less vicious and more philosophical. For Spenser, the conceit of the ineffective physician the speaker an opportunity to expound the dangers of confusing physical and metaphorical wounds.

Long languishing in double malady,  
Of my harts wound and of my bodies grieve:  
There came to me a leach that would apply  
Fit medicines for my bodies best reliefe.  
Vayne man (quod I) that hast but little priefe:  
In deep discovery of the myndes disease,  
Is not the hart of all the body chiefe?  
And rules the members as it selfe doth please.  
Then with some cordialls seeke first to appease,  
The inward languour of my wounded hart,  
And then my body shall have shortly ease:  
But such sweet cordialls passe Physitions art.  
Then my lyfes Leach doe you your skill reveale,  
And with one salve both hart and body heale (Sonnet L).

This poem admits at the outset that the "wound" of love is not purely metaphorical: it is a "double malady." The "hart's wound" is presumably the traditional metaphorical love wound; the "bodies grieve" is the physical effect of lovesickness as described in Ferrand, Ficino, and others. But the sonnet goes on to confuse any easy distinction between the two. First the speaker accuses the physician of having little psychological

experience, an accusation that implies a metaphoric value to both “maladies.” But then he proceeds to educate the physician on the nature of physical illness. If the heart is in fact “of all the body chiefe,” something accepted in Galenic physiology, then the “inward languour of [the speaker’s] wounded hart,” ought to be susceptible to appropriate medicines. At this point the speaker simply seems to be accusing the doctor of medical ignorance. The last three lines, however, reaffirm the figurative status of the wound. The “sweet cordialls” required to cure the patient are not just arcane or beyond the understanding of a bad doctor: they are unavailable to the art of medicine as a whole. The only physician the speaker needs, he contends, is the lady herself.

When the love wound remains entirely metaphoric, Spenser recognizes its comic potential. The conceit of Cupid with his arrows can express the playfulness of casual flirtation. Among the mostly serious sonnets of the *Amoretti*, for example, is one in which the process of falling in love is made to seem relatively innocuous.

One day as I unwarily did gaze  
 On those fayre eyes my loves immortall light:  
 The whiles my stonisht hart stood in amaze,  
 Through sweet illusion of her lookes delight.  
 I mote perceive how in her glauncing sight,  
 Legions of loves with little wings did fly:  
 Darting their deadly arrowes fyry bright,  
 At every rash beholder passing by.  
 One of those archers closely I did spy,  
 Ayming his arrow at my hart:  
 When suddenly with twinkle of her eye,  
 The Damzell broke his misintended dart.  
 Had she not so doon, sure I had bene slayne,  
 Yet as it was, I hardly scap’t with paine. (XVI)

The poet’s conceit begins as a fairly conventional representation of the role of sight in the process of falling in love. Here is a lady whose eye beams are capable of making almost anybody (“every rash beholder”) fall

in love with her. By the end of the poem, however, the machinery of the conceit has become startlingly real. The little winged loves have moved beyond the poetic perception and become something of which both parties are aware. This lady knows what she is doing, and is capable of putting a stop to it at will. Her sense of humor undermines any severity inherent in the situation. By permitting her eye to twinkle with merriment, she breaks the "dart" with the same organ that emitted the deadly glances. The overall effect is to transform the traditional account of love, in which the lover is struck down by the limpid gaze of the unconscious beauty, into a highly conscious game that might be enjoyed by both parties. The anticlimax of the last line, however, shows how this persistently petrarchan speaker insists on grumbling that it was still a very near thing.

One of the poet's concerns, in this sonnet sequence, is to defend his love for the lady from the accusation that it is merely a perturbation of the mind, one of what Wright calls "thorny bryars sprung from the infected root of originall sine."<sup>24</sup> When Spenser takes eye-beams more seriously, he is careful to distinguish between chaste and unchaste love:

More then most faire, full of the living fire,  
 Kindled above unto the maker neere:  
 No eies but joyes, in which al powers conspire,  
 That to the world naught else be counted deare.  
 Thruh your bright beams doth not the blinded guest,  
 Shoot out his darts to base affections wound:  
 But Angels come to lead fraile mindes to rest  
 In chaste desires on heavenly beauty bound.  
 You frame my thoughts and fashion me within,  
 You stop my tounge, and teach my hart to speake  
 You calme the storme that passion did begin,  
 Strong thruh your cause, but by your vertue weak.

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<sup>24</sup> Wright 2.

Dark is the world, where your light shined never;  
Well is he borne, that may behold you ever (VIII).

The first four lines of the poem are exactly the kind of exaggeration expected of the petrarchan lover, especially since the subject is the lady's eyes. Like the stricken lover, the speaker thinks that the object of his desire subsumes the whole world. It soon becomes clear, however, that he really does think of the lady as semi-divine. Her gaze, unlike that of the lady in XVI, does not carry the arrows of Cupid (the blinded guest), but rather ministering angels. These angels are similar to the darts of unchaste erotic love in that they reshape the lover's interior: "You frame my thoughts and fashion me within." Instead of fueling passion, however, this love "calme[s] the storme that passion did begin." The speaker does not deny that he has felt passion for the lady, but argues that such passion becomes weak "by [her] vertue." Ultimately, her virtue replaces unchaste passion. The traditional sources of erotic passion, her eyes, here become the primary means by which this lady expresses her virtue.

Such placid neoplatonism does not last long in the *Amoretti*. Elsewhere the poet returns to the metaphor of love as a wound as a way of depicting the violence of love. In sonnet LVII, for example, the speaker calls the lady his "sweet warrior" and complains that his wounds are so sore,

That wonder is how I should live a jot,  
Seeing my hart through launched every where  
With thousand arrowes, which your eies have shot:  
Yet shoot ye sharpely still, and spare me not,  
But glory thinke to make these cruel stoures. (6-10).

If the lady really were a warrior, then the wounds she made might be glorious. The speaker's argument rests on the assumption that she is not a warrior, that he is not her enemy, and therefore that the wounds she inflicts are just "cruel." These accusations are not technically petrarchan, but by the time of the *Amoretti* they were certainly a commonplace of lyric persuasion. This poem, for example, ends with an appeal for "grace" so that the speaker's wounds "wil heale in little space." The pose of passive suffering drives the poet to his most vivid and horrifying imagery. In XXXI he describes the lady not as a warrior but as a beast "of bloody race," whose beauty is a trap set out, "that she the better may in bloody bath, / Of such poore thralls her cruell hands embrew" (11-12). The contrast between the violent imagery of such poems and the relatively serene metaphors of the more Neoplatonic poems helps demonstrate the tension between virtue and fulfillment that Spenser sees as inherent in sexual love. The poet of the *Amoretti* knows that the lady resists his demands because she is virtuous. Early in the sonnet sequence he is content to reason that "Such love not lyke to lusts of baser kynd, / The harder wonne, the firmer will abide" (VI. 2-3). Even the metaphor of the love wound can seem innocent. In the same poem, the poet is willing to try to create a "deepe ... wound," in the lady, one "that dints the parts entire / With chast affects, that naught but death can sever" (11-12). As the sequence progresses, however, the poet becomes more and more likely to condemn the lady's resistance as "cruelty," and more likely to use the pose of being wounded as an accusation against her. The sequence is saved only when the lady finally capitulates, in Spenser's revision of the petrarchan tradition.

The reconciliatory mood of the *Amoretti*, and of the *Epithalamion* that follows eliminates the tension between chaste and unchaste love. The social union of marriage includes both virtue and fulfillment without depending on either the idealizations of Neoplatonic love, or the pathology of erotic melancholy. But Spenser's position in these poems was not his last or only word on the subject of the wound of love. It is in the longer narrative context of the *The Faerie Queene* that Spenser develops his most detailed description of the confusions, dangers, and potentials of the love wound.



## CHAPTER 4

"THE TICKLE TERMES OF MORTALL STATE":  
HEALING WOUNDS IN SPENSER'S FAERIE QUEENE III

Spenser's descriptions of wounds in the *Faerie Queene* often reveal a surprising amount of medical knowledge. Unlike Tasso, Spenser occasionally describes a course of wound care in detail. When Belphoebe is treating Timias for the wound he has received from the "grisly foster" at the beginning of Book III, for example, she is not content with squeezing the juice of a mysterious "soveraigne weede" into the wound:

The flesh therewith she suppled and did steepe  
T'abate all spasme, and soke the swelling bruze,  
And after having searcht the intuse deepe,  
She with her scarfe did bind the wound from cold to keepe.<sup>1</sup>

This treatment is amazingly up-to-date. The danger of spasms, cold air, and foreign material in the wound cover many of the major points of Renaissance wound care.<sup>2</sup> Later, when Timias' condition apparently worsens (for reasons we shall see), Belphoebe begins to fear "Least that his wound were inly well not healed, / Or that the wicked steele empoyned were" (5.49). Her diagnosis is perfectly reasonable in the

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A.C. Hamilton (New York: Longman, 1977) III.5.33. All further quotations are from Book III in this edition and will be noted with Canto and Stanza number.

<sup>2</sup> Ambroise Paré, *The works of Ambrose Parey chyrurgeon to Henry II, Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III, Kings of France [microform] : wherein are contained, an introduction to chirurgery in general : a discourse of animals and the excellence of man: the anatomy of man's body : a treatise of praeternatural tumors ... [illustrated with variety of figures and the cuts of the most useful instruments in chirurgery : recommended by the University of Paris to all students in physick and chirurgery ...* (London: Jos. Hindmarsh, 1691) 224.

context of Renaissance medicine. What we see today as a single complication, infection, was understood in the Renaissance as several different phenomena. Spenser's use of the term "empoysned," for instance, had a much wider application than it does for us. Whole groups of wounds were classed as "envenomed" not because they were contaminated with known toxins, but because they were likely to cause complications (infection). Thus, for example, all animal bites (including human bites) were to be treated as venomous.<sup>3</sup> Details like these occur frequently in Spenser's depiction of wounds and show him to be well informed of Renaissance medical techniques.

Belphoebe's anxiety and uncertainty about the "inward" state of Timias' wound also is typical of the sixteenth-century surgeon. Today wound care is relatively straightforward: the physician usually does everything possible to avoid complications and let the wound heal on its own. In the Renaissance, however, the future of a wound was considerably more mysterious. Certain kinds of wounds were nearly always fatal, and a surgeon had to know which they were in order to avoid giving a false impression. The French surgeon Ambroise Paré frequently emphasizes how important it is to be able to tell when a wound is mortal. Even wounds that could be healed required constant and inspired intervention. The medical literature lists a fantastic number of salves, unguents, and the like that a surgeon could use to speed up or

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<sup>3</sup> In the middle part of the sixteenth century a controversy arose as to whether or not gunshot wounds were poisoned. Surgeons like Thomas Gale, who argued against the idea by pointing out that none of the ingredients of gunpowder were toxic in small quantities, made little headway, however, until Paré demonstrated empirically that victims of gunshot wounds could heal without cautery. Thomas Gale, *Certaines Workes of Chirurgerie* (London: Rouland Hall, 1563).

slow down the course of healing so as to achieve a satisfactory result.<sup>4</sup>

Inevitably, given the ignorance of the sources of infection, many patients seemed to heal at first, only to succumb to sepsis perhaps weeks after the initial accident. Sidney himself died like this, as Spenser well knew.<sup>5</sup>

Thus from a medical point of view Belphoebe tries everything available to a sixteenth-century physician. If Timias fails to respond, it is not because Spenser could not portray a detailed and well informed medical treatment.

Of course, Timias does not recover; as we shall see, he is suffering from a new wound that is metaphorical rather than physical. This failure of medical knowledge, even where Spenser most convincingly represents it, will turn out to be crucial to Book III's reinterpretation of the wounded body. One of the chivalric fashions that had been given primacy in Renaissance poetry generally was the metaphorical commonplace that uses "wound" to describe love as well as physical

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Brugis, *Vade mecum, or, A companion for a chyrurgion: fitted for times of peace or war, briefly shewing the use of every instrument necessary and the vertues and qualities of such medicines as are ordinarily used, with the way to make them: also the dressing of green wounds ... : together with the manner of making reports, either to a magistrate or a coroners enquest* (London: Printed by T.H., 1652), lists 163 different preparations associated with wound care. Speedy wound healing was not always desirable, because according to the dominant humoral pathology of the time a patient might have various humoral excesses or imbalances in the vicinity of the wound (often what we would call "inflammation") which would require purging. In these cases the job of the physician was to make the wound suppurate before healing. Pus "bonum et laudabile" was always considered a good sign anyway. To encourage the mild infection that produces suppuration, physicians added a wild variety of substances. Paré's favorite was "oil of whelps," a noxious fluid whose supplicative powers were assured by the amount of organic material introduced by boiling puppies in oil!

<sup>5</sup> He contributed the framing poem "Astrophel" (and perhaps "The Dolefull Lay Of Clorinda" as well) to the collection of elegies on the death of Sidney, which comprised the second half of the volume containing *Colin Clout's Come Home Againe*, (London, 1595).

injury. This dual meaning is hardly unique to the Renaissance (in fact it is pervasive in Western culture), but it proved singularly attractive to Renaissance romance, perhaps because many such works aimed to bring together in a single work love and war: Ariosto's "le donne, gli armi...." Spenser too uses the convention of the wound of love. Timias' "inward" wound is his love for Belphebe, Marinell's mother fears that he will be a victim of "hart-wounding love," and even Britomart's passion for Artegall begins as a "wound" that "deepe engord her hart." Spenser, however, does not take "hart-wounding love" at face value. Rather, his descriptions of wounds reveal the dangers implicit in the conventional metaphor. References to love as a wound frequently occur close to the real physical wounds of Book III, and at key points characters sometimes confuse the metaphorical and literal aspects of the wounded body. Ultimately, I shall argue, Spenser turns this confusion to positive account. Book III's need to connect the "wound" as a physical reality with the wound as a metaphor for a spiritual experience reflects Spenser's depiction of Chastity as both a spiritual and a physical virtue.

On the most basic level, the passages which juxtapose real and metaphorical wounds point out how characters can confuse mind and body. The circumstances surrounding Marinell's near-fatal wound at the hands of Britomart, for example, highlight the dangers of such confusion. Early in Marinell's life his mother seeks out a prophecy from Proteus, who tells her that "of a woman he should haue much ill, / A virgin strange and stout him should dismay, or kill" (4.25). Unable to conceive of a female knight, Marinell's mother makes the tragic mistake of assuming that the wounding at issue is metaphorical: she mistakes a

real wound for a metaphorical one. While her mistake seems to privilege the inward over the outward, however, her solution to the “problem” relies entirely on outward means: she simply adjures Marinell to forswear woman’s love. Thus, as James Nohrnberg notes, Marinell’s problem is that he conceives of chastity as entirely physical--like a taboo.<sup>6</sup> More specifically, while his mother conceives of his potential wound as metaphorical, she understands the “cure” as being entirely physical. When Marinell is physically wounded by Britomart, his mother descends into a crisis of interpretive angst:

This was that woman, this that deadly wound...  
The which his mother vainely did expound,  
To be hart-wounding loue, which should assay  
To bring her sonne vnto his last decay.  
So tickle be the termes of mortall state,  
And full of subtile sophismes, which do play  
With double senses, and with false debate,  
T’approoue the vnknown purpose of eternall fate. (4.28)

Marinell’s wound does fulfill the prophecy, on the one hand, but on the other it is an insoluble mystery, full of “double sense.” Of course, as with many prophecies the real “subtile sophismes” reside in the hearer. Marinell’s mother makes a mistake that depends on her own blindness to the double meaning of wounding.

Timias’ adventures dramatize a contrary but equally mistaken idea about the relation between metaphorical and real wounds. While Marinell’s calamity results from reading a real wound as a metaphorical one, Timias suffers because Belphoebe interprets a metaphorical wound as a real one. At first Timias is suffering from the physical wounds

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<sup>6</sup> James Carson Nohrnberg, *The analogy of The Faerie Queene* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976) 435.

inflicted on him by the “griesly foster” and his brothers. When Belphoebe comes upon him in the forest he is unconscious from loss of blood and truly in need of the help she can give him. Unfortunately for Timias, however, even as Belphoebe heals his body she creates another wound to replace the old one:

She his hurt thigh to him recur'd againe,  
But hurt his hart, the which before was sound  
Through an unwary dart, which did rebound  
From her faire eyes and gracious countenance (5.42).

Belphoebe appears not to notice this wound: “litle she weend, that love he close concealed.” But her lack of understanding goes deeper than mere ignorance. Even were she to be informed of Timias’ love, Spenser suggests, she would to never “treat” it because “that sweet Cordiall, which can restore / A love sick hart, she did to him envy; / To him and to all th’unworthy world” (5.50).

The irony of Belphoebe’s healing one wound while unwittingly causing another echoes the kind of precious dilemma of which medieval romance is exceedingly fond. In Spenser’s hands, however, Belphoebe’s failure to heal Timias properly reflects some of the limitations of her allegorical role as “the highest staire / Of th’honorable stage of womanhead.” Belphoebe is constitutionally unable to admit that a wound can be anything but literal, in contrast to Marinell’s mother, who cannot envision her son’s danger as anything but metaphorical. Belphoebe’s impressive surgical skills only serve to reflect her firm concentration on the practical details of her patient’s plight. She has exactly the kind of mind, “resolute and merciless,” that Ambroise Paré recommends for the sixteenth century surgeon who must work without anaesthesia. But this attitude is unsuited to the nature of Timias’ second

wound. Her blindness prompts the narrator to exclaim, with reason, "O foolish Physick, and vnfruitfull paine / That heales vp one and makes another wound" (5.42). "Physick" can cure only some wounds; others require a "soueraigne salve" (5.50) that Belphoebe forever holds "in secret store". Her inability to come to terms with the double meaning of wounding is almost as destructive as Marinell's and certainly more frustrating.

The problems characters have distinguishing between mind and body are only the beginning of the confusion surrounding the interpretation of wounds in these passages. Spenser also uses these passages to challenge the connections between erotic love and physical violence that are implicit in the metaphor of love as a wound. Take, for instance, Britomart's state of mind before and during her encounter with Marinell. He has the ill fortune to meet with her while she is in an exceptionally bad mood. This mood originates, not surprisingly, from her meditation on her own metaphorical wound. She is riding along and trying to "beguile her grievous smart" by thinking of Artegall, "but so her smart was much more grieuous bred / And the deepe wound more deepe engord her hart" (4.6). After voicing her complaint, she subsides again into inward meditation over her "priuy griefe." All of this inward and conventionally metaphorical sorrow, however, ends suddenly as she glimpses Marinell from afar. In one of the poem's more overtly psychological statements,

Her former sorrow into suddein wrath,  
Both coosen passions of distroubled spright,  
Conuerting, forth she beates the dusty path;  
Loue and despight attonce her courage kindled hath (4.12).

Her wrath, however, is distinctly martial, while her sorrow was entirely erotic. By calling them "coosen passions," Spenser underlines the conflation of physical and spiritual violence that lies behind the notion of the "wound." Britomart has hardly sorted this problem out yet. Just as Arthur may chase Florimell (in Canto 1) on the assumption that she might be the woman he is looking for (Gloriana), so Marinell, at the distance Britomart first sees him, might well be Artegall.<sup>7</sup> Her violent reaction is as yet an integral part of her love. Still, since the fight ends her inward suffering, it may mean, as Roche argues, "that Britomart won't withdraw into herself and recognizes the outwardness and physicality of love."<sup>8</sup> This "outwardness," however, is calamitous for Marinell. Like Orlando's madness in Ariosto, Britomart's rage, while it may be therapeutic, still reveals a problem which must be solved. It expresses the connection between erotic love and physical violence as a problem that Britomart needs to overcome in herself as well as recognize in others.

The problems with conflating the erotic and the martial are even more striking in the events leading up to Belphoebe's discovery of the wounded Timias. The wounds inflicted in the encounter between Timias and the "Foster" brothers result from something like what René Girard calls "mimetic desire."<sup>9</sup> Arthur, Timias, Guyon, and Britomart are riding through a forest when Florimell appears, chased by a "griesly

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<sup>7</sup> The possibility is heightened by the mythographic connection between Artegall and Marinell. Marinell's story is a sustained rendition of the life of Achilles, whose armor Artegall wears (3.2.25).

<sup>8</sup> Roche, *The Kindly Flame: A study of the 'Faerie Queene' III and IV* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1964) 71.

<sup>9</sup> René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).



Foster [Forester].” Possessed by “enuie” and “gealosity,” the men take off, Arthur and Guyon after Florimell, but Timias after the Foster himself. Because he pursues the Foster rather than Florimell, he is a particularly good example of the mimetic origins of male violence in the poem: the Foster arouses his anger essentially because they desire the same object. Later we hear that Timias ignored Florimell because he “That Ladies loue vnto his Lord forlent” (4.47), but this revelation only makes his involvement in a world of conflicting desires more acute. He is willing to forgo the object of desire, but not vengeance against those who share that desire, or at least against someone who shares that desire. Since his loyalty to Arthur involves self sacrifice, sexual desire becomes something the suppression of which is the key to amicable relations between men. The wound Timias receives and the wounds he gives in his fight with the Foster brothers become the physical manifestation of this link between violence and sexual desire.

The details of the encounter emphasize how interchangeable sexual desire and violent rage can be. The passage initially suggests that Timias’ anger is righteous. After all, the Foster is “griesly,” full of “beastly lust,” and he runs away. Timias seems to be all righteous violence and the Foster all illicit sexual desire. Subsequent events, however, tend to confuse the issue. Timias is not alone, for instance, in his desire for vengeance. The Foster begins to flee Timias’ “auengement strong” (5.13), but later, when the Foster safely escapes the immediate threat, he himself “cast t’auenge him of that fowle despight” (5.15). Vengeance, once initiated, becomes reciprocal and escalating. From being the noble

attacker, Timias is transformed into an ignoble defender, ambushed in a ford where he cannot use his knightly weapons to his best advantage:

by no means the high banke he could sease,  
But labour'd long in that deepe ford with vaine disease. (5.19)

The whole fight revolves around Timias' tactical need to seize the high ground he has lost along with his initiative as the attacker. In fact, the passage suggests that his severe wound is a direct result of his unfortunate tactical situation, because while the Foster keeps him at bay with his "long bore-speare,"

Anone one sent out of the thicket neare  
A Cruell shaft, headed with deadly ill,  
And feathered with an unlucky quill  
The wicked steele stayd not, till it did light  
In his left thigh, and deepely did it thrill (5.20).

When he finally does come to grips with his enemies, the fight draws quickly to a close, but the damage has already been done, not just physically but also to any possible view we might have of Timias as distant from or uninvolved in the messiness of this guerilla skirmish.

To some extent the gruesome specificity of the Foster brothers' wounds counterbalance Timias' wound: they partially redeem his earlier ignominy. Ultimately, however, both the wounds the Fosters suffer and Timias' wound end up substantiating Timias' heroism. As the fight ends we get a brief commentary from the narrator, who characterizes the two sides of the conflict. "They three be dead with shame," he says, "the Squire liues with renowne" (5.25). Death is shame, life renown. The wounding that has gone on before serves, in this view, to prove the victor's righteousness and to put an end to any confusing similarity between the parties. As in the theory of trial by combat, the physical wound is not merely the byproduct of desire but actually an essential

means by which desires are sorted out and substantiated in the face of rival claims.

Of course, the narrator's interpretation of events is not adequate. Its willful simplicity is itself a clue that Spenser's aims in this passage are more complex. But other hints let the reader know more securely the degree to which the incident is susceptible to alternate interpretations. Behind the history of this wretched little scuffle there lies a fairly conventional allegorical meaning. Two allusions in particular have led critics towards this allegorical interpretation. First, the Foster's "sharp bore-speare" that he brandishes as he chases Florimell and with which he fends off Timias at the ford inevitably invokes the story of Venus and Adonis (which will become the governing myth of Book III). Given the phallic urgency of the spear in the Foster's hands, its most relevant mythographic interpretation ties it to the wound of lust. Under this interpretation the Foster is a figure of Lust as a potentially wounding (rather than enervating) force, and Timias' decision to chase him betrays his own vulnerability to this force. The location of Timias' wound reinforces this interpretation. The "thigh" wound has traditionally had sexual overtones, just as the wound of the heart is a conventional marker of love. At this stage, however, the allegory is still very general. Timias is not guilty of a specific lust, but of concupiscence generally, and of entering into the circular path where violence begets sexual desire, and desire violence. His wound memorializes his participation in this vicious cycle between the two kinds of wounding.

The passages concerning Marinell and Timias' wounds initiate Spenser's criticism of the wound as an emblem of love, but these early

passages reveal still another feature of wounds, a feature that will prove to be more threatening than all the other confusion arising from the metaphorical commonplace. In their rhetorical elaboration, descriptions of wounds in Book III tend to stress the outward appearance of wounds at the expense of their inward effects. Each wound has its spectators, whose interpretations of the wound do not necessarily correspond to the interests of the victim.

Ironically, the very physicality of wounds is often what leads to their transformation into artistic entities. When victims become unconscious (from shock or loss of blood) their subjectivity is no longer in question, and the narrative gaze shifts to the observer. At the end of Timias' fight with the Fosters, for example, the perspective of the verse shifts. Stanza twenty six abruptly reverses the narrator's exulting analysis of the Squire's "renowne":

He liues, but takes small joy of his renowne  
 For of that cruell wound he bled so sore  
 That from his steed he fell in dedly swowne;  
 Yet still the blood forth gushed in so great store,  
 That he lay wallowed all in his owne gore (5.26).

From being an action or event in the midst of a battle, mortal only to the vanquished, the wound has turned into a condition: something which turns an active human subject into a passive object. Like the scene of the wounded Marinell, this passage also stresses the aesthetic dimensions of the wound. The image of Timias wallowing in "his owne gore" has a sticky physicality that Spenser uses elsewhere, in Redcrosse's "poured out in loosenesse" or in the spectacle of Ruddymane, to suggest complete helplessness, moral as well as physical. When Belphoebe finds Timias, his transformation from active character to "heauy sight" is complete:

Shortly she came, whereas that woefull Squire  
 With bloud deformed, lay in a deadly swound:  
 In whose fair eyes, like lamps of quenched fire,  
 The Christall humour stood congealed rownd;  
 His locks, like faded leaues fallen to the grownd,  
 Knotted with bloud, in bounches rudely ran,  
 And his sweet lips, on which before that stownd  
 The bud of youth to blossome faire began,  
 Spoild of their rosie red, were woxen pale and wan (5.29).

Even though the passage calls Timias' beauty into existence only to describe how his wound destroys it, the total effect is hardly unattractive. Like the dead Sven in Canto VIII of the Gerusalemme Liberata, Timias' wound "deforms" him into a still life rich in Petrarchan metaphors.

By transforming Timias' wound into a highly wrought piece of art, Spenser shifts the narrative's focus from the physical or moral dimensions of the wound to its artistic effects. While he is in his swoon, Timias' wound does not really belong to him, but to the viewer. Since we don't get this gorgeous description until Belpheobe arrives, she is the primary viewer; the still life is expressly designed for her. Its details are "aesthetic" in the purest sense of the word since they seem designed to evoke feeling. While the subject matter might seem inherently repulsive, for instance, the description develops it into a kind of soft petrarchan pornography, full of the traditional decor of dazzling eyes, sweet lips, and the interplay of red and white. The horror of the scene is not erased but adds to the erotic effect. Lest we mistake this effect the narrator is quick to add that the sight was one "that coulde haue made a rocke or stone to rew." Belpheobe's reaction, at least initially, confirms the aesthetic impact of the picture's combination of revulsion and attraction. She views Timias with a mixture of "soft passion" and "sterne horroure," until the passion and the "vnwonted smart" merge into pity,

whose point “perced through her tender hart.” The violence of this metaphor indicates the degree to which the wound as an aesthetic phenomenon produces desire in the beholder through a kind of sympathetic association.

Belphoebe’s reaction to Timias’ wound is relatively innocuous, because she acts in good faith, even if without much success. Her own appraisal of the wound as an aesthetic object does not prevent her from treating it as an injury to another person. When, on the contrary, the beholder has an interest in preserving the wound for its own sake, its aesthetic dimension becomes much more sinister. In these cases the wound does not so much demand treatment, as the possibility of treatment demands a wound. The wound itself is only of value as it enters the figurative service of the viewer, where it can be used to support ideas entirely divorced from the original context of the wounding. The end result is that the victim gets recast (or miscast) into the position desired by the observer. As Book III progresses, the potential for such objectification increases. We first see the process in its more sinister form when Britomart stays at Malecasta’s castle.

In Malecasta’s world love is what C. S. Lewis has called “skeptophilia” (love of looking). His term is appropriate not because this urbane adultery never gets beyond the look, for it certainly does, but because the whole affair is grounded on an original aesthetic experience, making her castle the perfect place for the aesthetic side of wounding. The traditional theories of aristocratic love stress its origins in a glance, hence the privilege that Gardante enjoys of being the only one of Malecasta’s italianate courtiers to succeed in wounding Britomart. In this

kind of love, however, the wound is generally as far removed from any actual wound as possible. As in the artistic rendering of the wounded Timias, the wound belongs wholly to the viewer who transforms it into a highly erotic suffering, and the pain that the notion of a wound conjures up becomes something to be sought and enjoyed rather than avoided. The pain that Britomart feels, however, despite its traditional origins in the sight of the beloved, is somewhat different. For her it has a physical reality that will not be denied. Far from being part of a complex erotic game, the commonplace of the wound of love is for her dangerously close to a real wound, just as the wound she gets from Gardante actually is a real wound (or as real as anything can be in such an allegorical world). Britomart is partially the victim of confusion about the relation between mind and body, but her wound has more to it than the ambiguities of the commonplace. Britomart gets a real wound because she doesn't fit in to Malecasta's designs, either psychologically or physically. Spenser exaggerates such miscasting comically in Britomart, but the episode ultimately suggests that miscasting is not unique to her but an essential part of Malecasta's enterprise. When Britomart arrives at the castle, for instance, she interrogates the knights attacking Redcrosse. They reveal a curious situation. Every unattached knight who happens by must stay with Malecasta forever, but if a knight has a "Ladie or a Loue" he must give her up or fight to prove her fairest. If he wins the fight, however, he gains Malecasta as his reward! This classic double bind applies not just to Britomart, but to all comers, and emphasizes the degree to which the object of Malecasta's kind of love doesn't participate in its own choice.

What is comic for Britomart, however, is deadly for Amoret, Book III's most devastating example of the power of wounds. In Amoret's plight at the hands of Busyrane, Spenser brings together all of the difficulties with wounds he has revealed in the previous episodes. Busyrane thrives off of the epistemological confusion arising from the convention of the wound of love. He envisions the commonplace at its most destructive and coercive, and this is what makes him so much more sinister than Malecasta. Although Malecasta's castle and Busyrane's "house" both depend on visual effects, their version of love is quite different. At Malecasta's the wound, as an object of contemplation, aims at producing in the viewer a sympathetic reaction, tinged with erotic dimensions. Pity is capable of "piercing" the body and leads to love. Busyrane both inverts and literalizes this process. He aims to create love in Amoret (for him) by giving her a real wound. The story of Venus and Adonis is noticeably missing from Busyrane's art collection, because he is trying to act it out on Amoret's body: to make her a dying Adonis figure. This situation turns the conventions of seduction upside down, inverting the traditional petrarchan situation. In one of the many possible sources for the episode, for instance, the Busyrane figure doesn't inflict a wound but displays his own wound in the hope of seducing his victim. Most critics agree that Amoret's plight literalizes the metaphor of the wound of love, but usually the victim of this wound is the lover and not the beloved. Like Malecasta, then, Busyrane has got things wrong. Busyrane's "error," however, is not as arbitrary as Malecasta's, because he consciously aims to recast Amoret in a role that is foreign to her nature. Until her capture by Busyrane,



Amoret is represented primarily as a beloved who exercised free choice when she picked Scudamour out of the many courtiers at the Faery court who found their feeble hearts “wide launched with loues cruell wound” (6.52).

Amoret’s wound and the ambiguous pageantry that surrounds it are, not surprisingly, the most critically vexed passage in Book III. As in so much of Spenser’s allegory, what begins as a problem the poem poses for its central characters becomes a problem for the reader as well. While the interpretations of the House of Busyrane are almost as varied as its critics, most center around the question of how Amoret, who is “th’ensample of true loue alone,” ends up as the prisoner of a sadist like Busyrane. Many of these explanations are based on the unquestioned assumption that a wound represents a flaw in the victim. Up until this point in The Faerie Queene it has been almost axiomatic that a character always “deserves” any nasty situation he or she gets into: wounds, captivity, and the like indicate the moral incapacity of the victim or of a group that the victim represents. Accordingly, critics like A. C. Hamilton and Thomas Roche locate Amoret’s problem within her. To Hamilton, for instance, she has an “inhibition that prevents her” from uniting “freely and pleasurably in sexual relations” (my emphasis).<sup>10</sup> After some iconographic sleuthing he is able to report that the inhibition is “latent lesbianism or homosexuality”<sup>11</sup> Roche is slightly more subtle. Pointing to the report (in Book IV) of Amoret’s abduction by Busyrane on her

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<sup>10</sup> A. C. Hamilton, *The structure of allegory in the Faerie queene*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961) 157.

<sup>11</sup> Hamilton, 163.

wedding day, he claims, "Busyrane has got possession of Amoret's mind," and thus, "The House of Busyrane--at least on one level--is Amoret's mental attitude toward love and marriage." What he calls "the tragic unreality of Amoret's mind" is that she "is afraid of the physical surrender which her marriage to Scudamour must entail" Ultimately Busyrane "is the image of love distorted in the mind, distorted by lascivious anticipation or horrified withdrawal. He becomes the denial of the unity of body and soul in true love."<sup>12</sup>

If critics have often sought to explain how Amoret deserves her plight, however, they have also frequently felt uncomfortable with this kind of interpretation. A. Kent Hieatt, for instance, reacting to Roche, blames Scudamour for Amoret's situation, pointing to his high-handed assault on the temple of Venus in Book IV.<sup>13</sup> Even Roche has felt it necessary to assert, without much evidence, that he doesn't think Amoret is personally guilty.<sup>14</sup> Most female critics are particularly distrustful of interpretations that seek to attach blame at all. Helen Gardner, for example, doesn't like any interpretations that locate the center of the episode around a "problem," either Amoret's, Scudamour's, or Busyrane's.<sup>15</sup> Isabel McCaffrey even argues that the allegory of Book

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<sup>12</sup>Thomas P. Jr. Roche, "The Challenge to Chastity: Britomart at the House of Busyrane," *PMLA* 76 (1961): 340-44.

<sup>13</sup>A. Kent Hieatt, "Scudamour's Practice of Maistrye Upon Amoret," *PMLA* 77 (1962): 509-10.

<sup>14</sup>Roche, *Kindly Flame*, 129.

<sup>15</sup>Helen Gardner, "Some Reflections on the House of Busyrane," *Review of English Studies* 34 (1983): 403-13.

III generally is “not... about the state of the heroine’s psyche.”<sup>16</sup> Gardner doesn’t claim to offer any completely developed alternative, however, and McCaffrey relies on the extremely general idea that Amoret is “tortured and abused by a pattern of behavior.”<sup>17</sup> Harry Berger is the most conscientious of the episode’s critics in trying to avoid blaming Amoret while explaining her plight. He takes the important step of considering Busyrane not as an element of Amoret’s psyche or as a pattern of behavior to which she falls prey, but as something intrinsically separate from her. According to Berger, he is “the male imagination trying busily (because unsuccessfully) to dominate and possess woman’s will.”<sup>18</sup>

I would like to step back momentarily from the details of the passage and see if it is possible to gain a fresh perspective. The tendency of critical commentary to center around the nature and degree of Amoret’s guilt, in particular, despite her obvious miscasting, leads me to wonder how things might look if her innocence is kept firmly in mind, and not just her “personal” innocence, but the innocence of that which she “ensamples” as well. There is a cultural institution that offers parallels to Busyrane’s wounding of Amoret: torture. It requires little effort to see Busyrane as a torturer. He has Amoret locked up and has been keeping her alive but in pain for a period of time. If he were a simple murderer she would be dead. We even get a more complex

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<sup>16</sup> Isabel Gamble MacCaffrey, *Spenser’s allegory : the anatomy of imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976) 286.

<sup>17</sup> McCaffrey, 286.

<sup>18</sup> Harry Jr. Berger, “Busirane and the war between the sexes: an Interpretation of the *Faerie Queene* III xi-xii,” *English Literary Renaissance* 1 (1971): 99-121 100.

interpretation of the situation as torture from Scudamour who claims that Busyrane “by torture... would her constraine / Loue to conceiue in her disdainfull brest” (11.17). Scudamour’s analysis of the magician’s motives are later confirmed by the narrator, and by Spenser himself in the letter to Raleigh. Spenser himself may have been familiar with torture. While judicial torture as an official institution was confined to European countries that used Roman law, torture was hardly unknown in England, and Spenser’s experiences in Ireland could only have made it more likely that he would have come in contact with the practice.<sup>19</sup>

On the whole, the rhetorical elaboration of wounds in Book III shares with torture in objectifying the victim. While the central action in torture is wounding, for instance, the ultimate purpose of the event depends on the interpretation of the wound. One of the jobs of the torturer is to reassign responsibility for the wound to the victim, hence the warning that Henry Lea reports as traditionally given to the accused by the Spanish Inquisition, that “if he is crippled or dies under the torture he must hold himself accountable for it in not spontaneously confessing the truth.”<sup>20</sup> The question of culpability, however, is wrapped up in the torturer’s more general task of substantiating his own explicit motivations. Elaine Scarry, in her book The Body In Pain, examines this process at great length. She is, above all, suspicious of any attempt to read a rational intent, like that of interrogation, into the act of torture. “The question,” she says, “whatever its content, is an act of

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<sup>19</sup>James Heath, *Torture and English law: an administrative and legal history from the Plantagenets to the Stuarts* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982) .

<sup>20</sup>Henry Charles Lea, *Torture* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1973) 106.

wounding; the answer, whatever its content, is a scream."<sup>21</sup> The real purpose of the event, for Scarry, is to substantiate the torturer's "world" at the expense of the victim's "world."

Attributing motive to the torturer and betrayal to the tortured is a way of validating the torturer and eclipsing the pain of the tortured. When we say that a prisoner has confessed or betrayed we acknowledge his/her pain only as an attribute of his torturer's power and his/her own weakness.<sup>22</sup>

Those critics who stress Amoret's weakness and culpability over her strength and resistance fit neatly into Scarry's paradigm. To them Amoret is "betraying" her own fears and moral incapacities. This interpretation, we might suspect, is precisely what Busyrane is aiming to produce, under cover of his preoccupation with Amoret herself. He relies on Scarry's axiom that the human mind, when confronted with a wounded human body, will transfer the reality of that body onto something else, usually an abstract concept like guilt or innocence, betrayal or heroism.<sup>23</sup> The "concepts" Busyrane supplies as the ready context of Amoret's wounded body are the messages of his various galleries of art, and finally the mask of Cupid into which he inserts her. These pageants directly contradict the concept of "true loue alone" that Amoret is supposed to ensample. If we interpret figures of the mask who represent the "phantasies / In wauering wemen's wit" as Amoret's fantasies, for instance, we acknowledge the success of Busyrane's torture, because the key to Amoret's actual behavior is unwavering loyalty.

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<sup>21</sup> Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 46.

<sup>22</sup> Scarry, 37.

<sup>23</sup> Scarry, 126-7.

Loyalty in love, at its most heroic, was traditionally associated with resistance to torture. Alciati's emblem 13, for example, depicts the Athenian monument to Leaena, who is reputed to have bitten her own tongue out under torture rather than betray her lover Harmodius' role in the assassination of Hipparchus (a son of Peisistratus). The motto is "Nec quaestioni quidem cedendum" (One should not yield, even when put to the torture).<sup>24</sup> The tonguelessness of Leaena figures female heroism as silence. Like Cordelia's silence, however, Amoret's unprotesting resistance is as prone to misinterpretation as her wounded body. As a torturer, Busyrane depends on this misinterpretation.

The notion of Busyrane as a torturer provides one way of explaining why Britomart succeeds in overcoming him even though she doesn't understand his art. That she succeeds, despite her manifest incomprehension, suggests that the key to overcoming Busyrane's perversions is action rather than reflection, because reflection, even our own critical reflection, always ends up playing his game. To some degree, of course, Britomart's confusion is one of the features of allegory itself. As Lewis says, for instance, "what Guyon and Britomart meet with is chiefly horror. They therefore have no direct dealings with the pagan characters on the moral plane."<sup>25</sup> Yet Spenser's characters often do realize the extent to which actions have a moral value. And, if anything, Busyrane's house encourages reflection. The most noticeable thing about

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<sup>24</sup> The picture shows a statue of a tongueless lioness sitting in the doorway of a tower under a bas relief of an owl. The owl is a symbol of Athena, and hence of Athens, and the lion refers to "Leaena," but these images also resonate with the Britomart/Glauce pair since Britomart's shield bears a lion and *Glauce* means owl.

<sup>25</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Spenser's images of life* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1967) 28-9.

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resemblance to Ovid's Busiris helps us to understand the threat that Busyrane represents to the world at large, and why Britomart's instinctive boldness is only sufficient to overcome Busyrane and not to cure Amoret's wound. To begin with, Amoret's resemblance to the victim of human sacrifice reinforces her innocence and the potential arbitrariness of her situation. If Busyrane is engaged in successful human sacrifice, Amoret cannot possibly be guilty of anything or she would not make an appropriate victim. According to Ovid, for example, Busiris "defiled his temple with strangers' blood."<sup>27</sup> (my emphasis). His sin is particularly heinous because he chose unsuspecting and innocent travellers, but as René Girard in his *Violence and the Sacred* points out, this has frequently been the way with human sacrifice. The victim is usually innocent; often, Girard argues, his innocence is absolutely necessary if the sacrifice is to achieve its purpose. But what is this purpose? Ovid's emphasis on inappropriate sacrifice as defiling provides a possible answer. Girard's exploration of sacrifice describes what he calls its "purifying" effects. According to Girard, sacrifice is a community's way of responding to a crime of violence, real or perceived. In order to short circuit the tendency of violence to escalate out of control, the victim must be innocent of involvement in the cycle of violence:

The rites of sacrifice serve to polarize the community's aggressive impulses and redirect them toward victims that may be actual or figurative, animate or inanimate, but that are always incapable of propagating further vengeance.<sup>28</sup>

Yet, if we rely on Ovid, Busiris' sacrifice is not successful, nor, we may suspect, is Busyrane's. After all, Busyrane hardly seems interested in

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<sup>27</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 11.183.

<sup>28</sup> Girard, 18. On the victim as a surrogate, generally, see Girard, 68-88.



ending a cycle of violence. If anything he is more interested in perpetuating it. To him, Amoret is guilty of free choice and loyalty. Simply by resisting him, she threatens to put an end to the destructive cycle of adulterous love. To the degree that Busyrane desires vengeance against her, his sacrifice is improper. What in a torture situation we see as a crisis in interpretation of wounds becomes, in improper sacrifice, what Girard calls a "sacrificial crisis," in which "the disappearance of the sacrificial rites coincides with the disappearance of the difference between impure violence and purifying violence. When this difference has been effaced, purification is no longer possible, and impure, contagious, reciprocal violence spreads throughout the community."<sup>29</sup> Of course, the spread of violence throughout the community is precisely what Busyrane is selling. His tapestries, for example, are intended to show the primarily the coercive and destructive aspects of Eros. In them,

Kings Queenes, Lords Ladies, Knights and Damzels gent  
Were heaped together with the vulgar sort,  
And mingled with the raskall rablement,  
Without respect of person or of port  
To shew Dan Cupids power and great effort (11.46).

The border, depicting a river of blood flowing through broken weapons, parallels Leonardo Da Vinci's "The Way to Represent a Battle," where blood flows "in a sinuous stream from the corpse to the dust," and the artist is instructed to "make no level spot of ground that is not trampled over with blood."<sup>30</sup> Busyrane's art takes the war between the sexes to its literal extreme: love and war (not just individual violence) become

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<sup>29</sup> Girard 49.

<sup>30</sup> Leonardo Da Vinci, "The Way to Represent a Battle," *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. Edward MacCurdy. trans. Edward MacCurdy. (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1938) 2: 269-71 2: 896.

synonymous. His attempt to make Eros into pervasive violence recalls the fight between Timias and the Fosters in which desire becomes the occasion for a violence that feeds on itself. As impure sacrifice, Busyrane's wounding of Amoret reveals that the violence attached to sexual desire is a feature of violence as a larger social phenomenon.<sup>31</sup>

Girard's ideas about sacrificial violence can also help explain why Britomart's instinctive boldness is unable to cure Amoret's wound. Sacrifice is designed to deal with violence as it transcends the individual; Busyrane's perverted sacrifice simply promotes instead of ameliorates this social violence. Thus, Britomart cannot simply revenge Amoret's wound on Busyrane or she will be participating in the very reciprocal violence that he is trying to promote. If, as the patroness of Chastity, Britomart learns anything at Busyrane's, it is that curing wounds is more difficult than causing them. Because Amoret's wound is not hers alone, no single conventional cure can possibly be effective. The only thing that will heal her wound is a treatment as symbolic as the wound itself.

The solution to this dilemma, Spenser suggests, depends on a principle of wounds that has been latent in all the wounding throughout the poem: the intimate connection between the wound and the weapon that caused it. Sometimes a weapon has its own special ability to wound, like Britomart's spear which has a "secret virtue." More commonly, a weapon on the point of causing a wound suddenly gains moral significance proportionate to the wound it will cause. Thus the arrow

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<sup>31</sup> As Girard explains, "we are tempted to conclude that violence is impure because of its relation to sexuality. Yet only the reverse proposition can withstand close scrutiny. Sexuality is impure because it has to do with violence." Girard, 34.

that wounds Timias becomes, "A Cruell shaft, headed with deadly ill, /  
 And feathered with an unlucky quill." As it enters his body it is "The  
 wicked steele." This connection between wound and weapon was widely  
 acknowledged in the Renaissance.<sup>32</sup> Bacon acknowledges in Sylva  
 Sylvarum, "it is constantly received and avouched that the anointing of  
 the weapon that maketh the wound will heal the wound itself."<sup>33</sup> This  
 example of what Freud calls "omnipotence of thought" is perfectly suited  
 to Spenser's allegorical design, because it links the literal and figurative  
 elements of wounding. A weapon, Scarry says, since it exists "at the  
 external boundary of the body... begins to externalize, objectify, and make  
 sharable what is originally an interior and unsharable experience."<sup>34</sup>  
 Once the interior experience has been externalized, as it is in The Faerie  
 Queene generally and in Amoret's wound in particular, the cure must  
 include both weapon and wound.

In Amoret's case, of course, the "weapon" is not a single, easily  
 identifiable object. It can't be the "deadly dart" that pierces Amoret's  
 heart in the mask, for instance, even though this is the only item of the  
 mask that doesn't disappear when Britomart breaks through into

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<sup>32</sup> One popular work, for example, was Jean Baptiste van Helmont, *A ternary of  
 paradoxes: the magnetick cure of wounds, nativity of tartar in wine, image of God in man*  
 trans. Walter Charleton (London: Printed by James Flesher for William Lee, 1650),  
 which extolls "the magnetick cure of wounds." Even physicians who did not formally  
 advocate treating the weapon to cure the wound reflected the imaginative force of the  
 wound-weapon connection in some of their basic attitudes. For a long time gunshot wounds  
 were considered as potentially poisoned, not just because they frequently became infected  
 (from tiny pieces of debris driven into the wound by the force of the bullet), but because  
 gunpowder was itself a morally suspect weapon.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Sigmund Freud, "Totem and Taboo," *The Standard edition of the complete  
 psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey. (London: Hogarth Press,  
 1974) 82.

<sup>34</sup> Scarry, 16.

Busyrane's inner sanctum, because Amoret is only "seemingly transfixed with cruell dart" (12.31, my emphasis). The dart is part of Busyrane's illusion. For a moment it looks as though it might be the "murdrous knife" he offers to stab Amoret with at the last minute, especially since this is the same weapon that wounds Britomart "vnwares" (it doesn't know that she is a woman). The knife does incorporate some of Busyrane's sadistic intent toward women, but it drops out of the picture during Amoret's cure, and besides it is a part of Busyrane's power that Britomart seems to have annulled when she "maistered his might" (12.32). In fact, Busyrane's "weapon" is his whole system of evil magic. He and his weapon are of a piece, and Amoret knows it. Thus, when Britomart is about kill him, Amoret asks her to hold back,

For else her paine  
Should be remedillesse, sith none but hee,  
Which wrought it, could the same recure againe (12.34).

Killing Busyrane would destroy the weapon but not cure the wound. And since Busyrane created Amoret's wound primarily to substantiate his own kind of perverted love, if he is killed, the message that he has been trying to substantiate will live on. Thus, Amoret's cure demands not revenge, or reciprocal wounding, but a kind of un-wounding. Britomart achieves this effect symbolically by getting Busyrane to reverse the "charms" by which he inflicted the wound. Her treatment succeeds where a purely medical treatment would have failed, because it acknowledges Amoret's wound as a part of Busyrane's fiction. Normally we think of the body as something that wants to heal, which is why it is said that a wound that heals without complications heals "by first

intention.”<sup>35</sup> In The Faerie Queene, however, wounds make the body’s integrity subject to fictional interpretation, and thus to heal a wound one must take its fictional dimensions into account.

Amoret’s plight incorporates all of the difficulties implicit in wounds, but her situation occurs in the light of a potential alternative to the conventional metaphor of the wound, an alternative that Spenser has been developing throughout Book III in his treatment of the myth of Venus and Adonis. This myth occupies the center of the book both formally and philosophically. Its varying interpretations make the myth itself show up in places as opposed as Castle Joyous and the Garden of Adonis; its central image, a woman mourning and attending the wound of a unconscious man, occurs even in passages that make no overt reference to the myth, such as Belphoebe’s treatment of Timias, or the Marinell’s treatment by his mother. The meaning of the myth, however, is as contested as the fictional dimensions of wounds in general. Adonis’ wound seems to represent the potential flaws of physical passion, but it also can reflect cosmic processes. Venus’ treatment of the wound seems attempt to deny mortality, but it also can celebrate restoration and rebirth. More generally, the interpretation of the myth is frequently profane, but can also be sacred. At the formal center of the Book, in the Garden of Adonis, Spenser combines these two interpretations to produce an understanding of wounds that incorporates individual sexual desire with regeneration rather than destruction.

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<sup>35</sup> This phrase dates back to Classical medicine.

The mythography on which Spenser draws supports both profane and sacred interpretations. On the one hand, the story of Venus and Adonis is one of many tales about the love of a divine being for a human in which things turn out badly for the human partner. The details of the myth and its inclusion of Venus led to the interpretation of Adonis' wound as evidence of the tragic mortality of human passion. Alciati's emblem 77 depicts the essential frustration of this interpretation. We see Adonis lying beneath a tree and attended by Venus and Eros. The boar runs away in the background and Venus seems to be spreading some leaves over her fallen lover. The motto, "Amuletum Veneris," alludes directly to this apparently curative action. But the epigram interprets the scene as an explanation of why lettuce (the leaves in question) causes impotence. Far from being a "cure," Venus' actions infect the natural world with failed sexuality. Alongside the common interpretation of the myth as a sad example of human passion, however, is another mythography that reads it as a dramatization of seasonal events, like the story of Ceres and Proserpina. According to Macrobius, for example, Adonis is sun:

In the story which they tell of Adonis killed by a boar, the animal is intended to represent winter... And so winter, as it were, inflicts a wound on the sun, for in winter we find the sun's light and heat ebbing, and it is an ebbing of light and heat that befalls all living creatures at death.<sup>36</sup>

This interpretation solves the problem of the wound by making sexual desire irrelevant.

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<sup>36</sup> Macrobius, *The Saturnalia* trans. Percival Vaughan Davies (New York: Columbia UP, 1969) 1.21.1.

The most detailed profane version of the Adonis legend in Book III is in the tapestries of Malecasta's Castle Joyous, which use the aesthetic dimension of wounds specifically to encourage unchaste love. For Malecasta and her courtiers, the metamorphosis of Adonis is not a story of how passion comes to a bad end, but an example of how violence can be rendered attractive in art. Just as Timias' wound transforms him from an heroic knight into an immensely attractive picture of dying beauty, the tapestries make the myth of Venus and Adonis into a series of pictures designed for salacious meditation. Not surprisingly, the heart of the tapestries' interpretation is the scene of the dying Adonis:

Lo where beyond he lyeth languishing,  
 Deadly engored of a great wild Bore,  
 And by his side the Goddesses groueling  
 Makes for him endlesse mone, and euermore  
 With her soft garment wipes away the gore  
 Which staines his snowy skin with hatefull hew:  
 But when she saw no helpe might him restore,  
 Him to a dainty flowre she did transmew,  
 Which in that cloth was wrought, as if it liuely grew (1.38).

Like Belpheobe's view of the wounded Timias, this scene achieves its force by a combination of horror and attraction. On the one hand the wound is ugly, since it stains with a hatefull hew, but on the other hand it serves to set off Adonis' snowy skin and allows us the erotic privilege of seeing Venus groveling and moaning. Adonis' metamorphosis into a "dainty flowre" symbolizes the way that the tapestry itself transmutes his wound from the literal into the aesthetic. The final line reminds us overtly that we are looking at art.

While Malecasta uses the myth of Adonis to provoke unchaste love, the central Canto of Book III does exactly the opposite. Instead of showing the wound as the generating force of a barren individual

eroticism, The Garden of Adonis incorporates it as an emblem of sexuality at its most general and cosmic. Here Adonis' wound is not individual passion, but simply a sign of the end of one natural cycle of generation. Adonis himself is hardly human. Rather, he is "the Father of all formes," "eterne in mutabilitie / And by succession made perpetuall, / Transformed oft, and chaunged diuerslie" (6.47). Like Macrobius' mythography, the Garden of Adonis seems to revise the legend away from any human signification. But Spenser's version of the legend is not entirely conventional. He reworks the cosmic mythography so as to reinforce its human dimensions. By emphasizing the sexual implications of the myth's seasonal interpretation, he suggests a link between sexual desire and regeneration.

At the center of the Garden, as of the 1590 version of book III itself, is the mount of Venus. Here cosmic regeneration and individual human sexuality merge, because the Mount is both geographical and anatomical: at once the center of the cosmos and the mons veneris or vulva. This connection means that the mythography of the Garden of Adonis doesn't replace earlier versions of the Adonis story as much as modify them. As Alastair Fowler argues, the purpose of the passage "is to show how human love, when it is orientated to generation, enters into the divinely ordained creative pattern of nature herself."<sup>37</sup> The fate of Adonis' wound is crucial to this general scheme. In order to bring Adonis back to life, Spenser must displace the wound from its central position in the narrative. It ends up primarily in the three kinds of flowers that grow

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<sup>37</sup> Alastair Fowler, *Spenser and the Numbers of Time* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1964) 136.



around the arbor wherein Adonis is hidden. One of these is the narcissus that is de rigeur for any Renaissance representation of love, but the other two are both “results” of wounds like Adonis’. The hyacinth grew from the blood of the dying Hyacinthus, and the Amaranthus refers to the death of Amintas, to Philip Sidney’s death (of a wound), and carries the common name of “love-lies-bleeding” (6.45).<sup>38</sup> All these allusions suggest that wounds transform rather than destroy, which is precisely what Spenser is doing for Adonis. In fact, although Venus doesn’t seem to be bothered by an open wound (she reaps “sweet pleasure of the wanton boy” in the next stanza), she does have to keep him

Lapped in flowres and pretious spycery,  
By her hid from the world, and from the skill  
Of Stygian Gods, which doe her loue enuy (6.46).

The flowers that cover him and the “pretious spycery” evoke the bandages and salves of Renaissance wound treatment. The effect is a picture of Adonis as perpetually undergoing treatment for a wound that will not heal. His wound both enables and enforces his constant transformation; it symbolizes both his “mortalitie” and his “mutabilitie.”

Amoret is Book III’s most disastrous example of wounding, and the Garden its most positive. To Britomart, the heroine of the Legend of Chastity, falls the task of negotiating between the two, since the Chastity she “ensamples” must reconcile individual sexual desire with cosmic generation. She must recognize and overcome the confusion between mind and body, and between love and physical violence, inherent in wounds. But she also has to live with this confusion, since as a chivalric

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<sup>38</sup> A. C. Hamilton, notes to *The Faerie Queene*, 363.

warrior she embodies both sexual desire and potential violence. She must understand the role that the "wound" plays in the cosmic scheme of regeneration, but she also has to live out that role through the real physical pain of her impending motherhood.

For Britomart, the danger of confusing metaphorical and real wounds primarily shows up in her easy acceptance of the traditional chivalric conception of wounds. At the beginning of book III, real wounds seem to have lost any allegorical dimensions and reverted to simple badges of martial prowess:

O goodly vsage of those antique times,  
 In which the sword was seruant vnto right;  
 But all for praise, and proofe of manly might,  
 The martiall brood accustomed to fight:  
 Then honour was the meed of victorie (1.13).

The adventures of Book II are also immediately reduced to "long wayes," "perilous paines," and "sory wounds" (1.1). In light of the complex situations that actually produce wounds in the course of Book III, these gestures toward medieval romance seem inappropriate, and yet the tone they set affects the whole Book. At bottom, wounds indicate involvement and activity, qualities essential to Spenser's conception of virtue. As James Broaddus notes, "In book III... the problems attendant upon the expression of human sexuality are consistently the product of idleness and inconstancy. The solution to the problems is consistently the product of heroic endeavor and constancy."<sup>39</sup> Thus, to some degree virtuous love must be associated with martial energy because knightly endeavors are what constitutes activity in romance.

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<sup>39</sup>James W. Broaddus, "Renaissance Psychology and Britomart's adventures in *Faerie Queene* III," *English Literary Renaissance* 17.2 (1987): 186-206.

But the connection between love and war in Book III is even more direct. For one thing, Spenser's wounds are proof not just of martial prowess, as in epic, but also of sexual fidelity, as in romance. When Britomart rescues Redcrosse from the six knights at the Castle Joyous, for example, he explains to her why he has to fight:

For I loue one, the truest one on ground,  
Ne list me change; she th'Errant Damzell hight,  
For whose deare sake full many a bitter stownd,  
I haue endur'd, and tasted many a bloody wound (1.24).

His wounds, in this fight as elsewhere, show his loyalty to Una, just as Britomart's wounds show her loyalty to Artegall, or, in a more acute and unmartial formulation, Amoret's wound proves her love for Scudamour. A wound is way of making visible one's willingness to suffer for the beloved, and knight errantry is a way of taking an active role in the process. If love is supposed to be supported by war, however, the opposite is also true. Wounds given are as much a proof of true love as wounds received. After Britomart has ridden down the six knights at Castle Joyous, for example, she exclaims

now may ye all see plaine,  
That truth is strong, and trew loue most of might,  
That for his trusty seruants doth so strongly fight (1.29).

Not only is love connected to war, according to this formulation, love is a martial force in its own right.

At first Britomart accepts this easy equation between physical violence and virtuous love, but her own wounds, the first at Malecasta's and the second at Busyrane's, provide her with evidence of the equation's coercive effects. In the first case, as we have seen, Britomart gets wounded because she doesn't fit in to Malecasta's designs, but for a

moment the narrator's description of the wound makes its seem as though she may fit in:

The mortall steele stayd not, till it was seene  
 To gore her side, yet was the wound not deepe,  
 But lightly rased her soft silken skin,  
 That drops of purple blood thereout did weepe,  
 Which did her lily smock with staines of vermeil steepe (1.65).

The image of Britomart's "soft silken skin," her "lily smock," and "purple blood" echo the tapestry of Venus and Adonis, as if Britomart were suddenly a feminine Adonis. Roche argues that this wound "is Britomart's initiation into the realities of love" and that "her encounter in Castle Joyous forces her to an awareness of love in others and of herself as a love object."<sup>40</sup> Certainly Britomart becomes aware of herself as a love object, but she rightly refuses to accept the "realities" of this sort of love. "Love," in Castle Joyous, is nothing like the "trew loue" that Britomart sees herself as having, and its object can never escape the status of an object. Her sudden rage and redoubled vigor when she gets wounded are an implicit rejection of the role that she is offered at Malecasta's. Her actions imply not that she has learned something positive about love, but that she has discovered how the metaphor of the wound can lead toward false love.

The wound Britomart receives from Busyrane is similar in many respects to her wound at Malecasta's, but the role it offers her emphasizes the cruelty inherent in the commonplace of the wound of love rather than its playful perversion. As at the Castle Joyous, the wound gets described in terms that make it into a work of art. Busyrane's dagger

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<sup>40</sup> Roche, *Flame*, 70.

strooke into her snowie chest  
That little drops empurpled her faire brest (12.32-33).

Britomart also reacts with instant rage, "albe the wound were nothing deepe imprest." The nearest comparison to this wound, however, is not the story of Venus and Adonis, but Amoret herself. Since she is not a tapestry or a piece of art but has instead been inserted into a performance against her will, her similarity to Britomart implies that the knight of Chastity is being offered another role, a role that is based on coercive and destructive display. Britomart's rage is as effective a personal rejection of such a role as it was in the Castle Joyous, but it must be modified in this situation because martial prowess is itself inherently coercive and destructive. She has to hold back in order to save Amoret.

Britomart's wounds challenge the chivalric perspective on love and martial violence, but, like Amoret's plight, they do not themselves provide an alternative. The Garden of Adonis itself is too abstract a place to give a direct solution to Britomart's human problem, but its emphasis on regeneration provides a context for her understanding of love and violence. In the end, Spenser suggests that love and war should be connected only on a large historical scale in which pain and suffering look forward to regeneration. The poem manages to relocate the significance of wounding conflict because Britomart is more than an allegorical personification. In fact, Merlin offers her historical role to her as a consolation for her own metaphorical wound. "Let no whit thee dismay / The hard begin," he says, "...For so must all things excellent begin" (3.21-2). Thus, as Iris Hill explains, "once Merlin identifies the honor and life of Britomart with that of a nation and race, he transforms

the personal into the historical and makes erotic pleasure synonymous with the pursuit of glory"<sup>41</sup> But even though Britomart's knightly prowess and her physical vulnerability are means by which she will finally gain sexual fulfillment, they are not exactly the same thing. Rather, Britomart's marriage with Artegall is the hoped for end to her travail. Virtuous sexual fulfillment puts an end to conflict as well as justifying it. At this stage in the poem, such an end to conflict is also envisioned historically. Michael Leslie, for example, points out that the lineage of Britomart and Artegall's arms goes back to opposing sides of the Trojan war. Artegall bears "Achilles armes," while Britomart's shield derives from Hector by way of Brutus. The marriage of this royal pair thus, like the origins of the Tudor dynasty, is a *concordia discors* that puts an end to strife.<sup>42</sup>

To the degree that wounds help bring a particular future into being, they are part of a process which must include healing and regeneration. In this sense, the wound itself resembles a rite of passage, rather than an indication of a particular moral problem. The idea of the rite of passage accords well the effect of Book III as a whole, since it has often been read as a narrative of adolescent chastity. Nohrnberg, for example, calls Chastity "preeminently a virtue of self-realization simply because it coincides, as a real virtue, with 'coming of age.'"<sup>43</sup> Also, while today we tend to see medical problems as abnormal, contemporary medical theory

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<sup>41</sup> Iris Tillman Hill, "Britomart and 'Be Bold, Be not too bold,'" *English Literary History* 38 (1971): 173-8.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Leslie, *Spenser's 'fierce warres and faithfull loves' : martial and chivalric symbolism in the Faerie queene* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1983) .

<sup>43</sup> Nohrnberg, 438.

did not. Walter Pagel, in an essay on Paracelsus, describes the traditional school:

For the ancient humoral pathologists... illness was closely connected with the normal life of the individual, because if health is dependent upon the humours, the form and course of the disease must vary according to the particular humors predominating in the individual in question.<sup>44</sup>

Wounds were the exception to this rule in that they arrived from outside the body, but the course of wound healing had to treat them as if they did not. They at once violated and made manifest an individual's "continuity." Hence the emphasis in medical treatises of the period on taking the nature of the victim into account when treating the wound.<sup>45</sup> Thus wounds, like disease, interrupted normal life but also demonstrated its inner workings. This attitude made healing a natural analog for depicting psychological development.

As rites of passage, wounds are necessary markers on the way to an imagined future that should preclude wounds. Spenser's main emphasis in Book III, however, is not so much on this imagined future as it is on wounds as an integral part of human experience. They are not something to be overcome in any final sense. We often tend to think of Britomart and Artegall's union as the end of their story and the beginning of their history, for example, but Merlin knows otherwise. To begin with, their love for each other will not end their participation in

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<sup>44</sup> Walter Pagel, *Religion and Neoplatonism in Renaissance Medicine* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985) II. 104.

<sup>45</sup> "It behoueth you to knowe, that chirurgery is moste harde and difficultye to attayne unto... for howe can it be but diffical and longe, whan the Chirurgian must consider so many diuers temperatures of men, and hyd and secreet effectes, and properties of nature in them grafted." Thomas Gale, *Certaine Workes of Chirurgerie* (London: Rouland Hall, 1563), prologue.

martial activities, according to Merlin, but actually enhance it. "Long time," he says, "ye both in armes shall beare great sway" (3.28). We get to see the beginning of this pattern ourselves later in the poem. But the story does not end here. Britomart will not end her commitment to arms, "Till Thy wombes burden thee from them do call." At the same time she gets pregnant, Artegall will die, "cut off by practise criminall / Of secret foes," and she will be left with his "dead Image" and his son. There are no placid moments in this relationship, no times that preclude wounding. The moment when the relationship's consummation is made visible is also the moment of its rupture. For Britomart, the "hard begin" does not end with the flames at the door of Busyrane's.

Britomart's pregnancy is a final sign of how integral wounds are to human experience generally, as well as to the creative process of art. The conversation between Britomart and Redcrosse in Canto ii foreshadows this relation between wounds, pregnancy, and narrative. As Redcrosse praises Artegall, Britomart "woxe inly wondrous glad":

The louing mother, that nine monethes did beare,  
In dearest closet of her painefull side,  
Her tender babe, it seeing safe appeare,  
Doth not so much reioyce, as she reioyced theare (2.11).

Redcrosse voices precisely what Britomart wants to hear about Artegall. Like other Renaissance authors, Spenser conceives of this voicing of what has been contained within in terms of childbirth.<sup>46</sup> The "closet of her painefull side," however, also invokes the wound from which Britomart is presently suffering, in terms of the pains of pregnancy and

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<sup>46</sup> Sidney's characterization of Astrophel as "great with child to speake" is probably the most memorable instance of this tendency.



childbirth. Thus, Britomart's wound may start out as the highly personalized wound of love, but it ends up as the travail of the mother of Britain. She is, from the very beginning, what Nohrnberg calls "the idea--or fore-conceit--of a loving mother."<sup>47</sup>

Pain defines Britomart's experience both as a lover and as a mother. It sets her apart from the only real instance of childbirth in Book III, Chrysogonee's birthing of Amoret and Belpheobe. Chrysogonee's childbirth is painless because it is cosmic rather than human: it has so little to do with her individual humanity that she is not even conscious of what is happening. Thus,

Vnwares she them conceiu'd, vnwares she bore:  
She bore withouten paine, that she conceiued  
Withouten pleasure (6.27).

Chrysogonee's childbirth offers an unreachable image of cosmic sexuality just as Malecasta offers an undesirable image of individual sexuality. The pains of Britomart as a potential mother reconcile the purely cosmic and generational aspects of wounding with the purely individual and erotic. Thus, Book III's need to connect the "wound" as a physical reality with the wound as a metaphor for a spiritual experience reflects its depiction of Chastity as both a spiritual and a physical virtue.

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<sup>47</sup> Nohrnberg, 439.

## CHAPTER 5

"THE MALICE OF COMPLEXION":  
THE WOUNDS OF WAR IN THE RENAISSANCE

Ambroise Paré, the great sixteenth-century surgeon and authority on wound treatment, is best known for his triumphant discovery that gunshot wounds need not be treated with cauterization, as contemporary theory required. In his *Methode de traicter les playes faictes par hacquebutes* (1545) he tells how, as a young surgeon, he accompanied the army of Francis I in its campaign to recover towns and castles surrounding Turin (1536). The siege of the Castle of Villana, was particularly intense, and resulted in an extraordinary number of casualties. Paré, who portrays himself as a naive but earnest young surgeon, dutifully followed Giovanni da Vigo's instructions dealing with gunshot wounds, which were considered "envenomed," and began to cauterize the wounds of his patients with hot oil. But there were so many wounded that Paré ran out of oil, and was thus constrained to apply a more mild treatment (a "digestive" consisting of egg yolk, rose oil, and turpentine) to many of his patients. That night, he tells us, he could not sleep for worry that the patients he failed to cauterize would be dead in the morning. He rose early, only to find that to his surprise the patients he had treated with the digestive were healing better than those he had cauterized. From this moment on, he says, "I resolved myself

never so cruelly to burn poor men wounded with gunshot.”<sup>1</sup> This engaging anecdote has become part of modern humanists’ interpretation of the rise of investigative science and empirical medicine, and has found its way into basic anthologies of Renaissance documents.<sup>2</sup>

In the edition of his collected works, Paré naturally prefaces his chapter on gunshot wounds with an account of his discovery. Between the story of his success and his detailed discussion of gunshot wounds, however, the mature Paré feels obliged to recount a more perplexing anecdote, an anecdote that reveals the mystery and frustration that still plagued wound treatment in the period.<sup>3</sup> One day during the French wars of Religion, Paré says, the king (Charles IX) asked him a difficult question:

It pleased your Majesty one day... to ask me how it came about that in these recent wars, the greater part of Gentlemen and soldiers wounded by arquebuses and other firearms, died without any improvement, or with great difficulty

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<sup>1</sup> Ambroise Paré, “The Apologie and Treatise of Ambroise Paré, translated out of Latin and compared with the French by Thomas Johnson,” (1634). Paré’s publication of this challenge to orthodoxy was followed by a power struggle in French medical circles, pitting the learned physician Joubert against the unlearned young surgeon. Gregory de Rocher gives a good account of this struggle and the ways in which it reflected the sixteenth-century confrontation between the theoretical (and largely internal) medicine practiced by socially elevated physicians, and the growing empirical authority of the more lowly surgeons. Gregory de Rocher, “The Renaissance Wound: the Discourse of Power in Sixteenth-Century Medicine,” *Romance Quarterly* (1991): 131-7.

<sup>2</sup> Paré’s anecdote joins selections from da Vinci, Vesalius, Fracastoro, and Paracelsus in Penguin’s *Portable Renaissance Reader*: James Bruce Ross, and Mary Martin McLaughlin, eds., *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, (New York: Penguin, 1953).

<sup>3</sup> He ends the account of his discovery by undermining its significance. What he has discovered, he says, ought to mean that gunshot wounds could be easily treated, “if it were not that one is constrained in it [treatment], by the problems which occur to ill-humored [cacochymes] bodies, and by the bad disposition and malignity of the air, as I show more amply in this following discourse” [my translation]. (“si ce n’est qu’on en soit contraint, pour les accidens qui adviennent aux corps cacochymes, et pour la mauvaise disposition et malignité de l’air, comme je demonstre plus amplement en ce suivant discours...”). Ambroise Paré, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: J. F. Malgaigne, 1840) 2: . All future translations of Paré are mine, and are drawn from this edition.

recovered, even though their wounds were of small appearance and the surgeons called to help them used all their ability and knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

Even without Paré's answer, this passage tells us several things about war wounds in the period. First, because the king reacts to what he perceives as an excessive mortality rate, he has some idea of what the expected or ordinary danger from wounds ought to be. Second, he associates the change in mortality with the use of firearms. There is some sense in the king's assumptions, because, although gunpowder had been in use for centuries, it was still perceived as a new weapon, and hence it was the logical suspect for a new kind of mortality.<sup>5</sup> Because Paré was famous for asserting that gunshot wounds were not inherently different from the general category of "contused" wounds (caused by blunt or tearing objects), it fell upon him to explain what was perceived as excessive mortality. Whether or not the young king actually ever asked this question of Paré, the surgeon saw contemporary anxieties about the difficulty in healing wounds as something he had to confront in his own work.

Paré's answer to the king's question is a masterpiece of Galenic subtlety. He argues that the unusual mortality afflicting the French (Paré

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<sup>4</sup> Paré, *Oeuvres* 131.

Il pleust un jour à vostre Maiesté (Sire)... me demander comme il advenoit qu'en ces dernieres guerres, la plupart des Gentils-hommes et soldats blessés de coups d'harquebuses et autres instrumens, mouroient sans y pouvoir aucunement remedier, ou à bien grande peine relevoient de leur maladie, ores que les playes par eux recevés fussent de bien petite apparence: et que les Chirurgiens appelés pour leur guerison, y employassent tout leur devoir et scavoir.

The circumstances that Paré mentions place the anecdote in 1562, after the siege of Rouen during the first of the Wars of Religion.

<sup>5</sup> J. R. Hale, "Gunpowder and the Renaissance: An Essay in the History of Ideas," *Renaissance War Studies*, (London: Hambledon, 1983) 389-420.

says it is a national problem) is an isolated event resulting from the combination of recent meteorological disturbances. To begin with, Paré says, the reader must understand how important the quality of the air is in human health, and how much it is affected by seasonal change. The seasons, he says, “encompass us on all sides to the point that we are constrained to take them into [*les heberger en*] our organs and conduits designated by nature.”<sup>6</sup> Apparently in recent years the seasons had, as Titania complains in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, changed “their wonted liveries” and spawned not just the “rheumatic diseases” that Titania mentions, but a general distemperature in which wound healing was inherently unfavorable.<sup>7</sup> Such an unfavorable climate, according to Paré, had in turn created a more serious propensity for corruption within even apparently healthy individuals. According to Galenic theory, patients’ prospects for recovery depended on their individual constitutions: their balance of humors. In France, Paré argues, Nature “seemed so much charged with vicious humors,”<sup>8</sup>

Whence it followed that bodies injured to the quick had difficulty healing, considering that there was in these a loss of substance which, requiring a regeneration of flesh, could not be brought about, either by medicine or by surgical skill, so great was their ill-humor [*cacochymie*]. Just as in a dropsical patient the flesh cannot grow, because the patient’s blood is too cold and watery, and as in a leper the flesh and other parts of the body remain in their putrefaction because of the corrupted blood on which they are nourished, so the wounds of ill-humored bodies cannot acquire nor regenerate good substance:

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<sup>6</sup> Paré, *Oeuvres* 139. “nous environnent de tous costés jusques à nous contraindre les heberger en nos organes et conduits delegués par nature.”

<sup>7</sup> Before we judge Paré’s ideas here, it might be appropriate to remember that modern epidemiology recognizes the importance of seasonal change, since disease vectors are themselves living organisms. It is certainly possible that unseasonable weather could have affected mortality on the battlefield, by increasing the possibility for infection. More generally, our recent concerns with “air quality” demonstrate strikingly similar anxieties about what is going on in our own “organs and conduits.”

<sup>8</sup> Paré, *Oeuvres* 141. “sembloit tant chargée d’humeurs vicieux.”

because to make laudable flesh in the wounded part, the blood must not fail in quality nor quantity, even if the injured person is in their natural humor. All these things lacking in the time of these recent wars, one should not be surprised if wounds, no matter how small and inconsequential, even if they are in the extremities, led as it may be to so many distressing accidents, and in the end to death.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout his purported answer to the king, Paré limits his analysis to the medical aspects of the problem of excessive mortality. Yet his continual references to a national imbalance of humors, and to “these recent wars [ces dernières guerres]” suggest a wider judgment as well, a judgment that reveals the logic behind contemporary anxieties about wounds. To the audience he conjures up in the anecdote, and especially to the audience of the first edition of the *Oeuvres* (1575), “these recent wars” were not entirely over in 1563. The story takes place during a time of chronic and savage civil war. The queen mother, Catherine de’ Medici (who was also present during the meeting that Paré recounts and was acting as regent for her young son), was still unwillingly under the control of Guise at this time. When Paré speaks of a disposition to corruption afflicting all of France, he is describing not just a specific medical problem but the state of the entire nation. The Wars of Religion

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<sup>9</sup> Paré, *Oeuvres*. “Dont s’ensuit que les corps navrés en leur substance charneuse estoient difficiles à guerir, considéré qu’il y avait en iceux perdition de substance, laquelle ayant besoin de regeneration de chair, n’en pouvoit venir à bout, fust par medicamens ou par artifice de Chirurgien, tante grande estoient sa cacochymie. Tout ainsi qu’en un hydropique la chair ne se peut engendrer, pource que le sang y est trop froid est aqueueux: et qu’en un elephantique la chair et les autres parts du corps demeurent en leur putrefaction à cause du sang corrompu dont elles sont nourries: pareillement en playes des corps cacochymes ne se peut faire acquisition nouvelle, ny regeneration de bonne substance: pource que pour rendre une chair louable à la partie naurée, il est necessaire que le sang ne peche en qualité ne quantité: mesme que la partie offensée soit en sa temperature naturelle. Toutes lesquelles choses defaillantes au temps de ces dernières guerres, il ne se faut esbahir, si les naureures, tant fussent-elles petites et de peu de consequence, mesmes ès parties non nobles et principales, ont amené quant-et-soy tant d’accidens fascheux, et en fin à la mort.”

themselves are evidence that Nature is “so much charged with vicious humors.” As a mere surgeon, albeit already famous, Paré cannot openly make such arguments, particularly since they criticize his royal audience. But he repeatedly draws attention to the fact that the wounds of the aristocracy are just as likely to end in death as those of commoners. Despite the best medical care, he says at one point, the stink of ulcerous wounds “was the same [commune] for Princes, for nobles, and for poor soldiers.”<sup>10</sup> This casual statement reveals not only the appalling state of field medicine, in which wounds of ordinary soldiers were often left untreated, but also exposes the true nature of the king’s question. The wounds of common men were expected to stink, and expected to cause unnecessary pain and death. Only when the nobility seems to be succumbing to the same condition does the question “how did it come about? [comme il advenoit...]” arise. To his credit, Paré’s answer is at least as unsettling as the question, since it lays the blame for unexpected mortality on the constitution and, by implication, the morality of its noble victims.

Paré’s anecdote is specific to the French civil wars, but the issue he raises had a much wider currency in the Renaissance because the changing conditions of warfare had rendered it less and less an arena in which a single aristocratic warrior could establish a heroic identity. Paré’s concern with putrefaction echoes a more general concern, in the period, with the status and value of the human body as an instrument of signification. If wounds were increasingly perceived as grotesque, then

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<sup>10</sup> Paré *Oeuvres* 141. “estoyent communes aux Princes, aux grands seigneurs, et aux pauvres soldats.”

the wounded body could less often be invoked as evidence of heroic purpose. Because the humoral body in the period was conceived of in moral and political as well as medical terms, the dangers of putrefaction attendant on gunshot wounds were as socially and politically threatening as the changing circumstances of Renaissance warfare as a whole.

People were interested in wounds as medical problems during the Renaissance in more than theoretical ways. Such interest was itself part of the beginning of a larger process that Foucault describes, both in *Discipline et Surveiller* and elsewhere, by which power in the early modern period does not repress or deny the body but instead incorporates it into a discourse of economic utility. “[The] political investment of the body,” he says, “is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use.”<sup>11</sup> In the case of wounds, the first appropriation was military. Information on practical wound care was of great interest to those who wished to maintain armies in the field for any length of time. This demand was met by the first practical handbooks on wound care such as Hans von Gersdorff's extremely popular Feldtbuch der Wundtartzney (Strasbourg 1517). The way wounded soldiers were treated in the field depended increasingly on practical military considerations. Clarkson, for example, records what may be the first instance of the practice of triage in western history. According to Clarkson, during one of England's Irish campaigns a field hospital was so overrun with sick and wounded men that doctors could not treat everyone. Estimating that those sick from disease had only a

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<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977) 25-6.



one in ten chance of surviving to fight again, the physicians decided to concentrate on the wounded.<sup>12</sup> Military doctors payed more systematic attention to wounds than to illness largely because early modern surgery was so much more effective than internal medicine of the period. Surgeons could actually claim, with some demonstrable truth, to have helped patients to survive, and different surgical techniques could have very different results.

Foucault's paradigm, however, requires a separation of psychological and physiological qualities that was only just beginning in the Renaissance. Consequently, the increased interest in wound treatment of during the Renaissance can not be separated from interest in the moral, spiritual, and aesthetic qualities of the individual. Because wound care was so firmly rooted in Galenic humoral physiology<sup>13</sup> wounds were never treated as distinct or separable from their numerous interpretive contexts. Galen understood disease as product of humoral imbalance ("dyscrasia") rather than of specific pathogenic agents: "Of all diseases the fashion is the same, only the seat varies."<sup>14</sup> "Actual disease," he says, "is that condition of the body which,

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<sup>12</sup> Leslie Clarkson, *Death, disease, and famine in pre-industrial England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976) 124.

<sup>13</sup> Except for a few special treatments (see below) both professional surgeons and local healers relied on the same basic principles in treating wounds. Everyone cherished the hope that some mysterious balm might be super effective. George Baker, *Oleum Magistrale* (London: 1574) sets up his recipe for a powerful oil by telling the story of an unlearned Moor named Aparice who develops a secret recipe for the oil, angers local physicians, and finally dies in prison without revealing the ingredients. His widow, however, sells the recipe for 500 ducats. Baker claims that his oil is especially good for curing such difficult conditions as "contusion, harquebush shot, [and] cancers."

<sup>14</sup> Galen, quoted in Guido Majno, *The healing hand: man and wound in the ancient world* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975) 171.

not accidentally, but primarily and of itself, impairs the normal function.”<sup>15</sup> Wounds conformed to the same principle, as numerous surgical works from the period attest. In designing a course of treatment, the surgeon was supposed to consider not only the part of the body affected, but also the temperament of the victim and the relation between this temperament and the local climate. Wounds themselves were even thought of as having individual temperaments,<sup>16</sup> and as subject to particular dispositions and distemperatures. And the degree to which physicians and surgeons focused on temperament increased in the case of corrupt (infected) wounds. While medical texts categorized “green” or “bloody” wounds by the kind of tissue they included (body parts, organs, etc.), ulcers (infected wounds) were categorized by their dominant humor.<sup>17</sup> Like the humoral body itself, wounds were thought to need frequent intervention. Renaissance surgeons knew that the body could heal itself, but they preserved a place for themselves as “natures freinde, and minister.” By intervening, they could head off the many “accidents” that lay in wait for the victim of a wound, and guide the healing process through its recognized phases, promoting the correct humoral mixture at each point.

Aside from the manual dexterity required to probe or stitch a wound, the art of wound healing consisted of knowing which of the recognized “curative intentions” one should promote, and which of the astounding number of pharmacological applications one should use at a

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<sup>15</sup> Galen, *On the Natural Faculties* (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1928) 2.9.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Gale, *Certaine Workes of Chirurgerie* (London: Rouland Hall, 1563) 36.

<sup>17</sup> John Banister, *Treatise of Chyrurgerie* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1575) see also Gale.

particular time. There were five curative intentions, each corresponding to a class of the pharmacopoeia. Usually they are listed in the order they could be expected, although all wounds would not necessarily pass through all phases. First, a wound might require “suppuration” or “maturation,” and a surgeon would search for an appropriate suppurative. Suppuration was the production of pus, so many of these medicines include large amounts of organic material and are essentially designed to promote infection. Contused wounds were thought to require suppuration, as were those with large objects stuck in them. It was thought that allowing the wound to “mature” in this way would help the body to expel both objects and evil humors that had collected in the wound. Second, many wounds would require “mundification” or cleansing. The medicines associated with this stage are extremely varied and so it is not easy explain in twentieth century terms what Renaissance surgeons were actually doing when they “mundified” a wound. Many ingredients in mundificatives are anti microbial or antiseptic, but many are also similar to suppuratives, and “mundify” was occasionally used as a synonym for “suppurate.”<sup>18</sup> Third, all wounds could eventually benefit from the application of “incarnatives” which were thought to aid flesh in growing. Fourth, while incarnatives were responsible for new flesh, the coherence of the whole rested on its “conglutination” or sticking together, and required additional medicines. Last, at any point a wound could lead to “accidents,” a term used for anything from pain to convulsions, and thus requiring many different cures.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Gale.

<sup>19</sup> Gale, 12-13.

The notion of curative intentions is part of the Renaissance understanding of wound healing as a process of maturation through expulsion and recreation. The astounding variety of medicines accounts for their sense that this process is complicated by the particularities of temperament. Early modern medicine used many different types of preparations. Renaissance writers speak of potions, emplasters, cataplasmes, cerotes, unguents, oils, fomentations, salves, balms, concoctions, and many other now obscure preparations. These substances were not interchangeable. They each had their uses, and each corresponded to a particular kind of humoral intervention. Some were hot, some cold, some dry, others moist. Some had an expulsive "faculty," some a "retentive." If one was suffering from a poisoned wound, for instance, hot medicines (perhaps a fomentation, or an oil) would be applied because it was believed that they would draw the poison toward them.<sup>20</sup> If inflammation was a problem, on the other hand, a surgeon would apply "repercussives" to drive back the humors.<sup>21</sup> The medicines themselves were humoral in the sense that they participated directly in the bodily processes of repletion and evacuation, rather than by causing the body to act on its own. Most of the time the surgeon tried to aid the body's natural ability to heal itself.

The techniques for dealing with the first four of the five curative intentions were handed down relatively unchanged from Medieval medicine to the Renaissance. The fastest growing area of surgical medicine in the period, however, concerned the fifth intention: the

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<sup>20</sup> Gale 31.

<sup>21</sup> Gale, 31, 34-5.

possibilities of “accidents” and unpleasant developments resulting from wounds, and how to deal with them. This dimension of wound care required even more careful attention to the humoral balance of the individual in question. Pain, for example, was one of the “accidents” that might befall a wounded person. It was considered undesirable, not for sentimental reasons, but because it disturbed the humors:

“[pain] bringeth a flux of humours to the wounded part, and ushereth most grevous accidentes, as phlegmone other wise called inflamation, aposthemes, and such like. Yea and that in those bodies which are pure and free from excrement.”<sup>22</sup>

The possibility that even originally pure bodies could degenerate quickly when wounded was something that both perplexed and fascinated Renaissance medicine, and it focused attention on the process of corruption in the human body.

Contemporary accounts of corruption hint at its social and moral value as part of the process of defining it. John Banister’s *Treastise of Chyrurgerie* (1575) deals entirely with ulcers, the technical name for an infected wound of any kind:

That is to be called an Ulcer, where as there is corruption. And that a wound, where (as yet) there is no putrefaction.<sup>23</sup>

According to Banister, ulcers are rooted in the complexion of the individual. If one is originally replete with evil humors, these “may at length corrupt and putrefy the said parts of the same body”<sup>24</sup> Likewise a temporary distemperature can cause ulceration. Banister calls this condition “the malice of complexion,” and constantly warns of its

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<sup>22</sup> Gale 34.

<sup>23</sup> John Banister, *Treastise of Chyrurgerie* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1575) 2.

<sup>24</sup> Banister 5.

danger.<sup>25</sup> To prevent ulcers, one was supposed to keep the body properly soluble with the six non naturals: air, meat and drink, motion and quiet, sleep and waking, repletion and inanition, and the passions. The passions played an especially important role in the treatment of ulcers. Gale warns that patients must be careful to “flee all vehement perturbations and affections of the minde.” Ulcers are most easily cured, “in persons of good complexions, whose bodies are nourished with good blode, and have no abundance of superfluous moistnes.”<sup>26</sup> Conversely, those whose bodies have “superfluous moisture,” such as women (especially pregnant women), and dropsical people, are especially prone to dangerous ulcers.<sup>27</sup> As a corollary, men were urged to avoid sexual relations, “as ... the greatest pestilence that may be in this disease.”<sup>28</sup> The loss of semen would be not only a waste of much needed spirit, but could also render the body more cold and moist, since semen was considered hot and “dry.” By constantly emphasizing moisture as the relevant aspect of temperament, medical writers ultimately aligned ulcers in particular, and putrefaction in general, with the same defect in temperament that was thought to characterize women. This quality, combined with the danger attributed to unruly passions, made putrefaction socially as well as medically undesirable. Infected wounds could be a sign of a defect in self control and a defect in masculinity.

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<sup>25</sup> Banister 6.

<sup>26</sup> Gale 41.

<sup>27</sup> Gale 42.

<sup>28</sup> Gale 34-5.

Because of the social implications of putrefaction, the growing interest in it during the early modern period became especially acute in the case of one particular kind of wound: that caused by gunshot. Since gunshot wounds usually occurred on the battlefield, they had a special place in the Renaissance construction of male aristocratic identity. The declining importance of the mounted knight in the Renaissance, and the threat that this decline represented to the mores of the aristocracy, have become a historical cliché. The advent of gunpowder tended to make armies larger, and with proportionately less cavalry. The weapons themselves were eventually mass produced and utilitarian, not highly ornamented. Also, J. R. Hale asserts that "firearms could do appreciable damage with less training than was required for other arms."<sup>29</sup> The result was that the hastily trained musketeer or arquebusier had more military effect than the highly trained mounted warrior. Although firearms were often criticized as cowardly, anti-chivalric weapons, however, they did have a certain appeal, even for the upper classes. Hale suggests that those nobles who adopted artillery messages in their emblems wanted to express "power latent within the inert metal casing; rigid control, ignited by a spark of righteous passion, could lead to an explosion."<sup>30</sup> Such emblems represented an appealing male fantasy of the body. The metal of a gun's barrel, or of the shell of a bomb, was not only rigid, but also impermeable. Unlike the humoral body which as Ficino complains is "perpetually in flux, changed by growing, shrinking,

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<sup>29</sup>J. R. Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe, 1450-1620* (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1985) 51.

<sup>30</sup> Hale, *War and Society* 49.

continuous disintegration, liquefaction, and alternate heat and cold,"<sup>31</sup> a gun contains and represses its inside material, releasing it in a controlled burst of power. Shakespeare appeals to this fantasy of impermeable rigidity in *Henry V*. Before the gates of Harfleur, Henry exhorts his men to,

Stiffen the sinews, conjure up the blood,  
Disguise fair nature with hard-favor'd rage;  
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;  
Let it pry through the portage of the head  
Like the brass cannon ... (3.1.7-11)

Philosophical and technical writing of the period, while not as fantastic, is equally concerned with the body of the warrior. Renaissance climate theory was one source of contemporary theories. Many of the generalizations of climate theory depended on military examples. Levinus Lemnius, who treats climate extensively, begins by discussing its influence on violent action. Northern peoples, who have "grosse blood and thicke Spyrites, are seene to be bolde and full of vertuous courage, rude, unmanerlye, terrible, cruell, fierce." They are "not a whitte afrayde to hazarde their bodyes in the adventure of anye perilous extremitie." When they are wounded, the sight of their own blood makes them fight more fiercely. The peoples of Asia, on the other hand, are "mere meycockes, and persons very effeminate, shrynkinge at the least mishappe that happeneth, and wyth the smallest grieffe and feare that can bee."<sup>32</sup> When they catch sight of their own blood, they are prone to fainting. Military manuals used such generalizations in discussing the

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<sup>31</sup> Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love* trans. Sears Jayne (Dallas, TX: Spring Publications, 1985) 75.

<sup>32</sup> Levinus Lemnius, *Touchstone of Complexions* (London: 1576) 13-14.



temperament of the ideal warrior. Thomas Procter, for example, seems to have felt it appropriate to begin his book on *The knowledge and conducte of warres* (London, 1578) with a piece of climate theory that shows how the English, by virtue of their temperate climate, have “an honourable desire to the exercyse of armes, having by the prycke of Magnanimitie, a victorious mynde, affecting fame, soveraigntie, and honour above all other nations.”<sup>33</sup>

Although firearms themselves may have been an attractive representation of the ideal warrior’s body, however, the wounds they caused challenged not simply the importance or value of the chivalric warrior, but the very physiological basis for his heroic identity. Gunshot wounds were much different from the wounds produced by more traditional weapons, and much more likely to become ulcerous. While firearms were mostly a curiosity in the Middle Ages, by the middle of the sixteenth century they had come to dominate the battlefield. Recent ballistic research has shown that while sixteenth-century firearms did not have the accuracy and range of modern weapons, they were capable of producing equally serious wounds at short range. Over short distances (less than 100 meters), the main difference between a sixteenth-century musket and a modern rifle is that the latter fires a lightweight bullet at extremely high velocity, while the former fires a heavy bullet at low velocity.<sup>34</sup> Some modern writers have argued that high velocity bullets

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<sup>33</sup> Thomas Procter, *The knowledge and conducte of warres* *The English Experience: Its Record in Early Printed Books Published in Facsimile* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969) iii.

<sup>34</sup> Modern military assault rifles also use a specialized type of bullet, designed to fragment inside the body of a victim and create more damage.

always inflict greater injury because their total kinetic energy is greater.<sup>35</sup> More recent medical research, however, suggests that a bullet's kinetic energy does not always correlate with the severity of the wound it produces. When a bullet enters the human body it produces two separate effects. Immediately surrounding the track of the bullet itself (and any fragments) is a region of cellular destruction called the "permanent cavity." Around this region is another area called the "temporary cavity" out of which the surrounding tissue is stretched during the bullet's passage. Since large temporary cavities are generally produced only by high velocity weapons,<sup>36</sup> it has been assumed that these weapons will always cause more serious injury. In the recent edition of *Emergency War Surgery*, however, Thomas Bowen and Ronald Bellamy argue that temporary cavities do not always cause a lot of damage because much tissue is highly elastic, and that since velocity is harder to increase than mass, mass is a greater factor in wounding power.<sup>37</sup> According to them, "wounds that result in a given amount of 'kinetic energy deposit' may differ widely," and "the actual interaction of projectile and tissue ... is the crux of wound ballistics."<sup>38</sup> Ballistic studies done on sixteenth-century weapons confirm their power to inflict destructive wounds. The average weight of a musket shot in the period

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<sup>35</sup> B. D. Ragsdale, "Gunshot wounds: a historical perspective," *Military Medicine* 149.6 (1984): 301-15.

<sup>36</sup> Ragsdale 302. Thomas E. Bowen, and Ronald F. Bellamy, eds., *Emergency war surgery*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Defense, 1988)15-34. Ragsdale notes that low velocity weapons firing extremely large bullets can also cause some temporary cavitation.

<sup>37</sup> Bowen 15-34.

<sup>38</sup> Bowen 33. The origin of the term "kinetic energy deposit" is not clear.

was about 80 grams,<sup>39</sup> compared with only 3.6 grams for the bullet of a modern assault rifle. Peter Kalas shows that at distances of under 100 meters, these weapons created extremely large entry wounds, with huge permanent cavities.<sup>40</sup> B. D. Ragsdale's study of bone fractures from the American Civil War also shows that when a large lead bullet hits bone it deforms and creates "large osseous defects and lengthy fracture lines."<sup>41</sup>

The wounds that sixteenth-century firearms produced were also extremely prone to infection. Bowen and Bellamy explain in modern terms why gunshot wounds as a whole are inherently dangerous. Such wounds are often "characterized by lacerated, contused, and devitalized tissue; extravasated blood; disruption of the local blood supply; presence of foreign bodies; and contamination with various microorganisms, all of which predispose to the development of subsequent infection."<sup>42</sup> Bullets that create a temporary cavity can also suck in foreign material into the wound because of the negative pressure associated with the cavity.<sup>43</sup> Since sixteenth-century weapons produced large amounts of contused tissue they were especially dangerous. Today, for example, a clean wound from a .22 rifle would not be surgically treated, but a wound from a larger weapon, or by a bullet that deformed or fragmented would

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<sup>39</sup> Paul Kalas, "Schiessversuche mit historischen feuerwaffen des landeszeughauses Graz and der prüf-und versuchsstelle für waffen und munition des amtes für wehrtechnik," *Von Alten Feuerwaffen: Entwicklung, Leistung, Technik (Sonderausstellung im Landeszeughaus Graz, Mai-Oktober, 1989)*, ed. Peter Krenn. (Graz: Landesmuseum Joanneum, 1989) Veröffentlichung 12: 41-113.

<sup>40</sup> Kalas 79.

<sup>41</sup> Ragsdale 306.

<sup>42</sup> Bowen 163.

<sup>43</sup> Ragsdale 309.

require careful “debridement” (cleaning) to avoid infection.<sup>44</sup> The bone fractures caused by early firearms also made the wounds they produced more serious, since compound fractures are difficult to heal and liable to infection. As late as World War I, one out of four American soldiers with a compound fracture of the femur (thigh bone) died.<sup>45</sup> Sixteenth-century wounds may even have been more likely to be contaminated by bacteria. Although Bowen states that every gunshot wound is contaminated by bacteria,<sup>46</sup> the amount of bacteria, particularly fomites and pyogenic (pus forming) bacteria, associated with early modern clothing and equipment may well have been greater. Ordinary soldiers, at least, might easily have been in contact with their wounded comrades, since field hospitals were rudimentary at best.

In addition, the way gunshot wounds were typically treated in the Renaissance did not necessarily make them less likely to become infected. Bowen and Belamy list the following as the main causes of infection in modern wounds: delay in treatment, inadequate debridement, lack of blood supply caused by vascular damage, bad drainage, tight packing or bandages, primary closure (sewing up the wound), a wounded intestine, infection by fomites, metabolic disease (or other disease such as dysentery, diabetes and malnutrition).<sup>47</sup> All of these causes contributed to Renaissance mortality from gunshot wounds.

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<sup>44</sup> Bowen 33.

<sup>45</sup> Ragsdale 309.

<sup>46</sup> Bowen 165.

<sup>47</sup> Bowen 164.

Given the small number of barber-surgeons assigned to military units,<sup>48</sup> it was inevitable that large numbers of wounded men would get delayed treatment. Debridement, as a distinct feature of wound care, was not known in the Renaissance, although many of the best surgeons recommended careful cleaning.<sup>49</sup> While Renaissance medical writers thought that a supply of “good blood” was necessary for wound healing, they lacked any practical means of assessing the quality of blood supply to tissues (in a modern sense). In the hands of the best Renaissance surgeons, problems of drainage, primary closure, and tight bandages would actually have been minimal, but since the connection between drainage and infection (by anaerobic bacteria) was not well understood, many barber surgeons would have promoted infection by preventing drainage and aeration. As for a wounded intestine, almost all Renaissance surgeons recognized it as extremely dangerous, but there was little that could be done about it. Given the overall lack of sanitation in the early modern period, a wound could have been infected by fomites (contagious wound bacteria) in any case where a surgeon attended more than one patient in succession. In addition, since Renaissance medicine did not understand bacterial contamination, it was likely that large numbers of benign bacteria would have been allowed to grow in a wound, potentially attracting more pathogenic forms.<sup>50</sup> As for the

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<sup>48</sup> Hale says that while important men brought their own surgeons along, the aim to provide one barber-surgeon for every 150 men was “seldom achieved.” Hale, *Warr and Society* 120.

<sup>49</sup> Debridement is “the macroscopic cleansing of wounds by surgical removal of nonviable tissue and foreign matter, evacuation of hematoma, and the provision of adequate drainage” Ragsdale 309.

<sup>50</sup> Bowen 167.

importance of disease, metabolic and other, Renaissance surgeons also recognized this as a potential cause of infection. As we have seen, however, such problems came under the general topic of “dyscrasia” and served to explain the causes of all infection.

Because gunshot wounds were so dangerous in practice, their treatment was controversial in the Renaissance. In his article on the surgical treatment of gunshot wounds, Kelly DeVries argues that Medieval surgeons generally did not treat gunshot differently from other wounds. At the end of the fifteenth century, however, the Italian surgeon Giovanni da Vigo claimed that gunshot wounds should be treated as poisoned, because the residue of gunpowder was extremely dangerous.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, Vigo thought that such wounds ought to be cauterized. His procedure quickly gained acceptance throughout Europe. DeVries points out that Vigo was so popular by the early sixteenth century “that surgeons sometimes eliminated probes and suturing tools from their equipment while including in their place several cauteries.”<sup>52</sup> It was not until Paré’s published his *Methode de traicter les playes faictes par hacquebutes* that any contrary opinion emerged. DeVries calls Vigo’s motives for arguing as he did “uncertain,” and suggests that he could have been influenced by Islamic traditions, his own empirical observations, by the opinion of Heironymus Brunschwig (who said that gunshot wounds were poisoned), or even by the need to treat quickly

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<sup>51</sup> Kelly R. DeVries, “Military Surgical Practice and the Advent of Gunpowder Weaponry,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 7 (1990): 131-146.

<sup>52</sup> DeVries 141.

large numbers of wounded.<sup>53</sup> But it is not necessary to suppose such detailed motives for Vigo, because his theory corresponded so clearly to the popular opinion that firearms were radically different from other weapons. When Vigo said that gunshot wounds were poisoned, he simply made medical theory correspond with the unique and sinister place that firearms had in moral and religious discourse as well as in the popular imagination. One sign of the cultural strength of Vigo's theory is its persistence in the face of contrary evidence. Although Paré's correction was quickly accepted in practice, medical writers of the period seem to have felt obliged to repeat the terms of the debate whenever they discussed gunshot wounds. They continued to re-animate the debate until well into the seventeenth century.<sup>54</sup> Also, even when they had abandoned the notion that such wounds were poisoned, surgeons continued to give them a special place in technical writing, a place that reflects the opinion that such wounds are "not agreying with nature."<sup>55</sup>

To understand why the notion that gunshot wounds were poisoned found such ready acceptance in early modern Europe, we need to look beyond the general place of firearms in the culture. Gunshot wounds frequently became ulcerous, and as we have seen, ulcers were marks of a defect in self control, and by extension a defect in masculinity. Soldiers, if they were as choleric as they were supposed to be, should have been less likely to putrefy, but they were not. As Gale notes, even pure bodies

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<sup>53</sup> DeVries 142.

<sup>54</sup> John Browne, *A compleat discourse of wounds, both in general and particular* (London: E. Flesher, 1678) 96.

<sup>55</sup> Gale 7.

could develop ulcers after being wounded. By contemporary logic, putrefied wounds could only be explained as the result of some sort of distemperature. This is precisely the argument that Paré makes in answer to his King's question, and it was a disquieting one even when the distemperature was attributed to a large group of people, or rooted in a climatic disturbance. The idea that a gunshot wound might be poisoned was an attractive alternative to the possibility of individual or group distemperature. A poisoned wound could turn ulcerous through no fault of the victim. One's complexion was not as important in such cases as the behavior of the venom. As we have seen in the case of the metaphorical love wound, poisons (with the exception of some corrosives) were thought to act by altering the actual constitution of the victim. Vigo's theory, and its persistence, are thus a sign of contemporary unwillingness to admit that bodies always carried their own destruction inside them, and that the body of a noble warrior could succumb to "superfluous moisture" as easily as the body of a pregnant woman.



## CHAPTER 6

"NOTABLE WOUNDS":  
MORTALITY AND POLITICS IN SIDNEY'S *ARCADIA*

"I am no base body"

--Musidorus

"None can speak of a wound with skill, if he have not a wound felt"

-- Pyrocles

One of those deeply affected by the growing ambivalence toward the wounded body was Sir Philip Sidney. Although his *Arcadia* was composed before he had ever served in a military campaign, its depictions of wounds reflect Sidney's own anxieties about the status of the heroic body in the rapidly changing realities of Early Modern warfare. For him, as for Paré, the wounded body can be linked to political corruption and instability. Grotesque wounds, in particular, are politically and morally suspicious. But Sidney also describes some wounds as beautiful, and begins to redefine the heroic status of the wounded body as a self-conscious artistic construct. Ironically, Sidney's own death, of an infected gunshot wound, might well serve as a case study appended to an anecdote such as Paré's. Sidney's own reactions to his wound, and the reactions of his friends and country folk as well, parallel his literary response to questions of the body.

Although Sidney's death came, necessarily, too late to influence his writing, its effect on his reputation, and consequently on the reception of his literary work, was so great that it makes sense to read his work, as his contemporaries did, in light of his death. Sidney was wounded on September 22, 1586, while participating in the English campaign in the Netherlands. On this day he was engaged in a minor skirmish outside the town of Zutphen, the object being to interdict a supply convoy to the besieged town. In the confused conflict, Sidney was hit by a bullet just above the knee, and the thigh bone was broken.<sup>1</sup> He managed to ride his horse back to camp, where the wound was dressed, and the bone set, before he was removed by barge to Arnhem.<sup>2</sup> At first the wound seemed to be healing well. By the fifth day, Sidney was sleeping well, by the fourteenth day he was no longer in pain. Somewhere between the sixteenth and eighteenth day, however, events took a serious turn. The wound began to emit a noxious odor and the sutures had to be removed. A week later (on the 25th day after he was wounded) Sidney died.<sup>3</sup>

The circumstances of Sidney's wounding are typical of Early Modern warfare. The informality of the skirmish before Zutphen, for example, reflects the Renaissance tendency toward a greater number of battles, with higher casualties, in place of a few pitched battles. According to J. R. Hale, this tendency was the result of governments' realistic assessment that war was won by a "strategy of envelopment, attrition, and siege

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<sup>1</sup> V. B. Heltzel, and H. H. Hudson, eds., *Nobilis, or A View of the Life and Death of a Sidney... by Thomas Moffet*, (San Marino California: 1940) 90.

<sup>2</sup> Katherine Duncan Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney: Courtier Poet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) 295.

<sup>3</sup> Duncan Jones 297.

rather than from a seeking of pitched battle.”<sup>4</sup> The attack on the supply convoy, although arranged at a moment’s notice, was actually the most common kind of engagement one could expect at the time, especially in the Netherlands where the new kind of warfare was so widespread that contemporaries referred to the area as “the school of war.”<sup>5</sup> The weapon Sidney fell victim to was also only recently coming to dominate the battlefield (although firearms had been available since the fourteenth-century). Given the extent of his wound, it also possible that he was shot by a relatively new phenomenon on the Early Modern battlefield: a musketeer. Muskets were larger, and thus more dangerous, than the other popular firearm, the arquebus.<sup>6</sup> They projected a ball which could pierce most armor at a substantial distance.<sup>7</sup> If Sidney was struck by a musket ball, rather than one from a lighter weapon, his failure to wear

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<sup>4</sup> J. R. Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe, 1450-1620* (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1985) 61.

<sup>5</sup> Hale 18.

<sup>6</sup> Although the musket was more efficient than the lighter arquebus, its introduction was slowed by several factors. Muskets were so heavy that they had to be fired from a rest, and their rate of fire was slow. Richard Preston, S. F. Wise, and H. O. Werner, *Men in Arms: A History of Warfare and its Interrelationships with Western Society* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1956) 104. Also Montgomery of Alamein, *A History of Warfare* (New York: William Morrow, 1983) 231. J. R. Hale (p. 52) adds that since the musket was also more costly than the arquebus, and musketeers drew more salary, communities responsible for equipping troops, and governments responsible for paying them, often preferred the cheaper arquebus. Statistically speaking, Sidney was more likely to have been hit by a lighter weapon. Although Spain led Europe in implementing military technology, by 1600 its ideal unit still only counted muskets as 42% of the total number of handguns. Hale, 52. Sidney may also have been hit by a shot from the very newest sort of weapon, the wheel-lock pistol. This was a cavalry weapon used at close range in a technique called “Caracole” in which troops would charge up to to close range, discharge their weapons, and then retire. Considering that the Albanians facing the English were famous for their cavalry (see note 28), this alternative is not impossible.

<sup>7</sup> 200-240 paces (the encounter at Zutphen was closer than this). Preston 51.

leg armor, as a famous anecdote has it, would have had little bearing on the danger of the wound.<sup>8</sup>

Sidney's long and painful death was also, if not typical, at least representative. As I have shown, the large, slow moving bullets of the period produced large ragged wounds, and these wounds were probably often contaminated with foreign matter, including the wad that the bullet may have carried along with it. Because of its low velocity, the bullet itself often remained in the wound and had to be fished out--if it could be found (and the bullet that hit Sidney never was). As a result, a typical gunshot wound might easily seem to be healing well, until infection broke through the body's natural barriers and the patient died of sepsis long after the initial trauma. The best surgeons were aware of the constant dangers attendant on wounds. As late as 1678 John Browne cautions that "wounds are not past danger untill the 7th Day be over, neither are they void of accidents untill the Matter be well digested."<sup>9</sup> Some contemporaries were dubious about any gunshot wound. In 1575, for example, Luis de Requesens, the Spanish governor general in the Netherlands, reported to Philip II that "most of the wounds come from pikes or blows and they will soon heal, although there are also many with gunshot wounds, and they will die."<sup>10</sup> From all reports Sidney had some of the best medical care available at the time. This meant that he

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<sup>8</sup> It is even possible that leg armor would have made the wound more extensive, and more contaminated. If the armor fragmented it could have caused a larger permanent cavity, even if it prevented the bullet from penetrating as far.

<sup>9</sup> John Browne, *A compleat discourse of wounds, both in general and particular* (London: E. Flesher, 1678) 22.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Hale 121.

was attended by several different surgeons, although unlike the bevy of doctors serving a modern intensive care unit, Sidney's attending physicians would have formed an *ad hoc* committee in which individual reputation and conviction would have determined the course of treatment. Once Sidney was even sent an extra surgeon as a generous gesture by Count Hohenlohe, who was recovering from a wound of his own.<sup>11</sup> All this high quality medical attention did not necessarily increase Sidney's chances of survival, however. Although Paré's discoveries had eliminated cautery as a regular procedure in treating gunshot wounds, they were still subject, as were all "contused" wounds, to healing by "secondary intention." What this means is that a controlled infection was encouraged, in order that "good" pus should purge the area of its imbalance of humors. The surgeon would introduce "suppuratives" (balms containing a great deal of organic matter, and hence producing "suppuration"), to induce such an infection. Needless to say, such a procedure is inherently dangerous. Add to this the fact that the surgeons were unable to retrieve the bullet from Sidney's leg, and his death, like many of those who suffered gunshot wounds in the period, seems almost inevitable.

The trends of Early Modern warfare that shaped Sidney's wounding and death also made it difficult to interpret his death as heroic. Because the skirmish in which Sidney was wounded was minor and inconclusive, his wound could hardly be understood as a sacrifice made

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<sup>11</sup> Duncan Jones 297. This surgeon, Adrien van der Spiegel, seems to have had a better understanding of Sidney's condition than most, because he reported to his master, the Count, that Sidney was not well, at a time when the general prognosis was favorable. At his master's command, however, he remained with Sidney until the end.

for great gain. More importantly, because a morning fog shrouded the conflict, no one ever knew the identity of the man who fired the fatal shot. This anonymity prevented the incident from being understood as a clash between opposing warriors. If Whetstone's report is correct, Sidney himself tried to assert such an interpretation nonetheless. Instead of allowing his horse to be led away from the field, or submitting to being carried away, Sidney insisted on riding back to the English camp on his own, so that "The foe shall miss the glory of my wound."<sup>12</sup> Such reasoning depends on a degree of mutual observation that simply did not occur during the skirmish before Zutphen. In addition, the weapon responsible for Sidney's wound, was, like all gunpowder weapons in the period, morally controversial, and not likely to increase the heroic reputation of either the user or the victim.<sup>13</sup> As Dominic Baker-Smith says, Sidney "fell victim to the weapon which brutally exposed anachronism."<sup>14</sup> By "anachronism," Baker Smith means the mounted man at arms, a role Sidney played brilliantly in the less serious arena of Elizabethan tournaments.

Sidney's contemporaries knew that his death wound fell outside the conventional bounds of martial heroism. The many elegies written for him attempt, in various ways, to reinterpret the circumstances and nature of his wound. Most elegies portray his wound as a tragic accident.

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<sup>12</sup> George Whetstone, *Sir Philip Sidney, his honourable life, his valiant death, and true vertues*, sig. C1r. Quoted in Duncan Jones 295.

<sup>13</sup> J. R. Hale, "Gunpowder and the Renaissance: An Essay in the History of Ideas," *Renaissance War Studies*, (London: Hambledon, 1983) 389-420.

<sup>14</sup> Dominic Baker-Smith, "'Great Expectation': in Sidney's Death and the Poets," *Sir Philip Sidney: 1586 and the Creation of a Legend*, ed. Jan van Dorsten. (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

In Spenser's "Astrophel," for example, Astrophel (Sidney) is a hunter who captures wild beasts and then wades into the pen to slaughter them.

He is wounded when one of the animals fights back:

So as he rag'd emongst that beastly rout,  
A cruell beast of most accursed brood:  
Upon him turnd (despeyre makes cowards stout)<sup>15</sup>

Rather than glorify the battle, Spenser has taken a different tactic and degraded Sidney's foes to the status of animals, and cowardly ones at that. The success of the "cruell beast" is a direct function of Astrophel's power, since he has made the animals despair. Spenser may actually be criticizing Astrophel, despite his elegiac tone, since the hunter seems as excessive in his passion as the animals (he desires the death of the animals "ful greedily"). Even so, however, he is translating Sidney's death out of a purely martial arena. There can be little martial glory in the confrontation with a desperate animal. Of the poems in English on Sidney's death, only one alludes to the specific circumstances of his wound. "An Elegie or friend's passion for his Astrophill," (probably written by Lodowick Bryskett)<sup>16</sup> describes a gunshot, but it does so in monumental terms. According to this account, the god Mars was envious of Sidney's abilities, and engineered his death:

In this surmize he made with speede,  
An iron cane wherein he put,  
The thunder that in cloudes do breede,  
The flame and bolt together shut.  
With privie force burst out againe.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Edmund Spenser, *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (London: 1595), from "Astrophel."

<sup>16</sup> Baker-Smith 88. Bryskett's poem is a paraphrase of Bernardo Tasso's *Selva nella morte del Signor Aluigi da Gonzaga*.

<sup>17</sup> "An Elegie or friend's passion for his Astrophill."

Here the poet does not deny Sidney's martial heroism. In fact, he awards it quasi-epic stature, since it attracts the envy of the god of war himself. Yet because Sidney's wound is not portrayed as the result of a specific heroic act, this poem avoids having to discuss the details of the event. Likewise, the poet takes advantage of the anonymity of Sidney's attacker to substitute a god for an ordinary Albanian soldier.<sup>18</sup> In the eyes of his contemporaries, the circumstances of Sidney's wounding did not warrant an epic treatment, like the Chanson de Roland, as much as much as an allegorical or emblematic translation.

If the skirmish at Zutphen could not conveniently be interpreted as a heroic conflict, the long and painful course of his demise was even more unsuitable for poetic treatment. Some poets simply avoided it altogether. "An Elegie, or friend's passion," for instance, follows the relatively detailed description of the gunshot with the simple statement that "so our Astrophill was slaine." More typically, however, Sidney's wound is depicted as mortal by virtue of its extent, rather than its eventual corruption: he bleeds to death, in these treatments, in a short time. Thus redesigned, Sidney's wound becomes a more acceptable focal point of the poets' anguish. Unlike Sidney, who died surrounded by surgeons, servants, and friends, Spenser's Astrophel dies because no one is around "To stop his wound that wondrously did bleed," or eventually to kiss his lips "like faded leaves of rose." Medical intervention is not an

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<sup>18</sup> The troops facing the English at Zutphen were Albanian. Duncan-Jones 295, citing Stow, *Annales* 1252 (1592). Albanians were highly sought after as mercenaries in the sixteenth-century. Albanian cavalry, in particular, were known for their energy and liveliness (Hale 70). These mercenaries were probably recruited from those Albanians who fled to Dalmatia as the Ottomans gradually occupied the region during the first half of the sixteenth-century.



issue, because Astrophel is dead before anyone finds him. Instead we are left with the image of Stella beholding her dead love, "With crudled blood and filthie gore deformed." Even the ugliness of such a death fades in other elegiac poems. "The mourning muse of Thyestis," for example, draws on the classical comparison of the dying youth with cut flowers:<sup>19</sup>

His lips waxt pale and wan, like damaske roses bud  
Cast from the stalke, or like in field to purple flowre,  
Which languisheth being shred by culter as it past.

This delicate discoloration, which invokes beauty even as it describes its loss, is the most radical product of the revisions that contemporaries imposed on Sidney's unpleasant and odorous death.

Many of the elegiac portrayals of Sidney even go so far as to depict him as a version of the mythical Adonis, who also died of a wound in the thigh.<sup>20</sup> The poet of "the Mourning Muse of Thyestis," for example, openly compares Sidney's sister to "Venus when she waild her deare Adonis slaine." In his "Astrophel," Spenser is more subtle but also more thorough in identifying Sidney as an Adonis. Astrophel, like Adonis, is a young man whose passion for hunting leads to a mortal wound. Like Venus, Stella (whom Spenser calls "As faire as Venus") discovers her lover too late to save him, and proceeds to abuse her own body in

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<sup>19</sup> The last two lines are a translation of Virgil, from the death of Euryalus in book nine of the *Aeneid* (577-81).

<sup>20</sup> John Buxton even suspects that Shakespeare's poem may have something to do with Sidney. John Buxton, "Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis and Sidney," *Sir Philip Sidney: 1586 and the Creation of a Legend*, eds. Jan Van Dorsten, Arthur F. Kinney, and Dominic Baker-Smith. (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1986) 104-110.

mourning. The passage in which Stella finds Astrophel echoes Ovid. In

Golding's *Metamorphosis*,

when she [Venus] saw him [Adonis] weltring in his Gore;  
Downe jumping from the skies, at once she tore  
Her haire and bosome: then her brest invades  
With bitter blowes; and Destinie upbraids.<sup>21</sup>

In "Astrophel," when Stella sees Astrophel "With crudled blood an  
filthie gore deformed, / That wont to be with flowers and gyrlonds  
dight," she "likewise did deforme like him to bee." The poem called  
"The Dolefull lay of Clorinda," which follows "Astrophel" and may have  
actually been written by the Countess of Pembroke, takes the mourning  
of a woman for the death of a young man as its subject. As in "Astrophel"  
and the Adonis legend, the young man is associated with flowers. He  
himself is the "fairest flowre," and his lips are "like lillies pale and soft."  
This poem is spiritual rather than sexual, however, since the poet ends  
by taking comfort in the fact that the young man's soul,

...is not dead, ne can it die,  
But lives for aie, in blissfull Paradise:  
Where like a new-borne babe it soft doth lie,  
In bed of lillies wrapt in tender wise.  
And compast all about with roses sweet,  
And daintie violets from head to feet.

But the Adonis legend itself had a cosmic interpretation that Spenser  
himself drew on in The Faerie Queene, so the spiritual turn is not  
inappropriate. <sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> 10.720-3.

<sup>22</sup> The name "Clorinda" also evokes an incident that had both sacred and profane interpretations. Although in Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* Clorinda is the victim of the wound rather than the beholder, her wound has sexual implications for the male observer, Tancred, but is also the cause of Clorinda's deathbed conversion to Christianity. By calling herself Clorinda, the speaker of the "Dolefull Lay" may be saying that Sidney's death has created a wound in her.

By comparing Sidney with Adonis, his eulogizers not only diverted attention from the real nature of his demise, they also actively relocated and sexualized that death. Like Adonis, the figure of Astrophel is initially innocent of love. At the beginning of the poem Spenser calls "his joyance innocent, / Sweet without sowre, and honny without gall." In the Renaissance, love was often described as a combination of sweet and sour. Alciati's emblems 112 and 113, for instance, show Cupid being chased by bees as an emblem of the pain of love.<sup>23</sup> Thus what Astrophel is "innocent" of is erotic love. The focus of the Ovidian story, Venus' love for Adonis, does not correspond to a similar focus in the elegies on Sidney, but the passages dealing with Sidney's wound do invoke a parallel erotic involvement. In "Astrophel," the spectator is Stella, who takes sorrow to the extreme and "followed her make like Turtle chaste. / To prove that death their hearts cannot divide / Which living were in love so firmly tide." Other poems on Sidney's death describe it in Ovidian terms, but without a putative spectator, and in these poems the poet and his (or her) audience must take the place of "Venus when she waild her deare Adonis slaine."<sup>24</sup>

Adonis is appealing because he is astoundingly beautiful, and so it proves for the elegiac representations of Sidney as well. The beauty of Spenser's Astrophel, for example, like that of Adonis, carries a strong erotic charge. At the beginning of the poem, the speaker tells us that "all men's hearts with secret ravishment / He stole away, and weetingly

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<sup>23</sup> Andrea Alciati, *Emblematum Liber* (New York: Hildesheim, 1977).

<sup>24</sup> from "The Mourning Muse of Thyestis."

beguyld." His beauty makes his death more tragic (in Spenser it is a "sad ensample of mans suddein end"), but it also may contribute to his misfortune. In his commentary on the story of Adonis, George Sandys argues that the fragility of the anemone (the flower that Adonis becomes) expresses "the fraile condition and short continuance of Beautie," but he also quotes Seneca to support his view that "Men of excellent beauties have likely beene subject to miserable destinies."<sup>25</sup> The dangers inherent in male beauty recall another Ovidian tale in which a young man's death is even more directly related to his beauty: the myth of Hyacinthus. The death of Hyacinthus, of an accidental wound caused by Phoebus, finds echoes in "the Mourning Muse of Thyestis," where the young man's palor and similarity to a wilting flower match Ovid's comparison of Hyacinthus to "violets, or lillies loving streames, / Or Poppie, bruized in their yellow stemmes," which "Wither forthwith, and hang their heavy heads."<sup>26</sup> Both Adonis and Hyacinthus are types of a young masculinity which triggers desire and results in its own destruction. Sidney could be compared with them in youth, if not in beauty, but the real effect of these elegiac representations was to describe Sidney as the object of desire. To those bent on eulogizing him, he could be portrayed as too good to live long. According to this logic, Sidney's mortal wound is not something to be ignored, but central to the task of canonization. On the day he was wounded "An epitaph upon the right honorable Sir Philip Sidney" exclaims,

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<sup>25</sup> George Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphosis, Englished, Mythologized, and Represented in Figures* (Lincoln Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1970) .\*\*

<sup>26</sup> Sandys, Book 10 ll. 185-192\*\*

Backe to the campe by thee that day was brought  
First thy owne death, and after thy long fame.

Here, both death and fame reside in Sidney's wound.

It may seem odd to consider the circumstances of Sidney's death before discussing his work, since Sidney himself could not have known that he would die of a such a wound, nor that his contemporaries would react to his death as they did. Ironically, however, Sidney's work confronts many of the issues that were to prove so powerful to him and to his peers during and after his death. The new Arcadia, in particular, does for its characters the same thing that Sidney's contemporaries did for him after his death. Margaret Hannay has pointed out the similarities between the plot of the revised Arcadia and the traditional saints' lives. She argues that the adventures of the princes and the trials of Pamela and Philoclea function like a protestant saint's life, or at least that "the saints' lives and the Arcadia fulfilled similar functions for their audiences."<sup>27</sup> Likewise Sidney, while never specifically claimed as a protestant "saint," was taken as an exemplary figure, and one whose death became the subject of legend. His death inspired not just the elegiac poetry that I have discussed, but also a number of "lives."<sup>28</sup> Hence, it is not surprising that contemporary versions of his life and death shared concerns with some of Sidney's own fiction. Arthur Kinney has remarked how Sidney "stubbornly dismisses the primary

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<sup>27</sup> Margaret Hannay, "Faining Notable Images of Vertue': Sidney's New Arcadia as *Legenda Sanctorum*," *University of Hartford Studies in Literature* 15-16 (1983-4): 84.

<sup>28</sup> George Whetstone's, Thomas Moffet's, George Gifford's, as well as Fulke Greville's.

distinctions between life and art," so that "fiction-making and factual understanding [become] indivisible acts."<sup>29</sup>

The actual circumstances of Sidney's death were, as we have seen, a potential obstacle to its fictional heroic interpretation, but Sidney himself had already foreseen this kind of obstacle in his own fiction. In his revision of the Arcadia, Sidney demonstrates an increasing interest in the status of the individual body, and the meaning of wounds. The threat of ugly wounds, sometimes even dismemberment, metaphorical as well as literal, pervades the New Arcadia. Sidney's revision concludes with Amphialus' rebellion which rends the political body of Arcadia, and gives its best knights wounds that are neither heroic nor beautiful. In the face of this threat, however, Sidney suggests a new vision of the heroic body, in which the tragic pointlessness of the wound is muted by the beauty of the victim in suffering.

Sidney dramatizes the threat to the heroic body in the New Arcadia in one of its very first scenes. Musidorus has washed up on the coast of Arcadia and convinces the shepherds Strephon and Claius to accompany him to sea in search of his friend Pyrocles. Before they find him, they come upon the wreck of the ship which carried the princes: "a ship, or rather the carcase of the ship, or rather some few bones of the carcase hulling there, part broken, part burned, part drowned..." The ship itself is only one of many carcasses in the area, however:

amidst the precious things were a number of dead bodies, which likewise did not only testify both elements' violence, but that the chief violence was grown

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<sup>29</sup> Arthur F. Kinney, "Intimations of Mortality: Sidney's Journey to Flushing and Zutphen," *Sir Philip Sidney: 1586 and the Creation of a Legend*, eds. Jan Van Dorsten, Arthur F. Kinney, and Dominic Baker-Smith. (Leiden: Leiden UP, 1986) 125-6.

of human inhumanity; for their bodies were full of grisly wounds, and their blood had as it were filled the wrinkles of the sea's visage, which it seemed that the sea would not wash away that it might witness it is not always his fault when we condemn his cruelty.<sup>30</sup>

There is little context for the destruction in this scene. This is no battlefield where opposing sides have met. The dead bodies are not distinguished one from the other, and their grisly wounds indicate only destruction in a general sense. The ocean setting reinforces this lack of specific meaning, since its fluid medium has mixed together the blood, the bodies, and the material possessions of the slain. It is no longer possible to discern, for example, which of the bodies owned which of the "precious things," in life. Like the ship, which Sidney describes as progressively less whole, the human body in this scene has little individual meaning.<sup>31</sup> Finally, the meaning that the bodies do have in the scene depends on negation: they simply record "human inhumanity." This oxymoron was still relatively fresh in the sixteenth-century.<sup>32</sup> In this passage it supports Sidney's larger rhetorical move of comparing the sea's conventional "cruelty" with that of human beings. Human violence, at the beginning of the *New Arcadia*, seems as random and impersonal as that of the natural world. As it happens, Pyrocles is not one of the dead bodies floating about. His narrow escape, however, foreshadows what we will later learn about the adventures of the two

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<sup>30</sup> Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (The New Arcadia)*, ed. Victor Skretkovicz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). All future citations are from this edition, and will be indicated by book, page, and line number.

<sup>31</sup> Even later, when we hear the story leading up to the shipwreck, the event remains equally irrational.

<sup>32</sup> According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word "inhumanity" itself began to be used at the end of the fifteenth-century. The OED lists Burns as the first to use the phrase "man's inhumanity."

princes. They are the heroes of the New Arcadia, and their heroism is constantly shaped by the threat of a grotesque and unsavory death.

Pyrocles and Musidorus function as private individuals for most of the revised Arcadia. However, because they are princes destined to rule their own kingdoms, their bodies are never precisely their own. The noble body in the *New Arcadia* has a public and political role. Like other Renaissance political theorists, Sidney uses the image of the state as a single body. Euarchus, who in Book II is portrayed as the ideal ruler, is powerful because he acknowledges that “he with his people made all but one politic body whereof himself was the head” (2.161.14-16). For him this metaphor means that ruler and subjects are mutually responsible. They owe service to him because he is their king, but in return he “cared for them as he would for his own limbs.” Sidney uses this topos unexceptionally for the most part,<sup>33</sup> but when he depicts wounds that occur in a political context he alters it. If the state is a body, one might assume that wounds, particularly wounds inflicted on the body of the ruler, would be a natural metaphor for political division and disintegration. This is certainly one of the ways in which Restoration writers conceived of the civil war, for example.<sup>34</sup> In the *New Arcadia*,

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<sup>33</sup> The need for mutual responsibility between ruler and subjects was a Renaissance commonplace, and gave rise to such metaphors as the comparison of the kingdom to a garden, as in Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, as well as the idea of the kingdom as an individual body.

<sup>34</sup> The titles of many seventeenth-century works describe religious and civil strife in terms of wounds. For example: Humphrey Moseley, *Phyllon therapeytikon: an healing leaf most humbly tendred to the nobility and gentry of England, as an essay to cure the bleeding wounds of themselves and the nation* (London: Printed by D. Maxwell, for Sa. Gellibrand, 1658)



however, bodily suffering is political valuable, particularly when it involves the body of the ruler (or of the future ruler).

Physical pain is part of Pyrocles and Musidorus' education as princes:

their bodies exercised in all abilities both of doing and suffering, and their minds acquainted by degrees with dangers; and in sum, all bent to the making up of princely minds, no servile fear used towards them, nor any other violent restraint, but still as to princes, so that a habit of commanding was naturalized in them, and therefore farther from tyranny (2.163.35-164.5).

The experience of danger and suffering is what separates a natural habit of command from tyranny. The subsequent adventures of the two princes are also a part of their education. But in these adventures, their "suffering" is just as important as their "doing," a fact which explains the amount of time they spend in captivity or recovering from wounds.

Sidney even depicts bodily suffering as a source of nourishment for the two princes, as though it replaces mother's milk:

As high honour is not only gotten and born by pain and danger, but must be nursed by the like or else vanisheth as soon as it appears to the world, so the natural hunger thereof which was in Pyrocles suffered him not to account a resting seat of that (which ever either riseth or falleth), but still to make one occasion beget another, whereby his doings might send his praise to others' mouths to rebound again true contentment to his spirit (2.178.33-179.2).

In this context, wounds nurture the nobility of the ruler and contribute to the "high honour" that separates the ruling class from the people.

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Jeremiah Rich, *The mirrour of mercy in the midst of misery, or, Life triumphant in death, wherein free-will is abolished, and free-grace exalted: with the large wonders of loves wounds* (London: Printed by J. G., 1654).

When common people become subject to wounds, as they do during the popular rebellion in Book II of the New Arcadia, their wounds are entirely different from those of the nobility. Unlike the wounds that Pyrocles and Musidorus suffer during their adventures, the wounds in this scene are both anatomically specific and comically grotesque. In fact, the details of the wounds are what make them comic:

Among the rebels there was a dapper fellow, a tailor by occupation, who, fetching his courage only from their going back, began to bow his knees, and very fencer-like to draw near to Zelmane; but (as he came within her distance) turning his sword very nicely about his crown, Basilius with a side blow strake off his nose. He being a suitor to a seamster's daughter, and therefore not a little grieved for such a disgrace, stooped down because he had heard that if it were fresh put to, it would cleave on again—but as his hand was on the ground to bring his nose to his head, Zelmane with a blow sent his head to his nose (2.281.21-26).

Ironically, the dismembered tailor spent his time sewing things together. But, since it emphasizes the man's profession, the passage has a broader comic effect as well. It reveals how ridiculously amateurish he is as a warrior. The man's "fencer-like" stance and sword twirling are really part of the affectation of a "dapper" tailor. When he loses his nose, his behavior completes the picture of a man who fails to understand the nature of martial wounds. He forgets at once that he is in the middle of a battle and attempts to assert his professional inclination to unite parts and "save face." The nature of his wound, and of the "side blow" that makes it, are also evidence that the tailor's concern with his appearance is drastically misplaced. In the epic tradition, the more heroic and noble characters rarely receive disfiguring wounds; these are reserved for less important characters. In this respect, the tailor's vanity parallels his presumption in rebelling against his king, and his death shows such presumption to be its own downfall.

The rebellion in Arcadia has long been recognized as a focal point of Sidney's political thought, but critical opinions about the grotesque wounds that occur during the rebellion have been deeply divided. For some, Sidney's depiction shows how critical he is of the notion of popular uprising. Greenblatt, for example, argues that the grotesque comedy of the battle reveals the uncontrolled passion of the lower classes, and their utter unfitness for rule.<sup>35</sup> Like the tailor, the other rebels are inept because of their economic and social class. According to Greenblatt, the rebels' dismemberment also parallels their confused political agenda, and dramatizes the threat they offer the stable political body. Richard Berrong, on the other hand, stresses the origins of the riot in Clinias' manipulation of popular sentiment. Pointing to revisions of the scene in the *New Arcadia*, he says that "Sidney clearly wanted his readers to abandon the notion ... that popular uprisings could be dismissed as eruptions of lower-estate covetousness or uncontrolled passion."<sup>36</sup> Some critics, however, have seen the comedy as undermining any serious consideration of the rebels' cause. Alan Isler, for example, sees the grotesque violence of the battle scene as playful, "like the strokes of the cartoonist's pen," rather than serious.<sup>37</sup>

I think the passage's lack of verisimilitude itself has serious implications, however. Sidney is certainly capable of depicting grotesque

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<sup>35</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, "Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre, and The Representation of Rebellion," *Representations* (1.1, 1978).

<sup>36</sup> Richard M. Berrong, "Changing Depictions of Popular Revolt in Sixteenth-Century England: The Case of Sidney's Two Arcadias," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 19.1 (1989): 30.

<sup>37</sup> Alan D. Isler, "Sidney, Shakespeare, and the 'Slain-Not Slain'," *U of Toronto Quarterly* 37 (1968): 175-85.

wounds in non-comic ways, as he later does in the opening scenes of Amphialus' rebellion, so the comic unreality of these wounds has a specific purpose. By making fun of the rebels' bumbling ineffectiveness, Sidney does discount their direct political threat, but he also perpetuates the role of the body in the construction of political power. Ultimately, he depicts the wounds suffered by the rebels as ridiculous because he wants to show that heroic wounds are restricted to the upper classes. Even when they rebel, according to Sidney, the common people have no access to the body that defines the power of the ruling class. As a whole, the battle itself has less to do with the nature of popular rebellion than it does with the quality of the rulers' bodies. The real threat that Sidney attempts to defuse here is not to aristocratic rule, but to the heroic understanding of the body that gives moral backing to that rule. Unlike Paré, who perceives the human body as a levelling factor, Sidney tries to define common bodies as not only inherently grotesque, but ridiculous.

Sidney's own attitude toward the battle contrasts with that of the ill fated artist that he includes in the battle scene. This man, a painter, "was to counterfeit the skirmish between the Centaurs and Lapithes, and had been very desirous to see some notable wounds, to be able the more lively to express them." Unfortunately, he gets too close to his subject and "Dorus, with a turn of his sword, strake off both his hands. And so the painter returned well skilled in wounds, but with never a hand to perform his skill" (2.282.12-20). The painter's fate shows the dangers of taking representation too literally, but the exact reason for his punishment is more obscure. Greenblatt, who sees the blows that the painter admires as the ones given by the peasants, argues that he is

wounded because he is "drifting toward solidarity with the rebels."<sup>38</sup> Berrong, on the other hand, points out that the painter's subject, the battle of the Centaurs and Lapiths, was usually seen as a figure for the triumph of passion over reason, and hence that the painter is not sympathetic with the rebels' cause at all.<sup>39</sup> For him, the painter's injury is "at most ... a warning to those artists who, in their desire to portray more accurately the real nature of popular rebellion, risk falling victim themselves to social violence."<sup>40</sup> It is possible that Sidney may have delivered the passage as an abstract warning to other artists, although "the real nature of popular rebellion" was hardly a popular artistic subject in the period. It is more likely, however, that the painter's mistake bears directly on the meaning of the episode in the New Arcadia. Any analogies between the riot and the battle of the Centaurs and Lapiths are neither complimentary to the peasants, nor to the nobles. But the painter himself is looking specifically for "notable wounds," and this is his mistake. To admit that this battle will produce notable wounds is either to assume that the nobles will be wounded (and hence that the peasants pose a threat), or, more likely, that the peasants' wounds will be notable. Since the whole thrust of the passage is comically to deflate the wounds received by the commoners, the painter's serious interest acts as a foil to Sidney's comic depiction of the wounded common body.

In the first half of the New Arcadia, the heroic body seems relatively secure, or at least not threatened by the grotesquerie that marks the

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<sup>38</sup> Greenblatt.

<sup>39</sup> Berrong 21.

<sup>40</sup> Berrong 21.

commons. By the end of Sidney's revision, however, the heroic body is more seriously challenged. Another rebellion arises in Arcadia, this one within the ruling class itself.<sup>41</sup> Amphialus' attempt to take control of Arcadia is a wound in the body of the state, and it turns the Arcadian nobles one against the other, evolving into a civil war of enormously destructive proportions. This war threatens even the noble or aristocratic body with the kind of grotesque dismemberment hinted at in the scene of the shipwreck and acted out on the bodies of commoners in the riot. Ironically, Amphialus begins as a potential hero. Helen speaks of his youth in terms similar to those used to describe the education of Pyrocles and Musidorus: "Nothing was so hard but his valour overcame; which yet still he so guided with true virtue that although no man was in our parts spoken of but he for his manhood, yet, as though therein he excelled himself, he was commonly called the courteous Amphialus" (I.123\*). In fact, Amphialus' ability as a leader is one reason that his revolt is so successful, at least initially. Although the rebellion is a breach in the political body of the state, Amphialus orders his forces to form a sound body of their own. In setting up his camp, for instance, he assigns his soldiers positions based on "the constitution of their bodies" (3.327.26-7). The war begins as though it will affirm the heroic value of the bodies involved:

at the first, though it were terrible, yet terror was decked so bravely with rich furniture, gilt swords, shining armours, pleasant pencels, that the eye with delight had scarce leisure to be afraid (3.344.38-345.5).

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<sup>41</sup> The commoners rebellion was incited at Cecropia's orders, but took its own shape and direction.

As the conflict progresses, however, “the often-changing fortune began also to change the hue of the battles”: they become steadily more horrific. What was at first a truly pretty picture becomes, as Sidney ironically puts it, “beautified with the grisliness of wounds, the rising of dust, the hideous falls and groans of the dying” (3.340.23-5). The first sign that the conflict is beginning to escape chivalric bounds is the plight of the horses. These, “lay dead under their dead masters whom unknighly wounds had unjustly punished for a faithful duty” (3.340.28-30). Although the “unknighly wounds” presumably applies to the horses, since it was considered unknighly to wound an opponent’s horse, the grammatical ambiguity of “whom” makes the clause apply equally to the dead knights. By the time the battle is in full swing, this ambiguity has disappeared. The victims of this war suffer the same kind of dismemberment as the rebellious peasants of Book II, although in this case it is not comic:

In one place lay disinherited heads, dispossessed of their natural seignories; in another whole bodies to see to, but that their hearts, wont to be bound over so close, were now with deadly violence opened: in others, fouler deaths had uglily displayed their trailing guts. There lay arms, whose fingers yet moved as if they feel for him that made them feel; and legs which contrary to common reason, but being discharged of their burden were grown heavier (3.340.35-341.5).

At this moment, the scene approaches the chaos and ugliness that were characteristic of the real Early Modern battlefield. The narrator’s response to the tragedy is unambiguous. “All,” he says, “universally defiled with dust, blood, broken armours, mangled bodies, took away the mask and set forth horror in his own horrible manner” (3.344.38-345.5).

The battle is broadly horrific, but Sidney’s depictions of certain individual wounds reveal the specific nature this horror. Just as the

battle is beginning, Amphialus causes a wound that sets the tone for the entire battle. In the vanguard of the Arcadian loyalists is a young man named Agenor, the youngest brother of Philanax. Agenor is, according to Sidney, "of all that army the most beautiful," "whose face as yet did not betray his sex with so much as show of manly hair; of a mind having no limits of hope nor knowing why to fear; full of jollity in conversation, and lately grown a lover" (467). Unfortunately, Agenor has neglected to lower the visor on his helmet. Amphialus charges, then, seeing the youth and beauty of his adversary, lowers his lance in order not to harm him. The lance shatters upward, entering into Agenor's open helmet and strikes a face "far fitter for the combats of Venus giving not only a sudden, but a foul death, leaving scarcely any tokens of his former beauty" (468). This type of accident, as Malcolm Parkinson has explained, was relatively common in formal tournaments of the period, especially since armor could not be relied on to protect against thin splinters of wood driven with great force.<sup>42</sup> But Agenor's death is far more than an unfortunate accident. Like the "Astrophel" whom Sidney's peers lamented in place of the real, pock-marked, Sidney, Agenor is a type of young masculine beauty much in vogue in Renaissance England. Like Adonis, with whom Sidney was also compared, Agenor is "lately grown a lover." The ugliness of his death wound reveals the extent to which Amphialus' rebellion will destroy this type of beauty and cut short

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<sup>42</sup> Some of the more notable accidents occurred to Henry VIII in 1524 (he was unharmed), to Sir Francis Brian in 1526 (he lost an eye), and of course to Henry II of France in 1559 (he was killed when a splinter pierced his eye). Sidney himself had cause to remember such a danger. In a letter of 1575 he was informed that Albert Count of Hohenloe had been killed while jousting at a wedding celebration. E. Malcolm Parkinson, "Sidney's Portrayal of Mounted Combat with Lances," *Spenser Studies* 5 (1985).



the same kind of potential Sidney's contemporaries saw in him as the perfect representative of his class. In the New Arcadia, Agenor's "foul death" also foreshadows the many foul deaths and unknighly wounds which will follow. Even the apparent accident that leads to Agenor's wound reflects certain aspects of Amphialus' career. Since Amphialus' tragedy is that his passion for Philoclea misdirects his essential nobility and good intentions, it is appropriate that he destroys Agenor in spite of, or perhaps even because of, his desire to avoid hurting him.

Amphialus' destruction of Agenor leads to other similar tragedies. Later in the battle, it results in the death of Ismenus, another beautiful young man, and on the opposite side. Ismenus is Amphialus' page. Philanax has an opportunity to kill him during the battle, hesitates because of Ismenus' youth and beauty, and then, remembering Agenor, goes ahead and strikes Ismenus down anyway. This time the wound is neither as ugly, nor as immediately fatal, and the young victim has time to be "fierce though beautiful, and beautiful though dying," "like a fair apple which some uncourteous body, breaking his bough, should throw down before it were ripe" (\*472). The classical example on which Sidney is drawing here, and perhaps by contrast in the death of Agenor as well, is the death of the young Euryalus in book nine of the Aeneid. Euryalus is as handsome in death as in life; his dying gestures resemble "a purple flower, severed by the plow," or "poppies... weighted down with sudden rain."<sup>43</sup> In the Aeneid, Euryalus' death is particularly tragic because his close friend Nisus is observing the event, and in the Renaissance, Nisus

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<sup>43</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid* trans. Allen Mandelbaum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981) 9. 577-81 (p. 239).

and Euryalus were sometimes taken as a classical example of friendship between young noblemen. This is certainly how Sidney interprets them in the *Defence of Poesy*, for example, and one reason why the author of *The Mourning Muse of Thyestis* uses the virgilian passage to describe Sidney himself.<sup>44</sup> By describing the death of Ismenus in these terms, as well as by linking it to the death of Agenor, Sidney emphasizes the aristocratic potential (friendship, love, beauty) that the Amphialan rebellion interrupts and destroys. Once Amphialus has unleashed this kind of violence, it becomes self-perpetuating.

The wounds suffered in Amphialus's insurrection are a manifestly public and political disruption of the heroic body. The whole conflict, however, has its origins in a deeper and more private kind of wounding that has been building throughout the revised *Arcadia* in Sidney's depiction of erotic love. Like Tasso and Spenser, Sidney uses the traditional metaphor of love as an "inward" wound. In its most conventional form, the metaphor pervades the lyrical Eclogues separating the narrative chapters. Pyrocles sings of "the wound festered so strangely within me."<sup>45</sup> Musidorus describes Pamela as one "whose wounds are salves, whose yokes please more than pleasure doth" (410). In the narrative, Sidney sometimes uses the conventional imagery of the wound of love at great length. When Pyrocles first admits that he is in

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<sup>44</sup> In the *Defence of Poesy*, Sidney says, "See whether wisdom and temperance in Ulysses and Diomedes, valor in Achilles, friendship in Nisus and Euryalus, even to an ignorant man carry not an apparent shining..." 161 in Hazard Adams, ed., *Critical Theory Since Plato*, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971).

<sup>45</sup> Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (New York: Penguin, 1977) 196. Passages from the eclogues are drawn from this edition unless otherwise noted.

love, Musidorus, who has not yet fallen for Pamela, criticizes him harshly, and Pyrocles is terribly upset,

"And herewith the deep wound of his love, being rubbed afresh with this new unkindness, began, as it were, to bleed again in such sort that he was unable to bear it any longer; but gushing out abundance of tears, and crossing his arms over his woeful heart, as if his tears had been out-flowing blood, his arms an overpressing burden, he sunk down to the ground" (\*I.138).

The princes also refer to themselves repeatedly as being wounded, and can even devise elaborate reflections upon their wounded condition. Even Argalus and Parthenia, whose relationship is delightfully free of posturing, accept the metaphor to some degree. When Argalus rides away to answer Basilius' summons in Book 3, he carries a favor embroidered with "bleeding hearts, though never intended to any bloody exercise." Sidney also plays off the comparison between real and metaphorical wounds. When Amphialus is wounded in the thigh by Pyrocles (disguised as Zelmane), he "departed from them, faster bleeding in his heart than at his wound, which, bound up by the sheets wherewith Philoclea had been wrapped, made him thank the wound and bless the sword for that favour" (2.198.25-28).

Widespread as it is, the "inward" wound of love might be relatively innocuous, were it not that Sidney depicts erotic passion as affecting a physical body as well as a metaphorical one. Sometimes, actual physical wounds help to create erotic love. A character's physical suffering in the New Arcadia is likely to provoke or increase desire in others. The misguided queen Andromana, for instance, falls in love with Pyrocles and Musidorus while they are staying with her, recovering from "some very dangerous wounds" (2.249). Pyrocles himself admits that seeing the dying Zelmane (whose name he later adopts) has primed him to fall in

love with Philoclea. Zelmane's death, he says, "made my heart as apt to receive the wound, as the power of your beauty with irresistible force to pierce"(2.268.33-4). When a character is already in love, the sight of his/her lover's wounds intensifies his/her emotion. When Helen sees Amphialus' deadly wounds, at the end of Sidney's revision, "she fell in a swoon upon him, as if she could not choose but die of his wounds"(3.444.17). Even comparatively trivial wounds have a strong effect in the New Arcadia. When Pyrocles (disguised as Zelmane) is nicked by an angry lion in Book I, the wound provokes Basilius and Gynecia to paroxysms of solicitude. Although the wound is "of no importance," Gynecia nonetheless applies "a precious balm unto it of power to heal a greater grief" (1.113.26-36). This principle by which physical wounds influence love reaches its peak in the mock executions of Pamela and Philoclea near the end of the New Arcadia. In these scenes, Cecropia's designs fail because the sight of wounds does not make the loving observer fear death, but rather seek it. When Pyrocles, accidentally witness the spectacle of Philoclea's head in "a basin of gold pitifully enamelled with blood" (3.431.9), he succumbs to a "wild fury of desperate agony" and attempts to brain himself against the wall. Philoclea, despite the fact that her affections for Pamela are sisterly rather than erotic, also desires to die herself when she sees what she thinks is her sister being executed.

These individual reactions to wounds might seem to be the product of ordinary human sympathy, but in the New Arcadia such sympathy is the central experience of love itself. Echoing neoplatonic theory, Musidorus claims, "true love hath that excellent nature in it, that it doth

transform the very essence of the lover into the thing loved, uniting and, as it were, incorporating it with a secret and inward working.” (1.71.33-72.2) Ideally the “thing loved” should be virtue, but in the New Arcadia it is often the wounded body of the loved one, and the neoplatonic paradigm becomes the logic by which physical or outward wounds provoke metaphorical or “inward” ones. The danger implicit in this process is that physical wounds do not in themselves advertise the social class, the virtue, nor even the identity of the victim. The whole idea of a “mock” execution, depends on the observers’ inability to determine the real body that is being wounded, or even whether or not a wound has occurred at all. Pamela’s case is particularly ironic since the body that Philoclea and Pyrocles take to be hers really belongs to the entirely unvirtuous Artesia. Philoclea’s “execution” has the the living and unwounded princess play the part of her decapitated head (albeit unwillingly). The clothing in one case, and the blood and basin of gold in the other, are the shaky ground on which the observers firm passions are based.

If love can derive from physical wounds, it can also produce such wounds, as it does in Amphialus’ rebellion. Long before this point, however, love has already been linked with war. In one of his conceits during the Second Eclogue, for instance, Musidorus likens his mistress to an entire army:

Her loose hairs be the shot; the breasts the pikes be;  
Scouts each motion is; the hands be horsemen;  
Her lips are the riches the wars to maintain.  
Where well couched abides a coffer of pearl;  
Her legs carriage is of all the sweet camp (432)

In the narrative, such conceits can become horrifyingly real. King Tiridates, outraged at Erona's rejection of him, takes arms against her and kills her subjects,

For being far too strong in the field, he spared not man, woman and child; but (as though there could be found no foil to set forth the extremity of his love but extremity of hatred) wrote, as it were, the sonnets of his love in the blood, and tuned them in the cries of her subjects...(2.206.11-15).

Throughout the New Arcadia, metaphorical wounds can spawn real wounds, because inward emotions have physical consequences. For Sidney, "inward violence" is not just a state of mind, but a force which motivates "outward" action, even in as simple a case as when Basilius and Gynecia run after Pyrocles (disguised as Zelmane) "each carried forward with an inward violence" (1.113\*).

Ultimately, the wound of love becomes part of Sidney's political vision, because the real physical consequences associated with love are almost always politically and socially disruptive in the New Arcadia. Rulers, particularly those who fall in love with commoners, experience love as a direct challenge to political propriety and political wisdom. Sometimes the passion of a ruler has disastrous consequences for the common people. Erona's love for the base Antiphilus, for instance, earns her the hatred of her more aristocratic suitor Tiridates. Ultimately he goes to war against Lycia itself, making Erona's subjects suffer for her impropriety. More commonly, love causes rulers simply to abandon their responsibilities, leaving a dangerous vacuum of power behind. Plangus' father, the king of Iberia, falls improperly in love with his son's mistress, Andromana, and makes her his queen. She immediately takes advantage of the situation and becomes the de-facto ruler of the kingdom, something that, as Pyrocles says, "may luckily fall out to him

that hath the blessing to match with some heroical-minded lady. But in him it was neither guided by wisdom, nor followed by fortune, but thereby was slipped insensibly into such an estate that he lived at her indiscreet discretion" (2.249\*). Even the love of one aristocrat for another can be politically disastrous. Helen, who is "beloved of [her] people," and whom Sidney elsewhere characterizes as an excellent ruler, falls prey to an unproductive passion for Amphialus, a passion that leads to, but does not end in, the death of Amphialus' friend Philoxenus. Helen herself realizes that from a political point of view her unrequited love is simply "absence and folly," and that her subjects are being wonderfully tolerant. In many ways the villainous Cecropia is right when she says that "love commonly is the instrument of subjection" (3.447\*).

Sidney even creates the appearance of social incompatibility in love where none actually exists. Under ordinary circumstances, Musidorus and Pyrocles might seem to be the perfect suitors for Pamela and Philoclea, but in the delightfully twisted world of the New Arcadia they are forced to disguise themselves as entirely unsuitable. Musidorus adopts the identity of a commoner, and Pyrocles that of a woman. They woo the princesses across an artificial version of the same kinds of inequities that make love politically disastrous for so many other characters in the New Arcadia. This fantasy has its dangers for them as well, even though their identities are assumed, because their disguises are neither as impenetrable nor as transparent as they desire. Pyrocles finds that the one who instantly sees through his disguise is not Philoclea, but Gynecia, while Basilius, whom he did not intend to attract,

is too well taken in by the prince's transvestism. As for Musidorus, he has some difficulty in convincing Pamela that he is a suitable object of desire, even after he makes clear his real identity.

In order to reveal their identities to the princesses, the princes must erase the social bodies that they have adopted, a process that depends on their physical performance. Musidorus, for instance, attempts to "show" Pamela his nobility by demonstrating his martial training. Pamela appears to be impressed by these bodily endeavors. At one point, she tells Philoclea, he "danced the matachin dance in armour (O, with what graceful dexterity!) I think to make me see that he had been brought up in such exercises" (2. 248-9\*). At another point she compares his abilities as a rider with those of the unquestionably base Dametas. Musidorus, she says,

as if centaur-like he had been one piece with the horse, was no more moved than one is with the going of his own legs; and in effect so did he command him as his own limbs; for though he had both spurs and wand, they seemed rather marks of sovereignty than instruments of punishment, his hand and leg with most pleasing grace commanding without threatening, and rather remembering than chastising... that it seemed as he borrowed the horse's body so he lent the horse his mind (2.248\*)

Dametas on the other hand gives "his gay apparel almost as foul an outside as it had an inside." By using words like "sovereignty" and "command" to describe Musidorus' horsemanship, Pamela recalls the qualities attributed to the ideal ruler in the New Arcadia.<sup>46</sup> In the specific context of Dametas' ludicrous incompetence, the scene echoes Sidney's political defense of inherent nobility in the riot scenes.

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<sup>46</sup> She is following a well established Renaissance tradition in doing so.



Pyrocles has an even harder time in establishing himself as a candidate for Philoclea's affection. Even though the princess herself is easily convinced of both his masculinity and nobility, Pyrocles remains caught in the unwelcome attentions of her parents, one of whom has seen through his disguise too well, and the other who has failed to do so at all. His attempts at self-advertisement are thus reduced to cryptic gestures which turn elaborately on his own conception of himself as wounded. His contribution to the royal family's "recreations" is a series of carefully mutilated birds:

Now she [Pyrocles] brought them to see a seeled dove, who, the blinder she was, the higher she strave. Another time a kite, which having a gut cunningly pulled out of her and so let let fly, called all the kites in that quarter, who (as often times the world is deceived) thinking her prosperous when indeed she was wounded, made the poor kite find that opinion of riches may well be dangerous (I.152\*).

Both of these examples are designed to comment on Pyrocles' own condition. The blinded dove, for instance, is meant to be like the lover, blinded by his passion. The image of the kite is a more curious analogy, however. In it, Pyrocles refers not just to his own wound of love, but to his frustrating situation as a whole. The kite, like the dove, is unaware of her mutilation, but so are the other kites who assail her (they think she has simply found a piece of intestine lying about). Like the kite, Pyrocles finds himself in a situation where he is the object of desire rather than the desirer. His "inward" wound has prompted an outward disguise that only complicates and confuses his courtship of Philoclea.

Both Pyrocles and Musidorus are forced to maintain the disguises they have created long after they have served their ostensible purpose. Despite Pamela's conviction that Musidorus is indeed noble, she insists that he continue to mediate his intentions toward her through the

fantasy of wooing the unfortunate Mopsa, who is, of course, the social equal of the humble Dorus. Pyrocles, first because he is unable to dislodge the affection he has created in Gynecia and Basilius, and later because he hopes to aid Philoclea, finds it equally impossible to break completely free of the role he has adopted. These difficulties naturally cause a great deal of frustration in the two princes. At one point, Musidorus complains to Pyrocles that, "howsoever I show her I am no base body, all I do is but beat a rock and get foam" (2.141.1-2). Although he uses "body," here, in its widest sense (he means "person"), his anxiety is deeply involved in his physical body. He wants to show that his body is intrinsically noble, even as he relies on its lack of class marking as part of his disguise. Ultimately, the princes' frustration with with the unmanageability of their adopted roles blends with their initial sense of love as painful. Their "wounds" of love begin to express not just the conventional pain associated with unrequited love, but the anguish brought on by a sense that each is forced to inhabit a body incompatible with his desire.

The anxiety of the two princes is itself part of Sidney's larger depiction of the conflictual quality of the self. Love is a "wound," in the New Arcadia, because human nature is, in Sidney's depiction, emotionally divided. In the first Eclogues, Sidney rhymes the phrase "Oh wretched state of man in self-division" with "Cupid's deep incision" (188), and the connection between self-division and "incision" holds in the ensuing narrative, where love is consistently depicted in terms of its "inward violence." Critics who have worked on Sidney's rhetoric often refer to his habit of describing his characters' motives in in terms of

complexly linked contradictory emotions. In John Carey's terms, the language of the *Arcadia* "circles to and fro;"<sup>47</sup> for Michael McCanles, it is filled with "dialectical reciprocity."<sup>48</sup> Both Carey and McCanles interpret this quality as a moral comment on human nature. To Carey, for example, it shows "the counteraction inherent in action, the repercussion of acts upon the agent."<sup>49</sup> Carey argues that Amphialus is the character who most "personifies the human dilemmas--the peripeteia and the self-conflict--which we have identified as Sidney's foremost structural principles."<sup>50</sup> McCanles pushes the existential quality of Sidney's depiction of self-conflict, arguing that by emphasizing mutual implication Sidney challenges the basic opposition between virtue and vice itself. Ultimately, McCanles claims, evil is "the consequence of attempts to escape the dialectical reciprocity that potentially informs all our actions"<sup>51</sup> Whether or not Sidney would embrace the "reciprocity" of virtue and vice, I think he shares his vision of human self-conflict with both Tasso and Spenser, and like them his deployment of both metaphorical and real wounds applies the Early Modern medical definition of a wound as a "solution of continuity": an interruption in an otherwise unified body.

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<sup>47</sup> John Carey, "Structure and Rhetoric in Sidney's *Arcadia*," *Sir Sidney: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, ed. Dennis Kay. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 246.

<sup>48</sup> Michael McCanles, "The Rhetoric of Character Portrayal in Sidney's *New Arcadia*," *Criticism* 25.2 (1983): 123-139.

<sup>49</sup> Carey 250.

<sup>50</sup> Carey 253.

<sup>51</sup> McCanles 126, 131.

Pyrocles and Musidorus are threatened by the “self-division” of love, but it falls to other characters to demonstrate the eventual pathology of a self divorced from its desiring body. Gynecia is a perfect example that self awareness does not protect against the folly of love, and actually increases its agony. While she does not have as much political responsibility as her husband, she is fully aware of the public consequences of her adulterous love for Pyrocles:

There appeared unto the eyes of her judgement the evils she was like to run into, with ugly infamy waiting upon them: she felt the terrors of her own conscience; she was guilty of a long exercised virtue which made this vice the fuller of deformity. The uttermost of the good she could aspire unto was a mortal wound to her vexed spirits; and lastly, no small part of her evils was that she was wise to see her evils (213\*).

In her case, the inward “mortal wound” is not solely love, but the self-aggravated effects of a diseased conscience.

Amphialus is the greatest victim of the New Arcadia’s erotic pathology; he combines love’s personal anguish with its political consequences. Characters like the king of Iberia, or Erona, are almost ludicrous in their complete desertion of public virtue in favor of private passion. Amphialus, however, shares with Gynecia the knowledge that he is acting wrongly (in his case, by holding the princesses captive) and realizes the extent of his treason to the political body of Arcadia, but he cannot stop. His plight demonstrates the extent to which even those who have a foremost claim to heroic virtue can be “self-divided” by the inward wound of love. Ironically, Amphialus himself is not politically ambitious. The specific economic and political grievances he disseminates to justify his insurrection are not the true cause of his intransigence. Rather, he decides to rebel because his passion for Philoclea prevents him from returning her to her parents. His mother,

Cecropia, certainly is politically ambitious, and clearly uses her son to her own ends, but her ambitions depend entirely on Amphialus' abilities as a leader. Her independent efforts to overthrow Basilius, such as the peasants' rebellion, or to kill off the princesses, such as the attack of the lion in book I, end in failure. And Amphialus can only be led into rebellion by a kind of sleight of hand that works at the expense of his own misguided passion.

Amphialus's physical wounds play a crucial part in this sleight of hand. On the most literal level, they keep him from knowing about, and hence protesting, his mother's designs. Cecropia engineers the abduction of the princesses, for instance, while Amphialus is in bed, recovering from the thigh wound he has received from Pyrocles in Book II. When Amphialus is once again incapacitated by wounds, this time received from Musidorus, the unrestrained Cecropia begins to torture the two princesses. In the first case, she can present him with a *fait accompli*, and one that he can not bring himself to reverse. In the second case, she has gone too far, and loses everything. In both cases, however, Amphialus' incapacity is at least as symbolic as it is real. The thigh wound is directly related to his love for Philoclea. He receives this wound as the penalty for spying on her while she is bathing, and Sidney uses it as an opportunity to describe his love for her as a wound (2.198.25-28). As a thigh wound, it is also associated with the sexuality implicit in the story of Venus and Adonis. The second wound is more serious physically, but its power to incapacitate Amphialus is also psychological. He is so ashamed at his behavior, that he refuses to recover:

And as for Amphialus, his body had such wounds, and he gave such wounds to his mind as easily it could not be determined whether death or he made the

greater haste one to the other. For when the diligent care of cunning surgeons had brought life to the possession of his own right, Sorrow and Shame (like two corrupted servants) came waiting of it, persuading nothing but the giving over of itself to destruction (3.413.29-32).

The irony of the situation is that Amphialus' retreat into self pity actually lets Cecropia get on with torturing Pamela and Philoclea, just as his incapacity from his first wound lets her kidnap them. In freeing Cecropia to act on his behalf, but without his knowledge, Amphialus' wounds become physical correlatives of his inability to reconcile his love with his sense of justice and virtue.

The conflict between private passion and public virtue that underlies Amphialus's rebellion reaches its peak in the death of Argalus and Parthenia, the *New Arcadia's* most ideal couple. These two are the only lovers who manage to successfully combine heroic virtue and erotic love. Sidney extols them from the very beginning of the *New Arcadia*. Kalanders' steward, when he first describes Argalus, ranks him with Pyrocles, Musidorus, and Amphialus: "a gentleman in deed most rarely accomplished, excellently learned, but without all vain glory; friendly without factiousness; valiant, so as for my part I think the earth hath no man that hath done more heroical acts than he" (1.27.15-21). Parthenia is "the perfect picture of a womanly virtue and wifely faithfulness." As she enters the temple to be married to Argalus, "her eyes themselves seemed a temple wherein love and beauty were married. Her lips though they were kept close with modest silence, yet with a pretty kind of natural swelling they seemed to invite the guests that looked on them." (1.48.2-13). Their actions before they are married go even further to establish their heroic virtue. Argalus' loyalty to her when she is (temporarily)

mutilated, and her refusal to burden him show their affections to be more unselfish than those of many other lovers in the New Arcadia. Because they face so many obstacles on the way to marriage, the steward, in telling their tale, exclaims, "But it was hard to judge whether he in doing or she in suffering shewed greater constancy of affection" (1.29.33-4). In these two characters, the two actions that have defined heroism for Pyrocles and Musidorus, "doing and suffering," have been divided and gendered. But they have not been separated, because Argalus and Parthenia function almost as a single unit after their marriage. When Phalantus takes Parthenia's picture from a Sycionian knight, for instance, Argalus offers to fight for it, but Parthenia will not let him occupy the conventional role of the champion. She tells him "that she would rather mar her face as evil as ever it was than that it should be a cause to make Argalus put on armour" (1.97.20-2). Finally, when Argalus is drawn into the conflict in Arcadia, and goes to challenge Amphialus, Parthenia tells him, "Parthenia shall be in the battle of your fight: Parthenia shall smart in your pain, and your blood must be bled by Parthenia" (3.373.9-10). As it turns out she is serious about her metaphor.

Both Argalus and Parthenia die at Amphialus's hands. Their destruction symbolizes Amphialus's own moral distance from their ideal relationship, and the threat that the Arcadian rebellion offers to the heroic body. Argalus's death is tragic mostly because he is Amphialus's friend, and has been dragged into the conflict against his better wishes. Amphialus's consternation at having killed him is what Carey has called "an epitome of Sidney's major theme," "victory turns to defeat, man to

woman, dead foe to dead friend, all in an instant."<sup>52</sup> But the real pathos of the event occurs when Parthenia arrives at the scene, and attempts to treat Argalus' wounds.

tearing off her linen sleeves an partlet to serve about his wounds; to bind which she took off her hairlace, and would have cut off her fair hair herself, but that the squires and judges came in with fitter things for that purpose (507).

Her efforts are in vain, but their futility is accentuated by the manner of her failure. In wishing to bind Argalus's wounds with her hair, she is like Tasso's Erminia, who also comes on her lover, Tancred, after he is badly wounded.<sup>53</sup> Erminia actually does use her hair; she also succeeds in restoring life. This passage depicts one of the most redemptive and restorative moments of Tasso's poem. Erminia is a pagan maid who heals her Christian beloved; her actions show passion as healing rather than destructive and as not opposed to Christian goals in the poem. Parthenia, however, does not even get to complete the heroic gesture, being prevented by the presence of formal "squires and judges" who have had medical material at hand all along.<sup>54</sup>

Parthenia's own death completes the tragedy of this couple, but Sidney's description of it also begins to redefine the heroic body. As he does for Ismenus, Sidney emphasizes her beauty during her dying

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<sup>52</sup> Carey 254.

<sup>53</sup> Sidney's regard for Tasso's work is well known. The two even may have met, either in Paris or in Italy during Sidney's grand tour, but the documentary evidence suggests that it is more likely they missed seeing each other (Duncan-Jones, 80).

<sup>54</sup> Sidney, a veteran of many tournaments, may also mean to expose the false heroism the formal apparatus of challenge and response in which Amphialus has invested so much. Since Renaissance tournaments were spectacular and celebratory rather than seriously martial, Amphialus's willingness to use them as a serious part of his rebellion has a certain nightmarish quality.



moments, a beauty made greater by our knowledge that her death is unnecessary and futile. Like Argalus, Parthenia remains unrecognized by Amphialus, until he has already wounded her mortally. Amphialus is horrified at what he has done, but his emotions are eclipsed by

**Sidney's raptures over Parthenia:**

Her beauty then, even in the despite of the passed sorrow or coming death, assuring all beholders that it was nothing short of perfection. For her exceeding fair eyes having with continual weeping gotten a little redness about them; her roundly sweetly swelling lips a little trembling, as though they kissed their neighbor death; in her cheeks the whiteness striving by little and little to get upon the rosiness of them; her neck, a neck indeed of alabaster, displaying the wound, which with most dainty blood laboured to drown his own beauties, so as here was a river of purest red, there an island of perfectest white, each giving lustre to the other; with the sweet countenance, God knows, full of an unaffected languishing (3.397.24-39).

Parthenia is beautiful, in this passage, because her liveliness contrasts with her approaching death. Her eyes, those organs of petrarchan love, report her sorrow at the death of her lover. Her lips, which recall ripe fruit in their "roundly sweetly swelling," tremble as if the fruit were about to fall. Her complexion is a pleasing mixture of red and white, a conventional palette, but in this case the "white" is the pallor of approaching death, while the "rosiness" is the color of Parthenia's natural vivacity. Sidney depicts her wound using the same contrast between red and white, but reverses the meaning. The "river of purest red" is Parthenia's blood escaping; the "island[s] of perfectest white" are parts of her unwounded flesh. Each of these contrasts enhances Parthenia's beauty, just as her blood and flesh each give "lustre to the other." The portrait is not as sadistic as it might seem, because Parthenia's feelings are not central. The passage is framed by Parthenia's red eyes and by her countenance "full of an unaffected languishing," but most of the imagery is strikingly distant and artificial: monumental and

geographic rather than personal. These terms give her wound a beauty that begins to transcend the horror and irrationality of the situation: Parthenia's suffering is beautiful because she herself is a paragon of heroic beauty.

In depicting the results of the New Arcadia's most senseless tragedy in such glowing terms, Sidney demonstrates the force of conscious artistic interpretation. As though to stress the novelty of the passage, and to explain its apparent incongruity, he finishes his description of the wounded Parthenia with a defense:

though these things to a grossly conceiving sense might seem disgraces, yet indeed were they but apparelling beauty in a new fashion which, all-looked-upon through the spectacles of pity, did even increase the lines of her natural fairness. (3.397.24-39)

This point needs to be explicit, because hitherto the wounds occurring during Amphialus' rebellion have been described according to what Sidney here characterizes as a "grossly conceiving sense." The wounds of Agenor, other assorted knights in the first battle, and even Argalus and Ismenus, are more "disgraces" (hideous or grotesque) than the "apparelling [of] beauty in a new fashion." Also, not everyone sees Parthenia's death as other than a disgrace. Amphialus, at least, is purely horrified (to his credit, given his responsibility for her death). This "fashion" of beauty is new to the Arcadia, as well as "new" in the sense of "novel" or "unusual," and it ignores the political threat to the heroic body implicit in the whole rebellion. It also depends on a particular way of seeing the world that Sidney evokes by dismissing opinions that are too "grossly conceiving." "Grossly," here, almost certainly means plainly or literally, but it already carried with it some of its modern class connotations since it also could mean coarsely and without

refinement.<sup>55</sup> Another possibility latent in Sidney's use of the word is the sense of material rather than spiritual understanding, a meaning particularly current at the end of the sixteenth-century.<sup>56</sup> The point of view Sidney appeals to is, thus, limited by social class and sophistication. Only those sufficiently refined will be able to perceive Parthenia's wounded body as "perfection." As a heroic body, she is available only to her own class, and to these her beauty depends on a figurative understanding. This new fashion of wounding could well apply to Sidney's own death wound. Parthenia's wound, like his, does not affect the course of events, nor heal the political body. It can not literally change the "gross" foulness of a death like Agenor's, but it can provide an figurative way of valuing the heroic body in the face of horrific wounds such as Sidney's own was to be.

The complex artistry with which Sidney depicts the dying Parthenia is only the most visible sign of a change that overtakes the end of his revised *Arcadia*. Previously, Sidney portrays heroism as a combination of doing and suffering. By the end of the *New Arcadia*, it consists mostly of suffering. One of the odd features of the revised narrative is that of the central heroic characters, only Musidorus remains free to act throughout. The others, Pyrocles, Philoclea, and Pamela, are abducted by Cecropia at the beginning of Book III and spend the rest of the narrative as prisoners. Their story consists of their resistance and fortitude under imprisonment and eventual torment. Like Parthenia, their value as

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<sup>55</sup> OED 7.

<sup>56</sup> OED 5.

heroes depends on their performance as sufferers, not on their ability to participate in the larger political action. Even Musidorus spends so much of this time incapacitated by wounds that he is not, until the very end of Sidney's revision, able to affect the course of events. Sidney's treatment of the body in these cases, as for Parthenia, stresses the figurative value of suffering over its practical consequences. His complex and vivid depictions of suffering are among the things that make Margaret Hannay call the work a Protestant saint's life. They suggest that Sidney was beginning to relocate the heroic body, away from its political value, which is as threatened in the Arcadia as it was on the Early Modern battlefield, and toward an aesthetic and spiritual value. This ideal does not deny the potential horror of the wounded body. In fact, the contrast between the ugliness of the wound and the beauty of the victim is part of Sidney's larger vision, as Carey puts it, "of nature as debate, but debate in which contraries artfully co-operate to maintain stability."<sup>57</sup> Since Sidney never completed his revision of the Arcadia, we will never know what ultimate fate he envisioned for the heroic body: whether or not Pyrocles, Musidorus, Philoclea, and Pamela, would be able to reclaim the combination of heroic virtue and erotic love lost by the ill fated Argalus and Parthenia, or to reassert the political force of the aristocratic body. As it stands, the work reaches its climax in noble suffering. Sidney broke off his revision at the moment when that suffering started to transform into active retaliation.

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<sup>57</sup> Carey 247.

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