The Wounded Body

Memory, Language and the Self from Petrarch to Shakespeare

Edited by
Fabrizio Bondi · Massimo Stella · Andrea Torre

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Fabrizio Bondi, Massimo Stella, and Andrea Torre

Over the last decade, international scholars have published many studies on the motif of the wound in the literature and culture of modern Europe. Those works reveal that vulnerability emerges as a distinctive feature in the self-representation of Modernity. The reasons why vulnerability is so important are many and they are deeply connected with the transformations which Europe underwent during the transition from the 'Autumn of the Middle Ages' (as Huizinga would say) to the Renaissance; it is however clearly impossible to examine all of them in our book. It is here sufficient to point out that the image and experience of laceration,

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both physical and psychological, are particularly fitting to allegorise a new kind of subjectivity which is entirely imbued with conflict and deprived of the possibility of being mended either by ethical and political thought or by religion. The lover of Petrarch's poems is the prototype of such a conflicted and wounded selfhood, and his amorous poetic language becomes the linguistic translation (*mise en parole*) of that selfhood across Europe. This book does indeed open by considering Petrarch's language as a foundational phenomenon and it broadens its scope to include Shakespeare's dramatic language, which is here regarded as a sort of point of arrival.

This volume does not follow a chronological order: the aim is not that of reconstructing the history of the transmission and reception of a rhetorical and literary code (*Fortleben*). That history has already been traced and widely accepted. The studies contained in this book rather explore the image of the wound as a 'cultural symptom' and a 'verbo-visual sign' which lies at the core of some interesting representations of a new concept of selfhood in early modern Italian and English cultures on the two opposite poles of lyric poetry and theatre (although we also focussed on the narrative poem): by doing so, we aimed to show that Italy and England were at the forefront of an important process of intellectual renewal and regeneration that occurred through poetry. Moreover, we advise our readers that if this dialogue and interchange between Italian and English culture is explored mainly within the context of Early Modern culture and literature, nonetheless some of the essays here collected provide important insights into the Ancient and Mediaeval imaginary of the wound thus complying with a theoretical perspective which combines historicity (discontinuity) and trans-historicity (continuity) in the study of a specific cultural phenomenon.

By studying and describing the transmission of this metaphoric paradigm through the literary tradition from a pre-Petrarchan context (Medieval French narrative, and the poetry of Cavalcanti and Dante) to the multifaceted European Petrarchan *koinè* (brilliantly investigated by Selene Scarsi in Chapter 14), we tried to show how the image of the bodily wound—from Petrarch's representation of the Self to the overt crisis which affects the heroes and the poetic world created by Ariosto and Tasso, Spenser and Shakespeare—could respond to the complex interplay of some key issues which inform the emergence of Modernity as a new cultural feature: namely, the coming into prominence of introspective learning, which emphasises the function of individual remembering

and personal experience as opposed to collective memory and inherited beliefs; the reshaping of the moral Self between the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation; the concept of body politic, which shifted from indicating the divine sovereignty of Kings to designating the political sovereignty of states.

The way in which this book has been organised reflects its deep conceptual structure:

- Poetic moulding of the word-image;
- Re-use of the word-image in performative arts and in visual language;
- Key figures who are wounded in their identity, namely the Lover and the warrior Hero/Heroine.

These are the sections in which the essays collected in this volume are organised. The body, sex, desire and memory are the elements that conceptualise the experience of the wound and they also underlie the structure of this book. Wounds undermine our idea that the human body is compact and impenetrable. They trigger an eminently psycho-physical process which evokes the disturbing duality of psyche and soma. When we are wounded we indeed experience the fragility of both our body and our Self. According to Freud, an impulse which comes from within the subject, that is to say from one's drives (or, to put it in technical jargon, from the 'passions') is not dissimilar from the influence exerted by external forces. In the genesis of the amorous wound, these two forces sometimes mingle. Although the archetypical amorous wound is generally regarded as being caused by an external object (such as Cupid's bow which strikes Apollo in vengeance), the interaction between internal and external forces, concealment and exhibition may engender complex mechanisms which involve gender identity and the political status of bodies (among other possible elements).

As far as the relationship between memory and desire is concerned, it is worth mentioning that if (amorous) desire is the very emblem of remembrance in that it is the constant repetition of an original trauma, then memory is undeniably associated with knowledge and reflection. Lovers think by relying on their memory, whose emblem is the open or the healed wound.

An important theoretical and hermeneutical perspective that has been drawn upon in these essays is that of memory, its practices and its cultural phenomenology. Memory is here intended as a complex combination of both the steps and the outcomes of a process of memorisation as by the dynamics and modes of the act of remembering. Memory thus has

a complex structure which makes it similar to the notion of cognitive activity (the two of them may even overlap). Cognitive activity is indeed a process whereby thoughts are constructed according to predetermined rules, procedures and rituals. Metaphors are cultural forms that offer reliable traces of cognitive activity in that they influence imagination and the creative consciousness, and, as such, they are fitting embodiments of the above-mentioned meaning of memory. For that reason, it is interesting to focus on them to undertake a critical investigation based on the concept of the representation of history, that is to say, on the conviction that it is not the past as such but the forms with which we remember it that guide our actions. From this point of view, the purpose of knowing is not only to ascertain how things really are, but also (and above all) to investigate through what modes (including language and rhetoric) they are remembered and placed in historical self-representation or, more precisely, in the historical semantics of a given society. Such a history of memory is configured to all effects as a cultural history, as a research into the life of the various forms of textuality taken up by the human mind. As Iolanda Plescia shows in her study (see Chapter 6), within the above-mentioned historical and cultural context, a true, intrinsically coherent, semantic field associated with the idea the wound is generated.

The connection between memory and bodily sign is strong and long-lasting, since any sign that we bear on our bodies gives testimony to our lived experience. The image of the wound is indeed a valid metaphorical representation of the idea of mnemonic trace; or rather, in the various stages that characterise it temporally, it offers itself as an expression of the entire dynamic of memory. Any sign we bear on our bodies can be read as the recording—on a support that is perishable, just as memory is—of traces of our lived experience (think, for its dramatically exemplary value, of the numbers tattooed on the prisoners of the concentration camps). Any form of incision on the body—whether inflicted or suffered—can convey a memory (think, for its modelling narrative value, of the scar of Homer's Odysseus, as shown by Anna Beltrametti in Chapter 3), and, above all, it can convey the passional dimension of the memory inasmuch as it stems from an emotion that has violently left a mark on the soul. The act of wounding (and its instruments) translates fully *sub specie metaphorae* the practice of taking notes in order to remember: remembering can indeed be regarded as a sort of 'mental writing' which is symbolically represented by the metaphor of the wound in that the wound carries with it the idea of permanence (in the face of the flow of time), of resistance

(to the perturbing psycho-physical passions) and of depth (at which the images violently deposit the memorial datum).

The semantic field of the wounded body interpreted as a mnemonic trace revolves around two conceptual focal points. One of them is the image of the wound which is to be understood as a traumatic event which leaves a mark on someone's body and soul and prompts him to investigate its causes and the solutions to fix it. In its specific temporality, the wound creates subjectivity in that it activates a signifying power that has to do with human experience in its entirety. The wound is thus the consequence and the evidence of a *trauma*, namely of the blow that caused it. The original trauma exists in its specific, non-chronological time dimension. In Chapter 2, for instance, the contemporary philosopher Rocco Ronchi points out, in Deleuzian terms, that each blow is the manifestation of the transcendental nature of the event and that the wound is 'embedded' in a continuum, a flow of time. The wound is bleeding.

Bleeding, along with the signifiers connected with it, namely tears and words, is often the sign of the act of *expressing oneself* which stems from the wound. The wounded subject often starts to talk. He often complains, and complaining is generally the act whereby an individual expresses his or her own subjectivity. The relationship between Cavalcanti and Dante, explored by Gabriele Frasca as he analyses the *rime petrose* in Chapter 4, offers an interesting example of that tendency as well as an important precedent the early modern metaphorology of the wound studied in our volume. The motif of the wounded subject who complains, though, appears in literature through the centuries and it is drawn upon by men and women writers alike. As is shown in Tatiana Crivelli's analysis of Italian women's poetry of the sixteenth century (Chapter 12), the wounded and raped woman laments, denounces, 'sings' of her pain; like Ovid's Philomel, she metamorphosises into a singing creature. The wound may heal or remain open and it may ever fester. The wound that does not close, such as the one caused by love, may bring pain and pleasure at the same time: this is what the lover who appears in the lyric poems written by Petrarch and later also by Tasso suggests, a lover who loves his wound almost as much he loves the object of his desire (see Fabrizio Bondi, Chapter 13). The wound may thus never heal in that it becomes the sign of desire, of its phantasmal permanence beyond the event that caused the wound and beyond the possibility of being fulfilled, not even by being sublimated in literature, myth or arcadic fiction (see Luca Manini, Chapter 15).

Accordingly, within the complex metaphorical and semantic field of the wound, sacred and profane love intertwine, and images, attributes and values are constantly re-signified and adapted. The image of the wounded body can indeed be conceived as the most effective and significant expression of Christian aesthetics and rhetoric, since it allegorises the internal conflict of the soul; moreover, the physical and moral violence that accompanied the archetypal sacrifice of Christ (the apex both of the humanisation of the divine and of the divinisation of the human) is fully conveyed and emphasised by the figuration of the holy stigmata. In order to explore the ways in which this visual and cultural constellation of images of the stigmata has been devised and developed, it is fundamental to anatomise the image of the wound as a semantic and mnestic emblem (a conceptual metaphor), and to investigate its presence and meaning in the sacred art and religious rhetoric of the XV and XVI century (the specific topics of Chapter 16, written by Giuseppe Capriotti, and Chapter 17 by Andrea Torre). The images of Christ's wounds very often survive in the mind of the observer, during private meditation; for instance, the literature written by female mystics contains a plethora of depictions of wounds and stigmata, which have strong connections with the real images produced by artists. Devotional subjects such as the Man of Sorrows, for instance, have been conceived as a synthetic retelling of the story of the Passion narrated by the Gospels in that they condense, select and put together the different details provided by the Evangelists, thus forming a repository of iconographic transnarrational variants. The wounds of Christ represent the most effective paradigm to remind the Christian community of the event that constitutes its own foundation, and consequently to rebuild its identity, through the identification with an 'open' God, as it were, displaying his vulnerability, his inner being, his incarnation.

The second conceptual focal point of the imagery of the wounded body is the motif of the scar, which projects the event of the wounding into the past, draws attention to the fact that time has passed and urges the subject or those who look at the marks on his body to engage in an introspective and analytical process, like that experienced by the humanist Petrarch and investigated by Andrea Torre in Chapter 5. The wound closes. The memory of the wound thus materialises into a mark, although that mark is not necessarily a stable and permanent one. The scar is the final outcome of the 'subjectifying cycle' initiated with the wound. If a body bears many wounds, stratified over time, it becomes a memorial

map of the life experience of a subjected, in which his story can literally be read.

On the body of a knight, for instance, scars define the personal identity and social status of the knight and they do so as a consequence of the very signs of the past that shaped the knight's body, namely wounds, scars and mutilations. The glory and honour of a victory or the shame and pain of a defeat are thus embodied in the scar according to a ritual which became increasingly codified. In Chapter 9, Sabrina Stroppa analyses the most important variants of that ritual code as they are exemplified in the poems of Boiardo and Ariosto. The wounds are the visible signs through which the hero, his courage, and his valour are celebrated in the epic narrative and in a context in which stoic morals are predominant. Wounds and scars represent honourable conduct in battle and, as such, they are the reification of the ideals and values of an entire society, which appear on the body of an individual. Because of their violence and raw realism, epic representations of the wounded body may well be read as polemic critique of war and violence (see Alvaro Barbieri, Chapter 7).

The most immediate connection that is established between the two aforementioned focal points is the link between the *punctum temporis* of the event which caused the wound and the time which is needed to meditate on the meaning and the consequences of the wound. Whereas the scar is the trace of a past event (it marks the transition between a 'before' and an 'after') and it may serve the narrative purpose of reactivating the memory of that event, the wound is an unresolved point in the narrative and it signals that the position of the wounded character within the world he inhabits and the context of the story is equally unresolved: he may well become involved in something unexpected, such as an adventure (see Manuel Mühlbacher, Chapter 8). When a character displays a wound, be it open or closed, fresh or sutured, that act requires those who observe it to engage in a hermeneutic effort which has to do with memory. In other words, wounds must be examined and scars must be reopened so as to work through the trauma suffered as a consequence of the wound.

The wounds from which a subject may suffer are many, but such an increase in their number, which is the consequence of the traumatic action of the inner drives and of the 'stings and arrows' of life, may lead to an extreme fragmentation of the subject, a condition which is similar to schizophrenia. As has been pointed out above, the experience of receiving a wound does indeed undermine the perception that our bodies and our

Selves are impenetrable and compact, and that necessarily involves gender identity and the political status of bodies. For instance, if the wholeness of the body—symbolised by the armour of warriors—is a male prerogative, receiving a wound and having one's armour pierced is an experience which threatens gender identity, especially if the deed is done by a female virgin warrior clad in a male armour, as is the case with Tasso's Clorinda (see Giancarlo Alfano, Chapter 10).

The wound of a warrior is caused by external factors: it is the result of a clash between two subjects which is triggered by wrath as explained by Shakespeare's theatrical works, namely by his 'Roman' and his 'political' plays. Shakespeare's Roman and political *Trauerspiel* displays a destructive clash between the individual sphere of desire and the collective sphere of power, and it does so through the theatrical game and the dramatic word, both conceived as 'wounding devices'. This annihilating conflict leads to two outcomes which are typical of European modernity, namely the impossibility to conceive and represent a shared 'political body', and the emergence of a new 'reading' of the inner life of human beings, which starts to be regarded in metapsychological and metamemorial terms as a web of pulsional drives (see Massimo Stella, Chapter 11).

The editors and authors of this collection are very grateful to Dr. Arianna Hijazin, who made an important contribution to the volume not only as a translator, but as a colleague who fully shared the intellectual project behind the book with us.

PART I

Wounded Words: Some Methodological Insights

CHAPTER 2

The Wounded Poet: On the Twenty-First Series of Deleuze's *Logic of Sense*

Rocco Ronchi

It is in the twenty-first series ('of the Event') of *Logic of Sense* that the wounded poet makes his appearance (Deleuze 1990, 148–153). The story of Joe Bousquet (JB), a volunteer in the Great War, is well known. He was hit by a bullet in the spine when he was barely twenty years old. He spent the rest of his life in bed, writing and building intellectual relationships with the most eminent French thinkers of his day. His work, writes Gilles Deleuze, 'is in its entirety a meditation of the wound, the event, and language' (Deleuze 1990, 348). A sentence by JB works almost as an epigraph for Deleuze's series: 'My wound existed before me, I was born to embody it' (Deleuze 1990, 148). The sentence is counterintuitive: how can a tear in the flesh *pre-exist* the subject who suffers from it? And how can the genesis of the subject be equated with something so contradictory as the *embodiment* of a wound? Is JB's sentence merely a metaphor? After all, JB is a poet, and metaphors are the very essence of poetry. But if it

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is, it is an image capable of telling us what is the process of individuation (how *one* becomes what *one* is) with a greater precision to that of the concept.

1 Symbama

Logic of Sense is a logic of the 'event'. There is nothing like a shot which breaks the back of a young man in love with life, nothing like poetry or women to lay bare the dominant role of chance in human life. The Stoics, who provided Deleuze with a conceptual framework for his research, use the expression 'symbama' (fortuitous event) to indicate the relation that ties a subject to an event. 'Symbama' stems from 'sym-baino', which means 'to agree, to concur'. A bullet shows that the agreement between subject and predicate required by the form of the proposition (S is P) is problematic. As is well known, the birth of philosophy is marked by an investigation of the very foundations of predication, an issue which is as pressing as it is apparently abstract. The ancients wondered how a predicate can be attached to a subject without this entailing a blatant contradiction. Such logical problem implied an ontological problem: 'how can Becoming exist?' Change was witnessed physically but it could not be explained logically. JB's story exacerbates this aporia, adapting it to the existential taste of the moderns. Indeed, a twenty-year-old's broken back reveals even more powerfully than the predicate 'sitting' referred to 'Socrates', upon which the ancients were keen on exercising their minds, how difficult the mediation between subject and predicate is. Faced with the evidence of trauma, even pre-philosophical common sense needs to recognise the extremely concrete nature of that insistent interrogation.

The solution offered by the Stoics to the problem of predication was to transform the proposition into the expression of a 'meaning' (i.e. into that which pragmatic linguistics defines as 'enunciation', as will be later pointed out). Émile Brehier, who acted as a sort of intermediary between Deleuze and Stoicism, wrote:

> The proposition no longer requires the mutual penetration of two objects, which are impenetrable by nature. It simply expresses a certain aspect of an object, in that it carries out or undergoes an action. This aspect is not a real quality, it is not a being that penetrates an object. It is rather an act which is the result of the object's activity or of the activity of another

> object upon it. The content of a proposition, that is its meaning, is thus neither an object nor a relation between objects. (Brehier 1928, 20)

In the terms of Stoic philosophy, which is objectivist just like Greek philosophy, this means that the predicate is not a material body, but rather an incorporeal which is *attributed* to the subject. The predicate (JB's wound) is not a real (objective) thing but rather a modality of the subject (JB), a manner of being which is grammatically represented by the verb. Predicates are verbs, not substantives; they are actions of the subject: here is the theory of incorporeals! In ontological terms, this means that JB is defined as a result of the incorporeal events that happen to him when, for instance, the corporeal thing 'bullet' meets the corporeal thing 'back', thereby producing the incorporeal *attribute* 'wound'.

The sentence which Deleuze quoted from JB is thus not as counterintuitive as it seems. After all, it expresses something with which common sense agrees without any difficulty. Who is JB? JB is the 'wounded poet'. He is nothing but what his wound has made of him and will continue to make of him while he lives. Far from being a presupposed substance, the subject of a proposition ('who') is an effect of the event, that is to say an effect of what Aristotelian ontology defines as an 'accident'. Brehier continues to explain:

> There is only one kind of connection, one which, according to Aristotelian logic, is accidental (and which the Stoics continued to define as *symbama*), namely the connection between the event (*événement*) and its subject. (Brehier 1928, 20)

Thus, it is the accidents, that is to say Becoming, that make us who we are. And yet, this does not mean that the subject is a sort of wax tablet upon which fortuitous events imprint themselves. An accident is a *verb*, and Becoming is the prerogative of the subject (subjective genitive). At the time he was writing *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze likely had in mind his English predecessor, Alfred N. Whitehead, who, in *Process and Reality*, had turned the subject-substance (the 'who') into the 'superject' of the process, that is the effect obtained as a result of the process (when death will have made the subject objectively immortal…; see Whitehead 1929, XII). The subject is thus the very process, it is individuation in act. In other words, the subject is the *symbama*, provided, though, that the 'eternal truth' of events can be 'counter-actualised' in the accident.

2 The Principle of Reason

The thinking-subject is the subject who relates to Being. Where there is thought, there is reflection. The subject is such only insofar as he accepts the accident, makes it his own, *including* it as a verbal predicate. In the case of JB, the accident is the incident which resulted in a broken back. Thus, it is no wonder that Deleuze draws on JB's sentence in order to indicate the only way to find an 'ethic'. The extreme example of JB provides Deleuze with the guiding principle which enables him to find the solution to a vexing issue which had always troubled the thinkers of absolute immanence. How can one distinguish between the 'good way' and the 'bad way' of 'being in the world'? What ethics should wise men live by? Deleuze answers as follows: 'Either ethics makes no sense at all, or this is what it means and has nothing else to say: not to be unworthy of what happens to us' (Deleuze 1990, 149).

To be worthy of what happens to us means to *include* (to appropriate) that which, by *inflecting* us (the wound), makes us what we are (the wounded poet). Not to be worthy means instead to negate the event, to grasp it 'as unjust and unwarranted (it is always someone else's fault)': that is 'what renders our sores repugnant—veritable *ressentiment*, resentment of the event' (Deleuze 1990, 149). Resentment against the process of becoming, which was condemned by Nietzsche, is the 'bad' opposite of *inclusion*. Resentment does entail the inclusion of the event, but, in that case, the event is *encrypted* in the depth of the psyche, buried *inside* the psyche as if it were something external, unassimilated, something that continues to consume the subject incapable of coming to terms with it (see Abraham, Torok 2009, 221-ff.). As has rightly been recognised, Deleuze's argument has much in common with Leibniz's thought.[1] In metaphysics, inclusion is the prerogative of the supreme principle, that is the *principle of reason*. The fact that 'nothing happens without a reason' means that each predicate inheres in the subject even when the subject is a real being (and not just a logical ideality). Ceasar only exists as an actor in the incorporeal event of the crossing of the Rubicon. JB is his own wound. His wound is the 'fold' which *makes* him that being which is and cannot but be. Ethics thus entails considering the fold as part of a concept which no longer designates a class, but rather corresponds to a real being, to an existing individual: Caesar, JB.

Does being worthy of what happens to us mean that we should accept with resignation a given order of things that pre-exists us? Many of JB's

sentences cited by Deleuze could be easily interpreted that way, but that was certainly not what either JB or Deleuze-Leibniz meant: 'Everything was in order with the events of my life before I made them mine; to live them is to find myself tempted to become their equal, as if they had to get from me only that which they have that is best and most perfect' (Deleuze 1990, 148).

The very same issue is raised by Nietzsche's Eternal Return of the Same: is Nietzsche's theory a prelude to universal determinism or is it an assertion of the Will to Power? The same solution is valid for both Deleuze and Nietzsche: in order for the Eternal Return to be an assertion of the Will to Power, the event must not be understood as a predicate, nor must the predicate be verbally expressed as an event (which is the same thing). If the event (JB's wound, Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon) were a predicate, then one would have to assume that JB and Caesar are ascribed to the intuition of a God residing outside of the cosmos, a God who has always and forever seen (and created) Caesar crossing the Rubicon and JB being hit by a German bullet. If the predicate were intended as an event, then it would be God (the eternal one) who would dwell in the *symbama*, in JB's wound, and in Caesar's decision to cross the Rubicon. As Leoni suggests, JB's wound

> is a divine fold of the universe; divine in the sense that it restores the difference of the whole universe, it automatically and immediately re-differentiates the whole fabric of the world through the faintest of its breaths. (Leoni 2019, 20)

To include through the principle of reason does thus not mean to assume that there was a reason for the event—an attitude which common sense defines as 'to come to terms' with something. It means instead to be the reason *of the event* (subjective genitive), that is 'to become the offspring of one's events and not of one's actions, for the action is itself produced by the offspring of the event' (Deleuze 1990, 150).

The event is thus intensive and not extensive: it is not an 'element' added to the substance or obtained from the analysis of it; it is rather an act that is immanent to substance.

3 Sense

On the logical level, what has been explained so far means that the event (the wound) must not be related to the thing designated, nor to the signified (the concept), but rather to the *quoddity* of the *expression* (for the Stoics, the *lekton*). The Stoics' insistence on the incorporeality of the expressible (the *lekton* is for the Stoics an incorporeal attribute) should not be taken to signify that the event is 'abstract': that would be at odds with the concreteness of JB's wound. Incorporeal means in fact 'effective', 'real'. If divorced from its incorporeal expression, the 'thing' does literally not exist, it does not manifest itself. The same is true for its meaning, which, outside the context of its expression, is nothing but a pale abstraction. *Effectiveness* begins with expression, that is with the production of an incorporeal effect, no matter how small it is or if it is produced only once (Stoic logic is heavily indebted to Megarian logic, and Megarian philosophers had postulated an exact correspondence between being and acting). Existence begins with expression and also ends with it: nothing can continue to exist when there are no more effects.

That is why it has been argued above that the Stoic solution to the problem of predication consisted in transforming the proposition into the enunciation. The proposition (S is P) means nothing at all outside the specific and unrepeatable context in which it is expressed. It is a body of sound and has an abstract meaning but, without its date and place, its interlocutor, and the chain of previous enunciations to which it responds and on which it is based, the mere proposition has no illocutionary force, no potential to generate an effect: for instance, it cannot trigger any sort of answer. Severed from the unique occasion that generates it, the proposition has no *meaning*. As Deleuze claims:

> Sense is the fourth dimension of the proposition. The Stoics discovered it along with the event: sense, *the expressed of the proposition*, is an incorporeal, complex, and irreducible entity, at the surface of things, a pure event which inheres or subsists in the proposition. (Deleuze 1990, 19)[2]

4 Trauma

Thus, not only is JB's wound a particularly harsh example of an event, one which is apt to elicit reflection on the uncertain and unpredictable nature of being, but it also effectively shows that the event is a *sign*. To

JB, immobilised in his bed of pain, the wound is not a fact but an enunciation. JB is *interrogated* by his wound, he is summoned by it and *cannot avoid* answering. He is compelled to 'embody' it. According to Deleuze, the event is a sign: this is his fundamental theory, which he elaborated through his attentive reading of Stoic logic. As has been pointed out above, the event does not exist unless it is 'expressed'. That is precisely the reason why, in the brief introductory note on JB, Deleuze wrote that a reflection on the wound, on the event, is always also a reflection on language. Considering JB's physical condition, one may argue that his wound is indisputably a fact and that it would be absurd to list it among the incorporeals discussed by the Stoics. Yet, in Deleuze's opinion, to state that the event is a fact does not shed light on its true nature. Indeed, not every fact that occurs (to us) is an event. Only those facts that *leave a mark* are events, those that 'loudly' announce their existence as events when they take place. It is thus the *traumatism* of the event that sets us on the right path to understand its nature. Not only is trauma the sign of something else—like tracks are the signs of a prey for a hunter—but it is also *a sign of its own occurring*.

The traditional division of signs into indexes, icons, and symbols is inadequate when it comes to trauma. Trauma does not fit within that classification because indexes, icons, and symbols are 'mediators' (i.e. they stand for something else for someone who interprets them), whereas trauma is immediate. If the signs of language point to the essence of things by relying on presupposed knowledge, trauma is the *happening* that signals itself as *pure* happening (almost as if it were appearing in person), and it does so through the event that happens. Through a specific *quid* (a spatio-temporal actualisation), trauma indicates that something *has taken place*, it signals that something has definitively and inescapably *occurred*. Trauma conveys the 'what'. Thus, the event does not indicate what happens (the *quid*) but rather its very happening (*quod*): 'The event is not what occurs (an accident), it is rather inside what occurs, the purely expressed. It signals and awaits us' (Deleuze 1990, 149).

The *quid* and the *quod* are certainly connected—there can be no event without a specific actualisation—but they are as different in nature as the corporeal and the incorporeal in the Stoics' 'paradox' (defined by Deleuze as the paradox of 'sterile division' [Deleuze 1990, 31]). Trauma is thus much more than a possible kind of event: it is rather its specific semiotics—Deleuze writes that it is the 'splendour' of the event (just as glory is the splendour of God). Even common sense, so harshly criticised by

Deleuze, openly recognises this: traumatic events are commonly said to 'leave their mark' on us, and that 'mark' is exactly a sign. Before being a mediator of something else, the sign is the very immediacy of the self-presenting event. Its language is not a code that has to be understood: it communicates by contact, or rather by inflicting stunning 'blows'.

5 Genesis of Thought

Deleuze reads Proust and wonders: what makes us think, what makes us remember, what makes us know ourselves? In other words, where does thought originate? The answer he gives is: it is signs, traumas. The wound is always a starting point:

> Who is in search of truth? And what does the man who says "I want the truth" mean? […] There is always the violence of a sign which forces us into the search, which robs us of peace. The truth is not to be found by affinity nor by good will, but is *betrayed* by involuntary signs […] Truth depends on an encounter with something which forces us to think, and to seek the truth […] It is the sign which constitutes the object of an encounter, and which works this violence upon us. (Deleuze 2000, 16)

Thought is not generated by wonder. Wonder involves erudition, it is the product of an inference which finds contingency in experience. If philosophy began with contingency, it would absurdly be generated by itself. The origin of thought is indeed always explained as follows: when faced with the assumption that truth exists before the intellect, which tolerates no contradiction, experience falters and hence the metaphysical question arises: 'why is there something rather than nothing?', a question which was reiterated for centuries. In other words, the precondition of that metaphysical question is the very intellect which has to answer to it. What provokes thought, what provokes it regardless of us, exerting maieutic violence over our natural inertia, is something more primitive, something that has the quality of a *received* blow: it is 'the sheer feeling of experience', which is produced by the shock of trauma (see Santayana 1923, 140).

The description of the genesis of thought given in *Proust and Signs* is fascinating, but it is still inadequate. Trauma does loudly announce the event and it does provide a starting point for thought which does

not reside in thought itself. The event, though, still risks being understood in the light of a subject-object relation. In that passage, Deleuze seems to be merely restating a fairly trivial truth: experience exists because something 'from outside' leaves a mark in an individual's 'inner world', waking him from his torpor. But if that were the case, a contradiction would emerge: to think, whatever the meaning we give to that verb, is to establish a relation (to think means that someone thinks about something), and hence it is impossible to explain the genesis of such relation by assuming that it already exists. The cause that originates the relation cannot be the relation itself. Thus, the sheer happening loudly announced by trauma must be detached from the relation and endowed with the capacity to generate the relation as its effect. Being well-aware of the paradox that the following statement entails but reassured by an illustrious philosophical and theological tradition,[3] we must argue that the sheer happening (which is always the happening of something to someone) must be an unrelated element, a non-relation. There has to be something like a trauma per se, a trauma which exists 'before' the individual who experiences it and 'before' the world associated with his experience. That trauma must be conceived as an *absolute* blow which is not situated in linear time (*kronos*), where the events of life generally occur. The 'splendour' of the event, that is the splendour of experience 'before' experience becomes the experience of something and the experience of someone, is thus an *anonymous* splendour.

6 The Splendour of the "They"/"One"

By re-elaborating Heidegger's famous motif of *das Man* and combining it with echoes of Blanchot, Deleuze re-elaborates the famous Heideggerian motif of Das Man and combines it with echoes of Blanchot. He renames the splendour of the unrelated as the 'splendour of the They/One' (Deleuze 1990, 152). Heidegger's pages on the *they* are widely known, but the macroscopic fact that the 'they-self' is more important than the authentic Self, as was very clearly stated by the German philosopher, has not been sufficiently stressed:

> Authentic Being-one's-Self does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject, a condition that has been detached from the 'they'; it is rather

> an existentiell modification of the 'they'- of the 'they' as an essential existentiale. [...] The 'they' is an existentiale; and as a primordial phenomenon, it belongs to Dasein's positive constitution. (Heidegger 1962, 167 & 168)

In *Being and Time*, the Self is a modification of the They, one surely valuable, desirable, and crucial for the construction of an 'authentic' existence, but still a modification. According to Heidegger, what is experienced immediately is the They. More precisely, on the existentiell level, what is experienced immediately is the abysmal fear that strikes the They when it feels itself existing. The They is traumatised. Perhaps the They is nothing but that sheer experience of trauma, the deep echo of a fear which existed before the world came into being. In *Being and Time*, the They is characterised by 'averageness', it is alienated from 'publicness', it is 'diverted', it is 'the "nobody" to whom every Dasein has already surrendered itself in Being-among-one-other' (Heidegger 1962, 165–166). Its icon can by no means be likened to a mouth deformed in a scream like the one in Munch's painting. Pascal had already observed that the *divertissement* which characterises the natural state of being of the They, making it apparently carefree and forgetful of the seriousness of life, is in fact a mere dishonest flight from an unnamed fear that has always paralysed it.

Die Eigentlichkeit, though, pertains to another *Stimmung*, to another mode of the *Befindlichkeit* (how one feels, one's 'state of mind'), namely anxiety, *die Angst*. Anxiety 'individualizes', it reveals a self-sovereign subject (*Wer*) who can rule over himself insofar as he possesses the ability to rule (to 'mak[e] up for not choosing' [Heidegger 1962, 313]). This is Heidegger's most Kierkegaardian passage:

> Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its Being towards its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-that is, its Being-free for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself. Anxiety brings Dasein face to face with its *Being-free for* (*propensio in...*) the authenticity of its Being, and for this authenticity as a possibility which it always is. (Heidegger 1962, 232)

Anxiety is the rare privilege of the authentic Self, that is of that special being (as compared to the ordinary They) which understands itself in the light of its most proper possibility, death.

Building on Heidegger's pages, Maurice Blanchot claimed for the They a sort of generative power and argued that the They is the pivot of any literary work, as literary works revolve entirely around that experience

of anonymity (see Blanchot 1967, 67-ff.). People only write when they are caught by a fascination with that They which leads outside of the human world, outside of history and its dialectic. According to Blanchot, that original They lies in the extreme act of dying. Yet, his notion of death is not the same as that of the main text of nineteenth-century existentialism, where death is celebrated. In his opinion, death is not experienced in the first person (of the future tense) as being-towards-death. It is rather ordinary death, real and humble, and it takes everyone. It is a kind of death which, in order to be possible at the present time, requires the deposition of the first person, the Self, and the transition to the third person, 'he'. Benveniste has shown that, unlike 'I' and 'you', 'he' is not a pronoun, as it indicates a non-person, the neuter (Benveniste 1971, 197–200). Without that sudden leap into the utter anonymity of the third person nobody could die, observes Blanchot. Nobody ever dies in the first person of the present indicative: rather, *one* dies (exactly as 'il pleut') without there being a temporal present ready to welcome the spatio-temporal counter-actualisation of that event.

According to Deleuze, it is at the atopic and atemporal instant of dying that thought can perceive an image (which should be defined as 'bastard', in the Platonic sense of the term; see Ronchi 2001) of the pure event, that is of the trauma (non-relation) which comes before relation or, as Deleuze writes, which 'slips away from the present' (Deleuze 1990, 163):

> Death has an extreme and definite relation to me and my body and is grounded in me, but it also has no relation to me at all – it is incorporeal and infinitive, impersonal, grounded only in itself. (Deleuze 1990, 151)

'Every event is like death', continues Deleuze, because every event is 'double and impersonal in its double' (Deleuze 1990, 152). We will now consider what the nature of this doubleness is:

1) Since the event is the happening *of something* that happens *for someone*, that is a relation, it is situated on the plane of facts (of spatio-temporal actualization). Even death is a fact: it is a fact for those who have lost someone, if not for those who have died. Events happen at identifiable dates and involve causal and explanatory links which go from past to present.
2) But, since the event is an *event* of something, since it is the very *happening* of the thing that happens, it evades simple localisation

in space and time, just like death, thus remaining forever an *unrelated* element. When the inevitable event of one's death occurs, no relation is possible. The distance that separates us from our death cannot be covered, not even if we had infinite time at our disposal. No causal link can explain that event, as that event is itself the *cause*.

7 Counter-Actualisation

Every event is double and, hence, there are two possible processes: actualization and counter-actualisation. The former is spatio-temporal, as it aims at the determination of the something (for someone); the latter does the opposite, as it considers 'the pure event in its eternal truth, independently of its spatio-temporal actualization' (Deleuze 1990, 146). Deleuze labelled JB a 'Stoic' not because of his resistance to pain but because he is 'wise'. What do wise men do? Deleuze's answer to this question is surprisingly 'classical', and it testifies to his complete faith in the value of speculative thinking, a faith which, as Deleuze himself recognised, was anachronistic and naïve at a time when philosophy was generally regarded with suspicion. The sage, he writes, 'waits for the event', he *counter-actualises* it:

> That is to say, [he] understands the pure event in its eternal truth, independently of its spatio-temporal actualization, as something eternally yet-to-come and always already passed according to the line of the Aion (Deleuze 1990, 146).

To counter-actualise means to pervert the natural order of things, to suspend our natural attitude towards the world, towards what happens, in order to grasp in the event (*what*, *quid*) the splendour of its happening (*that*, *quod*). By temporarily detaching themselves from the world of men, wise men aim at the eternal (the unrelated, the separate), which is the immanent cause of time (of relation):

> Bousquet goes on to say: 'Become the man of your misfortunes; learn to embody their perfection and brilliance'. Nothing more can be said, and no more has ever been said: to become worthy of what happens to us, and thus to will and release the event, to become the offspring of one's own events, and thereby to be reborn, to have one more birth, and to break with one's carnal birth'. (Deleuze 1990, 149–150)

The Stoics were wise because they loved fate, which is not the same thing as 'necessity' as it is intended by Aristotle. Necessity is analytic: given a definition, a theorem follows. In the *more geometrico* there is no transformation into something else, there is no becoming except for our own finite intellect. Fate is instead synthetic. It entails concatenation of events and inflexible causality, but not analysis nor deduction of consequences. There is no algorithm that can generate the eternal return of the same. The sequence of events, with all its catastrophes and new beginnings, cannot be unwound. The Stoic sage is thus not gifted with supersensory vision which enables him to penetrate the generating principles of reality through a flash of intuition. He is not someone who occupies the position of the subject supposed to know, a position which must perforce be situated outside the cosmos. According to the Stoics nothing exists outside the cosmos, as God is nothing but the very unfolding of the cosmos. The sage is thus no longer the keeper of the law, he is neither a judge nor its opposite, that is a rebel, but he is rather a man who, faced with an event, an accomplished, irrevocable, unalterable event, recognises—or, better, unleashes—the immense power of an unfolding and developing fate. The sage is someone who understands the eternal truth of the event, which is anamorphically encoded in its spatio-temporal actualisation.

Deleuze credits actors and mimes with such wisdom and identifies humour as the characteristic mood of counter-actualisation. Actors are chosen as examples of counter-actualisation because they act, because their present is repetition. To understand their superiority in terms of wisdom, though, it would be necessary to image a special kind of actor, one who recites a text not yet written, who almost discovers it while reciting it and marvels at what he is repeating, since he did not know it before he actually repeated it. In other words, there is repetition but not that which is repeated (exactly as was the case in Nietzsche's eternal return as it was understood by Deleuze). Such an actor is very difficult to find on a theatrical stage, but, somehow, any of us is that actor when we go through certain kinds of extreme experiences, illustrated by the psychopathology of everyday life, in which one has the impression of being the actor of one's own present which ghostly reappears as a repetition of the past, but of a past that has no date. In the *déjà-vu* experience (which is also a *déjà-vecu*), we involuntarily 'perform' our life, which appears before us as an unidentified and irresistible force that cannot be escaped. On this matter, Bergson (another major influence on Deleuze) writes: 'We act and yet 'are acted'. We feel that we choose and will, but

that we are choosing what is imposed on us and willing the inevitable' (Bergson 1920, 170).

Thus, the Stoic sage turns into a method that which, in the *déjà-vu* experience, is a mere unintentional episode. To counter-actualise means indeed to *alienate* the present, to free it from its natural bond with the past and the future (from its chronological linearity, from Kronos), so as to bring it back to a fixed instant of timeless, pure happening:

> The actor belongs to the Aion[4]: instead of the most profound, the most fully present, the present which spreads out and comprehends the future and the past, an unlimited past-future rises up here reflected in an empty present which has no more thickness than the mirror (Deleuze 1990, 150).

That is why the sage is a skilled humorist: 'in that which occurs (an accident), [he] selects the pure event' (Deleuze 1990, 150). Humorists are not so much interested in the meaning of things, but rather in the sense of things. The process of alienation carried out by the humorist aims exactly at de-signifying the present, which, having become separated from the 'world' which gave it meaning, is allowed to appear as it is, that is to say in its pure *quodditas*. It is freed for a moment from the *quidditas* to which, however, the present is always related. In the cosmos, the sage is enabled to see, through a humorous anamorphic deformation, the difference in nature between God (the unrelated) and the world (the relation), in which he never ceases to counter-actualise himself.

8 The Cause

What is it that shines for the sage? In order to answer this question it is necessary to emphasise once again the fact that Deleuze was a 'classical' philosopher. Despite his conceptual acrobatics and often convoluted style, Deleuze was always proud to acknowledge his indebtedness to that philosophical tradition, whose validity he never cast into doubt (unlike Derrida, for instance). Deleuze appropriated the fundamental principle of speculative philosophy from the works of the ancients: substance must be conceived as act (*energheia*). He also learned from modern philosophy to regard the substance-act as subject (becoming). From contemporary philosophy he then borrowed the theory from which the series discussed in this article takes its name: the subject is nothing but an 'event'. Lastly, the incident of the wounded poet (and the influence of Stoic philosophy)

enabled him to shed light on the singular and individual nature of the 'event' ('one and the same Event' [Deleuze 1990, 152]). In order to take the place of the substantial foundation, the event must neither be metaphysically conceived as an accident of substance nor logically interpreted as a predicate. On the modal level, this means that the event cannot be qualified as 'contingent'. The fact that the event is not contingent, though, does not imply that it is a necessity, as that would be at odds with its actuality (*energheia*). Only the order of events, the order of the things that have occurred is truly necessary. The happening of the thing that happens is endowed with a whole different 'splendour'; it is a kind of happening that is different in nature from the things that happen (although it is closely linked with them). It possesses the same 'splendour' that traditionally characterises the 'cause': the splendour of actuality, of effectivity. The cause *causes*: in this apparent tautology one can grasp the immense power of the cause (*fate*) which the Stoic sage counter-actualises in each spatio-temporal actualisation.

There is an anecdote that illustrates the peculiar modality in which the *zeitlos* cause 'shines' for the prophet-philosopher: it concerns Hegel and, to my knowledge, it is only mentioned by Karl Rosenkranz in his famous biography of the philosopher (see Rosenkranz 1974, 80). It dates back to the time he spent in Frankfurt, when he often engaged in passionate conversations with Hölderlin, and it deals with Achilles, the hero *par excellence*. Achilles died because of a wound in his heel. Hegel argues that Achille *could have been* hit in any other part of his body. 'The wound in that part was largely a coincidence'. As far as the *logos* is concerned, the wound is contingent. But, in fact, both that actuality (being hit exactly in the heel) and its opposed non-actuality (the impossibility of being wounded in any other part of the body) 'are, writes Hegel, joined together in the imagination through a myth, the myth of Achilles' immersion in the Lethe (*sic*), according to which the parts of the hero's body which were not wounded could not possibly be wounded and, at the same time, only the part that was actually wounded could be wounded'. By holding him by the heel while she was immersing him in the Styx, Achilles' caring mother '*cause*' Achilles as we know him: she granted him invulnerability in battle and established the path that the arrow necessarily had to follow to end the hero's life. Like JB, Achilles can also claim: 'my wound existed before me, I was born to embody it'.

That is true not only for Achilles and JB, but also for every 'hero'. Heroism is indeed always the expression of that eternal truth: far from

being the 'sovereign subject' who defines itself according to the *power to* and the *power not to*, the hero can be conceived as a field of impersonal forces, defined solely by a 'wound' which pre-exists him and which he must embody. He cannot help embodying it. Heroes have a destiny and that is exactly what differentiates them from other human beings. They counter-actualise the event. Their wounds are 'slits' through which the splendour of an eternal truth filters. They do not choose but rather welcome an anonymous force which dominates them and makes up every fibre of their being. In the concluding paragraphs of their letters, those condemned to death during the Italian Resistance always offer the same sort of explanation for their heroic behaviour. There is no emphatic tone in those letters, but only the proud assertion of a sort of obedience: 'I could not act otherwise', 'I had no other choice', 'I had to, I am sorry'. Their words betray a fatalistic attitude which seems to be a sort of ethical counterpart of the mindset displayed by the scorpion of the famous fable when he explained to the shocked frog his irrational behaviour while crossing the river: 'I had no choice, I had to sting you, it is in my nature, that is the wound that pre-exists me and "I was born to embody it"'.

(*Trans. by Arianna Hijazin*)

Notes

1. See Leoni 2019, 10: 'What makes Joë Bousquet Joë Bousquet, when Joë Bousquet actually becomes Joë Bousquet? That question has always been pivotal throughout Leibniz's work. The answer to that question lies in the notion of individual substance, which is prominent in *The Monadology*, a veritable compendium of Leibniz's philosophical thoughts'.
2. The other three dimensions of the proposition are indication or denotation, manifestation, and signification or demonstration, and they are all mutually interdependent. In the third series of *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze shows that without the fourth dimension, that of sense, the proposition is nothing but an abstraction. The mistake made by formal logic (its 'reductionism') consists in having used the proposition severed from sense as a basis for the analysis of the *logos*. See Palumbo 2018, 57–78.
3. I am here referring above all to Plato's *Parmenides*, whose aporetic greatly influenced the *Logic of Sense*.

4. Aion, as opposed to Kronos, indicates the eternal truth of the event.

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CHAPTER 3

The Scars and the Tale, the Wounds, and the Drama

Anna Beltrametti

1 Dead Bodies and Living Bodies

Although the iconic and ideological power of dead bodies is undeniable, neither the few illustrious bodies nor the many bodies of poor and forgotten people cut down by war, terrorism, massacres, shipwrecks, climate change, or pandemics will be the main focus of this study. We will not stop to consider these bodies, be they Achilles' victims or Patroclus' body in the Iliad, or the victims of the culture clashes which shake our modern world.

Maybe too much has been said of the deep emotions dead bodies are capable of unleashing, and of the way they impose themselves on people's attention. They are excluded from the shared rituals of death, and remain either unburied or celebrated in complex ceremonies. Often they are stolen and hidden like all the darkest state secrets, other times

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they are spectacularly executed and exhibited as trophies, or even abandoned to be the feast of wild animals. At first these bodies are reduced to mere objects, then to obscene objects, and, for that reason, they have always been the focus of *pathos* and of highly rhetorical speeches, often animated by antithetical intentions. For some, the bodies themselves are the symbol of beautiful heroic death in name of a just cause, while for others they represent an exemplary punishment which often goes beyond the killing or execution of the enemy by also including public display and shaming (De Luna 2006; Fornaro 2016).

In Sophocles' *Ajax*, Ajax's body after his suicide represents the shame of a warrior who, unable to live up to his code of honour, has killed himself for having failed in accomplishing the true objectives of his efforts against the Atreides, the unjust and inept sovereigns. However, for his enemies, Ajax's body confirms the right of a sovereign to dishonour a rebel by not allowing proper burial. Similarly, in *Antigone*, written a few years later, Creon decides to deny Polynices proper burial and to use his corpse to intimidate his opponents. However, Antigone wants her dead brother's body to be buried according to the most ancient customs of religion and family, even if it goes against the laws of the state. Sophocles kept the body off-scene, but made it the object of every contention, constantly the centre of every dispute between Creon and the other characters. He made it a symbol of the monarch's hubris and of his mistake. It is a warning against a form of justice which is supremely unjust and which has catastrophic outcomes in its attempt to dominate relationships, affection, and religion and to extend its control to areas which are by definition not controllable by the laws of the state. After Sophocles, Polynices' body remained in the memory of the West as an archetype, a primary and eternal icon, both inside theatres and outside, of the tension that exists between traditional ethos with its ancient and shared beliefs and political logic, with its attempts to modify those beliefs and create a new mentality.

The dead body, even when it is not the body of the king, as in the mediaeval notion drawn upon and re-elaborated by Ernst Kantorowicz's, is always double: for bodies not accompanied to their natural dissolution and oblivion by the customary procedures,[1] physical death is always the beginning of symbolic life, *exemplum imitandum* or *vitandum*. When these symbolic values are not of divine origin, those who come into possession of the body and of its history imbue it with those cultural and sometimes brazenly political and partisan values which in Greece are

expressed in the *epitaphioi logoi*, at first private and then public, but also in the removal of the bones and the cult of heroes which were considered protectors.[2]

2 Living Bodies and Naked Souls, the Scars and the Wounds

Living bodies cannot be owned and made into objects to imitate or despise without coming to terms with their voices, which will interfere with the images and signs imposed upon them, illuminating or obfuscating the images, hiding or showing the signs. They can also force others to look at them or look away. No one can make use of the living against their will. Their words give interpretation and context to their wounds and scars, on some occasions confirming what the eyes of others see or believe they see, on other occasions contradicting or confounding viewers with surprising information.

Scars or healed wounds are a frequent plot device in many tales. Hand-to-hand duels in the *Iliad* sometimes end with the death of one of the warriors, but more often result in wounds which do not tame the loser's fighting spirit. These wounded heroes are soon healed by divine intervention and return to combat stronger and on occasion more beautiful than before.[3] Taking wounds and the subsequent healing are vital steps in the initiation and affirmation of heroes. Warrior virtues and fay powers, humans and gods, life and death, war and fame converge in these instants. These moments are also a rich source of inspiration for the *aoidos*, who can interpret them by mixing narration and description, diegesis, and ekphrasis, starting from the scar and then working his way back to its origin. As Brelich well understood, there are no heroes without wounds, whether inflicted of suffered, and similarly there are also no heroes without bards who tell the tales and sing the lays, transforming the scars from physical signs on the body to marks of memory of those who have discovered them and can no longer forget them.

Open wounds scream their truths and cause screams, they excite. They attract the gaze of those around the person who is wounded, modifying the way in which victims perceive themselves and forcing them to reconsider their relationship with the one who struck them. This can also involve the community, either bringing ongoing social tension to light, or generating new problems. No one understands this urgency, no one

translates it into unforgettable images as well as Anthony in front of Julius Caesar's body in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*:

> ANTONY: Over thy *wounds* now do I prophesy, | Which *like dumb mouths* do open their ruby lips, | To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue, | A curse shall light upon the limbs of men; | Domestic fury and fierce civil strife | Shall cumber all the parts of Italy. (*Julius Caesar* 3.1)

> ANTONY: Show you sweet Caesar's *wounds, poor poor dumb mouths*, | *And bid them speak for me*: but were I Brutus, | And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony | Would ruffle up your spirits and put a tongue | In every wound of Caesar that should move | The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny. (*Julius Caesar* 3.2)

Scars and wounds which have at least superficially healed and ceased causing pain are lasting marks. Years later, satisfying tales can be told of them with relaxed detachment. Major and minor variations to the details of the story can be made, depending on the audience and the occasion. In poetry and literature, a scar heals the body and returns it to a new state of order, just as in the figurative arts. A wound, on the other hand, opens and disfigures the body, removing it from a state of order, *ou kata kosmon*, to use the Homeric turn of phrase. Scars have analeptic properties, they are reminders of the past and allow us to reinvent it. Wounds are somehow proleptic, in that they project themselves on possible future outcomes.

The Greek language clearly distinguishes 'scar' (*oule*), the mark which points to past events and which binds the past to the present, from 'wound' (*helkos, trauma, plege*), which is a process, a transformation which is taking place. A famous passage from Plato is the tale with which Socrates ends the *Gorgias*. In Socrates's words, it is a 'right fine story (*logos*), which you will regard as a fable (*mythos*), I fancy, but I as an actual account (*aletheia*)' (523a–527e). Here, the differences between scar and wound are defined on a metaphysical plane as well as a physical one. This is done by listing the scars which mark both dead bodies and the souls of the mighty, revealing the injustices they might have committed:

> […] from these stories, on my reckoning, we must draw some such moral as this: death, as it seems to me, is actually nothing but the disconnection of two things, the soul and the body, from each other. And so when they are disconnected from one another, each of them keeps its own condition very much as it was when the man was alive, the body having its own

> nature, with its treatments and experiences all manifest upon it. […] Again, if anyone had been a sturdy rogue, and bore traces of his stripes in scars on his body, either from the whip or from other wounds, while yet alive, then after death too his body has these marks visible upon it […] And so it seems to me that the same is the case with the soul too, Callicles: when a man's soul is stripped bare of the body, all its natural gifts, and the experiences added to that soul as the result of his various pursuits, are manifest in it. So when they have arrived in presence of their judge, they of Asia before Rhadamanthus, these Rhadamanthus sets before him and surveys the soul of each, not knowing whose it is; nay, often when he has laid hold of the Great King or some other prince or potentate, he perceives the utter unhealthiness of his soul, striped all over with the scourge, and a mass of wounds, the work of perjuries and injustice; where every act has left its smirch upon his soul, where all is awry through falsehood and imposture, and nothing straight because of a nurture that knew not truth: or, as the result of an unbridled course of fastidiousness, insolence, and incontinence, he finds the soul full fraught with disproportion and ugliness. (Plato, *Gorgias* 524a–525a)[4]

Plutarch, the great platonic scholar, echoes the metaphysics of scars and wounds of the soul by using the same words when discussing more practical and specifically moral questions, in particular, the vice of flattery:

> The great difference between flatterer and friend may be most clearly perceived by his disposition towards one's other friends. [...] the flatterer scares all real friends away, and does not allow them to come near; or if he cannot accomplish this, he openly cringes to them, pays them attentions, and makes a great show of respect for them as for superiors, but secretly he is suggesting and spreading some sort of calumny; and when secret talk has caused an irritating sore, even though he be not entirely successful at the outset, yet he remembers and observes the precept of Medius. This Medius was, if I may call him so, leader and skilled master of the choir of flatterers that danced attendance on Alexander, and were banded together against all good men. Now he urged them not to be afraid to assail and sting with their calumnies, pointing out that, even if the man who is stung succeeds in healing the wound, the scar of the calumny will still remain. In fact it was by such scars, or rather such gangrenes and cancers, that Alexander was consumed so that he destroyed Callisthenes, Parmenio, and Philotas. (Plutarch, *Adulator* 65c–65d)[5]

3 Scars and Tales, Omissions, Truths and Lies

Erich Auerbach had a brilliant intuition when he decided to open his work *Mimesis*, published in 1946 and written during the war while he was in exile in Istanbul, with an analysis of book 19 of the *Odyssey*. His analysis of realism in western literature from antiquity to the twentieth century begins with a scene set in one of the most significant and indicative contexts of the Homeric work, distinguished by an incredible concentration of distinctive traits. These traits are further highlighted by the contrast with the biblical story of the Binding of Isaac (*Genesis* 22.1–18). For Auerbach, Homer's narration serves reality, while the Bible's narration is in service of truth.

We could have a long and fruitful discussion on the concept of realism which underlies Auerbach's analyses, his choice of texts and his approach to them. Auerbach points out that the realism of the Homeric scene lies not in theme, but in form, in the attention devoted to the things and gestures which are described in the episode of Ulysses' recognition. This realism is mainly accomplished through a skilful use of narrative resources, and also a specific reiteration of the palatial motifs which the *aoidos'* compendium includes.

The scar is a device often used in moments of *anagnorisis*.[6] One seminal moment of this kind is when Ulysses' identity is revealed in his own home. The scar is discovered in a context which forms part of what Havelock terms the tribal encyclopaedia of epic poetry. The discovery takes place in a museum of almost visible, concrete Mycenaean gestures and things, with the characters and objects located in their proper place in the palace, as confirmed by archaeological research. However, the number of furnishings, the vividness of detail, and the emotions of the moment transport these spaces and objects outside the scope of social realism. These spaces and objects are described using the same stylised folk repertoire used for, among others, the palace of Alcinous, king of the Phaiacians. The traditional welcome scene, with the traveller's feet being washed by the old nurse, and the tale of the hunt and young Ulysses' wounding, mingle the legendary and the real in these tales.[7] Facts alone do not generate tales, but well-crafted tales, technically well structured descriptions and believable lies combine to create effects which give a coherent impression of truth.[8] Each of these elements on its own is more alive and incisive than truth, which is by its nature elusive and opaque.

The scar which Ulysses failed to hide to delay his recognition immediately opens a narrative space which the *aoidos* wonderfully embellishes with many narrative threads, some interrupted, others doubled, and still more dropped and picked up again. The recognition scene in the palace (ll. 349–393) develops into the hunting scene which then includes the story of Ulysses' mother's family. Finally, we have the tale that a young Ulysses tells his parents once he is lead back home (ll. 393–466). This digression is a pleasant detour for those who appreciate the tale and an excessively long pause for those who wish to return to Ulysses' encounter with his nurse. The play of emotions and glances between Eurycleia and Ulysses is interrupted for over seventy lines. After this digression, the tale continues in a way that reminds of theatrical proxemics: Eurycleia is so surprised, overjoyed and distresses that she drops Ulysses' leg in the bronze basin, which clatters as water falls to the ground. Ulysses, afraid of being discovered too early, stops Eurycleia's hand, to prevent her from warning Penelope, and with his right he grabs her throat, to prevent her from speaking to anyone (ll. 467–502).

There are many descriptions and tales regarding scars which cannot be hidden or kept out of sight. They overlay settings, voices, and temporal planes, intermingling past and present, as Auerbach observes, sometimes even modifying the past based on the present. The scar Ulysses fails to hide is the earliest sign of his heroic virtue. But what if it had been the proof of a defeat, a mark of inadequacy, of cowardice or infamy?

Rousseau suspects Montaigne of failing to mention a scar marking some unutterable guilt in a literary self-portrait:

> No one can write the life of a man except himself. His internal manner of being, his genuine life is known inly to him; but he diguises it when he writes it; under the name of his life he makes his apology; he shows himself as he wants to be seen, but not at all as he is. At most, the most sincere are truthful in what they say, but they lie by their reticence, and what they keep silent about changes what they pretend to admit so much, that by saying only a part of the truth they do not say anything. I put Montaigne at the head of these false sincere people who want to deceive while speaking truthfully. He shows himself with his flaws, but he gives himself only agreeble ones; there is no man at all who does not have odious ones. Montaigne portrays himself in a good likeness but in profile. Who knows whether some scar on the cheek or an eye put out on the side he hides from us might not totally change his physiognomy. (Rousseau 1995, 586)[9]

Through silence, falsehood, or misrepresentation, scars can be made to mean whatever is needed. When they appear on a body, like gaps or lapses in an otherwise well-written texts, they let us catch a glimpse of things the words have left out, of omissions and of that which cannot be spoken.

4 Wounds in Drama

Wounded bodies do not just give us a glimpse of past pain, they display it openly: they have great visual strength, they are asking to be seen in their chaotic state. The fact that they are the object of much thought also makes them political bodies, forcing us to consider the conflicts they represent and the stakes at play.

The Attic theatre, as we know it through surviving texts, is heavily logocentric, and draws its strength not from body language, but from words. The short costumes, half-masks, swellings, and prosthetics for the 'lower body material' that were used in comedies and which can be seen on Greek vases, let us presume that body language was put to good use in this type of performance. On the other hand, the heavy, long costumes with full-face masks used in tragedies did not permit the use of facial expressions and must have had a significant effect on the acting style. This kind of performance must have been much more stylised and the audience must have focussed mainly on the words and chants.

Aeschylus's works, if we do not include *Prometheus Bound* among them, which cannot be considered Aeschylean in its surviving form (West, 1998[2]; Marzullo 1993), focus more attention on a costume than on the bodies within. The words emphasise and clarify the garments and gestures displayed on stage: in *The Persians,* Xerxes appears with a torn cloak, rather than wounded[10]; in *The Suppliants*, the young Egyptian women are described more than once as having dark skin and exotic garb (ll. 70, 154–155; 119–123; 130–133).

As far as we can tell from surviving texts, Euripides' second *Hippolytus* of 428 BC and the final scene of Sophocles' near-contemporary *Oedipus Rex* are the first wounded or suffering bodies that are displayed in the theatre. Sophocles, in his *Women of Trachis*, of uncertain date, first recounts and then puts on stage Heracles tormented by Nessus's poison, while the Dramatist of *Prometeus Bound* deals with the more political implications of a body wounded by torture. The century closes with two of Sophocles's masterpieces, dominated by the two consumed bodies of

Philoctetes and of the old *Oedipus at Colonus*, by the remains of the warrior and of the king whose honour must be restored.

5 Torture, Obscene Bodies, and Power

In the pseudo-Aeschylean *Prometheus*, there are two bodies disfigured by power: the body of Prometheus, the male protagonist, bound and nailed to the rock, and the metamorphosed body of Io, the wandering heroine, who has been turned into a fleeing animal. This is almost certainly not the earliest surviving tragedy which features wounded bodies, but it is the most extreme and spectacular.

A long prologue in the form of a dialogue between Hephaestus, the divine smith, and Kratos, coercive force, with the silent presence of Bia, the personification of violence, does not leave space for misunderstandings. Like one of Brecht's signs, the prologue is crystal clear: the theme of the tragedy is not simply the violent repression resorted to by Zeus, a new sovereign who is hard on his subjects because he has just risen to power. The spectacle of the torture taking place also plays a vital role (Baudrillard 2002). As observed by Artaud, the spectacle of cruelty must always be more brutal and more violent than it is in reality if the objective is causing emotional turmoil and being thought-provoking. The torturers make a great show of the gestures associated with the torment in the desolate and desert wasteland that is Scythia. There is Kratos who is urging Hephaestus to nail Prometheus down and Hephaestus who is trying to avoid having to carry out the horrible task of binding in chains his relative, who is guilty of having given men fire. The deictics which indicate Prometheus's body to the Chorus, to Oceanus, and indirectly to the spectators become frequent. Recurring and varied nouns and verbs relating to vision (163), culminate in a sight which, though Hephaestus cannot bear to see, Kratos deems appropriate for the crime (l. 70).

No tragedy manages to present the unpresentable punishment, the vile use of power, *aikeia poinè* (ll. 176–177), as effectively. The punishment strikes at the philanthropy of the former fighting partner (ll. 221–241 and 304–305) and at the virginal obstinacy of Io, who is devastated in her body and mind (l. 673) and disfigured by being transformed into a cow (l. 588) for not having given in to the divine sovereign's desires.

The tragedy written by Euripides on bodies and power, *Hippolytus,* keeps itself at a distance from these extremes. Here, like in the other tragedy, two bodies are represented, one male and one female, which are

brought on stage because they are marked by the inability to conform to the shared mentality on which the power of the king of Athens, Theseus, is based. Phaedra condemns herself to total immobility, a kind of precursor of death or symbolic death, and then hangs herself to avoid giving in to her forbidden desire for Hippolytus, the son of her husband and of an Amazon. Hippolytus, with his handsome and pure body, is mangled by the bull-monster which assaults his chariot. He had been exiled by his father who cursed him for having threatened his wife and for having ignored the rules of the city by living with the Orphics. In Euripides, Phaedra's languid body and Hippolytus's young and vigorous one, both of which are outside of political logic, are a pair, both killed by power and the logic of state. However, the aesthetic value of the wounds, interior in the case of Phaedra, exterior for Hippolytus, is predominant over the defacement they cause. The wounds of power stand out not because the humiliated bodies are transformed into rocks or wandering heifers, debasing them, but because they exalt their extreme beauty.

6 Wounds, Liminality, and Irreversible Regression

The wound is Philoctetes, and Philoctetes, in Sophocle's retelling, is his wound, which has separated him from the other heroes of the Achaean army and left him on the desert island of Lemnos.

Sophocles leaves no doubt about the importance of the wounded body, described with images and words of rare rawness, which can elicit disgust. Ulysses and Neptolemus have landed on the island to bring Philoctetes back to Troy, and the first sign they see telling them he is still alive are rags covered in blood laid out to dry at the entrance of the cave with two mouths (ll. 26–38). The sore is devouring, *diaboros*, *adephagos*, *barybros*, bloody, *aimateros*, worm-ridden, *entheros* (ll. 7; 265-ff.; 313; 695–697). It has a nausea-inducing smell, *dysosmia*, and causes wild screams, *boe* (ll. 876; 891; 1032). Philoctetes feels his wound is alive, sprouting and growing ever more (*thetele kapi meizon erchetai* 259). In a moment of pain, he tells Neptolemus that he is food, *brykomai*, for his illness, which wanders and slithers, *dierchetai*, *herpei*, like an animal and reappears when it is tired of its wanderings, *planois isos hos exeplesthe* (ll. 742–759).

The Chorus tells us that the wound bites Philoctetes in the soul, *dekethymos* (l. 706), as well as in the flesh: it caused his companions to exclude him from the expedition and to abandon him impiously and

villainously on the deserted Lemnos (ll. 257–259; 265–266). The wound also caused two kinds of regressions in Philoctetes. He has regressed as an individual from a man to a child left without his nanny, while, anthropologically, he has gone from being a civilised man, who drank wine and ate bread, to a primordial distance hunter, using his bow to kill wild animals, both for food and to defend himself (ll. 691–717).

The wound and the bow are both of divine origin. Others have not failed to notice this. In 1947, Edmund Wilson gave the title *The Wound and the Bow* to a brilliant paper on the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles,[11] in which he focussed on the ambivalence and exceptional nature of the hero, which is tied to his distinctive traits: the wound of shame and exclusion caused by the bite of the sacred snake, and the bow of glory, a supernatural gift from Heracles and magical tool of healing and conquest. Clear textual signs in this tragedy, however, show that the liminal chronotope prevails over the places and times of exclusion and reunion. Neoptolemus quickly tries to explain to himself and to the chorus of his sailors why Philoctetes was abandoned: his torments are of divine origin, *theia pathemata*, unleashed against him by the cruel goddess Chryse and by a divine plan, *theon meletei*, to ensure that Troy will not fall before the appointed time (ll. 191–200). Philoctetes never elaborates on the origin of his wound, which was caused by the venomous bite of a wild snake (ll. 265–267). He is also blind to any chance of recovery. The only things that count for Philoctetes are the crippling wound which is devouring him and his bow, an extension of himself, which is his safety and source of food. Philoctetes is the *limen* in which he has been left, a place which, like his ever-changing wound, is the expression of an ongoing and never-ending process. Philoctetes represents a warrior who is not the same man he was before and yet has been unable to change.

The Sophoclean lexicon of the wilderness, *agriotes* (ll. 165–166; 173; 226; 266–267) and of rawness/cruelty, *omotes* (l. 194), used both for the wound and for the setting, gives both Philoctetes's state and the landscape of Lemnos a feeling of marginality and suspension. The island which in myth was a place of dissolution, of bad-smelling women and massacred men,[12] in the tragedy becomes a place of exile, wild and hard, much like the forests where the youths of Sparta, during the *krypteia*, had to learn the techniques of survival, defence, offence, and deception, to be fully integrated among the Spartans.[13] But there is no rebirth or transformation in Lemnos for Philoctetes, who describes himself as a ghost,

an *eidolon*, a member of the living dead, a survivor of his own story in a hostile world run by the worst people (ll. 945–947; 1018; 1029–1030).

It is easy to see the political theme of this tragedy, especially if it is read in parallel with the more ancient tragedy of Ajax: what is at stake is the need to urgently reintegrate the archaic warrior, with his aristocratic code of loyalty and honour, into the political community. The triumphing *poleis* believed they could and should have rid themselves of these figures through the establishment of democratic forms of government. No integration is possible for Philoctetes, though, who is lost in a deathly and obsessively self-referential spiral, in the regrets of a world of dead people in which Neoptolemus would also have been dragged without the intervention of Heracles *ex machina* (ll. 1421–1438). Along with his foot, his aristocratic ethos is also rotting away.

Heiner Müller rewrote his Philoctetes, interpreting the injured body of the hero as the point of contention in a diatribe between those who have respect for the hero and those who do not. He saw in the wound the sign of an irreparable tear in the system of power and strength: his Neptolemus kills the dissident Philoctetes out of loyalty to Ulysses and Ulysses thanks him by revealing how, like a servant who has done his master's dirty work and is now a hindrance, he could now kill him. The consequences Müller arrives at in his re-writing are extreme. However, they are not all the consequences which Sophocles hints at: Philoctetes's wound is not only the sign of a radical split with an old system of values, but also the irreversible degeneration of a figure which has run its course, and which, after its exile, has drowned in sterile solipsism, unable to reshape itself and to find a new place in history.

7 The Blinding, the Inner Gaze, the Transformation

In the fourth and last episode of *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus has discovered his past and the transgressions he has unwittingly committed. The second messenger tells the Chorus to prepare to listen, *hoia erga akousesthe*, and to see, *hoia eisopsesthe*, uncommon things (ll. 1223–1226). The messenger then narrates that Oedipus, on seeing his mother and spouse Jocasta hanged, pierces his eyes with golden pins taken from her clothes. The messenger then continues: 'He shouts at everyone to open up the gates and thus reveal to all Cadmeians his father's killer, his mother's… but I must not say those words. He wants them to cast him out of Thebes […]

Soon you will see a sight which even a man filled with disgust would have to pity' (ll. 128–1296).[14] Sight is also one of the recurring motifs of the lyrical duet between the Chorus and Oedipus when he enters the scene. For the Thebans it is 'an awful fate for human eyes to witness, an appalling sight – the worst [they've] ever seen (*deinon idein pathos, deinotataton panton*) (ll. 1297–1298)', unsightly, *oud'eisidein dynamai se* (ll. 1304; 1312). Oedipus, now blind, *typhlos*, can only recognise friends through their voice (l. 1228). He states his reason for blinding himself twice: 'why should I have eyes when there was nothing sweet for me to see? […] What is there for me to see, my friends? What can I love? Whose greeting can I hear and feel delight?' (ll. 1331–1337).

As he leaves, Oedipus explains why he prefers blindness to death: in death he could not have borne the sight of his father and mother in Hades, and living he could not bear the sight of his children, knowing how they were born. He asks to be hidden, *kalypsate*, or killed, *phoenusate*, or thrown into the sea, *thalassion ekripsate*, where they will never see him again, *entha mepote eisopsesthe eti* (ll. 1369–1412).

One of the most gruesome scenes of all Attic tragedies is introduced and commented upon with a surprising recurrence of sight-related phrases, with the obvious intent of rendering Oedipus's self-inflicted injury more spectacular. Oedipus then entrusts his small daughters to Creon and asks to be left to go to die on Mount Cithaeron, where his parents had exposed him as an infant (ll. 1446–1475).

Oedipus at Colonus, almost twenty years later, takes its cue from this scene. Oedipus with his crippled body is once again at the centre of attention: he is lame, blind and now also marked by the passage of time, old and worn out by begging and wandering. Here, at the grove which is sacred to the Erinyes, at Colonus near Athens, Oedipus, leaning of Antigone's arm and watched by her, has come to the end of his wanderings and of the expiation he had sentenced himself to at the end of the first tragedy. The spectacle of the wounding which had dominated the finale of *Oedipus Rex*, here is replaced by the spectacle of degradation. Oedipus is described by the gaze of others: the citizen of Colonus discovers the nobility hidden beneath his decrepit exterior (l. 76); the Chorus speaks of the vagabond, *planatas* (l. 123), and observes the empty eyes of the exhausted traveller, *polymochth'alata* (ll. 148–169); Oedipus speaks of himself as of a poor shadow, *athlion eidolon*, a body which is no longer what it was (ll. 109–110; 393). Through the words of the locals he becomes aware of the fear and disgust which his sad figure causes

in others. He asks not to despise him when they see his horrid visage, because he will bring benefit to those who will welcome him (ll. 286–289). Polynices, his son, also describes Oedipus, and sees an exile, with ancient dirt encrusting his clothes on his sides, eyeless, with unkempt hair blown about by the wind (ll. 1256–1263).

Sophocles's posthumously performed tragedy of the old Oedipus is closely tied to the *Philoctetes* of a few years before. Both tragedies, written at the end of a century marked by a wave of political and cultural failures of the democratic and oligarchic governments, can be seen as palinodes of previous works (Beltrametti 2012). The stakes in both cases are the rehabilitation of the ancient figures of the warrior and the king, both of which were marginalised in the rich Periclean city by more secular political thought. *Oedipus at Colonus* takes up where *Oedipus Rex* left off, and returns to the theme of personal sovereignty, of the place of the king or *tyrannos* within the system of political institutions. The *Philoctetes* (409 BC), instead, deals in a similar way with theme of the warrior, by focussing on how this figure, with its codes of honour and virtue, fits into the world of political logic. This theme had already been approached in *Ajax* about forty years earlier. These images and words are recalled in the last two tragedies Sophocles wrote.

The devastated and exiled bodies of the two protagonists dominate, and the plots have similar structures. Both characters, *Philoctetes* and *Oedipus*, talk of themselves in a similar way, saying that they are shadows of the past, relics of a culture and a community which have cast them out, Philoctetes exiled to Lemnos, and Oedipus to the wild mountains. Both understand that they have come to the ultimate turning point: Philoctetes recognises the sounds of his homeland in the Greek spoken by the strangers landed on Lemnos and yearns for a return to his father's home at Trachis, while Oedipus has accepted that he has arrived at the end of his journey, to the sacred grove promised by Apollo (ll. 91, 102–103). Both retrace the steps of their story, rail against their enemies and curse them: Oedipus has come to accept his dark acts, the extreme transgressions committed unwillingly and unknowingly, which he suffered from but he nevertheless committed.[15] Philoctetes, much like Heracles in the *Women of Trachis*, likewise thinks and speaks of himself only as a victim who is not responsible for the conduct of others. Oedipus distances himself from his past and his guilt, and Philoctetes never alludes to the transgression which brought on the bite and the injury, and he thus fails

to recognise his error and the violence he did. He is unable to reconsider his behaviour and his identity as he is possessed of an absolute and unassailable sense of self.[16]

Two wounded bodies occupy the last scenes written by Sophocles, but these wounds have opposite consequences. The blindness which Oedipus inflicts upon himself removes his controlling gaze from worldly things and from the events which had given him the kingship of Thebes. Blindness grants him an inner view, which leads him to see the rot within, hidden by external beauty (*OT*. 1395–1396). Philoctetes' wound does nothing but remind him of his exclusion and binds him to his place of exile, which becomes the intrinsic dimension to him. Oedipus gains self-knowledge and learns to go beyond external appearance and is thus able to move on from his past in Thebes and embrace the future as presented in the figure of Theseus, the young king of Athens. He offers his own body as a gift, *doron*, for Theseus' advantage, *onesis*, and gain, *kerdos*. Philoctetes remains locked in an idealised and ultimately lost past, and envisions a return to the house of his father and of his infancy as his only way out of Lemnos.

Integrating the warrior, worn away by the wound in his body and his values, will not be easy. On the other hand, it might be possible to restore the honour of a king who has recognised the violence of the acts on which his authority is founded and, having discovered this hidden and monstrous side of his power, has been able to mould it into a positive force within a new world and a deeply restructured idea of kingship, where all traces of tyranny are wiped away.[17]

(*Trans. by Arianna Hijazin*)

Notes

1. In the *Iliad* the dead bodies are clearly distinguished according to their fates: those which Achilles leaves for dogs and carrion birds (*Iliad* 1.3–5), bodies of warriors to be buried during the truce which Agamemnon and Priam requested (*Iliad* 7.313–432), prince Hector's body, at first mistreated (*Iliad* 22.376–404) and then handed over by Achilles to Priam for solemn burial rites (*Iliad* 24.468–676 and 696–804).
2. Herodotus 1.66–67 tells of events relating to the discovery or removal of the bones of Orestes, while Plutarch, in *Life of Cimon*

8.5–7, tells of how the bones of Theseus were brought back to Athens. See also Coppola (2008).

3. *Iliad* 4.188–219: Machaon heals Menelaus' wound (*helkon*); *Iliad* 5.95–165: Athena heals Diomedes, who was wounded in the right shoulder, but not defeated, in a duel with Pandarus. Athena's intervention made him three times as fierce as before.
4. For the English translation see Plato (1967), http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0178%3Atext%3DGorg.%3Asection%3D524a.
5. For the English translation see http://www.perseus.tufts.edu.
6. Euripides, in the scene where brother and sister recognise each other in *Electra* 573, refuses to mention the signs listed by Aeschylus in *The Libation Bearers* (Orestes' footprint, his lock of hair and his cloak) in that he does not consider them believable enough. He resorts instead to the scar between Orestes' eyebrows, which is his individual mark rather than a mark which identifies his family.
7. Hunting was the principal occasion for a young man to prove his heroic and regal virtues, as attested by the recurring motif of the Calydonian hunt and the iconography of the Macedonian tombs of Aigai-Verghina, particularly the frieze on the façade of the grandest, Tomb II, thought to be the tomb of Phillip II.
8. Ulysses, just like an *aoidos*, persuades Penelope to tell many lies which appear to be truthful, *Odyssey* 19.203.
9. Rousseau (1959, 1148): 'Nul ne peut écrire la vie d'un homme que lui-même. Sa manière d'être intérieure, sa véritable vie n'est connue que de lui; mais en l'écrivant il la déguise; sous le nom de sa vie, il fait son apologie; il se montre comme il veut être vu, mais point du tout comme il est. Les plus sincères sont vrais tout au plus dans ce qu'ils disent, mais ils mentent par leurs réticences, et ce qu'ils taisent change tellement ce qu'ils feignent d'avouer, qu'en ne disant qu'une partie de la vérité ils ne disent rien. Je mets Montaigne à la tête de ces faux sincères qui veulent tromper en disant vrai. Il se montre avec des défauts, mais il ne s'en donne que d'aimables; il n'y a point d'hommes qui n'en aient d'odieux. Montaigne se peint ressemblant mais de profil. Qui sait si quelque balafre à la joue ou un œil crevé du côté qu'il nous a caché, n'eût pas totalement changé sa physionomie'. The scar or wound (the French *balafre* makes no distinction) of which Russeau speaks in

the *Préambule* becomes a title for one of Mario Lavagetto's articles on lies in literature, cfr. Lavagetto (1992, 127–132).

10. In the long duet (ll. 908–1077) which Xerxes has with the Chorus of Faithful Persians ant the end of the tragedy, the massacre suffered is referred to three times with the image of the torn cloak or *peplos*.
11. The title was extended to the collection of seven papers, *The Wound and the Bow*, translated into Italian as *La ferita e l'arco. Sette studi di letteratura* by Nemi d'Agostino for Garzanti and republished with a preface by Piergiorgio Bellocchio by Garzanti in 1991.
12. Philostratus, *On heroes* 19.20; Dumézil (2005) and Burkert (1992, 35–56).
13. Xenophon, C*onstitution of the Lacedaemonians* 2.1–14 and Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus* 16–18.
14. English translation taken from http://johnstoniatexts.x10host.com/sophocles/oedipusthekinghtml.html.
15. This theme of innocence, of having suffered rather than inflicted violence, is recurrent, both in words and in form, in key passages of *Oedipus at Colonus* (265–274; 512–548; 960–990).
16. This inability to critically analyse and renew one's self is also displayed by Heracles in *Women of Trachis*. He cannot recognise either his own hubris or Deianeira's jealousy, but forces his son Hyllus to marry Iole, his concubine, as a form of unthinking continuation. As attested by Euripides' *Hippolytus*, this behaviour was no longer thought of as appropriate at the time the play was written.
17. The power to redeem is an important trait of good kingship and lines 457–460 of this last *Oedipus* recall the Thebans' cry to their king when they were afflicted by the plague in the first tragedy, *OT* 14–57 (see l. 48 in particular). The positive aspects of personal and regal power, which is demonised in other texts, is represented in *Oedipus at Colonus* by Theseus, the *basileus* (l. 67), who is elsewhere presented as a proto-democratic leader: see Euripydes, *The Suppliants*, 352–353; 404–408.

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CHAPTER 4

The 'Aperto Segno' and the 'Colpo Ascoso'. The Love Wound in Cavalcanti and Dante

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During the last fifteen years of the thirteenth century, the representation of the symptoms of love evolved as a result of the poetic and speculative contaminations between Dante and Cavalcanti. This study takes as its starting point one among the many wounds depicted in that period which had not 'closed' into a trope but rather had one edge that had been healed by the literary tradition and one which would soon merge into the Petrarchan wound. That wound is the one described as impossible to heal in the fourth stanza of *Al poco giorno ed al gran cerchio d'ombra* and its aetiology offers a stimulating case study.

Dante's sestina is a blatant imitation of Arnaut Daniel's *canso* on amorous obsession, sung a century earlier by Daniel dressed as Tristan. It occupies an important position in the sequence of the fifteen *canzoni distese*, which were transcribed and ordered by Boccaccio: it is the seventh poem in the sequence, that is the central one (together with the next).

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Boccaccio might not have been the one who devised that extraordinary arrangement of poems, but he certainly shared it with his friend Petrarch and bequeathed it to the following generations, thus turning it into 'the most evident and least questionable element of the field of manuscript tradition (and also of print tradition until very recently)' (De Robertis 2005, XVI). The sequence starts with a virulent poem that has little in common with traditional courtly poetry, *Così nel mio parlar vogli'esser aspro*, and ends with an infuriated acknowledgement of the inescapable power of love in *Amor, da che convien pur ch'io mi doglia* (it is worth noting that these two first lines are both in iambic metre and feature a good number of oxytones). It is the aforementioned sestina, though, that is the hinge around which the whole sequence revolves. It owes its exceptional quality to the influence of Cavalcanti, whose friendship with Dante was by no means limited to the period in which they were both members of the stilnovo group. The 'exegetical noise' (Corti 1983, 16) which has gathered around *Donna me prega per ch'eo voglio dire* and has recently become deafening in its attempts to establish whether Cavalcanti's poem antedates or follows Dante's invention of the *prosimetrum* in his *Vita Nova*, has eventually reduced what is perhaps the most intense moment of the relationship between Dante and Cavalcanti to a mere unheard murmur. Indeed, at the time in which Cavalcanti wrote *Donna me prega* (which was also a time when he and Dante were politically engaged), their friendship 'was still alive – if ever it was interrupted, as is claimed by some' (Nardi 1966, 192).

In *Al poco giorno*, the noun employed to designate the *amor vulnus*, 'colpo' ([wounds], l. 20),[1] is enough to reveal the extraordinary nature of that wound. That word is clearly indebted to *Lo ferm voler qu'el cor m'intra* ('que plus mi nafra·l cor que colp de verja', ['For it strikes my heart more than a blow from a rod'] l. 15), especially in that the blow is inflicted to the heart, which had always been seat of the 'appetite'.[2] Its devastating effects are portrayed in Dante's so-called *rime petrose*, but that wound is itself also the paradigmatic image that justifies the existence of many other similar images which appear in the first poems of the aforementioned sequence. In *Così nel mio parlare*, for instance, the noun 'colpo', often linked with verbs such as to slay, to wound, to strike, gives origin to some of the most realistic scenes in Dante's whole lyric output: it is almost as if we were witnessing the brutality of the battle of Campaldino, as if Dante (who might have had some of Guittone's scenes in mind, such as those described towards the end of *Ahi, Deo, che dolorosa*,

which were appreciated also by Cavalcanti) were anticipating his depiction of the violence of city life offered in the *Inferno*. Just as is the case in the canzone 'montanina', the blows raining down on the metaphorical armour of pride worn by the beautiful woman 'sbandeggiata' ([banished], l. 71) from the court of Love actually unveil the wound which has been inflicted upon the poet. That wound is irreversible, in that it deprives the man who has received it of his senses and his self-awareness, and then, as soon as he comes back to himself, it takes away from him all hope of surviving. In the canzone 'montanina', unlike in the *rime petrose*, the poet's loss is not replaced by any hallucinatory satisfaction nor by any proud assertion of the constancy of his desire, which would justify the expression of inescapable pain which is the main feature of his poetry.

One first observation can thus be drawn: in the troubled period after Beatrice's death, every time Dante turned to lyric poetry again (an unexpected and even belated choice), he always had his 'primo amico' [first friend] in mind. He also always tried to account for how his friend had avoided the *mutatio vitae* as a true 'insignis physicus' (to put it in Filippo Villani's words, author of the codice laurenziano *Vite*). The *mutatio vitae* was a sort of time bomb that had been encountered by every courtly poet halfway through their lives, starting with the Provençal poets (as is testified by the scant information offered by the *vidas*). After all, that generation of poets who were so interested in the management of the *res publica* had to face Guittone, who had become a 'frate gaudente' (i.e. a member of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary). His militant conversion, which he had so blatantly advertised and which went hand in hand with his abrupt dismissal of fervent love, about which he used to boast, was a matter of no little importance to them. The time devoted to juvenile love had to come to an end for everyone, for those who followed Guittone and those who did not alike. Those poets, though, had to find a way to continue to capitalise on the potential for social influence possessed by lyric poetry also when they had become older and had reached a 'tempered and mature' age (*Convivio* I, i) in which their perspective on life should have started to change.[3] In other words, they had to save their own soul by way of talking. Above all, they had to present themselves as endowed with a deep understanding of the forces at play in the battle of life in order to take part in the distribution of prebends and offices (or to carry out a more wide-ranging policy, such as that of the order of the *milites beatae Virgines Mariae*). At that time, writing poetry was an act of

militancy: to lose sight of the social and political repercussions of poetry was like choosing to be stuck in a nice pre-Raphaelite painting.

The wound inflicted by the hard-hearted lady is thus a mortal wound, and it is the very emblem of the love poetry written at an unusually late age by Cavalcanti (and then also by Dante), who wished to go against Fra Guittone. It was indeed very different from the wounds that had been 'sterilised' by a literary tradition which started with Ovid's late production and Virgil's bucolic works, and reached courtly poetry through the 'good reads' (classical or non-classical) which were popular in the Magna Curia. That wound is impossible to heal because it was inflicted 'al poco giorno ed al gran cerchio d'ombra' ['To the short day and its great arc of shadow'], that is in winter; winter, though, should also be intended as a time in men's lives, if credence is given to a section in the codice Ashburnhamiano 843 (which even claims that the poet is surprised at realising that he is 'così innamorato alla sua vecchiezza pervenuto' ['still so in love at his old age']). That winter brought Dante to the 'dark forest' (as Beatrice reminds us when she reappears in the Earthly Paradise), from which he would not have been able to escape, not even with the promise of a spiritual spring, unless he had been rescued not only by his master and guide, but also by that impressive literary medium, the *Comedy* (in this case utterly anti-Cavalcantian) which taught him and his readers how to adapt to the changing of life's seasons without repudiating one's past self or withdrawing into isolation, no matter how repented, disdainful or 'immeritus' one may be. The tragic style of the canzoni would by no means have been an adequate medium for such a literary endeavour, not even if the canzoni had been accompanied by explanatory, or rather amending prose, as was the case in the *Convivio*. Indeed, the fact that Dante manifestly employed scientific terminology suggests that the *Convivio* is not a sort of continuation, ten years later, of the *Vita Nova*, in which Beatrice, who now resides among the *beati*, is replaced (despite the 'mirabile visione' ['miraculous vision']) by a 'donna gentile' ['gentle lady'] who incarnates philosophy. That work is rather a response to the *Scriptum super cantilena Guidonis de Cavalcantibus*, where Dino del Garbo had taken up Guido's challenge to engage as a 'canoscente' ['knower'] with *Donna me prega*, a poem which combines music and philosophy and is radically Aristotelian in its very vocabulary (Corti 1983, 10).[4] Dino del Garbo was the first one who reacted to Cavalcanti's invitation ('ond'a presente canoscente chero' ['I seek a noble knower'], l. 5), and the numerous allusions to Avicenna which frequently emerge in his commentary indicate that he

almost certainly wrote it during the first decade of the fourteenth century, when he was in Bologna: after his graduation in 1305 (or 1300), Del Garbo became the most famous and authoritative expert on Avicenna. Those allusions also lead us to believe that the only possible audience of Del Garbo’s commentary was an academic one. As early as the first lines of the *Convivio*, Dante seems to distance himself quite explicitly from that kind of interpretive approach, and his rejection is more radical than that of Cavalcanti when he had cast his *Donna me prega* as a ‘counter-model’ aimed at threatening ‘the very essence of the intellectual and moral universe of the *Vita Nova*’ (Fenzi 1999, 9).

What is indisputably true is that in the *Convivio*, just as in many other passages of the *Comedy*, Dante appears to have a score to settle with his ‘first friend’, but he only faces a shadow. In the *Comedy*, that shadow is barely ‘half alive’ (Contini 1976, 144), together with the late Florentine politicians of the previous generation, but it nonetheless hovers over the poem’s numerous reticences, which are instead aimed at relegating it behind the other companions met by Dante. Dante significantly encounters that shadow in the *Purgatorio*, the most autobiographical cantica, where several poets appear, from Casella to Arnaut (a parable that is itself a sign). In that cantica, Dante appears to *know* what he should repent of, and Beatrice, in turn, *knows* what to blame his friend for, and they both knew that before Dante’s immersion in Lethe and continue to know it afterwards. Dante is blamed for having allowed himself to be distracted by young ladies and ‘women of stone’, and, in criticising him, Beatrice utters the emblematic noun ‘colpo’, as if she were deliberately drawing attention to it (‘non ti dovea gravar le penne in giuso | ad aspettar più *colpo*, o pargoletta | o altra novità con sì breve uso’, Purg. XXXI 58–60 [‘You should not have allowed your wings to droop | leaving you to other darts from some young girl | or other novelty of such brief use’]).[5] A further and more problematic accusation is also moved against Dante: he is guilty of having followed ‘quella scola’ (XXXIII 85 [‘the school’]) which was clearly influenced by ‘radical Aristotelianism’, if not by ‘Cavalcanti’s Averroism, which was strongly marked by rationalist materialism’ (Fenzi 2017, 404).

The matter becomes even more complicated after Cavalcanti’s death (for Dante, who has survived his friend, it is complicated also on a psychological level), which occurred in the same year as both the Jubilee and the setting of the *Comedy*. During that year, the sole inevitable separation of

the two friends took place. That separation is never alluded to in the enigmatic epistolary sonnets (which are probably ambiguous because of their very status), but it is unequivocally proved by two events that occurred in close chronological proximity: the exile to which Guido was condemned, and his death of malaria in August 1300. The appearance of Cavalcanti's father in *Inferno* X, who looks around ('sospecciar', Inf. X 57) to search for Dante the character, a friend of his beloved son's whose voice he has recognised, provides Dante the author with the occasion to explain, many years later, the reason why his friendship with Cavalcanti had ended (for further details on that reason, which is here omitted, see Frasca 2015, 70–72). Despite the short-sightedness typical of the damned (which, in this case, only prevents them from seeing things that 'draw near of happen now' [l. 103], that is to say present events and events that are about to happen), that episode reveals that if there was a rift between Dante and Cavalcanti—and indeed there was a rift between them, as is testified by the verb 'ebbe' (Contini 1976, 151)—it took place much later than we generally think, and it was by no means caused by the ferment caused by the appearance of *Donna me prega* in the already troubled waters of courtly lyrics, which had been agitated by Cavalcanti and Dante themselves. Quite the contrary: if the *rime petrose* dramatise (i.e. adapt to the subjective medium of lyric poetry) the theoretical opinions expressed in Cavalcanti's poem, it means that that poem does not represent an act of contemptuous dissociation on Cavalcanti's part from the views of his younger friend, who was drifting apart from him, but it is rather a theoretical milestone which indicated a path that Dante followed (even if he later had some regrets about it). It taught Dante how to continue to write poetry, love poetry, even when he had passed the age, if not of love (since love can be experienced until the age of sixty, according to Andrea Cappellano), then at least of the merry gatherings of friends and of the songs that belong to those occasions.

The wound alluded to in the *rime petrose* is thus a sort of "gangrene" which infected all the old superficial scratches of courtly poetry. And it does so as if it were fulfilling an explicit desire to hinder the healing process represented by the *mutatio vitae* (even when the *mutatio vitae* was just a façade, as was the case for that great rhetorician Guittone d'Arezzo) by drawing on Cavalcanti's proud knowledge of human physiology and psychopathology. If it had not been for that contradictory desire to keep the wound open, a contradiction which Dante overcame by linking his *Comedy* to the 'mirabile visione' in the *Vita Nova*, the

Petrarchan paradox of writing love poetry not after the death of the poet's beloved, but rather in old age, would not have been fuelled. Writing love poetry in old age is no longer considered to be a scandalous or ridiculous thing to do, especially because Petrarch's example was subsequently very often followed, but, on its first appearance, his literary operation was received with no little perplexity. In some cases, it even elicited outrage, which was partly mitigated by Petrarch's copious literary output in Latin and by his religious faith, which was always on the verge of becoming militant (but never actually became so). Some of the more austere religious men still protested, though, and they had every reason to do so.

That is why it is worth returning to the device which Dante borrows from Arnaut and originally re-elaborates by playing up its obsessiveness in *Amor, tu vedi ben che questa donna*, a sort of *sestina rinterzata* (so-called in the absence of a better definition) in which the 'blow of this hard stone' (l. 15) is described as being 'hidden' within the poet (*vulnus intrinsecus*). The only reason why it is hidden, though, is that the blow has hit the poet's heart, which is nearly devoid of all reason. The first line of this poem, the eighth of the *canzoni distese* and hence the pivot of the whole sequence, a poem which 'no mind imagined any time' (l. 66), has once again an iambic rhythm with many oxytones, which occupy the same position within the line in this and in the aforementioned poem. These metrical choices are the paradigmatic trait of Dante's *rime* and, since they recur at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the sequence, they may even indicate that the specific order of the poems was decided by the author himself and merely repeated by Boccaccio (an hypothesis that has been endorsed by Tonelli 2010, 7). In any case, it appears that the first line of *Amor tu vedi ben*, with its dense pattern of assonances and consonances, provided a model (conscious or unconscious) for Dante's later 'canzone montanina' (AMÓR tu vÉdi bÈN che quésta DÒnnA | AMÓR da chÉ conviÈN pur ch'ío mi DògliA): it is as if that later poem, written by a man in his late forties (just as Petrarch), could not help echoing the former *canzone petrosa*, making it resound 'in mezzo l'alpi' (l. 61 ['on mountains']) and in valleys.

In *Amor da che convien*, the 'I' complains about the persecution inflicted on him by the image of his beloved woman, which was shaped by his own 'anima folle' ['foolish soul'], as is explained in the following lines. It is thus his soul that is to blame for having caused that suffering; the more it seeks solace, the more it evokes the shadow of its desire. The rhetorical question posed in the following lines ('Quale argomento

di ragion raffrena | ove tanta tempesta in me si gira?', ll. 26–27 ['What argument of reason can now quell | the ruthless tempest whirling in my heart?']) reveals that the inescapable emotional state described in the poem is blatantly modelled on *Donna me prega* (where love 'for di salute giudicar mantene, | ché la 'ntenzione per ragione vale' [heeds not the soul's health being drawn | By will not reason'], ll. 32–33). Dante draws not only on Cavalcanti's second (and third) stanza, but also on lines 50–56, which, according to Del Garbo's comment, express the impossibility for those who experience a kind of love that is almost an obsession to focus on anything else, in that the 'species rei', i.e. the image of the object of desire, literally enslaves them to someone else's thought even when it is not explicitly evoked ('servilis in cogitationibus in quibus cogitur de re amata'). This condition understandably triggers fits of rage, as if those lovers were trying to expel that external pathogenic element without success. Rage, which stems from the combination of a choleric and melancholic temperament, is a clear symptom of that disease, the disease of *amor hereos*, that is of pathological love. *Amor hereos* had been studied in detail by medieval physicians ever since Constantine the African's first translations of Arabic treatises on medicine and the diffusion of Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine*, translated by Gherardo da Cremona and adopted as the standard medical text in Bologna around the seventies of the thirteenth century on the initiative of Taddeo Alderotti (Tonelli 2015, 3–13). Despite being a symptom of such a well-known disease, rage alone cannot account for the infamous 'scuritate' ['darkness'] caused by Mars and mentioned in *Donna me prega* (ll. 17–8) nor for that incessant simmering of 'ira mala' ['evil wrath'] which, in the *rime petrose*, often unsettles the balance typical of courtly poetry.

From this perspective, the sestina and the so-called 'sestina rinterzata' are formal devices that have such a cyclical structure that they can almost be regarded as instruments of torture, or (which is about the same), as tools that enable us to detect a *ferm voler* ['firm will'] which has become explicitly pathological, or, to put it the words of the great physician Arnaldo Villanova (borrowed also by Dino del Garbo), has turned into a *delirium vehemens*. While in Dante's sestina (*Al poco giorno*), the same six rhyme-words are repeated in each stanza as if the poet were mimicking the obsessive bouncing back and forth of the lyric subject within that 'gran cerchio d'ombra' ['great arc of shadow'] in which he finds himself, in the sestina rinterzata (*Amor tu vedi ben*), the dominant rhyme-word of each stanza acts as a mental trap from which the lyric I cannot escape

unless he makes that supreme effort which, at the end of the sirima, leads him to fall straight into another trap set for him in the next stanza.

The formal achievement of these two sestine, which goes together with the superbly doctrinal one in *Io son venuto al punto della rota*, and with the hyperrealistic violence that characterises *Così nel mio parlar* (a poem which is yet somehow peculiar), is by no means dissimilar to that of Cavalcanti's famous doctrinal poem. Thus, if it is 'vital to read [*Donna me prega*][…] and to interpret it by taking into account the pauses imposed by the middle rhymes' (Corti 1983, 20), if its rhythmic pattern is necessary to understand the poem and all its nuances, then that must be the case also for Dante: Dante did indeed share theoretical ground with his friend, and was also keen on offering medical readings of the love wound. In his *Donna me prega*, Cavalcanti somehow revived the kind of doctrinal poetry mastered by that 'great but overshadowing' poet Guittone (Fenzi 1999, 38) and he probably did so to confront him once and for all rather than to distance himself from Dante and his *Vita Nova*. In doing so, he compelled his younger friend to 'engage with the poetic achievements [of Guittone d'Arezzo] more attentively and maturely' (Fenzi 1999, 40). Thus, both Dante and Cavalcanti decided to draw upon Guittone's complex formal patterns and thus to challenge that successful poet on his own ground, that is by choosing to write in a 'clus' style rather than reproducing that slightly outworn and highly conceptual '*trobar leu*', later translated by Dante as 'dolce stil' (*Purg.* XXIV 57 ['sweet new style']). That challenge also involved what they considered to be their *novità* (novelty) no matter whether it was expressed in a 'sweet' or 'sour' style: such novelty was their knowledge of the physiological processes of love, no longer based on the outdated (and rather fanciful) ideas of Andrea Cappellano (an inexhaustible source for Guittone) but rather on more advanced medical theories. The two of them may even have had access—possibly with the help of friars Pietro Olivi and Ubertino da Casale, who were active in Santa Croce since the end of the 1280s—to the *Tractatus de amore heroico*, which had only very recently been written by Arnaldo Villanova (Tonelli 2015, 44). While Cavalcanti, whose is poem is addressed to a 'canoscente' able to follow his subtle argumentation, openly faced Guittone by making use of a device that was particularly dear to him, that is internal rhyme, Dante rejected the 'arnaldism' typical of Guittone and his followers, and rather drew directly from their acknowledged model, Arnaut Daniel (which they re-elaborated in the vernacular): he employed his *trobar ric* as the formal structure 'mai

pensato in alcun tempo' ['never before conceived'] with which to describe the aetiology of love that was familiar to himself and his 'first friend'. Dante and Cavalcanti were equally aware of their own uniqueness, or one could say equally arrogant, but they paradoxically always supported each other, thus engaging in a shared dialogue ('ragionare a due voci') which entailed 'mutual imitation' and even 'inventing the subject matter of their discourse' (De Robertis 2005, XV–XVI).

Love—not the kind of idealised love sung of at a young age, but rather love which can still be discussed at a more mature age, as experts (as physicians or philosophers)—can thus lead men to death even if it is by no means the same thing as death, as was claimed by the already clichéd wordplay popularised by Guittone in *Ahi, Deo, che dolorosa* ('"amore" quanto "ah, morte" vale a dire', l. 27 ['love amounts to saying death']).[6] Technically, love is not even a disease, specifies Cavalcanti in *Donna me prega*, but rather a wound which is suddenly opened when a pathogenic element appears, and which can be very dangerous. It is an 'accidente', 'che è sovente fero' ['accident … often fierce and wild'], according to the precise distinction drawn by Arnaldo da Villanova ('dicitur proprie accidens et non morbus'), who reiterates the medieval notion that there was no such thing as a disease that was not caused by a malfunctioning of the human body itself (Tonelli 2015, 28–29). Thus, even if 'di sua potenza segue spesso morte' ['the potency of love | Will often lead to death'], it is not clear why death should be deemed to be the outcome of a process of degradation, unless we bear in mind that, according to Cavalcanti and his friend Giacomo da Pistoia (and to Latin averroism more in general), true happiness consists in 'the speculative act of understanding the supreme intelligibles' (Nardi 1966, 243), and hence men should aim at investigating everything that can be known. As Dino del Garbo rightly recognises, the death alluded to in Cavalcanti's poem is not metaphorical but real: and it is real not because love is contrary to nature, but rather because, by plunging men into a melancholic mood (a complex condition in which the medicine of that time included several phenomena that would now be defined as depressive), it distracts them from 'ab operationibus propriis nurimenti'.

In his sestina, Dante describes in similar terms the paradoxical state of passion which would easily prompt the lyric I to sleep on hard 'stone' and to feed solely on 'grass' for the sole purpose of 'watch[ing] her garments cast a shadow' ('sol per veder do' suoi panni fanno ombra', l. 36 – with all the erotic undertones that the line has). In this passage,

the poet slightly alters the meaning of the two consecutive rhyme-words but without employing *equivocatio* (avoided also by Arnaut), which he would later denounce as *inutilis* in his *De vulgari eloquentia* (II xiii 13), an attack once again directed against Guittone. Dante creates a similar semantic intensification of the two rhyme-words, which are once again consecutive as is required by the *retrogradatio cruciata*, in the fourth stanza, on which we will now focus in order to analyse closely that 'colpo' which is there described as impossible to escape. Even if it is barely alluded to, that tropical shift in meaning leads us straight into one of those shops where remedies for several ailments (such as healing herbs and stones) were sold, and which were run and attended by members of the Arte dei Medici e degli Speziali. But before we enter that shop (which must indeed have been very busy, given how fashionable it was among the higher classes to suffer from love sickness, as is testified by *Donna me prega*), it is necessary that we understand why the diagnosis of the subject's condition sketched in that stanza cannot but be unfavourable.

If we were to compare the poem to a piece of visual art, we could say that the third stanza is one of the very few colour sketches that can be found in Dante's lyric poetry: because of its skilful combination of colours (which does not involve solely the woman's clothing, but is extended to the whole scene), that stanza seems to prefigure those sketched miniatures of characters which appear in the Ante-purgatory and in the Earthly Paradise thus skipping the whole Purgatory, which is characterised by a more didactic and militant kind of figurative art (one could say that it is like a black and white painting). The scene is all painted in green and gold, the same colours that would later be employed by Petrarch, and it focuses on the first of the two appearances of the otherwise intangible Stone Lady: she here manifests herself in the mind of the poet rather than in real life. Indeed, having seen her attired as he describes, and having fallen in love with her at first sight are facts that actually took place, but the poet's obsessive recalling of that vision, which is almost conceived as if it were an allegorical picture, is a symptom that goes well beyond the 'immoderata cogitatio' popularised by Andrea Cappellano and elaborated in the *Vita Nova*.

The poem thus displays both the triumph of the external pathogenic element within the sensitive soul, a phenomenon described by Dino del Garbo in his comment of *Donna me prega* ('talis homo, quando est in cogitatione alicuius rei, subito pervenit ad ipsum species rei quam desiderat', l. 48), and a sort of 'mineralisation process'. Every time the

lyric I recalls the *ymago* of the young woman wearing a wreath of flowers in her curly blonde hair, that image 'trae' ['draws'] (l. 14) from his mind 'ogne altra donna' ['any other woman'] (and it is difficult for us not to be shocked by those words, used as we are to the cult of Beatrice).[7] The colour effects created by that scene (which call to our mind Laura) are so alluring that Love itself comes to rest in the woman's shade. The poet is also compelled to stay as close as possible to that shade, as if he were bonded to it with lime ('più forte assai che la calcina pietra', l. 18). The vivid carnal image of longed-for physical proximity also appeared in Arnaut's *Lo ferm voler* (l. 17: 'de lieis serai aisi cum carn e ongla' ['I'll always be close to her, like her flesh and her nails'], but also ll. 21 e 22, where the troubadour wishes he were as close to his beloved's room as the finger is to the nail) becomes here explicitly 'mineral' ('calcina pietra'): we are thus in the world of natural constrictions and not too far from the sepulchres of Cavalcante and Farinata. As is stated in *Al poco giorno*, once the 'disio' is born 'non cangia il verde' (l. 4: 'this my longing does not change its green'), no matter what may happen, nor if one is going through an unlucky phase of the year or of his life, and it does not wither not because it brings with it a sort of spring of the soul, but rather because each *vehemens delirium* 'è barbato nella dura pietra' (l. 5: 'is 'rooted […] in the hard stone') and it thus possesses the same vital (and irrational) tenacity as an evergreen tree. This is explained very clearly in *Io son venuto*: 'Passato hanno lor termine le fronde | che trasse fuor la vertù d'Ariete | per adornare il mondo, e morta è l'erba; | ramo di foglia verde non s'asconde | se non in lauro o in pino o in abete | o in alcun che sua verdura serba' (ll. 40–45: 'Leaves, that the power of the Ram brought forth | to brighten and adorn the world, have gone | beyond their limits, and the grass is dead; | all greenleaf boughs | are hidden from our glance | except in laurel, or in pine or fir, | or in some other ever-verdant tree'). Dante mentions here a laurel and a desire which can be compared to it because of its ability to resist to the changing of the seasons. The *ferm voler* with which Arnaut was obsessed becomes in the *petrose* a genetic trait, and anticipates the metamorphoses displayed in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*.

As would be later made explicit in the 'canzone montanina', the magnetic power possessed by the object of love always combines with the obsession of the lover, who deliberately continues to evoke the ghost of his beloved, which is engraved in his mind and almost seems to have a life of its own: this is the condition of the subject of the rime *petrose*, and

also of the Petrarchan 'I'. 'La sua bellezza ha più vertù che pietra' ['Her beauty's worth far more than precious stone'],[8] comments the poet, who explicitly uses medical jargon, 'e 'l colpo suo non può sanar per erba' (ll. 19–20: 'and for her wounds there is no healing grass'). It is of no use to try to move away from the object of one's desire, as the 'species rei' which has settled in his sensible soul exists in potency but is nonetheless always on the verge of becoming an actuality ('est in potentia multum propinqua actui'), as is explained by Dino del Garbo. That 'species rei' manages to penetrate like the scorching rays of the sun through any possible screen or improvised shelter. The case is thus desperate, but it has precedents: Enrico Fenzi (2017, 407–408), who investigated the classical elements in the 'rapacious and omnivorous *tour de force*' of the *rime petrose*, has rightly recognised that the allusion to the possibility of using healing herbs to cure a wound is likely indebted to three passages in Ovid with which Dante was familiar (*Metamorphoses* I 523 e X 188–189; *Heroides* V 149), to Tibullus (II 3, 13), and to two passages in the *Roman de la Ros*e, where the term 'erbe' (or 'herbes') is always associated by way of synonymic dittology with 'racine' so that it rhymes with 'medecine'. Among these possible sources, the most relevant is clearly the first one. That allusion fits well into that 'classical, often Ovidian, tradition of appropriating simple medical jargon' (Tonelli 2015, XII) which was an important element of that widespread 'interchange between literary tradition and scientific culture', and which was so harshly criticised by Cavalcanti (on the occasion of a famous quarrel with Guido Orlandi). It also introduces the motif of the two different arrows by means of which Cupid inspires love or hate. The scene narrated by Ovid is famous: Apollo mocked the 'lascivus puer', and his skills as an archer, and he, eager to take his revenge, struck his slanderer with his gold arrow, which made him fall in love with Daphne. Daphne was instead hit by Cupid's lead arrow, which aroused in her the deepest loathing for the god. Apollo thus started to chase Daphne in vain, and tried to soften her with every rhetorical argument possible, although he kept repeating the same ideas (as though he had ended up in a sestina). In the meanwhile, a strong carnal desire started to grow in him, leaving him no rest. In the very instant before he got hold of Daphne, who was about to metamorphose, Apollo, the god of medicine himself, declared that his disease was incurable: 'Ei mihi, quod nullis amor est sanabilis herbis'. Even if one ignores the image of the evergreen 'barbato nella dura pietra' or the colours which would later define Laura, that explicit allusion casts a precise shade (exactly that of

the venerated tree) upon the construction of the elements of the myth of Daphne in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*.

Petrarch's indebtedness to Dante is much more substantial than has been recognised by Paolo Possiedi and Domenico De Robertis, who analysed the formal elements of Petrarch's poetry so as to give us a glimpse of a 'Petrarca petroso'. Indeed, it is here not a matter of unveiling the influence of 'Dante in Petrarca', as has been done by Trovato (1979): here Dante *is* Petrarch. This is testified by the fact that Petrarch appropriated the form of the sestina, which he repeated nine times (and nine is a remarkably significant number, especially in Dante): in doing so, he almost turned himself not so much into Petrarch but rather into the first 'Petrarchist'. That is to say, he became a poet who, in order to choose himself as his own model, had to find in the work of his predecessor the idiosyncratic poetic forms which he would later diligently organise into a sequence (see Frasca 1992, 173–206).

It was by no means merely a matter of forms, though. The more or less Ovidian wounds probably regained great popularity through the mediation of the *Eneas* (Antonelli 1992, 9) but especially as a consequence of the famous quarrel between the Abbot of Tivoli and Giacomo da Lentini, and they later thrived in the Sicilian and Siculo-Tuscan milieu with the rhyme-words 'dardo-sguardo', after they had been associated with the motif of sight by Notaro. Unlike those wounds, though, the 'colpo' of the *petrose* cannot in any way be linked with that kind of 'socialised' love displayed in the *Vita Nova* and even in the poet's room, the 'solingo luogo' where it was possible for him to avoid people's gaze (but not the gaze of the prosimetrum). On the contrary: if there is one thing that we can be sure of, it is that the incurable wound isolates him who has received it from society and transforms him into a medical case: that process marks the origin of his individual history (his *principium individuationis*, to quote from the Latin translations of Avicenna. The final outcome of this apparently paradoxical display of courtly themes centred on the wound inflicted by an unattainable woman (perhaps unattainable because she is too young and thus 'selvaggi[a]' in the sense in which the word is employed in *Donna me prega*) is the fact that the Petrarchan subject is not really touched by the *mutatio vitae*. As for its origin, it cannot be located in Provençal poetry, in which the few wounds that are evoked are generally associated with a happy experience (they are literally 'colps the joi'), as is the case, for instance, in the exemplary poems by Jaufre Rudel (*Non sap chantar qui so non di*, ll. 13–18) and Raimbaut d'Aurenga (*Un*

vers farai de tal mena, ll. 22–28), analysed by Gubbini (2005, 781–791), or in the equally important one by Bernart de Ventadorn (*No es meravelha s'eu chan*, ll. 25–32). The motif of the heart-rending amorous wound was instead rediscovered in the Magna Curia, not only because of the popularity of the classics among its dignitaries (and also of the literary output in the langue d'oc and in the langue d'oil), but also and especially because of the scientific fervour of that time, which enabled Giacomo da Lentini to create his own motif of sight by associating the wound with scientific theories on vision, especially those formulated by Galen and summarised in the *Liber oculorum*, another translation from Arabic carried out by the untiring friar Costantino Africano (Tonelli 2015, 32–36). That this link with medical science is the key of this extraordinary metamorphosis of the lyric subject is demonstrated by the equally remarkable fact that in the vast and varied literary output of Guittone d'Arezzo, who was famously capable of acting all the parts on the 'stage' of courtly love poetry, there are only very few allusions to wounds, unless we count among his poems *Infelice mia stella e duro fato*, a sonnet characterised by ineluctable astrological determinism which was inexplicably ascribed to Guittone by the Giuntina. Guittone only mentions the wounds inflicted by conscience in *O quanto fiedi me, forte sanando*, and alludes to a small number of other generic wounds. Thus, the pivotal element of this process, which would later involve Guinizzelli, is by all means Guido Cavalcanti's re-elaboration of the motif of the amorous wound.

In *Donna me prega* the wound becomes the blatant outcome of the 'sguardo [...] dardo' ['glance ... dart'] which the lovers exchange because of their 'simil [...] complessione' ['similar ... temperament'] (ll. 57–60) and which, as Dino del Garbo acutely illustrates, turns the received wound into a sort of mouth which cannot be compelled 'ad loquendum' (this explains why the subject of the petrose speaks reluctantly, almost as if he were forced to do so). Before that transformation took place, though, Cavalcanti's *vulnus* emerged (despite its being *intrinsecus*) as the 'aperto segno' ['open gaping sign'] of a *principium individuationis* which actually defines men only when they give themselves over to someone else.[9] This process, exemplified in many of Cavalcanti's works, is perhaps best described in *Tu m'hai sì piena di dolor la mente*, a sonnet in which the forces at play are mentioned according to an elaborated symmetrical pattern ('tu' is placed at the beginning of the first line, 'Amore' at the beginning of the fifth, 'io' at the beginning of the ninth… and in the twelfth line we find the device which enables the statue of a human

body to move). The second-person singular pronoun at the very beginning of the poem transcends the conventions of courtly poetry and has indeed very few antecedents (the first available example in Siculo-tuscan poetry is *Tu mi prendesti, donna, in tale punto*). The strength of this pronoun, without a vocative to mitigate it, is indeed powerful, but it is not really fully capitalised upon, as the word is not stressed due to the iambic structure of the line: the stress falls instead on the devastating action that has immediate consequences for the poet ('tu m'hai'). The external pathogenic element has thus parasitised its host and his soul merely by showing itself: in order to evade that familiar pain, the host would rather go away, thus starting the trend of repeated flights which characterise Cavalcanti's lyric 'I', a subject who paradoxically exists as a residue of his own divisions.

If we focus on the vocabulary employed in the poem, we realise that such a human being, who acts as if it were a robot 'fatto di rame o di *pietra* o di legno' ['made out of bronze or stone or wood'] and animated by an artificial mechanism, and who has a wound in his heart which is the 'aperto segno' of his being dead (ll. 11–14), embodies the archetypal subject of the *petrose*, a subject trapped in the cycle of his instinctual drives and deprived of his 'felicità mentale' ['mental happiness']. Indeed, Giacomo da Pistoia, a physician and one of Cavalcanti's select friends, had also argued that the 'affectio appetitus sensitivi' is the main obstacle to 'ultima felicitas homini', which consists in the fruitful attempt to grasp everything that is intelligible (Zavattero 2005, 370). A world which receives the strokes of love that are destined to us in order to grant us the only possible eternity according to Averroistic thought is but a world that has been turned into something less than a vegetal, into a mineral, even: Cavalcanti had no doubt on that matter. This fact (although it is still to be fully assessed) has the advantage of revealing the specific genealogy of Dante's *rime petrose*, whose remote origin may be identified in Giacomo da Lentini's *Guiderdone aspetto avere*, where the 'figura piacente' ['lovely mien'] of the beloved woman 'diranca' the poet's heart ['makes my heart break apart'], and his spirits 'manca e torna in ghiaccio' ['lose their strength and turn to ice'] at the very thought of her.[10] An important source of inspiration for Dante was certainly Guittone's sonnet *Eo sono sordo e muto ed orbo fatto*, whose second line reveals that the cause of the poet's stupor was an 'acerbo amore' ['immature love']. Lastly, the climax of such a genealogy is reached right before the appearance of Calvanti's subservient robotic being on the literary

scene with the 'statua d'ottono' ['brass statue'] mentioned in Guinizzelli's sonnet *Lo vostro bel saluto e 'l gentil sguardo.*[11] That poem describes an amorous wound which can be considered the emblem of the 'slits of love' evoked above: the woman's gaze is depicted as a thunderbolt 'che fer' per la finestra de la torre' (l. 9: 'that strikes through a tower window'). This literary lineage culminates in the last lines of *Io son venuto al punto della rota*, where the poet, turned into a 'man of marble' ('uomo di marmo'), and the 'maiden', who 'for a heart has marble' ('in pargoletta fia per cuore un marmo'), face each other, both suspended in mutual 'calcination' (ll. 71–72). Not even at a young age could Dante avoid the influence of this heritage, as is clearly testified by the episode of the 'gabbo' in his *Vita Nova*: the epiphany of the lady does not here turn the poet into a statue, but it induces him to lean against a painting, as if he were trying to blend with the images therein depicted so as to hide the 'figura nova' ['changed self'] into which he is metamorphosing and which would later explicitly belong to someone else ('d'altrui') (*Con l'altre donne mia vista gabbate*, ll. 3 and 12).

There is still one last issue to be discussed, which is of vital important and has to be carefully considered. It is beyond doubt that the poetic 'I' of the *petrose* emerged as an uncharacteristically old subject of lyric poetry and that its characterisation was heavily influenced by the precise symptoms described by Cavalcanti in *Donna me Prega*. This is proved not only by the author's insistence on his beloved's 'savage' youth, but also by the canzone 'montanina': that poem draws on forms and motifs which Dante should have long left behind and which appear unsurprisingly 'dissonant in relation to the time when [the poem] was written' (Tonelli 2010, 9) All these traits, together with the lack of courtly measure explicitly pursued by these poets, lie at the heart of the construction of Petrarch's lyric subject (which is remarkably able to survive love and also to survive in the lyric tradition despite the flow of time), as is testified by the numerous echoes of the myth of Daphne which have been traced in *Al poco giorno*. The *petrose* were most likely written in 1296–1298 (with the possible exception of *Così nel mio parlar*, whose date of composition is still a matter of scholarly debate), that is after Dante's encounter with philosophy and his consequent renunciation of the cult of Beatrice. Despite the fact that other possible dates of composition have often been suggested for the whole sequence or for individual poems, we must here take for granted that the poems were written in the two-year time span mentioned above. And yet, there remain unresolved doubts about that, doubts which should

attract the attention of legions of scholars, especially if we consider the great popularity enjoyed by *Così nel mio parlare*, which very soon became a sort manifesto, just like Cavalcanti's *Donna me prega* (an outcome which may have been encouraged by the author himself). But why did Dante not only write the sequence of the rime petrose but also identified with it so strongly right at the time when he was most actively engaged in politics? Why would he declare himself afflicted by *amor hereos* when he was aspiring to one of the most prestigious communal offices? How could that 'Cavalcantian' world populated by irrational loves and brutal instincts, a world where the lyric I was often trapped, have a positive impact on Dante's respectability, which was indeed necessary for the *cursus honorum* that he was pursuing?

An attempt will now be made to answer those questions by relying on some pieces of a mosaic many of whose tiles are now missing and whose image is thus lost. The first element that will be considered is a bizarre phrase drawn from the first book of Cappellano's *De Amore*, where a 'nobilior femina' teaches her suitor 'plebeius' about courtly duties and explicitly encourages him to attend church service, 'licet quidam fatuissime credant, se satis mulieribus placere, si ecclesiastica cuncta despiciant'. It can be inferred from the words of the noble lady that as early as the last years of the twelfth century there were some unwise men who thought to impress their beloved with their disregard for the Church and its practises. This is a clear sign that secular culture was gradually gaining authority (also through lyric poetry), and it is thus plausible that such an irreverent attitude was spreading in secular and politically engaged social circles, as is also testified by Dante's *Inferno* (and this is the second tile of the mosaic), where we can find essentially the 'entire Florentine ruling class before Dante'. Among them were many prominent figures who were greatly admired by the poet (Farinata, Jacopo Rusticucci, Brunetto Latini etc.) and who are also described by other trustworthy sources as 'elite men, *esprits forts*, "libertines" in the seventeenth-century sense of the term' (Contini 1976, 144). It is thus not surprising that *Donna me prega* and *Così nel mio parlar*, two poems devoid of any religious allusions, were written at a time in which the two friends were deeply involved in politics, if we bear in mind both that the ruling class often exhibited their lack of interest—if not utter disregard—for religious matters, and that Dante had become a member of the Arte dei Medici e degli Speziali so as take an active part in the public life of the city. Possessing good knowledge of a psychological distress that was so fashionable could indeed have its

advantages. It should also not be forgotten (and this is our third tile) that, as has been pointed out by Bruno Nardi (1966, 262), Arnaldo da Villanova listed among the possible remedies for that stubborn love (which had been called *ilisci* by Avicenna) 'l'occupazione in negozi molto diversi' and 'l'impegno nel recare a compimento mandati e incarichi ricevuti' ['keeping oneself busy with several different activities and putting effort into carrying out entrusted tasks']. Thus, showing himself to be affected by *amor hereos* would by no means hinder his ability to perform a public office. On the contrary, one could say that it was exactly the poet's civic engagement that caused the amorous wound to fester (to the point that it became impossible to heal even in the course of a whole lifetime). Such political commitment, though, was about to turn into courtly commitment against Dante's will, as is testified by the letter addressed to Moroello Malaspina, which should have been sent together with *Amor, da che convien pur ch'io mi doglia*. And if that lover who found himself compelled to live as a courtier (that is to say the exiled Dante) replaces the lover of courtly poetry who had studied to become a physician of love (i.e. Dante before he was exiled), we are already almost in the presence of Petrarch.

(*Trans. by Arianna Hijazin*)

Notes

1. All translations of Dante's lyric poems are from Alighieri (1999), unless otherwise stated.
2. All translations of Arnaut Daniel's *Lo ferm voler* are from Daniel (1981).
3. The translation of the *Convivio* is from Alighieri (1990).
4. All translations of Cavalcanti's poem are from Cavalcanti (2010, 58–63).
5. All translations of the *Divine Comedy* are from Alighieri (2000, 2003).
6. The translation is from Guittone (2017, 97).
7. [Translator's note: a slightly more literal translation of Dante's line than that offered by Tusiani has been given here].
8. [Translator's note: the English translation of Dante's line is that of Tusiani (Dante, 1999), but the author suggests that the word

'vertù' is used not only in the sense of 'worth' but also of 'medicinal property'].

9. *Tu m'hai sì piena di dolor la mente*, l. 14. Translated in Cavalcanti (2010, 18–19).
10. The translation of Da Lentini's poem is from Da Lentini (2018, 28–31).
11. The poem is translated in Guinizzelli (1987, 32–33).

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CHAPTER 5

Through the Wound, and What Petrarch Found There

Andrea Torre

> I have a scar on my right thigh. The scar is there, so something must have caused it. But my only memory of what happened was supplied by my mother, who told me of an accident that occurred in 1942 as a result of which I had to have three or four or five stitches. 'And you were very brave. You didn't cry'. So I became the kind of little boy who doesn't cry. An instance of how implanted memories can exert a force well into the future.
>
> J. M. Coetzee

1 Reading the Marks of Time

On 15 October 1359, Petrarch wrote to his friend Neri Morando to congratulate him on recovering from an illness. The initial joyful tone in which he comments on the happy news is immediately followed by a benign reproach for having neglected the wise advice which he had

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previously given him, when he suggested that he should lead a quiet life instead of being always busy with the most disparate activities. As is often the case in Petrarch's letters, the specific occasion for which the letter was written is merely a pretext for expressing more general reflections, which are often moral and didactic in tone. The physical illness which affected his friend is identified by Petrarch as a symptom of an inner state of perturbation caused by his restless moving from military efforts to literary recreation, from immediate public recognition to the more solitary activity of learning. Neri does not even seem to wish to solve nor face that problem, implies Petrarch, who laments that his friend has stubbornly rejected the advice given to him and has always preferred to aimlessly run away from the problem rather than investigate its cause: 'But you, unmindful of my advice and of your welfare, betraying your intellect, constantly journey through heat and ice, rain and dust, briars and slime, without any recognition of perilous events or surrounding hazards' (Petrarch 2005a, III, 185).[1] The depiction of Neri which emerges from the letter is also a faithful self-portrait of Petrarch himself, or, at least, it is a precise representation of some traits that the various literary alter-egos which populate Petrarch's texts have in common—from the restless *agens* of the *Fragmenta* and the *Triumphs*, to the ill *Franciscus* of the *Secretum*, to the dialogic passionate subject of the *De Remediis*, to the autobiographical 'I' of the letters. The portrayal of those *personae* of the author reveals that the subject's inability to handle the memories of his past has provoked and continues to exacerbate a *vulnus*, a 'wound' of the will which leads him to neglect the search for the true Good. Neri is thus the fitting interlocutor of an epistolary dialogue which is in fact a sort of dialogue with the mirror, or rather an introspective soliloquy.[2]

The initial representation of Neri as Petrarch's double contributes to the construction of the meaning of the entire letter, in whose second part Petrarch is literally *stigmatised* because of the same problematic traits for which his friend has been blamed. The parallel between the two characters is also rhetorically emphasised by the repetition of the same phrase at the beginning of the letter and towards its end, when Petrarch ends his account of his domestic mishaps: Petrarch hopes that the news of his own recovery will reach his friend before he reads the letter in which he narrates his troubles, just as the news of Neri's recovery reached him before he even knew that he was ill.[3] The letter is thus mainly structured as a chiasmus (opening wishes—Neri's illness—Petrarch's illness—closing wishes) which reinforces the analogy between the existential conditions

of the two interlocutors and helps the time sequence evoked in the letter to emerge more clearly, from the remote past in which Petrarch was feeling unwell and could thus copy a volume of Cicero's works, to the more recent past in which Petrarch and Neri were ill, from their present recovery to the future in which his friend (as well as the readers of the *Familiares*) will be able to read Petrarch's letter and meditate on the events and the thoughts that are reported in it. That sequence of events also reveals the presence of a third character in the epistle: it is Petrarch's beloved author, Cicero, who, towards the end of the letter, is depicted as a 'new Cupid' who has wounded not only Petrarch's heart, but also his leg.[4] Petrarch's sickness was indeed a consequence of his inadequate treatment of a wound on his foot, which he got by repeatedly hitting against a bulky volume of Cicero's epistles which was placed on the floor beside the door of his library (that volume was a collection of Cicero's letters to Atticus, discovered by Petrarch in 1345 in the Chapter Library of Verona).[5] In spite of repeatedly stumbling over the volume, Petrarch did not change the way in which he moved across the room, nor did the worsening of his wound prompt him to reflect on the meaning of the wound left by the book on his body. Like Neri Morando, Petrarch thus appears to be a *corporis immemor* and *desertor ingenii*, but his situation is even worse in that the emotional turmoil which he experienced as a consequence of his wound is the exact same as that which he felt during his previous illness. In that period of time, he transcribed Cicero's volume and was so absorbed by his desire to possess the *corpus* of the letters of his beloved Latin author that he neglected other painful physical symptoms (which were the consequence of a fall off his horse while he was fleeing Parma, which was under siege, as he explains in book V, letter 10 of *Familiares*, addressed to Barbato di Sulmona).[6] The letter to Neri Morando (together with the one which will be discussed below) thematises the tension between the *habendi cupiditas*, that is to say the eagerness to possess an object of desire, and the tendency to ignore the symptoms of an introspective examination of the conscience. For that reason, it offers a paradigmatic example of one of the most productive conceptual pivots around which Petrarch's literary and intellectual activity revolved, namely the aggravation of desire provoked by the conflicting attitudes of looking within himself so as to reject that desire and repeatedly evoking the memories of the desired object.[7]Petrarch's desire for Laura works in the same way. The accumulation of the images of the beloved woman

evoked by his memory, almost blurs the difference between Laura's physical presence and her presence as a mental image produced by memory: indeed, the act of remembering is not aimed at making one think of the material object itself but rather at fetishistically compensating its absence by displaying some allusive details. Laura's body is thus transfigured into a myriad of mental images and subsequently re-embodied in a fragmented textual *corpus* (see Vickers 1981; Agosti 1993).

The argumentative structure of letter 10 in book XXI of the *Familiares* rests not only on the image of the wound, but also on some concepts, whose importance is repeatedly signalled by precise lexical choices. For instance, it is worth pointing out that, as early as the first lines, the traumatic event is depicted as a funny accident: it is described as a prank played on him by Cicero,[8] which initially amuses Petrarch but later turns out to be far from innocuous in that it has caused a serious injury.[9]Petrarch's brief description of how he received the wound and of its consequences repeatedly draws on the semantic field of indifference, as is signalled by the repetition of the verb 'spernere'. Petrarch did indeed treat with indifference the two objects with which he has established a psycho-physical relationship: the volume of Cicero's letters is offended at having been placed beside the doorpost,[10] and the wound, which has been neglected by the poet,[11] seems to acquire consciousness and have an emotional response.[12] The same critical attitude towards the indifferent behaviour of the wounded subject is thus shared by the wounding object and the wound itself.

The personification of the book (which carries with it the phantasmal evocation of its author) culminates in Petrarch's paradoxical question: 'What's this, my Cicero? Why do you strike me?' (Petrarch 2005a, 187),[13] and it can be regarded as a typical example of Petrarch's tendency to engage in dialogue with the writers of the past, which is demonstrated by his reading habits (his annotations) and by the literary forms which he often employed in his career (the letters addressed to the *auctores peculiares* in Book XXIV of the *Familiares*).[14] What is unusual is Petrarch's subjectivising treatment of the wound, which must be understood in Bakhtin's sense as the grotesque image of a liminal bodily space between the subject and the world,[15] a space which is not merely the external container of an inner entity, but it rather fully participates in the construction of a psychic body (see Benthien 2002). Towards the end of the letter, that tendency to subjectivise the wound is extended to the entire left leg which is mocked by one of Petrarch's servants and turned into the subject

of a disparaging pseudo-etymological comment made by the poet himself because of the numerous injuries it suffered.[16]

The letter ends just as it started, that is by portraying a suffering individual, who regrets all the activities that he has not been able to do because of his illness instead of analysing the symptoms of his suffering.[17] That person is not Neri Morando, who is greeted as 'integer et illesus' ('complete and healthy') by the author of the letter, but rather Petrarch himself, who is the antiphrastic exemplification of the words addressed to his recovered friend in the first lines the letter: 'I thank God, who threatens more than He strikes, who thunders more than He hurls lightning bolts, who often shakes us not to make us disheartened but stronger by reminding us of our condition' (Petrarch 2005a, III, 185).[18] The letter thus aims at correcting and educating others but it also encourages to meditate on oneself, it represents the very necessity to reflect analytically on oneself. That strategy of representation, which reveals the stoic foundation of Petrarch's practices of self-government,[19] is performatively pursued by Petrarch, who develops in the space (and in the time) of two letters the hermeneutic process implied in the simple question 'What's this, my Cicero? Why do you strike me?'.

One year later, on 18 August 1360, Petrarch writes a letter to Giovanni Boccaccio (*Dispersa* 46), which is a sort of continuation of *Familiares* XXI, 10 in that it recounts how much Petrarch suffered, how he recovered, and what meaning he attached to that experience; in doing so, the letter reveals details that were necessarily not available in the epistle to Neri Morando and establishes a semantically relevant temporal connection with it. Indeed, in the *Familiare* to Neri, the injury is presented as recent event and its effects on Petrarch's body are described almost in real time: the wound is still open and the author hopes that it may heal before the letter reaches his friend. In the *Dispersa* to Boccaccio, the healing process is instead concluded: Petrarch thus explains how he treated his wound and tries to find the meaning of his accident while he is in good health so that the time he spent recovering was not entirely wasted. The fact that Petrarch devotes such a great deal of attention to his wound in the later epistle makes it even more evident that, in the letter to Neri Morando, he had not reflected at length on the cause and on the meaning of his accident. Significantly, Petrarch writes about his wound in his letter to Boccaccio because Boccaccio had heard about it and had offered his own interpretation of the event. That epistle is thus the comment of a comment, it is the result of a redoubled hermeneutic

effort, and, as such, it emphasises the necessity to analyse the events narrated in the previous letter and it especially draws attention to the fact that the wound mentioned in it is a sign which must be fully investigated and analysed in all its facets in that it offers a glimpse of the poet's inner self.[20]

The letter to Boccaccio has a well-organised structure, which allows its main message to become progressively clear and explicit. Petrarch wrote the letter to let his friend know about his decision to live permanently in Milan: his choice had not been welcomed by his friends and admirers, who were hoping to live close to him and see him regularly. Even the most brilliant minds can be clouded by their desire to be close to their idol, but the anxiety of Petrarch's friends appears to be shared by Petrarch himself, who is especially worried because his *buen retiro* in Valchiusa had been violated by burglars who had stolen more than thirty manuscripts.[21] It is at this point of the letter, while he is discussing the fact that kindred spirits long to be close to each other, that he alludes to the episode of his wounding, narrated in *Familiare* XXI, 10, which is interpreted by Boccaccio as a paradoxical proof of his spiritual affinity with his beloved Cicero.[22] By alluding to the symbolic act of wounding performed by Cicero's book of letters, Petrarch emphasises the importance of Cicero's influence (and of classical culture more in general) in his life, and demonstrates that Cicero's lessons are deeply rooted in his soul, just like each book he has read which offered him the opportunity to converse with someone who is other than himself. In this sense, the symbolic act of wounding may be interpreted as an implicit representation of the request for physical proximity and constant attentions made by Boccaccio and his other friends. Petrarch reads the unreasonable entreatises of his friends and the 'pale and trembling faces' of the books he has momentarily lost as hints that his hope of reaching his longed-for inner peace is vain and ephemeral (a perception which is emblematically summarised in the phrase 'vana cupientem animam spe oblectem' ['Deceiving my desiring soul with a vain hope']): human life is governed by chance and the sole thing that is in men's power to do is take care of themselves. *Fluctuatio animi*, that is the tendency to oscillate between the self-inflicted exacerbation of desire and the virtuous tendency to rationalise, which is typical of Petrarch, is thus once again shared by the author and the addressee of the letter, the poet and the (more or less implicit) readers, who see themselves mirrored in each other.

The question which Petrarch addressed to Cicero's book in *Familiares* is here repeated with apparent sarcasm by Boccaccio, who is an external observer of the accident and who has also been hurt by the unexpected behaviour of a dear friend of his. That question is implicitly answered by Petrarch as a result of his acquisition of self-awareness and through a linguistic pun: 'In your letter you elegantly suggested that because I was so intimate with Cicero, I did not deserve to be wounded by him, and stated that Cicero's own maxim that those who are close to us hurt us the most is true [...] regarding that Ciceronian wound of which I used to joke, my play [*ludum*] has now turned into mourning [*luctum*]'.[23] Martinez (2010, 295) recognises the influence of the Old Testament on that passage and especially the echo of two biblical texts upon which Petrarch often draws, namely the book of Job (30,31: 'versa est in luctum cithara mea' ['my harp is turned to mourning']) and that of Lamentations (5,15: 'versus est in luctus chorus noster' ['our dancing is turned to mourning']). Other biblical texts, whose events and characters are relevant to Petrarch's mythobiography, are also echoed.[24] The intertextual allusion is signalled not only by the word 'luctus' and by the general context of a joyful situation which turns into a sorrowful one, but also by the pun which, generally speaking, represents the subtlest form of parody,[25] and, in this specific case, is also a successful performative representation of the notion of 'radical reversal' mentioned in the passage. Indeed, in this new hypertext, the wounds and the scars represent the memorial trace of the re-elaboration of a previous work, they indicate that the past has been re-embodied. They are thus hermeneutic signals which enable us to investigate the ways in which and the reasons why the hypotext has been appropriated and adapted, and new material written by someone else has been conflated with it. The intrinsic difference of that new material must be acknowledged for the hypertext to fully reveal its meaning (see Torre 2019). Petrarch's acquisition of awareness as a result of having been wounded is indeed powerfully symbolised by the act of severing and suturing which is performed on the literary word itself and which lies at the core of the transformation of the word 'lu*d*um' into 'lu*ct*um' (two terms that can be easily confused with each other when deciphering an ancient manuscript).[26] A similar lexical 'metamorphosis' of the term 'l*u*sus' into 'l*e*sus' interestingly appears also in *Familiares* XXI, 10. Despite the very small variation in the spelling of

the word, the meaning of the sign is radically changed, and that alteration becomes the symbolic representation of the gradual transformation of *ludum* into *luctum*.

The *Dispersa* 46 resumes the narration of the events occurred after his accident, which Petrarch begun in *Familiares* XXI, 10. He thus reveals that he was seen by many doctors and received many treatments, whose sole effect was that of making him age prematurely as a consequence of the pain caused by an open wound which slowly became a scar. *Ludus* thus turns into *luctus*, the wound into a scar: what affects Petrarch even more deeply than his physical pain and emotional suffering is the perception of the inescapable flow of time.[27] The original trait of Petrarch's life and intellectual output is indeed his perception of time as something which is defined and can be defined in terms of a process of gradual and deliberate wasting away which is destined to end (see Taddeo 1983; Folena 2002, 266–289; Kircher 2006, 145–228; Marcozzi 2016a).[28] When Petrarch suddenly becomes aware of the fact that, as he taps the paper with his pen while he thinks, the pen 'wounds' the paper, or that he is repeatedly changing his pen while he continues to write hectically,[29] he realises that memories are the signs of the 'lacerations' of life.[30]

The effort of remembering which lies at the core of the *Familiares* is emblematic of that. Petrarch remembers personal events from the beginning to the end of the volume, or rather from the end to the beginning. Towards the end of the book, in letter XXIV, 1, Petrarch offers to Philippe de Cabassoles a comprehensive account of his meditations on time and a catalogue of some of the literary works which he had studied for his entire life, both of which are the result of his untiring and extensive practice of reading and annotating books: 'With what youthful zeal I plucked from them for several years before becoming familiar with other kinds of writers may be seen in my surviving works from that period, and especially in my marginal notations on certain passages whereby I would conjure up and precociously reflect upon my present and future state' (Petrarch 2005a, III, 309).[31] The use of the latin verb 'adfigo', which often recurs in Petrarch's works with the meaning of 'to impress a mark upon the memory', to memorise something, is particularly interesting. The term 'adfigo' refers precisely to the act of sticking a nail or some other blunt instrument into a surface, an action that offers a visual representation of the process of remembering. On the one hand, the image of the nail portrays the act of memorisation as a violent bodily experience, while, on the other hand, the image of the wound vividly represents the effect of

that act, an act of corporeal writing, whereby an event is engraved on the surface of the skin and which arouses a swarm of feelings and physical reactions. Petrarch's pen has left on the paper ('notabam') the traces of his attentive reading and his elaborate thoughts, which do not focus ('ruminabam') so much on the sophisticated stylistic devices employed by ancients authors but are rather aimed at bequeathing to posterity, through those indelible signs left on the paper, the very essence of the ancient texts:

> Diligently I would note not the verbal facility but the substance of the thought – the distresses and brevity of this life, its haste, tumbling course and hidden deceits, time's irrecoverability, the perishable and changing flower of life, the fugitive beauty of a rosy face, the frantic flight of unreturning youth, the deceits of a silent stealthy old age, and finally, the wrinkles, illnesses, sadness, toil, and implacable cruelty and harshness of indomitable death. (Petrarch 2005a, III, 309)[32]

In that confession to Philippe de Cabassoles and to himself, Petrarch implicitly echoes the first letter of his book—the biographical narrative, in which everything is linked, is thus built on a circular semantic structure—in which the wrinkles that signal his imminent old age are replaced by the incurable wounds that belong to his adulthood, an age which in he suddenly found himself as a result of his encounter with death.[33]

In the first letter of the *Familiares*, Petrarch tells his friend Ludwig van Kempen that his desire to flee when the plague took the lives of many of his friends and relatives in 1348 prompted him to face his past and the fact that 'time, as they say, has slipped through our fingers' (Petrarch 2005a, I, 3).[34] It prompted him to counter the deadly and obliterating action of time with an engaging project of elaborating his own memories, that is to say of narrating his life.[35] This text, which acts as an introduction to the entire volume, suggests that memory is conceived by Petrarch both as a defence against the relentless flow of time and as the lens through which its intrinsic *voluptas* is revealed in the form of a surprising moulding of the self.[36] Petrarch is 'encircled by confused heaps of letters and formless piles of paper', just as the book collector described by Walter Benjamin is, and he is torn between throwing everything in the fire or indulging in the pleasure of 'looking behind like [*in terga respicere*] a tired traveler from avantage point after a long journey and slowly recalling the memories and cares of your youth' (Petrarch 2005a, I, 4).[37] In these letters (real or

invented as they may be), Petrarch offers an idealised self-portrait, which is as true as every fictional narration, as true as every autobiography, in that an autobiography is a story in which the writer presents his own interpretation of the events, which he selects so as to produce specific effects.[38] In a crucial passage in *Familiares* I, 1, Petrarch admits that when he was reading the letters he had previously written he was astonished at realising how much he had changed, and he thus projects on himself the mnemonic work he had made as he was putting together his collection of letters:

> But when I began turning over the papers piled at random in no particular order, I was astonished to notice how varied and how disordered their general aspect appeared. I could hardly recognize certain ones, not so much because of their form but because of the changed nature of my own understanding. Other things, however, did come back to mind with considerable delight. (Petrarch 2005a, III, 4)[39]

The connection between *Fam*. I, 1 and *Fam*. XXXIV, 1, and Petrarch's entire project of dealing with the *fuga temporis*, which he undertook in the *Familiares*, both follow a pattern which is similar to that which—on a small scale and through the image of the wound—characterises the passage from *Fam*. XXI, 10 to *Dispersa* 46. The same metaphoric association between *vulnus* and *ruga* which emerges in the two main texts of the volume can indeed be likened to the transformation of the wound inflicted by Cicero's book into a scar: 'My copy of Cicero's Letters marked my memory with an indelible inscription and my body with a permanent scar: although I did forget them, he tried to strengthen my memory inwardly and outwardly'.[40] In this regard, it is significant that Petrarch uses a Latin word, 'stigma', which is strongly associated with the Christian experience of Passion. This linguistic choice is perfectly coherent with Petrarch's attempt to link the cultural heritage of Latin literature with the ethical and philosophical tradition of the Gospels and of the Holy Fathers. In this passage, the influence of Saint Paul's thought when he wrote to the Galatians 'ego enim stigmata Domini Jesu in corpore meo porto' (6,17) is clearly evident. With that phrase, Saint Paul suggests that it is in Christ's body, in the visible sign, that the meaning of the Christian message reveals, on the one hand, its ecumenical nature (i.e. it can be understood across different cultures and languages), and, on other hand, its connection with the faithful's psychological experience.[41] On fol. 129r

of the manuscript of Saint Paul's letter which belonged to Petrarch, that passage is flagged with the author's typical mark of emphasis, that is a vertical line that has three dots above it and ends in the shape of a hook: that shape has an undeniable symbolic value with regard to the mnemonic function played by those signs (see Fiorilla 2005). In the line spacing of the codex, *stigmata* is interpreted as *signa milicie Christi* in adherence to Pietro Lombardo's teachings, while the marginal note, written according to the *Glossa ordinaria*, features the same peculiar association of stigma with nota ('stigma. punctum. nota') which can be found also in the *Dispersa* 46.[42]

The images of bodily and spiritual brokenness belong to a larger literary and theological tradition in which the Sacred Scriptures are not only a repository of rhetorical figurations but also a source of conceptual images, which, in accordance with a century-old hermeneutical practice, contain allegorical, moral and anagogical meanings.[43] The metaphoric dynamism is also a typical characteristic of religious sermons in that it gives the opportunity to incorporate a visual element that can be easily memorised by the listeners. The devotion of the five wounds, which is linked with religious inwardness, testifies to the faithful's responsiveness to those visual and mnemonic stimuli. As we can see in the *Letter of Old Age* VIII, 3, Petrarch employs the same term, 'stigma', to allude to the physical traces of the mystical contemplation of Francis of Assisi:

> But certainly the stigmata of Francis had their beginning when he embraced Christ's death in such a continuous and powerful meditation that, as he had mentally transferred it over a long period of time and felt as though he himself were crucified with his Lord, eventually his pious belief transferred a true likeness of the thing from his mind into his body. (Petrarch 2005b, I, 282)[44]

Both the *Dispersa* 46 and the *Letter of Old Age* VIII, 3 suggest figurative parallelism between sign and wound, between writing and striking, reading and remembering. The stigmata of St. Francis mirror (and reopen) the wounds of the martyred body of Christ, and represent a living memory of all the episodes of His Sacrifice for the Salvation of mankind. During the Middle Ages, the representation of the naked and wounded body of Christ acquires the status of a *machina memorialis*, which exhorts the believers to take on themselves the pains of the Saviour and to pursue an authentic *compunctio* of their senses and

intellect. Indeed, the wounds of Christ are the most effective paradigm which reminds the Christian community of the event that led to its own foundation, and consequently helps it retrace its identity through the identification with an 'open' God, as it were, who displays his vulnerability, his inner being, his incarnation.[45] In practising that mental exercise, the page of the mind and that of the body overlap. The page of the mind is linked with that of the body, on which memorial traces can be inscribed as stigmata, wounds and scars: sacred rhetoric thus explores the relation between suffering and memory, construing affective memory as a source of emotions that deeply pierce the receptive soul.[46] By 'reading' these wounds and meditating on them—so Petrarch reminds us in his hagiographical treatise *De otio religioso* – the believers are given the opportunity of reflecting on exemplars of Faith, thus taking inspiration for their own Christian conduct of life, and, above all, for a successful intimate self-scrutiny.[47]

St Francis' stigmata are the signs of the memorial recuperation of a unique experience, and they become, in turn, a *memento* of Christ's Passion, which facilitates a general confession, an introspective act similar to that which Cicero's volume had triggered in Petrarch by wounding him.[48] The wound-time-memory nexus is thus once again relevant. The act of wounding could be related to the power of natural memory or to the rhetoric art of memory. Indeed, time slowly heals every wound, helping us to forget everything. With the passing of time, a memory risks falling into oblivion, when it is not re-evoked by an incessant act of remembering. The metaphor of the wound can illustrate the relationship between time and memory in two ways: the wound can either change over time and become a scar, which is the physical trace of the events that led to the wounding, or it can suddenly bring back the memories of past events and sensations.[49]

2 Reopening Wounds

As has been shown in Petrarch's account of the accident in which his leg was wounded, the semantic field of the wound interpreted as a mnemonic trace revolves around two conceptual focal points. One of them is the image of the wound which is to be understood as a traumatic event that leaves a mark on someone's body and soul and prompts him to investigate its causes and the solutions to fix it. The other is the image of the scar, which projects the event of the wounding into the past, draws attention

to the fact that time has passed, and urges the subject or those who look at the marks on his body to engage in an introspective and analytical process. The most immediate connection that is established between these two focal points is the link between the *punctum temporis* of the event which caused the wound and the time which is needed to meditate on the meaning and the consequences of the wound. The displaying of a wound, be it open or closed, fresh or sutured, requires those who observe it to engage in a hermeneutic effort that has to do with memory. In other words, wounds must be examined and scars must be reopened so as to work through trauma.[50]

Petrarch refers exactly to the wound as a metaphor of memory in *Familiares* VIII, 1, when he tries to console Stefano Colonna. He chides his friend for his habit of anxiously ruminating on the numerous bereavements in his family. All those losses left him alone and especially turned him into a body covered in wounds, as Petrarch suggests at the head and in the final greetings of the letter.[51] Petrarch probably echoes Ovid's portrayal of Marsyas (*Met.* VI, 388: 'nec quicquam nisi vulnus erat' ['Nought else he was than one whole wound']),[52] and he certainly empathises with Colonna's sorrow.[53] In the letter, addressed to this 'second Job', Petrarch tries to console his friend by relying on a strategy that entails the temporal delimitation of his loss, which is achieved through two fundamental actions: defusing the emotional charge of his loss through a therapeutic cry (i.e. reopening past wounds by recalling the numerous losses) and helping him to acquire a more rational awareness of his own condition (i.e. crossing the threshold of the wound and understanding the changes produced by those losses). At the first stage of Petrarch's attempt to console his friend, the wounds are the necessary outlets of grief (grief thus 'exits' the body, and that movement is often represented through the allusion to both blood and tears); later they become the symbol of another, equally necessary, autoptic practice (which, in this case, involves a complementary movement towards the inside, that is an act of introspection).[54] The time of mourning must be followed by an engagement in a dialogue with one's own self, in which the individual can finally be free from his emotional involvement in the past events (from the sorrow which they caused and the pleasure of indulging in it later):

> I implore and beg you to do I hope that you have already done. I implore and beg you to do this lest (since the mind is often more curious about

> things found only in the memory) you should slide into new miseries by recalling old ones, and by indulging excessively in your fatherly grief you should once again reopen the scars of your now closed wounds. (Petrarch 2005b, I, 394, on which see Stroppa 2014, 101–194)[55]

The image of the scar which starts to bleed again after a long time because of the great fatherly sorrow of Petrarch's friend is here associated with the idea of a mental repository, where the grieving consciousness of the subject wanders looking eagerly and unceasingly for anguishing memories. Therefore, the hypothetical domain of an appeased memory seems to be troubled by the daemon of remembering, which haunts the present with the continuous reenactment of what had happened. Both the poet-lover of the *Canzoniere* ('and the new season that year by year renews on that day my ancient wound') and *Franciscus*, the main character of Petrarch's *Secretum* ('I don't have any wound that is so ancient that it can be removed simply by being forgotten: all the ones that hurt are recent. And even if one could be effaced by the passage of time, fate has so often returned to hit me in the same place that no scar tissue could ever close the gaping wound'),[56] experience the same excruciating conflict between the unexpected re-emergence of a painful memory and the wholesome practice of rational recollecting, which is also a controlled elaboration of past sufferings. The second part of this study focuses exactly on the image of the wound in the *Secretum* and on the ways in which it is employed. It also tries to demonstrate that the wound is a key metaphor of the radical examination of *Francicus*' memory carried out by *Augustinus*, that is to say of Petrarch's examination of his own memory.

Augustinus points out the vices which stain *Franciscus*' soul and then, in the second book, he invites his interlocutor to fix in his memory their conversation and treasure it so as to reflect upon it. The action of *servare* precedes and enables that of *ruminare*, an act of knowledge which is, in turn, unavoidable for the intellectual and ethical process of self-care undertaken by the individual within his memory, in which the past that was dominated by evil is opposed to the meditation on the remedies that should be remembered for the preservation of his future life. In the *Secretum*, medical treatment is represented as an education to read, in a mnemonically oriented way, books, the world, and one's self, that is to say those 'technologies of the self' which, according to Focault, 'permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts,

conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality' (Foucault 1997, 225). What is encouraged is thus active reading, which is a precondition for silent meditation on what has been read or listened to. Active reading is explicitly modelled on the monastic practice of *lectio divina* (see Leclercq 1974, 88–91; Stock 2000), but its scope is broadened to include not only the hermeneutic reading of biblical texts but also the exegesis of the classics and the practice introspective analysis.[57] *Augustinus* denounces *Francisus*' inability to remember what he has read and associates it with the shortcomings of those 'disgraceful groups of well-read people [*that*] wander round incapable of translating the art of living into action'.[58] He should make an effort to memorise the *salutares sententie* ('helpful points') which have the power of eliciting sympathy 'in that way, whenever and wherever there is an outbreak of disease which allows of no delay, you will, like a skilled doctor, have remedies which are, so to speak, engraved on your mind'.[59] The comments on the condition of the protagonist and the similes through which the message acquires a more universal meaning (such as, for instance, the herd of pedantic people set against the *expertus medicus*) are both based on the opposition between the notions of idle movement ('passim … errare') and 'mediated stability' ('multoque studio tibi familiares effice'), 'vicious loss' ('libro … elapso') and 'virtuous preservation'. Such opposition can be understood also as contrast between a useless movement of horizontal dispersal and a useful pursuit of vertical depth: 'For it is undoubtedly true that the most effective way of scorning the attractions of this life, and of calming the mind amid all the storms of the world, is to recollect one's own miserable state and to meditate constantly upon death, on condition that such thoughts do not come upon us lightly and superficially, but worm their way into the very marrow of our bones'.[60] Interestingly, the historical Augustin draws on the same metaphoric field and on the same opposition between *intus* and *extra* in order to criticise, in *Confessiones* 3, 5, the hermeneutic approach to Scripture which focuses solely on the literal meaning of the text without grasping its deeper meaning: 'What I am now saying did not then enter my mind when I gave my attention to the Scripture. It seemed to me unworthy in comparison with the dignity of Cicero. My inflated conceit shunned the Bible's restraint, and my gaze never penetrated to its inwardness'.[61]

As is implied in the aforementioned passage of the *Secretum*, in the culture of the Middle Ages, the most serious flaw of memory was not

so much the tendency to forget but rather *curiositas*.[62] *Curiositas* is the inability to elaborate thoughts according to ordered structures and precise points of reference: it is similar to the 'vain hopes and vain sorrow' mentioned in *Rvf* 1 ('vane speranze e'l van dolore', vain in they are pointless and misguided) and also to the 'varied style' for which Petrarch apologises and which implies a chaotic 'fragmentation' in terms of form, content and also in existential terms. The virtuous attitude antithetical to *curiositas* is *sollicitudo*, or *studio*, a voluntary effort to improve and control one's concentration so as to develop a good memory and a lively intellect. These two antithetical notions are in fact two sides of the same coin: the opposite of *bona memoria* (i.e. an intense and carefully examined experience of the object of the memory) is *mala memoria* (i.e. the repeated, superficial and chaotic evocation of the object of the memory). Petrarch drew on the metaphoric field of the wound to describe both aspects of memory. More specifically, he represented the defective functioning of *Franciscus*' memory (which is a symptom of his lack of *voluntas*) by repeatedly making use of the dialectical opposition between the notions of deep and superficial, and between the metaphor of the wound and that of the callus. At the same time, *Agustinus*' teachings and his examination of his interlocutor's troubled mind are portrayed as a lengthy, skilful and in-depth medical examination of *Franciscus*' memorial wound, a process which can essentially be regarded as an infliction of another wound (a wound that had already healed is indeed reopened and examined).

The dialogue between *Francisus* and *Augustinus*, for instance, is structured as sequence of 'penetrations' into *Franciscus*' psyche, each deeper than the last. By accepting *Augustinus*' suggestion to engage in a *meditatio mortis* that has to be performed by way of observing or remembering someone who is about to die ('meditating intensely, run through each part of a dying man's body' ['acerrima meditatione singula morentium membra percurrere']), *Franciscus* recognises that his master's advice is an effective *memento* against his inability (and lack of determination) to control the chaotic flux of exterior images which invade and trouble his mind.[63] He also realises the first effects of the violent examination of his conscience which he has undergone: 'Now you have plunged your hand deep into the wound'.[64] The image of the hand which examines his conscience by opening (or reopening) wound recurs in Petrarch's writings, as is demonstrated by a letter to Tommaso da Messina (*Familiares* I, 9), which deals with the pleasure of reading:

> How much I feel myself freed from very serious and bitter burdens by such readings! Meantime I feel my own writings assisted me even more since they are more suited to my ailments, just as the sensitive hand of a doctor who is himself ill is placed more readily where he feels the pain to be. Such cure I shall certainly never accomplish unless the salutary words themselves fall tenderly upon my ears. When through the power of an unusual sweet temptation I am moved to read them again, they gradually take effect and transfigure my insides with hidden spines. (Petrarch 2005a, I, 49)[65]

In the *Secretum*, that image has a structural function: it appears in the second book, where Petrarch's indulgence in the main deadly sins, and especially sloth,[66] is scrutinised[67]; and it is also employed in the third book, where *Augustinus* tries to bring to light the most serious and enduring causes of Petrarch's inner turmoil and alienation, his yearning for earthly glory and his erotic desire for Laura.[68] Towards the end of that dialogue, which lasted for three days, *Franciscus* cannot but declare: 'I admit defeat: you seem to have taken everything that you've said straight from the book of my experience'.[69] In this general context, in which memory plays a pivotal role, the analysis of Petrarch's faults carried out by *Augustinus* is indeed an in-depth reading of *Franciscus*' memories. His reading of the book of Petrarch's memory is characterised by the great care with which he chooses, among the vast body of available information, solely those passages which demonstrate the truth of his accusation: indeed, Petrarch uses not only the metaphor of *experientiae liber*, but also the verb *excerpere*, which is both a technical term which generally indicates the practice of drawing extracts, words, or nouns from the works that are being read and also a verb which visually represents *Augustinus*' violent and resolute attempt to remove those sick memories from *Franciscus*' mind and to free him from his self-consuming desire for Laura. The metaphor of the book in the context of a discourse on memory is also interesting in that the outcome of *Augustinus*' analysis of *Franciscus*' mind is indeed a book, the *Secretum*, which is performatively brought into being through a fictional dialogue between an infirm and penitent soul and its spiritual master.[70]

The metaphoric field of the wound thus suggests that *Augustinus*' interrogation is a process that is halfway between a humanistic philological investigation and an inner examination conducted by a spiritual master, and it is also a symbolic variation of Petrarch's tendency to take notes while he reads (both books and reality) to help his memory: 'And

if that something is the result of attentive reading, then make clear notes alongside the useful passages (as I said earlier), as if to hold them hooked onto the memory when they might otherwise escape'.[71] The 'wounding' of the page when annotating it and the wounding of memory are symbiotic processes, each a requirement for human cognition to occur at all. Those glosses are like the wounds of the book; they enable the text to become deeply engraved in the reader's memory, just as hooks penetrate the flesh.[72] Nails, hooks, spines, etc., are incisive metaphors that refer to memory. They all imply the idea that memories persist in spite of the passing of time, and suggest that the power of recall resists the psychophysical turmoil that affect the body, thus eventually representing the human mind as an inner mnestic repository. *Franciscus*' mistakes, which are zealously indicated by *Augustinus*' wounds-annotations, appear thus to emerge from the obliterating textual flux of life so that his conscience can finally become aware of them.

The strategic role played by the image of wounding within the argumentative structure of the dialogue is demonstrated by the fact that Petrarch also employs it, antiphrastically, when he criticises the emotional tumult provoked in *Franciscus*' soul by Laura. As he desperately tries to defend his conduct and the object of his erotic desire, *Franciscus* argues that it was Laura, so harshly blamed by *Augustinus*, who rescued him from the corruption of the earthly world and guided him onto the path of celestial salvation.[73] According to *Augustinus*, though, *Franciscus*' statements clearly reveal that he examines his past from an entirely wrong point of view, and demonstrate that the difficulties which he is experiencing may also be due to his misguided mnemonic reconstruction of his past, as he subverts the meaning of each event, each feeling, and each value. *Augustinus* is thus the one who puts things in the right perspective and recognises that Laura is the cause of *Franciscus*' inner sickness, not its cure:

> What is more, we can hardly say that someone has saved us, rather than killed us, when they advise us to turn aside from a disgusting and filth-strew path, only to direct us over a precipice, or when they cut our throats while attending to some minor sores. So the woman you extol for having been your guide and diverted you from all kinds of filth has driven you into a dazzling abyss.[74]

By drawing on the metaphor he had chosen for his own activity, Petrarch's spiritual master reinterprets Laura as an unskilled doctor who inflicts a lethal wound while trying to treat a small sore, that is to say he depicts her as an 'anti-*Augustinus*'. He establishes a contrast between a physician who acts without having the necessary skills and one who is expert and proficient in using the tools for performing a hermeneutic and therapeutic dissection of his patient's soul. A good doctor truly fulfils his duty only when he knows how to ask the right questions so as to touch his patient's *punctum dolens*, and when he brings to his consciousness the deep causes of his distress. That is not an easy job, though, as is demonstrated by the long dialectic exchange of the *Secretum* and as *Augustinus* himself declared at the very beginning of the dialogue:

> This conclusion was still to come: that though circumstances frequently prompt it (never sharply enough, however, to penetrate to the depths of the hearts, hardened by long habit, of wretched men, who have, as it were, a callous resistance to salutary advice), you'll find few who are contemplating deeply enough the fact that they are bound to die.[75]

The superficial 'callus' (which is a re-elaboration of St Augustine's *tumor*) is thus the metaphorical antithesis of the wound in that it embodies the idea of physical, moral and psychological resistance to any restorative practice of self-examination. Such resistance is the result of an unhealthy mental *habitus*, an ethical passivity that feeds on past moments of happiness or on the vain hope that they might return. The present is either not seriously focussed upon or it is merely observed in a narcissistic and superficial way: 'Weren't you alarmed by the story of Narcissus, and hasn't the mature consideration of your inner self warned you of the repulsiveness of the body? You are satisfied with the superficial appearance of the skin, and don't look beyond it in your mind's eye'.[76] This is the gist of *Augustinus*' repeated and stern warnings to his pupil as he urges him to gauge whether the knowledge he has accumulated over the years has helped him acquire self-knowledge: 'What use was all that reading? How much of the many things that you have read has remained implanted in your mind, has taken root, has borne timely fruits?'. These pressing rhetorical questions are unsurprisingly followed by a simple, firm exhortation: 'search your soul rigorously'.[77] That phrase is indeed a concise order uttered in response to *Franciscus*' desperate laments: *Franciscus* is still far from understanding the gravity of his error and *Augustinus*' order

calls for a general change attitude on his part rather than the performance of a specific action. The violence implied in the verb *quatere* ('to shake', 'to tear down', 'to disrupt') is combined with the idea of 'coming from within' suggested by the preposition *ex*-: the imperative *execute* is thus an exhortation to undertake a thorough examination of the loci of one's soul, both those objectified in the books that one has read (and with which dialogue has been established, which is physical as well as abstract, as is demonstrated by the reader's annotations), and those which shape one's most intimate subjectivity. By implicitly recommending a mnemonic exercise within the dialectic pattern of the dialogue, *Augustinus* connects his argument with the point he made the previous day on the *pestis phantasmatum* which absorbs *Franciscus*' time and energy,[78] and also with his symbolic depiction of his desperate interlocutor, in which he employed a significant botanical metaphor:

> What usually happens to someone who sows too many seeds in a confined space is that because of crowding they prevent each other's growth; that is what happens to you: nothing useful takes root in a mind that is too full, and nothing grows that will bear fruit. And lacking any plan, you vacillate and are turned hither and thither, never complete and never entirely yourself.[79]

That passage contains the same juxtaposition of adjectives ('nusquam integer, nusqum totus') which Petrarch employed at the end of his letter to Neri Morando in *Fam*. XXI, 10, when he praised his friend for his moral, physical and spiritual health, which is yet to be achieved by those who are troubled by a deep emotional conflict ('mira fluctuatione') between different desires and live in a state of stasis, of exile from a condition of ethical and spiritual health.[80] The opposition between a space where horizontal dispersion takes place—and which becomes overcrowded and claustrophobic ('angusto')—and a deep vertical movement which has a great creative potential ('radices') also re-emerges. Finally, Petrarch is once again blamed for wasting his energy and his time in a multitude of vain actions instead of devoting them to the examination of his wounds, those that are still painful and those that are not. This is a polemic theme that recurs in the most important passages of Petrarch's writings. It appears also in a key section of his *Triumphus Temporis* (ll. 73–81), in which the callus of the author's bad habits, which is made to rhyme with *fallo* ('sin'), is depicted as the strong surface upon

which the poet-moralist and the confessor-autobiographer act with their hermeneutic *stilus* so as to enable the exemplary image of a self which needs to be healed to emerge:

> It may be that I spend my words in vain,
> but I declare that ye are suffering
> from perolous and deadly lethargy.
> For days and hours and years and months fly on,
> nor can the time be far away when we
> must all together seek out other worlds,
> do not grow a callus on the heart against the truth
> as ye are wont to do; and turn your eyes
> while ye may yet amend your sinful ways. (Petrarch 1962, 98)[81]

(Trans. by Arianna Hijazin)

Notes

1. Petrarca (1993, 1110): 'At tu quasi consilii mei tuique corporis immemor et sui desertor ingenii, per estus et glaciem, per imbres et pulverem, per vespres et lubricum assidue volveris, nec ancipites casus vides nec circumfusa discrimina'.
2. This is a method for achieving self-knowledge which Petrarch explicitly theorises in *Familiares* VII, 16, where he draws on the semantic field of the wound: Petrarch (2005a, I, 378–379): 'I beg you devote yourself to this; turn your moste eloquent pen this way; reveal me to myself; take over the power of your tongue; seize, bind, strike, burn, cut, restrain all exaggeration, cut away all that is superfluous, and do not fear that you will cause me either to blush or to grow pale. A dismal drink drives away dismal illness. I am ill, who does not know it? I must be cured by more bitter remedies than yours; bitter things do not yield to sweet things but rather bitter things purge themselves in turn. If you want to be of benefit to me, write something that hurts me' [Petrarca 1993, 549: 'Hic precor, incumbe, huc facundissimum calamum tuum verte, ostende me michi, inice lingue manum, arripe, liga, feri, ure, seca, tumida comprime, supervacua rescinde, nec ruborem michi fecisse timueris nec pallorem; tristis potio tristes pellit egritudines. Eger sum, quis nescit? Acriore tibi sum curandus antidoto; non cedunt

amara dulcibus, sed amara invicem se se trudunt. Si prodesse vis, scribe quod doleam'].

3. See Petrarca (1993, 1109) ('Gratum, ut in malis, habui quod ad me convalescentie tue priusquam egritudinis fama perlata est' [Petrarch 2005a, III, 185: 'I was grateful, as much as one can be during bad times, that news of your convalescence reached me before news of your illness']), and Petrarca (1993, 1114) ('Sed iam res ad salutem spectat, ut et tu quoque prius convalescere quam egrotasse me noveris' [Petrarch 2005a, III, 188: 'Now my recovery is proceeding so well that you too will be learning of my convalescence before my illness']).
4. See Petrarca (1993, 1114) ('Ita dilectus meus Cicero cuius olim cor, nunc tibiam vulneravit' [Petrarch 2005a, III, 188: 'My beloved Cicero has now wounded my leg as he once did my heart']).
5. On the importance of that discovery and on the role of Cicero's letters as a stylistic and ethical model for Petrarch's *Familiares*, see Eden (2012, 49–72).
6. See Petrarca (1993, 1112) ('Est michi volumen epystolarum eius ingens, quod ipse olim manu propria, quia exemplar scriptoribus impervium erat, scripsi, adversa tunc valitudine, sed corporis incommodum et laborem operis magnum amor et delectatio et habendi cupiditas vincebant' [Petrarch 2005a, III, 187: 'I have an enormous volume of his letters that with my own hand I transcribed some time ago while in bad health because the transcription proved difficult for the scribes. Despite my body's discomfort and the hard labor involved, my love and pleasure and my desire to possess it won out']). When discussing Petrarch's bibliophilia it is worth mentioning that one of his friends was the English chancellor Richard de Bury, a cultivated intellectual whom Petrarch met when he was in Avignon and who celebrated the nearly sensual pleasure afforded by the possession of books in his treatise *Philobiblion* (Petrarca 1993, 340).
7. See Brooks (1993, 19): 'What Kleinian analysts call "part objects" become invested with affect and meaning, as the text presents inventories of the charms of the beloved (as in the enormously influential Petrarchan tradition). The moment of complete nakedness, if it ever is reached, most often is represented by silence, ellipsis. Narrative is interested not only in points of arrival, but also

in all the dilatory moments along the way: suspension or turning back, the perversions of temporality (as of desire) that allow us to take pleasure and to grasp meaning in passing time'.

8. See Petrarca (1993, 1112) ('Cicero, qualiter modo mecum *luserit*, hinc audies' [Petrarch 2005a, III, 187: 'But now listen to how I was tricked by Cicero']).
9. See Petrarca (1993, 1112) ('Erigo illum *iocans* … eodem postridie redeuntem rursum ferit rursumque cum *iocis* erigitur in suam sedem' [Petrarch 2005a, III, 187: 'I picked him up and jokingly said … the next day, as I again returned to the room, he again struck me and again I jokingly picked him up and put in his place']); and Petrarca (1993, 1112) ('tandem igitur cum iam dolor non *iocos* tantum sed somnos requiemque *lacesseret* … qui [*i medici the doctors*] multis iam diebus *huic non amplius ludicro vulneri* incombunt' [Petrarch 2005a, III, 187: 'So finally, when the pain began to affect not only my joking but my sleep and rest … For several days now some doctors have treated this wound that is no longer to be taken jokingly since it is causing considerable pain']).
10. See Petrarca (1993, 1112) ('quasi *indignantem* humi' [Petrarch 2005a, III, 187: 'as if he did not deserve being near the ground']). The book's reaction echoes a passage in Richard de Bury's *Philobiblion*, in which the books complain with the clerks: 'adhesit pavimento anima nostra, conglutinatus est in terra venter noster et gloria nostra in pulverem est deducta. … Nullo circumligantur medicamine vulnera nostra seva, que nobis innoxiis inferuntur atrociter, nec est ullus qui super nostra ulcera cataplasmet; sed pannosi et algidi in angulos tenebrosos abicimurin lacrimis, vel cum sancto Job in sterquilinio collocamur' ['our soul is thrown on the floor, our bowels are scattered on the ground and our glory is tossed in the dust … our dire wounds are not dressed with bandages – and we have received some atrocious ones although we are innocent – and there is no one who takes care of them. On the contrary! We are thrown, battered, cold and weeping, into dark holes or into dung heaps together with Saint Job'] (Bury 1998, 67).
11. See Petrarca (1993, 1112) ('sed cum iam crebra concussione repetiti loci fracta cutis nec *spernendum ulcus* extaret, *sprevi* tamen' [Petrarch 2005a, III, 187: 'Altough my skin was broken from

repeated blows on the same spot causing a considerable sore to develop, I paid no attention to it']).

12. See Petrarca (1993, 1112) ('Paulatim quasi se *sperni dolens vulnus* intumuit' [Petrarch 2005a, III, 187: 'Gradually, as if angry at being neglected, the sore…']).
13. Petrarca (1993, 1112) ('Quid […] rei est, mi Cicero, cur me feris?').
14. On the importance of the constant dialogue between the reader and the book see: Bec (1976), Feo (1998), Vecchi Galli (2003), Chines (2003), Torre (2007), Marcozzi (2016b), and Bolzoni (2019). On Petrarch's annotations see Signorini (2019).
15. Bakhtin (1984, 316–318): 'The grotesque is interested only in protruding eyes, like the eyes of the stutturer in the scene described earlier. It is looking for that which protrudes from the body, all that seeks to go out beyond the body's confines. Special attention is given to the shoots and branches, to all that prolongs the body and links it to other bodies or to the world outside … All these convexities and orifices have a common characteristic; it is within them that the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome: there is an interchange and an interorientation. … Thus the artistic logic of the grotesque image ignores the closed, smooth, and impenetrable surface of the body and retains only its excrescences (sprout, buds) and orifices, only that which leads beyond the body's limited space or into the body's depths'.
16. Petrarca (1993, 1113) ('ut non inepte famulus mecum *iocans* inter humiliora servitia sepe *fortunarum tibiam* nuncupare soleat' [Petrarch 2005a, III, 188: 'my servant, in joking with me while doing his chores, quite rightly calls my unlucky leg']); Petrarca (1993, 1113) ('Ceterum […] suum forte nomen impletur; sic enim vulgo quod infaustum est, levum aut sinistrum dicitur' [Petrarch 2005a, III, 188: 'the accident certainly corresponds to its name; what is unfortunate is commonly called lefthanded or sinister']).
17. See Petrarca (1993, 1113) ('Sepe illa me per omnem vitam exercuit; multum tempus, a puero incipiens, id quo nichil tristius facio, iacere compulit' [Petrarch 2005a, III, 188: 'Throughout my life it has often bothered me, and many times from boyhood onward it has forced me to rest, something I find most intolerable']).

18. Petrarca (1993, 1109) ('Deo gratias, qui minatur crebrius quam ferit tonatque sepius quam fulminat et sepe nos concutit non ut deiciat sed ut firmet nostreque conditiones admoneat').
19. See Mazzotta (1993, 90): 'The idea shaping the *Familiares*, that ethics is fundamentally a question of self-government or self-control and that the self becomes the exemplary model for the larger world, is refracted and represented in a variety of aspects. The scope the letters give to ethics is large: it appears as a politics of self, as dietetics, as an inner economics, as etiquette or stylistics, and what I would call thanatetics (as the conduct of self before death, as it emerges from the letters od 'Senecan' consolation). All these various aspects belong to and can be brought within the parameters of Stoic ethics'.
20. See Lavagetto (2002, 292): 'Since the body is not transparent and it is impossible to look inside it as if it were a glass hive, a different route must be taken, as is suggested by Tristram Shandy. Marcel Proust believes that we can only analyse the surfaces behind which everything that cannot be seen lies hidden. We must search somewhere else. Words, though, are of equally little use in that they offer a no less opaque and deforming reflection of men's thoughts than that offered by the body. Language and body are analogous and complementary systems and the body, being like a closed vessel, can be taken as a persuasive metaphor of a discourse which has a hidden layer of meaning whose presence can be intuited. Our words have a body, they are a body, and, at the same time, our body is a text written in non-linguistic characters which can nonetheless be linguistically deciphered'.
21. Petrarca (1994, 342) ('Testantur triginta vel eo amplius librorum volumina, quae olim ibi reliqueram nihil usquam tutius credens, quaeque non multo post praedonum manibus vix elapsa mihique ex insperato reddita, pallere nunc etiam et tremere videntur, et turbidum loci statum unde evaserant fronte portendere' ['This is demonstrated by the fact that thirty volumes, or an even greater number of books, which I had long ago left in this place which I thought to be the safest in the world, barely escaped the hands of some thieves and were unexpectedly given back to me. They are now pale and trembling and their cover bears the mark of the awful place from which they have escaped']).

22. See Petrarca (1994, 346) ('Hac tu igitur arte me solaris, quod ab ipso, quo cum percupide versor, Ciccerone sim offensus quem nunquam Albumasar offendet ut auguror' ['With this stratagem, then, you console me for the fact that it was that very Cicero who wounded me, whom I eagerly read and reread, while Hippocrates and Albumasar (so I hope) would never think to hurt me']).
23. Petrarca (1994, 346) ('Quod proximum in tuis litteris erat elegantissime cavillaris, quod a Cicerone scilicet, etsi non merear, propter coniunctionem tamen nimiam *laesus sim*: coniunctiores enim saepe nos, ut ipse ais, infestant […] Sed ut omissis iocis rem ipsam plane noveris, vulnus illud Ciceronianum de quo ludere solebam, *ludum mihi vertit in luctum*'). The very act of wounding is implied in the pun, in that it comes an unexpected emotional and intellectual shock to the reader: 'This trope clusters on the Latin root, *pungo, punctus*, literally meaning to pierce, puncture, and thus wound some surface. The word quickly came as well to mean emotional vexation, anxiety, grief, and so on, and its close relative, *compunctus*, had much the same range of meanings, both the sense of piercing a surface and the emotional sense, of goading and vexing the feelings' (Carruthers 1997, 2).
24. See Pozzi (1996, 172): 'it is a personal appropriation of the text: the author echoes the knowledge he acquired while meditating on Scripture and describes his own condition or a specific situation of his life, so that the reverberated biblical text tells something about his own experience and enables him to speak of himself. Job, David, Jeremiah are alter-egos of the poet'.
25. In analysing Petrarch's creative appropriation of biblical texts, Giovanni Pozzi argues that the 'alteration of a single letter of the signifier [is …] the noblest form of parody' in that a minimal change in the signifier produces a radical change of the signified. Pozzi illustrates his statement with an example drawn from Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermones super Cantica canticorum*, in which paronomasiae and alliterations that are perfectly relevant to this discussion lie at the core of the patristic wordplay (*lusus*): 'Amat et pergit amatorie loqui […] Puta ergo sic dicere sponsum: "Ne timeas, amica, quasi haec, ad quam te hortamur, opera vinearum negotium amoris impedire seu interrumpere habeat". Erit certe et aliquis *usus* in ea ad id quod pariter optamus. Vineae

sane macerias habent, et hae diversoria grata verecundis. Hic litteralis *usus*. Quidne dixerim *lusum*? Quid enim *serium* habet haec litterae *series*? Ne auditu quidem dignum quod foris sonat, si non intus adiuvet' (Pozzi 1996, 153–154; the italics are in the text).

26. See Brooks (1993, 22): 'The bodily marking not only serves to recognize and identify, it also indicates the body's passage into the realm of the letter, into literature: the bodily mark is in some manner a "character", a hieroglyph, a sign that can eventually, at the right moment of the narrative, be read. Signing the body indicates its recovery for the realm of the semiotic. … For the texts that show us the process of inscription give a privileged insight into the ever-renewed struggle of language to make the body mean, the struggle to bring it into writing'.
27. See Petrarca (1994, 348) ('Parum deerat anni circulo dum in dies peius habens, inter taedia et angores, inter medicos et fomenta senescerem … nunquam certe hactenus seu rei causam, seu animi dolorem, seu temporis spatium consideres, simile aliquid passus eram' [almost a year had passed and I was feeling worse. I was growing older and only experiencing boredom and pain, often provoked by doctors and their concoctions … and the cause is to be found both in my mental exhaustion and in the waste of time caused by my illness]).
28. See Barolini (2009, 39): 'Time and its passing are the hinges between Petrarch's moral and metaphysical meditations: his exploration of the self's interiority in its multiple fragmented incarnations unable to resolve and to convert into a single stable and full being reflects his understanding of time as a medium that literally cuts the ground out from under us, destabilizing and deracinating us. Time in its metaphysical multiplicity can lead to moral confusion'.
29. See Petrarca (1993, 1245) ('Ecce ad hunc locum epystole perveneram deliberansque quid dicerem amplius seu quid non dicerem, hec inter, ut assolte, papirum vacuam inverso calamo *feriebam*. Res ipsa materiam obtulit cogitanti inter dimensionis morulas tempus labi, meque interim collabi abire deficere et, ut proprie dicam, mori' [Petrarch 2005a, III, 312: 'Having reached this point in the letter, I was wondering what more to say or not to say, and meanwhile, as is my custom, I was tapping the blank paper with my pen. This action provided me with a subject, for I considered how,

during the briefest of intervals, time rushes onward, and I along with it, slipping away, failing, and, to speak honestly, dying']); Petrarca (2014, 326) ('Hec fient simul et facta sunt; omnia secum tempus trahit, omnia absorbet, omnia circumvolvit ac miscet, nichil stare permittit. Et magna mutantur et minima: calamus hic dum ista percurreret ter mutatus, ter michi ferro castigandus fuit' [This is what will happen and has already happened; time drags away everything, absorbs all things, disrupts and overturns all things and does not allow anything to remain stable. Both great things and small things change. This pen has changed three times as I was writing this page: I had to sharpen it three times]). This quotation is significantly drawn from his biographic portrayal of Heraclitus.

30. Gur Zak analyses a passage in *Familiares* VI, 2, in which Petrarch describes to Giovanni Colonna his reaction at the sight of the ruins of Rome, and suggests that 'the description of the ruins of Rome thus becomes a metaphor of Petrarch's own self: like the glorious city, he himself is subjected to the ravages of time, constantly changing, leaving behind only fragments – scattered memories and words retained in the minds of the two interlocutors that cannot, as he insists, invoke the past in full. The subjection to the passage of time, Petrarch therefore implies, is a subjection to a costant sense of absence and loss' (Zak 2010, 3). On Petrarch's memorial experience when he saw the ruins of Rome see also Hui (2016, 89–130).
31. Petrarca (1993, 1242) ('libelli indicant qui michi illius temporis supersunt et *signa mee manus talibus presertim affixa sententius*, ex quibus eliciebam et supra etatem ruminabam presentem futurumque illico statum meum'). On the meaning of the 'mortal wound' mentioned in this letter see Fera (2019).
32. Petrarca (1993, 1242) ('*Notabam* certa fide non verborum faleras sed res ipsas, misere scilicet vite huius angustias, brevitatem velocitatem festinationem lapsum cursum volatum occultasque fallacias, tempus irreparabile, caducum et mutabilem vite florem, rosei oris fluxum decus, irrediture iuventutis effrenem fugam et tacite obrepentis insidias senectutis; ad extremum *rugas* et morbos et tristitiam et laborem et indomite mortis inclementiam implacabilemque duritiem').
33. See Petrarca (1993, 241) ('Millesimus trecentesimus quadragesimus octavus annus est, qui nos solos atque inopes fecit; [...]

irreparabiles sunt ultime iacture; et quodcunque mors intulit, immedicabile vulnus est' [Petrarch 2005a, I, 3: 'The year of 1348 left us alone and helpless … It subjected us to irreparable losses. Whatever death wrought is now an incurable wound']).

34. Petrarca (1993, 242) ('Tempora, ut aiunt, inter digitos effluxerunt'), a sentence which echoes a passage in Seneca's *Moral Letters* in which Seneca advises his friend to 'gather and save your time, which till lately has been forced from you, or filched away, or has merely slipped from your hands' (Seneca 1917) [Seneca, *Epistole a Lucilio*, I I, I: 'Ita fac, mi Lucili: vindica te tibi, et tempus quod adhuc aut auferebatur aut subripiebatur aut excidebat collige et serva … quaedam tempora eripiuntur nobis, quaedam subducuntur, quaedam effluunt'].
35. Petrarca (1993, 242) ('non magnificus, sic non inamenus labor visus est, quid quo tempore cogitassem recordari' [Petrarch 2005a, I, 3: 'This thought finally dominated, and while the work involved did not appeal as a grand undertaking, neither did trying to recall the thoughts and memories of times past seem too unpleasant']. On Petrarch's project of writing about himself the *Familiares* see Antognini (2008).
36. See Bury (1998, 108) ('Delicatissimi quondam libri, corrupti et abominabiles iam effecti, murium quidem fetibus cooperti et verminum morsibus terebrati, iacebant exanimes; et qui olim purpura vestiebantur domicilia tinearum. Inter hec nichilominus, captatis temporibus, magis voluptuose consedimus quam fecisset medicus delicatus inter aromatum apothecas, ubi amoris nostri obiectum reperimus et fomentum') [The precious books which were once magnificent lay barren, left on the ground to rot neglected, or to putrefy covered by mice nests and mangled by worm bites. In those places I found forsaken volumes, which had once worn purple and linen but were then covered in dust, thrown on the ground and left to be eaten by woodworms. I could not resist them and, in my spare time, I lost myself in those poor books with even greater pleasure than an apothecary who wanders among the spices of his shop: I thus found the object of my love again. (Translation mine)]. On books as the fetishised object of Petrarch's desire see Camille (1997).
37. Petrarca (1993, 242) ('Confusis itaque circumventus literarum cumulis et informi papiro obsitus, primum quidem cepi impetum

cunta flammis exurere et laborem inglorium vitare; deinde, ut cogitationes e cogitationibus erumpunt, "Et quid" inquam "prohibet, velut e specula fessum longo itinere viatorem in terga respicere et gradatim adolescentie tue curas metientem recognoscere?"'). See also Benjamin (1968, 59): 'I am unpacking my library. Yes, I am. The books are not yet on the shelves, not yet touched by the mild boredom of order. I cannot march up and down their ranks to pass them in review before a friendly audience. You need not fear any of that. Instead, I must ask you to join me in the disorder of crates that have been wrenched open, the air satured with the dust of wood, the floor covered with torn paper, to join me among piles of volumes that are seeing daylight again after two years of darkness, so that you may be ready to share with me a bit of the mood – it is certainly not an elegiac mood but, rather, one of anticipation – which these books arouse in a genuine collector. For such a man is speaking to you, and on closer scrutiny he proves to be speaking only about himself'.

38. See Coetzee-Kurz (2016, 3): 'A more radical way of posing the same question is: Are all autobiographies, all life-narratives, not fictions, at least in the sense that they are constructions (fiction from Latin *fingere*, to shape or mould or form)? The claim here is not that autobiography is free, in the sense that we can make up our life-story as we wish. Rather, the claim is that in making up our autobiography we execise the same freedom that we have in dreams, where we impose a narrative form that is our own, even if influenced by forces that are obscure to us, on elements of a remembered reality'.
39. Petrarca (1993, 242) ('Sed temere congesta nullo ordine versanti, mirum dictu quam discolor et quam turbida rerum facies occurreret; ut quedam, non tam specie illorum quam intellectus mei acie mutata, vix ipse cognoscerem; alia vero non sine voluptate quadam retroacti temporis memoriam excitarent').
40. Petrarca (1994, 348) ('Indelebilem memoriae meae notam et stigma perpetuum Cicero mihi meus affixit. Memineram sui, sed ne unquam oblivisci possim, intus et extra consultum est'). On this passage see Bolzoni (2019, 9): 'The wound lies at the threshold between body and psyche, *intus* and *extra*, and it is a proof of the strength of memory and the impossibility of forgetting; it is the true sign of the effectiveness of reading'; and Covington (2009,

86): 'A wound is open, unresolved, a coming apart, a shock, its meaning indeterminate; a scar or disfigurement, on the other hand, stands at a greater temporal distance from the original infliction. Wounds suffered in battle left the soldier in an abject, unresolved position in relation to the world, his body literally opened, his life and death dependent on the course of healing or decline his wounds would take; scars, on the other hand, were corporal evidence of healing as well as damage – a memorializing faultline on the body that reminded the veteran of the "before" and "after" that his life had taken upon the injury he suffered'.

41. See Greenblatt (1997, 223): 'Pauline Christianity saw the physical marks on Jesus' body, from his circumcision to his scourging, piercing, and crucifixion, as the signs of an exalted sanctity, the salvific manifestations of a divine love that willingly embraces mortal vulnerability. What looks at first like a move away from the ritual shedding of blood – the metaphorization of circumcision – is intertwined in fact with a more radical, literalizing insistence on the meaningfulness of sacrificial wounds. For Jews, God manifested himself principally in a text, the Torah, but for Christians God's flesh was itself a text written upon with universal characters, inscribed with a language that all men could understand since it was a language in and of the body itself, independent of any particular forms of speech'.
42. On this codex possessed by Petrarch see Martinelli (1990) and Baglio (2008).
43. See Covington (2009, 172–173): 'The wound is religion's indexical image supreme, a metaphor whose power resides in its ability to pivot in any number of meaningful directions. As a synechdoche, Christ's fragmented wounds represent his body and the larger incarnational meaning behind it; but wounds also kaleidoscopically revolve from within a larger web of meaning, as paradoxical – and imbued with tension – as Christianity itself. A symbol of brokenness, they also lead to wholeness, as represented by conversion and faith; embodying suffering, they represent joy as well, as they emit the blood of redemption and are even carried into heaven as marks of victorious resurrection. Seemingly violating the body, soul, and identity of their bearer, they also reconstitute that identity to a more genuine state of being in accordance with divine purpose'.

44. Petrarca (2009, 328) ('Sed profecto Francisci stigmata hinc principium habuere, Christi mortem tam iugi et valida meditatione complexi ut, cum eam in se iandudum animo transtulisset et cruci affixus ipse sibi suo cum Domino videretur, tandem ab animo in corpus veram rei effigiem pia transferret opinio').
45. See Covington (2009, 13): 'In his painfully exposed stance of outstretched injury, Christ finally embodied a vulnerability, representing not five wounds but one human and divine wound, glistening in fragility on the cross and spewing forth the blood that represented atonement as well as kenosis, an emptying out "on behalf of the world"'.
46. See Rubin (1991, 302–308).
47. See Petrarca (2006, 190) ('Nam quis, obsecro, tam prerupte tamque inflammate libidinis usquam erit, qui acriter ad memoriam reductis Cristi vulneribus non frigescat et sanguine eius ad hoc fuso, ut inde potissimum concrete nostrorum sordes vulnerum lavarentur?' ['Who is so dominated by the flame of pleasures that the bitter remembrance of Christ's wounds could not erase these vain distractions? Nor his bloody Passion could clean our rooted corruption?']).
48. See Covington (2009, 157): 'The Bible was the repository of this imagery, yet puritans, in pushing their spiritual examinations to the forefront, also appropriated the trope of woundedness to their own purposes in fashioning or reconfirming their faith through a narrative that was as much a personal testimonial as it was a contribution to a larger collective or communal identity. For them, woundedness was a reality as well as a metaphor, just as the worldly was intimately bound up with the spiritual, and the physical world itself was perceived symbolically, particularly in its stormy tempests. The very act of writing was a marking, if not quite a wounding – a way in which one attained (or grasped at) faith by recording its workings upon one's life a second time around, in textual form'.
49. On the metaphors of memory see: Assmann (1991), Carruthers (1990), and Draaisma (2000).
50. See Freud (1964, 253): 'The complex of melancholia behaves like an open wound, drawing to itself cathectic energies – which in the transference neuroses we have called "anticathexes" – from all directions, and emptying the ego until it is totally impoverished'.

51. See Petrarca (1993, 554 and 562) ('mixta lamentis consolatio super gravissimis fortune vulneribus … [Fortuna] exhausit pharetram, exarmata est; nec habet illa quod iaculetur, *nec tu habes ubi de cetero feriaris*' [Petrarch 2005a, I, 386 and 395: 'a tearful consolation on the extremely harsh blows of fortune … Fortune has emptied her quiver and stands disarmed; she no longer has arms to hurl at you nor do you, in what remains, have any point where you may be struck']).
52. On the cultural implications—of the myth of Apollo and Marsyas see Benthien (2002, 63–94, especially p. 81): 'If the skin is taken awayand this may also have been one motive for the interest in the topic during the Renaissance and subsequent epochs – there occurs, psychologically speaking, a splitting of the self. It is no coincidence that the flayed satyr already laments in Ovid, "quid me mihi detrahis" – why are you stripping me from myself'. Marsys' exclamation is probably echoed in Petrarch's question to Cicero's book in *Familiares* XXI, 10 ('Quid […] rei est, mi Cicero, cur me feris?').
53. Petrarch thus shared his friend's pain, as is necessary when writing a letter of *consolatio*. Petrarch explains that in another letter, similar in tone to the one mentioned above, which he sent to Donato Albanzani on the occasion of the death of his son: 'Succurro ego tibi et solor te, amice, pro spatio temporis proque ingenii viribus, et me ipsum solor, quibus sunt cunta comunia, spes et metus et gaudia et dolores; ideo, ut dixi, vulnera nostra coniungo, ut medicamenta permisceam' (Petrarca 2014, 200) [Petrarch 2005b, II, 381: 'I succor and comfort you, dear friend, in what time there is, and to the best of my ability, and I comfort myself since we share everything; hopes, fears, joys, and grief. And so, as I have said, I combine our wounds in order to prepare the salves'].
54. See Benthien (2002, 39–40): 'In this pre-Enlightenment conceptual world, there are many more body openings than we would recognize: eyes, ears, nose, mouth, breasts, navel, anus, urinary passage, and vulva. These "orifices" are primarily exits whose intentional direction points from the inside to the outside. The body surface itself is everywhere a potential exit, because it can open or be induced to open anywhere. Wounds, bulges, or tears in the skin are channels from which something flows that would otherwise choose a different route. … The inside of the body is conceived as

an unstructured, osmotic space whose processes remain invisible. Speculations about this inside are possible only through signs that appear on the skin or through significant discharging "fluxes"'.

55. Petrarca (1993, 561): 'Id duntaxat obtestor ac deprecor, ne unquam forte – ut est animus sepe curiosior eorum in quibus nullum iam nisi memorie ius habet – vetera memorando in novas miserias relabaris, ac nimis indulgens patrio dolori rescindas herentium iam vulnerum cicatrices'.
56. Petrarch (1976, 203): 'et la nova stagion che d'anno in anno | mi rinfresca in quel dì l'antiche piaghe'; Petrarca (2016, 116): 'Nullum in me adeo vetustum vulnus ut oblivione deletum sit; recentia cunt cunta que cruciant. Et siquid tempore potuisset aboleri, tam crebro locum repetiit fortuna, ut hians, vulnus nulla unqua cicatrix astrinxerit'.
57. On the difference between Augustin the Stoic and the Augustin described by Petrarch see Quillen (1998).
58. Petrarca (2016, 134) ('*F*. Immo vero inter legendo plurimum; libro autem e manibus elapso assensio simul omnis intercidit. *A*. Comunis legentium mos est, ex quo monstrum illud execrabile, literatorum passim flagitiosissimos errare greges et de arte vivendi, multa licet in scolis disputentur, in actum pauca converti' ['*F.* Yes, a great deal, when I was reading them. But as soon as the book was out of my hands, my agreement with it slipped entirely from my mind. *A*. That's what usually happens with readers, with the dire and damnable consequence that disgraceful groups of well-read people [*that*] wander round incapable of translating the art of living into action']).
59. Petrarca (2016, 134) ('*A*. Quotiens legenti salutares se se offerunt sententie, quibus vel excitari sentis animum vel frenari, noli viribus ingenii fidere, sed illas in memorie penetralibus absconde multoque studio tibi familiares effice; ut quod experti solent medici, quocunque loco vel tempore dilationis impatiens morbus invaserit, habeas velut in animo conscripta remedia' ['*A*. Whenever in your reading you come across helpful points that make you feel encouraged or inhibited, don't rely on your intelligence, but implant them deep in your memory and make yourself familiar with them through close study; in that way whenever and wherever there is an outbreak of disease which allows of no delay, you will, like a skilled doctor, have remedies which are so to speak engraved

on your mind']). On the Petrarchan experience of 'active reading' see Kahn (1985).

60. Petrarca (2016, 11) ('Cum sit profecto verissimum ad contemnendas vite huius illecebras componendumque inter tot mundi procellas animum nichil efficacius reperiri quam memoriam proprie miserie et meditationem mortis assiduam; *modo non leviter, aut superficietenus serpat, sed in ossibus ipsis ac medullis insideat*').
61. Augustinus (1991, 74) ('Non enim sicut modo loquor, ita sensi, cum attendi ad illam scripturam, sed visa est mihi indigna quam tullianae dignitati compararem. Tumor enim meus refugiebat modum eius et acies mea non penetrabat interiora eius').
62. On the notion of *curiositas* see Carruthers (1998, 82): 'In terms of mnemotechnic, curiosity constitutes both image "crowding" – a mnemotechnical vice, because crowding images together blurs them, blocks them, and thus dissipates their effectiveness for orienting and cueing – and randomness, or making backgrounds that have no pattern to them'.
63. Petrarca (2016, 46) ('*F.* […] Signum tamen aliquod memorie mee, si vedetur, imprime, quo admonitus post hac de me ipse michi non mentiar, nec erroribus meis interblandiar' ['*F.* […] Please impress upon my memory some sign that will remind me from now onward not to deceive myself about myself, and not to indulge my errors']).
64. Petrarca (2016, 62) ('*F.* […] Nunc profunde manum in vulnus adegisti. Istic dolor meus inhabitat, istinc mortem metuo').
65. Petrarca (1993, 282) ('Eoque magis propriis adiuvor interdum, quo illa languoribus meis aptiora sunt, que conscia manus medici langientis et ubi dolor esset sentientis, apposuit. Quod nunquam profecto consequerer, nisi verba ipsa salutaria demulcerent aures, et me ad sepius relegendum vi quadam insite dulcedinis excitantia sensim illaberentur atque abditis aculeis interiora transfigerent').
66. Petrarca (2016, 112) ('*A.* Maxima tue mentis vulnera nondum attigi, et consulto dilata res est, ut novissime posita hereant memorie' ['*A.* I haven't yet touched the worst injuries to your mind, but I deliberately put them off so that our most recent discussions would remain fixed in your memory']).
67. Petrarca (2016, 82) ('*F.* Age, iam urge, ingemina, accusatoris officium imple; quid iam novi vulneris infligere veli expecto' ['*F.* Go on then, press home your point, intensify the pressure, fulfill your

duty as prosecutor. I now await the new wounds that you want to inflict upon me']).

68. Petrarca (2016, 144) ('*A.* Nondum intractabilia et infixa visceribus vulnera tua contigi et contingere metuo, recolens quantum altercationis et querelarum levior contactus expresserit' ['*A.* I haven't yet touched your most unyielding and intimate wounds, and I'm wary of doing so, remembering how much argument and protest even the slightest mention of them provoked']).
69. Petrarca (2016, 184) ('*F.* Victus sum, fateor, quoniam cunta, que memoras, de medio experientie libro michi videris excerpsisse'). The image employed by Petrarch appears also in Bernard of Clairvaux (1957, 14) ('Hodie legimus in libro experientiae').
70. See Zak (2010, 108): 'The examination of conscience in the work thus consists of the combined acts of reading and writing: it is through the internal reading of his past experiences that Petrarch is able to realize the truth about his condition, and it is the writing of the dialogue that facilitates this internal reading. The role of writing does not end in encouraging the internal reading, however: through the documentation of this reading, Petrarch is also able to imprint on his mind the conclusions he reaches in the process of reading and writing, shaping himself accordingly'.
71. Petrarca (2016, 138): '*A.* Quod cum intenta tibi ex lectione contingertit, imprime sententiis utilibus [ut incipiens dixeram] certas notas, quibus velut uncis memoria volentes abire contineas'.
72. Bolzoni (2019) mentions a passage in the *Ecclesiaste* (XII, 11, 10–11) to illustrate a similar notion: 'Qoheleth tried to find noteworthy sayings and he wrote words of truth. The words uttered by wise men are like goads and the collections of works written by different authors are like nails stuck in one's body' (8). The metaphoric representation of the subject's inner self as a surface to write upon can also be found in St Augustine's writings (see Jager 2000, 27–64). On the mnemonic function of Petrarch's annotations see Torre (2007, 75–208).
73. Petrarca (2016, 162–164) ('*F.* [...] Illa iuvenilem animum ab omni turpitudine revocavit, uncoque, ut aiunt, retraxit, atque alta compulit expectare. [...] Et iubes illam oblivisci vel parcius amare, que me a vulgi consortio segregavit; que, dux viarum omnium, torpenti ingenio calcar admovit ac semisopitum animum excitavit' ['*F.* (...) She restrained my youthful mind from any shameful

action, hooking it back, as they say, and focused my gaze on higher things. (…) But are you now ordering me to forget her, or to love her less, this woman who has set me apart from the common herd and who has guided me along every road, spurring me on in my sluggishness and stirring my slumberring mind']).

74. Petrarca (2016, 164–166) ('*A*. […] Enimvero, nec qui variis sordibus obscenam viam declinare monuit, si in precipitium produxit, nec qui, minutiora sanans ulcera, letale interim iugulo vulnus inflixit, liberasse potius quam occidisse dicendus est. Ista quoque, quam tuam predicas ducem a multis te obscenis abstrahens in splendidum impulit baratrum').
75. Petrarca (2016, 40) ('Hec enim conclusio restabat: quanquam multa vellicantia circumstent [nichil tamen ad interiora penetrare duratis longa consuetudine pectoribus miserorum, vetustoque velut callo salutiferis ammonitionibus resistente] paucos invenies sat profunde cogitantes esse sibi necessario moriendum').
76. Petrarca (2016, 74) ('Neque te Narcissi terruit fabella, nec quid esses introrsus virilis consideratio corporee feditatis admonuit? Exterioris cutis contentus aspectu, oculos mentis ultra non porrigis'). See Zak (2007, 182–185).
77. This and the previous quotation are from Petrarca (2016, 68) ('Lectio autem ista quid profuit? Ex multis enim, que legisti, quantum est quod inheserit animo, quod radices egerit, quod fructum proferat tempestivum? Excute pectus tuum acriter').
78. Petrarca (2016, 60) ('*A*. Hec tibi pestis nocuit; hec te, nisi provideas, perditum ire festinat. Siquidem fantasmatibus suis obrutus, multisque et variis ac secum sine pace pugnantibus curis animus fragilis oppressus, cui primum occurrat, quam nutriat, quam perimat, quam repellat, examinare non potest; vigorque eius omnis ac tempus, parca quod tribuit manus, ad tam multa non sufficit' ['*A*. The infestation I mentioned has harmed you; if you do not take care, it will hasten you to your ruin. Indeed the frail mind, overwhelmed by its apparitions, and oppressed by many varied and endlessly conflicting concerns, cannot work out which of them to confront first, which to nurture, which to put an end to, and which to repel; all the strength and time given to it by a parsimonious hand are not sufficient for so many tasks']).
79. Petrarca (2016, 60) ('Quod igitur evenire solet in angusto multa serentibus, ut impediant se sata concursu, idem tibi contigit, ut

in animo nimis occupato nil utile radices agat, nichilque fructiferum coalescat; tuque inops consilii modo huc modo illuc mira fluctuatione volvaris, nusquam integer, nusqum totus').

80. Gur Zak recognises that such a metaphoric condition of exile is 'another ample demonstration of the Stoic nature of Petrarch's hermeneutics of self: it is the exile from virtue – his "true self" – that makes him dependent on the fluctuations of fortune, and this dependence is in turn responsible for the passions and anxieties that dominate him, his experience of fragmentation and restlessness' (Zak 2010, 87).
81. Petrarch (1988, 369–370) ('Forse che'ndarno mie parole spargo, | ma io v'annunzio che voi sete offesi | da un grave e mortifero letargo, | ché volan l'ore e' giorni e gli anni e' mesi: | inseme, con brevissimo intervallo, | tutti avemo a cercar altri paesi. | Non fate contra'l vero al core un callo, | come sete usi, anzi volgete gli occhi, | mentre emendar si pote il vostro fallo').

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CHAPTER 6

Untimely Wounds in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

Iolanda Plescia

> To Macbeth, fear is mixed up with the very perception of himself as a living being; it is a longing for dangerous life – like the plunging of a knife into flesh – which in a shudder recognizes that it is alive, precisely because it suffers.
>
> Nadia Fusini, Di vita si muore

1 Introduction

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* has traditionally played an unresolved and fluctuating influence in historical studies on early modern sovereignty: on the one hand, *Macbeth* offers the example of a comprehensive paradigm of sacred kingship, staging an opposition between the impious and bloody tyranny of the Scottish Macbeth—whose reign is haunted by murder and lacerated by injustice—and the holy figure of the King by divine right, typified (although not seen on stage) by Saint Edward the Confessor, endowed by heaven with supernatural powers, representing the living

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image of the Saviour on earth, King of England, the country that gives sanctuary to Malcom in his capacity as the rightful heir and Macduff as avenging hero of the play. On the other, the picture of the supernatural order regulating earthly affairs is very much complicated by the witchcraft scenario created by the Weird Sisters—*Macbeth* being the only play in which Shakespeare uses the word 'weird', if we accept most editorial emendations for the Folio's 'wayward'—a title, as is well known, coming from Old English 'wyrd', referring to fate, destiny, and when pluralized indicating the Fates, the Anglo-saxon equivalent of the Parcae.[1]

While such broad symbolic, historical and anthropological issues must be kept in mind in any serious reading of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, in this essay I wish to draw attention to some key words in the play which I see as connected to its central themes by an underlying meditation on time and the future, and which allow a fresh enquiry into the theme of the wound that is at the heart of this collection. These include different kinds of lexical items, to which I devote three separate, but interconnected, examinations: (1) the word *wound* itself, (2) expressions of futurity and the modal verbs *will*, *shall* and *would*, and, (3) the adverb *untimely* associated to the verb *rip*. I should begin by clarifying that, although my reading is linguistically informed, punctuated in particular by a historical awareness of language development and pragmatics, I am not here making claims in strict corpus linguistic-stylistic terms about the keyness or frequency of such words in quantitative terms. In a sense, this contribution might be classified as one that subscribes to an idea of philology as a 'linguistically informed cultural history' (Petré et al. 2018, 1–14), with the final goal in this case being one of textual appreciation. I should also indicate that this essay brings together and expands on some of my previous work, in particular on *Macbeth* (2010, 2012) and on the Roman Shakespeare, with special regard to *Cymbeline* (2010). In both texts, the theme of the wound is of crucial importance, tied as it is to early modern conceptualizations of regality and of the body.

The words I propose to explore are held together by a structural hinge revolving around time and ideas of temporality. *Macbeth* is a play in fact deeply engaged, as has been variously shown, with the temporal horizon of the future and of anticipation (Bloom 1998; Berry 1958; Honigmann 1989; Serpieri 1986). Things happen or are made to happen before they should; the future is fantasized, thought of as already realized, rather than merely planned; even the past is projected onto and into the future to make sense of the present, which is one possible way to understand,

I believe, Macbeth's enigmatic line 'She should have died thereafter', spoken after the death of Lady Macbeth (V.5.17). Ralph Berry's early assessment that the play is dominated by the future, both grammatically and thematically, perfectly explained why this, the shortest of Shakespeare's tragedies, is a play that 'is future minded [...]. It purely and avidly pursues a Future, and that is why reader and audience derive from it a sensation of rapidity and hurrying' (Berry 1958, 49). As will be seen, *untimeliness* is a major theme of this play: the fact that what happens occurs at an inappropriate time is in *Macbeth* always a problem of anticipation, of events having materialized too soon. The words I have selected for close analysis are all linked to depictions of time rushed and ushered in before it should have been.

2 Bleed, Bleed, Poor Country

Few would dispute the fact that Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is seared in the collective imagination as one of his bloodiest plays, thanks to the constant references to murder, repetition of the words *blood* and *bloody* as well as the verb *bleed* in various forms, and, of course, the image of Lady Macbeth now consecrated in popular culture, compulsively rubbing her hands to obliterate an imaginary and persistent spot of blood. The very first lines of the second scene of Act I—the true beginning of the action after the witches' prologue foreboding that 'fair is foul, and foul is fair' (I.1.9)[2]—refer to the arrival of a wounded captain whose function on stage is to tell the story of the battle in which Macbeth has proven his valour as well as his allegiance to his King, against the 'Norweyan Lord' (l. 31). Whether or not stage blood was or is used as a prop in productions of *Macbeth* (Dutton 2018, 194–195), the words of the captain—himself a 'bloody man' (I.2.1) are powerful enough to conjure up a particularly harrowing tale that evokes the bloody theatre *par excellence*, that of the sacrifice of Christ:

> So they
> Doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe:
> Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds,
> Or memorize another Golgotha,
> I cannot tell – (I.2.38–42)

This is the first mention of wounds in a play in which the fall of Macbeth as a tragic hero—as Booth defines him in a classic essay (Booth 1951)—is directly linked to his treacherous wounding of the King, an act which amounts to the blackest of sins. The significance of the proleptic image of *reeking wounds* is punctuated by the use of 'memorize', an extremely rare verb in Shakespeare, almost an *hapax*, which appears only one other time in his corpus (in *Henry VIII*, a collaborative play): low frequency may at times be just as significant, or more, than frequency. To memorize—and thus make memorable—'another Golgotha', means here to repeat, and commit to history. Yet what happened at the Golgotha is an unrepeatable act by definition: it is *the* act of sacrifice that is, in effect, presented as a redemption of all time and all of history, for all humankind, past and future. At the same time, paradoxically, it is the most repeatable of acts within a Christian perspective, as the Golgotha is memorialized on the altar in the daily Mass. The remembrance of Christ's redemptive wounds is suggestively placed at the opening of a play in which wounding the King is the sin that will, tragically, ruin a 'man who has every potentiality for goodness' (Booth 1951, 20): a reversal, a redemption of this inflicted wound will be needed to make amends.

Wounds as such are not mentioned with particular frequency in the play, but when they are, it is at momentous junctures. King Duncan, for one, upon hearing the Captain's story, makes recourse to the well-worn conceptualization of the soldier's wounds as honourable: 'So well thy words become thee as thy wounds, | They smack of honour both' (I.2.44–45). The association between words and wounds is not merely phonetic, as Coriolanus was to demonstrate in another play which takes his name, part of the Shakespearean 'Roman' canon, written between 1605 and 1608, in the same years as *Macbeth* (composed sometime around 1603 and 1606; see Muir 1984 [2006], xv–xx). Showing one's wounds and telling one's battlefield stories is the performative act that begets honour in the eyes of fellow men: it is precisely what Coriolanus refuses to do after his successful battle against Corioli, and he will not be forgiven for not showing his injuries.

The scene in which Macbeth's ability to shed blood is praised by his captain is only a foretaste of what is to come. It is Lady Macbeth who first refers to the wound to be brought upon the King, after she has read a letter from her husband that informs her of the witches' prophecy promising the throne to Macbeth, and pronounces her fatal speech:

> Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
> Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood,
> Stop up th'access and passage to remorse;
> […] Come to my woman's breasts,
> And take my milk for gall, you murth-ring ministers,
> Wherever in your sightless substances.
> You wait on Nature's mischief! Come, thick Night,
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of Hell,
> *That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,*
> Nor Heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
> To cry, 'Hold, hold!' (I.5.40–54, my emphasis)

Such an iconic rejection of womanhood in favour of a *keen knife* will become even more meaningful when read in light of the ending of the play, whose resolution rests on the wounding of a woman giving birth, as will be seen. But for the time being let us note the lines that immediately follow this passage, as soon as Macbeth makes his entrance on stage: 'Thy letters have transported me beyond | This ignorant present, and I feel now | The future in the instant' (ll. 56–58). The movement towards anticipation mentioned above as a driving force in the play is here brought to bear directly on the deed to be done: the wounds to be inflicted upon the King are a gateway into the foretold future, one that must be hastened, ushered in before its time.

The relationship between time and action is also at the core of a reflection in a later scene (IV.3), in which Macduff has joined the slain King's son Malcom in England, and tries to persuade him to return to Scotland and reclaim his right to the throne. Malcom seems well aware that as rightful heir he must 'redress' what he can (l. 9), but that he will only be able to do so at the right time: 'As I shall find the time to friend, I will' (l. 10). The underlying idea to Malcom's somewhat cautious position is that things need to fall into place. So much so that he rather procrastinates in this scene, putting Macduff to the test by protesting that he himself, the lawful King's son, would also become a tyrant, if given the throne. In fact the scene, based as most of the play is on Holinshed's Chronicles (1577), contains a lengthy dialogue between the two, which is more of an extended commentary on evil and the nature of tyrants than a way of pushing the action forward: and it is useful to remember here that Shakespeare had read the works of James I, surely *Daemonologie* and

Counterblast to Tobacco, but also possibly the *The True Law of Free Monarchies* and the *Basilikon Doron*, and that James 'condemned rebellion even against manifest tyrants' (Muir 1984 [2006], xxxvi–xliii), upholding the divine-right theory of kingship.[3]

The fast paced dramatic rhythm does slow down for a moment here: as Muir recalls in a footnote, the scene was considered simply 'tedious' by E. K. Chambers, while on the other hand, L. C. Knights placed particular emphasis on it as a scene whose real purpose is to perform a function of 'choric commentary' (Muir 1984 [2006], 122). Indeed, the scene acquires profound meaning if we think of it as the meditation of a chorus on the fate of Scotland, on power hunger, and on the qualities that a ruler must possess. Macduff's lament over Scotland is accordingly interspersed with recurring exhortatives and vocatives: 'Bleed, bleed, poor country!' (l. 31); 'O Scotland! Scotland!' (l. 100). Malcom immediately identifies the wound inflicted upon the regal body of the King as a primal one, a blow to the entire community: 'I think our country sinks beneath the yoke; | It weeps, it bleeds; and each new day a gash | Is added to her wounds' (ll. 39–40). The *gash*, not merely a synonym of wound but a deeper, longer cut, one perhaps less precise and more violently delivered—a wound can have a surgical connotation, but a gash cannot—indicates here that brutal and recurrent chaos ('each new day a gash is added') has erupted within the body politic.

All of this has happened, Macduff explains, because of the appetite for power which has hastened the event of the King's death, anticipated before it would naturally have been destined to occur:

> Boundless intemperance
> In nature is a tyranny; it hath been
> Th'untimely emptying of the happy throne,
> And fall of many kings. (ll. 66–69)

'Th'untimely enmptying of the happy throne': *untimeliness* is the real temporal axis of the play and it is one that takes us back to the idea of rushing towards the future, but also connects with another important passage, in the last act, in which restitution, and resolution, are rooted in the same temporal experience.

3 Will, Shall, Would

Let us then consider briefly, before turning to that decisive final moment, the use of the future I have been referring to in the foregoing paragraphs as 'structural'—in particular in Act I, which sets the tone for the entire play, as I have argued elsewhere (Plescia 2010a, 2012). The English language, as is well known, does not have a morphologically marked future tense, but makes recourse to modal verbs and expressions to construct future scenarios. This point in itself—whether English can be said to have a future tense or not—is of some contention among scholars, but we will not delve into this particular aspect which is beyond the scope of this essay.[4] For now, let us consider this intriguing definition of modality given by Paul Portner: 'modality is the linguistic phenomenon whereby grammar allows one to say things about, or on the basis of, situations which need not be real' (Portner 2009, 1). It is true that Portner concentrates on semantic theories of modality, while the notions most useful to our analysis are of a pragmatic and contextual nature. However, his definition of modality as the language used to speak of 'situations which need not be real' would be a very apt way to describe the manner in which Macbeth conceives of his own future after he has heard the Weird Sisters' prophecy, developed around the modal verb *shall*: the future predicted by the witches *need not be real*, and Macbeth knows this perfectly well, which is why he decides to realize the prophecy himself, prompted by Lady Macbeth.

In early modern English—Shakespeare's language—modal expressions conveyed overlapping semantic and pragmatic values: they were at a particular stage in language development which meant they were taking on new grammatical functions, also to express tense, as well as various shades of possibility and necessity. Importantly, this phenomenon contributed to the linguistic construction of subjectivity, by marking stance, and the increasing use of modals in the period has been characterized as a linguistic manifestation of a shift from early to modern (Craig (2000). However, semantic values remained available (see, among others, Hope 2003; Blake 1996), and the modal auxiliary *will*, which was used to express futurity due to the lack of a future tense in English, also often retained a strong volitional colouring. The same blurring of modal meaning and grammatical function characterized *shall*, which additionally was moving away from its Middle English values of obligation, order and prescription, and taking on a sense of volition (different shades

of meaning emerge in relation to the different personal pronouns it is associated with).

Modals with a future value in which various shades of volition and ability recur in almost all of the Weird Sisters' exchanges, from their very first lines at the outset of Act I ('When shall we three meet again?', l. 1), to the apparently meaningless tale about a 'tempest-tossed' sailor told in I.3.4–10, which ends with an enigmatic, general threat from the witches: 'I'll do, and I'll do, and I'll do'. What I have suggested elsewhere for the famous line 'All hail, Macbeth! That *shalt* be King hereafter' (I.3.50), however, is that two competing values of *shall* are at play. Macbeth knows from the start that the witches have given him a 'prophetic greeting' (l. 78). Why, then, does he not simply assign a simple future tense value to *shalt*: something that is to come, independently of his will? Why the decision to act upon what is presented as a pre-established future? Later on, when Macbeth muses on the meaning of the prophecy, it would seem that he gradually becomes inclined to understand it as a verb in which deontic modality, relating to the sphere of obligation, prevails—he may thus have chosen to interpret the witches as having given him something more similar to an order, a command, a request that he help shape the future of which they have given him a glimpse.

There is an important textual moment in which Macbeth seems to be weighing the possibility that the witches have used a 'deontic' shall. Shortly after the prediction, in an aside (I.3.144–145) he is shown in a moment of reflection, which might even be considered procrastination: 'If Chance *will* have me King, why, Chance | *may* crown me, Without my stir'. These lines convey two different possibilities: if Chance—here very close to the idea of destiny—wishes Macbeth to be King, perhaps it will crown him without him having to take action; or, *may* could be interpreted as having an exhortative sense: if Chance wants me to be King, why then let it crown me. The murderer-to-be is here evaluating the extent to which he must become involved in his own fate. A few lines later, he further expands on the idea of ineluctability, again by selecting the modal *may*: 'Come what come *may*, | Time and the hour runs through the roughest day' (ll. 147–148). Macbeth is at this point contemplating the possibility that the prophecy may come into being without the involvement of his will, but he has a choice to make.

The direction he takes is, of course, heavily influenced by lady Macbeth. She is immediately alarmed at the uneasiness her husband initially shows at the idea of taking his fate into his own hands. In her

soliloquy in I.5, pronounced just after she has read Macbeth's letter, there is a marked shift towards the distal forms of the modals *will* and *shall*, that is towards *would* and *should*. We are here moving more resolutely into the 'irrealis domain', the world of unreal or unrealized facts; it is a world to which the future also belongs—for, let us remember, it too *need not be real*. Lady Macbeth's fears about her husband's possible procrastination is expressed linguistically through an obsessive repetition of 'would' forms, while she also seems to use 'shalt' as a form of command, echoing the witches, logically linking it to the modal 'must' a few lines later:

> Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and *shalt* be
> What thou art promis'd. – Yet I do fear thy nature:
> It is too full o'th'milk of human kindness,
> To catch the nearest way. Thou *wouldst* be great;
> Art not without ambition; but without
> The illness *should* attend it: what thou *wouldst* highly,
> That *wouldst* thou holily; *wouldst* not play false,
> And yet *wouldst* wrongly win; thou'*dst* have, great Glamis,
> That which cries, 'Thou must do', if thou have it;
> And that which rather thou dost fear to do,
> Than wishest *should* be undone.
>
> (I.5.15–25, my emphasis)

Though Macbeth's nature is too kind, and thus weak and unsteady, Lady Macbeth will see to it that the prophecy is fulfilled. We find Macbeth himself at the beginning of scene vii contemplating the deed to be done in a conditional mood: 'If it were done, when'tis done, then'twere well | It were done quickly…' (1–2). The category of 'what is not real', or 'what need not be real' is dominant in Macbeth's mind: his final decision to hasten the future—and thus not to interpret the prophecy as a simple future, but as a command, a call to action—is thus a very conscious one. Within this framework, in which the modal verbs *shall*, *will* and *would* repeatedly point to future possibilities to be negotiated with the present, it is remarkable that Lady Macbeth's linguistic 'antidote' to her husband's weakness is the long list of imperative verbal forms she uses in her famous evocation, 'Come, you spirits, […] unsex me here' at I.5.40–53, which we came to when commenting upon her use of the word *wound*.

4 The Untimely Wound

The two foregoing paragraphs have allowed us to highlight the significance of the word 'wound' in the context of questions of honour, sacrifice, and treason, as well as the 'grammar' which seems to prompt Macbeth into swift action. Much of the impression of hurriedness and precipitation noticed by commentators of the play may derive precisely from this tight verbal structure revolving around the use of modal verbs associated to future and conditional forms; the arrangement more than the frequency of the modals in question, as well as the repetition effects accumulated in the first Act, are what foreground Macbeth's attitude towards the future that is proposed to him. I am not sure that the number of times Macbeth uses *will* or *would* as a raw figure can allow us to attribute a more or less resolute nature to him; much more significant is Lady Macbeth's use of *would* in conceptualizing her husband's ability to act, for that matter. My understanding of the characters' attitude towards the future is based on contextualizing those uses of *will*, *would* and *shall*, against the backdrop of different values that those modals could convey in Shakespeare's time.[5]

I now return to the idea of ushering in the future, and to what we might call the *untimely wound:* what lady Macbeth proceeds to do, shedding the nurturing characteristics of her sex, *un*-sexing herself, is precisely to convince Macbeth to be *un*timely. To *untimely empty the happy throne*: to defy the very nature of the prophecy, which would direct the will to accept that the future is to happen. The prefix *un-* is central to this process: as Jonathan Hope has noted, 'Shakespeare seems particularly drawn to 'un-' as a way of negating concepts, perhaps because it suggests an active process of undoing something, rather than simple absence' (Hope 2010, 83). David Crystal notes how Shakespeare 'seemed to have had a penchant for using *un-* in imaginative ways' (Crystal 2010, 171), and perhaps the most interesting of these cases are those in which the -un prefix performs a 'reversative' function, as opposed to a merely negating one, thus undoing, reversing the action described (Zimmer et al. 2011). There are several noteworthy examples of this phenomenon in *Macbeth*, including 'unfix' (I.3.135; IV.1.96), 'undone', from *undo* (I.5.25; 'What's done cannot be undone', V.1.64; V.5.50), the previously mentioned 'unsex' (I.5.41), 'unmake' (I.7.54), 'unbend' (II.2.44), 'unprovokes' (II.3.28); 'unmanned' (Lady Macbeth's great accusation at III.4.72), 'untie' (IV.1.52), and even the striking verb 'unspeak', used

by Malcom to retract his self-accusation when debating with Macduff on whether to move against the tyrant (IV.3.123). While we cannot say with any certainty that Shakespeare invented such words, he is often cited as the first occurrence in the Oxford English Dictionary for these forms (Zimmer et al. 2011, 355), and in general seems not to shy away from using a reversative or negative prefix in cases when it might not have been common practice (as in the case of 'unspeak', which has only two occurrences in the *OED*).

Shakespeare certainly did not invent the word 'untimely' either—just as he did not invent most of the words attributed to him by popular acclaim (Hope 2016). In the case of 'untimely', we are dealing not with a verb but with an adjective, which can also be used as an adverb, in which 'un-' negativizes, rather than reversing—there are other examples of this form related to the murder, such as 'unmannerly' ('the murtherers | Steep'd in the colours of their trade, | their daggers | Unmannerly breech'd with gore', II.3.114), and of course the more common, but all-important in the context of the killing of a King by divine right, 'unnatural', repeated three times ("Tis unnatural, | Even like the deed that's done', II.4.10; 'Unnatural deeds | Do breed unnatural troubles', V.1.68–69).

Reversal and negation remain in any case closely connected processes, and Shakespeare makes full use of the potential of the *un-* prefix throughout the play. It is in this regard extremely interesting to notice how the word *untimely* is not common in English before the end of the sixteenth century: the *OED* provides only a couple of recordings for it used as an adverb in the thirteenth and fourteenth century before Spenser employs it in the *Faerie Queene*,[6] and no occurrences for it used as an adjective before the 1500s. Most of its collocations in this case are with 'fruit', conveying the idea of immaturity, unripeness, as witnessed by examples in Coverdale and the Bishops' Bibles, as well as Milton. Was Shakespeare's time, an age deeply affected by political and historical turmoil and change, and concerned with the decline of the very epistemological paradigms that sustained the theory of the divine nature of monarchical authority, the right one to begin using a word like *untimely*? The playwright certainly seems to favour using it in a tragical and historical context: it appears, sometimes repeatedly, in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Pericles*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Henry VIII* and *Henry VI part III*, *Richard II* and *III*.

It is thus not surprising to encounter the word once again in the play, after that first mention of the 'untimely emptying' of the throne. This

second occurrence is placed at the end, when Macduff enters the battle-field which Macbeth is sure cannot be conquered by any man 'born of woman'. For he has in the meantime received another prophecy from an apparition in the presence of the witches: 'Be bloody, bold, and resolute: laugh to scorn | The power of man, for none of woman born | Shall harm Macbeth' (IV.1.80–81). But as Macduff confronts his father's murderer, he reveals that he owes his very life to an *untimely wound*: 'Despair thy charm; | And let the Angel whom thou still hast serv'd, | Tell thee, *Macduff was from his mother's womb | Untimely ripp'd*' (V.8.13–16). Macduff was thus born before his time, forcefully extracted from the womb before coming to full term. Interestingly, the word 'untimely' is also absent from the LEME (Lexicons of Early Modern English)[7] database before and around Shakespeare's time and only shows up in dictionaries a few decades into the 1600s, when it seems to collocate especially with 'birth' in a number of sources. In John Bullokar's *English Expositor* (1641), for example: 'Abortiva: That which is untimely born'; in Hexham's Copious English and Netherdutch Dictionary: 'untimely Birth'; in Thomas Blount's Glossographia (1656): 'Abortive (abortivus): any thing brought forth before its time, that is delivered untimely, still-born'. Except that, miraculously, Macduff was not still-born, but survived a violent extraction from his mother's body.

The question remains of why this assertion can be taken to mean that he was not 'born of woman'. One final inquiry into another type of wound, the *rip*, is necessary (see also Plescia 2010b), for there is one other character in Shakespeare who was 'ripped' from his mother's womb, and that is Posthumus Leonatus, who in Act V, scene 4 of *Cymbeline* (ca. 1608–1611) receives a vision of his mother and father, together with his long-lost brothers, who have died in battle.[8] About to reveal a family secret, the Leonati draw round in a circle, and the Folio stage direction tells us that the elderly father should be 'attired like a warrior', while his mother is clothed as 'an ancient matron': the *mater* has met her own battlefield, the lying-in room, one from which she did not emerge alive. She reveals to Posthumus—whose very name points to his having been born after his father's, and incredibly, also his mother's death—that she died before she was able to give birth to him, deprived of the aid of Juno Lucina, goddess of childbirth: 'Lucina lent me not her aid, | but took me in my throes, | That from me was Posthumus ript, | Came crying'mongst his foes, A thing of pity!' (V.4.43–47).

The choice of verb, *rip*, is the same one used to describe Macduff's birth, and it must be stressed that in the case of *Macbeth*, Shakespeare is closely following his source, Holinshed. In both instances, the *rip* can be considered a violent act, a sort of inverted 'rape': the word is of uncertain origin, similar to a number of verbs found in several Germanic languages,[9] but it is very close in sound to the Latin *eripio*, the same verb used in accounts of early, legendary 'caesarean sections' found in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. The similarity of the two verbs may not have been lost on the ears of at least some early modern English theatregoers trained in the classics through grammar school. And while 'rape' comes from yet another verb, Latin 'rapere', through Anglo-French (meaning 'to seize with force'), that violent act may also have been hovering in the audience's imagination.

We cannot presume that many Elizabethans—or even Shakespeare, for that matter—knew that the possibility of practising caesarean sections on living women was being hotly debated in early modern European medical circles, after the publication of Francois Russet's *Traitté nouveau de l'hystérotomotokie ou enfantement caesarien* in 1581. But it is still significant that this historical moment is one in which surgeons began to claim a position in the lying-room, replacing the midwife. The cut they wanted to perform—Russet derives *caesarean* precisely from *caedere*, to cut, but also conflates this sense with a false etymology derived from an ambiguous passage in Pliny referring to the divine birth of one of the Caesars—was one which indeed allowed them to do away with 'the woman's part': an expression Posthumus uses to refers to the tainted nature of women in his invective in II.4.171–173, pronounced when he thinks Imogen, the British princess and daughter of King Cymbeline, has betrayed his love. Of course live caesareans would remain a theory for a long time in medical practice. But the act itself, immortalized in mythological accounts early on, was one that symbolically realized a male fantasy in which the civilized practice of medicine ruled the primal act of giving birth (the uterus itself having been conceptualized since Plato as a sort of autonomous animal): not for nothing the products of the two miraculous Ovidian births are Aesculapius himself, god of medicine, and Bacchus, extracted from his mother and born a second time from his father Jove.[10]

This very concise discussion of such a complex issue is not meant to lead us to draw any simplistic conclusions about Shakespeare's knowledge of the particular standing of caesarean childbirth in early modern medical debates. It is sufficient here to note that cutting the mother's womb open to extract a viable foetus is a rip, a wound that technically does take away

the role of the woman in childbirth; whether 'born of no woman' is taken to refer to the mother having died shortly before the excision, or whether it refers to an act of autonomous coming into the world, independent of the woman's effort in childbirth, it is Posthumus' extraordinary, unnatural birth that qualifies him as the immaculate hero who will mediate between Rome and Britain, and embody values both Roman and British, allied in a 'masculine embrace of the civility of empire' (Mikalachki 1995, 303). In *Macbeth*, it is Macduff who shares the experience of the unnatural birth, and who is placed in the right position to reverse the effects of the wound that Macbeth has inflicted upon his King. And fittingly so, since this is the play in which motherhood is explicitly negated, in which the only important female character has renounced her sex and rejected the memory of ever having given suck. Macduff's birth realizes a 'male fantasy of exemption from the woman's part', as Janet Adelman has it: 'As Macbeth carries the prophecy as a shield onto the battlefield, his confidence in his own invulnerability increasingly reveals his sense of his own exemption from the universal human condition. Repeated seven times, the phrase *born to woman* with its variants begins to carry for Macbeth the meaning 'vulnerable', as though vulnerability itself is the taint deriving from woman' (Adelman 1992, 139–141). The emptying of Macduff's mother's womb is thus the answer to the emptying of the throne; and if it is true that Shakespeare's use of the verb *rip* closely follows Holinshed's sentence almost verbatim ('I am euen he […] who was neuer borne of my mother, but ripped out of her wombe', in Muir 1984 [2006], 179), his only addition is precisely the adverb 'untimely'.

Macduff's revelation marks Macbeth's demise. In her book-length study of wounds and metaphor in seventeenth century England, Sarah Covington has highlighted how images of violent wounding in *Coriolanus* in particular are tied to ideas of 'fragmentation and tearage' (Covington 2009, 25) which can be taken as a comment on the Elizabethan present and the precarious status of the body politic as well as a reflection on the past. This was especially true in the years in which *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline* and *Coriolanus* were written, after the ascension of James, King of Scotland, to the throne of England. As Covington further notes, 'The accession to the English throne of James, king of Scotland, complicated the notion of the body politic, as the realm or commonwealth of England was extended to include other kingdoms, including Ireland, with the latter already long (if problematically) claimed in ownership. […] While James did much to achieve a certain degree of union, the

differences nevertheless remained stark, particularly in later rhetoric that reinforced the difference in describing Ireland or Scotland as 'wounding' the body of England, or the three kingdoms during the civil wars as fully separate and 'bleeding'' (Covington 2009, 24–25). In light of Covington's comments on Coriolanus, it seems very meaningful to find Rome fleetingly evoked at the end of *Macbeth*, in a few seconds' meditation in the final battlefield (V.8.1–2)—'Why should I play the Roman fool, and die | On Mine own sword?'. The apparently extemporaneous allusion should not be overlooked in its reference to the Roman ethos of suicide after a political fall. In *Macbeth*, this passing, almost hidden theme of Romanness— a thread which has also emerged in relation to Posthumus in *Cymbeline* and which is followed elsewhere in more detail in this collection, in relation to the Roman canon proper (see Massimo Stella's essay in this volume)—may in fact point to an ambivalently admired model of Empire which, for all its complexities and obscure moments, was able to dress its own wounds time after time and hold its fragmented body together for centuries (Del Sapio Garbero et al. 2010). But Macbeth refuses the self-inflicted wound, preferring to open up *gashes* on others: 'while I see lives, the gashes | Do better upon them', ll. 2–3. The tyrant has resumed his mad rush, his frenzied pace, and there is no time to learn a lesson from history.

Notes

1. 'weird, n.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/226915?rskey=CnPhHp&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed September 12, 2020); see also its adjectival form, "weird, adj." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/226916?rskey=CnPhHp&result=2&isAdvanced=false (accessed September 12, 2020).
2. All references are to the Arden Shakespeare edition, edited by Kenneth Muir (Muir 1984 [2006]).
3. The still fundamental reference here is Kantorowicz (1957), recently re-published by Princeton University Press with a new introduction and preface (Conrad Leyser and William Chester Jordan, 2016). Kantorowicz treats the famous ghostly procession of Macbeth's predecessors, whose last member holds up a 'glass' showing a long line of successors, as a figuration of the notion of *corporation sole* (387).

4. On the question of whether one can speak of a 'future tense' in English, see Nakayasu (2009, 20–21), Hope 2003, 150), and Traugott (1989, 40).
5. An example, on the other hand, of a fascinating frequency analysis which combines both corpus stylistic methods and fine commentary and contextualization of the "unsettling" nature of play's language, in which echo and repetition play an important part, is Jonathan Hope and Michael Whitmore's essay 'The language of Macbeth' (2014).
6. 'untimely, adv.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/218945?rskey=3idIUG&result=2&isAdvanced=false (accessed September 12, 2020).
7. LEME, edited by Ian Lancashire and published by the University of Toronto, is available at: https://leme.library.utoronto.ca. A search was done using the 'Quick Search' keyword function.
8. The lines quoted from *Cymbeline* refer to the J. M. Nosworthy's Arden edition (2004). The authenticity of the vision scene has been debated, but Nosworthy convincingly argues in favour of its being Shakespearean (xxxvii).
9. 'rip, v.1.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/166191?rskey=hbx5P8&result=7&isAdvanced=false (accessed September 12, 2020).
10. These are the births of Phoebus and Coronis' child, Aesculapius, god of medicine (Book II), and of Bacchus, extracted from his mother Semele's womb and sewn into his father Jove's thigh to be carried to full term, and thus significantly reborn from a male body, in Book III (for a fuller account, see Plescia 2010b, 137–138).

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PART II

Wounded Heroes: Language, Genre, Stylistic and Narrative Structures

CHAPTER 7

Anatomy of Chivalric Destructiveness: Imagery of Injury and Culture of Clash in Old French Heroic Narrative

Alvaro Barbieri

> In every population, the warrior was also a butcher, who, after having fought and defeated the enemies, was expected to finish the job either by making them prisoners (that is to say slaves) or by killing them.
>
> Sebastiano Vassalli, *Terre selvagge*

> The Counterinsurgency Group (Controbanda) did not give blessings. It was by no means a charity institution. Whatever they found on their path was dead, or, if it was not dead, they made it die.
>
> Alceste Brogioni *from* Sergio Tau, *La repubblica dei vinti. Storie di italiani a Salò.*

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> Tant me verrez de Sarrazins tuer Nes oserez voier ne esgarder. (You shall see me kill so many Saracens that you will not even dare to look at the scene).
>
> *Aliscans*

> Tote la terre des morz cuevrent, Tot detrenchent quant qu'il ataignent (They covered the field with corpses, they butchered everything they saw).
>
> Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Roman de Troie*

1 Foreword: Narrowing Down the Topic

This article is not meant to be yet another study on war wounds in Medieval French narrative.[1] It is rather an attempt to explain the sheer joy and libidinal excitement radiating from romance and epic representations of slaughtered bodies. In chivalric romances, the destruction of flesh by labour of violence certainly elicit mourning, but they mostly provoke emotional responses which are inscribed in the register of euphoria. By drawing on primary sources and identifying specific anthropological categories, this study will demonstrate that the jubilant descriptions of slaughter are due not only to the orgiastic and sacrificial nature of war, but also and foremost to the celebration of heroic strength and exaltation of the deadly destructive power of heavy cavalry. This paper will not investigate the physical suffering of wounded knights,[2] their frailties, or pain of the body of the warrior as a fundamental, symbolic construct, but will rather consider that same body as the main focus of the narration of martial violence. It is not about the tribulations of bodies, but rather about the way wherein the limbs are 'merrily' torn off and cut to pieces by brutal slashes: those blows are described by employing a plethora of powerful expressive devices aimed at emphasising the effect of those violent strokes and the devastating percussive efficiency of feudal age *milites*.

2 Destroyers of Bodies, Priests of the Void, Lords of Massacre: Those Who Kill

This study focuses on a very specific kind of hero. The heroes who founded cultures, civilisations, and cults, those who discovered new lands, and those who slayed monsters will not be considered. The focus is rather on the 'progeny of Ares', on the hero as a military warrior and elite

fighter. Epic heroes, who are praised for their valour and mostly rely on their physical strength, are the main object of this investigation, whereas the 'sciamanic heroes', i.e. those who triumph because they are aided by magic, metamorphic powers or supernatural qualities, will be left out.[3]

Heroes are blown by the wind of their destiny. Life blows impetuously behind them. They are exceptional men, who triumph because they answer to the powerful call of life. They have a strong and unrestrained personality which enables them to live in tune with the flow of existence. The hero is not required to have a precise idea about the destiny of the world, but to fulfil his own destiny in the world.

The paradigmatic trait of a hero is his exceptionality: heroes are exceptionally beautiful and healthy, their qualities exceed the standard, and it is exactly for that reason that they are unrivalled on the battlefield. Whatever they do, they do it with innate dexterity and natural talent, as if they were driven by an irresistible overflow of vigour. A superabundant physical presence suits these individuals of superior magnitude: every time they appear to show themselves and to act they put their bodies into it. They belong to a supreme race, the bearers of a difference that is revealed with the peremptoriness of a privilege. Glory (and even the world itself) is never enough for those special men, who force the biological limits of the human species and the cultural limits of society, and who transcend common human experience and ordinary life. The hero is never satisfied and he always seeks himself by constantly trying to overcome his own limits: he abhors stasis and is prompted to act by his need to be worthy of his own self and of his destiny. His way of existence consists in an unceasing surge of will towards further goals: not only because glory must be constantly renewed in the life-giving fire of struggle, but also because the beauty of heroism lies precisely in the instability and restlessness of its dynamism. The essence of the daring spirit never coincides with the possession of an acquired condition, but is always and only given in the insatiable tension and the daring movement towards an elusive and unattainable goal, in the search for something that moves relentlessly towards an otherworld of desire and dream. The adventurous impulse refuses to rest in stasis, because it lives in the plasticity of becoming. By remaining in the idle enjoyment of the outcome, the hero would deny his transformative nature and betray himself. By an expression of an empowered and oversized humanity, he is always an excellence and an overachiever, a concentration of forces ready to erupt: his fate is to break ranks, to break routines, to always be at the highest pitch, to unhinge

the anxieties of the human, and to always go beyond the limits each time. He is so gripped by his desire to overachieve that he always tries to outdo himself in order to fulfil his dreams of might. Everyone expects a hero to exaggerate, to exceed the norm, and it is exactly because of those excesses that the hero plays a decisive role: indeed, he can break stalemates and radically alter any situation. There is always something definitive in his actions; he has an innate ability to prevail and a innate propensity to do what needs to be done. He is a 'big shot', he is the fighter in a state of grace who shifts the balance, breaking the inertia of the battle. To be a real hero means to be an outstanding warrior, to push military values to the extreme. Devoted to impossible undertakings and overwhelmed by the eros of huge passions, the great champion always has a surplus—he is much more than the others—and it is because of this gap that his presence on the field upsets the cards, determining a decisive disparity. The hero possesses the natural superiority that makes victory inevitable, making even grand gestures seem simple: by virtue of this overwhelming power, he defeats his opponents with instinctive ease, putting the full weight of his difference into play. When physical strength is so absolute and out of the ordinary, it ceases to be a vulgar quality and becomes admirable.

For a hero, being normal means being abnormal; every quality that characterises or identifies him is exaggerated and excessive. He is unusual in that he possesses superhuman ambition, colossal strength, unbridled exuberance, the dynamism which is proper to a higher nature. Such surplus of energy, rushing through his spirit and overflowing from his flesh, may lead him to abuse his power and oppress others,[4] but it is generally employed to carry out virtuous, glorious, and socially acknowledged deeds which are worthy of fame. Even when he is inactive and may seem undistinguishable from 'ordinary people', the hero continues to carry within himself a flame of burning ardour: he is a 'hot' who pretends to be 'cold', concealing the outburst of his mana under a shell of 'normality'. The exceptional individual only reveals the full extent of himself in his *démesure*, when he leans out with his whole figure beyond the boundaries of the human. The hero's absolute talent becomes manifest and shines only if it overflows into the excess of its extreme manifestations, stimulated by the attrition of existence. A hero is someone who transcends human limits; he is so full of energy that whatever he does is extraordinary, and sometimes even over the top: his actions are anomalous, they transcend the norms, and the reason is that there is a huge

disparity in strength between him and other human beings. His paradigmatic traits are overabundance of energy and excess of vigour and valour.[5] He is extremely powerful and capable of extraordinary, inimitable deeds; he tends to break the rules, defy taboos, and violate conventions.[6] Its difference lies in its spirit of challenge, but even more in the mass of energy he can release at the right moment. He is the best of his race, a unique exemplar of a particularly glorious kind of humanity, a magnificent subverter moved by his fervent desire. He is special in that he aspires to transcend himself, but especially in that he tips the scales in any battle, thus disrupting balance and order. Heroes are warriors *par excellence*, they are gifted with a sacred and dangerously intense energy: their exceptional force alone can bring victory to their faction. They have no equals, they are those who decide the outcome of a battle. They dominate the battlefield and are always indifferent to circumstances and above their enemies because they were born to excel and act in an outstanding way. Their prerogative is the constant crossing of the line: the difference that establishes a hiatus. Blessed with extraordinary strength and surrounded by a special aura, the best athletes always aspire to emerge from the chronicles and to become legends.

Great heroes also have a positive influence on their comrades in arms: they are charismatic leaders, fascinating guides who inspire enthusiasm and military ardour. A hero's arrival on the battlefield has a galvanising effect, it stokes the martial zeal of his companions and boosts the morale. His very presence on the battlefield changes the course of the fight. Being a natural leader and a role model, the hero is generally not a strategist but rather a charismatic captain who fights at the head of his men. Even when they fight in the ranks of their army, heroes are loners, they are individualists who embody an almost demonic power: they fight better than their companions, vanquish their enemies, and outdo every rival. The super-champion is the crucial weapon and the most invaluable resource for his people: he is not only a totem around which to cling in defence, but also a galvanising source of conquering impetus; without him, there is no potential for energy or eagerness to win.

A hero lives by his public image: he is feared by his enemies, admired and envied by his companions, and desired by women. He is the most eminent man among his people. He is feared and envied, but also loved and worshipped. The champion is a superstar bursting with charm and charisma. The traits which make him dangerous and unapproachable are also the reason why he is so irresistibly charismatic.

Above all, heroes possess that tremendous power which annihilates human beings, that 'force' which turns magnificent bodies into inanimate and empty shells. Simone Weil's well-known words on the obliterating power of the violence of war are extremely relevant here:

> To define force – it is that *x* that turns anybody who is subjected to it into a thing. Exercised to the limit, it turns man into a thing in the most literal sense: it makes a corpse out of him. Somebody was here, and the next minute there is nobody here at all. (Weil 1965, 6)[7]

Weil suggests that, in Homer, strength is a force which extinguishes life: it knocks down everything that stands, immobilises whatever moves, and breaks into pieces what was formerly whole. Destructive violence and the ability to kill are part of a hero's set of values, they are ingrained in his identity. Heroes are superior to other men because of the dreadful effectiveness of their murderous hands, which can skilfully wield weapons and cut through human flesh, bones, and sinews. The art of these butchers consists in the destruction of the limbs: with their terrible work, they dissolve the harmony of what is whole and consign the bodies to the insignificance of the inorganic. They possess the ability to deprive others of life and to disintegrate their bodies: they are exterminators, men who have the skill to kill. The Widow of the Waste Forest knows that very well; indeed, she regards knights as destroyers and slaughterers: 'Angels that all men fear, | For they kill whoever they meet' (Chrétien de Troyes 1999a, 212).[8] They are the lords of massacre, they bring death and suffering: their defining trait is their murderous touch, the eerie effortlessness with which they shatter everything they touch, their instinctual ability to assassinate people. This ominous 'gift' has always been the specificity of the super-warrior: to shed blood, to bring destruction, to make life disappear. The essential quality of a military hero is exactly the naturalness whereby he kills others. He is divine and feral, portentous and nefarious, he is a *homo necans*. The protagonists of heroic poetry have always been merciless hunters of men, efficient predators of their own species.

These assassins, who thrive on a battlefield and are among the best members of elite corps, appear in countless works of fiction and truly belong to epic settings. The most disturbing avatar of the natural born killer is possibly the protagonist of Sándor Márai's first narrative work, *A Mészáros* (*The Butcher*), published in 1924. The protagonist lives in the

modern world, a world where heroism has been corrupted and the glorified notion of war discredited: he is thus a caricatured and pathological version of a killer. Otto Schwarz is born bearing the ominous marks of monstrosity and rapacious fury ('he was ten months old and already had teeth', 'an infant of six kilograms' [Márai 2019, 10]). It is soon evident that he has an irresistible calling to be a butcher, and he also possesses uncanny and enormous physical strength, 'which generally manifests itself in the fact that everything he touches simply falls apart' (Márai 2019, 25).[9] This man, who enjoys being in the slaughterhouse, also feels at home among the massacres of the First World War: he easily switches from his meat cleaver to the bayonet, and disembowels the enemies with the same naturalness with which he butchered animals. After all, his job is to gut a living creature with a sharp blade in both cases. He is 'unrivalled in hand-to-hand fights' (Márai 2019, 62) and has the murderous prowess of a true dog of war, although he lacks the finesse of great military heroes. He exerts violence with the indifference of someone who is used to handling the flesh of dead beings and who is instinctively good at killing people, so much so that he even devotes himself to slaughtering innocents. When the war is over, mighty stolid Otto is unable to reintegrate into society; he becomes the perfect embodiment of the alienated war veteran:[10] he starts to drink, wanders in the working-class neighbourhoods of Berlin, and ends his career as a butcher by becoming a serial killer of women. The narration of the events of Otto's life from his birth to his suicide is as dry as a chronicle, and it echoes the steps of an heroic journey but also disavows and transposes them into a prosaic key. It is Otto's pathological propensity to kill, which makes him a true clinical case. His murderous propension perverts and corrupts the ideal of martial heroism by reducing it to a mere psychological disorder which can be seen as metaphorical representation of the horrors of the Twentieth Century.

Heroism is the crowning of strength: the military champion emanates a tremendous power, which annihilates and destroys, but is also imbued with the allure of Eros and with the enticing noise of life. The murderous and devastating actions of an elite fighter have a powerful erotic charge.

The essence of fighting is to kill the enemy, and, in every culture, soldiers are ministers of death.[11] 'American soldiers are still taught Patton's maxim "the duty of a soldier is not to die but to kill". They are constantly trained to kill and they celebrate when that happens' (Mini 2017, 72). When it is reduced to its primary intents and essential nature, war is primarily aimed at destruction:[12] the best fighter is the lord of the

void, the one who has killed everything around him, the survivor who stands among heaps of slaughtered bodies.[13]

A military hero is a natural born killer, an instinctual slaughterer, a skilled butcher, a specialist in massacre, a virtuoso of the knife, a short-range assassin, a killer with powerful and decisive blows, a steamroller who leaves a trail of destruction and blood behind him, someone who goes out onto the battlefield to immolate his opponents to the gods of massacre. In order to be exceptional, a military hero has to possess incredible strength and the ability to take men's lives. The best and strongest of all warriors is always a master of massacre, one who can inflict violent death. The most feared and celebrated warrior is not so much that possessing an innate sense of combat, but the one with the infallible instinct to kill. This uncomfortable truth, which applies to all archaic societies and extends its categorical force to the heroic poetry of all civilisations and cultures, is expressed with epigraphic clarity in Sigurð's Charms in the Feroese language, a late but fascinating revival of the Nibelung theme: 'Sigurð is more praised than the sons of other kings, for he smites a hundred warriors a hundred in one breath'.[14]

In ancient epic, military heroes are above all the most effective killers: on the battlefield the best warriors are those who slaughter the greatest number of men. They have vigorous bodies, but lack empathy. Their blows are lethal because the fighter who delivers them combines great physical strength and an instinctive ability to hit the vital body parts, to cut where the flesh is tender.

Military champions are naturally superior: they move on the battlefield with the same murderous ferocity possessed by the progeny of Ares. They are angels of death, dreadful gods of wars. A great killer sweeps the battlefield and hurls himself upon hosts of anonymous enemies. He might destroy his opponents, it disfigures them and deprives them of their humanity by turning them into inanimate matter. His enemies, pierced by his weapons, drop dead all around him: they are no longer men wielding weapons but rather mere lifeless things. Those who fight against a hero lose their physical integrity and their mobility, and are unhorsed by his blows: strong knights who were formerly mounted on their swift steeds become mutilated corpses lying in the dust. Outlined in his individuality, the knight rises above the anonymous multitude of slaughtered enemies: his centaur-like figure is charged with glorifying ascending symbolism, as he looms over the shapeless piles of corpses. His equestrian image – rampant and glorious – rising above the motionless

horizontality of defeated adversaries is one of the archetypal representations of military power. 'After all, warlords often like to ride their horses over mountains of corpses'.[15]

Since he cannot subdue and rule every rival, the super-warrior unleashes his lethal power against them: he overwhelms his enemies with his tremendous force, undoes them, and turns them into nothingness. He is eager for possession and annihilates everything he cannot seize. The frustration of his desire is compensated by the erotically charged act of destroying. He tears into pieces whatever he cannot get.[16]

The masters of slaughter display their ability to murder people by making extraordinary motions, which are not only extremely effective but also spectacular to watch: the slashes of their swords sever hands and behead the enemy, their blows send limbs flying, their thrusts pierce through flesh and bones, their downward slashes cleave horses in two and split men from head to groin.[17] These epic blows—memorable and lethal—have the force of peremptory gestures and they testify to the superhuman might of the heroes who deliver them.[18] Epic narratives present us with exaggerated situations, which are proportioned to the extraordinariness of the heroes who appear in those stories.[19] At Roncevaux, when his lance is broken, Roland unsheathes his Durendal and attacks Chernuble. The first slash delivered by one of the most famous epic swords cannot but be a sensational exploit.[20] The meticulous description of that blow and the detailed list of its effects emphasise the formidable efficacy of that weapon as well as the strength of the hero who carries it:

> He shatters his helmet with its shining carbuncles; he cleaves right through his hair and his head; his sword cuts down between the eyes in his face, through his hauberk with its delicate chainwork, and through his body till where it divides. Then through the saddle of beaten gold until it has reached the horse's body it has passed, and cloven its chine without seeking for the joint. He has hurled them both dead in the meadow on the thick grass. (*The Song of Roland* 1999, 28)[21]

Orlando's first charge, which inaugurates the titanic clash between the Saracens and the soldiers of Charlemagne, is described in equally emphatic terms. Aelroth, the nephew of King Marsilie, is almost literally shattered into pieces when he is hit by that violent frontal assault. The text describes in great detail the consequences of the blow inflicted on him by Orlando's

lance. This passage blatantly glorifies heroic valour and employs devices of amplification that are typical of epic narrative, but the injuries inflicted on the Saracen warrior are listed with such accuracy and detail that the description resembles a medical diagnosis:

> He breaks his shield and tears open his hauberk, he cuts open his breast and breaks all his bones and cleaves him to the chine. He makes an exit for the soul with his lance. He has driven it in deeply and made the heathen's body totter. (*The Song of Roland* 1999, 25)[22]

A similar forensic report, with equally illustrative insistence on the resection by the blade, can be found in the *Chanson de Guillaume*. With a great epic lunge, Girard cleanly breaks the shield and arm of a Saracen, whereupon the piercing steel continues on its way, shattering the ribcage and tearing the internal organs. The *mise en relief* of the anatomical details provides the usual effect of augmented reality, with a fullness of outcome that emphasises the excess of heroic performance in the execution of the assault.

> He strikes another one on the double shield,
> breaks it from edge to edge,
> cuts off the arm that's in the handle,
> cuts off the chest, cuts out the entrails,
> shoves the big spit through his back,
> knocks him down dead on the ground[23]

Herculean bodies, solemn gestures, tremendous blows: the epic deeds performed by heroes match their hefty physicality and colossal size. Everything that has to do with them is disproportionate, overgrown; they are oversized and special men, exceptional and extraordinary, different from and greater than other men. The idealised depiction of heroic feats is thus fittingly combined with emphatic forms of expression: heroic greatness requires a hyperbolic narrative style. Ordinary military operations are complemented by the sensational performance of the hero, who brings to the battlefield his gigantic physique, his amazing feats, and his dangerous blows. A hero's ethos and ideological convictions are not as important as his colossal physical stature. It cannot be stressed enough that a hero's physique, his muscles and his nerves, are essential features of the *chansons de geste*. The descriptions of the battles, in particular, dwell at length on the bodies of the fighters: glorious bodies whose beauty and strength is

celebrated; bodies which suffer among the fighting soldiers; bodies that are wounded, broken, and sacrificed to the gods of war. Factory of death and temple of life, war is where the human body is displayed in all its strength, where the physique of a hero stands out in all its magnificence. Indeed, most of the appeal of premodern war derives from the attractiveness of the young fighting man: war is a feral dance of bodies in arms.

In order to lay even greater emphasis on the motion and on the strength of the blows, heroic Old French poems deploy narrative techniques which produce an effect of 'slow motion'. This is the case when the author purposely dwells on the consequences produced by those powerful blows when they hit armours or flesh. The hyperrealistic violence of a hero's destructive action is amplified and emphasised *au ralenti*; it is depicted with an emphasis and a marked insistence that may remind of the representation of martial arts movements in kung-fu movies and in Hong Kong action films. Observed from such a close distance and broken down into a sequence of single frames, the extraordinary blows delivered by a hero appear in high definition, as it were, before the readers' eyes, through the resources of a skilful descriptive mannerism.[24] The tremendous figurativeism and heroic hyperbole dramatise the poetics of arms, providing a strong emotional twist and a vibrant pathetic characterisation.

The violent actions of elite warriors result in the fragmentation of a whole. Their destructive blows amputate limbs, cut heads off, and cleave bodies in two: the thrusts of lances and the slashes of swords divide what was whole and dissect bodies, turning them into heaps of bleeding flesh. Not only do those blows destroy the physical integrity of human beings, but they also take away their life, thus consigning them to the darkness of oblivion. The enemy faces one blow after the other and then ceases to exist. Severed, lifeless limbs scattered on the grass are all that is left of his body. Chivalric violence shreds weapons and men, reducing them to an undifferentiated and unrecognisable mess of pieces. Those tremendous blows disintegrate human bodies but they also divide another harmonious whole which was extremely important in chivalric warfare and *ethos*, namely the one formed by the knight and the steed he rode. In both epic and romance, the frontal clash of two armies causes knights and horses to tumble to the ground. Unhorsed knights and loose horses are emblems of incompleteness, symbols of the fragmentation of the centaur-like union of man and animal.[25]

Moreover, by cutting the flesh and breaking the bones, the sword also lays bare what should remain hidden, enclosed in a protective shell, namely the skin. Wounds tear the skin, thus altering the normal arrangement of hidden and visible body parts. When tears in the flesh are opened, parts of the body that should normally remain inside spill out. Thus, not only do the brutal blows delivered by warriors disintegrate what was formerly whole, but they also undermine the natural separation between the inside and the outside of a body. Where the brutality of warrior gestures unfolds, not only does the whole become fragmented, but the usual separation between the inside and the outside of bodies is also undermined.[26] These horrible dismemberments, which alter human anatomy by exposing internal organs and tissues, are fitting manifestations of the chaotic effects of warlike fury. When he is at the peak of his rage, the super-warrior moves wildly among ranks and files, breaking perimeters and boundaries, he breaks the ranks of the enemies, destroys their bodies by tearing them apart, and disrupts the harmony of their limbs by mixing what is inside with what is outside. All his gestures provoke violent disarray: when he is in his martial ecstasy, the hero acts as an unstoppable agent of chaos and disruption.

Protected by their armours and with their guard up, the fighters appear isolated and almost closed in themselves, covered by a shell that protects them but also separates them from the external world. It is the wounds inflicted upon them that 'open up' their bodies, laying bare what should remain under the skin. By breaking armours and lacerating flesh, the blows of the heroes work as agents of chaos which dismember and corrupt: they disintegrate the unity of human bodies, break down the whole, distort shapes, and blur the boundaries between the inside and the outside. Because of their shocking effects, those blows elicit fear and anguish. And yet, just as every orgiastic act and every 'carnivalesque' device which turns the world upside down, the slaughter of bodies also produces a peculiar and unsettling state of euphoria. The brutal effects of violence do provoke sadness but also an exciting feast of ferocity and barbarity. In ancient French chivalric narratives, the dystopia of carnage is turned upside down into brutal warfare happiness.

3 'La veïssiez…': Dismembered Bodies, Shattered Weapons

In Old French *chansons de geste*, the phrase 'La veïssiez…', which echoes the oral formulas of jongleurs,[27] often introduces the vivid visual descriptions of mass fights. Every time the author employs that cliché typical of epic melees the reader can expect that a solemn and lively representation of the battle is about to begin. The enthusiastic description of the colourful and shining armours of the soldiers is followed by the spectacle of their uproarious destruction, which is represented through a series of close-ups on the objects that are being destroyed and on the bodies that are being torn apart. The portrayal of the splendid panoply of the knights, whose beauty and value are celebrated, is thus succeeded by the crude precision whereby their destruction is described. The handsome young men and their precious belongings, which form a hedonistic scene, a luxurious *ekphrasis*, are destroyed as if they were offered in sacrifice to the gods of war. The cinematic and panoramic view of two opposing armies is thus instantly fragmented into a succession of grainy frames which feature images of destruction, wounding, and beating. After a wide, spaced-out first take, which monumentalises the scene with the epic gigantism of a blockbuster, the author zooms in so as to focus on the details of the broken weapons and of the limbs devastated by the violent impact.[28] The deictic formula *La veïssiez* introduces a figurative-dominant poetics of violence and shows us the devastating results of the frontal collision, aligning a series of detached frames with an impactful force of impression. Weapons and flesh are represented in their fragility of small broken things, with a dramatic incisiveness that derives from the analytical and photo-realistic evidence of the description. The overload of lemmas referable to the semantic fields of tearing and ripping, although in tune with the epic emphasis, produces images that are 'truer than life', with split objects and bodies that are placed before us in a crescendo of terribleness—distressing and yet exhilarating. It is a visual poetics of shocking content, an aggressive, in-your-face rhetoric of trauma. The motion of the affects is returned through the contemplation of the effects. This narrative strategy is exemplified in the five textual passages which follow (although many other examples could be given):[29]

You might have seen slashes of the sword and lances shattered. So many Saracens died on those streets and lay bleeding on the vast field. (*Gormund e Isembart*, ll. 502–505)[30]

God! How many lances are broken in halves, how many shields are shattered and coats of mail torn to shreds! You might have seen the ground littered with them, and the grass of the field, so green and delicate [is reddened with blood]. (*The Song of Roland*, 67)[31]

You might see a fierce, bristling combat, | so many shields crushed and lances shattered | so many hauberks torn and ripped apart, | so many feet and hands and heads cut off, the dead stumbling over each other. (*Aliscans*, ll. 58–62)[32]

You might have seen such a furious combat, | so many lances broken and shields crashing, | so many hauberks of Moorish chain pierced, | so many Saracens bleeding and dead. (*La Prise d'Orange*, ll. 1824–1827)[33]

Then there was a fierce struggle indeed. Lances broken, shields rent, hauberks frayed and spoiled, feet, hands, heads severed from the bodies, and many a noble vassal lying open-mouthed in death. The meadows are strewn with the slain and the grass is reddened by the blood of the wounded. (*Raoul de Cambrai* 1999, 55)[34]

The shredding of the warrior tools and the disintegration of the somatic unit attest to the tremendous destructive effectiveness of impact fighting. Feats of arms can be regarded as grand ceremonies in which the destruction of the equipment goes together with the destruction of human beings. Scenes of dismemberment are often characterised by a descriptive rhetoric that entails the enumeration and detailed listing of the parts of the body that have been severed. Thus, the shattering of weapons and the massacre of human bodies are depicted with an almost iconic outcome and by employing a poetic of fragmentation which brings together the aesthetic appeal of epic blows, the euphoric excitement of combat,[35] and the prestige of an archaic conception of war founded on sacrificial religiosity.[36] The battlefield is thus treated as an altar: it is not a dreadful slaughterhouse, nor a place where people are murdered for no reason, but rather a place where sacred rituals are celebrated, where the most valiant young men and their shining armours are sacrificed as if the battle were a sort of potlatch. That feral liturgy, which consists in the ritual destruction of goods and bodies, drives its officiants into a sweet ecstasy, as a joyful paroxysm or a shaking of the over-excited senses.[37] When they are engaged in mounted combat with lances or in the destructive orgy of a melee fight, warriors are driven into a state of hyperactivity, they

experience the desire to destroy everything, a desire which belongs to the archetype of war enthusiasm.[38] The images of the great blows and of the tears and cuts inflicted testify to the lethal effectiveness of feudal cavalry and convey, with its range of gory figurations, a sense of the atrocity of bloodshed. Yet, the feral quality of war is often combined with a hint of sensuality, a sort of eroticism of war.[39]

This ambiguous coexistence of military ferocity and lascivious abandonment to the voluptuousness of massacre is certainly not foreign to the *pathos* of greatness that we feel vibrating in the mass scenes of the Old French epic.

The devastating effects of the clash of two armies are stressed through a rhetoric of amplification which relies on emphatic repetition and accumulation. The repetition of intensifying morphemes (*tant*, *maint*),[40] the use of binary and ternary structures, and the recurring parallel and symmetrical constructions of sentences enhance the pathos and draw attention to the tremendous impact power of feudal cavalry.[41] The over-emphatic tones and the figures of amplification create an epic atmosphere, an air of numinous grandiosity. These techniques of *mise en relief* are also combined with figures of semantic repetition and echoic reverberation which rely on the recurrent use of words that belong to the semantic field of 'breaking' and 'tearing'.

When descriptive accumulation is at its height, that is to say after torn limbs and fragments of broken weapons have been displayed in textual passages that feature a series of anaphoric repetitions of the adverb 'tant', the pool of blood that was shed begins to spread. Blades cut deep, they tear and sever, thus letting out streams of blood. It is thus unsurprising that the battlefields are stained red. The field of Archamp is scattered with broken weapons,[42] and that heap of shattered objects is covered in the blood of the fighters: 'Shields and armor cover the Archant. | Great is the noise the craven traitors make; | the slaughter fierce and the fighting heavy, | and on the earth, run rivers of blood' (*Aliscans*, ll. 20–23).[43]

Guts and blood spill out of the deep wounds opened in the flesh of the knights. From the torn and wounded limbs spurt fountains of red blood. The flowing of blood and the spilling of guts and brains are the most macabre examples of the epic spectacle of wounding.[44]

4 Appetite for Destruction: Epic Landscapes and Scenes of Death

One of the most recurrent epic landscapes is the battlefield covered with corpses and pieces of shattered weapons. The site where the battle took place, which is utterly transformed by the effects of violence, is scattered with so many dead and maimed bodies that it is difficult to walk through it:

> So many dead knights lay upon the ground that a man could scarcely pass along, and the best and swiftest horses must go at walking pace. (*Raoul de Cambrai* 1999, 62)[45]
>
> And the dead lay abandoned, for many were maimed, wounded, or beheaded. (Chrétien de Troyes 1990, 103)[46]

Melee fights leave on the battlefield a multitude of dismembered bodies, fragments of lances, and heaps of broken weapons: it is almost a 'still life' made of dented helms, pieces of chain mail, and deformed shields. These epic landscapes bear a disturbing resemblance to modern and contemporary scenes of war. Photographic journalism, documentaries, and fiction cinema have made us accustomed to scenes of destruction and devastation caused by weapons: we are used to seeing fields furrowed by artillery and pocked with deep craters, destroyed houses with their roofs ripped off, demolished walls, heaps of ruins and pieces of plaster, burnt timber frames, splinters of wooden boards, burnt metal gratings, broken windows and unhinged blinds, tanks set on fire and destroyed, charred corpses and animal carcasses. This devastation of torn and scattered limbs, these ruins of destroyed and burnt buildings, these heaps of broken objects all contribute to define a sort of 'poetics of war landscapes', a *locus terribilis/horridus* ravaged by the immense power of war, which is characterised by pathetic descriptions which would normally elicit horror and anguish, but which can simultaneously inspire a disturbing sense of beatitude and jubilation. The sight of torn bodies and smoking debris provokes sadness and mourning but, at the same time, also a thrill of destructive euphoria, almost a gloomy happiness of strength. Contemplation of the ravages of war can make the mournful notes of lament resound with the joyous ring of devastating euphoria. These feelings are far from the quiet and contemplative admiration of 'ruins'; they rather have to do with the obscene and unspeakable

enjoyment that derives from the sight of buildings, objects, and bodies destroyed by the annihilating power of war. When faced with a heap of corpses and ruins, fresh reminders of fire and destruction, the observer feels a surge of barbaric exultation.[47] This euphoric reaction is certainly motivated by sadism and destructive drives,[48] but also by a wild desire to exist, by the pleasure of feeling alive while seeing places that are so full of death.

(Trans. by Arianna Hijazin)

Notes

1. On the wounds suffered by epic heroes, on their physical pain, and on the poetry of the wound in Old French chivalric literature I would just like to mention three contributions that appeared in the same postconference anthology: Zink (1988), Drzewicka (1988), and Limentani (1988).
2. The initiatory wound and the incurable or incapacitating wound will equally be excluded from this study. These are key themes of Old French heroic literature, but they are not relevant to this article.
3. The distinction between epic heroes and 'shamanic' heroes has been drawn by Bowra (1979, 7–12). This separation of two different and abstract types of heroism should not be followed too rigidly, but it can nonetheless be employed to be make useful distinctions, even among the heroes of Medieval French chivalric literature.
4. The privilege of being strong can often lead to violent and disorderly behaviour, which manifests itself in physical coercion and in the oppression of the weak. Those who have military valour are often also prone to prevaricate.
5. However, it must be noted that, though violent, champions' martial actions are always part of some formal design. Heroic greatness is an excess that is modelled and organised in the stylised contours of a destiny. In differentiated men and superlative warriors, brute force cannot triumph without a formal plan: good soldiers can contain the chaotic impetus of an attack within a superior and orderly formation, which ensures both the force of the attack and the beauty of an orderly military action.

6. On the martial role and on the 'sins' of the warrior see Dumézil (1990, 67–123). Dumézil focuses on Indo-European myths and legends, but his main arguments can be extended to all military ideologies.
7. See also Andò (2008), which offers interesting insights and observations, even though it is marred by a consoling rhetoric.
8. Chrétien de Troyes (1994, 695): 'Les enges don la gent se plaignent, | Qui ocient quan qu'il ataignent'.
9. When he is still a child, in a small town in the Brandenburg countryside, the protagonist witnesses the killing of an old cow, which is hit with an axe. That event leaves 'the memory of a sort of triumphant joy': the brutal act of a butcher is regarded by Otto as an entirely positive and effective procedure, as 'a way of settling things once and for all' (Márai 2019, 23).
10. Because of his psychotic pleasure in killing others, Otto Schwarz is an excellent killer, but he ceases to be useful as soon as the war ends. When the exceptional circumstances in which his ability to slaughter was valued is over, he finds no occupation and cannot fit within civil society. He thus becomes an alienated war veteran.
11. In traditional societies, the warriors who have killed at least one enemy acquire a special status, dangerous and prestigious at the same time. Those who have shown that they can kill an opponent either in a duel or during a raid are not only appreciated and admired, but also feared, as they proved they had the courage to take a man's life and can do so again. On a ritual level, the killers of men have to spend some time in isolation and undergo purification rituals so as to be purged from the contamination of the blood they shed. Yet, as far as social hierarchy is concerned, they occupy a high position on the social ladder. Napoleon A. Chagnon suggested that killers (*unokai*) were highly respected among the Yanomamö, a population inhabiting a vast area on the border between Brazil and Venezuela (Chagnon 2014, 94–97). Chagnon's arguments, which have been widely discussed (and often violently criticised) by international anthropologists, should be taken with caution and read alongside other studies such as Ferguson (1995, 358–362), but they still offer useful insights into the culture of war in ethnographic societies.
12. Being accustomed to seeing blood and to being close to what is impure, warriors are outsiders, indispensable to society but

also dangerous and threatening. The aura of prestige and danger which surrounds these men is due to their familiarity with death: even though the pacifism and the political correctness characterising Western public discourse generally emphasise the pacifying function of armed forces engaged in humanitarian missions and interposition actions, we should never forget that the defining trait of a warrior is his ability to kill and destroy. That is what sets him apart from common men and endows him with 'terrifying charisma and criminal ferocity' (Pinotti 2001, 203; see also 192–193, 199).

13. A warrior achieves fame mainly by engaging in single fights against respected and particularly strong opponents. Yet, epic narrative glorifies not only the victories obtained in duels (which are more similar to modern sports competition and, hence, they can be more easily understood by us), but also the slaughters made by super-warriors who butcher entire hosts of anonymous enemies, or methodically murder, one after another, a great number of peers or lesser warriors. Epics describe the massacres made by a hero, but they also often list the names of his many victims. Listing the names of the knights murdered by a champion is a way of celebrating his terrifying ability to kill: it is like making an inventory of his victories or displaying his hunting trophies.
14. *Carmi di Sigurð* (2004, 60).
15. See Cardini (2019, 208). The opposition between the victorious hero and his vanquished foes is represented in spatial and proxemic terms as an opposition between high and low: the triumphant hero, mounted on his horse, towers majestically over the enemies, thus embodying a symbolic image of ascension, whereas his opponents lie low in the dust.
16. The homicidal impulse of super-warriors would therefore seem to be attributable to a desiring urge and a violent lust for possession. To that psychoanalytical theory can be added an essentially religious explanation, which can be associated with military mystique and with an archaic magical conception of war. By killing his adversaries, the hero absorbs their Mana. A victim's spiritual energy is transferred to his killer, thus making him more powerful and imbued with sacred strength. See Canetti (2010, 302–315).
17. That kind of extremely powerful blow is a cliché of heroic poetry: a powerful downward slash of the sword cuts everything that stands in its trajectory, it cleaves bodies from head to groin. In the most

hyperbolic descriptions of that slash, the sword cuts in two not only the knight but also his horse, and ends its course by plunging into the ground. On the recurrence of the downward slash which cleaves men in two see Gigliucci (1994, 43–45).

18. Epic blows often break the stalemate produced by a balanced fight. After a long combat whose outcome appears to be uncertain, the hero manages to deliver the winning blow which puts an end to the duel. The stalemate is broken by an exceptional blow, an extremely high-powered slash that shatters the balance of the fight and the body of one of the duellists at the same time.
19. The fact that heroes deliver incredibly powerful and decisive blows has often been explained as being due to the amplifications and hyperbolic exaggerations that characterise epic narratives. The implausible feats of heroes and the unrealistic effects of their blows are part of the hyperbolic style of epic, and they were generally appreciated by the audience, who wished to find in *chansons de geste* an exaggerated and idealised version of chivalric life. See Payen (1997, 204–207). While this is certainly true, it is also useful to point out that several sources give evidence of the fact that bladed weapons, wielded by strong and muscular arms, could indeed open extremely wide and deep wounds. Cardini, for instance, dwells on the dreadful tears opened by the blade of a seax (Cardini 1991, 60, 66–67, 257).
20. In Old French heroic literature, the tremendous power of chivalric weapons is exalted especially when great mass clashes, in which rival units charge each other with levelled lances, are represented; yet the laudatory description of the destructiveness of the knights also emphasises the terrible damages inflicted by their swords.
21. *La Canzone di Orlando* (1996, ll. 1326–1334): 'L'elme li freint u li carbuncle luisent, | Trenchet le [chef] e la cheveleüre, | Si li trenchat les oilz e la faiture, | Le blanc osberc, dunt la maile est menue, | E tut le cors tresqu'en la furcheüre. | Enz en la sele, ki est a or batue, | El cheval est l'espee aresteüe: | Trenchet l'eschine, hunc n'i out quis jointure, | Tut abat mort el pred sur l'erbe drue'. For other extraordinarily powerful epic blows see *La Prise d'Orange* (2010, ll. 1003–1006, 1201–1203).
22. *La Canzone di Orlando*, ll. 1199–1203: 'L'escut li freint e l'osberc li desclot, | Trenchet le piz, si li briset les os, | Tute l'eschine li

desevret del dos: | Od sun espiét l'anme li getet fors; | Enpeint le ben, fait li brandir le cors'.

23. *La canzone di Guglielmo*, ll. 441–446: 'Puis refert altre sur la duble targe, | Tote li freint de l'un ur desqu'a l'altre, | Trenchad le braz que li sist en l'enarme, | Colpe le piz e trenchad la curaille, | Par mi l'eschine sun grant espee li passe, | Tut estendu l'abat mort en la place'.
24. At times, the smug insistence on the details of the dissection may even deflate the hyperbolic representation of the blow. The extraordinary violence of the blow delivered by the hero is emphasised by dwelling at the very close and analytical depiction of its destructive effects, so much so that the detailed description of the cut produced by it 'nearly overshadows the magnificent atrocity of the whole action' (Gigliucci 1994, 44).
25. On the back of each loose horse there used to be a knight, who is no longer there. In descriptions of great battles, the image of loose and scared horses wandering aimlessly and without a guide is a commonplace. For reasons of space, I will only give one example: 'Li destrier vont parmi l'estor fuiant, / les sengles routes, les resnes traïnant' (*Raoul de Cambrai* 1996, ll. 2499–2500) ['The horses flee in terror across the battlefield, with broken girths and trailing reins' (*Raoul de Cambrai* 1999, 49)]. When listing the most powerful representations of death in the *Iliad*, Simone Weil mentions the image of the empty chariots of war which jolt on the battlefield: they are noisily pulled by horses which run around terrified and disoriented because they are no longer controlled by a charioteer (Weil 1965, 6).
26. The disruption of the division between what is inside and what is outside is the main reason why those who look at anatomical tables may feel disturbed by their showing what is supposed to remain hidden. The images of the skinless bodies which are printed in ancient treatises on medicine and surgery alter the natural arrangement of outer body layers, marrow, skin and internal organs. See Caillois (2004, 139–152).
27. Deictic and presentative forms of that kind presuppose the existence of a performative rhetoric capable of giving the illusion that the passage is being recited, orally narrated by a minstrel who addresses the audience and gives the performance a special flavour of orality.

28. In the immeasurable echo of a dilated and vast space, the stark antithesis of forces that constitutes the battlefield is staged: it is a sharp opposition of factions which collide and fall to the ground in a heap of broken weapons and maimed knights. The first scene—wide and panoramic—is replaced by a sort of close shot of the colliding weapons and bodies. The devastating power of feudal chivalry finds its supreme expression in mass charges, when distances vanish and ranks clash. That military technique relies on the extreme violence of the impact: it is a very close fight. Because of the kinetic energy of the charge, the violent collision of heavily armed factions, and the grand movements of knights and horses clad in shining and colourful armours, a frontal charge is not only a military tactic, but also a fascinating performance and a theatrical military manoeuvre.
29. On the literary descriptions of mass fights, whose typical elements could be expanded and developed, but whose essential and defining features remained constant, see Rychner (1999, 151–152), where many examples are offered. To the examples given by Rychner I wish to add some other highlights of particular interest: *Aspremont* (2008, ll. 4942–4947, 8644–8649, 8758–8762, 9760–9762, 9799–9804), *La chanson de Girart de Roussillon* (1993, ll. 2895–2900, 5160–5164), Benoît de Sainte-Maure (2019, ll. 9704–9717), and Alexandre de Bernay (2014, ll. 1037–1042, 1091–1095, 1174–1177). The same stereotype, with the same structure and stylistic devices, can be found in *Cantare del Cid* (1986, ll. 726–732).
30. *Gormund e Isembart* (2013, ll. 502–505): 'La veïssiez tant cop d'espee | e tante lance e[s]quarteree, | tanz Sarrazins par ces estrees | morir sanglent sor l'erbe lee!'.
31. *La Canzone di Orlando* (1996, ll. 3386–3390): 'Deus! tantes hanstes i ad par mi brisees, | Escuz fruisez e bronies desmaillees! | La veïsez la tere si junchee! | L'erbe del camp, ki est verte e delgee, | ‹Del sanc qu'en ist est tute envermeillee›'.
32. *Aliscans* (2007, ll. 58–62) (but see also ll. 5424–5430, 5931–5935): 'La veïssiez fier estor esbaudir, | Tant hante freindre et tant escu croissir | Et tant haubert derompre et dessarcir, | Tant pié, tant poing, tante teste tolir, | L'un mort sus l'autre trebuchier et cheïr' (tr. Guillaume d'Orange 1991, 198).

33. *La Prise d'Orange* (2010, ll. 1824–1827): 'La veïssiez un estor si pesant, | Tant hante fraindre et tant escu croissant | Et desmaillier tant haubers jazerant, | Tant Sarrazin trebuchier mort sanglant!' (tr. Guillaume d'Orange 1991, 193).
34. *Raoul de Cambrai*, ll. 2800–2806 (but see also ll. 3292–3297, 3859–3865): 'Lors veïssiés une dure meslé: | tant'hanste fraindre, tant[e] targe troee, | et tante broigne desmaillie et fausee, | tant pié, tant pong, tante teste colpee, | tant bon vasal gesir goule baee! | Des abatus est joinchie la pree | Et des navrez est l'erbe ensangletee'.
35. The sole idea that violent blows and massacres might be considered exciting is much disturbing in our culture. Because of our system of values, which has led Western societies to regard themselves as no-war communities, we tend to reject the facts and evidence of the past which offend our sensibility as evolved and pacific European people of the third millennium. We may thus fail to see that French Medieval literature not only depicts an intrinsically belligerent society, but also celebrates and glorifies martial violence, and treats fighting as a feast of the senses. Battles do elicit fear, but also a sort of euphoria; they provoke martial excitement and enable the feudal *élite* of soldiers to show how much they value strength and enjoy slaughters. On the methodological risk of imposing our pacifistic views on the militarist culture of the Middle Ages see Payen (1979, 232): 'The celebration of violence in the Oxford version of the *Chanson de Roland* carries a militaristic tone which is no longer to our taste. Academic humanism has long obscured it'.
36. On that matter see Magali (2013, 371–377).
37. On the 'joyful' fights in *chansons de geste*, on the enthusiasm to destroy possessed by epic heroes, and on the euphoric representation of war as a game with weapons and a feast of violence see Andrieux-Reix (1993, 9–30), and especially Payen (1979). The author draws attention to the 'barbaric' joy to kill and the blood lust which emerge in many passages of the *Roland*: 'The beauty of *Roland* lies in bloodshed and slaughter' (226). According to Payen, the belligerent disposition, the military extremism, and the aggressiveness of the heroes in the poem are due to the heritage of 'viking' militarism, that is to say, to the fact that the bellicose attitude which led the Normans to conquer England and Sicily was

still part of the *ethos* of Medieval French warriors. On the spectacle of wounding and on the splendid atrocities of Old French epics see also Gigliucci (1994, 41–46), who emphasises the feral quality of the massacre of bodies in epic battles. The insistent representation of broken bodies is an amplified expression of the *ethos* of destruction and heroic fighting.

38. The brutality of the direct impact between two cavalry units produces an impressive impulse of energy, a wave of extraordinary violence which is accompanied by a vehement overflow of libido. It is at that point that the chant of violence produces pinnacles of elation and ecstasy.
39. The military vanity of the knightly class should not be underestimated. The warrior aristocracy, whose men were the fiercest knights of heavy cavalry, loved to be celebrated in heroic narratives. Medieval French knights were very skilled at charging deep into the enemy's lines and they were extremely proud of their ability to destroy. The professional pride of these irresistible armoured lancers is one of the main reasons why, in Old French literature, the moment of the impact between rival factions is also the moment of greatest destructive euphoria: when the two armies clash, everything breaks and is sent flying through the air, thus showing the tremendous impact power of feudal cavalry.
40. Not only do these intensifying adverbs create a sort of cadenced pattern in the long descriptions of the effects of the battles, but they also convey the idea of multitude, plurality, and enormity. See Andrieux-Reix (1993, 13–14).
41. Binary structures can be found in: *La Canzone di Orlando* (1996, ll. 2157–2158) and Chrétien de Troyes (1999a, ll. 869–870, 2124, 3801–3802). Ternary structures appear in *La Canzone di Guglielmo* (1995, ll. 1824–1825) and Chrétien de Troyes (2012, l. 4921). Parallelisms are employed in: *La Canzone di Orlando* (1996, ll. 1199–1200), Chrétien de Troyes (1999b, l. 3786), and Gautier d'Arras (1999, ll. 742–747).
42. Together with the valley of Roncevaux, the field of Archamp is the most famous battlefield in Old French epic. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that these two war dioramas summarise and fix in grandiose topographical and symbolic models the geopoetics of the Old French *chanson de geste*. The dark verticality of the Pyrenean passes, etched into the splintered rocks and full

of impending menace, is contrasted by the horizontal layout of Archamp, an arid and barren space, 'Homerically' made up of an endless plain that stops at the water's edge: between sea and land. As in any other war setting of French Medieval epic, the geographical location of this battlefield is uncertain: its specific position is not indicated and no detailed description of the landscape is given. Because of this geographical indeterminacy, though, that barren piece of land burnt by the sun acquires the 'tragic beauty' that is typical of fateful places. It is indeed an essential setting with very few topographical elements, but it is characterised by a sort of metaphysical abstraction. On that setting, which is a perfectly appropriate background for absolute conflicts and extraordinary gestures, see Frappier (1955, 168–172).

43. *Aliscans* (2007, ll. 20–23): 'D'escuz et d'armes est couverz li Archanz. | Grant fu la noise des cuvers soduanz, | Li chaples fiers et li estors pesanz; | Desor la terre coroit a rut li sans' (tr. Guillaume d'Orange 1991, 197). The image of the streams of blood which stain the green grass of battlefields is a common topos in Old French epic: *La Prise d'Orange* (2010, l. 1847) and *Aspremont* (2008, ll. 3941–3942). In other cases, bloodstains stand out on a knight's shining armour: Chrétien de Troyes (1999b, ll. 1151–1152, 5839–5840), Chrétien de Troyes – Godefroi de Leigni (2004, ll. 3620–3622), and Chrétien de Troyes (2011, ll. 867–868). The images of the grass covered in blood and of the bloodstained armour remained popular well into the Renaissance, where they appear in chivalric poems. Countless textual examples can be found in Ariosto (1976, XVI 58, XVIII 17, XXIV 65, XXX 63, XXXI 89, XXXIII 40, XXXIV 29, XXXVIII 13, XLVI 121).

44. The image of the gutted warrior who continues to fight is one of the most crude and hyperbolic representations of heroic behaviour. Sometimes, it is also supplemented with the gory detail of his guts tied around his waist. In *Chevalerie Vivien*, Vivien lies gutted on the ground after a sword slash, but he asks his uncle William to help him remount his horse and to tie his guts around his waist so as to be able to continue to fight. *Le Cycle de Guillaume d'Orange. Anthologie* (1996, 298–301). The most iconic representation of the jubilant destruction of bodies is the image of a knight pierced by a lance: Flori (1989, 23 and 26–27). Because of the violence of the impact, the lance pierces through the knight's chest and

emerges from his back, with its tip between his scapulae. The disturbing description of the body shattered under the violence of the impact is reversed in the image of the colourful waving flag: the spectacle of death and blood thus turns into a feast of arms. See for instance: *La Canzone di Orlando* (1996, ll. 1227–1229) and *La chanson de Girart de Roussillon* (1993, ll. 2573–2574).

45. *Raoul de Cambrai* (1996, ll. 3179–3180): 'Tant i a mors chevalier el sablon | n'i puet passer chevalier ne frans hon'.
46. Chrétien de Troyes (2012, ll. 1342–1344): 'Et li mort gisent estraiers, | Qu'asez i ot des decolez, | des plaiez et des afolez'.
47. The hallucinatory pictures of carnage—vast expanses of broken bodies and shattered weapons, traversed by shaken horses—produce in the texts areas of heightened affectivity in which joy and anguish, horror and euphoric outburst, are inextricably knotted together. For further details see Gigliucci (1994, 47–52).
48. Warriors are extremely pleased when they contemplate the results of their destructive power. A revealing example of that emotional reaction is offered by Lieutenant Colonel Kilgore's monologue on napalm in *Apocalypse Now Redux* by Francis Ford Coppola (USA 2011): 'Napalm, son. Nothing else in the world smells like that. I love the smell of napalm in the morning. You know, one time we had a hill bombed for 12 hours. When it was all over, I walked up. We didn't find one of 'em, not one stinkin' dink body. The smell, you know that gasoline smell? The whole hill. Smelled like… victory'.

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CHAPTER 8

Adventure and the Wound: History of a Paradoxical Relationship

Manuel Mühlbacher

Adventure is in many ways a paradoxical notion, or at least that is how it is described by the French phenomenologist Vladimir Jankélévitch in his essay on adventure, first published in 1936 (Jankélévitch 2017). According to Jankélévitch, adventure oscillates between the comic and the tragic, certainty and possibility, the ludic detachment of aesthetic contemplation and the seriousness of real life. Those who read an adventure novel expect that an adventure will be narrated at some point, even if they ignore when and what its content will be. Adventure entails the risk of death, but when death actually occurs we understand that the adventure was in fact something else: a tragedy, for instance. By eliciting desire and fear at the same time, adventure attracts and simultaneously deters the hero. In spite of all the rules of logic and common sense, the attitude of the adventurer is thus a combination of opposites: 'the adventurer is inside and outside at one and the same time'.[1]

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The present study aims to analyse the equally paradoxical relation between adventure and the wound. Adventure is generally incompatible with the wound intended as an incurable trauma, yet many adventurers remain wounded for more or less long periods of time. Although that paradox fits into the 'amphibolic' structure described by Jankélévitch, this study departs radically from one of Jankélévitch's arguments (see Jankélévitch 2017, 19): according to him, adventure reveals its open and contingent quality only while it occurs. As such, adventure exists solely as an immediate event experienced by someone, and its essential features are destroyed as soon as it is narrated after having been experienced (especially if it is narrated in a work of literature): 'When an adventure has a beginning and end, just like a work of art, and when it is located in space, in a space where there are no events nor any progression, it ceases to be an adventure' (Jankélévitch 2017, 18). This idea is clearly at odds with the role played by the notion of adventure in literary history and especially in the novel: as is shown in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, you need to have read about adventure in books before you can seek to find it in real life. Indeed, the main meanings of the very concept of adventure (extraordinary event, chance, danger, heroic deed and chivalric quest) are defined in twelfth-century French romance.[2] It is thus necessary to see the matter from an opposite perspective: an experience becomes an adventure only when it is narrated as such, that is to say when it is told in a specific way and according to precise narrative rules.[3] It is only in retrospect, when the hero has won and demonstrated his virtue, that a casual encounter starts to create meaning in so far as it reveals itself as a trial: in other words, it becomes an adventure. Two elements are necessary for an adventure to qualify as such: the adoption of a perspective which is open to contingency, and also of a retrospective view whereby the event is regarded as a narrative whole. Adventure is thus not pure experience but rather a narrative device which gives meaning to a fortuitous event.

If it is to be examined in relation to adventure, the wound must also be analysed through the lens of narrative theory. While most scholars have attempted to study the wound—for instance, as a motif or a metaphor—by adopting other methodologies,[4] this article focusses on its narrative function, that is to say the ways in which the wound influences the construction of the plot and especially of adventure. To this end, my analysis does not draw upon the structuralist notion of the plot as a diachronic realisation of a synchronic structure or as the pure addition of a number of elements which are always identical. Plot should rather be regarded as

a dynamic process during which the reader can grasp the end of the story, as is suggested by Peter Brooks: we should indeed take into account the 'narrative desire' which accompanies us while we read, synthesising the elements of the narration and anticipating a cluster of meanings which will emerge at the end. According to Brooks, the plot only fulfils its semantic potential retrospectively, while the elements which lie at the core of the story consist in digressions and mistakes which make us long for the end of the narration while deferring it at the same time (Brooks 1992, 90–112). The present article suggests that 'reading for the plot' always means 'reading for the wound'. This equivalence does not seem to be far-fetched if one considers the importance of the notion of trauma in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, which Brook uses as his theoretical foundation: the 'stimulation into tension' which opens the narration and creates a condition of 'narratability' is often an original trauma, and hence plot can be conceived as the opening and closing of a wound (see Brooks 1992, 103).[5] Yet, as will be later demonstrated, providing that initial impulse is only one of the several functions that a wound can have. Wounds create a tension that needs to be resolved, be it through healing or death (even symbolic death).

The following analysis is divided into two parts. The first one is a comparative investigation which focusses on three examples belonging to very different historical periods. It begins by looking at a classical text (Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*) and a nineteenth-century adventure novel (Jules Verne's *Michel Strogoff*), and then moves on to analyse the plot of a Medieval chivalric romance, Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec et Enide*. This section does not aim to update the existing specialised bibliography, but rather to raise and address key questions: What is the relationship between adventure and the wound? How do they interact in the construction of the plot? The same approach will then be adopted in the second part of this study to examine two Renaissance chivalric romances, Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato* and Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*. Those two texts will be read as a story of how the wound is 'lost' and then 'found' again.

1 Adventure and the Wound: Two Examples (Heliodorus and Jules Verne)

The famous *in medias res* beginning of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* is a highly visual scene: from the top of a hill a group of bandits looks down on a beach (and so does the reader), as if they were a theatre scene.[6] That

scene is populated by two lovers surrounded by 'bodies of men but lately massacred [νεοσφαγῶν]' (Heliodorus 1897, 2). One of the two survivors is severely wounded: Theagenes, 'covered with cruel wounds [Ὁ δὲ τραύμασι μὲν κατῄκιστο], with difficulty managed to lift up his head with a deep sleep, that resembled the sleep of death'; blood is still 'trickling down his cheeks' (Heliodorus 1897, 4). He still breathes, but Chariclea holds a sword in her hand, ready to kill herself should her lover die. The group of bandits then comes down the hill and reaches the beach: it seems to them that the girl is kissing 'a lifeless corpse' (νεκρόν σῶμα; Heliodorus 1897, 6). The narrator lingers twice on Chariclea wiping off the blood and 'tending the […] wounds' (πρὸς τοῖς τραύμασιν οὖσα; Heliodorus 1897, 6–7).

The beginning of the novel is thus very similar to the last scene of a tragedy. It is indeed no coincidence that the author employs a tragic register: the scene is deliberately presented as a 'θέατρον' and Chariclea utters a 'tragic plaint' (ἐπετραγῴδει; Heliodorus 1897, 3 and 8). By showing the youth apparently wounded to death and the lamentation of her lover, the text presents its readers with the core element of tragedy, suffering (πάθος): 'suffering is a destructive or painful action, such as public deaths, physical agony, wounding [τρώσεις], etc.' (Aristotle 1995, 1452b). After hovering on the brink of tragedy, the plot takes a different turn. The wounded man (literally τραυματίας) regains his strength and recovers: 'the wounded young man […] had gradually recovered, while his features resumed their ordinary expression' (Heliodorus 1897, 10). He manages to stand up and is brought, together with Chariclea, to the bandits' camp, where he meets a character who completes his miraculous healing. Cnemon, a Greek, knows an herb which can heal his wound within few days (Heliodorus 1897, 15–16), and he gives it to Theagenes right when his next adventure is about to begin, that is to say right before another group of bandits attacks: 'here is the herb which I promised you; take and apply it to your wounds [θεράπευε τὰς πληγὰς]. But we must be prepared for other wounds [τραύματα], and another massacre' (Heliodorus 1897, 57). In offering healing, while at the same time announcing another imminent wound, Cnemon discloses an important law of adventure plots: after countless trials, the body of the hero miraculously heals. Being wounded is only a temporary state that has no enduring effects; the text builds up the expectation of a tragic ending but then it suddenly goes in the opposite direction.

In his chapter on the chronotope of the Greek novel, Michail Bakhtin discusses the same kind of pattern on a more abstract level. According to Bakhtin, the fictional adventure-time produces a hiatus between two moments of biographical time, namely falling in love and marriage. Any event that happens during this extratemporal hiatus has no influence on the biography of the characters and hence it does not change them:

> And yet people and things have gone *through* something, something that did not, indeed, change them, but that did (in a manner of speaking) affirm what they, and precisely they, were as individuals, something that did verify and establish their identity, their durability, and continuity. The hammer of events shatters nothing and forges nothing—it merely tries the durability of an already finished product. And the product passes the test. (Bakhtin 1981, 106–107)

The representation of Theagenes' wounds in the first book of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* is a paradigmatic example of the adventure chronotope: his body withstands any injury as if it were made of iron or diamond, just as his mind is not affected by any traumatic experience. The immediate healing of the wound suggests that the hero is nearly invulnerable: neither his body nor his soul ever changes. To put it in Bakhtin's words, 'adventure-time leaves no trace' (Bakhtin 1981, 110).

The second example, Jules Verne's *Michel Strogoff*, which was published in 1876, is chronologically distant from Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* but it has important affinities with it as far as the chronotope is concerned. In this novel, set in nineteenth-century Tsarist Russia, the protagonist is tasked with delivering a secret message to the eastern region of the empire, which is a war-zone: the Tartars have invaded the south-western part of Siberia and the Asian peoples are revolting against the domination of the Tsar. The rebellion is led by a former Russian soldier, the traitor Ivan Ogareff. Michel is captured by the Tartar troops, who are unaware of the fact that he is a secret messenger: he thus ends up being one among the crowd of Russian prisoners and he is protected by that anonymity. Michel's mother, Marfa Strogoff, has also been captured by the Tartars and Ogareff's spies have revealed to him that she is the mother of the Tsar's messenger and that the messenger is hiding among the Russian prisoners. Ogareff thus devises a sadistic stratagem to find out who the messenger is: he decides that Marfa should be whipped before each prisoner as he hopes that her son will not be able to endure that sight. That

is indeed the case: seeing his mother so cruelly beaten, Michel wrenches the whip from the executioner's hand and violently strikes Ogareff with it, leaving a permanent scar on his face. Michel thus values his filial love over the mission that has been entrusted to him by the Tsar. As a punishment, he is not sentenced to death, he is only wounded; more precisely, he is blinded: 'Michael's fate was to be not death, but blindness; loss of sight, more terrible perhaps than loss of life. The unhappy man was condemned to be blinded' (Verne 1877, 233).[7] This is clearly an Oedipal scenario: the father (which was the appellative of the Tsar) forbids the son from seeing and recognising his mother.[8] The son breaks that rule and is punished with blinding. This plot has so much in common with Oedipus' story that it can certainly elicit many interesting psychoanalytic reflections,[9] but it can also be read as a hint at the genre of tragedy. When Michel is blinded, the happy ending which the readers of an adventure novel expects appears to be hopelessly compromised: how will Michel fulfil his mission after having been reduced to such a state of impotence? 'The conviction that no catastrophic or deadly event can occur to the main hero or to the likeable characters is part of the rules of the genre, despite the fear it also produces', writes Alexis Tadié (1982, 10), thus formulating a rule which Jules Verne deliberately violates. Since Michel's blinding is the equivalent of a tragic wound, the text challenges its own status as an adventure novel and confuses the expectations of its readers, who no longer know which literary code they should refer to in order to understand the text. In the context of the adventure chronotope, the sentence 'Michel Strogoff had been blinded' (Verne 1877, 520) yields no meaning: the reader, who is hermeneutically disoriented, almost becomes blind together with the protagonist.

In spite of his wound, Michel proceeds on his adventurous journey led by Nadja, a young woman and his future wife. After facing many adversities, the two of them succeed in bringing the secret message to Irkutsk. During the final clash with Ogareff, Michel parries his opponent's blows with incredible swiftness. Everything is described as if the blind man could see, as if a dead man had returned from his grave: 'this living statue', 'the statue became animated' (Verne 1877, 334).[10] And indeed, Michel sees and kills the traitor. The hero's healing fulfils the reader's desire and paves the way to a happy ending that seemed irreversibly lost. At the beginning of the last chapter, the narrator accounts for that miracle: 'Michel Strogoff was not, had never been, blind. A purely human phenomenon, at the

same time moral and physical, had neutralised the action of the incandescent blade which Feofar's executioner had passed before his eyes' (Verne 1877, 336).[11] Michel faked his blindness so as to beguile his enemies by inducing them to believe that he was helpless. Just like Michel, the readers of the novel begin to see clearly again: the blinding becomes suddenly meaningful, it is no longer an irreversible trauma but rather a heroic stratagem, a trial.

The characteristic feature of adventure novels thus emerges once again: every wound is healed (or rather *negated*) and the body of the hero is made whole again. The threat of a tragic ending is obviously meant to create suspense, to make a happy ending less probable, and to heighten the pleasure which is achieved against every expectation. Adventure novels thus need the wound, albeit solely as a transitory state. What cannot exist in those novels is the traumatic wound: adventure does not admit wounds which leave a permanent mark.

2 Wound and Plot in Chivalric Romance

Similar patterns are also typical of chivalric literature. *Don Quixote* repeatedly parodies them, as is the case when the protagonist concocts the balsam of Fierabras, which is supposed to heal his wounds but actually makes him vomit and lose his teeth (see Cervantes 2015, 195–198, 212–214). It is thus useful to reflect on the narrative function of the wound, that is, on how the wound contributes to the construction of the plot. Brook's idea of plot, which postulates a strong teleological orientation, can be enlightening in this case because chivalric romances often lack that progression towards an end. Chivalric adventure tends to be a potentially endless chains of events; there is no limit to the addition of new episodes.[12]

Much of the sixteenth-century debate that surrounded the *Orlando furioso* and the *Gerusalemme liberata* famously concerned the unity and multiplicity of plot, and theorists such as Giovanbattista Pigna and Torquato Tasso commented on the virtual endlessness of the romance plot: 'This progression can go on forever, as there is no rule that imposes a limit or boundary to it' (Tasso 1977, 28).[13] Although the word 'avventura'/'ventura' does not appear in those texts, we can certainly read Tasso's remark as an observation on the adventure chronotope: the endless progress of chivalric romances is a direct consequence of the seriality of the hero's trials. There is obviously a close connection also

between the endless sequence of episodes and the non-traumatic nature of wounds; they are indeed two sides of the same coin. The fact that wounds leave no permanent mark enables the hero to go through endless trials because he always reverts to a state prior to any injury. The knight's invulnerability, that is to say the transitoriness of his wounds, thus corresponds to a specific kind of plot, which admits endless seriality.

Before we return to discussing tangible examples, it is necessary to emphasise how heavily this type of plot influences the reading process. The lack of a permanent mark characterises the hero but it also has implications for the reader's experience, as has been recognised by several literary theoreticians of the sixteenth century. In the literary debate that took place during those years, scholars often mentioned the Aristotelian rule that the plot of epic must be 'comprehensible' (εὐσύνοπτον), that is to say, its scope should not be too vast to be contemplated, and it should be easily retained in our memory (εὐμνημόνευτον; Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1450b). In other words, Aristotle argues that the plot should be apt to be remembered, and so do his followers in the Renaissance, among whom are Torquato Tasso, Leonardo Salviati, Giovambattista Strozzi and Filippo Sassetti.[14] The plot of epic has an adequate length because it can be easily stored in the mind of the readers, whereas the multiple and polycentric plot of romance thwarts the mnemonic effort of the average recipient. Tasso, for instance, explains that the length of both the *Orlando furioso* and the *Orlando innamorato* is not 'apt to be grasped in a simple lesson by a mediocre memory' (Tasso 1977, 226).[15] This observation is closely related with the adventure chronotope, which is so important for the Renaissance romance, and especially for romances which pre-date that of Ariosto, as will be later shown. The sequence of events which follow one another in adventure plots leaves no mark in the memory of the reader just as it leaves no scar on the body of the hero.[16] There is thus a close correspondence between the non-traumatic wounds received by the character and an 'anti-traumatic' mode of reading, a correspondence which recalls the structural connection between trauma and mnemonic trace that has been postulated in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

If the lack of a wound goes hand in hand with a serial and endless plot which can easily stagnate, it is reasonable to hypothesise that there exists an opposite correlation, one between traumatic wounds and progress (or at least non-episodic plot). Although the wound does not necessarily mark the climax of the plot, it is nonetheless a powerful tool to transcend the mere succession of events. In Jules Verne's *Michel Strogoff*, the

wound creates suspense because, after Michel has been blinded, the reader is eager to see the solution of that enigma, the untying of that knot, but the resolution only happens at the end of the novel and it synthesises the single adventures of the hero. Drawing on two essays by Rainer Warning, it is possible to identify two modes of plot construction which are combined in *Michel Strogoff* (see Warning 2002, 2003). There is a *paradigmatic order* (in Jakobson's sense) according to which episodes are equivalent and interchangeable—it entails the repetition and variation of a perpetually identical scheme—; and there is a *syntagmatic order*, which requires a concatenation of events in a cohesive plot that has a beginning, a middle, and an end. If it is not immediately healed (as happens in Verne's novel), the wound becomes a powerful literary device to structure the plot, to emphasise its crucial events, to create and solve problems, and to direct the reader's attention towards the end, that is towards the healing of the wound or the death of the hero. For that reason, the critical model that has been employed so far should be revised: the notion of a sharp opposition between the wound of adventure novels and the traumatic wound should be replaced by the idea of a continuous spectrum, whose opposite poles are invulnerability and the incurable wound. If the adventure chronotope is predominant in the text, the hero will certainly endure every blows he receives without suffering any injury and go through a potentially endless sequence of events, even if that chronotope is often combined with other generic literary codes which admit also other kinds of wounds. The main structural problem of adventure novels—their endlessness—is generally solved through the aggravation of the hero's wounds. The plot ends and the circumscribed space of adventure is finally evaded when the wounds get worse, even if just temporarily or fictitiously.

To prove this hypothesis, it is useful to look back at the origins of chivalric adventure, namely at the romances of Chrétien de Troyes. The problem of endlessness, that is to say of a sequentiality which can only be broken through a violent interruption, does not seem to concern his texts, in which adventure is 'contained' within a macrostructure called by the author 'une mout bele conjunture' in his prologue to *Erec et Enide*: 'And he derives from a story of adventure a pleasing argument' (Chrétien de Troyes 1999, 2).[17] Although reams of comments have been dedicated to these lines, medievalists tend to agree that Chrétien is here describing his method of composition, which consists in creating a unified composition out of pre-existing Celtic tales (see Kelly 1970; Hilty 1975, 249–251).

A strong awareness of the problematic tension that there exists between adventure and plot, episode and whole narrative, narrative paradigm and narrative syntagm thus emerges in chivalric romance ever since its early days. The plot of *Erec* also shows that the wound of the knight is one of the main elements that give cohesion to the episodes of the story.[18]

In Chrétien's plot, a wound prevents adventures from endlessly following one after the other during the hero's second journey. Distracted by his love for his wife, Erec neglects his chivalric duties and earns the title of 'recreant'. Together with Enide he leaves the court and wanders the country seeking for adventures, which succeed one another: on the first day he defeats three and then five knights; on the second, he escapes an ambush laid by a count enamoured of Enide; on the third, he vanquishes his rival and defeats another extremely valiant knight, Guivrez le Petiz, who becomes his friend. On the fourth day, he kills two giants to save another knight. There are certainly some analogies among all these episodes, and each adventure contributes to the resolution of the hero's inner conflict: the unfolding of the whole sequence of events is thus not entirely arbitrary.[19] Nevertheless, the necessity to preserve that structure is not so compelling as to deny the possibility of amplifying the paradigm, and Chrétien's insistence on numbers demonstrates that he does not intend to eliminate the expandable nature of the adventure plot. The flowing of time—day after day—and the variation of the type and number of adversaries imply that a series of other adventures may happen.[20] How many trials will be needed to restore the honour of the humiliated knight? Adventures alone are clearly not enough to re-establish order: something more serious, a *wound*, is necessary to contain the plot.

The first turning point of the plot occurs when the hero fights against Guivrez le Petiz. During their first clash, they both thrust their lance into their adversary's bowels: 'Both are pierced to the vitals by the lances' (Chrétien de Troyes 1999, 52).[21] Their swords pierce through each other's armours and cut the flesh underneath it ['to the bare flesh' (Chrétien de Troyes 1999, 52)].[22] The outcome of the fight remains uncertain until chance intervenes: Guivrez' sword breaks, Erec forces him to declare himself vanquished and then treats him as a friend. Since both of them are wounded, Guivrez suggests that they see a doctor, but Erec refuses to do so and continues his journey. He later runs into King Arthur's court, which is travelling across the forest, and they treat his wound with an ointment made by Morgan le Fay, which can heal every wound provided that it is applied each day for a week. In spite of the warnings

and the pleas of Arthur's court, Erec leaves the following day, looking for new trials. He refuses all the comforts of the adventure chronotope which are at his disposal and chooses to continue his daring journey. He consciously worsens his wounds, he weakens himself for no reason, and his behaviour has disastrous consequences: after a victorious fight against two giants, Erec's wound opens up again and the knight falls to the ground, exhausted from his loss of blood. A count who was passing by sees Erec lying on the ground as if he were dead and falls in love with Enide. He thus abducts her and plans to force her to marry him after having buried her husband. Enide refuses to consent to the marriage and the count hits her twice on her face, but, at that exact moment, Erec wakes up from his coma and kills the count.

Erec and Enide run away and, after one last adventure, in which Erec is wounded by his friend Guivrez who fails to recognise him, Erec's healing process, or rather a process which leads to the utter erasure of trauma, begins. The body of the hero is healed, washed and dressed to the point that no trace of his wound remains. The series of traumatic events is also erased from the memory of the lovers: 'They have so [...] forgotten their grief that they scarcely remember it any more' (Chrétien de Troyes 1999, 71).[23] These two verses introduce a compromise between the registers of tragedy and adventure: while the first line announces the utter erasure of pain, in the second one, that erasure does not appear to be complete ('scarcely'). The adventure chronotope is thus restored but not without a slight hesitation.

When the hero is wounded, Chretien's chivalric romance discards the anti-traumatic pattern of adventure, or at least it appears to do so. Wounds accumulate on the body of the hero and his healing is delayed for so long that he undergoes symbolic death. His adventurous journey then continues and the hero reverts to his initial state on the level of both his body and his personal relationships. The function of the wounds received by the hero is clear: his injuries continue to get worse until a tragic event occurs which interrupts his journey and compels him to return to the court. The relationship between adventure and the wound is thus paradoxical: on the one hand, the wound does not belong to adventure-time because it leaves no mark; on the other hand, adventure needs the wound to stop the endless sequence of episodes—and that need is clear to many writers, even pre-modern ones like Chrétien. It is for that reason that the heroes of adventure fiction are often wounded, so much so that the

conventions of that genre appear to be temporarily violated, although a happy ending is always expected.

Among the wounds employed by Chrétien to connect different elements of his narrative is also the amorous wound. One example is offered by a passage in his *Yvain*, in which the narrator compares two types of wound:

> Love's pursuit's a gentle art:
> through the knight's eyes she strikes his heart.
> The wound that Love has dealt the lord
> won't heal like wounds from lance or sword,
> for any wound a sword has
> cut the doctors can cure quickly, […]
> So wounded is the lord Yvain,
> and he will not be whole again. (Chrétien de Troyes 1974, ll. 1263–1272)[24]

While Erec's falling in love is only briefly mentioned, that of Yvain is presented as an event of major importance. The implicit narratological reflection contained in this passage tells us that physical wounds fit within the adventure chronotope whereas amorous wounds are radically different because they cannot heal.[25] The plot of *Yvain* is fittingly interspersed with wounds of the second, traumatic kind. Laudine's messenger, who accuses Yvain before Arthur's court of not having returned by the promised date, inflicts an inner wound on the hero which drives him mad, and the traumatic impact of his guilt is once again emphasised when, after having returned to the magic fountain, Yvain nearly goes mad again and accidentally hurts himself with his sword: 'the sharp sword did not fail | to cut the skin beneath the mail | beside the lord Yvain's neck' (Chrétien de Troyes 1974, ll. 3307–3309).[26] The inner wound is thus paralleled by a physical, self-inflicted wound. If analysed from the perspective of narrative theory, the amorous wound can heavily influence the structure of the plot, which remains incomplete until the wound is healed. These observations drawn from Chrétien's texts can be generalised: the image of the amorous wound, which is not merely a literary *topos*, but rather an absolute metaphor of the experience of love, is generally implied whenever the power of eros intervenes in the plot and starts to influence its narrative development. That is the point in which narrative theory and metaphorology overlap. The image of the wound signals that falling in love is an event that leaves a mark and remains engraved in memory; the

story can thus employ the *topos* of the wound of love to form a unified narrative syntagm (see Torre 2009).

3 The Wound 'Lost' and 'Found' in Boiardo and Ariosto

A useful starting point to explore the role of wounding in the *Orlando innamorato* and the *Orlando furioso* is Riccardo Bruscagli's influential study on the narrative patterns of adventure and of the quest in Ariosto and Boiardo: 'two different methods of composition emerge, one based on the unifying function of the quest, and the other on the tendency to add episodes and interweave them typical of adventure plots' (Bruscagli 1983, 105, see also 2008). According to Bruscagli, the *Innamorato* is mostly characterised by the episodic interweaving of adventures, while the amorous quests of the knights are purely 'narrative mechanism[s]' whose role is that of moving the plot forward when it is about to stall (Bruscagli 1983, 113). That is the reason why Boiardo no longer needs the diabolic figure of Gano, who weaves treacheries in the *cantari*. Yet, the downgrading of the quest to a purely formal device also carries its own risks: Sergio Zatti emphasised the 'virtually limitless seriality of adventure' which characterises the *Innamorato* and which compels the author to end his poem with an event that is utterly contingent and external to the text, that is the French invasion led by Charles VIII in 1494 (see Zatti 2010, 114). The narrative method of Boiardo's poem requires the invulnerability of many characters, or at least the certainty that they will survive: Orlando is protected by divine will, Rinaldo wears Mambrino's helmet, Feraguto's only vulnerable body part is his navel, Argalia arrives at Charles' court wearing enchanted weapons. That rule is not always consistently followed: Argalia is wounded to death in Book I, Canto III and Orlando kills Agricane in Canto XIX; yet each character who is the protagonist of a specific narrative strand survives so that the plot continues to expand, and so does the number of characters. The author adds without taking anything away, he creates without ever destroying. Wounds are absent also on a psychological level. It is true that the appearance of Angelica in Canto I is described in Petrarchan language and it could be read as a collective amorous wound. Yet, as the story progresses, that event turns out to be much less significant than expected. Indeed, the characters are not only invulnerable but also miraculously capable of erasing their traumatic memories and especially their wounds of love.

One significant example can be found in Book I, Canto XXIV. Orlando is walking across a 'dense forest' with Leodilla (I.XXIV.12). At this point, the knight has already undertaken two quests: he has left Albracà to fight with Agricane, and, hence, he should quickly return to the siege in order to save the woman he loves from the danger that looms over her. Earlier on, he had also lost his companion Brandimarte, and, in Canto XXIV, we are told that he 'inten[ds] to find the friend he'd lost' (I.XXIV.12). A second quest has replaced the first one, thus also neutralising the wound of love. At sunrise, an episode typical of adventure plots takes place: a woman suddenly appears and involves Orlando in an adventure originated by Morgana (an adventure which takes the form of two objects, a book and a horn). The woman tells him the instructions of that heroic feat and the knight is immediately eager to take part in it (I.XXIV.25):

> After the Count learned from the woman
> about this marvelous adventure,
> he burned at heart to see it through.
> He did not think or seek advice
> but willingly stretched out his hand.
> He quickly took the book and the horn
> and, better to prepare for war,
> lifted the maiden off his horse. (Boiardo 2004, 128)[27]

This stanza combines several elements which are of crucial importance for the plot and ideology of the *Innamorato*, such as, for instance, the homage to the *matière de Bretagne* and the allusion to Fortune—Orlando lays out his hands to receive the objects because he wants to seize that occasion, just as he chases Morgana for the very same reason 13 cantos later (see *Orlando Innamorato* II.VIII e IX). What strikes us the most, though, is the fact that Boiardo employs the traditional language of love discourse to describe Orlando's reaction to this new adventure: the gesture of laying out the hand is not rational, but rather impulsive and driven by emotion. For that reason, the adventure is embodied in two objects, the book and the horn, which can be held in the hero's hands. As soon as an adventure presents itself, it replaces every other object of desire, erases its memory, and monopolises the attention of the hero. The characters appear to be often forgetful: Brandimarte makes Orlando forget about Angelica, and the new adventure cancels the memory of his lost companion. This tendency can be read as a perfect corroboration of

George Simmel's theory: adventure is characterised by an 'absolute presence' and has no past or future (Simmel 2001, 106). It can thus be argued that the narrative economy of the *Innamorato* is 'traumatophobic' and, as such, it is the perfect embodiment of the adventure chronotope.

That anti-traumatic amnesia also affects the readers, as is pointed out by Boiardo himself when he summarises the events that have led to a certain situation. While Ruggiero and Bradamante are fighting against a host of Saracens in Book III, Canto V, the narrator mentions an episode narrated in Book II, Canto XVII, in which Ruggiero kills Bardulastro who has treacherously wounded him (see II.XVII.31–32):

> But Barigano did not speak.
> He loathed that baron secretly,
> and he was looking for revenge
> because Rugiero'd killed his cousin,
> named Bardulasto, that vile traitor,
> who had attacked Rugiero first.
>
> If you remember this occured
> at Mount Carena's tournament.
> (You've probably forgotten it,
> since I, who wrote it, almost have). [Boiardo 2004, III.V.47–48, 87][28]

It is extremely significant that a *wound* escapes the memory of the reader, and perhaps also that of the writer. The fact that the moment in which the wound was inflicted has to be explicitly recalled reveals something important about the narrative structure of the *Innamorato* and the absence of trauma in the text. That recapitulation relies on a series of mnemonic acts: Bardulasto wounds Ruggiero, then Ruggiero gets his revenge by killing his adversary. Nineteen cantos later, Barigano tries, in turn, to avenge that killing. In narratological terms, this sequence of events can be described as a narrative syntagm. When the episode of the counter-revenge takes place, though, it becomes clear that the syntagmatic order is of little importance, that past episodes are soon forgotten, and that the reader's memory needs to be constantly refreshed. Not even a wound inflicted on one of the main characters leaves a mark because, in that case, it is immediately healed by Atlante (see *Orlando Innamorato* II.XXI.27). The adventure chronotope reduces once again the importance of the wound: the invulnerability of the characters is thus closely linked with the reader's amnesia. Ugo Foscolo had rightly recognised the

difference between Ariosto, who narrates new episodes but never 'loses sight of the rest of the plot', and Boiardo, who nearly 'forgets all the other character and even forgets the reader' (Foscolo 1859, 180).[29]

Yet, despite the 'phobia of trauma' which characterises Boiardo's poem, the wound still retains some of its potential to have an impact on the plot. Behind seriality lurks the possibility of trauma, of dying and of getting closer to the end of the story. For instance, the invincible bodies of the knights actually have vulnerable spots, such as the soles of Orlando's feet and Feraguto's navel, which is interestingly the perfect emblem of a cyclical narrative, as it stand for both birth and death, beginning and end. The penetration of the hero's body represents a potential egress from the adventure chronotope. The fact that a magic sword like Balisarda, which is capable of wounding enchanted bodies and cutting through magic armours, passes from Orlando to Brunello and then ends up in the possession of Ruggiero, is an illuminating example. Boiardo prepares the way for a potential wound, as if he already had the ending of his story in mind, but he then forgets about it. Ariosto instead recognises the narrative potential of the wound, and he fully capitalises on it.

Highly esteemed scholars such as David Carne-Ross, Patricia Parker, David Quint, and Sergio Zatti have read the *Furioso* as an attempt to bring to an end the stories left uncompleted by Boiardo and to shift from the mode of adventure to that of epic.[30] According to Quint, this shift also entails a transition from the cyclic order of time of the *Innamorato* to a linear one. If that idea is adopted as a starting point for this analysis, an hypothesis on how the romance chronotope is altered in the *Furioso* can promptly be advanced: in order to escape the closed loop of adventure, wounds need to be exacerbated. Trauma, which was present in Chrétien's romance but almost completely absent from Boiardo's poem, has to be reinstated. Thus, the *Furioso* can be read as a sort search for the 'missing wound'. Ariosto is well aware of that painful necessity and he does not hesitate to have his characters receive serious wounds. The following analysis of the *Furioso* begins by pointing out some macrostructural elements, well known to scholars who study Ariosto, which will be examined with a special focus on the role of the wound. In order to do so, the aforementioned critical studies will prove to be of primary importance. To conclude this investigation, a complementary but partially diverging hypothesis will be formulated, one which emphasises Ariosto's readiness to capitalise on the potential to inflict trauma possessed by some objects that are commonly found in romances.

Ariosto begins to reconfiguring the relationship between adventure and quest. As Bruscagli points out, the characters' readiness to take part in endless adventures is replaced by a more obsessive kind of quest (see Bruscagli 1983, 122–126). Except for the knights who are unaffected by love, such as Astolfo and Marfisa, most of the characters are eager to take possession of an unattainable object: that is an extreme version of the amorous wound if compared to the much less compelling kind of desire which moves Boiardo's knights to action. Orlando's behaviour exemplifies this new configuration of the narrative. After saving Olimpia in Canto IX, Orlando resumes his quest for Angelica, but he chooses not to stop at any port during his journey at sea so as not to be dragged into another adventure (*Orlando furioso*, 9.92):

> Such longing does Orlando feel to know
> If she (whom she so loves that every hour
> He spends apart from her is grief and woe)
> Waits helpless for the monster to devour
> Her, that no slightest wish has he to go
> To Ireland, nor to anywhere ashore,
> Let some new knightly challenge may detain
> Him and all hope to rescue her be vain. (Ariosto 1975–1977, 217)[31]

This stanza describes not only a state of mind but also a new chronotope, which stems from a modification of the relationship between quest and adventure. Orlando's eagerness to attain his object of desire has temporal consequences and instantiates the state of haste typical to most of Ariosto's knights. Their thought is directed to a faraway place and an absent object, and the rest of the world almost disappears. The last lines of the stanza focus on the new function of adventures, which are referred to as 'cosa nuova', a typical technical term often employed by Boiardo[32]: adventures are no longer desirable, but they should instead be avoided in that they are a waste of time. Adventure thus corresponds to deferral, an extremely important metanarrative notion in the *Furioso* (see Zatti 1990, 24–26). In the last two lines of the stanza, the author makes the character speak and expose the inevitable outcome of the new chronotope[33]: despite their haste, the knights never manage to grasp their object of desire, their quest is unsuccessful because it is constantly deferred and interrupted by new events.

This narrative mode, whereby an obsessive quest is deferred by adventures, is generally called 'romance paradigm' by scholars: 'romance',

though, is indeed a key concept but also a problematic one in that it is very general. Both Orlando's mistakes and Astolfo's voyage to the East can be categorised as 'romance' episodes, although, in this case, that label is applied to two different types of adventure and quest: one of them can be associated with the traditional adventure chronotope, the other is instead characterised by haste and frustration. For that reason, it may be useful to return to the notion of adventure and analyse its precise function in the *Furioso* as well the ways in which it combines with other narrative paradigms, as that will hopefully shed further light on the narrative structure of the poem.

The amorous quest can be read as a wound which requires a complementary element, healing, and it thus depends on a future event. If we were to phrase this using two rhyme-words that appear in *Orlando furioso* XXIII, 103, where Orlando reads the names of Angelica and Medoro carved on the trees, we could say that the 'nails [chiodi] which Love employs to prick and wound his heart' (Ariosto 1975–1977, 313) are also 'nodi' [knots] that have to be untied in the rest of the story.[34] Those knots are indeed untied many cantos later, when Orlando, who is finally healed, exclaims 'solvite me' (XXXIX.60). It is for the same reason that Medoro and Angelica disappear from the story as soon as their physical and emotional wounds are healed—their love story finds its happy ending too soon and its narrative potentialities are thus exhausted. Yet, another type of wound, different from the ones inflicted by love, becomes more and more important in the second half of the *Furioso*, which is characterised by a more epic tone: it is the lethal wound, or the 'teleological' wound, as one may almost call it. According to Marco Praloran, Mandricardo's death at the hand of Ruggiero in canto XXX marks a structural turning point in the story in that the tendency to expand the plot in different directions is gradually replaced by a tendency to advance it, to move it forward (see Praloran 2009, 160). Ruggiero's sword finally hits the heart of an enemy, it sheds his blood and inaugurates a sequence of deaths which only ends in the last stanza of the poem, where Ruggiero brutally wounds Rodomonte by piercing his eyes with his dagger. For each knight who dies there remains one less narrative strand and, hence, the epic and lethal wound gradually reduces the size of the poem, which was previously as vast as that of the typical romance.

The idea that the poem has an epic ending is convincing as far as the macrostructural level of the text is concerned, but the matter gets more complicated if the scenes of wounding are analysed in greater detail

because, as a matter of fact, the narrative mechanisms which contribute to bring about the conclusion of the story belong to the romance paradigm rather than the epic one.[35] It is now useful to look at the duel between Ruggiero and Rodomonte and the lethal wound which puts an end to the prolonged deferral of death (*Orlando furioso* XLVI.139):

> Ruggiero sees the danger straight away:
> Stabbed in the back he knows that he will be
> If here and now he does not end the strife
> By cutting short the evil pagan's life. (Ariosto 1975–1977, 523)[36]

As has been pointed out by Zatti, this passage is markedly metanarrative: it is almost as if the epic hero were to 'kill' the romance narrative structure by killing the Saracen (see Zatti 1990, 26). But how is that final wound inflicted? Ruggiero and Rodomonte are enemies of equal strength, they are both among the most valiant knights of the romance. The intervention of an external element that has nothing to do with the valour of the knights is thus necessary to tip the scales of the fight and that element is their armour. Ruggiero wears Hector's arms, which he gained in Canto XXX after his fight with Mandricardo. This is a classical allusion whose function is to associate the 'ceppo vecchio' [ancient lineage] of the Estense family with the Trojan hero, and, indeed, the entire description of the duel between Rodomonte and Ruggiero is interspersed with textual echoes of the fight between Aeneas and Turnus in the *Aeneid* (see Casadei 1993, 86–87). Hector's arms, though, had been previously mentioned in Book III, Canto I, of Boiardo's *Innamorato*. The enchanted and impenetrable amour once possessed by the Trojan hero thus belongs to the adventure chronotope: in the *Innamorato*, it protects the hero who wears it, Mandricardo, from any kind of wound. It is exactly this object capable of averting trauma that Ruggiero wears when he faces Rodomonte. Despite the ostentatious elimination of the supernatural in Canto XLVI (19–26), at least one magic object survives and it plays a pivotal role in the final battle of the poem. In order to lay even greater emphasis on the fact that the two knights are fighting at uneven odds, Ariosto has Rodomonte fight without Nembrotte's sword and his armour made from the hide of a dragon, whereas Ruggiero has Balisarda, a sword which can even cut through enchanted armours. The duel is thus between an invulnerable knight who can also easily wound

his opponent and one who possesses no magical weapon. The first pass with lances dictates the logic of the entire duel (*OF* XLVI.116):

> The pagan's lance which struck Ruggiero's shield
> Full centre had the puniest effect.
> The steel of Trojan Hector did not yield,
> So well does Vulcan's tempering protect.
> Likewise the weapon which Ruggiero held
> Struck Rodomonte's shield, but passed unchecked
> Despite the covering of steel and bone
> And thickness of a palm, or more than one. (Ariosto 1975–1977, 534)[37]

Rodomonte's lance breaks, whereas that of Ruggiero pierces his enemy's shield to its bony core, and it later also cuts his enemy's body to the bone. In other words, Ruggiero is still immersed in the adventure chronotope and, at the same time, with Balisarda in his hand, is placed in an ideal position to wound Rodomonte. It would thus be problematic to read the final episode as an epic scene. It is rather a combination of romance and epos, in which a knight aided by magic faces an epic and vulnerable enemy. The object which brings about the ending of the story by inflicting the last wound of the poem belongs to the adventure genre. This rather paradoxical situation can be described as a dialectic process: Ariosto manipulates the conventions of adventure so as to turn the object that would normally protect from trauma into an object which inflicts wounds; the traditional sources of endless deferral are transformed into elements that propel the action towards a conclusion. Those elements, which would previously bring stagnation to the plot, create here a teleological dynamics and end the story.

The fight between Ruggiero and Mandricardo, which is closely connected to the last duel because Hector's arms feature in both of them, is structured in a very similar manner. One of the adversaries, Mandricardo, wields the epic sword *par excellence*, Durindana, which was also the sword possessed by Roland in the *Chanson de Roland*. Ruggiero fights instead with Balisarda, which can pierce even Hector's armour. Ruggiero is the one who wins the fight and, in the last scene of the poem, he carries not the sword of epic but rather that of romance. That choice is revealing of how Ariosto treats adventure in the *Furioso*: even in the last cantos, Ariosto continues to draw on the adventure chronotope but he employs it to move the plot forward towards its conclusion. The forms and patterns of romance are not simply replaced by those of epic: among

the various strategies employed by Ariosto to close the plot of his poem is a sort of 'overturning' of the traditional pattern of adventure. At first sight, it seems as if adventure was dismissed and replaced by other narrative models, especially those of epic and of the quest. What is left of the adventure genre is apparently a faint residue, or, as Bruscagli puts it, 'sporadic and rather insignificant traces' (Bruscagli 1983, 122). At the same time, though, adventure is reappropriated and adapted: it does not cease to be a crucial narrative paradigm and it also contributes to move the plot towards its ending. Being rejected but also preserved, adventure retains its place in the structure of the *Furioso*, even if that entails its transformation and its merging with other narrative models.

The critical approach adopted so far has hopefully shown that it is useful to analyse the wounds received by the characters in order to grasp the narrative dynamics of a plot: a certain narrative form is always associated with a certain kind of wounds. In the passages that have been analysed—ranging from Heliodorus and Jules Verne to Chrétien, Boiardo, and Ariosto—wounds are more than just a recurring literary motif: they are rather a synecdoche for the entire unfolding of the narrative. In order to examine the function of the wound from the perspective of narrative theory, it has been crucial to try to answer two questions: at what stage of the plot is the wound inflicted? How long does it take for the wound to heal? These two factors often have a strong influence on the narrative structure of a literary work because those who read it will be prone to remember the most painful events experienced by the characters—as is often also the case with the events that happen in their lives. As has been demonstrated above, each literary genre has its own type of traumatic code. In adventure romances, wounds play a specific (albeit paradoxical) role: the serial structure of adventure is closely connected with the lack of permanent trauma, yet wounds are nonetheless indispensable because of that very narrative structure. This dialectic inversion—that is to say the absence of trauma which ultimately leads to the exacerbation of the wounds—gains even greater complexity in Ariosto's *Furioso*. On the one hand, the adventure chronotope is superseded by other narrative models; on the other hand, though, it resurfaces in the poem metamorphosed into new forms: adventure is thus paradoxically purged of it 'traumatophobic' nature and, as such, it enables the text to come to an end.

(Trans. by Arianna Hijazin)

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Notes

1. Jankélévitch (2017, 18): 'l'aventureux est dedans-dehors'.
2. On the meanings of *aventure/avanture* in old French see Lebsanft (2006).
3. The narrative quality of adventure is the main object of interest of the recent studies on this subject. See for instance Strohschneider (2006).
4. To my knowledge there are only two studies which analyse the narrative function of the wound: Sinka (1974) and Fleishman (2018). Despite being highly informative, these works do not offer elements for a more comprehensive narratological study of the wound.
5. See Brooks' analysis of *Great Expectations*, where the original traumatic scene is of vital importance in the novel. See also Freud (1982, 248), where the author hypothesises that the properties of life are generated in matter by an 'unimaginable' impact of force.
6. The theatrical quality of the first scene has often been recognised, though without paying attention to the plethora of wounds that are mentioned at the beginning of the novel. On the use of the theatrical device see Marino (1990) and, on the tragic lamentation, see Paulsen (1992, 53–66).
7. Verne (2017, 519): 'Ce n'était pas de mort, mais de cécité, qu'allait être frappé Michel Strogoff. Perte de la vue, plus terrible peut-être que la perte de la vie! Le malheureux était condamné à être aveuglé'.
8. For the appellative of the Tsar see Verne (2017, 368).
9. See, for instance, Serres (1991, 37–61) and von Koppenfels (2019).
10. Verne (2017, 631): 'cette vivante statue', 'la statue s'anima'.
11. Verne (2017, 633): 'Michel Strogoff n'était pas, n'avait jamais été aveugle. Un phénomène purement humain, à la fois moral et physique, avait neutralisé l'action de la lame incandescente que l'exécuteur de Féofar avait fait passer devant des yeux'. Verne

explains the miracle by resorting to the Leidenfrost effect, that is the evaporation of the upmost layer of a liquid when it touches an extremely hot surface, which causes the vapour layer that is produced to prevent the rest of the liquid from evaporating. See also von Koppenfels (2019).

12. On the tendency of the chivalric plot to 'become wild', which was a common feature in thirteenth-century prose romance, see Stierle (1980). On the potentially endless structure of the Renaissance romance see Mühlbacher (2019).
13. 'Può questo progresso andare in infinito, senza che le sia da l'arte prefisso o circonscritto termine alcuno' (Translation mine). For a very similar observation see Pigna (1997, 30).
14. See Salviati (1585, 71), Strozzi (1974, 336), and Sassetti (1913, 491).
15. 'Atta ad esser contenuta in una semplice lezione da una mediocre memoria' (Translation mine).
16. A crucial study of the 'mnemotechnic' role of the wound is Torre (2009, 185): 'The motif of the wound is an effective metaphoric representation of the idea of mnemonic trail; it is even the very emblem of the whole process of memory in the various chronological phases which characterise it'.
17. Chrétien de Troyes (1992, ll. 13–14): 'Et trait d'un conte d'aventure | Une mout bele conjunture'. Comfort's rendering of 'conjuncture' as 'argument' fails to do justice to the word since it does not imply the act of joining-together. In my reading, 'conjuncture' should better be translated as 'unified composition'.
18. The construction of the plot has been amply debated by scholars. R. R. Bezzola and E. Köhler follow the hypothesis brought forward by W. Kellermann, and argue that the structure of the narrative is bipartite. J. Frappier and R. G. Cook suggest that it is tripartite, but the core elements of their analyses do not differ radically from those of the aforementioned studies. See Kellermann (1936, 11–12), Bezzola (1998, 81–86), Köhler (1970, 236–261), Frappier (1959, 181), and Cook (1973).
19. Warning (1978) has recognised a principle of 'progressive repetition' in Chrétien's romances. Micha (1978) identifies symmetries and parallelisms. Köhler's suggestion that each episode is absolutely indispensable appears to be exaggerated (Köhler 1970, 250).

20. Cervantes (2015) also takes advantage of the possibility to count the giants. In *Don Quixote*, the number of adversaries is very often mentioned: two (42), four (80), 30 (103), many (615), ten (733).
21. Chrétien de Troyes (1992, ll. 3776–3777): 'Ambedui jusque as entrailles | Se sont des lances enferré'.
22. Chrétien de Troyes (1992, l. 3796): 'jusqu'as chars nues'.
23. Chrétien de Troyes (1992, ll. 5250–5251): 'Et lor grant dolor [ont] oblïee, | Que petit mais lor en sovient'. G. Sodigné-Costes has gathered a vast body of material on the scenes of wounding in chivalric romances and has read them as traces of historical reality within the fictional world of King Arthur. Yet, the fact that Erec revives and his wounds are completely healed shows that these 'realistic' elements are freely manipulated by the author. Sodigné-Costes (1994). On Erec's healing see 513.
24. Chrétien de Troyes (1994, ll. 1371–1380): '[Amors] qui si douchement le requiert, | Que par les iex el cuer le fiert, | Et cist cols a plus grant duree | Que cols de lanche ne d'espee. | Colz d'espee garist et saine | Mout tost, des que mires i paine; | [...] | Chele playe a messire Yvains | Dont il ne sera jammais sains'.
25. On the analogies and differences between physical wound and amorous wound see also the examples mentioned by MacInnes (1995, 76–97). This study focuses on the wound in the works of Tasso, Spenser, and Sidney, but does not investigate the relation between adventure and the wound, nor the narrative function of the wound more in general.
26. Chrétien de Troyes (1994, ll. 3499–3500): 'Et l'espee du col li trenche | Le char desous le maille blanche'. Yvain's folly can be healed just like a physical wound, that is with an ointment applied on his skin (Chrétien de Troyes 1994, ll. 2952–3011).
27. Boiardo (2016, 831): 'Dapoi che il conte dela dama intese | L'alta ventura e la gran maraviglia, | De trarla al fin entro al suo cor se accese; | Né fra sí pensa, o con altrui consiglia, | Ma con gran volontà la man distese | E prestamente il libro e il corno piglia; | E per meglio aconciarsi a quella guerra | La dama che avìa in cropa pose a terra'.
28. Boiardo (2016, 2065–2066): 'Già Barigano non stete a cridare, | Che odio portava occulto a il paladino | E avea voglia di sé vendicare, | Però che un Bardulasto suo cugino | Fo per man di Ruger di vita spento, | Ma lui lo avea ferito a tradimento. || Se vi racorda, e'

fu quando el torniero | Se fece sotto al monte di Carena: | Scordato a voi debbe esser de ligero, | Che io che lo scripsi lo ramento a pena!'.

29. For further details on this matter see Di Tommaso (1972, 89–97).
30. Carne-Ross (1976) (Carne-Ross recognises that there is a transition to the epic mode in the *Furioso*, but interprets it as a mistake on the author's part), Parker (1979, 16–53), Quint (1979), and Zatti (1990).
31. All references to the poem are from Ariosto (2018, 325–326): 'Tanto desire il paladino preme | di saper se la donna ivi si truova, | ch'ama assai più che tutto il mondo insieme, | né un'ora senza lei viver gli giova; | che s'in Ibernia mette il piede, teme | di non dar tempo a qualche cosa nuova, | sì ch'abbia poi da dir invano: – Ahi lasso! | ch'al venir mio non affrettai più il passo –'.
32. See Eduardo Saccone's interesting observations on the term 'cosa nuova' in Boiardo: Saccone (1974, 104–105).
33. For further information on the dialogic structure of the ottava rima see Addison (2004).
34. Ariosto (2018, 780): 'chiodi | coi quali Amore il cor gli punge e fiede'. In this case, a more literal translation of Ariosto's lines than that offered by Barbara Reynolds has been given.
35. Javitch (2010) has also questioned the hypothesis that the second half of *Furioso* is epic in tone. In my opinion, the theory that the *Furioso* has an epic ending offers a useful description of the macrostructure of the poem, but it needs to be carefully nuanced.
36. Ariosto (2018, 1509–1510): 'ma il giovene s'accorse de l'errore | in che potea cader, per differire | di far quel empio Saracin morire'.
37. Ariosto (2018, 1503): 'La lancia del pagan, che venne a corre | lo scudo a mezzo, fe' debole effetto: | tanto l'acciar, che pel famoso Ettorre | temprato avea Vulcano, era perfetto. | Ruggier la lancia parimente a porre | gli andò allo scudo, e gliele passò netto; | tutto che fosse appresso un palmo grosso, | dentro e di fuor d'acciaro, e in mezzo d'osso'.

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CHAPTER 9

The Wounded Body in Boiardo's 'Innamorato' and Ariosto's 'Orlando Furioso'

Sabrina Stroppa

In a literary genre such as the chivalric romance, in which the wielding of arms is both the 'noblest manifestation' of a knight's valour and the 'foundational and irreplaceable element' of the very genre, a substantial part of the narration consists in a series of duels (Dorigatti 2015, 72).[1] The body of the hero is thus constantly exposed to the risk of receiving a wound according to modalities which I will here try to illustrate.

I will start by looking at sixteenth-century norms of duelling. Treatises on duels of that period mainly focus on the point of honour (see Cavina 2011): nearly all of these works postdate the great chivalric romances and are generally unrelated to them.[2] They contain long and detailed prescriptions on the elements of a 'battle' (even though the titles of these treatises mention the duel, 'battle' is the term most frequently employed

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to describe it), which do not correspond exactly to the stylised descriptions of martial duels found in chivalric poetry. There are subdivisions and prescriptions on elements such as the social standing of the knight who offers himself as a champion, the choice of the judge and the place of the battle, the authority of prelates and princes to grant or deny permission to fight, the kind of affronts which justify the challenge, the possibility for two opponents belonging to different social classes to fight, the issuing of the challenge, the 'giving of the lie', the seconds, etc. …

Paride dal Pozzo, author of the treatise *Duello*, is recognised as the father of the science of duelling. *Duello* was written at the court of Aragon and published in Latin in the 70s of the fifteenth century, and it is one of the very few treatises on duelling which antedate the great chivalric romances in vogue during the period ruled over by the Estense.[3] It is only in the eighth and penultimate book of his treatise that Dal Pozzo describes the nature of the wounds received or inflicted, and he does so when he lists the various situations which can bring the duel to an end.[4]

The first section dedicated to physical injuries can be found in Chapter 8, which delineates a sort of hierarchy of the wounds that could be received by the knights engaged in a duel 'in several parts of their bodies' ('ne li membri umani'). Dal Pozzo explains, for instance, that if one of the two fighters loses his teeth and the other his eye, the latter is the one who receives the most severe blow to his honour (he will be 'più vituperato', 'more humiliated'), as the eye is a more spiritual organ and it is more closely related to the faculties of the soul. Similarly, the loss of honour is greater for the knight who receives a wound on his face than for the one who is wounded on his chest, arms, shoulders or more generically on his head: indeed, 'the sacred texts explain that the *similitudo Dei* can be discerned in the human face, and hence each stain inflicted on the face is a stain inflicted on God's image which shows through it'.[5]

The hierarchy of body parts, which is philosophical and theological in nature, thus strongly influences the judgement on the course of the duel. Dal Pozzo then adds another hierarchical classification, one based on the functions of the various body parts. Losing one's right eye implies bringing more dishonour upon oneself than losing the left one because the right eye is generally considered to be more valuable. The same can be said of the right hand, which is normally the stronger and the one which carries the sword. This list goes on and includes subtleties and reservations, such as the case of a left-handed knight who fights against a right-handed one: since the left-handed knight fights using the left-hand

as if it were the right one, the principle of the superiority of the right hand cannot be applied.

In the treatises, the detailed description of the plethora of variable ways in which duels could be resolved—and hence their meticulous codification—is closely connected on the one hand with the legal value of the duel itself as a way of solving private and public conflicts, and on the other with the defence and preservation of the honour of the fighter or of those who hire a champion for their defence.[6]

In chivalric poems, the duel is obviously the purest and most evident manifestation of the valour of a hero. The endless sequence of hand-to-hand combats that can be found in the *Innamoramento de Orlando* and which used to be depreciated by historical criticism can be associated with ritual: ritual is indeed an important element of epic and heroic narrations; 'the duel is a highly codified and regulated aspect of the profession of chivalry' (Dorigatti 2015, 76, see also 72–73).

Boiardo often describes duels in a highly stylised and hyperbolic way: his main aim was to elicit a sense of wonder in his readers by narrating the extraordinary feats of Carolingian heroes (Dorigatti 2015, 78). The narrator portrays a long series of blows, which are always 'brutal' and 'extreme', and emphasises their effect by mentioning the body parts reached by the sword. He generally does so by drawing a sort of visual line that links the movement of the weapon with the body part of the adversary which is wounded by it.

This technique can be found as early as the first Canto of the first book (I.I.78, ll. 3–4 and 7–8), which is brimming with short duels that are resolved in few actions. Ferraù, for instance, 'struck Urgano's head so hard | he split him open to the teeth', and at the same time he is hit by Argesto, who wounds him on the back of his neck with an iron mace, 'and hit behind his head so hard | blood poured from Feragutos' face'.[7] These are all descending blows which hit the head: the first one is implicitly characterised as lethal (the head is split in two), while the second, struck at the strong Ferraù, draws blood, but, instead of weakening him, it rather stokes his ardour: 'This made him even fiercer yet, | for he was one who had no fear. | He brought that giant to the ground, | cleaved from the shoulders to the waist' (I.I.79, ll. 1–4; Boiardo 2004, 13).[8] A few lines later, Ferraù strikes a sideways blow 'con la spada bassa': the position of the sword—which is not perfectly described by the English translation 'aiming low'—offers a hint as to where the blow will fall. Indeed, Ferraù's

sword cuts off his enemy's legs, although they are 'protected by chain mail' ('coperte di maglia': I.1.81, ll. 5–8).

Among all these countless swords which cut off limbs, there is also an expected but miraculously avoided wound, that is the wound which Argalia and Ferraù wish to inflict on one another at the beginning of the narration. Their duel is narrated in the second Canto of the first book, which opens with the revelation that both of them were made invincible by magic: one possesses an enchanted armour, the other an enchanted body (I.2.1, ll. 5–6; Boiardo 2004, 15: 'The plates and mail of one were charmed, | the other charmed in all except | his paunch').[9] The reader already knows that the duel is bound to end in a draw. A comic effect is thus produced when the two opponents, who were both initially convinced that they would easily kill their adversary with one of their extraordinary blows, are astonished to see that their swords repeatedly bounce off each other's body without ever drawing blood (I.2.4, ll. 1–4 and I.2.5, ll. 5–8; Boiardo 2004, 15: 'But when he saw his polished sword | bounce to the sky and not draw blood, | he was so terrified, so shocked, | the hairs rose on his back and neck [...] Yet here his blade had no effect | the magic helmet blocked his edge. | I don't write that he raged, but, dazed, | he did not know if he was dead').[10]

The movements of the swords, which are followed by the fighter's eyes, indicate that the duel is depicted through the creation of a series of dynamic lines which link the weapon with the body of the adversary: the eyes of the hero direct the movements of the sword and judge the effects produced by them. The narrator, though, can also draw attention to the body part that will be wounded before the duel takes place. That is the case in Canto VII, where Olivieri slaughters many unnamed Saracens and then faces Straciabera, 'the Indian king of Lucinor, | whos mouth showed fangs like some wild boar' (I.7.6, l. 8). The rhyme emphasises the beastly aspect of the enemy's monstrous mouth, which is hit by the extraordinary sword Altachier. Because of Altachier the combat is very brief: 'Oliver | drove Altachier between the eyes, | between the fangs, of Stracciaberra | and cut his swarthy face in half' (I.7.7, ll. 3–4; for both citations see Boiardo 2004, 65).[11]

Wounds are thus either almost ignored by those who receive them or they are deadly, but they can also be represented as producing debilitating physical effects which compel the opponents to interrupt the duel. At the beginning of the same canto, Ogier the Dane has to withdraw from the 'hard, horrendous, cruel war' that was being fought around Paris in

order to have his wounds treated, wounds which he received in the fight against Urnasso and his steed (I.7.2, ll. 1–2; Boiardo 2004, 64: 'The Dane received three separate wounds | and went to have them balmed and bound').[12]

As is evident from the few octaves mentioned so far, the wound draws attention to the body of the hero: while the lethal blow, the one which ends the fight, splits the enemy's head or body in two, thus implicitly putting an end to his life, the curable wounds are the only ones that bleed. It also seems that blood only gushes from the bodies of the main heroes, thus showing that they are alive and vigorous: on the contrary, the enemies resemble puppets, bodily entities made of inert matter, which do not bleed even if they are split in two.

That is the case in the fight described between the end of Canto IV and the beginning of Canto V of Book I: the giant Orione has kidnapped Ricciardetto and, at the end of Canto IV, Boiardo keeps his readers in suspense, showing them Rinaldo's desperate tears at the sight of Ricciardetto being dragged away, and leaving them uncertain about the outcome of that battle: 'the end of this uncertain fight | that, as I said, began at dawn, | lasted all day, and still goes on' (I.4.89, ll. 6–8; Boiardo 2004, 44).[13] The sole purpose of that allusion to the length of the battle is to create suspense at the end of the canto, as is evidenced by the fact that the fight ends after just a few blows at the beginning of the next one: Rinaldo wields the sword with both hands and opens a gash in the thigh of the giant Orione, who fights naked because his skin is 'black', 'so thick and hard' (I.5.1, l. 7; Boiardo 2004, 45). That wound and the sight of the blood gushing from it provoke the giant's wrath, who lets out feral sounds of anger (I.5.3, ll. 6–8; Boiardo 2004, 45: 'When Orione felt hot blood | that damned soul bellowed like a bull | and tossed aside his prisoner').[14] And yet, when he receives the fatal stroke of the powerful sword Fusberta, Orione falls to the ground split in two halves, and no mention of his blood is made (I.5.5, ll. 7–8).

The sight of blood gushing from his wounded body can either elicit the combatant's rage, as is the case with Orione, or redouble the hero's valour and energy. As has been pointed out above, the latter effect is produced when Ferraù is wounded, but many other examples can be mentioned, such as the violent battle fought at Rocca Crudele between Rinaldo and the horrible monster born from Stella's corpse. The monster is once again endowed with a formidable body which needs no armour as its hide is 'sì dura e tanto grossa | che nulla cosa la porìa tagliare' (I.8.59, ll. 3–4;

Boiardo 2016, 572).[15] The fight is thus uneven: in the first lines of the canto, the paladin desperately delivers a series of blows that produce no effect, while the claws of the monster destroy his armour. The wounds he receives, though, redouble his combative fury, and he tests his courage right when he is nearly vanquished (I.8.62, ll. 1–4):

> Four times Ranaldo had been wounded,
> but he showed unsurpassed resolve
> and courage. Though he'd thought he'd die
> and he poured blood, his fury grew. (Boiardo 2004, 81)[16]

Shedding blood in battle and seeing one's own blood pouring out of one's apparently invulnerable body thus generally stokes the 'furore', the military ardour. It is as if heroes could not accept to receive a wound, which damages their chivalric *virtus*.

The wound, though, is often lethal. While the monstrous enemies and the Saracens die without much consideration, the death of the main heroes is preceded by an interruption in the narrative and by authorial interventions that have a pathetic tone.[17] This is what happens when Argalia is killed by Ferraù, whose sword pierces through his enemy's groin: arterial blood immediately gushes from that part of the body and the flow is copious and unstoppable.[18] Boiardo mentions the wound and immediately comments with an expression of pain which reveals the gravity of the situation: 'But Feragu had drawn a knife | and down low, where no armor joined, | he reached and stabbed him through the groin. | Heavenly God, what a great pity!' (I.3.61, ll. 5–8; Boiardo 2004, 31).[19] Even the knight perceives the seriousness of his condition and addresses the enemy who has defeated him with a voice anguished and tired, asking him to be buried with military honours (I.3.62, ll. 5–6; Boiardo 2004, 31: 'He realized that his life was lost | and in anguished voice, and tired, | he turned to Feragu and cried …').

Argalia's death and Ferraù's breaking of his promise are notoriously two of the first motifs through which Ariosto links his narration with that of Boiardo. The *Furioso*, though, appears radically different from the *Innamorato* from its very beginning: while Boiardo's work is studded with duels which culminate as early as the first book with the remarkable and repeatedly interrupted combat between Orlando and Agricane,

which begins in Canto XV and continues until Canto XIX, the paradigmatic feature of Ariosto's poem is the frequent deployment of omission and narrative deferral.

The blood of the paladins is not shed in the first cantos: Ferraù and Rinaldo interrupt the 'crudel battaglia' in which they are engaged at their first clash because the object of their contention, Angelica, has fled away—a touch of irony on the author's part—(1.17-ff.; Ariosto 1975–1977, I, 121: 'Cruel are then the deadly blows that hail …'). The first serious fight portrayed in the poem ends with a blow to Sacripante's honour rather than to his body (a blow which is once again inflicted because of Angelica): the king is unhorsed but not wounded—it is his horse that dies—by a white knight, who is actually a woman, Bradamante, as he will later find out to his great humiliation (1.60-ff.).[20] Another wound, in this case a love wound rather than a war wound, is that inflicted on Orlando when he beholds Olimpia tied to a rock on the isle of Ebuda. The paladin is covered in blood which is not his own but rather that of the sea monster he has defeated without receiving a scratch: it's only when he sees the naked body of the beautiful woman that his heart is pierced (11.66, ll. 7–8; Ariosto 1975–1977, I, 361: 'For, gazing on her eyes, her hair, her brow, | He's wounded in the heart and knows not how').[21]

In the first cantos of the *Furioso*, the duels are indeed more like martial games than fierce battles, as is testified by the long description of the blows delivered by Orlando and Sacripante, who fail to wound their opponent but demonstrate that they are 'masters in their art' (2.9, l. 2; Ariosto 1975–1977, I, 140), or by the protracted battle of enchantments fought by the wizard Atlante mounted on a hippogryph against Gradasso and Ruggiero (2.50-ff.) and, later, against Bradamante (4.17-ff.).

It is thus no coincidence that the first knight who dies is the unjust Polinesso, who faces Rinaldo in a judicial duel in the presence of the King of Scotland with the awareness that he is fighting for a lost cause, and cannot hide his shame and fear while couching his lance and preparing to charge (5.88, ll. 1–2; Ariosto 1975–1977, I, 219: 'There on the jousting-field he stands, forlorn, | With trembling heart, his cheek an ashen grey').[22] Rinaldo appears instead perfectly calm and collected because he has accepted to fight on behalf of Ginevra for two good reasons: she is a woman oppressed by an unjust law, and he has had a proof of her innocence. Thus, he points his weapon against the enemy with perfect coordination of hand and mind (5.88, ll. 5–8; Ariosto 1975–1977, I, 219: 'Rinaldo rides headlong in mighty scorn, | Intending with one stroke to

win the day. | His expertise is equal to the test: | His weapon pierces his opponent's breast').[23] It is immediately evident that the wound he inflicts on Polinesso is lethal, so much so that Polinesso realises at once that he is about to die, begs his adversary for mercy, and confesses his crime to the King and the court, who are witnessing the duel (stanza 89).

Postponed duels, though, which are not mortal nor bloody, are by all means predominant in the first part of the *Furioso*. Freed from Atlante's magic castle, Orlando, Ferraù, and Sacripante argue over the privilege of chasing Angelica and they give each other the lie (12.38–46). In accordance with the knightly code of honour, the giving of the lie triggers a fight between Orlando and Ferraù, who are both skilful swordsmen and thus merely circle each other in a series of leaps and thrusts, without ever being able to reach the body of their adversary: 'In all the world, no other pair, I'd say | are so well matched in daring and in strength | And long they keep each other at arm's length' (12.47, ll. 5–7; Ariosto 1975–1977, I, 377).[24] While Boiardo insists on the wondrous and extremely powerful blows of his heroes so as to elicit wonder in his readers, Ariosto tends to emphasise that the knights who populate his poem are equal in strength and valour: this translates into a series of duels that are depicted as skilful martial games. In those duels, *intentio* is more important than might. For that reason, wounds are rare to find in the first cantos.

Among all these single combats which put the valour of the 'knights of yore' ['cavalieri antiqui'] to the test without necessarily being bloody, the savagery with which Rodomonte kills the enemies during the siege of Paris clearly stands out. The mighty Saracen 'his cruel sword no rank or standing heeds' and slaughters many knights indiscriminately, so that his sword drips with blood (16.24, l. 6; Ariosto 1975–1977, I, 484). The list of his countless victims conveys his overwhelming strength: wherever he treads, chunks of butchered bodies fly into the air, rivers of blood fall from the city walls (14.121, ll. 5–8; Ariosto 19751975–1977, I, 441: 'Alas! How many Frenchmen's skulls are split, | And larger tonsures cut than friars wear! | Heads fly before the fury of his blows | And down the walls a crimson river flows') and the bodies of the Christians are cut in half as if they were made of lifeless flesh.[25] The following lines focus closely on those wounds, wounds which either do not bleed (14.123, ll. 7–8: 'Orghetto of Maganza sliced in twain'; 14.125, ll. 1–2: 'He cuts in two Count Louis of Provence | And splits the breast of Arnald of Toulouse') or bleed only when they end the life of those who received them (14.125, l. 4: 'their souls flew from their bodies while their warm blood gushed

out').[26] These are by no means the same hyperbolic, 'wonderful' descriptions of the battle upon which Boiardo so frequently dwelled: the proem to Canto XV merely demonstrates that Rodomonte behaves as a vicious and inhuman leader, showing no regard for the lives of his men.

While the Christian soldiers receive the honour of being mentioned by their name when they are about to be killed, the same cannot be said for the warriors who fight on the 'wrong' side. This is evident when the soldiers hired by Cimosco, who are intimidated by the bad power of their lord's weapon, agree to ambush Orlando and engage him in a blatantly uneven fight (there are thirty of them against one, as is mentioned in 9.64, l. 5): they are all pierced through like frogs by Orlando's lance. Another example of that narrative strategy is offered by the episode of the nine men who decide to face Marfisa in Alessandretta: Ariosto carelessly lists the soldiers who are killed but refuses to name them. It goes without saying that 'fighting on equal terms [...] was a necessary condition for the duel to have probative value' (Erspamer 1982, 164), and each attempt to abuse one's power in order to overwhelm the adversary ('supercheria') was harshly condemned in chivalric treatises, as is also testified by Ariosto's poem.[27] Thus, in uneven fights, those who violate the rules of chivalry—although they obey those of the city, which they should nonetheless recognise as unfair—are denied the honour of wounds and even that of being called by their name. Theirs are bodies 'of dough', which do no bleed because those who own them do not live ethically. Those disloyal soldiers form an indistinguishable mass against which the hero strikes powerful blows that almost seem to cut the strings of many puppets instead of ending human lives. Attacked by the 30 men sent by Cimosco, Orlando rests his lance 'et uno in quella e poscia un altro messe, | un altro e un altro, che sembrar di pasta; | e fin a sei ve n'infilzò, e li resse | tutti una lancia...' (9.68, ll. 1–6).[28] Similarly, Marfisa 'so wide she slits her first opponent's breast, | It was as though he took the field quite nude', and then tackled another adversary and afterwards another: 'So fierce a jolt she gave the second foe, | So terrible a shock she gave the third' (19.82, ll. 1–2; 19.83, ll. 1–2; Ariosto 1975–1977, I, 604).[29] Only the black knight, who stood aside and refused to fight at uneven odds, is granted the honour of being named, the honour of a lengthy and impressive—albeit bloodless—duel, and the privilege of resting after such a long combat.

The additions to the 1532 edition of the *Furioso* are ordered so as to preserve the original geometrical and numerical centrality of the episode

of Orlando's madness, which is the real turning point of the narrative. However, as far as the subject of this study is concerned, there seems to be another relevant turning point, which can be identified with the deaths of Zerbino and his beloved Isabella. Zerbino's death, which significantly takes place in Canto XXIV (the same canto in which Orlando's madness is portrayed), occurs as a result of a long duel. During that duel the author employs a simile, which will be mentioned again later: he compares the knight with a hound, but one which fights on uneven terms against a boar (24.62, l. 1; Ariosto 1975–1977, II, 44: 'Just as a hound will rush towards the boar').[30] In that fight against the cruel Mandricardo, whose strength is redoubled by Hector's enchanted weapons, of which he had gained possession, 'poco a Zerbin vale esser mastro | di guerra' (24.66, ll. 5–6; Ariosto 1975–1977, II, 45: 'Zerbino's courage and | His skill in war play now but little part'): after a series of blows which he skilfully and desperately dodged, 'non può schivare al fin, ch'un non gli arrivi' (24.63, l. 8; Ariosto 1975–1977, II, 44: 'Although the prince avoided many blows, | One finally was sure to come too close'). This is first time a paladin dies in the poem, and he is also one of its main heroes: Medoro's nearly lethal wound had significantly been treated by Angelica a few cantos earlier, thus originating an important narrative line. At this stage of the narrative, though, the *Furioso* still mostly displays relatively bloodless duels which appear as martial games. The fist mortal wound is thus famously depicted as dripping a 'rubiconda riga' of blood on Zerbino's body, and it is dignified by the comparison with a 'bel purpureo nastro' sewed on a silver cloth by the hand of one's beloved lady (24.65, ll. 7–8 and 24.66, ll. 1–4; Ariosto 1975–1977, II, 45: 'in a crimson stream the blood ran hot', 'a scarlet band | Of ribbon').

Isabella's deadly wound, which she receives voluntarily at the hand of the 'imprudent' ['incauto'] Rodomonte, is analogously mitigated both by the 'clear voice' ['chiara voce'] which stems from her severed head and invokes the name of her beloved, and by the judgement on that act, 'incomparabile e stupendo', pronounced by the narrator and by God (29.26, ll. 1–4, and 29.28, ll. 1–2; Ariosto 1975–1977, II, 186–187: 'On such heroic courage God confers | Encomium'). These are thus two deaths in which the harm done to the body results in the glorification of the loving spirit.

Yet, as the narrative unfolds to its conclusion, the poem darkens and gradually progresses towards its bitter end (see Javitch 2010). The depiction of the deaths in battle also darkens and takes on a more tragic

tone. Canto XXXIX, which is also important because 'the storyline set in Europe and that set in Africa converge', is 'decisive and marks the beginning of a downward spiral' (Bozzola 2012, 53 and 54; see also Segre 1966, 21–22). Orlando's return to the battlefield once he has been cured of his folly has an immediate effect on Agramante's 'foolish courage' ['folle ardir']: the African king is in a difficult situation, which is exacerbated both by Orlando's participation in the siege of Biserta, which does indeed fall, and by the defeat of the fleet which was retreating towards Africa at the hand of Dudone.[31] Those events mark an unsettling victory, one that is 'brutal and bloody, aimed at exterminating an already helpless foe' (Matucci 1997, 15). The spectacle of Biserta's demise is a painful reminder of the deadly and catastrophic nature of war:

> The dead lie everywhere; from countless wounds
> A swamp has formed which more repellent is,
> And darker, hen the quagmire which surrounds
> The Fury-ridden battlements of Dis. (40.33, ll. 1–4; Ariosto 1975–1977, II, 463)[32]

In this context, Ariosto draws on rhetorical and lexical elements which he had already employed in the first half of his poem in order to charge them with tragic undertones. A relevant example is the duel between Rinaldo and Sacripante for the possession of Baiardo and for Angelica's love, which has been mentioned above. That episode was introduced by the simile of the 'due can mordenti', which, stirred by rage or by 'altro odio', draw close to each other 'digrignando i denti'and darting fiery glances, and then finally bite one another while still growling and arching their backs (2.5, l. 3; Ariosto 1975–1977, I, 139: 'two mastiffs deadly courage wage | Stirred by some jealous rivalry or hate | Baring their fangs'): that simile contributes to present the duel as a sort of brawl, fierce and noisy but not deadly. Another fight between two dogs, a mastiff and a Great Dane, is alluded towards the end of the last duel of the poem, the one between Ruggiero and Rodomonte, and it appears much different and decidedly more tragic than the previous one. The deadly fight between the two animals is condensed into the image of the mastiff thrown to the ground and subdued by the 'feroce alano' which has bitten him on the throat. Unlike wolves, dogs are not likely to recognise an alpha male, nor to submit to it in a fight, and hence they fight to exhaustion: the image thus conveys the idea that the two knights are equally valorous

and that they are fighting to the death. During such a fierce combat even the most dreadful and inevitably lethal wound, that on the jugular, does not assuage the anger and ardour of the fighter who lies on the ground but refuses to recognise his defeat.

That episode, in which Rodomonte mercilessly delivers a series of consecutive blows on Ruggiero so as to end his life,[33] is the most violent scene in the *Furioso*. Yet, the end of the poem's 'delights', which coincides with the end of the pleasant martial games scattered throughout the first half of the poem, is actually signalled by the deaths that occurred during a crucial duel, that fought in Lipadusa between Canto XLI and Canto XLII.[34]

That is a long and complicated fight of three against three, whose narrative orchestration is complex and entails frequent shifts of focus from one battlefront to another. The heroes who thought themselves invincibile and unstoppable, exempt from the afflictions that trouble other human beings, experience fear for the first time and realise to their horror that they are about to die.

Gradasso, the invincible king of Sericana, has boldly reached the place of the fight, and he engages in combat. He relies on his physical superiority, which quickly enables him to wound Brandimarte. It is the fight against Orlando, though, that insinuates danger: Gradasso is unexpectedly wounded by the first slash received from Orlando. The King had never been wounded in a duel before and, hence, that blow which wounds him 'whose blood had never been shed' ('da cui *non fu mai* tratto sangue', 41.84, ll. 2–3) comes as a surprise.

The horror of a wounded body, or rather the horror at the sight of *one's own* wounded body is conveyed by the long list of the parts of the armour pierced through by the sword: 'From helm to shield, from hauberk down to cuish, | She slices all she touches in one swish' (41.83, ll. 7–8); followed by the equally astonished enumeration of the body limbs hit by its blade: 'In face, in breast, in thigh Gradasso bore | The marks of Balisarda's swift descent' (41.84, ll. 1–2).[35]

It is indeed 'a strange thing' ['cosa strana'] to see one's robust armour being so easily pierced: that event is a sort of isolated and 'slow-motion' epiphany—'*or* gli par cosa strana … che … le tagli *or* sì'. From that moment on, Gradasso becomes merely a dismayed and almost detached spectator of that duel, a duel which he knows will be fatal for him. Gradasso does not react to the unprecedented and bizarre event of being wounded by fighting with redoubled strength, as many other knights had

done earlier in the poem. He instead delivers some cautious blows, which reveal that another shocking realisation has struck him:

> The proof is plain, he can no longer trust
> His magic arms as he was wont to do.
> More thought and greater wariness he must
> Employ, and parry more than hitherto. (41.85, ll. 1–4; Ariosto 1975–1977, II, 497)[36]

The 'proof' offered by that experience has shattered his trust in the inviolability of his armour and of his body; the wounds he received have given him a more accurate sense of his mortality and of the imminent danger—which is for the first time a *real* danger. As soon as he realises that his body can be wounded, Gradasso has no choice but to fight with 'ragion', so as to try to avert that risk; in other words, for the first time, he feels the necessity to defend himself. This is the beginning of the end for the virtuous soldiers of the *Furioso*: just a few lines later, Agramante's unexpected death brings Gradasso face to face with the inescapable gravity of his defeat and of his own death.

(Trans. by Arianna Hijazin)

Notes

1. See also Monorchio (1998), Angelozzi (1998), and Marco Cavina's extensive works (Cavina 2001, 2005, 2016).
2. One among other possible exceptions is Susio (1555), which mentions not only Homer and Greek tragic dramatists but also Ariosto (albeit sporadically): see book I, *Ragioni* contra *il duello*, cap. 4, p. 65 (the author argues that the idea of settling a wrong with the sword, 'as if the sword had an intellect', is a folly, and quotes from *Furioso* XXVII 58, 7–8: 'La mia ragion dirà mia scimitarra, | e faremo il giudicio ne la sbarra' ['I move this suit against you, and my blade | The prosecution's argument will aid'; Ariosto 1975–1977, II, 132]).
3. See Cavina (2016, 572): 'Paride del Pozzo, a native of Castellamare di Stabia, became universally recognized in the centuries to come as the "father of Duelism"'.

4. On *Duello* and its author see Cortese (1986) and Cavina (2016, 572–574). The book was soon translated and circulated into the vernacular. I will quote from an Italian edition which is chronologically close to Ariosto.
5. Dal Pozzo (1525, lib. VIII, cap. VIII) (*Quando ne la* battaglia *de oltranza, o in altra, se faranno ferite corporale neli membri humani, quale haverà maggiore honore, e laude*), page not numbered: 'perché dice la lege che la faccia de l'homo è a similitudine de Dio, e per questo non se pò bolare per iustitia uno homo in faccia, per non maculare la figura simile a la divina'.
6. See Cavina (2016, 571): 'The Science of Honour has its roots in the debates about the formalisation of the solutions to conflicts within the nobility in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries'.
7. Quotations from Boiardo (2004, 13; 2016, 204) ('Sopra de Urgano un tal colpo ha donato | che il capo insino ai denti li ha partito | […] e tanto il toca | che il sangue gli fa usir per naso e boca').
8. All italian quotations are from Boiardo (2016), where the editor Andrea Canova draws on and revises Tissoni-Benvenuti's edition of the text: 'Esso per questo più divéne fiero, | comme colui che fu sancia paura, | e messe a terra quel cigante altero, | partito dale spale ala cintura' (204).
9. Boiardo (2016, 242): 'L'un ha incantata ogni sua piastra e malia, | L'altro è fatato fuorché nela pancia'.
10. Boiardo (2016, 243–244): 'Ma poi che vide il suo brando polito | sancia alcun sangue ritornar al cielo, | per maraviglia fu tanto smarito | che in capo e in dosso se li ariciò il pelo […] L'elmo affatato a quel brando troncante | Ogni possantia di tagliare ha tolta. | Se Ferragù turbosse io non lo scrivo: | Per gran stupor non scià s'è morto o vivo!'.
11. Boiardo (2016, 503): 're de Lucinorco | ch'ha fuor de boca il dente come porco […] Tra ochio e ochio e l'uno e l'altro dente, | partendo in mezo quella facia nera'.
12. Boiardo (2016, 501): 'Dura battaglia e crudele e diversa […] Era il Danesse in tre parte ferito, | e tornò indreto a farse medicare'.
13. Boiardo (2016, 381): 'comenciò al'aurora, | e durò tutto il giorno e dura ancora'.
14. Boiardo (2016, 403): 'Quando Orïone sente il sangue caldo | Trà contra terra forte Ricciardeto, | Mugiando come un toro,

il maledeto!'. The translator, though, leaves out the author's indignant comment 'il maledeto!'.
15. Boiardo (2004, 80): 'nothing in the world could slit | its hide, which was both hard and thick'.
16. Boiardo (2016, 573): 'In quatro parte è già il baron ferito, | Ma non ha il mondo cossì facto core: | Védessi morto e non è sbigotito, | Perde il suo sangue e cresie il suo furore'.
17. On the narrator of the *Innamorato* and his explicit comments on love see Cavallo (1993), especially chapter I (*Boiardo's Narrator*).
18. In a fine article on Dante, Vittorio Bartoli and Paola Ureni drew a distinction between arterial and venous bleeding when focussing on the deaths described in the fifth Canto of the *Purgatorio* (see Bartoli and Ureni 2006).
19. Boiardo (2016, 315): 'Ma Feragù la daga
20. The author explicitly draws attention to the high quality of the armours worn by the two combatants, which 'salvaro i petti' despite the great blows delivered during the fight ['struck their breastplates, but merely with a glance'] (I 62, 7–8).
21. Ariosto (2018, 384): 'che mentre sta a mirar gli occhi e le chiome, | si sente il cor ferito, e non sa come'.
22. Ariosto (2018, 218): 'Sta Polinesso con la faccia mesta, | col cor tremante e con pallida guancia'. For the different types of duels see Espamer (1982) (Chapter VI), and Rizzarelli (2009). The typology offered by Gusmano (1987) appears to be too simplified and reductive.
23. Ariosto (2018), 219: 'mira a passargli il petto con la lancia: | né discorde al disir seguì l'effetto'.
24. Ariosto (2018, 402): 'Non era in tutto 'l mondo un altro paro | che più di questo avessi ad accoppiarsi: | pari eran di vigor, pari d'ardire; | né l'un né l'altro si poteaferire'.
25. Ariosto (2018, 478): 'Or si vede spezzar più d'una fronte, | far chieriche maggior de le fratesche, | braccia e capi volare; e ne la fossa | cader da' muri una fiumana rossa'.
26. Ariosto (2018, 479): 'Divise appresso da la fronte al petto, | et indi al ventre, il maganzese Orghetto [...] Tagliò in due parti il provenzal Luigi, | e passò il petto al tolosano Arnaldo [...] mandar lo spirto fuor col sangue caldo'. [Translator's note: Reynolds (Ariosto 1975–1977, I, 441–442) does not mention blood in the

last line that has been quoted: 'Four souls from Tours despatches in advance'].

27. See, for instance, Olevano (1620, lib. II, caso XII), *De' successi stravaganti di guanciata con superchieria*, where a famous passage of the Ariosto's *Cinque Canti* (IV 57, 3–4) is quoted.
28. Ariosto (1975–1977, I, 305): 'As if they one and all are made of dough, | In one and then another he implants | His weapon, till he's skewered at one go | No less than six …'.
29. Ariosto (2018, 659): 'aperse al primo che trovò, sì il petto, | che fora assai che fosse stato nudo […] E diede d'urto a chi venia secondo, | et a chi terzo sì terribil botta…'.
30. Ariosto (2018, 809): 'Come il veloce can che 'l porco assalta'.
31. On his reappearance see Bozzola (2012, 53) and notes.
32. Ariosto (2018, 1277): 'D'uomini morti pieno era per tutto; | e de le innumerabili ferite | fatto era un stagno più scuro e più brutto | di quel che cinge la città di Dite'.
33. See Ariosto (2018, 1510): 'E due e tre volte ne l'orribil fronte, | alzando, più ch'alzar si possa, il braccio, | il ferro del pugnale a Rodomonte | tutto nascose, e si levò d'impaccio' [Ariosto (1975–1977, II, 671): 'Raising his arm as high as would suffice, | He plunged his dagger in that awesome brow, | Retrieving it not once, but more than twice'].
34. For a more detailed analysis of that duel and its implications, see Praloran (1999), Quint (1994), Stroppa (2006).
35. Ariosto (1975–1977, II, 496–497). See Ariosto (2018, 1314): 'L'elmo, lo scudo, l'osbergo e l'arnese, | venne fendendo in giù ciò ch'ella prese […] e nel volto e nel petto e ne la coscia | lasciò ferito il re di Sericana'.
36. Ariosto (2018, 1315): 'Non bisogna più aver ne l'arme fede, | come avea dianzi: che la prova è fatta. | Con più riguardo e più ragion procede, | che non solea; meglio al parar si adatta'.

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CHAPTER 10

The Bleeding Scar: Towards a Reading of 'Gerusalemme Liberata' as the Poem of Belatedness

Giancarlo Alfano

1 A Theory of Recognition

In the ancient world the story was told of noble Scopas, who, having won the Olympic Games, organised a gaudy banquet enriched by the presence of the renowned poet Simonides of Ceos. Singing in honour of the host, Simonides made numerous allusions to Castor and Pollux, whose myth he described at length. But Scopas did not appreciate the performance, since at least half of the song had been devoted to those gods: therefore—he said—, he would pay only half of the agreed sum; the poet should ask the divine twins for the rest.

As fas as we know from Cicero's version (*De or.*, 2.86), a few minutes after this rather embarrassing scene, Simonides was demanded at the door of the palace where the party was being celebrated. He went there, but

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found no one. He made a few steps outside of the house in order to see if anybody, by any chance, was waiting for him in the street, but still nobody appeared. When was about to go back inside Scopa's house, he heard a loud sound: the roof of the venue had collapsed and killed all the people who were attending the party.

Screaming and crying, the families of the dead arrived to recover the corpses of their relatives and give them an honourable burial; but it was impossible to recognise the victims as they were all disfigured. But Simonides was a specialist in remembering: by resorting to his mental image of the banquet, where everybody was sitting at his place, he managed to give a name to the bodies.

That was the day the Art of Memory was born. Just as Simonides could remember the names of the guests through the visual scheme of the *ordered* banquet, so a number of fixed *loci* ('places' or compartments) where to arrange the things to remember (*ea quae memoria tenere vellent*) would help orators to store in their minds the things to say in their speech.

It is a famous story, told again and again from ancient times to modern ones (see Torre 2009a, 183–201). But it still deserves to be appreciated, as it establishes the difference between death, on the one side, and memory and poetry on the other. To understand this, it is useful to underline that in the classical world, poetry was regularly associated with the foundation of cities (see Horatius, *Ars poetriae*), that is, with the creation of the social chain. If human nature was based on the presence of both *ratio* and *oratio*—as opposed to the muteness of the other species—, it was because discourse helped human beings to recognise themselves as similar, able to join and live in groups. Yet, the sheer fact of death brings humans back to their old relation to Nature, to that beastly muteness. This is why funeral ceremonies were very soon included among the basic rules of the human species: a barrier had to be raised between the human living and speaking body and the silent human corpse. A barrier which was meant to be physical resulted in a specific linguistic mode that reoriented the art of memory towards poetry. Simonides' story ultimately reminds us that memory (or poetry) exists to find a place to the dead, or even to find their place.

We shall come back to the question of the place of the dead. Now it is necessary to stress a technical aspect of this art. As has been pointed out, mnemotechnics works by placing what must be remembered on a grid of fixed mental images (the *loci*) that are chosen for their cultural relevance in the context in which ones live. In ancient Rome, this grid

was represented by the route to the Forum; in the Italian Renaissance, it was represented by the image of a Theatre; in Christian times, this grid—which I would call a permanent horizon—was represented by the main events of Christ's Life and Death. Since any act of remembering through this Art is an act of repetition (I walk my way to the Forum step by step, just as I recall the Life of God's Son event after event), then it is just natural that mnemonics was used by the Christian Fathers in order to meditate daily on the Story of the Son.

This all is well-known, thanks to Jean Leclercq, who in his *L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu* (1957) underlined the importance of meditation in Benedictine culture, and to Roland Barthes, who, in 1969, discussed the work of Ignacio de Loyola and particularly his *composición de lugar*, that is the mental construction of a religiously relevant place (mount Golgotha, for instance). Finally, in 1998, Mary Carruthers offered an exhaustive reconstruction of the slow passage (400–1200 A.D.) from classical culture to Christian spirituality. In her brilliant and fascinating book, *The Craft of Thought*, Carruthers explained that the *active* power of images (*imagines agentes*, as it was said in ancient rhetoric), which *move* the memory through the faculty of imagination, played a crucial role in that passage.

In both traditions, classical and Christian, memory is conceived as neutral: indeed, it is compared to a wax tablet where scribes incised the letters; after use, those tablets could be cleared up and a clean slate was started. Simonides' myth provides another metaphor for the functioning of memory: the fall of the roof is an irreversible and traumatic event; as such, it constitutes a new horizon capable to gather the things to remember.

In Freudian terms, that fall is a 'representative of the representations', that is the interior image (*representative*) of the unconscious images (*representations*) that were originally in the outside world. In psychoanalysis, such representatives are all found in the Preconscious-system, where Language also lies: for that reason, they can freely arrive to consciousness, unlike the images they represent; and once they become conscious, they can give a new sense to the unconscious images. Human language thus produces a specific temporal quality, to which Freud used to refer as *Nachträglichkeit*: the fact of being in a belated, deferred way (see Campo 2018). Between the *now* of perception and the *now* of linguistic representation there is a divide, which is due to the unconscious movement between the actual event and the emersion of its interior image: when the

representative appears, it calls back the thing it represents and gives sense to the whole.

At this point, the permanent horizon of the *imagines agentes* shows itself as something more than a scenery in which to put the things to remember. Quite on the contrary, it is a peculiar time machine based on the dialectic between *now* and *then*, with the latter superimposing on the former.

A good example of such dialectics is the scar. As explained in the medieval *Tractatus de cicatricibus*, scars are 'signa rammemorativa' in a double sense: on the one hand, they help to remember something that happened (to me) in the past; on the other, they help people to recognise (me) as one to whom something happened in the past (see Grobner 2008). The scar is the *present* evidence of the fact of having been wounded *in the past*: as it is an actual representation of something that existed in the past (the fact of having received a wound), it realises the 'presentification', the 'being now' *of the past*.

As Paul Ricoeur has explained, western philosophy has fixed this temporal paradox in the hunting image of the footprint or trace: if 'all traces are at present', then they can be considered as the effect of an original impulse or as the sign of that impulse (Ricoeur 2005, 129–130). In other words, traces offer a present that is contemporary to the past: watching the hare's footprint, *we see now the 'then'* of its paw touching the ground. As Gilles Deleuze has put it, 'he scar is not the sign of the ancient wound, but rather of "the present fact of having received a wound"'. This produces a double paradox: (1) the 'contemporaneity of the past and the present that has been'; (2) the 'coexistence' of 'all of the past' and the 'new present with respect to which it is past' (Deleuze 1997, 105 and 110).

Indeed, a scar is not only the trace left by a wound, but the *in-sistence* of the wound at an imaginary level. It involves an imagination focussed on the body: if the art of memory is thus a technique of spatial organisation, the scar introduces us to a body-centred topic of belatedness, with the past sliding over the present in a sort of mutual transparency.[1]

2 The Cross: Narration, Affection and Politics in Tasso's Poem

The Cross, the symbol of Christian identity can be imagined as the representation of four arrows thrown from the four cardinal points towards a

common point in the middle. But it could be the result of an opposite movement as well: four arrows fired towards the four opposite cardinal points from a common point in the middle. A cross can represent convergence and divergence: a centripetal movement or a centrifugal one. This is the case in Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, with its tension between unity and multiplicity, which comes to the fore as early as the very first stanza:

> I sing of war, of holy war, and him,
> Captain who freed the Sepulchre of Christ.
> Greatly he wrought by force of mind and limb,
> And greatly suffered, nobly sacrificed.
> Vainly did Hell oppose him, Asia grim
> Vainly combined with Libya, Hell-enticed.
> Haeven favoured him and guided back, to fight
> Under his sacred flag, each errant knight. (Tasso2009b, 3)[2]

In the first two lines, the merciful captain (Goffredo di Buglione), whose aim is to deliver Jerusalem, is introduced: this is what could be called the 'teleological' level, which entails the horizontal, that is earthly, historical clash between the Crusaders and the muslim army. Line 5 introduces the second conflict, between Hell and Heaven: this is the theological level, where the direction of the plot is vertical (supramundane), with God and Lucifer, angels and demons fighting against each other. The first opposition is characterised by a centripetal force, with the captain bringing to unity the different Christian heroes in order to free the Holy City. The second opposition is axiological: as such, it is to be intended both as centripetal (if Christian values prevail in the crusaders' souls) and as centrifugal (if any commander follows his own mind and interest). All this is summarised in the last two lines of the stanza, where the flag hoisted in the Christian camp (whose holiness is underlined by the *enjambement*) is opposed to the wandering/mistaking comrades of the captain. If the rhyme *santi:erranti* shows the impossible conciliation of the two adjectives (santi ≠ erranti), that means that the centripetal drive towards Jerusalem is contradicted by an opposite impulse.

As shown by the semantic distribution in the stanza, Goffredo represents the centripetal pole, while his comrades are to be placed at the opposite side. If the Captain 'ridusse' (centripetal) his 'compagni erranti' (centrifugal), then the poem clearly moves back and forth in a dialectic tension between *erranza* and *riduzione*.

This tension has formal implications. ‘Compagni erranti’ reminds the reader of the tradition of the ‘cavalieri erranti’, which was pervasive in medieval and early modern literature, from Chrétien de Troyes to Matteo Maria Boiardo and Ludovico Ariosto. When Goffredo opposes the wandering inclination of his mates, he proposes in fact a standardised, univocal diegetic pattern (the Fight against the Muslims) which conflicts with the multivocal and multifocal narratives of the various knights, Rinaldo, Orlando and the others. If the latter tradition worked on the *entrelacement* technique and its retardant effects originally studied by Lot (1918) and Vinaver (1971),[3] the former was loyal to a narration that we could call ‘end-oriented’, which entails a balanced relation between the parts and the whole.

Goffredo represents the unity of the Army and its tension towards an end which is clearly declared; when the Army breaks apart, ‘the unity of the narration breaks as well’ (Residori 2009, 87). Therefore, Goffredo’s final victory is the victory of unity on variety, of the epic scheme on the romance plot.

This is coherent with Tasso’s culture, since he had read in Aristotle’s *Poetics* that poetry is firstly imitation (*mimesis*) and that, as it is imitation of men in action, poetry is firstly imitation of actions: that is, poetry is *mythos*, narrative, or, in Tasso’s Italian translation, *favola*. It is true that the narrative tension we have just recognised in the poem’s first stanza is produced by the characters’ passions, but our poet clearly stated that ‘the affections and the customs are based on the plot’ [‘gli affetti e i costumi si appoggiano su la favola’], thus implying that even the ‘interior’ construction of the characters was realised through narrative structures.[4]

The axiological tension (one *vs.* many; right *vs.* wrong; unity *vs.* multiplicity) is clearly shown a few lines after the beginning of the poem. God looks down from the Heavens considering ‘in un sol punto e in una vista’ all the world: ‘and in one flash sees all the earth and skies’ (1.7, l. 8). As He contemplates the Christian camp, and watches ‘the souls of men | to their inmost wills’ (1.8, ll. 3–4), He recognises Goffredo ‘compact | of faith and zeal’, who despises ‘the joys of earth—| the fame, the sway, the spoils’ (1.8, ll. 7–8) and remains focussed on the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre, while the other Christian princes are pulled by ‘vain ambition’, ‘pains of love’ or ‘fierce desires’. In the exiguous space of three stanzas (1.8–10) the poet presents a clear contrast between the Hero that will bring the story to its end (with the coincidence of theology and teleology) and the protagonists of possible alternative stories. Such contrast is based

on their opposite affections: the love for God (Goffredo) is opposed to greed, mundane love, thirst for glory or power ('compagni erranti'). As is evident, the poetic law according to which affections are based on the plot, can also be read the other way around: the plot ('favola') is built by the clash of affections.

Working inside the Aristotelian theory, Torquato Tasso develops the psychological dimension of his characters. The emergence of this 'logic of affections' is due to: (a) the tradition of Western rhetoric, intended as a set of verbal techniques aimed at persuading the audience by stirring their passions; (b) the tradition of modern Western lyric poetry, intended as poetry of affections, that is to say, based on the expression of the passions.[5]

In conclusion, Tasso's work on the psychology of the characters, his study of their interior reasons has consequences on the way they act (on the level of the plot) and the way they talk (on the level of style). The whole contrast between the captain and his mates comes from the poetic decision to develop the diegetic scheme on a 'sentimental' basis, to intertwine affections and diegetic structure.

Stressing the role of passions through a series of characters full 'of worry or fear or mercy or other similar disturbance' (Tasso 1964, 42: 'd'affanno o di timore o di misericordia o d'altra simile perturbazione'), Tasso develops a technique, which he calls 'parlar disgiunto', that is to say a style where the syntactical connection of the words is based more on the 'unione e dependenza de' sensi' than on syntactic conjunctions. This stylistic device relies on semantic associations aimed at influencing the sentiment of the reader, who is drawn to participate emotionally in the clash of values represented in the poem (see Tasso 1995, 216–233). This leads to Tasso's theory of suspense as the basis for poetic communication: the poet always has to keep the reader 'remains suspended and eager to read further' (Tasso 1964, 43: '*sospeso*, e desideroso di legger più oltre'). A poetical strategy of the sentiment, one could call it, that in his *Lettere poetiche* is applied to Erminia's love for Tancredi, a strand of plot which has to leave the listener suspicious, anxious to know more about it (see Tasso 1995, 77–82).

3 Vectors: Wandering and Wounds

Plot and affections give the reader the necessary instructions to understand the sense of the poem, producing that progressive disclosure that

goes together with the release of tension of suspense. This is the poetic reason for the contrast between Goffredo and his mates: if, in the poem, the ideological drive is subject to a narrative formalisation, that means that the unfolding of Truth has to coincide with the accomplishment of a task. Freeing Jerusalem (the 'end' of the story) is expressed as a desire to 'sciorre il voto', to comply with an oath to God.

This is declared from the beginning of the poem, and precisely when Goffredo delivers his first speech to his troops after having been nominated supreme commander (1.16–17). In the same moment he becomes *capitano*, Tasso's hero explains that his 'former thought' had always been 'to storm Mount Zion's noble walls' (1.23, l. 2). His purpose is to deliver Jerusalem in order to establish a new empire in Palestine, so that any devoted pilgrim will be allowed to see Christ's tomb, and pay his promised vows (1.23, l. 8: 'at the great Sepulchre to keep their vow'). In short, the narration makes the reader conceive the military effort as a tension towards the accomplishment of a vow, as though the crusaders were a peculiar kind of pilgrims.

If the war to deliver Jerusalem is a pilgrimage, and if the captain is the 'chief priest' of this endeavour, the opposite situation—*error* and *wandering*—is to be considered a wound, a laceration in the political and religious body of an army that bears the Cross as an ensign. If the centripetal movement of the arms of the Cross is a positive construction of the Christian Body (through the realisation of the vow), the centrifugal movement is a dismembering of that same Body.

A proof can be found in the eleventh *canto*, when, during the assault to the walls of the City, Goffredo personally takes the field. Discussing his choice with his generals, he explains to them that, when leaving Europe, he made the secret vow to God that he would take part in the battle: 'I silently to God swore a firm vow | to serve not only as I might command, | but also, when the time came, to appear | in nothing but a private soldier's gear' (11.23, ll. 5–8). In accordance with the rule of narrative suspension that brings to a slow but progressive unfolding of the story, these lines produce a short-circuit in the reader's memory with the first line of the poem (thus producing a 'belated effect'), where the expression 'armi pietose' synthesises the identity of the captain (1.1, l. 1): since it is merciful, Goffredo's tension towards the Sepulchre appears to be similar to the tension which spurs a pilgrim on in his long voyage to Jerusalem.

Towards the conclusion, the same association between fight and pilgrimage can be found when Tancredi declares that when he arrives in

'the place where Christ upon his cross was rent', 'Performed shall be [his] vow and pilgrimage'. Religious devotion ('pensier devoto' in the original text) implies the abandonment of one's life: if one has to die, it is better that he dies in the Holy City, in the place 'where the Immortal Man died' (19.118, l. 5): the military end is the end of the tale, and it is the end of the pilgrim's life as well. The clear overlapping of ideology and plot is even more interesting when one considers that these lines are attributed to Tancredi, the Crusader who more than anybody is distracted from his purpose by mundane affections: in the name of the Cross, the centrifugal movement of the *errore* has to be converted (just as Goffredo *ridusse*) into a centripetal one.

The coherence of Tasso's narrative construction is underlined by the reprise, in the last octave of the poem, of the terms employed in the first one, some thirteen thousand lines earlier. Both stanzas open with a direct reference to the 'captain', who, in the last eight lines, guides the Crusaders' procession to the 'santo | ostel di Cristo' (20.144, ll. 3–4). Arrived at the Sepulchre, Goffredo 'hung up his arms' ('l'arme sospende': and remember the 'armi pietose' in 1.1, l. 1) and 'there kneels to bow | at the great Sepulchre, there keeps his vow' (20.144, ll. 7–8: 'qui devoto | il gran Sepolcro adora e scioglie il voto'). With such genuflection the poem comes to its end: the 'vow' is finally 'performed', the plot concluded; the conquest of Jerusalem means the end of the poem, whose last rhymed couplet, underlining the religious nature of the military effort, makes the captain appear as a true 'functionary of God' (see Mazzacurati 1985).

As has been pointed out above, any impulse in contrast with this centripetal drive is considered a mistake ('errore'): as the verb 'errare' in old Italian meant both making a mistake and wandering; the moral or juridical, or even military error is always considered to be a centrifugal vector. If the occurrences of the word 'errore' in its various morphological forms (*errore*, *errare*, *errante*, *erranza*, and so on…) were analysed, it could be noted that this semantic field is always opposed to a straight movement.

For instance, this is evident in the poem's dedication to Alfonso II of Este, where Tasso applies to himself the typical, maritime metaphor of the 'peregrino errante', who, having been 'fra l'onde agitato e quasi absorto' is finally led 'in porto' by his 'magnanimo' master (1.4, ll. 1–5):

> And you, magnanimous Alfonso, who
> Snatch me from fortune's rage, who guide to port

> me, errant pilgrim, battered to and from
> by waves and rocks that made my spoil their sport:
> accept these sheaves with gracious eye .... (Tasso 2009b, 3)[6]

The straight line of a safe and rational route is thus to be conceived as the opposite of the one followed by Tasso, who, for his part, in that same first canto, condemns the ludicrous stories of king Arthur's knights and their wanderings (1.52, ll. 5–6): 'Hush, Argo's Minyans, Arthur's retinue | of knights; hush, paper dreams of errant stars' ['taccia Artù que' suoi | erranti, che di sogni empion le carte']. The dreams of the Arthurian tradition are silenced in front of the epic movement towards Jerusalem.

The semantic coherence of the *errore*-system in Tasso's poem has an obvious political meaning which is revealed by another interesting occurrence of the term, in the first canto, when Pietro 'the hermit' makes Goffredo general captain of the Christian Army and declares that 'Where one sole man does not control the law | [...] | their being, government will veer off course' (1.31, ll. 1–4: 'Ove un sol non impera [...] | ivi errante il governo esser conviene'): the monarchic form—suggests the poet—is the sole guarantee for a firm and consistent power, capable of restraining all the impulses that conflict with that centripetal movement that has been illustrated above.[7]

4 Without, Again: Tancredi and the Bleeding Scar

The double conclusion of the *Liberata*, with the conquest of the Holy City and the death or subordination to the Christian faith of the most important enemies may lead to an interpretation of the poem as an unfaceted ideological product of the Counter-Reformation era. Quite on the contrary, Tasso's major work could be considered an 'ambiguous' one, just as his pastoral drama, *Aminta* (see Da Pozzo 1983).

It may be true that in the theoretical horizon of the *gens de lettre*s of the Cinquecento there was no room for the idea that artistic representation can produce 'perverted effects', as Scarpati (1990, 3–34) puts it; yet, in the *Liberata,* attention should be paid to a 'perverted' logic undermining its allegedly transparent ideology. It is of course a logic of the forms, based on the imagery and the rhetorical figures considered as a coherent but not necessarily conscious system, just as Zatti (1983)

suggested some 40 years ago when he convincingly argued that the axiological opposition between the Christian and the Heathen (as the Muslims are called in Tasso's poem) was contradicted by the distribution of cultural values in the two fields.

Elsewhere I tried to discuss the ambiguity of the *Liberata* at different formal levels (see Alfano 2011, 1–38), here I will focus on the relation between wound and scar, which is, in my opinion, the literary representation of a more profound dialectic between recognition and remembrance. One of the best examples of such dialectic can be found in Tancredi's story.

In the second paragraph, the contrast between centripetal and centrifugal movements has been discussed. Love, a typical passion of heroes (*amor hereos*) according to a long western tradition, is considered an error in Tasso's poem.[8] As such, it represents a deviation from the straight line that should bring the Crusaders to Jerusalem. In Tancredi's case, the Christian hero is distracted by his feelings for Clorinda: he fell in love with the 'pagan' woman during the armed clash (1.46–49), but she ignores his affection, making vain any possibility of contact between them.

Indeed, the two can get in touch only in the typical forms of war that is during an assault or in a duel. An example of the former can be found in the third canto, when Tancredi tries to reveal his love to Clorinda (3.27–29) just before she is injured by a Christian Soldier (3.30). As the episode heralds the mortal night duel in Canto 12, it shows a typical device of Tasso's narrative technique: the transformation of metaphors into a narrative. Such is the case of the metaphoric 'flames of love' that become the true flames of a pyre in the episode of Olindo and Sofronia in the second canto. And such is the case of the traditional metaphor of the 'battle of love', which literally becomes an armed duel. As a consequence, the wound of Cupid's arrow (supposed to transform hate into love so as to close Diana's temple and open that of Venus) is taken as an effective injury procured in a hand-to-hand combat. This does not mean that the European erotic imagery established from Ovid to Petrarch is cancelled; but that it is ambiguously applied to a real military narrative.

The situation is quite simple: one night Clorinda comes out from Jerusalem in order to destroy the Crusaders' war machines; while she is trying to get back to the City chased by Christian soldiers, the Muslim guards shut the door and she is left alone outside. Clorinda runs away, but Tancredi catches up with the beloved woman, whom he cannot recognise

as she is wearing an armour that is not her usual one. The fight begins, and it is ambiguously depicted by Tasso both as a violent, bloody clash between two fierce enemies trying to destroy each other, and as the dance of two lovers unknown to each other (12.56, ll. 5–8 – 57, l. 4):

> At last, thus tangled in their fierce debate,
> they draw too close for sword-strokes. All the same,
> they strike out with their pommels, crazed and rash,
> and butt with shields, and make their helmets clash.
> Three times the warrior has embraced the maid
> in his huge arms; and from that clinging grasp
> as many times she has burst free, dismayed
> to know no lover's, but a fierce foe's clasp. (Tasso 2009b, 228)[9]

In the end, Tancredi succeeds in hurting her deadly (12.64):

> But now (behold!) the fatal hour arrives
> That at its end Clorinda's life will owe.
> His sword's point he at her white bosom drives;
> Greedy to drink her blood it plunges. Lo!
> The tender, gold-lace coverings it rives
> That clasp her lovely breasts, and a hot flow
> Spreads on her shift. She knows she's dying and,
> Feeling her feet grow weak, can scarcely stand (Tasso 2009b, 229).[10]

Clorinda is then a 'vergine | trafitta' (a 'Pierced virgin'): the blood coming out of her 'fair bosom' is the sign of a pardoxically lost virginity and it denies her any future, let alone the possibility of ever becoming a mother.

If love is *error* and religion is the straight route to the end of the story, then it is not surprising that Tasso makes Clorinda ask Tancredi to baptise her. Having discovered just before the lethal night mission that her true parents were Christians, she wants to reconcile herself with her origins before dying. Tancredi runs to a stream nearby in order to gather some water for the merciful office, but the following scene reverses the evangelic episode of Christ at the river Jordan implicitly evoked at this point of the text (12.67):

> Not far, a little rill was murmuring
> From its cool source, hid by the mountain's height.

He ran there, filled his helmet at the spring,
And came back sadly for the solemn rite.
Raising her visor with his hands, trembling,
He bared the unknown brow unto the light.
He saw it, knew it, horror in his eyes.
Ah woe! To see, to know, to recognize! (Tasso 2009b, 230)[11]

The helmet hides Clorinda's face and makes her unrecognisable, but when Tancredi raises the visor, her face becomes immediately visible: the lover can embrace his beloved, but only for a brief moment before she dies.

With a splendid example of 'parlar disgiunto', the enjambement underlines here the ambiguity as it stresses both Tancredi's sentimental reaction to the vision and the fact that *that* vision is the effect of an act of recognition that produces a permanent loss. Beneath the surface of the regular syntax of the phrasal verb 'restò senza' divided from its complement 'e voce e moto' ('for the fact of having recognised her, he remained without voice or motion'), a possible absolute construction of the verb seems to emerge: 'he saw her (*la vide*), he recognised her (*la conobbe*), and he remained without [her] (*e restò senza*)'.[12] The stroke that pierced Clorinda's body and violated her virginity leaves a mark on Tancredi's face opening a similar mortal wound.

When Tancredi, who has fainted for the shock, recovers, he curses himself in a series of lines which are revealing for our theme and the dialectic to which I alluded above (12.77, ll. 1–4):

'Alive amid my torments and my cares,
my justly vengeful Furies, crazed, astray,
trembling I'll haunt the gloomy desert lairs
where memories of my first crime crowd my way'. (Tasso 2009b, 232)[13]

In his desperate monologue, Tancredi creates an interference between wandering and error, re-activating the semantic field upon which the previous paragraph focussed: he has been led on a transverse route by his love for a Muslim warrior; as a consequence, he will be condemned to an erratic life.

But Tasso's text tells more than that. Some twenty stanzas later, Tancredi celebrates Clorinda's funeral and, talking in front of the place where she has been buried, he says that the Furies of vengeance will chase him forever and will only leave him in peace when he dies. At that time,

after living 'errando' around her tomb, he will be finally hosted in that same earthy womb ('dentro al tuo *grembo* accolto', 12.99). If the first error consisted in not recognising Clorinda, the subsequent wandering is both a re-production and a development of that original blindness.

This is evident in Canto 13, when Tancredi receives the order to free the Forest of Saron from the evil presences that have settled there. The hero enters the woods and advances safely. He overcomes every spell without fear, but when he strikes with his sword the branches of a cypress tree, he hears a noise which sounds like a moan coming out of a tomb (13.41, ll. 7–8: 'and hears the gashed wood, like a tomb, exhale | a dolorous and a muffled groan or wail', 'quasi di tomba, uscir ne sente | un indistinto gemito dolente') and which reproaches him for his gesture (13.42):

> […] 'Alas! Too much', it cried,
> 'have you, O Tancred, wronged me! Now let be!
> From limbs that to me, through me, once supplied
> A glad home, you've already driven me.
> Would you now maul the trunk where I abide
> Wretchedly fixed by ruthless destiny?
> Would you assail (ah, cruel and perverse!)
> Your dead foes in their very sepulchres? (Tasso 2009b, 248).[14]

By dismembering the tree (13.43, ll. 7–8: '… If you | hew down their wood, you murder what you hew', 'micidial sei tu, se legno tronchi'), Tancredi has violated Clorinda once again, even though only in his imagination. This textualisation of the body (Torre 2009b, 39), with its allusion to cultural memories,[15] recalls what has been explained in the opening paragraph about mnemotechnics and its connection with the place of the dead. Moving from Clorinda's real tomb to a hallucinatory one, the Christian hero confirms his double *errore*, and proves himself incapable of interacting with the remembrance of the past.

Tancredi, we might say, is unable to process his loss: the funeral ceremony, even though it is carried out with great attention and love (12.94 ff.), turns out to be a vain operation. On the contrary, he appears to be a desecrater of tombs, condemned to see the 'shadows' and to live on the border between life and death: as a consequence, he cannot find the place of the dead.

The fact is that the Christian prince is still stuck at that extraordinary enjambement that seals together the recognition of his beloved and

the permanent loss of her. Having removed her helmet, he has seen her, known her, and remained without her: the absence being fixed in a scene from which he will no longer detach himself, forced as he is into that 'compulsion to repeat', which in Freudian terms is the necessity to 'passively' undergo an experience which we are 'unable to influence' (see Freud 1977, 189–249).

Tancredi remains lost in the tangle of that same forest in which the knights of the romance tradition had freely wandered. The formal repetition of the duel scene, with the hero hitting a body that he does not recognise (in that it is transformed into a tree), belatedly gives sense to the previous scene, in which he had hit the body of his beloved, whom he had not recognised because she was protected by an unknown armour. But the same fact that this scene of repetition is set in a forest, that is to say in a classic Arthurian scenery, shows that that world has still a profound symbolic power, and it assures that return of repressed cultural material which is typical of all great poetry.[16]

Re-evoking the wound in Clorinda's virgin body, the tree dismembered in the wood by Tancredi belatedly gives meaning to the bloody duel, creating a traumatic connection between the hero and his error, and facing him with the necessity to recognise it. If Tasso was sincere in suggesting that Canto 13 is the centre of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*,[17] then the reader is asked to conceive the scar as an ever-bleeding persistence: the scar is not only a sign that helps him to recognise the nature of the hero, but also the mark of the persistence of the past in the present. The spatial opposition between the linear, centripetal path leading to the due end and the labyrinth of those who find themselves constantly wandering reveals itself as a time paradox.

(Trans. By Arianna Hijazin)

Notes

1. See Weinrich (1976, 1999a, 1999b).
2. Tasso (2009a, 55): 'Canto l'arme pietose e'l capitano | che'l gran sepolcro liberò di Cristo. | Molto egli oprò co'l senno e con la mano, | molto soffrì nel glorioso acquisto; | e in van l'Inferno vi s'oppose, e in vano | s'armò d'Asia e di Libia il popol misto. | Il Ciel gli diè favore, e sotto a i santi | segni ridusse i suoi compagni erranti'.

3. See also Praloran (1999) and Villoresi (2005).
4. See Tasso (1964). For an interesting evaluation of *affections* in the reception of Tasso's masterwork between the sixteenh and the seventeenth Century, see Careri (2005), who noted that the ottave of the *Liberata* were regarded by figurative artists as a repertoire which could be useful to describe the various forms of human sensibility, from wrath to love, from pathetic to tragic.
5. At least since Fredi Chiappelli's analysis was published (1981), critics of Tasso's literary works have generally observed that he knew the great rhetoricians of Late Antiquity, namely Demetrius Phalereus and the anonymous *De sublime* treatise (see also Grosser 1992). Tasso's stylistic approach has important consequences on the plot, as has been demonstrated by Raimondi (1980), who has shown that the narrative scheme of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* derives from a development of the Aristotelian tragic plot.
6. Tasso (2009a, 56).
7. For another occurence of the couplet *erranti*: *santi*, see 14.18, ll. 7–8: 'Così al fin tutti i tuoi compagni erranti | ridurrà il Ciel sotto i tuoi segni santi' ('Thus Heaven at length shall, partial to thy views, | Beneath the sacred Cross each errant chief reduce').
8. See Ciavolella (1976); the excellent Beecher (1990); and Beecher—Ciavolella (eds.) (1992). In Tasso (1995, 432–444), Tasso quotes the Luquois theoretician Flaminio Nobili, who attributed 'l'eccesso dell'ira e dell'amore a gli eroi, quasi loro proprio e convenevole affetto'. He also alludes to Platonic commentaries in the second book of his *Discorsi del poema eroico*: 'non si può negare che l'amor non sia passione propria de gli eroi, perché a duo affetti furono principalmente sottoposti—come stima Proclo, gran filosofo ne la setta de' platonici—, a l'ira ed a l'amore' (Tasso 1964, 54).
9. Tasso 2009a, 773): 'D'ora in or più si mesce e più ristretta | si fa la pugna, e spada oprar non giova: | dansi co' pugni, e infelloniti e crudi | cozzan con gli elmi insieme e con gli scudi. || Tre volte il cavalier la donna stringe | con le robuste braccia, ed altrettante | da que' nodi tenaci ella si scioglie, | nodi di fer nemico e non d'amante'.
10. Tasso (2009a, 777): 'Ma ecco omai l'ora fatale è giunta | che'l viver di Clorinda al suo fin deve. | Spinge egli il ferro nel bel sen di punta | che vi s'immerge e'l sangue avido beve; | e la

veste, che d'or vago trapunta | le mammelle stringea tenera e leve, | l'empie d'un caldo fiume. Ella già sente | morirsi, e'l piè le manca egro e languente'.

11. Tasso (2009a, 780): 'Poco quindi lontan nel sen del monte | scaturia mormorando un picciol rio. | Egli v'accorse e l'elmo empié nel fonte, | e tornò mesto al grande ufficio e pio. | Tremar sentí la man, mentre la fronte | non conosciuta ancor sciolse e scoprio. | La vide, la conobbe, e restò senza | e voce e moto. Ahi vista! ahi conoscenza!'.
12. For Tasso's use of *enjambement*, see Fubini (1946), Russo (2002, 146), Chiappelli (1957, 114–115 and 141–146), Soldani (1999), Vitale (2007, 161, 184): 'è senza dubbio forte l'incrinatura del legame proposizionale-elemento retto'.
13. Tasso (2009a, 786): 'Vivrò fra i miei tormenti e le mie cure, | mie giuste furie, forsennato, errante; | paventerò l'ombre solinghe e scure | che'l primo error mi recheranno inante'.
14. Tasso (2009a, 834): 'Tu dal corpo che meco e per me visse, | felice albergo già, mi discacciasti: | perché il misero tronco, a cui m'affisse | il mio duro destino, anco mi guasti?'.
15. The branch of the tree in the enchanted forest contrasts with the Tree of Life and the Wood of the Cross, while the burial of the beloved is opposed to the Holy Sepulcher.
16. See Orlando (1987). In this case, Arthurian material, perhaps intertwined with a Dantesque memory (the *selva*), enables the logic of the error to emerge.
17. See Tasso (1995, 45–49): 'il mezzo veramente della favola è nel terzodecimo'.

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CHAPTER 11

The Meta-physical Wound: Shakespeare's Roman Plays

Massimo Stella

> The high and excellent tragedy, that openeth the greatest wounds,
> and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue
>
> Sir Philip Sidney, *A Defence of Poesy*

1 Allegory and the Modern 'Mourning Play'

I wish to open this essay by drawing attention to the theoretical question which informs my understanding of the theme of the wound in Shakespeare's Roman plays. What do we mean by 'theme of the wound'? Do we mean 'imagery'?—that is 'a rhetorical device', a (verbal and visual) metaphor, or, more extensively, an 'oratory topic'? Or rather, is it 'Imaginary'—that is 'sign', a 'semiotic object', a corporeal/mental phantasm conveyed and expressed through language? Certainly, in sifting through possible theoretical approaches to the 'theme of the wound', we must

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take into consideration *what* is represented by the 'idea' or 'picture' *en cause*: in other words, what does 'the theme of the wound' stand for or, better, hint at? *Vulnus amoris* (the love wound) and *vulnus publicum* (the political wound)—the 'love-power dyad'—come here into play: how they inextricably merge into each other on the stage of Shakespeare's Roman plays will be the matter of the analysis presented in this study. Nevertheless, it is here fundamental to note—preliminarily—that if the theme of the wound points to the laceration of and within the individual and the collective body (love/politics), then we must infer that it cannot be considered a mere 'rhetorical *topos*'. Besides, in order to grasp this, much depends on what we mean by 'rhetoric'. Psychoanalysis and structural linguistics brought about an essential revolution in the study of rhetorical practice and the rhetorical tradition by reminding us that the unconscious speaks, as it were, 'the language of the tropes'. I will not dwell on the psychoanalytic conception any further, but I do wish to call attention to the fact that a trope is intrinsically a *fait de langage*, that is a symptomatic slip of the tongue—whether or not it is employed as a 'mere rhetorical/literary figure'. In addition to this pivotal idea, which comes from psychoanalysis and structural linguistics, I also wish to recall Walter Benjamin's reflections on the dramatic genre of *Trauerspiel*—literally the 'mourning play'—in that they constitute the most valuable point of reference in my discussion of the theme of the wound in Shakespeare's Roman plays. Namely, my main interest lies in Benjamin's thesis according to which there is a key relationship between the modern *'mourning play'* and the allegory formula that frames and encapsulate it. In his seminal work *Origin of the German Trauerspiel* (Benjamin 2019), Benjamin states that European (German, Shakespearean and Spanish)[1] modern (baroque)[2] drama emerges in the shape of a history play staging bloody court conspiracies and sinister affairs of state in which the ultimate emptiness of the experiential world is perfectly embodied. Since Power—whether it be the power of the sovereign (monarch or tyrant) or the power of the sovereign state—has lost its capacity of being effective, the World is a 'vacant thing', *res nullius*, nobody's thing: Benjamin defines it 'an emptied-out world' ('entleerte Welt', Benjamin 2019, 141), which lacks purpose and vainly seeks for some significance. This absence of meaning makes way for a chaotic equivocality (i.e. the fragmentation and multiplication of sense) which mourns 'the lost good object' (the unity of sense) through the novel phrasing of modern (baroque) dramatic verse. In a perspective not so dissimilar from Benjamin's view on German baroque

dramatists, T. S. Eliot, reflecting on the spoken quality of the metaphysical (Donnean) poetic diction, claimed that its usual course 'is not to pursue the meaning of an idea, but to arrest it, to play catlike with it, to develop it dialectically, to extract every minim of the emotion suspended in it' (Eliot 1931, 12–13). It is precisely in this attitude to language that we can find the specific feature of modern allegory, as Benjamin conceives it. Modern allegory is not 'a conventional relation between a signifying image and its signification' (Benjamin 2019, 169), and that is because the 'other' signified is lost. If allegory had been for centuries, from Mediaeval times to the Renaissance, the privileged means of the giving of meaning, whereby a certain signification (moral, political, etc.) was assigned to a correspondent element in the representation, modern sensibility brought to light an unbridgeable fissure, an unredeemable sundering between signifier and signified, so that the rhetorical device of allegorisation underwent a seachange in its function: it no longer lead to the knowledge of things; on the contrary, it returned to itself in the awareness of that lack of sense which was also the lack of being whereby the being exists: this produced the 'metaphysical shudder', a shudder which arises when experience, thought and poetic language clash with each other uncannily.[3] Hence, the art of rhetoric turned into a discovery (*inventio*) of the uncanny 'depths of language and thoughtfulness' (*Sprachtiefe*, *Tiefsinn*), and melancholy and mourning[4] were the emotional garments of that novel abyssal eloquence.

This is the line of thought I propose to follow in the understanding of the 'theme of the wound' as it appears in *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony & Cleopatra*, *Titus Andronicus*: I suggest that it should be conceived not (only) as a 'metaphor' (and as a *locus rhetoricus*), but, more widely, as an allegory in the sense intended by Benjamin, namely, as an event (a phenomenon) of language and, so to speak, as a 'route of thinking' which governs the writing of dramatic poetry in Shakespeare's Roman plays. Why the Roman Plays in particular? The 'theme of the wound' and the 'Roman theme' are strictly interrelated, the Roman scenario being the mytho-historical setting in which the playwright unfolds a mournful anatomy of power that is thoroughly imbued with images, visions and figurations of all sort of wounding deeds and self-wounding actions. Why is there such an interplay of 'binomials': Rome-Wound, Power-Rome, Power-Wound? How does the allegory of the wound affect the representation of power? And how do the love

wound and the political wound mingle with each other in the 'Roman allegorisation' of power? These are some of the questions that this study will try to answer.

2 Coriolanus I: The Body Anti-politic. Rhetoric, Language and the Image of the Wound

Coriolanus is one of the most elusive of Shakespeare's plays—it is quite unseizable. What is this drama about? Stanley Cavell, following in the steps of Kenneth Burke (see Burke 1966), came to a fundamental conclusion about *Coriolanus*, an idea with which I agree (though I would not subscribe to the line of argument Cavell employs to support it): through the character of Coriolanus Shakespeare stages the drama of the embodiment of Language—dramatic poetry being this embodiment which, in turn, requires to be incorporated (shared and internalised) by an audience (see Cavell 2003, 168). Yet, this embodiment, as I said above, is the object of a systematic disintegration.

Indeed, the allegory of the body lies at the core of the play, of its 'wordcrafting'—if I may say so. The poetic phrasing of the tragedy is woven on the loom of a dominant image, the body, so that the whole fabric of the dramatic language seems to unceasingly reflect this phantasmal shape. If I say 'phantasmal shape', it is because, throughout the play, the form we call 'body' acts as a multiple, fragmented and equivocal entity. This 'body' is simultaneously the whole and the part—being represented at times, from within, as an organism and as an organ, at others, from without, as a human outline and as an element of it; but it also emblematises different antagonistic subjects within the dramatic action, so that we see competing on stage—concurrently—the heroic body of the warrior (Coriolanus), the body politic of the city/of the collectivity (Rome) and the matriarchal body of the mother (Volumnia). In this confusing game of multiplication and dispersal, one could believe that Shakespeare is counterpointing the well-known and well-worn allegory of the body politic of the state, a motif whose popularity lasted from Plato's *Republic* onward and which was intriguingly capitalised upon by Tudor catholic lawyers and dramatists (I allude to the doctrine of the crown as a corporation sole and to the famous theory of the sovereign's two bodies).[5] If this is the case, the question is: why did Shakespeare write this play of figurative amplification and consequent semantic displacement of the traditional image? Shakespeare aims at dismembering the

rhetorical coherence and unity of the political allegory into its own components, thus restoring them to their pre-rhetorical essence of 'fragments of language', i.e. words: by disassembling the allegorical device upon which he himself capitalises—anatomising its workings from within and dissecting its wholeness—the dramatist establishes a contrast between rhetoric and language, so that we can alternatively attach rhetorical signifieds to the body or treat it as a field of imaginary signifiers. It seems clear, then, that attributing a political 'nature' to the body is part of the rhetorical *procédé*. Indeed, the body politic, as a *persona*, possesses its own art of speaking, that is its public discourse, its public rhetoric. This is a crucial point, since, on the contrary, the main feature of Coriolanus' being is conveyed by his uncompromising refusal to practise political rhetoric, which, in a fundamental passage, he contemptuously calls: 'the tongues of the public mouth' (III.1.22). What a powerful expression! By virtue of it, Coriolanus converts didactic allegorism into an imaginary, rhetoric into language, thus transforming a concept which originates in discourse—the body politic—into an uncanny play of verbal and visual signifiers: through Coriolanus' words we no longer see the shape of a (human) body, nor even a part nor an organ of it, but a body cavity, a hole within the body, a mouth; yet not a mouth as ordinary experience knows it, but an abnormal one, a two-tongued mouth (the two tribunes' tongues), if not a many-tongued mouth, a hollow in which—says Coriolanus in another passage—'the multitudinous tongue' of the people (III.1.155) twists and writhes. It is a phobic phantasmic image, which recalls to our mind something like a gorgoneion, the head of a Medusa, a female water-serpent monster: in a violent confrontation with the Roman senators, Coriolanus does indeed give the plebeians the horrific appellative of 'Hydra' (III.1.92). The 'tongue-snake' simile was a popular visual formula from Antiquity to Modern Times, while in Judeo-Christian tradition the Serpent seduced the woman (Eve) precisely by virtue of his tongue. It is also worth lingering a little longer on the image of the 'public mouth': is not the image of an open mouth, exposed to public sight and sexual abuse, a highly allusive reference to whoredom? The hero himself, in the presence of his mother, invokes 'some harlot's spirit' for inspiration, in an effort to persuade himself to beg for the plebeians' mercy by means of public rhetoric (III.2.112). Words are talking symptoms: this is the language spoken by Coriolanus. Somatised words, embodied verbal figurations which draw on phantasmal experiences in the psyche[6]: Coriolanus 'symptomatic eloquence' does not

aim at persuasion and reasoning, as rhetoric does; in fact, it raises phobias and desires, emotions and impulses—outrage, fury and stormy passions in which love and hate are twined together in a fatal as well as ambivalent knot.

The image of the wound is both the perfect counterpart of this corporeal language and the antithesis, the 'anti-allegory', as it were, of the body politic. The most illuminating example of this complex nexus of symmetries can be found in the following lines of the play:

> We have power in ourselves to do it, but it is a power that we have no power to do; for if he show us his wounds, and tell us his deeds, we are to put our tongues into those wounds and speak for them; so, if he tell us his noble deeds, we must also tell him our noble acceptance of them. Ingratitude is monstrous, and for the multitude to be ingrateful were to make a monster of the multitude; of the which we being members, should bring ourselves to be monstrous members. (II.3.1–13)

That is how a citizen comments on the new situation arisen in Rome after Coriolanus' extraordinary victory over the Volscians: if Coriolanus bends to the customary practice of showing his wounds to the people of Rome, if he humbly asks the people to be acknowledged and elected chief magistrate, then, the honour of the consulship will have to be bestowed upon him, despite his notorious hostility towards the plebeians; if it were not bestowed upon him, the shame of ingratitude would fall on the multitude. What is remarkable in this speech is the citizen's appropriation of images and formulas typical of Coriolanus' own way of addressing the mob: first of all, the hallucinatory transformation of the body politic into an imaginary horrific creature. But even more stunning is the action performed by the horrible many-membered monster of the multitude, which is depicted in the act of putting his numerous tongues into the hero's wounds to make them speak.

3 An Intermezzo: Julius Caesar or Putting One's Tongue into the Dead's Wounds

In order to fully grasp the potency of this image, we must suspend for a while the reading of *Coriolanus* and turn our attention to a crucial moment within the dramatic action of *Julius Caesar*, namely Antony's public speech at Caesar's funeral. In that speech, the image of the wounds

as 'talking mouths' plays a fundamental role: indeed, if Brutus is—as has been argued by Nadia Fusini—the self-duped free thinker, Antony, on the contrary, is the successful speaker (see Fusini (2010) and Fusini (2016). In his most famous tirade to the crowd, Mark Antony reenacts the killing of Caesar. More precisely, he literally *re-embodies* the murderous deed *en après coup*: he shows the dead man' s mantle, lifting it up in the air, as if it were a shroud covering the dead body, the body's lacerated skin, the skin perforated by the conspirators' stabs. Then, he uncovers 'the thing itself', which was concealed by that shroud, the red fleshy mass that was a human body—Caesar's bloody corpse. It is an obscene gesture, in that it exposes what is unbearable and repulsive to see but also devouringly magnetising when it is shown. Indeed, in this retelling of Caesar's assassination, Mark Antony eroticises to the greatest extent his enactment of the murder[7]: on the one hand, he arouses the visual voluptuousness of the public through his account of the event; on the other, he presents the wounding of the victim as a (mortal) love wound—Brutus was Caesar's beloved (iii, ii, 182–183)—almost as if Caesar's body were not only murdered but also symbolically raped. Moreover, Brutus killed a collective 'father'—the father of the people—and, in so doing, ravished the object of that collective love. But even more unsettling than that is the fact that Antony himself, by recalling the perpetration of the murder in every single moment of its unfolding, unveils his own complicity in Brutus' abominable deeds: his act of public speaking is a rerun, a repetition, of Brutus' double crime.

> I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts./ I am no orator, as Brutus is;/ But – as you know me all – a plain blunt man/ That love my friend, and that they know full well/ That gave me public leave to speak of him./ For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,/ Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech/ To stir men's blood; I only speak right on./ I tell you that which you yourselves do know,/ Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor, poor, dumb mouths,/ And bid them speak for me. But were I Brutus,/ And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony/ Would ruffle up your spirits, and put a tongue/ In every wound of Caesar, that should move/ The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny. (III.2.182–196)

If Mark Antony were Brutus and Brutus Antony… by this conditional, the master of rhetoric lets the truth slip (and purposely so): he is himself imitating, here and now, in our presence, what Brutus did. Is Antony murdering and raping Caesar's body again? Is he not ultimately abusing

Caesar's corpse? The pictorial idea—borrowed from Christian martyrological poetry[8]—of 'putting a tongue in every wound of Caesar' to make those wounds speak is, at the same time, a violent and a libidinal fantasy. Each of those fantastical tongues, all of which are Antony's tongues, would stick, *do* stick into Caesar's wounds like the stabs of his killers. There's something monstrous in Antony's many-tongued eloquence. And that monstrosity is precisely what is demonstrated by Antony's speech: language is itself a *monstrum*. Where does language come from? Antony's speech overflows from a body wounded to death. Is this mere artifice? Is Caesar's ravaged body but an element of the set stage, or rather, is it 'a real thing', a 'thing' about which the dramatist asks us to think? Since ancient Greek theatre, the body of the dead has been the tragic object par excellence: it is the source of the deeds and of the words dramatised by tragedy (see Murray 1912, 341–363). Therefore, sticking the tongue into the mortal wounds of the body means re-infusing Word and Motion into the 'hole' dug by Death within the human experience of life. In this way, language appears as the 'speaking symptom' of the interchanges between life and death: it detects the libidinal energy which feeds the doings of death and, viceversa, transfers that circulation of forces to a theatre of phantasmal signifiers. Playing on public rhetoric both as a mere expedient and as a cunning disguise, the dramatist stages, through Antony's speech, the psychic and experiential power of poetic language.[9]

4 Coriolanus II: 'Blows and Words'. Wounding Language and Jouissance

Unlike Caesar's body, the body of Coriolanus is decidedly a 'lively thing': it is the embodiment of an uncontainable energy and liveliness. Moreover, the wounds with which Coriolanus' body is studded, are by no means signs of vulnerability nor fragility in manliness and male identity. However, a successful line of reading, rooted in women, gender, cultural, gay and queer studies, has suggested that Coriolanus' wounded body should be regarded as a metaphorical device for representing, and exploring a subversive idea of the Self, namely a hybridised Self, in which masculinity and femaleness, disruptive (homoerotic) desire and stereotyped sexual and social roles, intimacy and public values, separateness and collectiveness meet and come into conflict.[10] In response to this perspective, one could observe, firstly, that the concept of body necessarily implies the notion of the unconscious, and secondly, that the unconscious mind

is free from all kinds of identitarian ideologies (whether 'traditional' or 'subversive'). In fact, the unconscious speaks *un-self-consciously* through language: Coriolanus' wounded body is a signifier—as Kenneth Burke keenly noted in his pioneering book, *Language as Symbolic Action* (Burke 1966, 88). What is, then, the peculiarity of this specific signifier within the dramatic action of *Coriolanus*? Does it actually say something about the Self of the Hero—as Miola thinks (see Miola 1983, 164–205)? The Self of Coriolanus is the Body itself, that is a thing in motion, a thing of emotions resounding into language. We all remember the famous Shakespearean formula that closes *The Rape of Lucrece*: 'unsounded self' (1819)—the Self 'unsounded' utters itself in action (see Goldman 1972, 19–20).

In order to explore how this bodily signifier—the wound—works on the stage of *Coriolanus*, we have to resume our analysis where we left it off, that is to say we have to go back to the mouth-wound analogy. As has been pointed out, the citizens of Rome are eager to see Coriolanus' war wounds and to hear him publicly plead, if not beg, before they accept him as a consul. To the eyes of the people the wounds impressed on the hero's body are their own possession in that those wounds were received for the sake of the country, namely the citizens—who, in being granted the right to vote, finally feel entitled to consider Coriolanus' wounds to be tradable for public offices and, consequently, to be a common ground for a mutual political bond: 'You must think, if we give you something [i.e. the consulate], | we hope to gain by you' (II.3.70)—utters frankly one of Coriolanus' voters. The people lay claim to Coriolanus, to the glory of his body. Yet, there is something openly libidinal in this political entitlement. The multitude expects, requires and desires to be honoured, recognised, appreciated, and, finally, to be *loved* by the public idol, by *its own* idol. Yet, since Coriolanus does not requite their adoration, the people transform the energy of their love drives into hate, jealousy and envy. The emotional attitude of the multitude towards the hero is therefore intrinsically ambivalent. The two abominable professional politicians, Sicinius and Brutus, the tribunes, play precisely on this ambivalence, trying to unbalance it towards hate—and, as we all know, they succeed. The image that has been just discussed, that is the idea, fantasised by a citizen, of putting a tongue into each one of Coriolanus' wounds is highly symptomatic of the love-hate attitude through which the Romans are tied to their favourite: on the one hand, this image hardly conceals an impulse to 'sexual appropriation', on the other, it disguises an intent to punish by

castration—since the multitude's tongue deprives Coriolanus of his own 'tongue', thus mutilating the hero's free speech.

Undoubtedly, Coriolanus' wounds are a collective fetish, to which both the ignorant multitude and the aristocratic elite are equally devoted. In the solemn assembly of the senate where Coriolanus is offered the consulate, general Cominius delivers a speech that culminates in the exaltation of the hero's body as 'a thing of blood' (II.2.107). Indeed, throughout the entire second half of Act I (for nearly 300 lines) Coriolanus is so insistently displayed as entirely covered in blood that he appears 'flay'd'(I.6.22) to his comrades, and he himself names that 'bloody guise' of his a 'mask' (I.9.10) and a 'painting' (I.8.69). The communal cult of the hero as a wounded body is finally incarnated by the daunting figure of Volumnia, who is represented by the dramatist as an awesome Mother-Goddess, the Motherland of the Romans and of the ideal Roman warrior, Coriolanus. Indeed she is neither a worshipper of her son nor a suffocating mother—as Adelman would say: rather than that, she is the Goddess of the tribe, the sole Body Corporate acting and speaking on stage—a 'real' corporate body, non-allegorical and non-political inasmuch as it is mythical and sacred. Volumnia is Society, she is the embodiment of the clan and of the land: the worship paid to the warrior hero, her son, is paid to her. She is *la mère-patrie*, who—anthropologically speaking—does by no means represent, at least in her origin, a female avatar of the everlasting patriarchy (as feminist criticism generally suggests), but rather the Divine Mother-Companion of a warrior brotherhood (as Jane Ellen Harrison has taught us).[11]

Despite this symbolic background, Coriolanus refuses to show his wounds both as an object of common admiration and as a bargaining counter for any political agreement. He refuses to publicly recount how he got them. He does loathe 'showing off' and abhors to be in any way eulogised, whether by the people or by his peers and his mother. Some of Coriolanus' harsh words are illuminating in this respect:

> My mother, | who has a charter to extol her blood, | when she does praise me grieves me. (I.9.13–15).
>
> I have some wounds upon me, and they smart | to hear themselves remembered. (I.9.28–29)
>
> No more, I say! For that I have not wash'd | my nose that bled, or foil'd some debile wretch, | which, without note, here's many else have

> done, | you shout me forth | in acclamations hyperbolical; | as if I loved my little should be dieted | In praises sauc'd with lies. (I.9.47–53)
>
> Your honours' pardon: | I had rather have my wounds to heal again | than hear say how I got them. (II.2.68–70).
>
> When blows have made me stay, I fled from words. (II.2.72)
>
> I had rather have one scratch my head i' the sun | when the alarum were struck than idly sit | to hear my nothings monster'd. (II.2.75–77)

Coriolanus sets an antithesis between blows and words: he recoils in disgust from words, while he steadily waits for blows. Why? Is there an unsounded relationship between words and blows? Blows hit. But what about words? Words can strike just as hard or even harder than blows if they affect the mind just as blows sting a muscle or an organ of the body. Words are *like* blows: here lies the repressed-unexpressed relationship between the two. Here is Coriolanus' way of dealing with language: he uses words as weapons. Indeed, the essential form of Coriolanus' speaking is invective. His speech is intrinsically censorious, chastising, castigatory and even cursing. But where does the essence of invective, its strength, its energy, reside? In Negation. Every speech uttered by Coriolanus is a mighty 'Not' hurled—like a projectile—at the listeners on stage as well as at us, the audience. It is certainly not a coincidence that the nexus of all of Coriolanus' tirades is 'the harangue of the banishment'. 'Banishment' is a name for the act of Negation:

> You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate | as reek o' the rotten fens, whose loves I prize | as the dead carcasses of unburied men/ that do corrupt my air, *I banish you*; | and here remain with your uncertainty! | Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts! | Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes, | fan you into despair! Have the power still | to banish your defenders; till at length | your ignorance, which finds not till it feels, | making but reservation of yourselves | still your own foes, deliver you as most | abated captives to some nation | that won you without blows! Despising, | for you, the city, thus I turn my back: | there is a world elsewhere. (III.3.120–125)

By the blows of these words Coriolanus reveals himself as Negation incarnated. In turning against the people the sentence of banishment decreed against him, he does assert himself as The 'Un-banishable', the sole who can banish the others and cannot be banished by others. Of course, Negation is Idealisation, in that the Ideal negates everything else

by repulsing all but itself as *scoriae*, as excretory matter—'Get you home, you *fragments*', says the hero to the crowd (I.1.221). Indeed, Coriolanus sees the people as excrements (Burke and Cavell's intuition about the excremental cast of Coriol-anus' eloquence is absolutely pertinent)[12]: they are excrements because they are merely absorbed in their bodily nature, they merely follow their instinct, their animal impulse. Besides, the fundamental signifier that stands for 'the city', for 'citizenhood', in *Coriolanus*' imagery, is the belly—the play opens with the Aesopian and Rabelaisian fable of 'the belly and the members' (see Nicoud 2018), while the double theme of food and famine is a leitmotiv within the dramatic action (see Charney 1961, 142–157). What Coriolanus negates is, then, the body as such, since that material body is but a 'dead carcass'. Of course, before anything else, the hero negates his own body as mortal remains. That's why he spurns the war wounds he bears, abhorring either to show and extol them or to be extolled and exposed because of them. And that's why he says: 'the blood I drop is rather physical than dangerous to me' (I.5.18–19)—the wounds from which he bleeds mortify his mortal nature. Yet, who could deny that Coriolanus is a great master of language? Each one of his speeches is a climax in the dramatic phrasing of the play. Coriolanus is the sublime, peerless Poet, isolated and alone on the stage (even though he follows a completely different line of argumentation, Harold Bloom recognised that *Coriolanus* is a quintessential experiment on poetry; see Bloom 1998, 583). Coriolanus does not speak 'the language of the tribe', like all the other characters (and especially Volumnia) do. The extraordinary poetic energy that Coriolanus infuses into his words is drawn from what we have recognised as Negation: it is by virtue of Negation, by that wounding blow, that *jouissance* is displaced from the body to language. The silent wound in Coriolanus' flesh is the sign of the rebirth of his natural body to the 'negative' *jouissance* of language.

5 Antony's Love Wound… or Lust Wound?

What does *Coriolanus* tell us about politics? Politics is nothing but dispersion and fragmentation. Some lines uttered by Aufidius in act iv, scene vii, are unequivocal:

> And power, unto itself most commendable, | Hath not a tomb so evident as a chair | To extol what it hath done. | One fire drives out one fire;

> one nail, one nail; | Rights by rights fouler, strengths by strengths do fail. (IV.7.51–55)

In Modern times, the efficacy of Power is uncertain: Politics makes this uncertainty ever more uncertain, and the fluctuation of popular opinion mirrors and echoes the overall instability. Even if a 'natural sovereign' existed, he would be trapped in this unpredictable game. Another line from Aufidius' mouth:

> I think he [Coriolanus] 'll be to Rome | As is the aspray to the fish, who takes it | By sovereignty of nature.

A sovereign by nature: that's what Coriolanus is or would be, or rather could have been, had he not been born in the Era of Politics. Indeed, his 'political parabola' is the chronicle of a fatal defeat. Coriolanus is, literally, a touchstone of the modern zeitgeist, the age, to say it with Hamlet, of 'politic worms' everlastingly gathered in convocations and assemblies (*Hamlet* IV.3.26). There is no 'body politic'[13]: collectivity is a mass of dissected, anatomised members, limbs, organs which all move on impulse and, therefore, react symptomatically.[14] Benjamin's perspective on the modern 'mourning play' can be fittingly applied to Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and, more generally, to Shakespeare's Roman world: the breaking of allegorical coherence opens a metaphysical chasm in Nature, a gaping hole in which a chaotic tangle of bodily drives appears and thrives with all its phantasmal mirages. Thus, power and authority can be wounded to death by instincts, urges, compulsions: thus, power and authority can be wounded to death by love—by *lust*. *Intrat Antonius*, *intrat Cleopatra*: the perfect 'love-power dyad'—this is apparently quite an obvious match, and yet it is in fact not obvious what love, what power Antony and Cleopatra embody and how love and power mirror each other.

Antony & Cleopatra is a tragedy of longing and regret, of instability and dissolution. A profound sense of loss permeates the atmosphere of the play, yet one could hardly say what loss is mourned in it: an invisible force is in action on the stage of *Antony & Cleopatra*, a force that drives all the dramatic movement to a fatal rest, to death. This path towards consummation comes to a culminating point in act IV, scenes 12–14, where Antony, attempts suicide after the second and last defeat due (he thinks) to Cleopatra. It is a moment of hyperbolic emotional outburst, in which a name, 'Eros', resounds so repeatedly, so insistently on the lips

of the hero—19 times in 139 lines (from IV.12.30 to IV.14.102)—that we must take the anaphora as a 'semiotic lure': now Antony desperately invokes Eros ('What, Eros, Eros!', IV.12.30; 'Eros, ho!', IV.12.42; 'Come Eros! Eros!', IV.12.49), now he apostrophises him ('Eros, thou yet behold'st me?', IV.14.1; 'My good knave Eros', IV.14.12; 'Gentle Eros', IV.14.21; 'Thou hast sworn, Eros', IV.14.63; 'O valiant Eros', IV.14.97); and, finally, after the disaster of Actium, he asks Eros to unarm him and then to kill him. Eros is Antony's 'armourer'. As Tony Tanner has noted, 'armour' recalls *amour*: 'Armour – Amour: there is no etymological connection, but the words are phonetically similar. And what we see here […] is an overlaying of *amour* onto armour, so that the armour is eroticised and sensualised' (Tanner 1997, 625):

> ANTONY Eros! Mine armour, Eros! CLEOPATRA Sleep a little. | ANTONY No, my chuck. Eros, come; mine armour, Eros! | *Enter EROS* [*with armour*] Come good fellow, put mine iron on. | If fortune be not ours today, it is | Because we brave her: come! CLEOPATRA Nay, I'll help too. | What's this for? ANTONY Ah, let be, let be! Thou art | The armourer of my heart: false, false; this, this! | CLEOPATRA Sooth, la, I'll help: thus it must be. | […] Is not this buckled well? ANTONY Rarely, rarely. (IV.4.1–11)

The scene, which is informed by an emblematical and allegorical memory framed in the most exemplary Renaissance Italian tradition—Antony and Cleopatra as Mars and Venus accompanied by Eros[15]—speaks by itself: the 'armourer Eros' (Cleopatra being the armourer of Antony's heart) is both the 'Ancient' Daemon Eros and the 'Modern' Eros-drive which governs the hero's life. So, when Antony learns of Cleopatra's (feigned) death just after the lethal rout at Actium, it is Eros he addresses while craving:

> Thou art sworn, Eros, | that when the exigent should come […] thou then wouldst kill me. Do't. (IV.14.63–68)

The reason he provides for this request is utterly revealing:

> Come, then! For with a wound I must be cured. (IV.14.69)

This is quite an epiphany: he who has lived all his life *suffering from* the gaping wound of love, must now *be cured* by the deadly blow of Eros. As

we all know, instead of killing Antony, Eros kills himself. Is this an act of love? Certainly of *true* love, because Eros does not fail to accomplish his act. On the contrary, Antony throws himself upon his sword, but 'misses the target'. Antony's suicide is a *parapraxia*, *un acte manqué*. Why? The hero's love for Cleopatra is *lust* for life, for *jouissance*, for more and more morsels of life and *jouissance*. And he utterly confesses it: 'I will [...] run into't [into my death] | as to a lover's bed' (IV.14.101–102). Indeed, Act V, scene 15 (ll. 10–65), Antony 'dies in Cleopatra's lap': his death is a lustful culmination.

Cleopatra's death is not different. She also dies from a mortal wound, a peculiar kind of wound, a snake bite: more precisely, she dies after being bitten by *two* snakes. This detail is not anecdotal. The snake bite is an everlasting symbol of falling in love as an experience of mental and physical arousal: in Plato's *Symposium*, for instance, Alcibiades compares his *coup de foudre* for Socrates to the bite of the viper (218e-218b); in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (specifically, in the fable of Cupid and Psyche) Cupid is imagined as a *vipereum malum* (*Metamorphoses* 4.33); Virgil's Eurydice is bitten by a snake hidden in the grass while trying to escape Aristeus' sexual aggression (*Georgics* 4.457–459). Cleopatra herself—the epitome of seduction—is called by Antony 'my serpent of old Nile' (I.5.25–26)—and it almost looks as though, having died from the asp's bite, the queen had died from her own poison. But, Cleopatra dies after being bitten by two snakes:

> CLEOPATRA Come, thou mortal wretch, | [*To the asp, applying it to her breast*] With thy sharp teeth this knot intrinsicate | Of life at once untie: poor venomous fool | Be angry, and dispatch. O, couldst thou speak, | That I might hear thee call great Caesar ass | Unpolicied! CHARMIAN O eastern star! CLEOPATRA Peace, peace! | Dost thou not see my baby at my breast, | That sucks the nurse asleep? CHARMIAN O, break! O, break! | CLEOPATRA As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle, – | O Antony! Nay, I will take thee too [*Applies another asp to her arm*] | What should I stay – [*Dies*].

Voluptuousness in dying finds here an unparalleled depiction. And yet, the *fulmen in clausula* 'Nay, I will take thee too' exceeds the measure of such an overflowing sensuality: the queen speaks and acts as if she would die *twice* to get more pleasure in dying—that's what Cleopatra is

dreaming of in her deathbed. One Antony—'O Antony!' she exclaims—cannot satiate her lust: if only there were *another* Antony to satisfy such a hunger! And there she takes the second asp. How can we forget Enobarbus' words about Cleopatra's 'celerity in dying'?

> I have seen her die twenty | times upon far poorer moment: I do think there is | mettle in death, which commits some loving act upon | her, she hath such a celerity in dying. (I.4.148–151)

In the world of *Antony and Cleopatra* lust for life is a mirror of power. What image, what idea of power does the story of this peerless couple return to us? As we all remember, in two symmetrical moments—namely, at the beginning and at the end of the play—Antony and Cleopatra are painted just like two portrait subjects: Enobarbus portrays a masterly, unforgettable Venus-like picture of the queen, while Cleopatra herself conceives a prodigious and hallucinatory depiction of Antony as a deified Emperor and God of war and abundance. Both of these two portraits in words draw inspiration from the Italian Maniera[16] and from its poetics of delirious grandness and frantic strangeness. Indeed, both Cleopatra and Antony are represented as supernatural—or metaphysical, if we prefer—*monstra*. Cleopatra embodies 'the perfection of imperfections', the 'possibility of impossibilities':

> ENOBARBUS I saw her once | Hop forty paces through the public street; | And having lost her breath, she spoke, and panted, | That she did make defect perfection, | And, breathless, pour[17] breathe forth. | MECAENAS Now Antony must leave her utterly. ENOBARBUS Never; he will not: | Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale | Her infinite variety: other women cloy | The appetites they feed: but she makes hungry | Where most she satisfies; for vilest things | Become themselves in her: that the holy priests | Bless her when she is riggish. (II.2.238–251)

Hunger and satisfaction, age and timelessness, holiness and lust become one thing in her. Ultimately, she is 'infinite variety' just as Nature is thought to be—if not even richer in infinity than Nature itself, since, when she appeared as a Lucretian Mother Venus (see Bono 1984, 173–179) on the waters of the river Cydnus, a 'gap in Nature' (II.2.228) suddenly occurred.

Antony is in turn imagined and described by Cleopatra as a King of Kings or, better, as a cosmic sovereign surrounded by an apocalyptic aura (see Seaton 1946, who refers to the Mighty Angel of *Revelation* 10.1–2):

> CLEOPATRA I dream'd there was an Emperor Antony: | O, such another sleep, that I might see | But such another man! DOLABELLA If it might please ye – CLEOPATRA His face was as the heavens; and therein stuck | A sun and moon, which kept their course, and lighted | The little O, the earth. DOLABELLA Most sovereign creature, – | CLEOPATRA His legs bestrid the ocean: his rear'd arm | Crested the world: his voice was propertied | As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends; | But when he meant to quail and shake the orb, | He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty, | There was no winter in't; an autumn it was | That grew the more by reaping: his delights | Were dolphin-like; they show'd his back above | The element they lived in: in his livery | Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and islands | Were as plates dropp'd from his pocket. DOLABELLA Cleopatra! | CLEOPATRA Think you there was, or might be, such a man | As this I dream'd of? DOLABELLA Gentle madam, no. | CLEOPATRA You lie, up to the hearing of the gods. | But, if there be, or ever were, one such, | It's past the size of dreaming: nature wants stuff | To vie strange forms with fancy; yet, to imagine | And Antony, were nature's piece 'gainst fancy, | Condemning shadows quite. (V.2.75–99)

Just as Cleopatra's apparition on the stage of Nature opens a hole into the matter of the universe, so the giant picture of Antony is a meta-physical tear across the canvas of the physical world: 'nature wants stuff' to mould such a man, such an Emperor of harmony and war, of outrage and bounteousness.

The two ekphrastic digressions,[18] where the images of Antony and Cleopatra are immortalised in the likeness of complementary Ancient Divinities, play a fundamental role in the play, in that they are the vehicle of an idea of power entirely alternative to the political notion and practice of power. *That* power, which emanates from Cleopatra's and Antony's *simulacra*, appears as a phantasmagorical flow of vital impulses, a stream of bodily and psychic energies and phenomena. In other words, *that* power reflects Life itself, yet not life as *Vita Naturae*, but as *Libido vivendi*—i.e. the psychic drive of/in the body. Poetic language strives to represent the unrepresentable life of the 'bodily mind', by encompassing it within the rhetorical and imaginary frame of hyperbole: the Life drive is a disruptive *power* which can overcome life itself and turn uncannily

into lust for death. That's how love and power, *lust* and power are inextricably dovetailed just as Antony and Cleopatra are. Power is a libidinal and enigmatic force which leads to self-destruction.

At the end of the play, Octavius Caesar is left alone on the stage as the sole winner of the match: unlike Antony and Cleopatra, he fully embodies the accomplished technician of power politics. Yet, once Cleopatra has resolved to die, she comments on Caesar's victory:

> Tis paltry to be Caesar; | Not being Fortune, he's but Fortune's knave, | A minister of her will: and it is great | To do that thing that ends all other deeds; | Which shackles accidents and bolts up change; | Which sleeps, and never palates more the dung, | The beggar's nurse and Caesar's. (V.2.1–8)

There is no glory in Caesar's victory. He is not a Lord, but rather a knave; even worse, he is the knave of a whore, that is to say Fortune. And most shamefully, he is a beggar, since, like a beggar, he feeds on dung in the common sty of the earth.

'It's paltry to be Caesar'—such an annihilation of political power and power politics is not incidental to Cleopatra's defeat. On the contrary, by employing these words, the dramatist offers a momentaneous glimpse of the events represented throughout the play, of their 'sense', if we may say so: and the 'sense' is that if Antony and Cleopatra's *libido vivendi* is a senseless waste, Caesar's *libido dominandi* is petty avarice. In both cases, we are presented with an essential *nothingness*, whether it be grandiose or ordinary. This 'flavour of nothingness' is a distinctive trait of the historical *Trauerspiel*, as Benjamin noted: viewed from the allegorical angle of the *mourning play*, history appears to be a story about nothing.

6 Roma-Amor, Tamora-Lavinia and Metamorphosis: The Wounded Body Itself

To look at Shakespeare's Roman plays (considered as a whole or, better, as a coalesced ensemble of micro-texts) in the perspective of the *Trauerspiel* genre is highly illuminating about how the name of Rome and its setting become effective in the poetic imaginary of the dramatist. The Modern *Trauerspiel* is a dramatised meditation on the metaphysical unsubstantiality of human history: it follows that 'history' is but a *causeless traumatic experience*—a 'trauma', literally a 'wound', deeply impressed in the collective mind and body of humankind. The *name* of *Rome* comes

here into play as the perfect allegorical *word for wound*. How? Since it was canonised by the elegiac poets of the Augustan Age—namely Propertius and Ovid—the palindromic word-play AMOR-ROMA[19] enjoyed great popularity in literature: for instance, it was employed in the Latin poetry of Joachim Du Bellay (*Amores* 5), George Herbert (*Lucus* 15), and especially in Goethe's *Roman Elegies* (1.13–14). And, of course, the pun was very familiar to the Elizabethan poets who translated Latin erotic elegies, such as Christopher Marlowe. *Roma* is the city of universal history and domination—a condition which makes this place both the ideal 'world stage' and the perfect embodiment of the 'stage of the world'.[20] Yet, if we read its name *à rebours*, we discover the reverse side, as it were, of the Eternal City and its solemn historical 'stage': *Amor*. Love is 'the darting god', 'the god who wounds' and, while wounding, blinds, inflames, tortures and maddens. Paired with *Roma*, *Amor* amplifies its ravaging, devastating *potentia*: this is how History-*Roma* (History incarnated in *Roma*) commingles, through Love-*Amor*, with the horrendous and woeful story of *Titus Andronicus*—a bloody whirlpool of insane and ferocious carnage. This interplay of forces is emblematised by the name of the Roman Empress, which is another allegorical pun: Tamora. Indeed, Tamora is not a character, but a personification: the royal woman is a lustful she-wolf, incarnating *Amor* as a fierce impulse and a devouring appetite, sparing nothing and nobody. That name, T-AMOR-A, also echoes—as Jonathan Bate and Patricia Parker suggested—[21] the name of the Empress' adulterous lover, AARON-(The)-MOOR, a twisted murderer and a brutal butcher, so that the monstrous intertwinement of the two names T-AMOR-ARON-MOOR, resounds as a roaring and frightening animal noise which threatens death, MOR-S.[22] But that's not all. I would like to suggest that the name *Tamora* evokes, above all, the *title* of the most famous book which recounts 'sad stories chansed in the times of old' (II.2.82)—as Titus calls it—and contains, among them, the dark tale which prefigures the crucial event enacted in the play: the book is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the tale Philomel's myth, the event Lavinia's rape.

Me-T-AMOR-phoses: punning on the *Amor-Roma* anagram, Ovid conveys in this Greek word the ultimate sense of his oeuvre. The poem relates stories (of all kind) of transformations prompted by AMOR, which stands for all the libidinal motions (the human passions of moral philosophy) acting in the psyche. *Tamora* embodies this Me-*Tamor*-phic strength that leads to the satisfaction of desires, destroying everything it

meets along the way. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is, as Titus calls it, a book of sad stories, a phantasmagoria of horrors and sorrows: the myths of transformation are stories of violence, rape, incest and emotional riot. In his *Hero and Leander*, Marlowe describes the 'Venus glass' (which is the crystal pavement of the temple sacred to the Goddess at Sestos) as a mirror in which 'you might see the gods in sundrie shapes | committing headdie ryots, incest, rapes' (ll. 143–144). In that concise *ekphrasis* we can easily recognise a perfect definition of Ovid's masterpiece according to the sensibility of an eminent Elizabethan reader. As Joseph D. Reed has remarked about the general notion of Ovidian metamorphosis: 'metamorphosis […] is a destructive pleasure which, moment by moment, assails a living being. […] We must not forget that among the problems and the riddles implied by the anagram contained in the poem's title, features the Latin word *mors*' (Ovidio 2013, XXI, translation mine).

Lavinia's story, which lies at the core of the action of *Titus Andronicus* is a story of metamorphosis, not only in that it reenacts the Ovidian literary model of Philomel, but also, and above all, in that it represents the irresistible compulsion of life instincts and their disfiguring, destructive manifestations. All this traumatising energy is discharged and visually transposed—signified, so to speak—into the wounded body of Lavinia. Raped and mutilated, Lavinia is twice wounded: in her sex and in the faculty of speech. Through the image of this twofold wound, a fundamental relationship is established between language and sexual drive which—metonymically—stands for the bodily nature as a whole. The name of Lavinia may be considered to be a further allegory: patently, 'Lavinia' comes from 'love', while the act of raping inflicted on her is a beastly discharge of sexual arousal. Moreover, Lavinia's rape can be read, or better, is to be read as a castration—a wound of virility—whereby the mouth is deprived of its 'organ'. Divested of its sound, the word becomes a mute, silent *sign inscribed in the body*. Language is not a transparent means of signification nor a rhetorical phrasing and depiction of a certain idea, or thought or meaning. It is rather an *enigmatic* constellation of signs which are to be tentatively interpreted: that is what the dramatist tries to convey by staging how Lavinia desperately struggles with her muteness, at the beginning of Act 4, in an effort to express herself and to explain her lacerating experience—an effort which arouses in her a wild state of physical agitation and whips her into an uncontrollable frenzy. These mental and bodily sufferings of Lavinia, her psychic and corporeal wounds seem to allude to the traumatic origin,

nature and manifestation of language: the poetic word is, literally, a *patho-logia*, a 'speech-of-passions', or a 'passionate speech'—as Hamlet defines dramatic poetry in the famous scene in which the prince asks the first actor of the company to perform extemporaneously the 'Pyrrhus monologue' (*Hamlet* II.2.430). It is not by chance that the name and the figure of Hecuba, who was the Elizabethan icon of emotional/woeful speaking (from Jasper Heywood's *The Trojan Women* to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*),[23] appears both in the aforementioned passage of *Hamlet* and in Act IV, scene 1, of *Titus Andronicus,* where young Lucius tries to explain Lavinia's sudden fit of madness during her reading (or re-reading) of the Ovidian story of Philomel by drawing an analogy with the Queen of Troy who was driven insane by the many sorrows she suffered (IV.1.16–21).

One could think, perhaps, that the whole scene is but a tiresome interplay of literary memories, and that the idea of revealing the identity of Lavinia's assailants through the renowned passage of the Me*tamorphoses* is but a predictable, if not pedantic, plot contrivance. Yet, that does not seem to be the case at all. The overlap between myth and experience in this scene endows literature with an uncanny profundity: there is no possibility of experiencing reality through any means except the Imaginary, that is Language. The poetic word is a thing of art inasmuch as it is the sorrowful 'engram', so to speak, of a bodily and psychic memory. Lavinia's wounded body is the emblem of the 'mourning work' intrinsically tied to the work of art: the song sung by the nightingale-Philomel is a mournful song on the lost object.

7 'The Sweet Violence of Tragedy': The Tragic Wound, or Tragedy as a Wounding Machine

I now wish to return, one last time, to the relationship between History and *Trauerspiel*, a relationship which cannot exist otherwise than by *juxtaposition*. The Roman stage of Shakespearean drama is an historical (and anthropological) 'object' in that it is an Early Modern invention[24]: thus, the tragedy of the Roman State (of Power State and Power Politics) alludes to another 'stage', the 'real' one, so to speak, where a New World is emerging and growing at a fast pace, the world of the modern nation state, of European global empires, of modern capitalism, modern science and secularism as well as of bloody religious sectarian conflicts. Besides, it is widely known that Elizabethan Drama emerged primarily as a 'legal fiction' in the context of lacerating tensions between the throne and the

state, between sovereignty and body politic. But this is nothing more than a play of *chiaroscuro*: the dramatist's concern is neither to shed light on social and political events, nor to mirror them in his creations. Certainly, he reacts to the temper of his times. And his own way of answering to it is to direct his poetic attention towards the 'human engine' of any motion and action which take place in life and history: the mind. To the poet's eye, history is 'history-life'. History is a story experienced by the subject, inscribed in its memory, engraved in its affections. Undoubtedly, the mourning cast of this emotional and bodily experience is not something we can take solely as an expected literary feature of the tragic genre. The Christian idea of the Incarnation, the Christian paradigm of the Passion, is violently brought into play again and reinterpreted by the Reformation (by Calvinism and Puritanism). The wounded body of Christ, which is the archetypal suffering body, allegorises the quintessential fragility of human nature without any guarantee of redemption other than individual faith and inscrutable divine grace (the Lutheran and Calvinist principles of *sola fide*, *sola gratia*). The man of the Reformation stands alone with his own conscience and the weakness of his flesh under a silent heaven. In the eyes of an historian (and in a cultural perspective), this is, perhaps, the most relevant background—the moral solitude of man, the doubt about salvation and the terrible spectre of God's wrath[25]—against which we ought to look at Lavinia's wounded body and to listen to Titus' exasperated question about the sense—or rather the senselessness—of his and his daughter's woes[26]:

> TITUS If there were reason for these miseries, | Then into limits could I bind my woes. | When heaven doth weep, doth not the earth o'erflow? | If the winds rage, doth not the sea wax mad, | Threat'ning the welkin with his big-swol'n face? | And wilt thou have a reason for this coil?. (III.1.218–223)

It is well-known that the problem of conscience—its troubles, its emotional turmoil, the internal struggle between contrasting impulses as well as between imagination and action—was a burning issue in the intellectual, philosophical, theological and confessional debate throughout the Reformation and Counter-Reformation Age, a debate in which Elizabethan tragedy was greatly involved. Indeed, drama can be a powerful means to look into and search the invisible space of the mind, as is demonstrated by Hamlet's idea of the play as a 'trap' to 'catch' the conscience of

King Claudius ('The play's the thing | wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king', *Hamlet* II.2.599–600).

Sir Philp Sidney, in a remarkable and crucial passage of his theoretical treatise, *A defence of Poesy*, proposes a conception of tragedy which is highly relevant to this matter:

> The high and excellent Tragedy, that openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue; that maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humours; that, with stirring the affects of admiration and commiseration, teacheth the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations gilden roofs are builded; that maketh us know
>
> *Qui sceptra saevus duro imperio regit,*
> *Timet timentes, metus in auctorem redit*
>
> But how much it can move, Plutarch yieldeth a notable testimony of the abominable tyrant Alexander Pheraeus, from whose eyes a tragedy, well made and represented, drew abundance of tears, who, without all pity, had murdered infinite numbers, and some of his own blood, so as he, that was not ashamed to make matters for tragedies, yet could not resist the sweet violence of a tragedy.[27]

Sidney's conception of tragedy as a window open on the human mind is entirely derived from what Hans Blumenberg would call an 'absolute metaphor': the metaphor of the wound. Since the inner world of emotions and desires is a 'body', tragedy is consequently conceived as a 'sharpened edge' which opens the deepest wounds into its flesh: the dramatic play of enacting or re-enacting a psychic conflict through the power of the poetic word is a traumatising, painful process similar to a surgical cutting. Indeed, in Sidney's view, tragedy is not (primarily) a 'representation', but an '*operation*', one which has to be as effective on the psyche as a knife on the ulcerous matter of a wound (in this context, it is perhaps worth remembering that the poet died of gangrene poisoning twenty-five days after being wounded at Zutphen in a military sortie against some Spanish forces). As argued by Staley (2010, 17–18), Sidney derives his understanding of tragedy from Seneca (as is testified by the fact that the Latin quotation in Sidney's passage is drawn from Seneca's *Oedipus*): the Roman philosopher wrote tragedies to look into the human soul and extended his cognitive analysis of the 'insides' of the mind to and through poetry. Indeed, Senecan tragedy is a study

on the turbulences of human affections, which are *pars pro toto* represented by *ira-furor* (outrage-fury-madness), the tragic emotional disease par excellence. Staley also notes that the crucial Senecan passage to which Sidney implicitly alludes is constituted by a couple of paragraphs of *De ira* (2.25–26), where the philosopher describes a threatening *prosopopoeia* of outrage. After providing an account of how horribly outrage can disfigure the outward appearance of individuals, Seneca paints a scary picture of Outrage:

> What, think you, must be the state of his mind within him, when its appearance without is so shocking? how far more dreadful a countenance he bears within his own breast, how far keener pride, how much more violent rage, which will burst him unless it finds some vent? Let us paint anger looking like those who are dripping with the blood of foemen or savage beasts, or those who are just about to slaughter them—like those monsters of the nether world fabled by the poet to be girt with serpents and breathing flame, when they sally forth from hell, most frightful to behold, in order that they may kindle wars, stir up strife between nations, and overthrow peace; let us paint her eyes glowing with fire, her voice hissing, roaring, grating, and making worse sounds if worse there be, while *she brandishes weapons in both hands*, *for she cares not to protect herself, gloomy, stained with blood, covered with scars and livid with her own blows*, reeling like a maniac, wrapped in a thick cloud, dashing hither and thither, spreading desolation and panic, loathed by everyone and by herself above all, willing, if otherwise she cannot hurt her foe, to overthrow alike earth, sea, and heaven, harmful and hateful at the same time. Or, if we are to see her, let her be such as our poets have described her:
>
> There *with her blood-stained scourge* Bellona fights,
> and Discord in her *riven robe* delights
>
> or, if possible, let some even more dreadful aspect be invented for this dreadful passion.[28]

The most distinctive feature of this allegorical portrait (which is inspired by Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.702–703) is the fact that the body and/or the robe covering the body of such a hideous and dreadful female (Bellona-like or Discord-like) divinity are studded with scars ('cicatricosam') and tears ('scissa… palla') and bleeding wounds ('cruentamque et uerberibus suis liuidam') which she self-inflicts by means of the spears she furiously shakes in both hands, careless of herself ('tela manu utraque quatientem – neque enim illi se tegere curae est').

The power of wounding (oneself as well as others) which Seneca attributes to *ira* in his powerful depiction is a general and comprehensive figuration of the outbursting energy possessed by the psychic drives. In other words, rage is a form, the form of the emotional life, which is then translated and transferred by poetic language into the art form of tragedy: both rage and tragedy work likewise—as a 'wounding machine'. If it is analysed from this point of view, the order and dramaturgical rhythm of *Titus Andronicus* turn out to be much more than those of a conventional revenge play. What could seem a bombastic accumulation of wounding actions, is rather a methodical process, namely a *repetition syntactically* oriented towards death. At the beginning of the play, a bloody mourning ceremony—the entombment of Titus' sons—is solemnised by the crude sacrifice of a human victim: Titus stands on the stage as a father and as a warrior who immolated twenty-one of his twenty-five sons to Rome—and he is about to lose all the survivors but one. Is such a father a warrior or a killer? Did he not kill all that he loved? Is he not unknowingly driven by a Death-drive? Is he not an agent of death? Because of *Love*—the controversial marriage of his only daughter, *Lavinia*, which favours lustful T-AMOR-A's nuptials with the emperor—he turns from the iron warrior of the beginning into an outraged and emasculated prey: he takes on himself the castration of his daughter, consenting to lose the hand who served ungrateful Rome by holding the sword. At that precise moment he discovers the profundity of language and encounters the story of Philomel, thus identifying himself with Procne. This is actually a psychic metamorphosis coming into effect wound after wound, at the end of which appears Tamora, in a chariot, as the allegoric goddess of Revenge, accompanied by her sons, Murder and Rape—that is Death and Lust—'in strange and sad habiliment' (V.2.1). Revenge or *Ira*. Her 'strange and sad habiliment' is not described. Directors have indulged in inventing the most fanciful costumes for Tamora as Revenge—needless to say that there is no hope of philological restitution (see Kiefer 2003, 43–60). Yet, Seneca's passage from *De Ira* provides the quintessential idea of that visual incarnation: it is the idea of the torn garment which looks like the wounded surface of a human body, and which ultimately conveys the mental image of Tragedy itself.

In one of the most influential works of our poetic and philosophical tradition, Prudentius' *Psychomachia*—'Soul War'—Discordia, which is, as Prudentius knew from Seneca, one of the names of *Ira* and which allegorically represents both the internal conflict of the psyche and the

equivocality of language, attempts to stab Concordia (spiritual harmony) treacherously by breaking through her cuirass and skirt, and making her bleed through the rip (*Psychomachia* 670–693).[29] Besides, like Seneca's *ira*, Prudentius' Discordia herself wears a torn mantle ('scissa palla') and a scourge with many snakes ('structum serpente flagellum', ll. 685–686). It would thus not be implausible to imagine such an attire for the last apparition of Tamora as Revenge before the final butchery. It is a phobic and mournful picture which should be taken as an allusion to that violent *psychomachia* within and between the body and the mind which tragedy brings into play. Yet, what is eventually revealed by the tragedy is by no means anything we can 'see' or identify or define. Rather, we see a dark blot barely discernible through the edges of the wound—the 'ulcer', as Sidney wrote: we perceive that an aching process is in motion but we do not know *what* is in progress. We cannot grasp that obscure object: we can solely give shape to its shapelessness through the projections and the associations worked out by (poetic) language, in an endless game of interpretation:

> Could the mind be displayed or made to appear through any substance, we should be confounded when we beheld how black and stained, how agitated, distorted and swollen it looked: even at present it is very ugly when seen trough all the screens of blood, bones and so forth: what would it be, were it displayed uncovered? (*De ira*, 36).[30]

Notes

1. Benjamin does not cite French dramatists (like Corneille or Racine or Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné), but quotes expressly and extensively from Pascal and Descartes as the eminent exponents of the cultural ambiance which gave birth to the genre of the *Trauerspiel*.
2. Indeed, 'Baroque' is technical term taken from the lexicon of Aesthetics which corresponds to a chronological/historical age.
3. See Williamson (1930, 90) ('metaphysical shudder' was Williamson's coinage). See also Kermode (2010) reformulates the expression 'metaphysical shudder' as the emblem of the metaphysical inclination to the (Freudian) Uncanny.

4. Benjamin (2019, 217). Benjamin plays with the words: *Tiefsinn* means 'profundity of thought, thoughtfulness', but also 'melancholy'.
5. See in particular Axton (1977), who reacts to Kantorowicz1957).
6. It is noteworthy to recall here that, drawing on the studies of Vesalius, the anatomical science of the seventeenth century—namely, John Bulwer in his *Pathomytomia* (1649)—discovers the psychic energy with which the muscles of the human body are endowed. See Greenblatt (1995, 25–31).
7. See the pioneering observations formulated by George Wilson Knight on the eroticism of *Julius Caesar* in Wilson Knight (1931, 63–95).
8. For example, Prudentius, *Peristephanon liber* 10.546–570.
9. The image of the tongue speaking from within the wound(s) of the dead body may be derived from the ancient (magical) belief in cruentation, see Dawson (2018).
10. I limit my references to the pioneering studies in the field of Early Modern Studies, Feminist Psychoanalytic Studies and Gay Studies: DuBois (1985, 185–208), Adelmann (1992, 130–164), Khan (1997), Goldberg (2003), Marshall (1996, 93–118).
11. See Gutwirth (1992, 252–284), and Harrison (1912).
12. Burke's reading of Coriolanus 'anal character' draws inspiration from Brown (1959).
13. I agree with the analysis of Hale (1971), and of Covington (2009, 24–25).
14. On the imagery of anatomical dissection in Shakespeare Roman plays see Del Sapio-Garberoet al. (Eds.) (2010) (in particular the essays by Garbero, Berns, Plescia).
15. See Bevington (2005, 7–8); on the image of *Venus Armata* and *Amor* playing with Mars' arms, see Wind (1967, 90–95).
16. Ronnie Mulryne also evokes the great Italian Florentine entertainments of the late 1580 s (cf. Mulryne 2005, 197–215).
17. I adopt the Arden reading 'pour', instead of the more commonly received 'power'.
18. For some fundamental theoretical reflections on the illusionism of ekphrasis, see Krieger (2019), and Mitchell (1994). On the role of ekphrasis in Shakespeare's plays see now, in particular, Elam 2017.
19. See Ahl (1985, 40, 45, 49, 110, 138–139, 125, 264, 265, 310); Hanses (2016); and Brown (1974).

20. Interesting observations from a Freudian and Derridean point of view can be found in Del Sapio Garbero (2018, VII–XX).
21. Cf. Shakespeare (2018, 125): the Moor is, in fact, Tamora's *amor*. Parker (2004, 218) argues: 'The link between *amor* and "Moor" appears in the overtones of "T'amo" as well as of *mora* or dark woman in the name of "Tamora," paramour of the Moor in *Titus Andronicus*'.
22. The wordplay *amor mors* is a *topos* of Latin Elegy: cfr. Tibullus I.1.69–70 'Interea, dum fata sinunt, iungamus ***a-mor***-*e*-***s***: | Iam veniet tenebris ***Mors*** adoperta caput'; Propertius II.1.47: 'laus in ***amore mori***'; Ovidius, *Heroides* 10.82: '***mors***que minus poenae qu-am mor***a mor****tis*'. Cf. Ahl (1985, 44–45).
23. See Pollard (2017, 89–142), and Bigliazzi (2019).
24. On Early Modern reshaping of the tragic genre, see Cadman et al. (Eds.) (2019).
25. Kerrigan (1996, 111–141) argues that the Protestant revival of the myth of the divine wrath against humanity had a decisive influence on the early modern revenge tragedy.
26. On the role and function of the Christological protestant background in *Titus Andronicus* see McConnel Scott (2012).
27. I suggest reading this passage in the light of Bates (2017), according to which Sidney's idea of poetry is by no means didactic and moralising: rather, according to Catherine Bates, what emerges from Sydney's reflection is a need of poetry based on the most conflictual motions of the human psyche.
28. Seneca (1900, 112): 'Qualem intus putas esse animum cuius extra imago tam foeda est? Quanto illi intra pectus terribilior uultus est, acrior spiritus, intentior impetus, rupturus se nisi eruperit! 5. Quales sunt hostium uel ferarum caede madentium aut ad caedem euntium aspectus, qualia poetae inferna monstra finxerunt succincta serpentibus et igneo flatu, quales ad bella excitanda discordiamque in populos diuidendam pacemque lacerandam deae taeterrimae inferum exeunt, talem nobis iram figuremus, flamma lumina ardentia, sibilo mugituque et gemitu et stridore et si qua his inuisior uox est perstrepentem, tela manu utraque quatientem (neque enim illi se tegere curae est), toruam cruentamque et cicatricosam et uerberibus suis liuidam, incessus uesani, offusam multa caligine, incursitantem uastantem fugantemque et omnium odio laborantem, sui maxime, si aliter nocere non possit, terras maria

caelum ruere cupientem, infestam pariter inuisamque. 6. Vel, si uidetur, sit qualis apud uates nostros est *sanguineum quatiens dextra Bellona flagellum* aut *scissa gaudens uadit Discordia palla* aut si qua magis dira facies excogitari diri adfectus potest'.

29. For an interesting commentary on this passage, see Hardie (2019, 117–120).
30. Seneca (1900, 112): 'Animus si ostendi et si in ulla materia perlucere posset, intuentis confunderet ater maculosusque et aestuans et distortus et tumidus. Nunc quoque tanta deformitas eius est per ossa carnesque et tot inpedimenta effluentis: quid si nudus ostenderetur?'

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PART III

Wounded Lovers in Profane and Sacred Art and Literature

CHAPTER 12

'Chacun de nous tient sa blessure ouverte, Sì che tal piaga Il mondo unqua risalde'. The Wound in Women's Poetry (that of Cixous and Colonna Among Others)

Tatiana Crivelli

1 Introduction

Cixous' versified prose, which is combined with a line by Colonna in the title of this study, provides a guiding principle for this reading of the works of Italian female poets of the Sixteenth Century: her prose transforms the wound, which is generally an event passively undergone by the subject, into a conscious action of the self, and it also offers useful categories of analysis.

In the pages which she devotes to Jean Genet (Cixous 2011), Hélène Cixous draws on the image of *blessure* to explain the emptiness generated by an original and irreparable amputation, a wound from which every

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F. Bondi et al. (eds.), *The Wounded Body*,
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creative act in both the life and work of that 'style thief' originated.[1] The wound, as it is portrayed in those pages, is at the same time an existential condition—in this sense, it is a figuration of the 'attentive democrat' who keeps it open as if it were a soup kitchen for the poor or the Other,[2] writes Cixous—and an image of the poet, who is born wounded.[3] Moreover, according to deconstructionism—an approach shared by Cixous and her favourite interlocutor, Jacques Derrida—deconstruction is itself a wound (to deconstruct means to open up lacerations). Lastly, the wound, or better, the narcissistic wound, is also that inflicted by the *écriture feminine* on patriarchy and on the phallocentric logic which dominates Western culture.[4] In her fertile theoretical and aesthetic approach, Hélène Cixous thus reads the wound as a 'mine to be dug so as to transform the sore from which everything originates into the gift of writing' (Maffioli 2017).[5] Thus interpreted, the wound becomes a mine, a fertile source, a sore that should not be healed in that it offers literary and psychoanalytic stimuli. The fissure produced by the intrusion of the *écriture feminine* into the fabric of the literary tradition should also not be healed: on the contrary, a powerful *pharmakon* can be extracted from that laceration. This study tries to rediscover some of the flavours and powers of that poisonous medication—which we can identify, as Derrida did, with the very act of writing (see Derrida 1981)—in the literary works of some Italian poets of the Sixteenth century by adopting a gender perspective to investigate the wounds inflicted on and by women.

2 The Wound as an Existential Condition

In Gaspara Stampa's collection of poems we can find a cluster of texts that are particularly significant in this respect: as in Petrarch's case, the amorous wound about which the lyrical 'I' complains is a wound that radically undermines the identity of the subject. In Stampa's poems,[6] love is not a temporary alteration of one's life, but rather a painful stab wound caused by falling in love, which takes the form of the slow bleeding of oblivion and distance (at once physical and emotional), of the purulent disease of jealousy and of the transitory relief offered by occasional *remedia*. Although it is evident that Stampa's poetry adheres closely (stylistically as well as thematically) to the Petrarchan code—a system of organised signs which 'work as identifying marks [...] that have metapoetic function, as quotations' (Hempfer 2001, 40–41)—it is also true that,

in the poetic tradition, the image of the amorous wound is generally associated with men. Because of its exemplary status, Francesco's love for Laura works as a universal element which, as such, can effectively give voice to new subjects, but, at the same time, it also becomes an abstract idea which subsumes all forms of difference within itself, including the specificity entailed in living in a gendered body. When lyric poetry begins to include the representation of an amorous wound suffered by a female 'I', the partial nature of the traditional poetic code clearly emerges: the feminine gender is grammatically marked, that is to say it does not have the same inclusive potential as the universal neuter. The masculine does not identify with the feminine. Gaspara Stampa was undoubtedly very aware of that fact. In her poems, it is an 'I' who dwells in a body, more precisely a female body, who is wounded.

The appearance of a female authorial self produces a sort of game of reflections as its most immediate effect: the beloved woman becomes the poet-lover, while the object of desire and inspiration assumes the body, habits and thoughts of a man, with all the consequences that this role reversal entails on a cultural, symbolic-poetic and expressive level. However, this simple pattern hides greater complexities which permeate the text and have to do with the paradigmatic role played by the figure of Laura. The lyric 'I' in women's poetry takes the male poet as a model and echoes his voice and language, but it also shapes itself in the image and likeness of Laura (and unsurprisingly so, as it is the expression of an eminently female code devised by women).[7] It is thus no coincidence that one of Stampa's favourite literary avatars was the figure of Echo, the nymph compelled to borrow the words of someone else. It is also not surprising that the Chimera, the composite creature *par excellence*, frequently appears in her poetry.[8]

The inclusion of the gender element into the text, which challenges the linguistic and conceptual masculine universal, enables the poet to hypothesise the existence of a specific gender group to which she could address her poetry because of the affinity of its members with the new poetic 'I'. Thus, for instance, in the first quatrain of Sonnet 83 (*Oimè, le notti mie colme di gioia*, see Stampa 2010, 132), the amorous wound is associated with a *state* of being (l. 4: 'converse il mio stato tutto in noia' ['changed my state to one of suffering']), and, in the second, the object of love becomes explicitly gendered, as is suggested, for instance, by the pronoun 'he' emphatically placed at the end of line 11. As a consequence, the last tercet can fittingly be addressed not to an ostensibly universal

audience referred to with the grammatical masculine, but rather to one explicitly identified as female: women reading the poem are encouraged to learn from the poet's example ('prendano essempio l'altre che verranno' ['May women heed this who come after me']). The experience of the lyric 'I' has thus acquired a specific gender connotation. Yet, it would be simplistic to observe merely that a role reversal takes place in the poem, no matter how important that role reversal is: what is at stake here is only apparently the playing of a role, it is something that has a more serious bearing on the poetic code in use, it affects that code by acting as a sort of regenerative *blessure*. Gaspara Stampa's poem has the same universalistic ambition (which is masculine in nature) possessed by the traditional poetic code, but it offers a new opportunity of self-identification: the lyric 'I' is here a female figure, one who openly declares to be female. In this respect, Stampa brings about a disruption in gender roles, she opens up a wound. The poet employs the language of the Petrarchan tradition, which aims at representing the universal condition of human beings, but at the same time she also enables 'the sound of [Laura's] sighs' to be heard, thus giving prominent position to a female subject whose story provides a model for a specifically female audience.

After all, the wound is a poetic image which combines feeling and physicality and which takes us to the real and symbolic terrain of the battlefield. Save for a few exceptions, such as the Amazons and other figures like Bradamante, it is generally male heroes who fight on the battlefield, and their goals are to defend their own integrity and to damage the enemy. On those battlefields, women are generally at risk of being defeated and have no tools to defend themselves effectively, so much so that the only heroic wounds that women are capable of delivering are self-inflicted ones, as was the case with Lucrezia. The fact that gender differences do not disappear when the battle is metaphorically intended as an emotional state is also relevant (although it has been overlooked by critics). The state of inner conflict, together with the wounds that are constantly re-opened in that battle ('l'alma impiagata', Gaspara Stampa defines her troubled soul in Sonnet 216, *Ben si convien Signor, che l'aureo dardo*, see Stampa 2010, 248, l. 7), may appear to be universal signs in that they are common to every human being capable of establishing relationships with others. Yet, they actually imply gender specificity. That is particularly evident in the poems written by women who are aware of that fact, such as Stampa, and in which a new way of articulating discourse transforms the war of love into a war of the sexes, as

is the case in Sonnet 147 (*Rimandatemi il cor'empio tiranno*, see Stampa 2010, 184–186).

In this sonnet on distance, existential suffering has a cruel, or, better, a feral quality, in spite of the author's evident predilection for an elegiac style modelled on Ovid's *Heroides*. A marked opposition between masculine and feminine is introduced as early as the first quatrain, where the count, explicitly addressed later on in the poem (l. 8), is invoked with the epithet 'empio tiranno': the masculine is associated with absolute power, here exerted without worrying about the suffering of others, and hence also accused of doing 'gran torto' (l. 2: 'you do wrong'). The poet mentions one of the most famous activities listed among the *remedia amoris* in order to emphasise men's primitive predatory instinct, and compiles a sort of metaphoric bestiary in which the man is an invincible predator (a tiger or lion) and the woman a 'cerva' ('doe'), whose only defence is flight and who is doomed to be vanquished because she has no offensive weapon (ll. 1–4): 'Give me back my heart, you evil tyrant, | which you do wrong to take and torture, | so doing to my poor heart and to me | what tigers and lions will do with a doe' ['Rimandatemi il cor' empio tiranno, | Ch'à si gran torto havete et istratiate, | E di lui, e di me quel proprio fate, | Che le Tigri e i Leon di Cerva fanno']. As is appropriate for a sonnet which is likely an epistolary one, the second quatrain draws attention to the contingent occasion on which the poem was written (the beloved promised that he would write to the author, but after eight days he has still not done so), but the two tercets introduce an unexpected twist. The author mentions two archetypal figures of male strength to which she opposes her womanly weakness, and she poses a rhetorical question which apparently rests on traditional gender roles, as it draws on the dichotomy between male strength and wisdom, and female weakness and irrationality (ll. 9–14): 'Do you think I'm a Hercules or Samson | to be able to withstand such grief? But I'm | young, and a woman, and out of my mind | especially when I'm without my heart | and without you for my defense - from whom | I'm accustomed to drawing strength and might' ['Credete ch'io sia Ercol' ò Sansone, | A' poter sostener tanto dolore | Giovane, e Donna, e fuor d'ogni ragione | Massime essendo qui senza 'l mio core, | E senza voi à mia difensione, | Onde mi suol venir forza, e vigore?']. Although the two biblical and mythological heroes, both endowed with legendary strength and heroic courage, are the embodiments of virility *par excellence*, they are here mentioned not merely as antithetical opposites of femaleness. Among the many trials they

had to go through to prove their invincibility, both Hercules and Samson were only vanquished by one thing: their attraction for a woman. The two heroes were meticulously chosen by Stampa. In the war of the sexes, the woman-doe would have no chance to survive the wounds inflicted on her by the man-lion, but, in the poem, the female author subtly implies that women can in fact survive, and very well so: they can even overcome men, exactly as Iole conquered Hercules, and Delilah took away Samson's strength. As Petrarch writes in his *De Viris Illustribus*, even the fearsome 'virorum victor et immanium domitor beluarum' was vanquished by his love for a woman, and, hence, it can rightly been said that 'victor omnium Hercules, victrix Herculis Yole' (Petrarca 2008, 88).[9] The same erotic subtext also underlies Samson's story, as is shown in roughly the same years by Mantegna's famous painting, on display at the National Gallery in London, which depicts Delilah as the embodiment of female sexual concupiscence, and in which an inscription reads: FOEMINA | DIABOLO TRIBVS | ASSIBVS EST | MALA PEIOR ('An evil woman is three times worse than the Devil'). Thus, from a gender perspective, the allusions to the mighty Hercules who was vanquished by Iole and to the invincible Samson who was rendered powerless by Delilah disprove the claim of frailness made by the female lyrical 'I'. The rich layering of meanings in the poem reveals the complexities of Stampa's formally perfect poetic diction, endowing it with a perturbing energy which is not explicitly conveyed but nonetheless unavoidable (an effect which is the result of the poem's drawing on the tradition of the war of the sexes, in which a female voice takes part). As a consequence of this new gender perspective, the image of the lyrical 'I' as a doe, employed by an extremely aware female author, projects its seductive power onto the text and conveys meanings which go beyond the language and metaphors traditionally associated with the amorous wound as an existential condition, and which can be certainly defined as subversive.

3 The Wound as an Authorial Condition

If, as has been said, the innovative representation of both genders in the poetry of female authors of the Cinquecento is closely connected with their awareness of the fact that they were writing as embodied subjects, then there is no one who can teach us better than Veronica Franco, who used her body to earn a living, what it means to incorporate bodily wounds into a text.

Born in 1546, eight years before Stampa's death, Franco combines in her works both the textual and the biographical dimension of her being a woman (but does not confuse one with the other, as scholars often do). Her works cannot be interpreted without taking gender into account,[10] as they are permeated by the wise and sophisticated assumption of the roles prescribed by society for males and females: the courtesan knows the rules of the game and knows also how to use gender stereotypes to her own advantage. Franco's writing profoundly transforms the relations between the sexes and the poetic strategies employed to represent them. It re-elaborates elements of the lyric tradition in a way which seems undoubtedly programmatic and capable of leaving a mark both on the relational dynamics of the society in which the author lives, and on the formal elements through which such dynamics are expressed.[11] To summarise, we can point out two extremely important aspects of this original treatment of the theme of love. On a formal level, Franco introduces innovations in her treatment of the *topos* of the amorous wound, among which the verse form she employs, that is the versatile Capitolo ternario (or in *terza rima*). Her poems also have a pervasive dialogic quality, which is conveyed through their macrotextual organisation (whereby texts addressed *to* the author alternate with texts addressed *by* the author), their message, language and form. Lastly, a relevant recurring element of Franco's poetry–and one which is of particular interest for us—is that the carnal wound, which is portrayed with full awareness of gender roles, acquires a metadiscursive value in Franco's many different representations of the amorous wound.

Capitolo 24 (*Sovente occorre ch'altri il suo parere*), for instance, offers a peculiar elaboration of that theme: the poet alludes to the codified practice of taking amourous revenge by inflicting a slash wound aimed at publicly 'branding' a woman who refuses to submit to the will of those who treat her as their property: 'but after that you threatened her mightily | and swore that you would slash her face | naming the day and the hour you'd do it' [Franco (1998, 244–245), ll. 34–36: 'ma voi la minacciaste forte allora, | e giuraste voler tagliarle il viso | osservando del farlo il tempo e l'ora']. Franco condenses multiple meanings into one image: the wound is a physical wound, a gender wound, but also a gesture that has explicit communicative value. It is inflicted precisely so that it can communicate something to an audience, and it is also the climactic consequence of a verbal offence, uttered 'sharp tongue' (l. 27: 'con lingua acuta') against a 'innocent woman' (l. 26: 'donna innocente').

In Franco's poetry, the wound is also a metaphor of sexual penetration, so much so that, in the famous Capitolo 2 (*S'esser del vostro amor potessi certa*), the poet even rewrites in an erotic key the image of a nail penetrating wood and employs a vocabulary which blasphemously alludes to the passion of Christ (ll. 175–180):

Your valour is the steadfast knot
that can pull me to your lap, joined to you
more tightly than a nail in hard wood
your skill can make you master of my life
for which you show so much love
– that skill that miraculously stands out in you. (Franco 1998, 69)[12]

In giving voice to female desire, Franco then explicitly links the expression of carnal desire with self-expression itself (ll. 154–171):

So sweet and delicious do I become,
when I am in bed with a man
who, I sense, loves and enjoys me,
that the pleasure I bring excels all delight,
[…] so that I, well taught in [sweet embraces],
know how to perform so well in bed
that this art exceeds Apollo's by far,
and my singing and writing are both forgotten
by the man who experiences me in this way,
which Venus reveals to people who serve her. (Franco 1998, 69)[13]

As a result of her assertion both of female *jouissance* and of her freedom of speech, the author emerges as self-assured, as she boasts about her skill in both fields and demands from her interlocutor a mutual interpenetration of bodies and souls as opposed to the violent act of wounding. It is only through such mutual interpenetration that 'you'll enjoy my sweetness to the full; | and I will also take pleasure in yours, | in the way that mutual love allows, | which provides delight free from all pain' [Franco (1998, 70–71), ll. 183–186: 'saranno le mie dolcezze a pien da voi godute; | e le vostre da me si goderanno | per quello ch'un amor mutuo comporte, | dove i difetti senza noia s'hanno']. The poet is thus asserting both that romantic relationships should be based on equality and that there is a connection between amorous discourse and the sexed nature of the desiring body. Thus, Franco's conception of true pleasure

implies a radical change in the characterisation of the amorous wound: the wound ceases to be an aggressive act carried out by men and passively undergone by women, an existential shock caused by a powerful external factor, and becomes something that affects at once body and soul, man and woman, the poetic subject and the very act of writing.

One last important innovation introduced by Franco is that, even when she describes a more traditional kind of amorous wound, her attention appears to be focussed not so much on the act of wounding but rather on the mark left by the wound on the body. In Capitolo 19 (*Quel che ascoso nel cor tenni gran tempo*) the two interlocutors, who had previously been lovers, have become old and have converted their love into friendship. Time and distance gave them relief from the effects of love, responsible for inflicting a wound on the lyrical 'I' (l. 31: 'I was pierced in the center of my breast' ['rimasi ferita in mezzo al pezzo']). In this case, their passionate love is merely the starting point of the poem, which focuses more explicitly on the present and on the scar left by that healed wound (ll. 65–69):

> In this way my mind discovered at last
> a cure for its deep and serious wounds;
> your departure for foreign lands
> mended the blow, although the scar
> could not be completely erased. (Franco 1998, 185)[14]

The word 'scar', which is extremely interesting and decidedly uncommon in the language of Petrarchan and lyric poetry, denotes a mark engraved in the flesh of those who have crossed the line to enter the realm of unspeakable passion: it is written evidence of that passion. 'Passion is the irresponsible decision of going beyond the present of being; it leaves a wound, a scar, in that place where the impossible takes place'[15]: a scar is thus at the same time a mark left by a healed wound and a mark which keeps the wound alive by inscribing it on a body. 'Each of us keeps our wound open', says Hélène Cixous. How? Through the written word, through the *pharmakon* of writing. Thus, we can perhaps apply to Franco's poems what Derrida wrote about Antonin Artaud's work when he argued that every word and every gesture of that author had a double function: they 'pierce, perforate, penetrate' but also 'heal the wound, suture, repair'.[16]

Among Franco's *Rime*, one poem in particular exemplifies in a very accurate way that complex relationship that exists between wound, love and writing: it is Capitolo 16 (*D'ardito cavalier non è prodezza*, see Franco 1995, 106–111). The poem is an answer to some insulting texts by Maffio Venier, especially to a long caudate sonnet, *Veronica, ver unica puttana* ('Veronica, a truly unique whore'),[17] and also a witty testimony of Franco's freedom of thought and rhetorical skill. Franco openly and publicly attacks her detractor, she takes on the role of champion of womankind and cleverly turns to her own advantage the notion of uniqueness associated with her name. Hers is an extremely brave stance given that the contest is between the reputation of a nobleman who amuses himself by writing pornographic poetry and a public woman whose social acceptance depends exactly on the coterie who defames her, and that it develops at the intersection between words and bodies, texts and their authors. Thus, if Venier ruthlessly circulated a caricatural depiction of the decay of a female body corrupted by venereal disease,[18] Franco's witty and articulate response revolves around the image of a female body which is not only vigorous, but also capable of taking on traits normally associated with virility while remaining womanly and seductive at the same time. Her poem effectively describes the verbal violence of the attack against her, which is depicted as a full-fledged rape, but also the reaction produced in her by that attack and the strength she gained from it. Veronica Franco issues a challenge to her detractor and presents it not so much as a private duel but rather as an instrument of revenge meant to be exemplary for all womankind. By leaving the choice of weapons to her aggressor, Franco moves the battle to the territory of art: the quarrel will have to be solved by wounding with words, that is by testing each other's skill in handling different linguistic and literary codes. Not only is the poem argumentatively and stylistically sharp, but it is also imbued with irony (a word which appears in the text at line 152, in a passage that has an antiphrastic meaning). Gender distinction is here not a mere role reversal. Veronica Franco's reaction to the wound inflicted on her honour as a woman and poet is a provocation to think differently, write differently, interpret differently: in other words, it is an exhortation to understand that there exists a different kind of 'dictionary' (l. 142) in the world. Veronica points out to Maffio that by calling her 'unique' 'non v'accorgendo mi lodate' (l. 176: 'without realizing it, you give me praise') and calls attention to the necessity of shared sense of interpretation which takes into account the points of view of both genders

in order to produce a more truthful expression (ll. 155–156): indeed, 'whoever speaks otherwise | digresses from the true meaning of words' [Franco (1998, 168–169): 'chi parla altrimenti | dal senso del parlar sen va discosto']. A vital element is here added to the group of signs belonging to the semantic field of the war of the sexes, 'ferire / feruta / ferro': it is the verb 'inferire', which is at the centre of Franco's rebuttal (ll. 178–180): 'And though you call me "prostitute" | either you *imply* that I'm not one of them, | or that among them some merit praise' [Franco 1998, 168–169: 'E se ben "meretrice" mi chiamate, | o volete *inferir* ch'io non vi sono, | o che ve n'èn tra tali di lodate']. The wound becomes here the phonic substance of the very act of signifying: it is the wound of the author, who is born wounded in that he/she is compelled to employ partial and subjective interpretive criteria, and a raw material of words which are always ambiguous and imperfect. By displaying a lyric 'I' who is at the same time seductively female and able to take on virile traits, and who is also capable of alternating lyricism and ironic rhetorical wit, Franco's writing 'disfid[a] a singolar battaglia' (l. 92: 'challenge[s] to single combat'): indeed, it also challenges the literary tradition, thus acting as an irreverent enemy. From the perspective of gender and of the literary genre, her purpose is that of setting an example (ll. 74–75): 'And to prove to you that I speak the truth, | among so many women I will act first, | setting an example for them all to follow' [Franco (1998, 164–165): 'E per farvi veder che 'l vero parlo, | tra tante donne incominciar voglio io, | porgendo esempio a lor di seguitarlo']. By appropriating and re-elaborating in a very original manner the canonical literary models to which she had access (Petrarch, of course, but also Dante, Ariosto, Ovid, Cicero, and the works, in prose and verse, of the other female protagonists of the Renaissance), Veronica Franco presents a challenge to the codified literary canon. We should thus adopt the same logic employed by her when she comments on the adjective 'unique' so inappropriately associated with her name, and reflect on the true or alleged uniqueness of the case of her poetry. By doing so, we may be able to find in her verse some of the fundamental elements which could help us understand a broader phenomenon, namely the wound opened by the incursion of the *écriture feminine* into the cultural fabric of that time.

4 The Wound of the Écriture Feminine

The works of the female poets of the Cinquecento are clearly indebted to the traditional poetic code, but, in writing of love, these poets no longer follow the universalising and asexual model handed down to them. Each in their own way, these female authors were brave enough to rely on gender difference to find their own way of looking at the world, and to bend the dominant language to their own creative needs: indeed, as Franco claims, 'Thus in adversity wise people behave, | knowing just how to put to advantage | what seems at first certain to harm them' [Franco (1998, 162–163): 'così nei casi avversi savi si danno, | che 'l lor utile espresso alfin cavare | da quel che nuoce da principio sanno'].

A wealth of new meanings 'pours out' of these wounds inflicted on the poetic diction of the lyric tradition. There seem to be as many ways to represent the author's female gender as there are female authors in this period. The emergence of the figure of the female poet on the cultural scene obviously takes on different forms, all of which are equally powerful. Paradoxically, Franco's passionate audacity (Franco (1998, 170–171): 'I insist on disputing it at any cost, | and I long to give birth to the anger I breed' ['e in ogni modo questo far voglio, | e partorir lo sdegno ch'entro covo']) could not have existed without the foundational precedent provided by the sublimation which informs love lyrics written by widows (above all Gambara and Colonna),[19] and by the loftier spiritual works of Vittoria Colonna. There is no space here to examine extensively the poems of this literary pioneer[20]: only three relevant sonnets will be examined, all of which develop the motif of the wound in a different way. First of all, we can find a bodily wound, and it is associated with a man. In Sonnet A1:61 (*Qui fece il mio bel lume a noi ritorno*) the lyric 'I' remembers that, when her husband recounted his military feats to her, he used to show his body as a proof: 'Conquered by my pleas, he showed me his beautiful scars and told me when and how he won his many and bright victories. What then gave me joy now gives so much pain'.[21] Once again, the scars (a *hapax* which would then be employed by Veronica Franco in the ways that have been analysed above) are proofs of the existence of productive wounds; they tell Vittoria of another 'vittoria' ('victory'). They testify to the valour of the man who returned alive from battle, announce that he cheated death, make him the most alive among the living (they are indeed 'belle', beautiful). But that is just a remembrance. After the death of Colonna's husband—the event which prompted the composition of

her collection of poem—the scar is no longer visible and, since the body of the hero is no longer flesh, a new wound has opened, namely a rupture between past and present, corporeality and spirituality, which holds the 'I' trapped in unresolved conflict (ll. 13–14): 'When I am immersed in my thoughts, I both rejoice and cry some sweet, and many bitter tears'.[22]

The act of displaying one's wound emerges in other forms—together with the image of the hands wounded by the crucifixion—in many of her spiritual poems. In Sonnet S1:66 (*Talor l'umana mente alzata a volo*), for instance, it appears in the context of an experience of mystic elevation which ends in a direct and amorous dialogue with the divine (ll. 12–14): 'He shows her his secrets in his open side and softly gives her his wounded hand, and then He talks to her'.[23] Lastly, in a variation on that theme, the image of the physical wound in Christ's side is metamorphosed into spiritual love. In Sonnet S1:118 (*A la durezza di Tomaso offerse*), it is suggested that the young widow should try to embrace the idea of ascetic abstraction from the body which St Thomas could not understand, as 'those who believe what they cannot see are truly worthy' (ll. 9–10).[24] This example, exactly as the others briefly mentioned here, may appear to be an invitation to *erase* the corporeal dimension—and scholars have indeed often read these poems that way. Yet, another interpretation is possible, one that takes into account the female body and the oxymoronic image of 'fecund chastity'.

In the first place, that image can allude to an autobiographical circumstance, as is the case in Sonnet A1:30 (*Quando Morte fra noi disciolse il nodo*), where Vittoria states that in her marriage 'our bodies were sterile, our souls fertile' (Colonna 1982, 18, l. 9: 'sterili i corpi fur, l'alme feconde'). On another level, though, while infertility is a condition suffered by the wife, it turns into a somewhat voluntary one when she becomes a widow, as is signalled by the functional appropriation of the image of the fecund chastity of Maria, the virgin mother. This image appears in several poems, such as, for instance, Sonnet S1: 108 (*Mentre la madre il suo Figlio diletto*), where Mary is represented both as the carrier of the secret of the resurrection and as the very symbol of a specific mission (ll. 9–11): 'The Father revealed to her the secret: He would not abandon his Son but rather bring him back alive and glorious' (Colonna 1982, 139: 'e'l sommo Padre il secreto le aprio | di non lasciare il Figlio, anzi aver cura | di ritornarLo glorioso e vivo'). Discovering the secret of that resurrection, whose mystery Maria already knows, is the poetic aim of the caste widow, who wishes to bring back, 'glorioso e vivo', the object

of her love. Thus, in the first tercet of Capitolo A2: 3 (*Vid'io la cima, il grembo e l'ampie falde*)—the sonnet from which the title of this paper is drawn (Colonna 1982, 57, l. 8: 'sì che tal piaga il mondo unqua risalde' ['so that such wound will never be healed'])—the poet fittingly introduces the theme of the 'worthy deeds' (l. 10: 'opre degne') eternalised by 'immortal praise' ('lodi immortali').

We could summarise (and thus consequently simplify) by saying that, in Vittoria Colonna's poetry, earthly love is characterised by a state of tension between body and spirit, transitory and eternal life, and it is condensed into the incisive image of the 'beautiful scars'. Divine love, on the contrary, never heals into a scar, it is a wound which never disappears, exactly like the stigmata. It is an endlessly fertile source, from which stems the possibility of spiritual rebirth and eternal life. At the same time, that wound is also linked with motherhood, as it was produced through the 'son of the Word' who was made flesh by being conceived in the body of a woman, and a chaste one. As has been demonstrated by studies on Colonna's religious prose writings (see Brundin 2001 and Carinci 2016), the figure of Mary is unsurprisingly pivotal in her spiritual works, where the author's own perspective often overlaps with that of the Virgin herself (and that happened in a historical period—the Reformation—in which authors tended to omit allusions to the figure of Mary so as to avoid controversy)[25]: that should be born in mind also when reading the *Rime*.

One last aspect is also worth emphasising. In the process of spiritualisation which takes place in Colonna's poems, the protagonists explicitly transcend their bodies in different ways according to their gender: the man does so through heroic death, the woman through penitential self-obliteration, which is due to her respectful acceptance of her destiny. Their models are the wounded Christ, and Mary. The latter conceived the Word in her flesh of woman with obedience and humility, enabling it to appear in a form intelligible to men, and, after Christ's death, she took on the role of a mediator who ensures that humankind understands the greatness of his mission. Like Mary, Vittoria—who was chosen by her husband as Mary was chosen by God—generates the word of truth in which the heroism of battle and the amorous wound, healed and engraved in the bodies of the lovers, are transcended. And it is an apparently helpless and fearful subject who transcends them, namely a woman who is otherwise merely destined to endure suffering. Thus, if the poetry of the 'chaste but fecund' woman is not salvific per se, it becomes salvific in that it passes on her vision to others, in that it conveys to others the awareness

she has gained by looking at her the wounds of her beloved, which also belong to her. Consequently, Colonna's poems combine some characteristic elements of lyrical poetry, such as the metaphor of nourishment, not only with the vocabulary of religious writing, but also with the physicality of a female body, albeit a holy one.

The potential inherent in 'gender multiplicity' effectively emerges in Colonna's complex poems, which set a model in that respect: on an intentional level, the lyric 'I' of her spiritual poems identifies with the universal body of Christ in that she desires spiritual ascesis and communion with God, *but also* with that of Mary in that the 'I' is also an intermediary who relies on words and a woman who meditates with anguish on amorous wounds. On a metatextual level, Colonna is a poet and, as such, she identifies with a masculine role represented by her predecessor Petrarch, but, because she is a female poet, she also identifies with Laura, whose fate and virtues she shares. This is exemplified in the first sonnet in her collection of spiritual poems, (S1: 1, *Poi che'l mio casto amor gran tempo tenne*),[26] which has one characteristic in common with Mary's message: it aims at communicating to the world the truth that has been revealed to her. Christ's wounds are particularly significant in this poem, as is testified by a remarkable quatrain where the nails which wounded Christ's body are associated with writing tools, his body with writing paper, and his bodily fluids with ink (ll. 5–8): 'May the holy nails from now on be my quills, his dear blood my ink, his sacred and lifeless body my lined paper, so that I may write down what he suffered'.[27] The sonnet ends with the request to be allowed to drink from a 'clear spring' ('lucido fonte'), from the wound which has never healed and which oozes 'bodily fluid' ('umore'). That last stanza evokes images of nourishment which would have been greatly appreciated by Cixous, as they are similar to those employed by her to describe women's writing as being made of milk and blood.

Colonna's poem does not represent a mere reduction to corporeality, but neither does it depict a pure ascent away from the body. It rather attributes new functions to the chaste body of a woman, which becomes one with the wounded body of he who was made man through her. The voice of the poet comes into contact with the divine through her maternal nurturing role, in which she also includes the union of the bodies, which is thus sublimated. The physical dimension of love (maternal and conjugal) is transferred to an eternal dimension, both prenatal and posthumous.

5 The Wound of Deconstruction

The emergence of the works of these female writers inflicts a wound on the literary tradition, which is at the same time conceptual, social, metaphoric and cultural: indeed, not only does this *écriture feminine* subvert established conventions, but it also deconstructs the binary opposition between male and female in the name of a 'more complex duality' which entails the 'nonexclusion either of the difference or of one sex', to borrow the words of a famous essay by Cixous (see Cixous 1976, 884). This is an extremely productive attitude, as it deconstructs the rigid binarism in which a subject is dominant, and opposes it to a mutually enriching dialogue between the two parts involved, where the exclusive formulation 'either / or' is replaced by the inclusive one 'both / and'. As Brigitte Weltman Aron states about Cixous, this attitude can 'do justice to a multiplicity of parts who refuse to become totalized and to be identified as One and, above all, who change or switch places in a way which would not be conceivable nor representable by binarism'.[28]

The works of these poets marked the beginning of a new and powerful literary era which truly deconstructs the tradition: not only does it reverse gender roles, but it also tightly interweaves them; it calls into play Laura and Petrarch at the same time, thus starting a trend which continues well into the Seventeenth Century in the works of the female poets of the Academy of Arcadia, before being neutralised by gender myths associated with the virility of the new Italian nation. It is in this sense that the writings of these female poets inflict a wound that should be kept open, exactly as Hélène Cixous and Vittoria Colonna encourage us to do.

(Trans. by Arianna Hijazin)

Notes

1. See White (1997). White refers here to Genet's own *Journal du voleur* (1949).
2. Cixous (2011, 35): 'Élégance du démocrate attentif: chacun de nous tient sa blessure ouverte, comme une table pour le pauvre ou l'autre'.
3. Cixous (2011, 7–8): 'Jean Genet: né amputé de mère et de père, déposé au Bureau des Enfants abandonnés, jugé non contagieux et déporté dans le Morvan, au pays *mor*, c'est-à-dire au pays *noir*.

Adressé au destin Poste Restante et personne pour le réclamer. Pour panser le blessé-né'.

4. The term is here employed in the specific sense attributed to it by Cixous (2010). Building on Lacan and Freud, Cixous places the feminine at the margins of the phallocentric symbolic Order in which language is inscribed. If a signifier is linked with one (and only one) signified, women, who occupy a marginalised position within the Symbolic order and produce *écriture feminine* from it, enjoy greater creative freedom, acting as a disturbing and deconstructing element at the same time.
5. The image of the mine, which is itself a wound on the earth/mother, is interestingly also a key metaphor used by Crescimbeni in his seventeenth-century work *Arcadia* to describe Vittoria Colonna. For further details see Crivelli (2021).
6. Her collection of poems is an interesting case not only for gender studies but also for those on the history of women in that it was an accomplishment carried out entirely by women: the *editio princeps* was edited by her sister Cassandra and it was printed in Venice by Plinio Pietrasanta. All references and English translations are from Stampa (2010).
7. This argument is indebted to Cox (2006).
8. See for instance Chemello (2005).
9. Caterina Malta argues that Petrarch draws on Ovid's *Heroides* (9, 1–6) and on Propertius (3, 11, 16–20).
10. I have studied Franco's work in greater detail elsewhere: see Crivelli (2014). Further bibliographic references can be found therein.
11. Veronica's blatant scepticism on the outcomes of the Word and the representation of diversity that results from it have been analysed in great detail in Crivelli (2005).
12. 'Il valor vostro è quel tenace nodo | che me vi può tirar nel grembo, unita | via più ch'affisso *in fermo legno chiodo*: | farvi *signor* vi può *de la mia vita* | che tanto amar mostrate, la virtute | che'n voi per *gran miracolo* s'addita' (Italics mine).
13. 'Così dolce e gustevole divento | quando mi trovo con persona in letto, | da cui amata e gradita mi sento, | che quel mio piacer vince ogni diletto | […] ond'io instrutta a questi [soavi abbracciamenti] so dar opra | sì ben nel letto, che d'Apollo a l'arte | questa se ne va d'assai spazio di sopra | e'l mio cantar e'l mio scrivere in carte |

s'oblia da chi mi prova in quella guisa | ch'a' suoi seguaci Venere comparte'.

14. 'Così divenne alfin la mente sana | da le profonde mie gravi ferute: | il vostro andar in region lontana | saldò 'l colpo, benché la *cicatrice* | render non si potesse in tutto vana' (Italics mine).
15. Derrida (1993, 63, 73). The text can now be found also in the Derrida "dictionary" *idixa*: https://www.idixa.net/Pixa/pagixa-0712121219.html [Accessed 7 July 2019]: 'La passion, c'est la décision irresponsable d'aller au-delà du présent de l'être; elle laisse une blessure, une cicatrice en ce lieu où l'impossible a lieu'.
16. Derrida (1986, 102): '*Coudre*. 1. "Je pouvais… coudre", et pour cela il me faut bien percer d'une aiguille ou d'une mine pointue, perforé, pénétrer, […] 2. pour fermer la blessure, suturer, cicatriser, et même la plaie que j'ouvre en cousant'.
17. Together with that poem, Venier wrote two other equally denigratory Capitoli: *Franca, credéme che per San Maffio* and *An, fia, cuomuodo? A che modo zioghémo?* Venier's texts are printed in Dazzi (1956). This edition includes a detailed study on Venier's erotic and lewd poetry. On the quarrel between Veronica and Venier see also Zorzi (1986, 91–111).
18. See Dazzi (1956, 37): 'Donna creduta mostro in carne umana, | Stucco, zesso, carton, curame e tola' ('A woman who looked like a monster in human flesh | plaster, cardboard, wooden board, leather').
19. See Crivelli (2008).
20. For a more detailed analysis of Vittoria Colonna's poems see Crivelli (2016), and the bibliographic references cited in it.
21. All references to Colonna's poems are from Colonna (1982). This sonnet is at p. 33: 'vinto dai prieghi miei poi ne mostrava | le belle cicatrici, e'l tempo e'l modo | de le vittorie sue tante e sì chiare; | quanta pena or mi dà gioia mi dava'.
22. Colonna (1982, 33): 'e in questo e in quel pensier piangendo godo | tra poche dolci e assai amare lacrime'.
23. Colonna (1982, 118): 'ch'i secreti Suoi nel lato aperto | le mostra, e la piagata man le porge | soavamente, e poi seco ragiona'. Among the wounds of Christ, it is those on his hands nailed to the cross which become a particularly prominent image in the corpus of Colonna's spiritual poems. See for instance S1: 94, 1–2 ('Le braccia aprendo in croce, e l'alme e pure | piaghe, largo, Signor, apristi il

Cielo') and S1: 24, 7–8 ('e le due man piagate or son scorte | da ridurne al camin per lei smarrito').

24. Colonna (1982, 144): 'maggior è il merto | di creder l'invisibile'.
25. According to Carinci 2016, there are passages in *Pianto della marchesa di Pescara sopra la Passione di Christo. Oratione della medesima, sopra l'Aue Maria. Oratione fatta il Venerdi santo, sopra la Passione di Christo* (1556. Venice: [Paolo Manuzio]) in which '[...] the perspectives of the author and the Virgin converge, creating an overlapping effect that must be borne in mind when reading the rest of the text' (408).
26. See Carinci (2016, 85).
27. Colonna (1982, 85): 'I santi chiodi ormai sieno mie penne, | e pure inchiostro il prezioso sangue, | vergata carta il sacro corpo esangue, | si ch'io scriva per me quel ch'Ei sostenne'.
28. Weltman-Aron (2015, 77): '[...] rendre justice à une multiplicité de parts qui ne se laissent pas totaliser ne reviennent pas à l'Un, et surtout qui s'échangent ou change de position, ce que le binarisme ne peut ni penser ni représenter'.

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CHAPTER 13

A Masochistic Prometheus: The Wound in Tasso's Lyric Poetry

Fabrizio Bondi

> Brusquement, Prométhée éclata en sanglots. L'aigle batti des ailes, roucula. D'un geste atroce, Prométhée ouvri son gilet et tendit son foie douloureux à l'oiseau.[1]
>
> André Gide *Le Prométhée mal enchaîné*

> Ora che tocchi con mano,
> la ferita – è vero –
> è cavernosa,
> ma non ci sbatti il muso,

[1] *Prometheus suddenly burst into tears. The eagle flapped its wings, it cooed. With an atrocious gesture, Prometheus unbuttoned his waistcoat and offered his painful liver to the bird.*

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è senza fondo.[2]
Andrea Inglese, *Lezione di S. Tommaso*

1. Scholars have often noted that Tasso's poetry is a poetry of 'affections' (a word which is to be understood in its ancient meaning of passions, feelings of the soul; see Careri 2010; Cabani 2018, 84). The main thesis of this chapter is that the image of the wound is closely related to that kind of poetry, which certainly includes lyric poems in that the subject matter of lyric poetry is love, the passion *par excellence*. The vividness, the *enargheia* of the signifier-wound employed when discussing feelings and, more specifically, love, is rooted in its somatic connotation. If it is true that, from Plato onward, passions have been regarded as an eminently psychophysical phenomenon, it is also undeniable that they are more strongly felt within the body. Moreover, the wound is also a perfect representation of the relation between the inside and the outside which characterises passional phenomena in that it is often part of an allegorical and mythological context.[1] Passions are always stirred, at least at an initial stage, by a specific object which is outside of the subject (Cupid's arrow which pierces the lover) and they later develop within the subject, in his psyche and his body (the wound which elicits pain and pleasure remains hidden, it closes and then re-opens, heals and leaves a scar). The force which activates this process (*cupiditas* / Cupid) is also internal.

For that reason—taking for granted the warnings given by scholars on that matter[2]—this study will focus on philosophy as an essential part of Tasso's poetic process. Philosophy must be understood in the broad sense of an area of study where different disciplines converge in the effort to establish an anthropology. Indeed, in the second half of the Sixteenth century, the theory of affections grounded on Aristotelian and Thomistic principles began to be questioned but it was at the same time also reelaborated and developed, although in a fragmented way (with one exception to my knowledge).[3] Another crisis took place in those years, which led to a complex and blatant collective effort to redefine literary genres. Tasso's solution to those cultural challenges may be exactly that 'poetry of affections' (and of effects) that has been mentioned above, if such an ambiguous and perturbing poetic style can be considered a solution at

[2] *Now that you touch it with your own hands | The wound is indeed | cavernous, | and yet you can never hit your face against it: | it is bottomless.*

all. The active and activating imitation of the passions is thus the aim of the literary genres employed by Tasso and it also facilitates some degree of blending of different genres. The image of the wound in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, for instance, is the sign of an intermingling between the lyric and the epic-chivalric code, as has been pointed out by Alfano.[4]

It is undeniably wise not to trust Tasso's attempt to operate a philosophical and religious re-orientation of his works (which goes together with a critical and poetic one) from the beginning of the eighties of the sixteenth century. Yet, just as Fredi Chiappelli found a more ancient and essential ideational core in the *Allegoria del Poema* (mostly written after the poem; see Chiappelli 1981, 12–13), I believe that it might be possible to do the same, at least in part, also by looking at the self-annotations which appear in the Chigiano manuscript and in the Osanna edition (1591). The aim, though, is not to portray Tasso as an 'immutable' author, who remains essentially the same through time: the *Gerusalemme Liberata* and the *Gerusalemme Conquistata* are clearly two radically different poems. Tasso's revision of his own lyric output, which he begun in the Chigiano manuscript, is also interesting per se, especially with regard to the relationship between poetry and philosophy, as is demonstrated by Ardissino, who argues that the works written by Tasso between 1585 and 1593 were heavily influenced by Plotinus (see Ardissimo 2003, 13). According to Ardissino, Tasso also drew on other philosophical sources, and especially on Plato.

It is also worth noting that the passage in the *Republic* in which the tripartite soul is associated with the City, that is the State,[5] is a key element in the aforementioned *Allegoria* of the *Liberata* as well as in another text which will later be examined. Looking at the echoes of that passage will help us identify nearly all the motifs which are implied in the image of the wound in Tasso's immense and partly chaotic lyric corpus: among them are plural and varied sign-wound (which is nonetheless always in tension with unity) that acts as a sign of the plurality of love; the constant and emphasised presence of both pain and pleasure which is connected with the amorous wound; the violence of Tasso's depiction of love; and the association of the love wound with the relation of true and false in poetry.

2. Although Tasso mentions wounds and sores in his poetic output as early as his very first poems, I wish to begin this study by looking at poem 113 in the Basile edition (all subsequent quotations are from this

edition). In an article to which I will often refer, Franco Tomasi identified that poem as a key element of Tasso's Canzoniere, which the author started to design at the beginning of the 1580s and which represents both the recapitulation of a love story and the theoretical justification of a new period in his lyrical production.[6] The choice of such a complex and solemn form demonstrates that Tasso attributed great importance to that poem.

Quel generoso mio guerriero interno leads its readers into a courtroom,[7] as is the case in Petrarch's *RVF* 360, which provided the explicit source for Tasso's poem[8]: Tasso engages in *imitatio* and *aemulatio*, as was his usual practice. There is a judge and it is the just judge *par excellence*, namely Reason. She holds a palm and a laurel branch and appears to allegorically reign over the moral and religious domain of the poem as well as over the poetic one. There is also an accuser, Disdain, and a defendant, Love. Unlike in *fragmentum* 360, the locus of the process in Tasso's poem is *in interiore homine*: Tasso refuses to participate personally in the debate with Amore, but he rather has Sdegno speak, that is to say the product of that irascible soul which, according to Plato's tripartite structure (drawn upon also by Petrarch), is situated in the heart. The presence of Reason and Love implies that the rational and the concupiscible soul are involved in Tasso's dramatisation of the workings of the passions,[9] which are described in a very precise way but without using medical or philosophical jargon.

The idea that the passions can be made to react with one another so that they can be balanced (according to some authors, this is how catharsis is achieved) stems from the psychological knowledge of that time.[10] When Disdain tells Reason 'I have often taken arms and attacked Desire for your benefit' he puts into verse a Platonic and Thomistic theory (Tomasi 2013 cites *Summa theologia*, q. 81, a. 1).[11] Rightful ire, contempt, and disdain can thus oppose desire.

Drawing once again on Plato (*Rep*. X, 588e), the second stanza describes desire as a many-headed snake, a hissing tangle of coils. It is an image of *plurality*, Tasso's *bête noire* in literature, philosophy and psychology.[12] 'The affections are so many that I hardly recognise them', declares Tasso through the character of Giovanlorenzo Malpiglio in the second dialogue named after him, and, in a particularly powerful passage in *Il Cataneo overo de le tentazioni amorose*, he states that as a result of the war between the irascible soul and the concupiscible soul 'many other passions are stirred like waves in the sea' ('Mille altre passioni a guisa

d'onde maritime sono sollevate'; this and the previous quotation are from Tasso 1998, 627 and 870). In Canzone 104, the poet offers a sketch of the phenomenology of emotions which is the main subject of lyric poetry: he attributes to Reason the ability to analyse it, and thus to bring light to 'the clouded senses, clouded like the sun which rises from the Ganges after having completed its orbit' (Tasso 2016, 118, ll. 31–33: 'il fosco senso [...] Come il sol che rotando esce di Gange'). Reason enables us to understand (perhaps with the help of Plato's *Philebus*) that pleasure and pain are hardly ever separated. This is the first way in which the motif of the wound (or rather the *wounds*) is presented: 'You know that desire pours an intense pleasure into the deep wounds that it inflicts on the soul, and exacerbates the pain by re-opening them' (ll. 34–36: 'E sai come il desio piacere intenso | In quelle sparge, ond'ei l'anima fiede | Profonde piaghe e le riapre e l'ange'). It is interesting to compare these lines with the same passage in the Chigiano edition: 'You know that desire pours an intense pleasure into the deep wounds that it inflicts on the soul by striking it, just as you are trying to save it' ('E sai come il desio piacere intenso | in quelle sparge onde la punge e fiede | profonde piaghe, ove al suo scampo intendi').

Tomasi suggests that 'profonde piaghe' is a 'commonplace Petrarchan expression' and quotes *Rvf* 196, 4. Yet, if one compares that line and its context with Tasso's phrase, it is immediately evident the latter is radically different in tone from the sweetness of Petrarch's expression. The correction of the Osanna edition, which is certainly 'motivated by the necessity to grain greater logical clarity rather than by the poet's will to hide the echo of Bembo in his text' (Tomasi 2012, 113; Tasso echoes Bembo's *Rime* 135, 6), may also have an expressive reason. The intense alliteration affects readers in the same way, but in this case it prompts them to identify with the reiterated action of 'rummaging' through the thickened blood of the wound.[13]

Thus, in the fourth stanza, the spectacle of the changing emotions which appears on the face of the beloved (that is to say those 'motions' which painters look for and study) provokes an equally protean succession of passions and desires in the observer and desirer. In other words, desire is a metamorphic *monstrum*:

> And you know that she, who is so beautiful and haughty, shows herself in different ways and is always admired as if she were a noble and previously

> unseen miracle. She alters herself through magic or nature and, in doing so, she also modifies the desires of our soul, which sighs for her.[14]

The kindness in the woman's voice and eyes deprives the fighter of his strength, and he finally surrenders with masochistic pleasure: 'And I willingly accept my own ruin'. In the following stanza the presence of the negative quality of 'plurality' is immediately evident in the desirer's gaze and it becomes even more prominent in relation to the fetishistic fragmentation typical of love poetry and especially of Tasso's output. Beside that, the passage also offers another example of the dynamic interaction of affections: Hope detaches itself from Disdain and joins with Love so as to pursue its goals.[15]

Love's argument, which is influenced by Plato and the Stilnovo,[16] begins with a similar idea: love refines those who experience it and hence it purges them of their lowest impulses, that is to say the thirst for riches and power. Although the motif of wounding is mitigated and presented as less dangerous through the *topos* of the lover who wounds and then heals, it is still characterised by the perturbing coexistence of pain and pleasure:

> I do not deny that, in the past, I wounded my soul because of my imprudence, and my soul knows that those wounds were painful, especially because it likes to suffer, and it chooses to sigh for a woman who has such pleasant medicines rather than receive joy from another, and it does not stop sighing.[17]

The rest of Eros' speech, which features a great number of Neoplatonic passages,[18] has a precise rhetorical pattern which is mainly that of judicial rhetoric and which is accurately described by Tomasi (2013, 115):

> Eros' long defense appears to be structured according to the rules of a trial that has a *qualitas adsumptiva*, that is to say according to the forms of judicial discourse which are generally employed when a direct defensive action would be too weak and it is hence supported through external arguments, as classical rhetoric prescribes (*Rhet. ad Herenn.*, I 24). And that is exactly the rhetorical strategy which underlies Love's speech, the speech of an accused who recognises his faults but makes his defense more subtle by calling on other agents, according to the practices of the *translatio criminis*, and who finally pronounces a *peroratio* so as to obtain a sort of suspended sentence from the judge who has to render judgment.

In Tasso's comment to his own work, 'io caggio' is glossed with a brief annotation, '*confessio criminis*', a rather unexpected Latin expression borrowed from legal jargon. The motif of confession echoes in the comment to line 109: 'A remarkable strategy is that of avoiding to explicitly state the faults of one's adversary so that he will confess them himself or that of revealing them while saying that you wish to conceal them' ('Mirabile artificio o di non manifestare i vitii dell'avversario, perch'egli medesimo *il confessi*, o di palesarli, dicendo di non palesarli'). In the previous stanza in which the wounds were mentioned, Eros had also confessed, 'with greater rhetorical finesse, afforded by figure of *concessio* in the Osanna edition: 'Maybe (I do not deny) I was careless and wounded my soul…' (Tomasi 2013, 116).

Love continues to argue that his own spiritualisation brought about by the salvific and elevating power of the beloved's eyes is possible. Yet, 'my nature, weighed down by the burden of mortality, tires my wings so much that I rarely go beyond [the contemplation of] her beautiful eyes' ('[…] la grave e mortale | mia natura mi stanca in guisa l'ale | ch'oltre ai begli occhi rado avvien ch'i passi'). Tasso's annotations of those lines is '*translatio criminis*', an expression which 'tends to attribute the cause of one's own criminal *factum* to a previous crime committed by others' (Procchi 2009, 237–252; the reference is to Cic., *Rhet. ad Her.*, 2, 22).

By introducing legal jargon in his comment—although that jargon could be entirely drawn from the rhetorical tradition (from *Rhet. ad Her.*, 2.22, for instance)—Tasso tries to emphasise the rigorousness of his investigation of affections but, at the same time, he also reveals his double and contradictory attitude towards the device of confession (see par. 6, above): obligation to confess and necessity to defend himself *traslando* (in the broadest possible sense of the term) coexist.

Lastly, in Love's *peroratio*, Tasso envisages the possibility that the two kinds of love, which are like different twins (and are represented through the mythical avatars of Castor and Pollux) may be reunited. Towards the end of the poem, though, Reason, the judge, does not grant the opponents even the ambiguous but significant smile which closed Petrarch's canzone. Judgement is still awaited. Reason remains silent.

3. It has often been noted that in the 'chaosmos' of Tasso's collection of poems one does not find the coherent and univocal 'story of a soul', nor the account of a single or at least predominant love. The first poems are indeed dedicated to Lucrezia Bendidio, the following ones to Laura

Peperara, but other more or less realistic objects of desire are also alluded to, literary avatars of the beautiful women who populated the courts, especially that of the Este: 'as thousands of loves are born from Love'.[19]

In poem 207, which is a sophisticated rewriting of an ancient original, the poet's heart is compared to a nest/ egg which is torn open at its birth by some 'graceful and young Cupids': these are the *Amores* of pagan literature, the spiteful, mocking, and omnipresent amoretti which personify countless erotic desires ('no tongue or pen can list them') without name nor gender.[20]

In the bold sequence of three poems 183–185 (which echo a motif already expressed in Sonnet 27), in which Tasso describes a lesbian kiss and its effects on the poet-*voyeur*, the lyric I asks Love to have a sexual contact with one of the two women or with both of them. He then 'continues to describe those kisses and expresses his desire to mend his heart, which was divided into more than one piece' (185). In that sonnet, the effect of the kisses (which are as percussive as blows) that the two women exchanged in the previous two poems is that of breaking the lyric I's heart and soul in pieces. In the epigrammatic closure a traditional image is employed[21]: 'Will I ever be able to pick up the pieces of my soul and then to put them in one place, just as the bee does, which draws its last breath when it stings?' ('Deh fia mai ch'io'l raccolga, e con quest'arte | e poi con l'alma in un sol loco il lassi, | come spira ne' morsi ape la vita?'). In that tercet, the reunification of the heart/ soul corresponds to death. Would the *reductio ad unum* of the lyric I cause similar (if not the same) anguish as its fragmentation?[22] In any case, no reunification takes place in Tasso's poetry without effort and torment.

It is significant that the same motif which 'lies at the tragic core of the *Amintas*' (Residori 2003, 8) can be found when Dafne calls down Love's punishment upon Silvia, who is blamed for the death of Aminta, to whom she says:

> […] like the Bee who leaves
> Sorrow to him he stings, but yet bereaves
> Himself of life: so now thou victor art,
> And dying wounded hast that stony heart
> Which living thou ne'r couldst […].[23]

Love inflicts a wound on Silvia's heart which is described as early as in the *Prologue* of the poem as 'dark and incurable'. In the *Prologue*, the

'change of tone' (Residori) is signalled by the solemnity of the sound of the line with three accents and by the insistence on the 'depth' of the wound ('cupa'). Love's plan is echoed in Aminta's account of the stratagem he devised to trick Silvia into kissing him:

> She harmlesse soul pittying the grief that I
> Made shew of, proffered freely to apply
> Her cure to my feign'd wound, which added fuel,
> To my hearts wound, and made it far more cruel.[24]

The refined technical construction of this passage suggests that the image of the wound, which is the symbolic parallel of a turning point in the plot, was important for Tasso. A combination of tensions hides behind the madrigalistic liveliness of the poem; the internal rhyme in line 489 draws attention to the metrical caesura in a violent and almost phonosymbolic way.

It is not by chance that the line continues with the division of its second half, which is broken into an interjection ('ahi lasso') and a sentence which is, in turn, divided by an *enjambement*. The following couplet of seven-syllable lines echoes the prologue and even mentions the same word 'cupa' to refer to the depth of the wound. Following the antithesis 'finta ferita' / 'piaga verace', which is the sign of a broader division, the couplet formed by lines 492–493 ideally closes the margins of the wound by representing such closure, within the rhetorical body of the line, with a parallelism ('labra sue' / 'labra mie').

For the characters of the *Amintas*, the wound is thus one and it digs deep into the 'verticality' of tragedy.[25] In the *Rime,* the metaphor of the wound is instead employed to describe the vicissitudes of the lyric I, who generally receives a plurality of wounds rather than just one: 'If this were life, I would receive many wounds and I would get from them as many delights' (*Rime* 9).[26] Later on, Tasso describes himself more tragically as a man covered with sores, a man whose psyche has been shattered by the 'stings and arrows' of Fortune.[27] Among those sores, there is also a hidden love wound. Not even that kind of wound is thus unique or the only existing one, although it is predominant:

> Among the thousands of arrows with which Fortune wounds my heart so often that there is no space left for any new wound, the dear arrow of love and its wound, alas, do find a place.[28]

The inclusive rhyme 'impiaga'/ 'piaga', which is employed elsewhere by Tasso for a differ purpose (*Rime* 16), emphasises the meaning of the entire quatrain.

Going back once again to the *Amintas*, the Satyr delivers a monologue in which he complains:

Ah me! my very bowels and my heart
Boil o're with blood, and like a cruel dart,
So *Silvia*'s fair ey's pierce me, I may say
Cruel Love; but far more cruel *Silvia*.[29]

In the Satyr's slightly deforming words, the numerous wounds tend to merge into a single wound and they are all provoked by the same cause, despite the fact that Love hides in many different places of the beloved's face (as is stated in the lines that precede those quoted above).

In the *Rime*, the love wound has instead a twofold etiology. In the first two sonnets dedicated to Bendidio (and which open the sequence of sonnets written for the Accademia degli Eterei), Tasso 'seems to deliberately contradict [...] the commonplace notion that men fall in love through sight and sight alone', and introduces the idea that love penetrates *per aures* (an idea which is Neoplatonic in its origin and thus particularly appropriate in this context, as is pointed out by Tomasi), or rather is engendered by the combined action of sight and hearing (Tomasi 2012, 55). In the two poems, Tasso mentions his first sight of the woman, which prepares the way for the subsequent shock provoked by the sound of her voice: 'And then her song hit my heart' (*Rime* 4, 9). In the second sonnet, eye contact is avoided by the lyric I, who is afraid of it, but

[...] I did not see the other danger:
my heart was wounded through my ears,
and her words reached the place which her face did not reach.[30]

In the following sonnet, though, 'the breeze of her speech offered sweet solace from the fire which came out of her eyes' (*Rime* 5, 7–8), while in *Rime* 41 (ll. 11–14), Tasso focuses on the fact that there is a small time gap between the wound inflicted by her looks and the one inflicted by the sound of her words, which 'wounded the heart *almost* at the same time' (italics mine). Such a time lag facilitates the activation of the verbo-visual and acoustic-visual 'machine', which is fuelled by

the passions and which shapes them, like in the beautiful and terrifying episode narrated by Saint Augustine in *Confessioni* VI, 8, in which his pupil Alipio suddenly falls victim of the devouring vice of arena games by way of a similar '*machinerie*'.[31]

Given Tasso's penchant for multiplicity, it is unsurprising that not even the important symbol of the wound is the only one which he employs in his repertoire of amorous metaphors. In the poems to Bendidio, the images of fire, of binding and laces, and that of the wound are equally important, and fittingly so, in that Tasso plays on a pseudo-etymological interpretation of Lucrezia's name, which is read as a combination of the words light, 'luce', and 'nets', 'reti'.[32] Moreover, in the tercets of *Rime* 9, the Stilnovistic 'colpo' and the wound inherited from Petrarch and Ovid coexist and are conflated ('How sweet are the internal wounds, and the act of shedding tears from the guilty eyes, and the eternal wounds provoked by a deadly stroke', 'Quanto soavi ancor le piaghe interne; | E lacrime stillar per gli occhi rei, | E d'un colpo mortal ferite eterne!'). Even the body, the object of love, is characterised by plurality, as was previously pointed out when drawing attention to the emotional metamorphoses of the beloved's face in the third stanza of *Quel generoso mio guerriero interno*.

As far as the poetic fragmentation of the female image is concerned, Tasso broadens the restrictive Petrarchan canon (as has been pointed out by critics such as Getto) by employing a range of vocabulary 'which evokes body parts or acts of love without abstract sublimations or obscene allusions' (Gigante 2007, 317–318). And yet, his poems often feature specific descriptions of erotically stimulating body parts such as the mouth, the neck, the breast, the hair, the hand (but also the gloves and the mirror, which are associated with the hand and, as such, become in turn the objects of the author's fetishistic gaze), which are portrayed, so to speak, in 'slow motion'—Residori brilliantly describes this tendency as 'hypnotic' contemplation. While the tradition of the *descriptio mulieris* is thus fragmented and diversified, the gaze of the lyric I rests on a single element which engenders desire, 'as if it were the only one'.

4. As has been pointed out above, the love wound brings both pain and joy: while this phenomenon is not described solely in Tasso's poems, it reaches an unparalleled intensity in them. For that reason, critics have often claimed that, in his lyric poems, Tasso displays a masochistic attitude

which was already manifest in the *Eteree*. I will now analyse the 'anomalous epithalamion' (Pestarino) *Amor, tu vedi, e non hai duolo o sdegno* (*Rime* 31), written for the wedding of Lucrezia Bendidio. After trying in vain to escape Love's domination, the poet's mind conjures an image of the object of his anguish, that is to say the hymeneal rites celebrated by his beloved woman with another man. It then returns to the time and place where the poet was wounded/fell in love:

> In the place where I felt the amorous wind blow and received serious wounds from you [Love], wounds which I show, still open and bleeding, to the woman who should heal them, but who only makes them worse, so cruel as she is.[33]

The wound is chosen as a symbol which draws attention to the fact that the lyric I continues to love the woman even after her marriage: the wounds *continue* to bleed, they have not healed. The healing function traditionally played by women is here denied in that the woman fails to heal the lover despite the astonishing spectacle which appears before her eyes. The next stanza begins with a 'thought' which offers to the suffering soul a representation of what hurts the most, 'and sinks into so many bitter sorrows' (the last word may be replaced with 'wounds'), thus creating a sort of double emblem. In that emblem, the new marital relationship is represented by the commonplace image of the helm and the vine, whereas the poet's hope is compared to the ivy (a symbol of faithfulness), which falls to the ground. Later, the poet unexpectedly asks the groom to let him be a 'bird which sings among your branches' and 'finds joy solely in their shades and no longer hopes nor craves'. The poet's wish to act as a third element in the happy couple has been read in a metaliterary way as the representation of his desire to continue to sing (and hence to love, but solely because love enables him to sing). The situation here depicted is undeniably bizarre even when it is not associated with some voluntary humiliations (perhaps even regulated by a contract in the manner of *Venus im pelz*).

I will now go back to Tasso's culture and to the context in which his poetry was written. The recurrent combination of pleasure and pain in human experience had been recognised by Plato in his *Philebus*, in which that combination had been ascribed to the concomitant actions of bodily stimuli and of the faculty of imagining and forming opinions possessed

by the soul. By relying on Plato's authority, as well as on other *auctoritates* in the field of medicine, philosophy, and poetry, Torelli declares in lesson I, 11 of his *Treatise of the Passions* that pleasure and pain can be separated solely through a process of mental abstraction.[34] At the beginning of the following lesson, the interchangeability of the two feelings within the complex totality of human affections is exemplified by a parallelism that features a Petrarchan oxymoron: 'My sweet sorrow | my bitter joy' (*Rvf* 240, 3–4: 'Dolce mia pena | amaro mio diletto'). Petrarch had indeed meditated on the cause and on the manifestation of his own *voluptas dolendi*, and had vividly represented it in his lyric output.

Tasso often dwelled on that topic as early as his first poems, among which is his aforementioned *Se d'Amor queste son reti e legami* (*Rime* 9). The brief description of that poem reads '*Mostra quanta dolcezza sia ne le pene amorose*', thus almost introducing an obsessive *leitmotif* which would recur in the following poems. Later on, the transformation of one contrary into the other (a transformation which is described as early as in Aristotle's philosophy) is depicted as an amorous paradox, as a 'countertruth' of love. In *Rime* 16 the poet states that because of the miraculous power of Lucrezia's beauty not only pleasure and pain but also 'the other passions' turn into their contrary. The second quatrain, for instance, describes how fear turns into desire and in the tercets the aforementioned ideas are summarised:

> Pain does not increase if she inflicts another amorous wound. On the contrary, she heals the soul with sweet sorrows. Turning pain and fear into joy and hope, and healing while brutally wounding is a greater miracle than those wrought by magic.[35]

The inclusive rhyme (piaga-impiaga) emphasises both the duplication of the amorous wound (described through an oxymoronic and paradoxical expression in the first tercet) and the fact that the two wounds are different: repetition and difference are both involved. It is worth noting, albeit briefly, that the words 'piaga', 'ferita', their synonyms, and the concepts related to them are often placed at the end of the sonnet, in its *cauda*, thus acting as a sort of metapoetic signal of the *pointe* and its effect, that is to say of the epigrammatic wit which should be displayed at that position according to the rules of the genre.[36]

Marvellous transformations aside, the coexistence of pleasure and pain can be considered an *ordinary* condition of the lover: 'And I enjoy

suffering, so much so that I take great pleasure in being martyred', says the lyric I in *Rime* 23, 7–8; and 'It will be sweet to die by the arrow and the bow' (68, 11).[37] Thus, just as lovers who often desire identification or reciprocity with the beloved, the lyric I also wishes that the woman who has inflicted many wounds on him ('She is the one who strikes and wounds | with a sweet blow she kills and gives pleasure') 'with sweet weapons which make her guilty of murder' (43, l. 7) may experience the same mixture of pleasure and pain[38]:

> I pray that she may enjoy pleasant suffering, and that the wound and the golden arrow be imbued with the gentlest sweetness. And if that noble soul continues to scorn the idea of rejoicing for a similar wound, may I receive death and hardships and may she receive great happiness.[39]

The poet gallantly hopes to be the one who experiences the greatest pain (and hence pleasure). His desire to suffer can be explained in various ways, one of which is the fact that keeping love/pain secret is identified as virtuous behaviour: that idea emerged in *Era aspro e duro e sofferir sì lunge* (*Rime* 64), an interesting sonnet also in that its narration of the psychological reactions of the lyric I is harsh in tone, and it nearly echoes the style of Dante's *petrose*; it should also be noted that, in the second quatrain, the image of the hand which becomes a 'cruel claw' that wounds the enamoured poet in his 'side' is particularly powerful.

In sonnet *Per figurar madonna al senso interno* (*Rime* 65) the poet gives a peculiar mythical representation of the relationship between love, pain (the wound), and poetry, which will be later explored in greater detail. The lyric I associates himself with Prometheus and, by doing so, he relies simultaneously on two different moments of the mythic and tragic story, namely the theft of fire and the repetition of the act of wounding Prometheus' liver performed by Zeus' eagle. The amorous paradox of Prometheus/ the eagle is once again rooted in the contemporary theory of affections. In Lesson I, 8 (*Lettione prima del Dolore*) of his *Treatise of the Passions* Torelli writes:

> Pleasure stems from the soul as a result of its influence and then it wanes; pain arises from the weight of the animated body. These two phenomena are as different from each other as Prometheus who stole fire and Prometheus who was bound to the rock and constantly devoured by the greedy eagle, which is itself the epitome of pain.[40]

Although in his commentary on his own work Tasso (who was a member of the *Innominati*, an academy in which Torelli was a leading figure) generically alludes to the myth of Prometheus he may have been familiar with an allegorical tradition that was known also to Torelli, whose project was that of giving a realistic description of human emotions that would be compatible with the ideology of the Counter-reformation (see Bondi 2012).

The motif of the coexistence of pain and pleasure resurfaces in Tasso's sacred poetry, which, as is well known, often shares the same poetic code as love poetry, as is openly displayed in sonnet *Al padre francescano Francesco Cocchi predicatore (Rime* 1647). In the first quatrain, the poet draws on the commonplace association of the heart with a diamond, which was so common in the tradition of love poetry, and he also employs the jargon term 'disdain'. The line 'where every dart of Love becomes blunt' (l. 4) could well appear in any profane love poem. Disdain, which stems from the awareness of one's own corruption, is here represented as an emotional and spiritual block. Only Cocchi's inspired and eloquent words can counteract that block, words which wound just as those of Lucrece. The words of the preacher are compared to an evangelical 'sword' (interestingly, war metaphors often appear also in love poetry) which pierces the armour of 'tenacious love' and stabs the heart. The wounds ('piaghe') thus inflicted do not shed blood. They are caused by voice and pain and hence they give out sighs and tears, and infuse their sweetness into the second tercet:

> My wounds did not shed warm drops of blood, but only bitter tears, for they were opened by your voice and by my pain. Thus, I cry and sigh as I learn of that glory that makes the sun radiant and blazing while you pour eternal sweetness into my heart.[41]

For St. Ignatius, tears were the sign that a contact with divinity had taken place, that prayer and contemplation had been effective. The influence of Ignatius' technique of contemplation over Tasso's poetry has been proven by a recent study which offers an interesting reading of *Eccovi il don de l'onorata testa (Rime* 1655*),* a sonnet whose thematic and symbolic focus is the 'cruel but holy and sacred spectacle' (l. 8) of the severed head of the Baptist (Morando 2016, 29). The author of that study argues that, for poetic reasons, the sonnet is not linked with any 'real picture'. What is involved in this sonnet is the ability of poetry not

only to paraphrase or amplify the divine *vox clamantis in deserto* but also to act as its very successor, in that it evokes in the minds of the readers and listeners images at least as vivid as those evoked by preachers.

In this 'confluence of poetical and spiritual problems' (as Morando puts it, quoting Ardissino and others), the poet shows once again his intention of creating a visual as well as a verbal machine (see paragraph 2, above) which is set in motion by the sound of words. Sound and voice are the elements that create the simulacrum and it is to them that the simulacrum returns (Morando 2016, 27). The bloody head of the Baptist thus fittingly has a 'living' wound which contrasts with the deadly one on his neck: it is his mouth, from which his life-bringing words stem (Morando points out that his mouth is often represented half-open in paintings).

Pain and pleasure are often intertwined, especially when religious experience verges on ecstatic and mystical experience, as is the case in sonnet *A san Francesco nell'atto di ricevere le stimmate* (*Rime* 1661).

> Oh Francis, you stare at the heavenly spheres and you look at your Lord, love Him and desire Him, burn for him and sigh for His death and for our sins because, like a perpetually blowing wind, both the blazing spirit and glances as sharp as arrows or darts pierce your heart, inflicting on you the same pain as that suffered by Christ. But your kind Lord stings and burns so sweetly that any pleasure is bitter compared to that suffering. And in that moment – wonderful feeling! – His own wounds are lovingly imprinted on you, as He who gives them to you knows very well.[42]

Francis' mystical contemplation of God is simultaneously painful and pleasant, and the sharp 'arrows'/ 'glances' which pierce his heart are no different from those of love: the piercing dart and burning fire are sweet. The ensuing emotion—which is wonderful, 'meraviglioso', just like that provoked by Lucrezia Bendidio—causes the wound to be impressed on Francis' body. The same idea can be found in *Rime* 1634, in which the wounds are those of Christ himself: 'Oh heart, why are not those wounds imprinted upon you?', but, in this poem, that wish cannot be fulfilled. The man who piously meditates during Good Friday is indeed not a saint.

In the sonnet on St Francis, the wound is represented as an inscription (as is the case also elsewhere), if not a typographic mark; the body is a text or an engraving of an image, like that which the poet impresses in

the mind of his readers. Francis seems thus to be absorbed in the contemplation of an image (an image of Christ on the cross, like in the traditional iconography) which is reproduced by poetry according to the teachings of St Ignatius.

Francis, though, experiences a transition from ardent contemplation to true mystical ecstasy: in other words, the man who meditates is no longer a subject who performs an action, he acquires a passive role (in the second quatrain) when he is struck by a different kind of Love through the work of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is the true writer and the true printer (the poet, a little god of his own 'little world', is merely its copy). The description of the appearance of the stigmata in the second tercet ('the loving copy of his wounds') thus follows the first tercet, in which the intertwining of pain and pleasure reaches a climax, which is also an expressive climax (see for instance the anaphoric repetition of the adjective 'sweet').

Thus, the surplus of enjoyment of the ecstatic man goes beyond the *techne* of the spiritual exercise and of predication, although these are the well noticeable starting points of the ecstatic experience. Tasso's poetry often hints at that mystical *excessus* in which darkness and light, pleasure and pain, matter and spirit are one thing, even though his poems clearly remain literary products which display their own sophisticated art.

5. In Tasso's poetry, the expression of erotic drives is often combined with images of violence. Cabani has compared the contemplation of Lucrezia's white neck with the 'erotic power released by the wound inflicted by an "inhuman warrior" near the "white neck" of Clorinda (*GL* III 30)'.[43] That wound, together with the cruel and sophisticated detail of the drops of blood on her blonde hair, appears to be an aestheticising prefiguration of the heroine's death.

Clorinda is once again mentioned when Cabani discusses the madrigal *Un'ape esser vorrei* (*Rime* 499), which, according to her, 'is in part an homage to the desired woman but it is also characterised by an erotic aggressiveness that is only partially concealed by the poem's light tone' (Cabani 2018, 73):

> Beautiful and cruel woman, I wish I were a bee that could suck the honey that is in you while producing its whisper-like buzz. Since I could not sting your heart, I would sting your white bosom and, with such a sweet wound, depart from life avenged.[44]

As has been mentioned above, the choice of loving one and only one individual is associated with the 'bite' of the bee that leads it to its death also in the last line of *Rime* 185. In that poem, though, the commonplace of the bee implied a nearly masochistic *voluptas moriendi* and it was probably informed by the 'fear' of psychical reconnection. In *Un'ape esser vorrei*, the image of the stinging bee is instead a metaphor of the sexual act, as is suggested by the ambiguity of the term 'breast' (and perhaps also of the orgasm as a *petite mort*). According to Cabani, this is a less explicit equivalent of the 'point that pierced Clorinda's breast' in the *Gerusalemme Liberata* XII, 64, 3–7, and of 'Tancredi's fantasies about the possibility of joining her in death' (Cabani 2018, 74).

The *topos* of the amorous battle, here imbued with tragic poignancy and obscure eroticism, is instead wittingly depicted in a sonnet included in a group of poems dedicated to Laura Peperara (*Rime* 183). The sonnet's concettist style is evident especially in its bold Sapphic and sadistic elements:

> My mind was inebriated with nectar and I was enraptured, unwittingly carried into a closed fence, inside which I saw two beautiful warriors of Love, jousting against each other, wielding the weapons that make Love so powerful. At first I watched them proudly and elegantly display their beauty and then they attacked each other and wounded each other with a searing kiss in the place where the mouth is redder. Their lips smacked and the signs of the blows remained impressed on them. Oh Love, why do you employ such powerful weapons for a pastime? Let them challenge each other in a real fight and let them not refuse to fight in a true amorous battle. Oh Love, let me, your devotee, face one of them, or fight against them both.[45]

The strategy of depicting the sensual scene as a dream or an erotic fantasy, which is employed by Tasso in the first two lines (but perhaps covertly contradicted in the description of the poem), is appropriate to the playful tone which the scene takes on, at a diegetic level, when the war of love is represented as a jousting tournament. In the tercets, though, the lyric I expresses rather bluntly his desire to turn that innocuous albeit teasing game (so teasing that it nearly pushes the boundaries of the courtly code) into a 'real' intercourse. The frustration of that desire due to the fact that the amorous game is played by the women alone (and, as such, it does not contemplate possibility of penetration that only occurs in 'true' war) confirms the implicit tension (which is anything but playful)

that Tasso manages to elicit even when he creatively employs metaphors that are rather trite.[46]

A voyeuristic fantasy of defloration pervades *Già il notturno sereno* (499), an epithalamion composed for the wedding of Alfonso and Marfisa d'Este, in which Tasso seems to show a 'special interest in the image of the young bride and especially in her violated body [...] and he employs a protracted war metaphor which is undoubtedly traditional but here reworked in a way that it becomes unusually insistent and violent' (Cabani 2018, 81).

Cabani rightly mentions once again bees and Clorinda, 'lying' like the young bride after the bloody intercourse. But the fantasy of rape/defloration also belongs to the Satyr in the *Amintas*, as is evident when he concludes his famous monologue at the beginning of Act II ('Nor shal the gods release her, til that I | For my revenge my armes in blood do dye', 'indi non partirà, ch'io pria non tinga | l'armi mie per vendetta nel suo sangue', ll. 819–820). As has been pointed out above, Residori usefully explains that the Satyr is a complex and nuanced character in spite of his uncouth and caricatured traits: upon this figure are probably projected some of Tasso' own anxieties.[47]

As has been shown by Gigliucci (2014), the woman who wounds in the *Amintas* is, of course, Silvia, a sylvan character and a hunter who can be associated with the virgin Diana. According to Gigliucci, in the darkness of the wood (which bears the mark of original violence, upon which the myth of Arcadia is grounded), Silvia's double is the wolf, just as the satyr is the double of Aminta. The ability to wound possessed by the nymph is the element that provokes the misunderstanding which opens the possibility of a tragic ending. Love wound and hunting wound are thus connected in the chiastic structure devised by Tasso, in which the distinction between what is true and what is false tends to be blurred. Within that structure, the carefully organised metaphors of the wound play a pivotal role.

6. Those who read Tasso's works and have in mind Foucault's scattered but deep reflections on confession would certainly suspect that the rite of confession influenced his writing to the same extent to which it influenced Petrarch, although in a different way (as is demonstrated by the explicitly confessional structure of the *Secretum*; see at least Foucault 2013). Confession must have been extremely important for Tasso 'the man' (as he was defined by scholars in the past). In his extremely

tormented psyche, confession was an obsession. And yet, it is vital to examine Tasso's life experience within the controlling milieu of the Court, which encouraged a precautionary use of dissimulation but also stimulated literary expression, establishing rules that had to be followed while at the same time creating the expectation that those established code would be altered, violated or treated with irony. The variation and violation of the literary codes is also necessary for the poet who aims at offering original material within the context of a courtly struggle for life. If Tasso's persecution complex may have been one of the pathological effects of that struggle, his desire to tie himself to a statement which contains the truth about himself (Foucault) is instead probably a symptom of his perpetual compulsion to put himself and his literary output under rigorous examination.

In the course of Tasso's lifetime and in his works, the superego gradually comes to dominate. In his epic and chivalric works, the emergence of the superego becomes manifest in his pursuit of 'historical and religious truth' (which acquires the status of a fetish) and of an epic 'orthodoxy'. Tasso, though, commits to adhere to an orthodoxy also in his lyric poetry. As he re-arranges his vast lyric output in the Chigiano edition, his superego links the possibility that lyric poetry may achieve the same dignity as epic to its truthfulness, thus following Petrarch's example (in the commentary to his own work, Tasso states that he attributes historical value to the relationship between Petrarch and Laura). The very first word employed in *Rime* 1 is especially significant in this regard: '*True* are those joys and those passions, for which I cried and sang poems that could match the sound of weapons and the glories and chaste love of heroes' ('*Vere* son queste gioie, e questi ardori, | Ond'io piansi, e cantai con vario carme | Che poteva agguagliar il suon de l'arme | E degli Heroi le glorie, e i casti amori').

The intertwining of religious and legal elements in the dispositive of confession, which has been investigated by Foucault, is evident first and foremost in an image, which has generally been neglected by scholars and which appears in a key sonnet of Tasso's first collection of poems, *Rime per gli Eterei* (*Arsi gran tempo, e del mio foco indegno*), a sonnet which, in the Chigiano edition, is placed in the middle of the 'cycle of Disdain' (Tomasi 2013, 117): 'Woe is me! I now clearly understand that what I said was like the voice of a man forced by torture by an unjust judge to stray from the truth' ('Lasso, e conosco or ben che quant'io dissi / Fu *voce d'huom, cui ne' tormenti astringa / Giudice ingiusto a traviar dal*

vero' [indeed, true pleasures are also just. See Tasso's commentary to his own work and *Philebus*]).

'People lie in order to confess', Tasso seems to imply. Love is here represented as an 'unjust judge' which resorts to torture in order to obtain a false confession, to elicit a lie – and yet 'vere son…'.[48] This passage may also mirror the doubts of both classical and Christian cultures as to the truth of confession obtained through *quaestio*. Cicero, who is generally against that practice, admits in *Topica* (20, 75) that both the confessions obtained through torture, such as lashes and fire, and those which stem from the subject's feelings, such as pain, desire, anger and fear are valid and should be trusted. Tormenting passion is thus simultaneously the element that causes the poetic and amorous statement to be true and its content to be false: 'Alas, because I was blinded by love, I mislead others by embellishing your image in my poems with such refined decorations that they made you look beautiful' ('Ahi ch'io cieco d'amor altrui ingannai / In rime ornando di sì ricchi fregi / La forma tua, che poi leggiadra apparve').

The tercet is more complex than it may appear and, as such, it cannot be dismissed as the mere expression of the idea that the poet describes his beloved woman as if she were more beautiful than she actually is. 'Interweaving ornaments with truth' is an inevitable process or effect inherent in writing poetry but it is at odds both with Platonism and with Christian thought, two cultural forces which exerted a strong influence on Tasso and which, together with other less easily identifiable elements, triggered his anxious quest for truth. How can lyric poetry be written if the impressions and the speech of the lover are unable to produce anything but *simulacra*?[49] How can it be written if Love, which is the force that 'gives speech' to poets, is a judge who extorts a confession, that is to say a statement that must be true, but the truth which is obtained through loving and writing is false (and it cannot but be false in that it has to do with the secular and mundane world)?

Love is depicted elsewhere as a cruel master who catches his rebellious slave who tried to escape and then 'forcefully' brands the name of his beloved woman on his heart (*Rime* 31, *Amor, tu vedi, e non hai duolo o sdegno*). The lyric I is thus somehow forced to love and hence also to speak, to produce art, to produce an inscription, an 'impression', as is demonstrated in Tasso's lyric and perhaps also epic output (see for instance the scars on Dudone's body in the *Gerusalemme liberata*, which represent an inscription that records the feats of war accomplished by the

hero; they are 'non-awful signs of wounds'). In *Rime* 35, the face of the lyric I upon which feelings surface is compared to a statue ('affection impressed as if in white stone'). The sonnet *Per figurar madonna al senso interno* (*Rime* 65) employs instead a painting metaphor (and on a Platonic problem). The poet shapes and gives life to an *eidolon* in the absence of his beloved woman. It is thought that his 'Thought' has to do so within the 'inner sense', the 'common place' in which the data gathered by the senses converge (and can thus be rationally analysed) and imagination is triggered by them:

> Oh Thought, how will you find the right shades and colours to represent our lady to our inner sense? How will you paint white flowers or roses strewn on the white winter snow? Will you be able to fly across the eternal and incorruptible sky and steal from the fairest star its bright light and flame, scornful of the revenge that the heavens will take?[50]

These two stanzas hint at the famous platonic notion that art is a shadow of shadows in that things are themselves nothing but a shadow of the Ideas, and allude to the impossibility of grasping the intangible essence of things, which exists in the Hyperuranion. Lines 7 and 8, though, allude to a theft and a punishment for *hybris* which prepare the way for an unexpected twist in the next tercet:

> Will you, like Prometheus, give a soul, a voice, and a human-like mind to our idol and will you also be the bird which feeds on its heart and inflicts terrible pain, craving that which gives both pleasure and pain? Or does Love assure you that you will escape such a cruel vengeance?[51]

That motif was openly anticipated in the opening description of the poem: 'He tells himself that in shaping the image of his woman he will resemble both Prometheus and the vulture which feeds on his heart' ('Dice al suo pensiero che nel formar l'imagine della sua donna verrà insieme assomigliar Prometeo e l'avoltoio che gli rode il cuore'). Lines 9–10 describe Prometheus as he moulds mankind, breathing life into it and giving it the gift of intelligence. The poet is thus capable of creating something that parallels God's creation but at the price of falling victim to self-inflicted tortures of love ('I dream of the object that gives me pleasure and plain', 'Vago di ciò che più diletta e noce').

He is thus the one who judges and condemns himself by associating his situation with that appalling theatre of torture represented in Aeschylus' myth. The figure of a Prometheus who tortures himself (*heautontimoroumenos*) is a fitting symbol of Tasso's way of writing poetry: the poet does indeed appear to be condemned to endlessly rewrite his own works, drawing out from his wounded chest (and his imagination) the reasons for writing. It may be said that this mixture of happiness, dissatisfaction, fear and sense of lack is the poet's curse and blessing.

Yet, Tasso's poetic art, which is extremely aware of and ready to welcome the hints that come from the unconscious, is constantly torn between the compulsion to tell the truth and the need to dissimulate. In casting himself as a second Prometheus, the poet also implies that, in his poems, he seeks to reconcile poetry and philosophy, rhetoric and dialectics: he is the creator of a language which is packed with conflicting ideas but in which the striving towards the One is able to capture the endless multiplicity of the world.[52]

(*Trans. by Arianna Hijazin*)

Notes

1. Ov., *Met*., I, 452–477. On the level of metaphorology, the extraction of that signifier from the complex totality of mythical signifiers operated by the poetical tradition and especially by Petrarch does not lead to the obliteration of the remaining mythical signifiers, with their semantic echoes and implications. For instance, the context of war/hunting in which Cupid's feat is set will generally be related to the metaphors of war and hunting in lyric poetry.
2. On the relation between poetry and philosophy in Tasso, see Jossa (2006).
3. I am referring to Pomponio Torelli's *Trattato delle passioni dell'animo*, written (and recited at the Accademia degli Innominati) between the last five years of the sixteenth Century and the first decade of the Seventeenth (see Bondi 2012, which also contains more information on the above-mentioned crisis of the theory of affections).
4. For that reason and for reasons of space, I will focus on the interference between the epic code and the tragic and pastoral one.

Tomasi (2013) finds interesting similarities between the canzone 113 and the *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

5. Plat., *Rep*., IV, 435b–441c. Tasso's re-elaboration of that concept in the *Allegoria* can be found in Tasso (2016, 295). Through that association, the image of the wound falls within one of the paradigms established by Blumenberg (1969), or 'absolute metaphors', that is to say the political and state implication of the organicistic paradigm.
6. Tomasi (2013). This study also analyses the intratextual relationships between *Quel generoso mio guerriero interno* and the poems which precede it. The first printed edition of the canzone appeared in 1582. There are some significant variations between the Chigiano edition and the 1591 Osanna edition, which I will point out when relevant to my argument. I will mainly look at the Osanna edition.
7. Firstly, the abovementioned topical metaphor of the war of love appears as early as the first line, but it is here represented as a 'psychomachia' (see Ardissino 2002, 242).
8. That text was mentioned in Tasso's own comment to the introductory poem of the Osanna edition as one of those poems in which Petrarch 'favoleggia' about 'vero amore' [true love]. 'Favoleggiare' is a verb which means to weave lyric discourse into a plot, into a sequence of actions similar to that of epic poems.
9. Tomasi (2013, 108) rightly uses the expression 'theatre of passions'.
10. In that respect, Plato's and Aristotle's theories are not at odds with the official Thomistic anthropology: see Bondi (2017), and Tomasi (2013, 109).
11. 'Ma ben presi per te l'armi sovente | Contra il desio […]'. This passage may contain a faint echo of *Rvf* 128, 93–94, which begins with the shocking vision of 'mortal wounds' in the body of Italy.
12. See Tomasi (2013, 111), who refers to the 'protean nature of the temptation of desire'. That the difficult balance between unity and variety, single and multiple, singular and plural both on the aesthetic and the philosophical level was Tasso's main concern has been recognised and pointed out by scholars of different generations.
13. In Lacan's terms, what is being described here is not so much desire or pleasure, but rather enjoyment (*jouissance*).

14. Tasso (1998, 113, 46–51): 'E sai se quella che sí altera e vaga | Si *mostra* in varie guise, e'n varie forme | Quasi nuovo e gentil *mostro* si mira, | Per opra di natura o d'arte maga | Sé medesma e le voglie ancor trasforme | De l'alma nostra che per lei sospira'. 'Arte magica' (magic) is mentioned once again in *Rime* 16. In both cases, that expression is part of a traditional combination of words but here it appears to be slightly less neutral in that the sun of Reason which rises in the east, a sacred cardinal point, is contrasted with the profane deceptions of sensual magic.
15. The Thomistic theory is here twisted, as Tasso himself points out in the commentary so as to anticipate any possible criticism. This openly announced 'poetic licence' may be merely a façade. Pomponio Torelli, for instance, declares in his *Trattato*, that Hope stems from Desire (see Bondi 2012, 217–228). The theory of the passions was not a consistent theory and Tasso's poetry reflected that inconsistency.
16. The Thomistic influence upon this passage has been investigated by Tomasi (2013, 115).
17. 'Forse, io no'l niego, incauto allor piagai | L'alma; e se quelle piaghe a lei fur gravi, | Ella se'l sa tanto il languir le piace, | E per sì bella donna anzi trar guai | Toglie, che medicine ha sì soavi, | Che gioir d'altra, e ne' sospir non tace'.
18. The comparison between Love and divine love is presented as an antithesis between fall and elevation: 'Egli s'erge sovente, ed a quel primo | eterno mar d'ogni bellezza arriva | ond'ogni altro deriva; io caggio, e'questa umanità m'immergo' ['He often rises and reaches that first, eternal sea of Beauty, from which everything else was originated. I fall and sink into this human existence'].
19. Tasso (1998, 205): 'D'Amor nascendo Amori a mille a mille'. But *Voi che pur numerate i nostri amori* could also be quoted, which, in the Osanna edition, follows the 'turning point' represented by the canzone *Quel generoso mio guerriero interno* (cfr. Tomasi 2013, 108).
20. 'Vaghi e pargoletti Amori', 'non li può contar lingua né penna'. I will not discuss Tasso's sexual orientation or whether he was homosexual or bisexual (although evidence based on several of his documents can be produced) not only because that would be beyond the scope of this essay, but also because I wish to homage

the idea of 'transexuality' which has often been drawn upon in the most successful representations of desire.

21. Virg., *Georg.* IV, 238: 'Animasque in vulnere ponunt' ('they leave the soul in the wound').
22. That paradox may be read in the light of Lacan's dialectic between the anguish of fragmentation and the narcissistic reunification of the self: according to Lacan, the latter is responsible for generating the threat of fragmentation and hence the anguish which it causes (Lacan 1974, 88).
23. Translation by John Dancer (*Aminta, the famous pastoral | Written in Italian by Signor' Torquato Tasso. And translated into English verse by John Dancer. Togheter with diverse ingenious poems*, Printed for John Starkey, London, 1660). «Tu, in guisa d'ape che ferendo muore | e ne le piaghe altrui lascia la vita, | con la tua morte hai pur trafitto al fine | quel duro cor che non potesti mai | punger vivendo» (*Aminta*, IV, 1, ll. 1615–1619).
24. 'La semplicetta Silvia, | pietosa del mio male | s'offrì di dare aita, | a la finta ferita, ahi lasso, e fece | più cupa e più mortale | la mia piaga verace, | quando le labra sue | giunse a le labra mie' (*Aminta*, I, 2, ll. 395–402).
25. That the opposition high/low, rise/fall is the symbolic mark of tragedy (one which is rooted its deep anthropological and psychoanalytic stratum) has been clearly shown by Ludwig Binswanger in *Traum und Existenz*, and further explained in the 1950s in Michel Foucault's prefatory essay (Binswanger 1993). Gigliucci (2014) builds on this idea in analysing Tasso's pastoral work.
26. Tasso (1994, 12, ll. 12–14). The wound is a sign of life (here but also elsewhere). To be wounded means to have survived.
27. Recent criticism has suggested that some early English plays which dramatise Tasso's tragic biography may have influenced Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.
28. *Rime* 70, vv. 1–4: 'Fra mille strali, onde Fortuna impiaga | il mio cor sì che per ferita nova | spazio non resta, oimé! loco ritrova | cara d'Amor saetta e cara piaga'.
29. 'Oimé che tutte piaga e tutte sangue | son le viscere mie; e mille spiedi | ha ne gli occhi di Silvia il crudo Amore' (*Aminta*, II, 1, vv. 734–736).

30. *Rime* 3, vv. 12–14: '[…] de l'altro periglio non m'accorsi | *Che mi fu per l'orecchie il cor ferito*, | E i detti andaro ove non giunse il volto'.
31. Pestarino (Tasso 2013, 13) rightly suggests Tasso operates a 'deliberate and refined adaptation of that episode' in Sonnet 3. It is indeed likely that Tasso was impressed by the artfulness and complexity of the passage, in which the skilled rhetorician plays with the semantic similarity between the signified (the metaphorical wound of the soul, the vice of the arena games) and the signified (the wounds which gladiators inflict on each other). In 'Che mi fu per le orecchie il cor ferito', Tasso condenses Augustin's complex pattern by which sound opens a breach where the true wounder, sight, can penetrate. The scream of the crowd, though, is the vehicle for an emotional *transfert* which itself produces the real wound.
32. Fire, ropes and knives are tools of torture. It must also be noted that the two words 'piaga' and 'ferita' (sore and wound) are used as synonyms by Tasso. The phonosymbolic opportunities offered by the bilabial p- (see, for instance, the 'labbra di ferite', margins of a wound, of Lubrano's father) and by the labiodental f- are very similar.
33. *Rime* 31, vv. 51–56: 'Là've spirar tra le purpuree rose | Sentii l'aure amorose, | E ben piaghe da te [*Amore, NdR*] gravi sostenni, | Ch'aperte e sanguinose | Ancor dimostro a chi le stagni e chiuda: | Ma trovo chi le inaspra ognihor più cruda'.
34. Pleasure and pain are also part of each human affection: they can almost be considered to be their building blocks. Bondi (2012, 195–198).
35. 'Non cresce il male, anzi'l contrario avviene, | S'ella raddoppia l'amorosa *piaga* | E sana l'alma con sue dolci pene. | Miracolo è maggior che d'arte maga | Trasformar duolo e tema in gioia e spene | E dar salute ove più forte *impiaga*'. Fear / hope and pain | joy are the four fundamental passions.
36. This is the case in *Rime* 3, 9, 16, 41, 43, 44, 47, 55, 64 and in many other poems.
37. 'E'l languir sì mi piace | ch'infinito diletto ho nel martire'; e ancora: 'Dolce sarà morir di strale e d'arco'.
38. 'Questa è pur quella che percote e fiede | con dolce colpo che n'ancide e piace'; 'Dolci arme, onde di morte è rea'.

39. *Rime* 55, 9–14: 'Deh! goda, prego, al dilettoso male, | E tinta in soavissima dolcezza | Sia la ferita e quel dorato strale. | A me quanto è di grave e di mortale: | Dà mille gioie a lei; se pur disprezza | Gioir l'alma gentil di piaga eguale'.
40. Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli, MS. IV. H. 182, cc. 103r-104v 'Quello [*il piacere, NdR*] per influsso dell'anima proviene et descende; questo [*il dolore, NdR*] dalla gravezza del corpo animato s'eleva, et v'è la stessa differenza ch'è da Prometeo che rapì il foco dal cielo allo stesso legato al sasso, et perciò è dall'ingordo augello dell'aquila, ch'altro non è che il dolore, continovamente devorato'.
41. 'Versar le piaghe mie tepide stille | di sangue no, ma sol di pianto amaro, | ché la tua voce e'l mio dolor aprille. | Così piangendo e sospirando imparo, | mentre eterna dolcezza in lui distille, | la gloria, che fa il Sole ardente e chiaro'.
42. 'Francesco, mentre ne' celesti giri | tien' fissi gli occhi, il tuo Signor risguardi, | e l'ami e'l brami e te n'infiammi ed ardi, | e la sua morte e'l nostro error sospiri: | perché qual aura che perpetuo spiri, | ti passa al cor l'ardente spirto, e i guardi | acuti pur come saette o dardi, | e senti in te medesmo i suoi martiri. | Ma così dolce punge e dolce avvampa | il tuo dolce Signor, ch'ogni diletto | a lato a que' tormenti amaro stime. | E prendi allor (meraviglioso affetto!) | de le sue piaghe l'amorosa stampa, | come salsi colui che'n te l'imprime'.
43. Cabani (2018, 70). Cabani also draws attention to the sadistic and aestheticising admiration of the contrast between Clorinda's blonde hair and the red drops of blood on it.
44. 'Un'ape esser vorrei, | donna bella e crudele, | che susurrando in voi suggesse il mele; | e, non potendo il cor, potesse almeno | pungervi il bianco seno, | e'n sì dolce ferita | vendicata lasciar la propria vita'.
45. 'Di nettare amoroso ebbro la mente, | rapto fui, né so come, in chiusa chiostra | e due belle d'Amor guerriere in giostra | vidi con l'armi ond'elli è sì possente; | vidi che in dolce arringo alteramente | fer pria di lor beltà leggiadra mostra, | poi movendosi incontra ove s'innostra | la bocca si ferir di bacio ardente. | Suonar le labbra e vi restaro i segni | de'colpi impressi. Amor, deh, perché a voto | tant'arme e tai percosse usar da scherzo? | Provinsi in vera pugna e non si sdegni | scontro d'amante. Amor, me, tuo devoto | opponi a l'una o fra le due fa terzo'.

46. For instance, in *Rime* 43, the act of wounding performed by 'Madonna' is divided into sequences that have a very precise progression, as is typical of Tasso's mimetic style: the 'sweet weapons' are sharpened, then they are seen as they 'brightly shine' and, lastly, they are pointed at the lyrical I ('ver me girolle'), and then thrown at him. The following sonnet, which is closely connected with this one, also focuses on the Love/ war *topos* and, in its last line, the word 'wound' appears in the same metrical position.
47. Many studies on Tasso's lyric poems, such as that of Cabani, seem to reveal the symptoms of all of Tasso's perversions: voyeurism, fetishism, masochism, sadism… These can be added to the rather conspicuous record which can be inferred from Tasso's biography and which includes a depressive and obsessive syndrome, psychotic episodes and a persecution complex. There is enough material to fill a Krapelin or a DSM. Tasso probably aims, consciously or not, at offering a somewhat 'realistic' representation of human drives. His poems combine poetry and philosophy and transcend them both; they contain the intuition that there is a certain degree of masochism and sadism in each human drive (Freud can also be quoted here in that he suggested that masochism has an 'original' primacy, although masochism has a different meaning in his studies).
48. In his comment to the *Rime eteree*, Pestarino argues that this is an 'elegiac motif' and cites Tibullus II, 6, 17–18, but he then immediately points out that the word 'astringere' is a technical term used when describing tortures (he mentions examples from Guicciardini and Bandello). The following quotation from Tasso's second letter to Scipione Gonzaga, written in 1579 when he was in Sant'Anna, is also particularly relevant: 'regretting words that I was forces to say amid the torments of my misfortunes when I was complaining' ['mal sodisfatto forse d'alcune parole che ne' tormenti de la mia calamità sono stato astretto di dir lamentandomi'] (quoted from Tasso 2013, 200). The torments of love and those inflicted by Fortune, which forced him to utter a false truth or a true lie, are equated also in sonnet 70: 'It is said that among the endless blows of adverse Fortune, the one inflicted by Love is barely felt' ['Dice che fra gl'infiniti colpi dell'inimica fortuna appena è conosciuto quello d'Amore']. In Sonnet 18, the eye of

the lyrical I is 'compelled by pleasure' to contemplate the neck of his beloved woman.

49. Tasso may have precociously noticed the discrepancy inherent in Platonism which, according to Deleuze, could potentially lead to its overturning. (Among the dialogues mentioned in *Logic of Sense* we can unsurprisingly find the *Philebus*. See Deleuze 2005, 227). Tasso was somehow obsessed with the problematic relation between the One and the Many and he turned to Plotinus to find a solution. Frightened by the schizophrenic vision of a wounded body, dismembered by a multiplicity of desires, he perceived that there was also another danger inherent in the salvific action of poetry, namely the possibility of creating simulacra. Simulacra are not so much the shadows of the ideas but rather true 'idols', as he calls them in the *Cataneo*. Poetry is not a copy of the copy, it is not a representation, but it rather evokes acoustic and visual phantasms which wander in the world; it is not a celebration of the Creation but rather its duplication.
50. 'Per figurar madonna al senso interno | Dove torrai, pensier, l'ombre e i colori? | Come dipingerai candidi fiori | O rose sparse in bianca falda il verno? | Potrai volar su nel sereno eterno | Ed al piú bel di tanti almi splendori | Involar pura luce e puri ardori, | La vendetta del cielo avendo a scherno?'.
51. 'Qual Prometeo darai l'alma e la voce | A l'idol nostro e quasi umano ingegno, | E tu insieme sarai l'augel feroce | Che pasce il core e ne fa strazio indegno, | Vago di quel che piú diletta e noce? | O t'assicura Amor di tanto sdegno?'. Please note the careful structure of the poem with regards to how the questions are arranged: the first questions occupies two lines, the second an entire quatrain, the third nearly two tercets (and it contains the key image of the poem), and the last one one single line, although it is the most important of them all. According to Tomasi 2013, this sonnet 'is about the limits that the senses impose to intellectual contemplation' (120).
52. Prometheus also appears in the *Philebus*. Plato interestingly mentions him (albeit generically: 'some Prometheus') right when he discusses the relation between one and many: 'A gift of heaven, which, as I conceive, the gods tossed among men by the hands of a new Prometheus, and therewith a blaze of light; and the ancients, who were our betters and nearer the gods than we are,

handed down the tradition, that whatever things are said to be are composed of one and many, and have the finite, and infinite implanted in them' (Plat., *Filebo*, 16C5-10).

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CHAPTER 14

'And of What Force Your Wounding Graces Are'. Importing the Wound from Italy to Elizabethan England

Selene Scarsi

Out of the many recognized Petrarchan situations, the wound is undoubtedly one of the most fundamental, not least as the *locus* where poetic output originates: as made explicit in the second and third sonnets of *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta*, Laura's gaze pierces the speaker's defenseless heart with a fatal stroke ('’l colpo mortal', 2.7), and from that wound bleeds forth the poet's lamenting voice.[1] Unsurprisingly, this familiar *topos*, so intrinsic to Petrarchan discourse, is a staple in Elizabethan sonnet sequences and beyond. In this chapter, I wish to investigate the use of the language of wounding in a number of early modern sonnet sequences, from conventional examples of Renaissance Petrarchism, such as Samuel Daniel's *Delia*, to less typical ones—Spenser's *Amoretti* and Shakespeare's

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Sonnets—, where wound imagery is often a key part of the sonnets' revolutionary recoding of conventions. The second half of the essay will focus on the handling of the motif in two contemporary epyllia, Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, which blend physical and metaphorical injuries, literalizing and redefining the formulaic wound metaphor, also employed throughout the poems, to great effect.

Generally speaking, the sonnet sequences of the 1590s tend to emphasize the Beloved's cruelty and the violence of the passion more intensely than the Petrarchan original.[2] This amplification invariably leads to an increase of the severity of the effects of love, and, consequently, wounding imagery—a pattern already discernible in earlier sixteenth-century cycles, from Bembo onwards. In England, it is exemplified, among others, by Samuel Daniel's descriptions of Delia, in the eponymous 1592 sequence, as 'that cruell faire, within whose brow | I written finde the sentence of my death, | In unkinde letters; wrought she cares not how' (10.2–4): the lover's heart, inevitably, then becomes 'prostrate spoyle […], trophey to her conquering eyes' (10.10–11, but also see 25.4 and 25.7 for very similar images). Daniel's eclectic sonnet cycle engages simultaneously with both the French and the Italian sonnet tradition, showing an exceptionally sophisticated method of creative imitation, as Jason Lawrence has perceptively demonstrated (Lawrence 2005, 62–117). Wounding imagery is faithfully maintained or emphasized: *Delia* 33, for instance, modelled on Tasso's 'immortality' sonnet 'Quando avran questi luci e queste chiome', states that 'fresh shalt thou see in mee the woundes thou madest, | Though spent thy flame, in mee the heate remayning' (33.5–6), a literal translation of the Italian original ('fresche vedrai le piaghe mie', 18.5); while in *Delia* 14, closely imitating du Bellay's 'Ces cheveux d'or', the term appears three times as a noun or verb, as the poet languishes in a quintessentially Petrarchan *voluptas dolendi quaedam* (which will be reiterated in 16.4: 'pleas'd in my hurt'):

> Loue was the flame, that fired me so neere,
> The darte transpearsing, were those Christall eyes.
> Strong is the net, and feruent is the flame;
> Deepe is the wounde, my sighes do well report:
> Yet doe I loue, adore, and praise the same,
> That holdes, that burnes, that wounds me in this sort.
> And list not seeke to breake, to quench, to heale,
> The bonde, the flame, the wound the festreth so;

By knife, by lyquor, or by salue to deale:
So much I please to perish in my wo.
Yet least long trauailes be aboue my strength,
Good Delia lose, quench, heale me now at length. (14.3–14)

Equally, the extraordinary force of the Beloved's violence is a frequent feature in *Delia*: in sonnet 15, indebted to both Philippe Desportes' 'Si la foy plus certaine' and Petrarch's *RVF* 224, the speaker complains of his 'Vultur-gnawed hart' (15.8). The addition of this mythological image of torture, which has no analogy in either Petrarch or Desportes, reinforces the generally more savage mood of the poem (Thomson 1965, 156). In *Delia* 24, which artfully combines several familiar tropes, from love as warfare to love as disease, his heart is 'vanquisht':

Oft and in vaine my rebel thoughts haue ventred,
To stop the passage of my vanquisht hart:
And shut those waies my friendly foe first entred,
Hoping thereby to free my better part.
And whilst I garde these windowes of this forte,
Where my harts theese to vexe me made her choice:
And thether all my forces doe transporte,
An other passage opens at her voice.
Her voyce betraies me to her hand and eye:
My freedomes tyrants conquering all by arte:
But ah, what glorie can she get thereby,
With three such powers to plague one silly harte. (1–12)

Later, in the 'Leander' sonnet 38, the speaker begs for a truce:

Stretch out the fairest hand a pledge of peace,
That hand that dartes so right, and neuer misses:
Ile not reuenge olde wrongs, my wrath shall cease;
For that which gaue me woundes, Ile giue it kisses. (38.9–12)

The amplified violence is reiterated in the first two quatrains of *Delia* 29, a translation of Desportes' 'Pourquoi si follement croyez-vous à un verre' (*Hippolyte* 18), where Daniel independently qualifies Delia's eyes as 'murthering', and graces as 'wounding'—in what is an otherwise extremely close rendering of the French sonnet:

O why dooth Delia credite so her glasse,

Gazing her beautie deign'd her by the skyes:
And dooth not rather looke on him (alas)
Whose state best shewes the force of murthering eyes.
The broken toppes of loftie trees declare,
The fury of a mercy wanting storme:
And of what force your wounding graces are,
Vppon my selfe you best may finde the forme. (1–8)

The choice of 'murdering' echoes, instead, Petrarch's *RVF* 46 and its 'micidiali specchi' ('murderous glasses', 46.7), showing once again how Daniel's sonnet sequence is 'skillfully created from many different strands of the European sonnet tradition' (Lawrence 2005, 85), in a striking process of creative imitation.

Even collections more divergent from conventional Renaissance Petrarchism depend heavily on wounding imagery. Spenser's *Amoretti* (1595) celebrates the successful courtship of and marriage to Elizabeth Boyle,[3] and is thus unique, in the context of Petrarchan cycles, in 'leading not to despair, irresolution or spiritual sublimation but to the fulfilment and legitimization of sexual desire in matrimony' (McCabe 2006, 179). Yet, even here Spenser relies heavily on the language of violence, particularly so in the first part of the collection,[4] when the speaker's still-unrequited love is described in sonnets overflowing with, and exaggerating, Petrarchan motifs. The Beloved is 'more cruell and more salvage wylde | then either Lyon or the Lyonesse' (20.9–10), 'amplifying the wildness of Francesco Petrarca's Laura and even that of her sixteenth-century authoritarian descendants with barbarity': the term 'cruel' alone appears in as much as a third of the first sixty sonnets in reference to the Beloved (Nazarian 2016, 183)—although, even as the first part of the cycle progresses, there is a clear development as the 'cruell warriour' of 11.3 softens into the 'sweet warriour' of 57.1, hinting at the forthcoming radical shift in the lover's fortunes. Accordingly, love is presented as a wound or smart throughout the first 67 poems: it is 'a payneful smart' in 18.8, a 'bitter balefull smart' in 24.5, a 'continuall smart' in 42.6, a 'dying smart' in 48.12, and unqualified as simply a 'smart' in 54.10. It is a 'wound' repeatedly: in 6.11 ('deepe'), 8.6 (in verbal form), 50.2, and twice in 57, one of several sonnets entirely built on the love as warfare motif (see also 11 and 12):

Sweet warriour when shall I have peace with you?
High time it is, this warre now ended were:

which I no lenger can endure to sue,
ne your incessant battry more to beare:
So weake my powres, so sore my wounds appeare,
that wonder is how I should live a iot,
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;
ye cruell one, what glory can be got,
in slaying him that would live gladly yours?
Make peace therefore, and graunt me timely grace,
that al my wounds will heale in little space.

The clearest example of Spenser's enhancing of Petrarchan tropes' violence, to an almost parodic extent, is *Amoretti* 10, modelled on Petrarch's *RVF* 121.[5] Spenser shapes his sonnet around the Italian madrigal—via Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* II, 1 ('ingiustissimo Amor', 'unrighteous Love'), and Wyatt's rondeau 'Behold, love, thy power how she dispiseth'—, but he independently adds the second quatrain:

Unrighteous Lord of love what law is this,
That me thou makest thus tormented be:
the whiles she lordeth in licentious blisse
of her freewill, scorning both thee and me.

See how the Tyrannesse doth ioy to see
The huge massacres which her eyes do make:
And humbled harts brings captiues vnto thee,
That thou of them mayst mightie vengeance take. (10.1–8)

Here, the language of violence and, specifically, warfare motifs are so pervasive that, as Kostić notes, 'it seems as if one has only to substitute 'spear' or 'sword' for 'eyes' in the second line [of the second quatrain] to get two lines which would fit perfectly into an Italian Renaissance epic or into Spenser's own *Faerie Queene*' (Kostić 1969, 40).[6] Dasenbrock highlights how, at the start of *Amoretti*, Spenser firmly situates his own poetry within the Petrarchan tradition by not only employing but bringing to the extreme Petrarchan motifs and situations (Dasenbrock 1985, 46). The motif of the *donna angelicata*, for instance, receives greater emphasis in Spenser than in his English contemporaries (Hardison 1972, 210). The

poet's amplified use of wounding imagery, with its tendency to exaggerate—one might even say to 'ouergo'—is no different. His Beloved's eyes do not simply inflict wounds: they lead to massacres. As a result, the radical shift of the latter part of the sequence, that unprecedented, and most un-Petrarchan, reciprocity of the poet's love (a mutuality that, if we read *Amoretti*, *Anacreontics* and *Epithalamion* as a triptych, as per Dubrow 1995, culminates in consummation, in the epithalamium's wedding night) carries even greater impact. Ultimately, and uniquely in the context of Petrarchan sonnet sequences, the problem of the conflict of flesh and soul will be solved, and those violent wounds will fully heal: 'simple truth and mutuall good will | seekes with sweet peace to salue each others wound' (65.11–12).

Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, published in 1609 as the sonnet vogue of the 1590s was waning,[7] go one step further: they redefine the genre, 'creat[ing] a sonnet sequence so different from all its predecessors that the form could never be the same again' (Duncan-Jones 1997, 49). They do so through two near-unique aspects: the presence of not one but two objects of desire in the same cycle, and the homoerotic undertones taking up the large part of the work,[8] as the first Beloved, the Fair Youth who dominates the sequence with 126 out of 154 sonnets, is male.[9] In this first section Shakespeare rarely adopts Petrarchan language, 'except by means of the implicit challenge or redefinition that he offers to it through eulogizing a young male friend, rather than a distant, idealized woman' (Duncan-Jones 1997, 49). Accordingly, wounding imagery is significant for its relative absence in a section of this length: the youth's eye does not wound, but 'gild[s] the object whereupon it gazeth' (20.6). Instead, and predictably in a sequence that often meditates on transience, most of the injuring is done by armed, destructive Time, which pierces the young man's beauty with a scythe (60.9–12, 12.13, and 123.14, as well as elsewhere: *A Lover's Complaint*, 12) or with a 'cruel knife' (63.10, but also see 65 and 108, among others); which proverbially 'devour[s]' (19.1) and 'deface[s]' (64.1). Wounding imagery appears almost incidentally: as an extended metaphor in sonnet 34, 'for no man well of such a salve can speak | That heals the wound and cures not the disgrace; | Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief'; or in the 'equestrian' sonnet 50 (possibly reminiscent of *Astrophil and Stella* 49), which is built on the parallel between a sluggish horse's bleeding wound, caused by his rider's prolonged spurring, and the speaker's non-physical but mental 'grief'; an analogy reinforced by the fact that 'grief' is used by Shakespeare to express

pain in a physical rather than exclusively psychological sense elsewhere (such as in sonnet 34 above, but also in Falstaff's phrase 'the grief of the wound' in *1H4*, 5.1.132).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is the often mock-Petrarchan Dark Lady series, part of a well-established current of anti-Petrarchism, that exploits conventional conceits more liberally than the Fair Youth section, as well as related variations on the theme, such as the *topos* of love as a sickness (147, 'My love is as a fever') or the sleeping Cupid's heart-inflaming brand (in the concluding anacreontics, 153 and 154, also portraying love as a disease). Sonnet 129 shows the destructive force of 'lust in action', 'murd'rous, bloody, full of blame, | savage, extreme, rude, cruel' (129.3–4), lines that, incidentally, echo Adonis' distinction between love and lust in *Venus and Adonis* (789 ff): 'love is all truth, lust full of forged lies' (804), feeding on and destroying beauty as a caterpillar on a tender leaf (798). The verses track 'the inexorable dissipations of erotic desire [...], tell[ing] all lovers that they desire what will ultimately destroy them' (Schoenfeldt 2007, 133). Sonnet 139 offers one of the most conventional examples of wound imagery in the collection, with the conceit elaborated and maintained throughout the quatorzain:

> O, call not me to justify the wrong
> That thy unkindness lays upon my heart;
> Wound me not with thine eye but with thy tongue;
> Use power with power, and slay me not by art.
> Tell me thou lov'st elsewhere; but in my sight,
> Dear heart, forbear to glance thine eye aside;
> What need'st thou wound with cunning when thy might
> Is more than my o'erpressed defense can bide?
> Let me excuse thee: ah, my love well knows
> Her pretty looks have been mine enemies;
> And therefore from my face she turns my foes,
> That they elsewhere might dart their injuries—
> Yet do not so; but since I am near slain,
> Kill me outright with looks and rid my pain.

Sonnet 133 also features the conventional image of the lover's heart wounded by a dart coming from the Beloved's eyes, but extremises it: the lover's suffering is 'torture', the courtly conceit of love as a prison becomes an exaggerated 'slavery':

> Beshrew that heart that makes my heart to groan

> For that deep wound it gives my friend and me;
> Isn't it enough to torture me alone,
> But slave to slavery my sweet'st friend must be?
> Me from myself thy cruel eye hath taken,
> And my next self thou harder hast engrossed. (1–6)

Moreover, not one, but two hearts have been wounded here: as always with the *Sonnets*, the convention is used unconventionally. Booth, positing a sexual innuendo (also perceptible in 139.7 above) glosses the 'wound' in line 2 to refer both to a 'serious injury' and to the female sexual organ, with a corresponding pun on the adjective 'deep': the lady's sexual parts have been offered to the two men (Booth 1977, 460), hinting at the Dark Lady's sexual insatiability and turning the idealized, unattainable Beloved into a grotesque caricature, as far removed from Laura as humanly possible, and reduced to a 'trigger of intemperate lust' (Schoenfeldt 2007, 128). The consequence of all this is a 'tacit exaltation of that male friend who figures throughout the *Sonnets* as a unique manifestation of Petrarchan beauty' (Cousins 2002, 202); the speaker uses the familiar motifs of the lady's tyranny and the wounded heart to hierarchize homoerotic desire over corrupting heterosexual intercourse, 'profoundly revers[ing] the terms of a culture which tends to idealize heterosexuality and scorn homosexuality' (Schoenfeldt 2007, 138). 'Satirically recalibrating the conventions – all of sonnetdom' (Stapleton 2004, 279), the sonnets reveal their revolutionary vein even in—in fact, precisely through—their handling of inherited material, with the wound metaphor playing a decisive role in Shakespearean's appropriation and radical disruption of Petrarchan discourse.

* * *

In the second half of this chapter, I would like to focus not on sonnets but on another, equally fashionable poetic genre which enjoyed immense popularity in the 1590s: the erotic epyllion. Introduced by Thomas Lodge in late 1589 with *Scillaes Metamorphosis*, and perfected by Marlowe and Shakespeare, the epyllion is often Petrarchan in idiom—at times, parodically so—and abundant in familiar motifs, not least wound metaphors and love as warfare imagery. Marlowe sets the scene for *Hero and Leander* (1593, published 1598) in Hellespont, 'guilty of true love's blood' (1), and blood features again in Hero's first presentation to the reader: her blue kirtle is said to have 'many a stain | made with the blood of wretched

lovers slain' (15–16). Leander's blazon—here it is the male protagonist, not the heroine, who receives a proper Petrarchan blazon[10]—includes lines such as 'as delicious meat is to the taste | so was his neck in touching' (63–64): as Greenfield points out, 'Leander arouses a desire cannibalistic in its intensity [...]. The desirability of Leander's body derives at least in part from its vulnerability to dismemberment' (Greenfield 2004, 235). Conversely, Hero echoes the sonnets' cruel Beloveds in the brief suggestions of her all-powerful gaze: with countless people enamoured of her and looking on half-enchanted, half-terrified as 'poor soldiers' surrounded by their slain companions and fearing death (119–121), the 'sentence of her scornful eyes' (123) will save those whom she favours, or condemn those whom she does not (130). Also reproducing a conventional situation is the violent *innamoramento* presented as a formulaic piercing of the lover, in this case, however, soon requited: Hero, having completed a sacrifice to Venus, opens her eyes as she rises from kneeling, and instantly

> Thence flew Love's arrow with the golden head,
> And thus Leander was enamoured.
> Stone-still he stood, and evermore he gaz'd,
> Till with the fire, that from his countenance blazed,
> Relenting Hero's gentle heart was strook:
> Such force and virtue hath an amourous look. (161–166)

The image of her wounded heart will appear again, first when Leander's rhetorical skills further deepen Hero's wound ('having swallowed Cupid's golden hook, | The more she striv'd, the deeper was she strook', 333–334), and then when Cupid himself, growing impatient at her half-hearted resistance, forces her vows of chastity down back to Earth by beating them down his wings, dispersing them in the empty air, and ultimately shooting 'a shaft that burning from him went; | Wherewith she strooken, look'd so dolefully, | As made Love sigh to see his tyranny' (372–374).

This same pattern of wounding on the part of a god who then softens and repents is replicated out of metaphor, and further complicated, in the homoerotic episode of Neptune's courtship of Leander, where wounds and desire are inextricably linked. The lusty god, mistaking Leander for a bored Ganymede, drags him under the sea and nearly drowns him before realizing he is dealing with a mortal man; he releases him with a promise of safe crossing, but continues to pursue him playfully, and his declarations

of love combined with his persistent, penetrating gaze (672–675) force an increasingly anxious Leander to scream 'I am no woman, I' (676). That awkward correction makes little sense to Neptune, as gender boundaries are easily eroded in the god's hardly heteronormative world, but Leander's growing resistance, and his impatient interruption of Neptune just as he starts narrating a tale-*exemplum* with suggestive homoerotic undertones, quickly turn the god's knowing smile into an angry desire for revenge:

> Neptune was angry that he gave no ear,
> And in his heart revenging malice bare:
> he flung at him his mace; but, as it went,
> He call'd it in, for love made him repent:
> The mace, returning back, his own hand hit,
> As meaning to be veng'd for darting it.
> When this fresh-bleeding wound Leander view'd,
> His coulour went and came, as if he ru'd
> The grief which Neptune felt […]
> The god, seeing him with pity to be moved,
> Thereon concluded that he was beloved. (691–699; 703–704)

Neptune's bleeding wound moves Leander to pity, incorrectly leading the god to assume reciprocity; his delusion is clearly a product of the familiar Petrarchan wish that the wounded heart—usually metaphorical but here literal—will have the desired effect of moving the Beloved to compassion or mutuality. Instead, Neptune's Beloved, Leander, will go on to consummate his love with his own Beloved, Hero, finally persuading her using, precisely, pity as leverage, in a fascinating complication of the basic Petrarchan pattern.

Let us now return to Shakespeare and another erotic epyllion, *Venus and Adonis* (also 1593). If, in the *Sonnets*, the use of wound imagery is relatively scarce, Shakespeare's wildly popular narrative poem, the 'first heir of [his] invention',[11] is almost entirely built on it. The poem, both comic and tragic, dark in matter but light in tone, and very Ovidian in its mixing of irony and pathos,[12] shows a degree of Lucian-like irreverence in its paradoxical portrayal of, in her own definition, a flawless yet inexplicably abhorred Venus (138), alternately viewed comically and sympathetically. The crux of this gender-inverted, wittily parodic poem rotates around the role reversal of traditional Petrarchan dynamics, with

a young Adonis who is as disdainful and disinterested in love as his pictorial iterations in the Titian painting(s) of the story,[13] and a goddess of Love who is unable to make any sense of her Beloved's reluctance and, in her aggressive, but ultimately futile, outbursts of passion borders on the grotesque—right from her initial, incongruous description as a 'bold-fac'd suitor' (6) in the first stanza of the poem.

As Dubrow notes, Venus' assertive 'vocabulary of mastery and captivity is drawn from the stock language of love poetry' (Dubrow 1987, 27); the goddess uses a predominantly male, Petrarchan language and does so extensively (hers are 45% of the lines, a larger percentage than any other Shakespearean character), but she uses it inappropriately, unsuccessfully, and thus appears comic (Cousins 2002, 18). However, there is also another significant effect of her appropriation of male Petrarchan discourse in her seduction of Adonis, beyond the simple gender reversal: Cousins suggests that it works to 'make her appear recognizably (if not completely) human, rather than specifically male, in her experience of unrequited love' (Cousins 2002, 25). Therefore, the use of Petrarchised discourse contributes to humanize and universalize the goddess, stripped in effect of her divine qualities—what Cousins suggests is Shakespeare's equivalent of Ovid's 'anthropomorphic refashioning of his divinities' (Cousins 2002, 28). Unsurprisingly, then, the familiar violence of Renaissance Petrarchism is central to Venus' approach. In her very first words to Adonis, the goddess promises 'I'll smother thee with kisses' (18)—kisses which will 'famish [his lips] amid their plenty, | Making them red, and pale, with fresh variety' (20–21)—before proceeding to 'pluck' Adonis from his horse (30), and force herself on him, his protests 'murder[ed]' with a kiss (54). These murderous kisses clearly prefigure the key episode of the poem, the boar's kissing/killing of Adonis at the end of the epyllion, and first suggest a degree of identification between the animal and the goddess; but the killer boar is only the final layer in a long series of instances of animal symbolism in the poem which exploit wounding imagery to the full, starting with the very first simile, the insatiable Venus as a starving eagle who,

> sharp by fast,
> Tires with her beak on feathers, flesh and bone,
> Shaking her wings, devouring all in haste,
> Till either gorge be stuff'd or prey be gone:
> Even so she kiss'd his brow, his cheek, his chin,
> And where she ends she doth anew begin. (55–60)

The goddess' kissing is equated to the bird's ferocious tearing apart of its helpless prey to annihilation, highlighting the destructive coerciveness of Venus' desire which continues to be elaborated further in the initial exchange with an equally helpless Adonis depicted as lying panting, trapped in the goddess' arms as a bird 'tangled in a net' (67), as Venus 'feedeth on the steam as on a prey' (63). Wound metaphors appear again in another central animal vignette, the horse digression: Adonis' stallion, having spied a young, lusty mare, breaks free and 'wounds' the earth with his hooves (267) as he majestically passages towards her. When the inversion of conventional gender dynamics is made explicit half-way through Venus' *suasoria*, the goddess returns to the familiar image of the wounded heart to refer by metonymy to her love for him:

> Would thou wert as I am, and I a man,
> My heart all whole as thine, thy heart my wound!
> For one sweet look thy help I would assure thee,
> Though nothing but my body's bane would cure thee. (369–372)

Later in the same exchange, following Adonis' mock-Petrarchan rejection of love ('for I have heard, it is a life in death', 413), Venus responds with her most explicit exaggeration yet of Petrarchan antitheses: the boy's snubbing voice is simultaneously 'ears' deep sweet music, and heart's deep sore wounding' (432), and his lowering look sufficient, even before he opens his mouth, to strike her 'like the deadly bullet of a gun' (461), literally forcing her to the ground: it is, after all, common (courtly) knowledge that 'looks kill love, and love by looks reviveth: | A smile recures the wounding of a frown'. Indeed, as soon as the frightened Adonis revives her with a reluctant kiss, Venus reprises her parodic appropriation of Petrarchan oxymora:

> Do I delight to die, or life desire?
> But now I liv'd, and life was death's annoy;
> But now I died, and death was lively joy.
>
> O thou didst kill me, kill me once again!
> Thy eyes' shrewd tutor, that hard heart of thine,
> Hath taught them scornful tricks, and such disdain,
> That they have murder'd this poor heart of mine. (496–502)

While metaphorical wounds have been plentiful in the poem so far, and while Venus is clearly presented as a (sexual) predator ('glutton-like she feeds, yet never filleth', 548; her lips are 'conquerors' which his lips 'obey', 549; her thought is 'vulture', 551), but ultimately innocuous—albeit unwillingly so—, things change dramatically with the introduction of the boar, a belligerent butcher who is 'bent to kill' (618), at whose mere mention Venus shudders in terror. Venus' prophetic fears are soon fulfilled, and—offstage—the wild animal gores Adonis to death. In a climactic crescendo, Venus, having been made suspicious by the sight of Adonis' desolate dogs licking their wounds (915), catches a glimpse of his dead body; instinctively closes her eyes, rebuked by the brain for wounding her heart (1042); and then dares to open them again, only to be confronted with the dreaded literalization of the Petrarchan motif: Adonis, who had been immune to Love's wounds his entire life (947), has now been mortally wounded by 'death's ebon dart' (948)—in porcine form:

> And being open'd threw unwilling light
> Upon the wide wound that the boar had trench'd
> In his soft flank, whose wonted lily-white
> With purple tears that his wound wept, was drench'd.
> No flower was nigh, no grass, herb, leaf or weed,
> But stole his blood and seem'd with him to bleed. (1051–1056)

Venus' 'mangling eye' (1065)—the destructiveness of her desire resonates in Shakespeare's choice of adjective here—deceives her into seeing not one, but three lethal wounds (1064), 'more gashes, where no breach should be' (1066), and multiple dead bodies: a massacre worthy of a Webster tragedy. The goddess, though, then proceeds to idealize the boar's actions, imagining herself in the place of the wild animal and attributing her own emotions to it (Dubrow 1987, 30). The boar, an animal who epitomized libidinousness in Renaissance bestiaries, thus becomes a surrogate for Venus herself (Kahn 2007, 84), having accomplished what the goddess had failed to achieve–intercourse with Adonis:

> If he did see his face, why then I know
> He thought to kiss him, and hath kill'd him so.
>
> 'Tis true, 'tis true, thus was Adonis slain:

> He ran upon the boar with his sharp spear,
> Who did not whet his teeth at him again,
> But by a kiss thought to persuade him there;
> And nuzzling in his flank, the loving swine
> Sheath'd unaware the tusk in his soft groin.
>
> "Had I been tooth'd like him, I must confess
> With kissing him I should have kill'd him first". (1109–1118)

The boar's successful penetration of Adonis with his phallic tusk is the fulfilment by proxy of Venus' aggressive, coercive but ultimately fruitless desire. The location of the wounding in the boy's groin, with its sexual connotations, exploits the association of sex and death to great effect, an association that is perhaps clearest in the Elizabethan use of the verb 'to die' as a frequent euphemism for 'orgasm'; that, in an obviously different, more disturbing way, also lies at the heart of *Lucrece*; and that, outside of the Shakespearean corpus, echoes Tancredi's intensely sexualised killing of Clorinda (by means of a wound through her breasts) in Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, 12.64. But the boar's anatomically penetrative embraces carry with them multiple layers of 'perverse' desire: as Coppélia Kahn notes, they summon up bestiality *and* sodomy (Kahn 2007, 85), as the penetration is homoeroticized—a male boar on a male youth,[14] complementing a male gaze which is firmly directed at Adonis throughout the poem. Bate notes that 'this is a poem about transgressive sexuality' (Bate 1993, 88); the epyllion's final, literalized wound, effectively ending love—not just for Venus-the-lover, but for the whole of mankind: Venus-the-goddess has forever cursed it—is the ultimate example of Shakespeare's transgressive subversion of Petrarchan dynamics.

Notes

1. 'Trovommi Amor del tutto disarmato | et aperta la via per gli occhi al core, | che di lagrime son fatti uscio et varco: || però, al mio parer, non li fu honore | ferir me de saetta in quello stato, | a voi armata non mostrar pur l'arco' ['Unarmed Love found me, for no watch was set | to guard the path that led from eyes to heart, | eyes that are open sluices for tears now. || I think his gain in honor was not great, | wounding me with an arrow in that state | while to you, armed, he never showed his bow' (*RVF* 3.9–14)]. I am using Peter

Thornton's verse translation of *RVF*, *Scattered Rhymes* (Barbican Press 2020).

2. Cynthia Nazarian, writing on the amplification of violent imagery (and, consequently, of the victimization of the speaker) in the poetry of sixteenth-century Petrarchists and its connection to political resistance, suggests that 'Petrarch's imitators exaggerated the posture of the downtrodden lover and adapted the rhetoric of powerless desire so as to forge a new position of strength from within the heart of vulnerability – a posture through which they could challenge cultural, religious and political authority' (Nazarian 2016, 3).
3. Whom he married on 11 June 1594. The autobiographical quality of the work seems sanctioned by the self-identification of the lover as the author of the *Faerie Queene* in sonnets 33 and 80.
4. Hardison, summarising critical perspectives on the question, suggests that one might almost consider the sequence 'a conflation of two distinct groups of poems' (Hardison 1972, 208). Different critics have identified a core group of 18 highly Petrarchan sonnets, although there is not necessarily a critical consensus on which sonnets make up the group; see Lever (1956) and Martz (1961). Lever and Martz themselves only agree on sonnets 10, 12, 18, 20, 32, 37 and 48 (Dasenbrock 1985, 49).
5. 'Or vedi, Amor, che giovenetta donna | tuo regno sprezza, et del mio mal non cura, | et tra duo ta' nemici è sì secura. || Tu se' armato, et ella in treccie e 'n gonna | si siede, et scalza, in mezzo i fiori et l'erba, | ver' me spietata, e 'n contra te superba. || I' son pregion; ma se pietà anchor serba | l'arco tuo saldo, et qualchuna saetta, | fa di te et di me, signor, vendetta' ['Just see now, Love, the way a maiden scoffs | at all your power and shrugs my torment off, | quite safe between such enemies as we two. || While you are armed, she sits in a light dress, | with hair unbound and feet bare in the grass, | heartless toward me and arrogant toward you. || I am in jail; but if your steady bow | still has some mercy and an arrow or so, | take vengeance for yourself and for me too' (*RVF* 121)].
6. Although epic poetry is treated elsewhere in this collection, it is worth stressing how the discourse of violence so pervasive in *Amoretti* is reprised and further elaborated in the *Faerie Queene*, culminating in episodes such as the House of Busyrane, when Amoret soaks in her own blood 'dreadfully dropping from her

dying hart' (III.xii.20.6). Nazarian posits a dialogical relationship between *Amoretti* and *Faerie Queene*: 'in the epic-romance the pattern of aloof, powerful Beloved and subjected, suffering lover replays the *Amoretti*'s politicization of the former's role: while the Petrarchan sequence's Beloved is sovereign, the epic-romance's sovereigns are Petrarchan' (Nazarian 2016, 186).

7. At least some of the sonnets were written between 1592 and 1598 and circulated in manuscript; in 1598, Francis Meres famously mentions, in *Palladis Tamia*, that Shakespeare's 'sugred sonnets' are passed around 'among his priuate friends': 'the sweete wittie soule of Ouid liues in mellifluous and hony-tongued Shakespeare, witnes his *Venus and Adonis,* his *Lucrece,* his sugred *Sonnets* among his priuate friends, &c'.
8. In France, Pierre De Ronsard had addressed different Beloveds, but in different collections; Gaspara Stampa's *Rime* is the other prime example of a poet writing sonnets for and on two different men within the same cycle (Collaltino di Collalto and Bartolomeo Zen). Just like Shakespeare, she sometimes addresses both in the same sonnet: see, for example, *Rime* 208, 'Amor m'ha fatto tal ch'io vivo in foco'. As for openly homoerotic (substantial) sequences, the most notable precedents here are Michelangelo's 30-odd poems for Tommaso de' Cavalieri, predating Shakespeare's sonnets by half a century or so, and, closer to home, Richard Barnfield's 1595 *Certaine Sonnets.*
9. The sonnets are even more striking in their subversion because of the peculiarities of sonnet-writing, an intimate, introspective mode which invites an autobiographical reading more openly than other poetic forms. Rebecca Yearling posits that it is precisely the choice of mode that made homoerotic sonnets such as Shakespeare's and Barnfield's less acceptable than the equally homoerotic epyllia of Shakespeare or Marlowe (Yearling 2013, 55).
10. Hero's 45-line description (5–50) mostly focuses on her clothing, including an ekphrastic account of the elaborate Venus and Adonis embroidery on her sleeves, while Leander's, of similar length (51–90), is a blazon proper, with references to body parts such as his smooth breast, white belly (66), eyes, orient cheeks and lips (72–73). Androgynous Leander, 'a maid in man's attire' (83), is feminized throughout the poem, not unlike Adonis, or the Fair Youth of Shakespeare's sonnets: all three male figures are described

in terms usually reserved for women. For a discussion of feminizing language in the sonnets, see M.L. Stapleton, 2004. 'Making the Woman of Him: Shakespeare's Man Right Fair as Sonnet Lady', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 46 (3), 271–295.

11. *V&A* is the first work Shakespeare published under his name; in the dedicatory letter to Southampton, Shakespeare calls it 'the first heir of my invention', while promising 'some graver labour' (likely *Lucrece*) next.
12. See William Keach, 1977. *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press).
13. For a study of Titian's painting as a possible influence on Shakespeare's epyllion, see John Doebler, 1982. 'The Reluctant Adonis: Titian and Shakespeare'. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 33, 4: 480–490.
14. Shakespeare's multiple layers of sexual unorthodoxy are particularly fitting, considering the equally transgressive context of the wider Orphic section in the Ovidian original.

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CHAPTER 15

Amoretta and Lucrece: Wounded Identities

Luca Manini

When reading Sophocles's tragedy *Philoctetes*, one is struck by the association between the condition of Philoctetes as a wounded warrior and his alienation from the Greek army. Once he has been bitten by a snake, his wound begins to fester and to stink, and his ailing and wailing make his companions maroon him on the desert isle of Lemnos, stopping him from taking part in the siege of Troy and making him lose his identity as a warrior. This instance serves me to introduce the topic of the present essay, which will deal with two female figures of early modern literature, the former being Spenser's Amoretta and the latter being Shakespeare's Lucrece. Both women are wounded by men and the wounds they receive question and undermine their identities, at the same time paradoxically strengthening and reinforcing them. The relationship between being wounded and keeping or losing one's identity will be the central idea of the following pages, alongside the idea that, in a patriarchal society, women were educated to be what men wanted them to be and that their identity could never be detached from the reality of a female body being a possession of a man.

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Amoretta is Spenser's own creation in his epic poem *The Faerie Queene* and she has a central role in books III and IV[1]; Lucrece belongs instead to the tradition of Roman history (or mythical Roman history) and her story is re-shaped by Shakespeare in his narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece*.[2] Both women live in a patriarchal society (see Kahn 1997), and their roles and identities are subject to the values of that type of social organisation where women were assigned precise (and constrained) roles,[3] and where the control from men was not to be escaped.

In book III, canto iii, of *The Faerie Queene*, readers learn about the miraculous birth of Amoretta: her mother, Chrysogone, begets her and her twin sister Belphoebe thanks to the rays of the sun that 'pierst into her wombe' (III, vi, 7),[4] in an audacious re-writing of the conception of Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the action of the Holy Ghost. While Chrysogone lies fainted on the ground, Diana and Venus take the two new-born babies from her: the twin sister taken by Diana, the goddess of chastity, will be named Belphoebe,[5] and she will be brought up to become the emblem of virginity, while the one taken by Venus, the goddess of love,[6] will be named Amoretta.[7] She is brought up in the Garden of Adonis, the place of generation and re-generation, to become the perfect embodiment of 'feminitee'. There, she is 'lessoned | In all the lore of loue, and goodly womanhead' (III, vi, 51), and she is meant to become 'th'ensample of true loue alone, | And Lodestarre of all chaste affectione' (III, vi, 52).[8] The destiny of the two sisters is thus set from the very beginning of their lives, and their identities are likewise predetermined: the former being destined to be a virgin, the latter being destined to be a chaste married woman.

By defining Lucrece 'the chaste' (l. 7),[9] Shakespeare accepted the paradigmatic image of her as handed down by tradition, which had made her the emblem of the faithful wife and of the honest Roman matron, the very embodiment of the values which Emperor Augustus will later celebrate and establish as the basis of Roman society. Lucrece's own self coincides with her being 'the chaste', her identity is contained in this definition, which Shakespeare took from his main sources, Livy and Ovid (see Martindale and Martindale 1990; Taylor 2000), but also from medieval writers such as Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Gower. Boccaccio presents Lucrece as an example of virtue and chastity in his *De Claris Mulieribus* ('De Lucretia Collatini coniuge'), where he introduces her with the words: 'Lucretia Romane pudicitie dux exgregia atque sanctissimum vetuste parsimonie decus'. Geoffrey Chaucer retells her story in his

work in verse *The Legend of Good Women* (V, ll. 1680–1885), and defines her the 'trewe Lucresse' (l. 1686), whose virtues are 'steadfastenesse' (l. 1687), that is firmness and constancy, an 'immutable wille' (l. 1875) and a 'stable herte' (l. 1876), not unlike the presentation made by the poet John Gower in his work *Confessio Amantis* (ll. 4763–5130). Shakespeare probably had these works in mind, although his direct sources are two Latin authors, Livy and Ovid. The former dealt with the story of Lucrece in the first book of the *History of Rome* (chapters 57–60); the latter in the poem *Fasti* (book II, ll. 685–852). While the wives of the other Roman warriors devote themselves to feasts, Lucrece spends the night spinning wool together with her maids,[10] like a second Penelope patiently waiting for her absent husband. Livy writes of Lucrece's 'castissimum [...] sanguinem', Ovid says that she is a 'nupta pudica' (v. 794, an adjective already used to describe her in l. 757) and describes her 'matronales genae' which turn red with shame (l. 828).

Both Amoretta and Lucrece are wounded twice. Amoretta is abducted and wounded by the black magician Busirane and, then, while she is in the hands of Lust (out of whose cave she has succeeded in fleeing), unwittingly wounded by Timias (Prince Arthur's squire) while he is attempting to snatch her from Lust. The first wound that Lucrece receives is the rape committed by Tarquin, the second is the wound she inflicts on herself when she takes her own life. For both women, to be wounded means to see their identity endangered, their steadfastness threatened, and their faithfulness menaced by male violence.

* * *

The name Amoretta means 'a little female cupid'[11] and her destiny, once she has grown up to be 'Of grace and beautie noble Paragone' (III, vi, 52), is to make all men fall in love with her through the darts which, according to the imagery of courtly love tradition, come out of her eyes and pierce through men's hearts, opening a wound in them (see III, vi, 52: 'To faerie Court she came, where many one | Admyrd her goodly hauevor, and found | His feeble heart wide launched with loues cruell wownd'). As for herself, though, only one man is the object of her love: just as Lucrece only loves Collatine, so Amoretta only loves Scudamour.[12] The two women are thus united by the exclusivity of their love, which other men (namely Busirane, Lust, and Tarquin) try to tread upon and shatter so as to satisfy their lust and male predatory nature. In III, xii,

Amoretta is a captive in Busirane's hands[13]; the magician has kidnapped her not simply to rape her but to convince her (by using torture) to love him and quench 'his sinfull lust' (IV, i, 4). The hero of book III, the virgin woman warrior Britomart goes to Busirane's palace to save her.[14] The first image that Spenser gives of Amoretta as a grown up woman can be found in the masque of Cupid, a gruesome and wicked masque indeed:

> She dolefull Lady, like a dreary Spright,
> Cald by strong charmes out of eternall night,
> Had deathes owne image figurd in her face,
> Full of sad signs, fearefull to liuing sight;
> Yet in that horror shewd a seemely grace,
> And with her feeble feet did moue a comely pace. (III, xii, 19)

Amoretta is likened to a ghost ('Spright'), she is like a dead body, actually dead to herself, to her own self, yet not completely so: she resists Busirane's attempt to win her love,[15] and, as Spenser notes, she retains some of her former 'grace', which sustains her in her struggle to keep both her love for Scudamour and her identity intact.

In the next stanza, Spenser describes the double wound Busirane has inflicted on her:

> Her brest all naked, as net ivory,
> Without adorne of gold or siluer bright,
> Wherewith the Craftsman wonts it beautify,
> Of her dew honour was despoyled quight,
> And a wide wound therein (O ruefull sight)
> Entrenched deep with kniyfe accursed keene,
> Yet freshly bleeding forth her fainting spright,
> (The work of cruell hand) was to be seene,
> That dyde in sanguine red her skin all snowy cleene.
>
> At that wide orifice her trembling heart
> Was drawne forth, and in silver basin layd,
> Quite through transfixed with a deadly dart,
> And in her bloud yet steeming fresh embayd
> […]. (III, xii, 20–21)

Busirane has opened up her breast, thus creating a 'wide wound' (a wound whose horror is emphasised by the alliteration); but the black

magician has gone even further: he has, actually taken Amoretta's heart out of her breast and placed it in a basin, where it lies 'transfixed' by a dart.[16] According to the tradition of medieval love romances and treatises, and of the *canzonieri* inspired by them, the lover is often robbed of his heart by his beloved woman, so that he must figuratively live without a heart inside his breast. Spenser audaciously reverses this tradition (and the poetic rendering of the *topos*) and makes Busirane actually rob Amoretta of her heart, he makes him literally take it out of her breast, so that Amoretta is *really* dispossessed of it. At the same time, though, the heart as the site of affections still belongs to Amoretta's soul: Busirane's conquest of it is thus merely an external one. In the masque, Amoretta is accompanied by allegorical figures:

> And after them a rude confused rout.
> Of persons flockt, whose names is hard to read:
> […]
> Inconstant *Chaunge*, and false *Disloyalty*,
> Consuming *Riotise,* and guily *Dread*
> Of heavenly vengeance, faint *Infirmity*,
> Vile *Pouerty,* and lastrly *Death* with infamie. (III, xii, 25)

Those characters personify vices which are utterly antithetical to the virtues embodied by Amoretta: since she bravely resists to Busirane's power and strives to cling to her original identity, Amoretta can indeed be defined as constant, true, resisting, innocent, and strong.

Thus, two are the wounds inflicted on Amoretta, one on her body, and one on her heart. This double piercing of her body (by a knife and by a dart) symbolises male power associated with the male sexual organ; and to add to this, Spenser specifies that, once the masque has come to an end and Britomart sees Amoretta again, she is tied to a pillar, which is another phallic symbol. When Britomart enters the room where Amoretta is kept, Busirane is busy writing: he is writing the spells (we can imagine) which should bend Amoretta's will to his own, but also *re-writing* (as a man can do) her life and destiny, turning her into his object of love and pleasure and effacing her faithfulness to Scudamour. What Busirane actually wishes, as has already been suggested above, is not simply to possess her body (as is the case with Tarquin and Lucrece), but also her soul and heart, to turn her into his beloved woman, in a grotesque refashioning of the Petrarchan lover. Equally significant is the fact that he writes using

Amoretta's blood, thus taking actual possession of a part of her, of the liquid which keeps human beings alive.

Seeing this scene, Britomart grows furious and strikes Busirane so fiercely that she nearly kills him. If Amoretta is 'steadfast', Britomart is 'stout'—by using this alliteration, Spenser unites the emblems of chastity and virginity, making them allies against male lust, embodied by Busirane. Both women, moreover, have got 'snowy' skin',[17] white being the symbol of purity. As usual, though, things are not so easy in Spenser. Britomart would like to kill the magician straightaway but it is Amoretta herself who stops her from doing so, as her salvation paradoxically depends on the man who has wounded her, since only Busirane can undo the spell he has cast on her and on her heart. Thus, under the menace of Britomart's sword,[18] Busirane frees Amoretta and, as Spenser writes, restores her to her *former state*: her original self has not been corrupted by Busirane's spells, her steadfastness has protected her. Busirane obviously releases and heals Amoretta against his will: he is forced to do so to save his own life. His attempt to kill both women is made with a *knife*, a sharp weapon which would *pierce* their female bodies as a phallus would do.

Thanks to Britomart's menacing of Busirane, Amoretta's body is healed and it is restored to its former integrity: her heart is magically replaced into her breast and the wound is sealed and disappears.

> The creull steele, which thrild her dying hart,
> Fell softly forth, as of his owne accord,
> And the wyde wound, which lately did dispart
> Her bleeding brest, and riuen bowels gor'd,
> Was closed up, as if it hat not been bor'd,
> And euery part to safety full sound,
> As she were neuer hurt, was soon restor'd;
> Tho when she felt her self to be unbound,
> And perfect hole, prostrate she fell unto the ground. (III, xii, 38)

Spenser writes that she is made 'a perfect hole', meaning a perfect, whole body, but some critics have suggested that, by spelling the word 'whole' as 'hole', Spenser may have been hinting at the female sexual organ, in the sense that, having been saved from Busirane's destructive lust, Amoretta has got back her status as an intact spouse for her future husband, who will be the first to 'pierce' her legally by breaking her hymen.[19] As things stand, Amoretta is once again in possession of her own self—and ready to give it up to a man.

Amoretta is wounded a second time. After being abducted by Busirane, in book IV (canto vii), she is abducted by Lust while she is wandering alone in a wood.[20] It is worth noting that Lust holds 'a tall young oak […] | Whose knotty snags were sharpned all afore, | And bath'd in fire for steel to be in sted' (IV, 7, 7), that is a sharp weapon, another symbol of the phallus. Amoretta is saved by Timias, Prince Arthur's squire, who, while trying to snatch her from Lust's grasp, unawarely hurts her with his sword (IV, 26–35). In Spenser's work, the female body thus always appears to be at risk of being wounded by men, even if accidentally. Amoretta will be healed, a little later, by Arthur, who gives her a potion which can cure all types of wounds[21]: 'And with few drops thereof did softly dew | Her wounds, that unto strength restor'd her soone anew' (IV, viii, 20).

Once again, Amoretta is wounded by a man and healed by another man to be kept for her lover, Scudamour. We will never know (the poem being unfinished) whether or not she will be reunited to her beloved man, Scudamour, but the two of them did indeed meet again in the first version of the poem (the 1590 edition of cantos I–III), where Spenser describes the reunion of the two lovers thus:

> But she faire Lady ouercommen quite
> Of huge affection, did in pleasure melt,
> And in sweet rauishment pourd out her spright:
> No word they spake, nor earthly thing they felt,
> But like two sencels stocks in long ebracement dwelt.
>
> Had ye them seen, ye would have surely thought
> They had been that faire *Hermaphrodite*
> […]
> So seemd those two, as growne together quite,
> […]. (III, xii, 45a–46a)

The image of the Hermaphrodite recalls the union of a man and a woman as 'one flesh' according to Christian doctrine[22]; moreover, if we remind ourselves of Scudamour's shield and what can be seen on it, that is '*Cupid* with his killing bow | And cruell shafts emblazond' (IV, x, 55), we can conclude that, because of her very name, Amoretta is somehow 'contained' in the shield that Scudamour holds (see Cavanagh 1994). Lastly, as has been noted (see Spenser 2006, 128), his name ends where hers begins: Scudamore > Amoretta.[23]

* * *

Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* is divided by a clear caesura. There is marked turning point in the narrative, which separates the period before the rape from the period after the rape. The moment of physical violence (which is not described) interrupts the course of the lives of both Tarquin and Lucrece; nothing for them can and will be as it was before, including their identities.

By raping Lucrece, Tarquin disavows his status as a royal prince and turns into a tyrant who violates not only a woman but also the state he should represent and defend; he neglects his honour and is punished and disgraced, as Shakespeare notes, by a 'wound that nothing healeth' (l. 731), namely everlasting dishonour and shame to his stock.[24]

If, in *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare effected a reversal of the roles of the masculine and the feminine, presenting his readers with an aggressive Venus and a reluctant and prudish Adonis, in *The Rape of Lucrece* he more traditionally portrays a predatory male and a female prey. Tarquin is likened to images of predatory and rapacious animals, just as Venus was in the other poem: he is a ram (l. 464), a hawk (l. 506), a basilisk (l. 540), a griffin (l. 543), a cat that plays with a mouse (l. 554), a vulture (l. 556), a wolf (l. 677). Lucrece is instead represented as a predate bird (l. 457), a hunted deer (l. 543), a mouse (l. 555), a lamb (l. 677); and her body is a town or a fort (ll. 469 and 1175) besieged by Tarquin, who is a soldier armed with a sword. In the classical sources, Tarquin is seized by the desire to possess her only after having seen her, while Shakespeare, departing from both Livy and Ovid, attributes the birth of his sexual craving to his mere hearing about her beauty and chastity; in doing so, he accentuates the power of speech, which, alone, is able to stir the human soul.[25] Tarquin's sexual desire becomes even more intense when he sees Lucrece: he is depicted by Shakespeare (as well as by Livy and Ovid) as a man who is unable to restrain himself, to contain the impetus of passion. The sources are silent about what happens in him after the rape; only Livy notes that he turns away from the violated Lucrece feeling 'ferox', an adjective that implies the malign pride of someone who is proud of the evil he has committed. Shakespeare, instead, leads his readers into the mind of Tarquin, he makes them watch the struggle, or rather the civil war that is unleashed inside him, as if his soul were a stage. What Shakespeare describes as happening in Tarquin's soul is once again the passage from a *before* to an *after*. The struggle that takes place

before the rape (lust, desire, disregard for the loss of honour, a sense of shame, the perception that somehow he will have to pay for the horror of his action) takes place once again after the rape, but in this case it is represented as a painful awareness of the vanity of pleasure, which lasts for a moment and then immediately vanishes.[26]

During the night, Tarquin leaves his room and moves towards that of Lucrece. As in the classical sources, he holds his sword, but Shakespeare writes that he lets its tip scratch against the floor and that, from that contact, sparks burst. The sparks are an objective correlative of the flames of his passion and an anticipation of the flames that burn Troy down in the tapestry (or painting) that Lucrece observes later in the poem. Tarquin is held back by various objects, but he walks on: he does not want to grasp the moral lesson and the warning that those objects convey, and, on the contrary, he perceives them as tests that he must overcome to reach the object of his desire, in what is a reversal of the tests which had to be overcome by medieval knights who wanted to prove their virtue and honour. He reaches Lucrece's room by forcing doors open and breaking a latch after the other, and he then appears before her holding a drawn sword. Her rape and subsequent suicide are powerfully anticipated by Shakespeare in this stanza:

> His hand that yet remains upon her breast
> (Rude ram to batter such an ivory wall)
> May feel her heart (poor citizen) distressed,
> Wounding itself to death, rise up and fall,
> Beating her bulk, that in his hand shakes withal.
> This moves in him more rage and lesser pity
> To make the breach and enter this sweet city. (ll. 463–469)

The strength of the man is suggested by the image of the ram; the wound of Lucrece is already inside her, in the frantic motions of her heart (a prisoner inside her breast as she is a prisoner in Tarquin's hands). In lines 505–511, phallic imagery dominates:

> This said, he shakes aloft his Roman blade,
> Which, like a falcon tow'ring in the skies,
> Coucheth the fowl below with his wings' shade,
> Whose crookèd beak threats if he mount he dies;
> So under his insulting falchion lies
> Harmless Lucretia, marking what he tells

With trembling fear, as fowl hear falcons' bells.

The sword is compared to the beak of a falcon, and it is then also referred to as 'falchion', that is a sword with a curved blade, 'which again evokes the phallic shape' (Armion 2010). This imagery is reiterated in line 541, when Shakespeare writes that Tarquin 'rouseth up himself' and in lines 645–646, when Tarquin says that his 'uncontrollable tide | Turns not, but swells the higher by this let'.

The moment of the rape coincides with Lucrece's silence[27]; her voice is the first thing that Tarquin takes away from her (ll. 613–622). The second thing is her chastity (ll. 687 and 1048–1050), that is her identity, proclaimed in the aforementioned line 7.[28] If we read lines 729–746, where Shakespeare alternates the description of the sensations and feelings of Tarquin and of Lucrece, we can observe that the first adjective attributed to her is 'perplexed', that is, she is in a state of mental and spiritual confusion. She is said to be desperate twice (ll. 739 and 744) because she is no longer pure; she feels that her flesh has been scratched, just as Sinon's face will be scratched later in the poem by Lucrece herself (l. 1564). She is 'panting' because her breathing is no longer natural (l. 737).

The first reaction that Lucrece manifests for having lost herself is not to accept the natural alternation between night and day, it is the refusal of light, the rejection of the sense of sight (l. 757), of her heart itself (ll. 759–760). At this point, she uses her recovered voice to rail and curse, to invoke changes in the order of things, thus showing that something has changed for ever inside her. Her state of 'perplexity' and despair reflects itself on the external world and she would (vainly) like to change it (l. 774). She lashes out against the harmonious proportions of order and invokes chaos, as she perceives that her identity is now best represented by chaos rather than order and proportion; she feels burdened by the 'load of lust' (l. 734) that Tarquin has left her.[29] If she is corrupted, then even the light of the sun is corrupted (l. 777). But Lucrece's desire to change the course of things shatters against the bitter awareness that she cannot modify it (ll. 1016–1022). She is alone (l. 795) and her words of invocation and curse are only a 'vain smoke' (l. 1027). Before raping her, Tarquin tramples on the torch (l. 673) and, with his foot, he turns off the light; this is an action that, in the context of the poem, takes on a highly symbolic value: he destroys light because darkness is the place of violence and sin, because he is well aware that the night must conceal his

evil action. At the same time, Shakespeare seems to suggest that Tarquin tramples not only on the torch but also on Lucrece, and extinguishes the light of her chaste virtue, thus generating in her a darkness that will lead her to commit suicide, to extinguish her own life voluntarily, a life which was (and no longer is) meant to be lived in the light. And what Venus and the boar are for Adonis, Tarquin is for Lucrece: they are agents of change, first, and, then, of destruction. Tarquin does not merely violate Lucrece's body, but he also destroys her identity, as Shakespeare explains in several places: 'As I, ere this, was pure, to Collatine' (l. 826); 'But when I feared I was a faithful wife: | So am I now […] O no, no, that cannot be; | Of that true type hath Tarquin rifled me' (ll. 1048–1050); 'And for my sake, | When I might charm thes so, (For she that was thy Lucrece now attend me)' (ll. 1681–1682).

After being raped, Lucrece is no longer herself because she is no longer 'the chaste'; Shakespeare makes her think of herself using the past verbal tense. As already mentioned, Shakespeare writes that she is 'perplexed': Lucrece is lost, confused, suspended in a liminal state in which she is not the same as she used to be and does not know who she may be or become.[30] In the moment she finds herself dispossessed of her own identity, Lucrece tries to create a new one, in the awareness that her old self is destroyed forever. The first step that Shakespeare makes her take is to try to think of someone who had endured comparable suffering. The mythological figure of Philomel, who was also a victim of rape, immediately comes to her mind, and then she focuses her attention on a painting that is in her home, a representation of the siege and the fall of Troy. These are beautiful pages, in which the *ekphrasis* becomes the *mise en abyme* of Lucrece's personal story. She immediately identifies with Philomel, who was raped by her brother-in-law Tereus. The ancient myth becomes a bearer of meaning, perhaps of consolation, if it is true that sharing one's sorrow alleviates it.[31] This reference links Lucrece with Lavinia,[32] the unhappy daughter of Titus Andronicus, violated by the sons of Queen Tamora; and also with the Innogen of *Cymbeline*, desired by the evil Iachimo (who, however, does not succeed in violating her). Philomel (it is worth noting) sings while keeping her breast 'Against a thorn' (l. 1135), and the thorn may be a reminder of the violence that was inflicted on her. The second identification is with Hecuba (see Del Sapio Garbero 2018) the unfortunate queen of Troy, who witnessed the death of her husband and the destruction of her city on the same day. She is depicted, in the

painting that Lucrece observes, as the emblem of human pain, and of the fall from a high state to one of degradation. As Shakespeare writes,

> In her the painter had anatomized
> Time's ruin, beauty's wrack, and grim care's reign;
> Her cheeks with chaps and wrinkles were disguised;
> Of what she was non semblance did remain. (ll. 1450–1453)

The physical (and spiritual) change undergone by Queen Hecuba is similar to that which Lucrece feels is occurring to her. Hecuba wails upon the wound of her dead husband, King Priam, and the image of her staring at his wounds (l. 1448) is a reflection of Lucrece herself: it is a reflection of her own wounded self and of her own self crying over the wounds which have been opened in her.

Despite these similarities, however, Lucrece is not Philomel, she is not Hecuba: the two women are only touchstones, they cannot be perfect doubles of Lucrece: the 'you' she uses in addressing them is a sign of separation, it draws attention to an inescapable difference. Between them there can be only commonality, closeness: Lucrece invites Philomel, the nightingale, to nest in her hair (which is significantly 'disheveled', l. 1129, thus acting as an image of the disorder she feels in herself, of her perplexity); but, even if Philomel accepted that invitation, she would be a guest, not a part of Lucrece's self. What Lucrece shares with Philomel is the fact that they have been raped and also the wound that derives from that act, but, unlike the man who assaulted Philomel, Lucrece's rapist does not tear her tongue out, he does not cut off her hands: in short, he leaves her the possibility of revealing his crime. With Hecuba, she shares the fall: Hecuba experienced the long years of the siege (a siege which, in Lucrece's case, is concentrated in the space of a single night, but is nonetheless devastating and destructive), and although Hecuba was not violated, her city, Troy, was.

As these identifications cannot give Lucrece what she is looking for, and as her former ego has vanished, Lucrece now feels a sort of inner division: there is indeed no longer *one* Lucrece (Lucrece the chaste) but rather *two* Lucreces, one who still has a pure soul and another whose body is defiled and corrupted.[33] This recalls the two Cressidas that Troilus sees when, having entered the Greek camp, he observes his beloved woman surrendering to Diomedes and exclaims: 'This she? No, this is Diomedes' Cressida' (V, 2, l. 140). If Tarquin is always the 'foe' (for instance, in

lines 1608 and 1646),[34] now Lucrece is, at the same time, the friend and the enemy of Collatine: she is a friend in that she is still a loyal wife, an enemy in that she is a violated woman and a wife who is no longer chaste. When her eye falls on Sinon, the traitor, the hypocrite, she cannot help scratching his image with her nails, in a vain attempt to hurt (to wound) him; Shakespeare significantly comments that she compares him 'to that unhappy guest [i.e. Tarquin] | Whose deed hath made herself herself detest' (ll. 1565–1566). The repetition of 'herself' clearly signals the existence of a split self, and Shakespeare also draws attention to the fact that there are now two Lucreces when he has her plead to Collatine: 'For she that was thy Lucrece, now attend me' (l. 1682), where 'she' and 'me' designate two women. Lucrece can only become 'whole' again after her self-inflicted death.

Interestingly, when he describes that event, Shakespeare reiterates the word 'wound':

> She utters this: 'He, he, fair lords, 'tis he
> That guides this hand to give this wound to me.'
>
> Even here she sheathèd in her harmless breast
> A harmful knife, that thence her soul unsheathèd.
> That blow did bail it from the deep unrest
> Of that polluted prison where it breathèd
> Her contrite sighs unto the clouds bequeathèd
> Her wingèd sprite, and through her wounds doth fly
> Life's lasting date, from cancelled destiny. (ll. 1721–1729)

Lucrece thus paradoxically sees suicide as a 'dying life', a life that can be obtained through death (l. 1055). She hopes that she can earn fame after having lost her chastity—which she has lost not through her own fault but through the violence of others (ll. 1265–1267). In her eyes, death acquires the status of a new birth and a re-conquest of her self, so much so that Shakespeare makes her say: 'For me, I am the mistress of my fate' (l. 1069). Lucrece's divided self lies in the separation between the contaminated body and the soul that is still pure. It is only by committing suicide that Lucrece will find herself again, rebuild herself, re-conquer herself by destroying herself. While earlier in the poem (ll. 465–469) it was Tarquin who was eager to make a breach into Lucrece's body, now that the breach has been made, Lucrece is the one who wants to break her own body, and the 'breach' is now described as a 'vent' (l. 1029)

that will let her soul out. Her soul does indeed depart from her body later in the poem: when Lucrece stabs herself, 'Her winged sprite […] thorough her wounds doth fly' (l. 1728). Lucrece justifies her suicide in lines 1030–1036:

> Poor hand, why quiver'st thou at this decree?
> Honour thyself to rid me of this shame;
> For, if I die, my honour lives in thee,
> But if I live, thou liv'st in my defame.
> Since thous couldst not defend thy loyal dame,
> And wast afeard to scratch her wicked foe,
> Kill both thyself and her for yielding so.[35]

Suicide appears to her to be the only way to blot out her 'cureless crime' (l. 772) and her 'neverending woes' (l. 935). Line 1196 is particularly relevant: 'Myself thy friend will kill myself the foe'. Only death can, paradoxically, give Lucrece a new life and recompose her original self, that is her identity as a chaste woman, untouched by guilt. As a novel Phoenix, she will be reborn and will be an example of purity for generations to come: 'For in my death I murder shameful scorn; | My shame so dead, mine honour is new born' (ll. 1188–1190). The wound she inflicts on herself is of a different kind than that inflicted on her by Tarquin: his was an agent of destruction, hers is an agent of re-birth and of restoration of her former, pure self, as Shakespeare makes clear in lines 1184–1185: 'My honour I'll bequeath unto the knife | That wounds my body so disonohourèd', and in line 1201: 'Mine honour be the knife's that makes my wound'.

While Tarquin, has lost his kingly status and degraded himself to the state of a rapacious animal and Lucrece is forced to lose her role and identity as a chaste Roman matron, Brutus recovers his authentic self or, rather, brings it to light. If Lucrece invoked darkness because light reveals wrong and sin, Brutus restores his moral and civil greatness, which he (as Livy specifies) had concealed under the mask of foolishness for an 'honest' reason,[36] namely to keep his life safe from the violent rapacity of tyrants (here exemplified in the figure of Tarquin). Significantly, Shakespeare writes that Brutus 'Began to clothe his wit in state and pride | Burying in Lucrece's wound his folly's show' (ll. 1809–1810). Thus, he is able to be actually himself in the moment of need. Even Brutus, like

Lucrece, speaks using the past tense ('I was'), but, while Brutus voluntarily reveals his true self, which he had previously concealed, the change undergone by Lucrece is a change not wanted but only suffered.

Before committing suicide, Lucrece makes her husband and his companions swear that they will revenge her by killing Tarquin[37]; but what we learn from the last stanza of the poem is that the Tarquins are punished with exile only. Shakespeare portrays Brutus and the other noblemen as perjurers and he thus implies that Lucrece's female voice is irrelevant. Brutus actually takes possession of Lucrece's body in order to display it in Rome and arouse the crowd to rebellion, but Lucrece's body was already a possession of her father and of her husband, as Shakespeare clearly shows in the two men's laments over Lucrece's dead body, where they both claim her by repeating 'She was my wife' and 'My daughter', 'My daughter and my wife' (ll. 1800–1807).

Brutus, moreover, seems to question Lucrece's deed when he says: 'Do wounds heal wounds, or grief help grievous deeds?' (l. 1822). This disturbing sentence accompanies the betrayal of the promise to kill Tarquin that the two men had made to Lucrece. And if Brutus defines Lucrece 'chaste' (l. 1839) and 'true wife' (l. 1841), her body is used as leverage to banish the Tarquins from Rome and found a new republican order. In the final stanza, what Brutus shows to the Roman citizens is Lucrece's dead body: she is reduced to an object to be shown and used for a political purpose, that of expelling the Tarquins from Rome and founding the *res publica*. The body that Lucrece wanted to destroy so as to recompose her ego and to restore Collatine's honour becomes the first stone to build a new patriarchal order.

To end where I started, in the last part of Sophocle's *Philoctetes*, the hero learns from Heracles (who miraculously appears before him) that his destiny lies in going to the shore of Troy, where he will be healed by Aesculapius and will be able to fight again. The alienated warrior gets back his identity as a warrior and will contribute to the destruction of Troy. Amoretta keeps her 'womanhead' and (we may suppose) she will become a faithful wife. Lucrece will become a model of self-respect and female honesty for the times to come. But if Philoctetes will be an active figure in the last phase of the siege of Troy, the destinies of the two women have been shaped by men for the benefit of men. Amoretta is wounded by two men and healed by two men in order to become the possession of another man. Lucrece is destroyed by a man and exploited by other men for their political aims.

Notes

1. Books I–III of *The Faerie Queene* were published in 1590; books IV–VI in 1596: this involved a change in the story of Amoretta, whose happy conclusion at the end of book III was altered by Spenser so that he could develop the character and her adventures in book IV.
2. The poem was published in 1594, following the highly successful narrative poem *Venus and Adonis* (1593).
3. According to Roche (1964), Amoretta's encounters 'exemplify the education of woman for her role inside society' (117).
4. All quotations are from Spenser (1998).
5. Belphoebe is a representation of Queen Elizabeth I (the dedicatee of the poem), who is thus portrayed as a perfectly beautiful and virtuous lady.
6. Venus is here the goddess of spiritual love, not the sensual Venus followed by other characters of the poem, such as Malecasta (Italian for 'unchaste') and Hellenore (the Spenserian version of Helen of Troy).
7. The form 'Amoretta' is used by Spenser only twice, in III, vi, 4, l. 5, and 28, l. 9. Throughout the poem he uses the 'form 'Amoret'. I prefer to use the form 'Amoretta', as I have done in my translation of the poem (Spenser 2012).
8. At the tournament organised by Satyrane (book IV), Amoretta is the only woman who is able to fasten Venus's belt, which is a symbol of 'chast love, | And wiuehood true' (IV, v, 3). As we read in IV, v, 19: 'Thereat all Knights gan laugh, and Ladies lowre: | Till that at last the gentle *Amoret* | Lylewise assayd, to prove that girdles powre; | And having it about her middle set, | Did find it fit, withouten breach or let'. Even though the word 'breach' does not here have the meaning of 'wound', as it does elsewhere, it is all the same a mark of Amoretta 'wholeness' as a chaste woman.
9. All quotations are taken from Shakespeare (2002).
10. This is, however, a detail that Shakespeare neglects, as he somewhat changes (as was his habit) the sources he took inspiration from.
11. The names of Spenser's characters are discussed in Horstmann (2001, 117–119) and *passim*.
12. As we can read in III, vi, 53: 'But she to none of them her loue did cast, | Saue to the noble knight, Sir *Scudamore*, | To whom her

louing hart she linked fast | In faithfull loue, t'abide for evermore'. The form Spenser will later use for her lover is Scudamour; the name is built up with the Italian word for shield ('scudo') and love ('amore', 'amour' in French).

13. The actual story of her abduction by him, during her wedding ceremony, is told in IV, i, 3. Spenser anticipates the episode in III, xi, 11, by making Scudamour say: 'My Lady and my loue is cruelly pend | In dolefull darknesse from the vew of day | Whilest deadly torments doe her chast brest rend, |And the sharpe steele doth riue her hart in tway'.
14. She is accompanied by Amoretta's lover, Scudamour, but he is unable to pass through the flames that defend the palace of the magician.
15. In IV, i, 4, Spenser writes: 'Seuen moneths so her kept in bitter smart, | Because his sinfull lust she would not serue'.
16. In IV, i, 4, we read of the 'cruell knife that her deare heart did kerve'.
17. In IV, x, 52, in the temple of Venus out of which Scudamour takes her, Amoretta is 'in lilly white arayd'.
18. This is a reversal of what we will see considering Tarquin's menacing Lucrece with his sword.
19. Not all critics agree on this point. See Goldberg (1981) versus Hieatt (1998).
20. Britomart, who remains with her after they leave Busirane's palace, is sleeping and does not hear her cries.
21. A 'liquor pure | Of wondrous worth, and vertue excellent, | That any wound could heale incontinent', which Spenser has told about in I, ix, 19.
22. This is suggested by Roche (1964, 135–136).
23. In book IV, canto x, Spenser makes Scudamour narrate the way he won Amoretta; it is a disquieting and disturbing episode. Amoretta is in the Temple of Venus, sitting 'in the lap of *Womanhood*', 'Shining with beauties light, and heavenly verte grace' (stanza 52). On seeing her, Scudamour decides to take her out of the temple; this happens with the approbation of the goddess Venus (stanza 56) but against Amoretta's will: 'She often prayd, and often me besought, | Sometime with tender teares to let her goe, | Sometime with witching smiles; but yet for nought, | That ever she to

me could say or doe, | Could she her wished freedom fro me wooe' (stanza 57).

24. Tarquin is not the only one who is wounded by his act: because of what he has done Collatine will also bear the mark of disgrace on his face, as specified in lines 830–831: 'And Tarquin's eye may read the mot afar, | How he in peace is wounded, not in war'.
25. In *Cymbeline*, Iachimo falls victim to the fascination of Innogen after having heard Posthumus Leonatus praise her, and then he confirms his desire in the instant in which he sees her (I, 7).
26. This is also what Shakespeare expresses in sonnet 129, where he describes the disgust that follows the satisfaction of fleshy desire.
27. Lucrece remains silent after she has vainly tried to dissuade Tarquin from accomplishing his act; thus, Shakespeare shows the ineffectiveness of female eloquence, as opposed to male eloquence. This was also the case with Venus in *Venus and Adonis*.
28. Lucrece is referred to with the metonymy 'pure chastity' in line 692.
29. This may be a hint at his seed that may have made her pregnant (l. 809).
30. Something similar happens to Innogen in *Cymbeline*: at the sight of the dead body that she thinks is the corpse of Posthumus, she recognises: 'I am nothing without him' (IV, 2, l. 366). Analogously, when Troilus goes to the Greek camp to spy on Cressida, he claims that, after seeing that scene, he will no longer be himself (IV, 2, l. 64).
31. According to the words of the old sage in *A Lover's Complaint* (ll. 64–70).
32. Lavinia is defined as 'spotless chastity' in *Titus Andronicus*, V, 2, l. 176.
33. That duality is signalled by Shakespeare when he describes the blood which issues from her wound: a part of it is still pure, the other is rotten because of Tarquin's violence: 'Some of her blood still pure and red remained, | And some looked black, and that false Tarquin stained' (ll. 1742–1743). See Wiltshire (2018).
34. In Livy, he is defined 'hostis pro hospite' (58, 8) and, in Ovid, 'hostis et hospes' (l. 787).
35. The reflection on Lucrece carried out by Augustine in the first book (chapter 19) of *De civitate Dei* requires a separate discussion. According to the principles of Christian doctrine, suicide is a

mortal sin (Dante places suicides in hell). If she had been innocent, Augustine argues, Lucrece would have had no reason to take her own life, because she was an innocent victim of Tarquin's violence; thus, if she killed herself, Augustine continues, that means that she felt guilty, an accomplice of the sexual act, and therefore she should not be taken as a model.

36. As is explained by Torquato Accetto, the author of the seventeenth-century treatise *Della dissimulazione onesta* (published in Naples in 1641).
37. This detail is not in the classical sources. Livy does not mention a request from Lucrece; Ovid makes her say that she lets the others decide Tarquin's fate.

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CHAPTER 16

'Risguarda quella piaga': Stigmata and the Education of the Gaze in Early Modern Franciscan Iconography

Giuseppe Capriotti

1 Starting from a *Lauda* and a Mystical Experience

In her 1491 memoire, *Vita Spirituale (Spiritual Life)*, an Observant Franciscan nun from Camerino named Sister Battista da Varano (1458–1524) describes the moment she fell into a swoon, caused by the harmonic chant of a *lauda*. Together with Sister Costanzia, she had started singing the song while sewing in front of the fireplace. Sister Battista tells us that the incipit of the *lauda* was *Anima benedetta dal alto Creatore (Soul, you that are blessed by the High Creator)*, and recounts falling into ecstasy at the point when the lyrics invite one to gaze at the wounds inflicted to Christ during his Passion: 'resguarda quelle mane […] resguarda quelli pei […] resguarda quello lato' ('look at those hands […] look

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at those feet [...] look at his side' [Battista da Varano 1958, 44]).[1] These lyrics were correctly identified in 1680 by Matteo Pascucci, who, without knowing the author of the *lauda*, quoted the complete text in his biography of Sister Battista, *Vita della beata Battista Varani* (*Life of the Blessed Battista Varani*; see Pascucci 1680, 98). It is still not known who wrote the *lauda* despite attempts to trace its history. In 1958, the editor of Sister Battista's spiritual works, Giacomo Boccanera, revealed that the text had been attributed to the Franciscan nun Sister Caterina Vigri from Bologna (1413–1463) in the collection *Rime scelte de' poeti ferraresi antichi e moderni* (*Selected rimes by ancient and modern poets from Ferrara*), published in Ferrara in 1713 (see Battista da Varano 1958, 44).[2] However, in 2005, Silvia Serventi traced the history of the lauda and discovered that it had been copied in many fifteenth century manuscripts, but only attributed to Sister Caterina in two codices.[3] Even though it can't be ascribed to Caterina, the text was surely part of the culture of the Franciscan nuns of Bologna, because at the end of Caterina's biography, written by Sister Illuminata Bembo, the author says that in the last days of her life the infirm nun continuously asked her sisters to sing that song, which she also sung with them.[4]

Although they do not solve the authorship problem, the biographies of Sister Battista and Sister Caterina (and the many manuscripts in which the *lauda* was copied) demonstrate that the lyrics were popular in Franciscan nunneries, and that they were also functional to Franciscan spirituality. The lyrics invite the devotee to gaze deeply into Christ's wounds:

> Oh, Soul, blessed by the high Creator, look at your Lord who is waiting for you. Look at his wounded feet, pierced by a nail and tormented by such a great scourge. Think that he was more beautiful than any other creature and his pure flesh was more than perfect. Then look at that sore he has on his right side, see the blood that pays all your delight. Think that he was pierced by a cruel spear: for each believer the dart went through the heart. Look at those hands that made and molded you, you will see how those Jews, like dogs, pierced it. Then with bitter tears cry out: "Oh Lord, you ran to the cross for me to die with great haste". Look at the holy head, which was so beautiful, look at him, pierced by thorns and bloody. Oh Soul, he is your spouse: so why don't you cry, so that by weeping you wet your infected guilt? Then, look at that face that was so bright, and now it's all full of spit and running blood. Think, oh grieving soul, that he is your Lord, who died of love only to give life. Look at him all wounded for you in the hard wood, the good Lord died paying for your sin. To guide us to

his kingdom he wanted to be crucified: oh soul, look fixedly on him and be delighted with him.[5]

The verses which sent Sister Battista into ecstasy are significant, as they invite the listener to look at the body parts where Christ's stigmata are found: the hands, the feet and the side.[6] The lyrics of this *lauda* can be considered a sort of education of the gaze, designed to guide the listener's eyes to the wounds and stimulate a powerful emotional involvement (to the point of inducing a mystical experience in the case of Sister Battista). In her monastery, Sister Battista educated her sisters to 'look at Christ with the mind's eye and constantly hold him in their memory, and to always imagine him on the cross, at the column or in every other place where he can teach the devotion'.[7] The action of looking with the mind's eye was strongly connected with the memory of the Passion. In another *lauda* which was undoubtedly written by Caterina Vigri, the act of looking at the stigmata is also mentioned. The Virgin, under the cross, looks at Christ's wounds and says 'El capo e 'l pecto ti vedo insanguinato' ('I see your bleeding head and chest') and 'li toi piedi benedecti […] como io li vedo stare cossì confitti'('I see your blessed feet, that are nailed'). At the end of the *lauda* Mary incites the people to look at the wound on the chest: 'Oh, ungrateful and evil people, do you not see his chest, that pours forth blood and water onto the earth?'.[8]

According to Carlo Ginzburg, these invitations to look are rooted in the biblical 'ecce' and are intended to catch the observers' attention as they enter the realm of the prophetic vision (see Ginzburg 1998, 100–117). Such exhortations can be found in many prayer handbooks, where the worshipper is taught to look with the mind and not only with the eyes (see Niccoli 2011, 85–98). By encouraging the reader or listener to gaze intensely, such literature contributed to the creation of an 'educated look', that is, it helped them to acquire the skill of looking, which was learned through training in the monastery.[9] We can interpret this skill as a 'technique of the body'[10]: the listener was encouraged to acquire specific visual skills that could facilitate the practice of 'inner visualisation', the shaping of mental images and mystical experiences.[11]

In this literature, the theme of the gaze is strongly connected with the stigmata. In *Anima benedetta*, the author frequently asks the devotee to look at the wounds. In many paintings of the early modern period, in which the stigmata of Christ or St Francis play an integral role, something very similar happens. By means of several visual strategies, painters from

different geographical areas tried to focus the attention of the observer onto those wounds. Sometimes they highlighted the gaze of characters within the painting towards the stigmata; in other cases, they emphasised the role of a figure pointing at the wounds to guide the observer; on other occasions they gave the stigmata a striking and distinct shape.

2 Looking at the Wounds, Pointing at the Wounds

In his seminal book *L'image ouverte. Motifs de l'incarnation dans les artes visuels*, George Didi-Huberman cited a striking *Pietà* (*Entombment*) by Carlo Crivelli as an important example in which the painter showed a figure gazing intensely into Christ's wounds (Fig. 1; see Didi-Huberman 2007, 50). This painting formed the upper central part of the polyptych for the cathedral of Ascoli Piceno (in the region of the Marche) and was signed and dated by Crivelli in 1473.[12] The iconography of the *Pietà* was quite popular, having derived from the Paduan models by Donatello before spreading across the Adriatic region (see De Marchi 1996). In many *Pietà* which Crivelli painted before and after this polyptych, there is a contrast between the human perfection of Christ's body and the violent lacerations of his flesh. In particular, Crivelli painted the stigma in Christ's side like an open mouth, with the lacerated skin of the wound forming irregular and injured lips that often echo the shouting and pained mouths of the Virgin Mary, St John the Evangelist, St Mary Magdalen or the angels. We see examples of this in the *Pietà* within the Massa Fermana Polyptych (1468), and in those that are now in Philadelphia (1472), London (1471–1473), New York (1476) and Boston (1485). In the *Pietà* that forms part of the polyptych for the Observant Franciscan church of San Pietro in Muralto, Camerino, and is now in the Vatican Museum (1488), the stigma in Christ's side is shown in profile, mirroring the pained expression of St John's mouth. In the *Pietà* above the *Coronation of the Virgin* painted for the Franciscan church of Fabriano and now preserved in the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan (1490–1493), the stigma shown in profile on Christ's left hand closely resembles a shouting mouth, and it is observed with anguish by Magdalene, who is holding his hand.[13] The case of Ascoli Piceno is significant because, Magdalene is once again holding Christ's left hand, while she inclines her head to gaze into the wound. Crivelli painted this scene with an amazing perspective, which he also used when depicting St Matthew gazing upon his book in

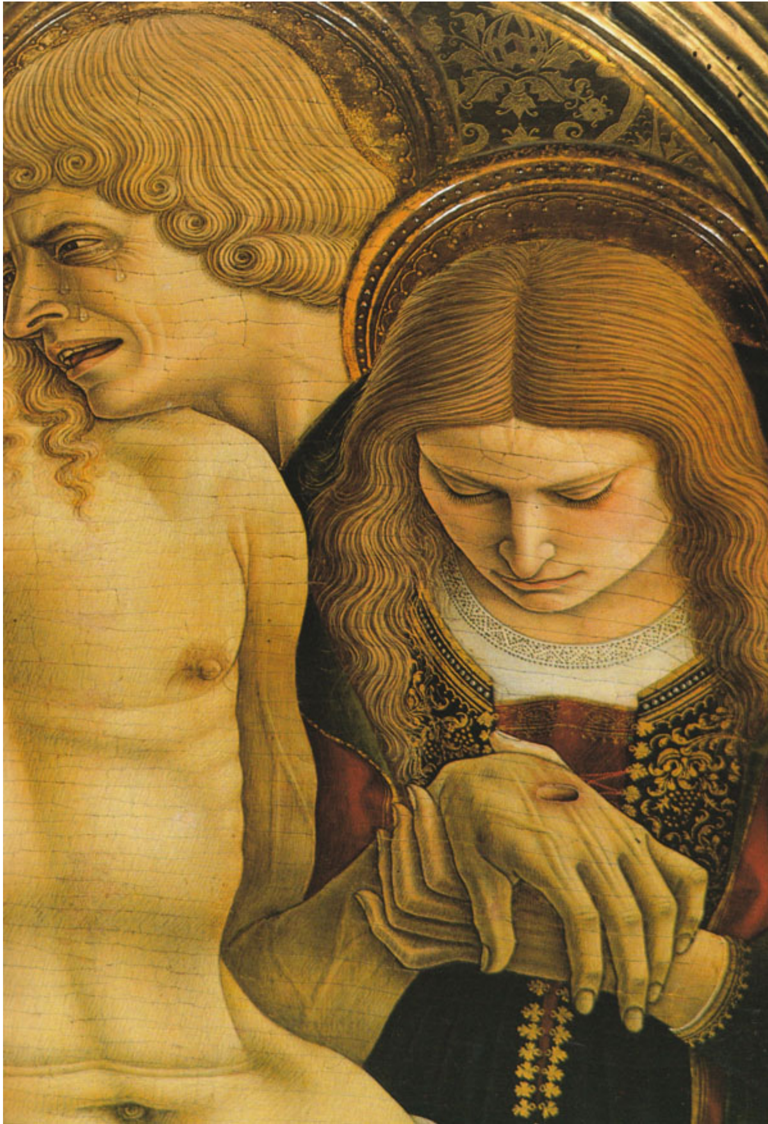

Fig. 1 Carlo Crivelli, Pietà (from the polyptych of the Cathedral), Ascoli Piceno, Cathedral (© Parrocchia di Maria Madre di Dio, with the perimission of the Ufficio Beni Culturali Ecclesiastici della Diocesi of Ascoli Piceno)

the *predella* of the same polyptych (see Didi-Huberman 2007, 20). In this way Crivelli associated gazing into the stigma with gazing into the Gospel: the wound is a synthetic symbol in which it is possible to read Christ's Passion in its entirety, just as in the Gospel. The stigma becomes an *imago agens* that condenses and recalls to memory a strong religious content. As Andrea Torre has convincingly shown, in the early modern period, the image of Christ's wounds was used in religious literature as a recalling device, because the wounds were imprinted in the mind of the devotee, like all exhibitions of cruelty (see Torre 2007; Torre 2009a, b). Moreover, Daniel Arasse has analysed how each detail enabled the observer to perfectly memorise the content, and how the image of the stigmata, and especially of the wound in Christ's side, was a special detail that was offered in stark isolation for the devotee to contemplate. The depiction of the wounds enabled the faithful to establish a strong empathetic connection with the subject represented in the image (see Arasse 1992, 53).

Crivelli's depictions of figures gazing at wounds, mostly in altarpieces for Franciscan churches, are a visual equivalent of the lyrics of the *lauda* sung by the Franciscan nuns Caterina Vigri and Battista da Varano. Like the words of the *lauda*, Crivelli invited his observers to look deeply at the stigmata through the gaze of Magdalene, and to commit to memory the violence that these wounds caused and the suffering that Christ felt due to humanity's sins.

The invitation to 'enter' Christ's wounds and arrive at the heart of Jesus was often present in devotional Franciscan literature. In his *De Perfectione vitae ad Sorores* (*On the perfect life to the sisters*), dedicated to the education of religious women, St Bonaventure tried to lead his audience to the 'Remembrance of Christ's Passion' (VI, 2) with these words:

> Draw near, O handmaid, with loving steps to Jesus wounded for you, to Jesus crowned with thorns, to Jesus nailed to the gibbet of the Cross. Gaze with the Blessed Apostle St Thomas, not merely on the print of the nails in Christ's hands; be not satisfied with putting your finger into the holes made by the nails in His hands; neither let it be sufficient to put your hand into the wound in His side; but enter bodily by the door in His side and go straight up to the very Heart of Jesus. There, burning with love for Christ Crucified, be transformed into Christ. Fastened to the Cross by the nails of the fear of God, transfixed by the lance of the love of your inmost heart,

> pierced through and through by the sword of the tenderest compassion, seek for nothing else, wish for nothing else, look for consolation in nothing else except in dying with Christ on the Cross. Then, at last, will you cry out with Paul the Apostle: With Christ I am nailed to the Cross. I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. (St Bonaventure 1928, 63–64)[14]

Sister Battista wanted to emulate this by educating her sisters to experience the same spiritual sufferings that Jesus felt on the cross. In her *I Dolori mentali di Gesù nella sua Passione* (*The mental pains of Jesus in his Passion*) she says:

> It was explained to me that the difference between one who delights only in the passionate humanity of Christ and one who delights instead in the mental suffering of Jesus Christ is similar to the difference between the vase with honey inside and the vase which has honey running down its outside. Thus, whoever wants to taste the passion of Christ should not lick solely the drops that come out of the vase, that is, the wounds of Christ, with which the divine vessel of his humanity is streaked: those who are hungry for this food will never be satisfied. If one wants to satiate himself, he must enter into the vessel, that is, into the heart of blessed Jesus and thus he will be satisfied more than ever.[15]

Sister Battista's image of an overflowing vase likely came from Plotinus (with whom she was probably familiar in that she had received a Neoplatonic education).[16] The idea of drops coming out of a vase (as a metaphor of Christ's wounds) may have been inspired by images of the crucifixion of Christ, in which large drops of blood spill from his side wound, splashing his breast. Similar images were widespread in her geographical area: among them are the numerous *Crucifixions* painted by Giovanni Boccati and Giovanni Angelo di Antonio (two of the most important painters from Camerino).[17] In both of the texts I have quoted, the wounds on Jesus' body are considered to be only a doorstep, a 'point of entry', that triggers the memory of the Passion (see Bennett 2001). By gazing deeply into them and through personal meditation, the devotee must enter the stigmata to reach the heart of Jesus and follow him.[18]

In some fifteenth century paintings, Jesus is shown holding open the stigma on his side so as to allow the devotee to participate in his sorrow. This iconography was often used in the Mass of St Gregory, where the theme of the *Imago Pietatis* also developed.[19] Indeed, the Franciscan order seems to have played a key role in promoting these themes to

touch the minds of devotees (see Sensi 1999, 2000). According to a late tradition from the end of the fourteenth century, St Gregory the Great was celebrating the Eucharist and, during the consecration of the host, he received a vision. A sorrowful Christ, resuscitated and emerging from his tomb, appeared to Gregory confirming the transubstantiation. The late fifteenth century *Mass of St Gregory*, attributed to an unknown Maestro de Manzanillo from Valladolid, Spain, and preserved in the Museo Lazaro Galdiano of Madrid, offers an example of fairly typical iconography (Fig. 2).[20] In the lower part of the image we can see St

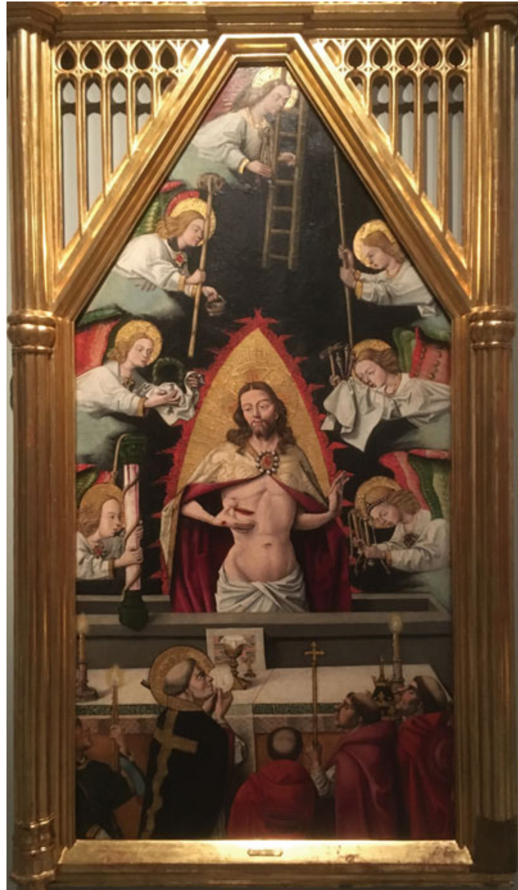

Fig. 2 Maestro de Manzanillo, *Mass of St Gregory*, Madrid, Museum Lázaro Galdiano (© Museo Lázaro Galdiano. Madrid)

Gregory consecrating the host in the presence of other clerics, while the figure of Christ is coming out of his sarcophagus on the altar, surrounded by the instruments of his martyrdom (the so-called *Arma Christi*). Even though the face of Christ is inexpressive, he is spreading his side wound apart with a hand, on which the large hole of the stigma (surrounded by a vivid red colour) is also clearly visible. The side stigma once again resembles an open mouth with red lips, and Christ's gesture of opening his wound with his hand is intentionally underlined by wrinkles that are created on the skin by the fingers (Fig. 3). The Spanish painter probably modelled this detailed representation on Petrus Christus' 1444 painting

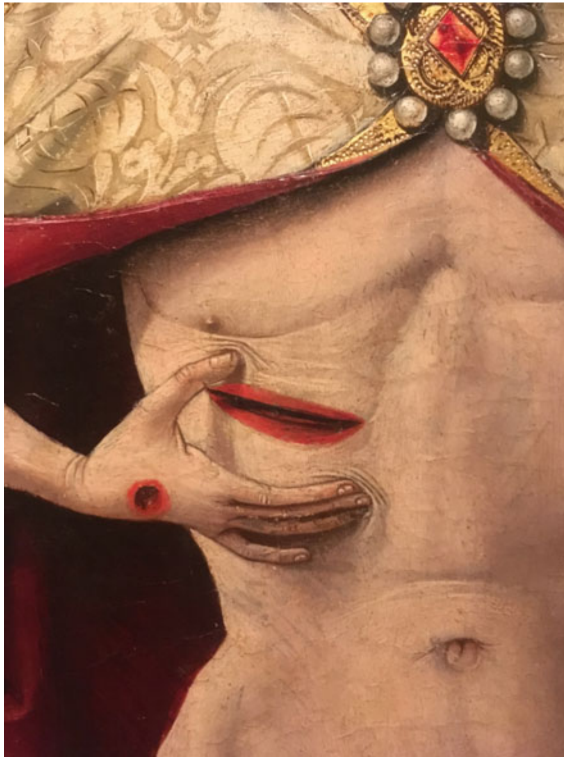

Fig. 3 Maestro de Manzanillo, *Mass of St Gregory* (detail), Madrid, Museum Lazaro Galdiano (© Museo Lázaro Galdiano. Madrid)

Man of Sorrow and its iconographic tradition, in which it is possible to follow the development of this motif.[21] Without doubt Christ is asking the observers to concentrate their gaze on the gaping stigma and to enter his heart and feel his sorrows.[22] The image was designed to touch the observers and let them experience the same emotion felt by St Gregory. The opened stigma in his side functioned as a symbolic device, aimed at convincing the devotee of the real presence of Christ in the host, and bringing to their mind the memory of the Passion.

Although the metaphor of the opened wounds as an entry point was widespread in the Christian tradition more in general (and often visualised through the episode of Doubting Thomas),[23] in Franciscan spirituality it seems to have had a long and vivid history, one in which Magdalene continued to play a special role into the seventeenth century.[24] The *Pietà with St Francis*, painted by Pieter Paul Rubens between 1617 and 1620 for the Capuchins' church in Brussels (now held in the Musées Royaux des Beaux Arts), is an invitation to look at the stigmata and also at the tools that caused the wounds (Fig. 4; see Vander Auwera et al. 2007, 183–186). On the right, St Francis is piously attending the scene, while on the left, two angels play an important role. The first angel is looking at the observer and pointing at Longinus's bloodied lance, which he holds in his other hand. The gaze of the second angel is held on the stigma in Christs' side, which had been inflicted by the lance, and he is touching Christ's arm with a hand as if he were trying to see the wound more clearly. Through his gaze, the first angel is suggesting to the observer that the stigma was caused by the lance, and that the faithful should focus on the wound as the second angel is doing. Close to the wounded feet of Jesus, a genuflected Magdalen is focusing her gaze not on the wounds, but rather on the nails that she is holding in her hands. In both cases, the devotee is invited to meditate on the tools that caused the wounds. St Francis and Magdalene also play an important role in the *Ecstasy of St Francis with the Descendent from the Cross* painted in Naples by Luca Giordano, between 1650 and 1653, and now preserved in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga of Lisbon (Fig. 5).[25] Although there is no documentation on the history of this painting, the presence of an ecstatic St Francis points to its former Franciscan context. The theme of the corporal and spiritual vision is underlined in the painting by St Francis and St Mary Magdalene. Magdalene is holding Jesus' feet and at the same time staring at his stigmata, in a position that strongly recalls Crivelli's Magdalene (Fig. 6). Close to her, Magdalene's corporal vision

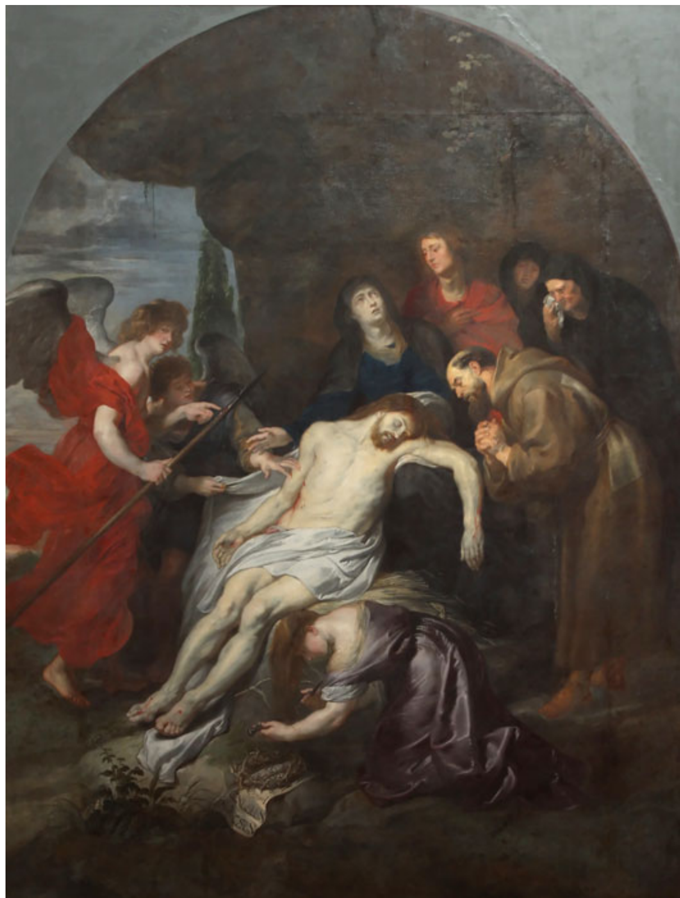

Fig. 4 Pieter Paul Rubens, Pietà with St Francis, Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux Arts (© Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels / Photo: J. Geleyns)

contrasts with St Francis' mystical vision. The Saint displays the stigma on his hands by holding them to his breast. Rather than searching for a specific literary source that explains the depiction of St Francis' ecstasy close to the Descendent, we should consider this image as a manifestation of the possible effects of the 'educated look', which enables one to

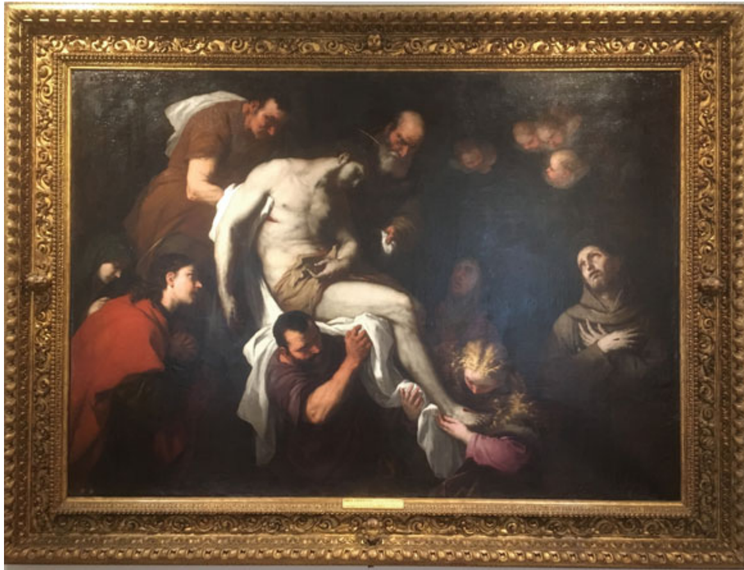

Fig. 5 Luca Giordano, Ecstasy of St Francis with the Descendent from the Cross, Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga (© Direção-Geral do Património Cultural /Arquivo e Documentação Fotográfica / Photo: José Pessoa)

overcome the material vision of the wounds and enter a higher mystical dimension.

The gaze could also be educated by gestures indicating the stigmata. Again, in Franciscan contexts, Antony van Dyck produced several Lamentations in which a character within the painting points at Christ's wounds. In the first composition, as documented in numerous examples,[26] the Virgin is holding the dead body of Christ and raising one of his hands, on which the stigma is clearly visible. In the middle of the painting a crying angel is pointing at the stigma with his finger, indicating the wound to two upset angels standing nearby.[27] In the *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, now in the Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Antwerp, the same role is played by St John (Fig. 7). The painting was conceived as an altarpiece for the tomb of Van Dyck's Italian client, Cesare Alessandro Scaglia, which was placed in the church of the Minor Friars of Antwerp around 1640.[28] In the middle of the painting, St John is holding up an arm of the dead Jesus, while using his other hand to indicate the stigma on Christ's

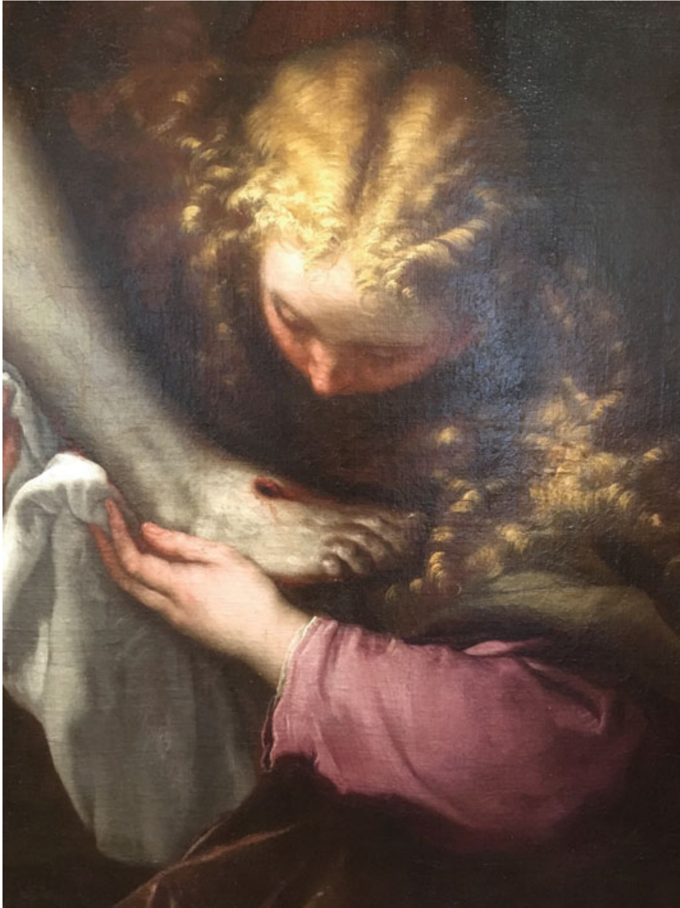

Fig. 6 Luca Giordano, Ecstasy of St Francis with the Descendent from the Cross (detail), Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga (© Direção-Geral do Património Cultural /Arquivo e Documentação Fotográfica / Photo: José Pessoa)

hand to two crying angels. In both cases, the despairing angels act as internal observers, mirroring the emotions of the devotees outside the painting. St John is showing them the symbol that should be at the heart of their devotion, a symbol placed at the very centre of the painting. The

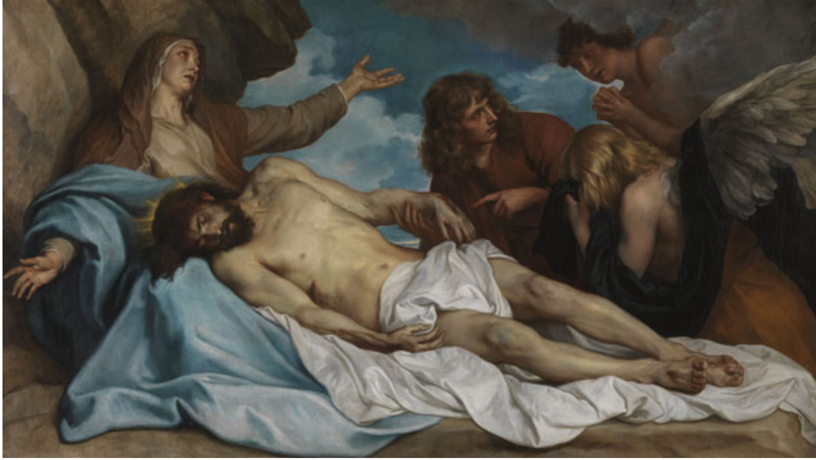

Fig. 7 Antony van Dyck, *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts (© Wikimedia commons, Public Domain, Inv.no. 403, Photo: Hugo Maertens, Collection KMSKA—Flemish Community [CC0])

gaze and the gestures of the characters towards the stigma are devotional tools, or visual strategies designed to educate the worshipper to look in the correct way.

In the early modern period gaze and gestures were also used to question the stigmata of St Francis, who was the first *alter Christus* and was painted displaying his peculiarly shaped stigmata.

3 The Gaze on the Stigmata Put into Question, and the Nails of Flesh

In an altarpiece made around 1528 for the church of San Francesco al Monte in Jesi (Italy), the painter Pietro Paolo Agabiti portrayed St Francis with his wounded palms facing the observer, while showing his stigmata to St Antony from Padua and St Bernardino from Siena, who are kneeling beside him on the left and on the right, respectively (Fig. 8).[29] St Antony is touching the wound in St Francis' side, made visible because of a rip in his tunic, and both saints are gazing intensely at it. The devotee is invited to look in the same place and this invitation is underlined by the theatrical red curtain, drawn open as if the observer were attending a show. The

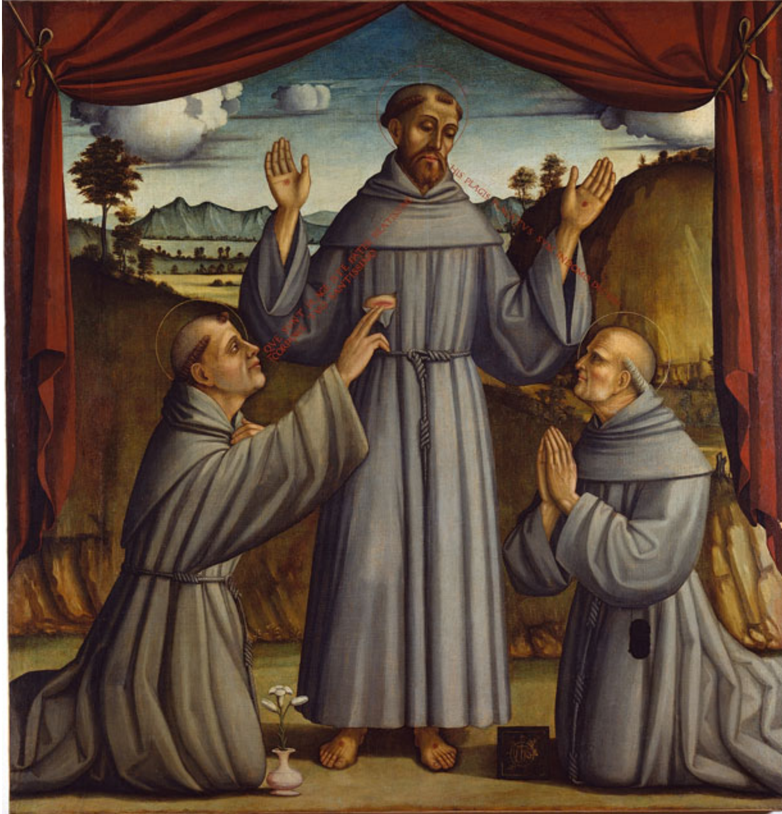

Fig. 8 Pietro Paolo Agabiti, Altarpiece with St Francis, St Antony from Padua and St Bernardino from Siena, Jesi, Pinacoteca Civica (© Pinacoteca e Musei Civici di Jesi)

meaning of St Antony's gaze and gesture is clarified by two inscriptions. The first issues from St Antony's mouth, who asks: QUE SUNT PLAGE ISTE PATER BEATISSIME Ĩ CORPORE TUO SANTISSIMO (What are they, oh blessed Father, these wounds in your most holy body?). While St Antony asks what the stigmata are, St Francis, who is looking at St Bernardino, answers: HIS PLAGIS PLACATUS SUM IN DOMO DEI MEI (Thanks to these wounds I was reconciled in the house of my God). Those wounds have transformed St Francis into an *alter Christus*.

We do not know why this work was commissioned, but evidence strongly suggests that the painting dealt with the importance of St Francis's stigmata in Franciscan spirituality.[30] However, according to Franciscan legends, St Antony never touched the stigma in St Francis' side. The idea of the stigma being examined derives instead from the *Legenda maior* by St Bonaventure, who, in order to demonstrate the real existence of that wound, recounts an episode that happened when the dead body of St Francis was displayed before burial: 'a learned and prudent knight, named Jerome, very well known among the people, as he had doubted these sacred signs and was as incredulous as Tommaso' swore on the Gospel to have really touched St Francis' wound.[31] St Bonaventure draws an explicit connection between Jerome's scepticism and that of doubting St Thomas. In Agabiti's picture, St Antony reproduces the touching gesture that St Thomas performed in the early modern iconography (see Most 2005, 155–214) and, hence, according to Roberto Rusconi, the painting is a proof of the diffusion of the popular belief in St Francis' resurrection as an *alter Christus*.[32]

Between the fifteenth and sixteenth century St Francis' stigmata were sometimes given a curious visual transformation so as to stimulate the attention of the observer.[33] In a compartment of the polyptych painted in the 1480s for the Franciscan Observant church of the Italian city of Sant'Elpidio a Mare,[34] Vittore Crivelli, Carlo's younger brother, portrayed a melancholic St Francis holding a book with his left hand and a crucifix with his right hand (Fig. 9). St Francis seems to be using the crucifix to indicate the tear in his tunic, through which his devotee can see the stigma in his side (Fig. 10). The wounds of Jesus on the crucifix held by the saint are connected to St Francis' own stigmata by several golden rays, like in the iconography of Giotto's *St Francis receiving the stigmata*.[35] In this way the painter transformed the static presence of a saint (motionless within a compartment of a polyptych) into a narrative episode. However, if we examine the shape of St Francis's stigmata, we can see that they are not normal wounds, but nail-shaped and fleshy growths. Something similar occurs in Cristoforo Castelli's triptych, painted between 1495 and 1500 for an unknown Franciscan church and now at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. St Francis is depicted in the central compartment, between St Luis of Toulouse and St John of Capistrano, displaying the palms of his hands towards the observer and exhibiting black nails instead of traditional wounds. The same nails appear in his feet (see Cobianchi 2013, 108–109). Very similar black

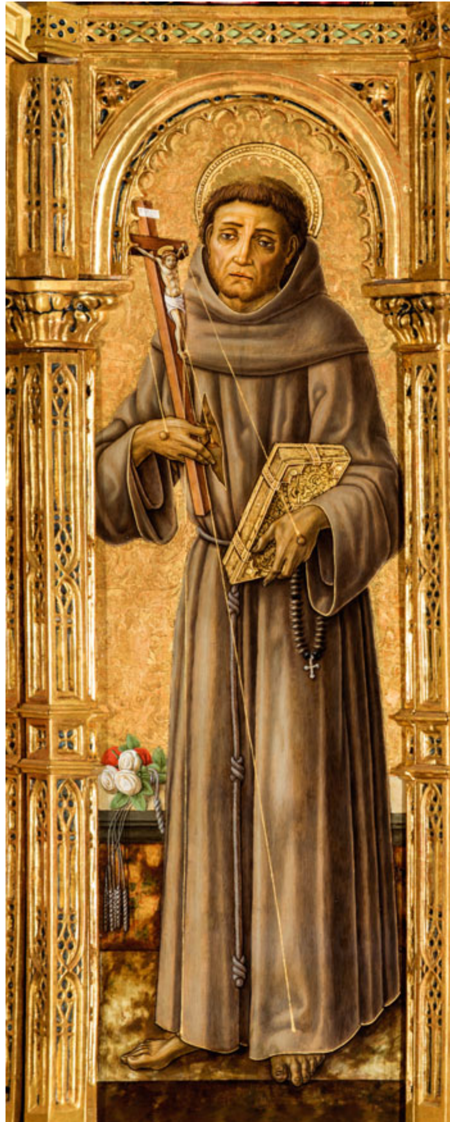

Fig. 9 Vittore Crivelli, *St Francis* (from the polyptych of Sant'Elpidio a Mare), Sant'Elpidio a Mare, Pinacoteca Civica (© Servizio Cultura del Comune di Sant'Elpidio a Mare / Photo: Roberto Dell'Orso)

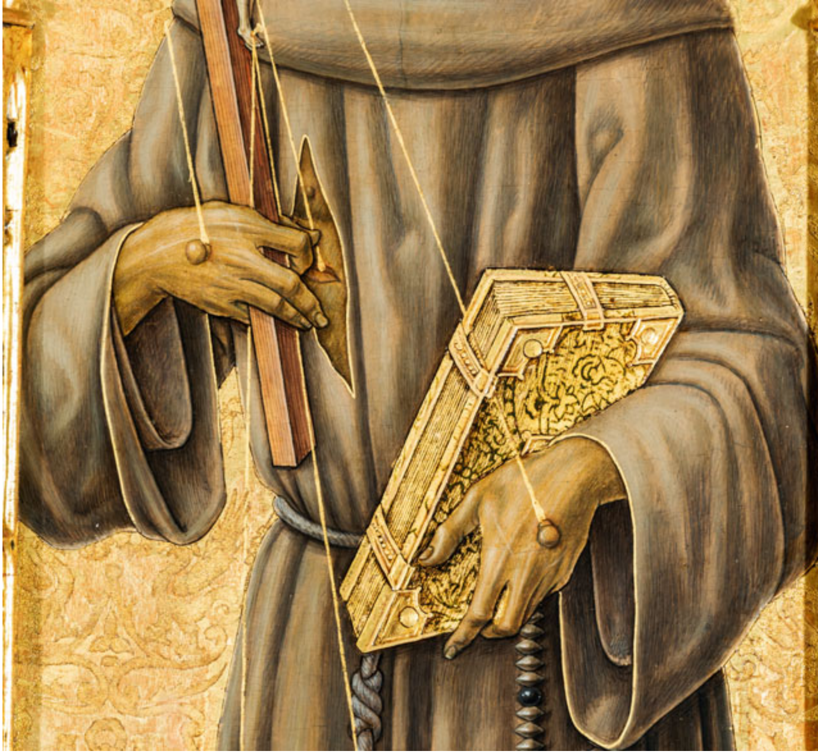

Fig. 10 Vittore Crivelli, *St Francis* (detail of the stigmata), Sant'Elpidio a Mare, Pinacoteca Civica (© Servizio Cultura del Comune di Sant'Elpidio a Mare / Photo: Roberto Dell'Orso)

nails are clearly identifiable in the palms and in a foot of the same saint in *St Francis receiving the stigmata*, painted by the Spanish artist Pedro Fernandez around 1515 and probably made for a Franciscan church in Lazio, but now preserved in the Galleria Sabauda in Turin.[36]

The history of this visual metamorphosis can be explained by analysing literary sources. As Frugoni (1993) demonstrated (137–201), the *Vita prima* of St Francis, written by his first companion Thomas from Celano, says that, while he was on mount Verna, Francesco received a vision of a man who looked like a seraph and was nailed on a cross. Then, while he was thinking about his vision, nails of flesh appeared on his hands and

feet: 'a fleshy and raised outgrowth, as if it were the tip of the nails folded and riveted'.[37] In the same way, Thomas specifies that when St Francis' body was on display, one saw 'not the nail holes, but the nails made of the same substance as his own flesh but of the colour of iron'.[38] These nails thus formed from St Francis' body itself (and not from the seraph) as a consequence of his profound spiritual suffering and identification with Christ, which was exclusively mental, rather than physical, in nature. In 1266, the general chapter of Paris decided to destroy every copy of the *Lives* of St Francis that had been written before the *Legenda maior* by Bonaventure from Bagnoregio, the book that had been approved as the exclusive and official version in 1263.[39] In the *Legenda maior* the author unified the moments of the vision and the manifestation of the stigmata (which were separated in Thomas), and replaced the man-seraphin mentioned by Thomas with a crucified Christ. In addition, the nails of flesh described by Thomas became physical wounds caused by real nails and left on St Francis' body during the vision, like a seal imprinted by Christ. Thus, spiritual pain was replaced by physical pain (see Frugoni 1993, 174–182). As Chiara Frugoni explained, Bonaventure's project was to quell the internal disagreements of the Order, caused by a clash over the different interpretations of the difficult legacy left by Francis, and to transform its founder into an *alter Christus* with divinised flesh. In this way, St Francis became an inaccessible and inimitable example, in all its uncomfortable radicalism, for the friars of the Order. Despite the fact that copies of Thomas of Celano's *Lives* were destroyed, the image of the nails of flesh somehow survived in the Observance tradition, as is evidenced by the *Specchio dell'Ordine menore* (Mirror of the Minor Order), also known as the *Franceschina*, written in the 1580s by an observant from Perugia named Giacomo Oddi.[40] Describing the receiving of the stigmata, impressed by Christ on St Francis' body, Oddi stated:

> The nails appeared in the hands and in the feet; they were made of the substance of his own flesh, or of newly created flesh, according to what Pope Alexander IV said when he discussed the privilege of the stigmata. But these nails pierced the palms of his hands and came out of the other side. They also penetrated his feet and emerged through their soles. And the parts that came out, that is, the points of the nails, were bent, as St Bonaventure says in the thirteenth part of the *Legenda maior*. The heads of the nails in the hands and feet were black. This is certainly a great miracle;

> the nails must clearly have been similar in that they were made of nerves and flesh.[41]

The nails of flesh piercing St Francis' hands in the polyptych of Sant'Elpidio a Mare suggest that, in creating that image, Vittore Crivelli must have been guided by an observant friar who knew this source well. The local friars had thus found a synthesis between the image of the *alter Christus* offered by Bonaventure and the previous depiction of St Francis deeply immersed in his spiritual pain, which Thomas from Celano had represented by employing the symbol of the fleshy nail-shaped stigmata. In any case, this very peculiar detail, like most unusual details, was used by the commissioners to attract the attention of the believer to an issue which was essential for the Franciscan friars in the second half of the fifteenth century. The Minors were making an effort to defend the privilege of St Francis' stigmata against the demands of the Dominicans, who were claiming the same privilege for St Catherine.[42] Furthermore, the visual focus on the stigmata was also important for the private religious life of the devotee, as is indicated by some other details in Vittore Crivelli's compartment. On the left, on a parapet behind the saint, there are four roses held together by the thong of a scourge, which was used for self-flagellation (Fig. 11). The scourge consists of a handle, which is close to the roses, and five thongs, whose thicker terminal parts are hanging from the parapet. Thus, we have five roses and five thongs. I wish to suggest that the five roses are a symbol of the wounds inflicted by the five thongs of the scourge, while the number five recalls the number of stigmata. The image seems thus to explain to the observer how to imitate the suffering of Christ and St Francis, that is by using the scourge on themselves. In this case, the instruction to look intensely at the painted wounds is combined with the encouragement to use the scourge so as to inflict real wounds on one's own body.

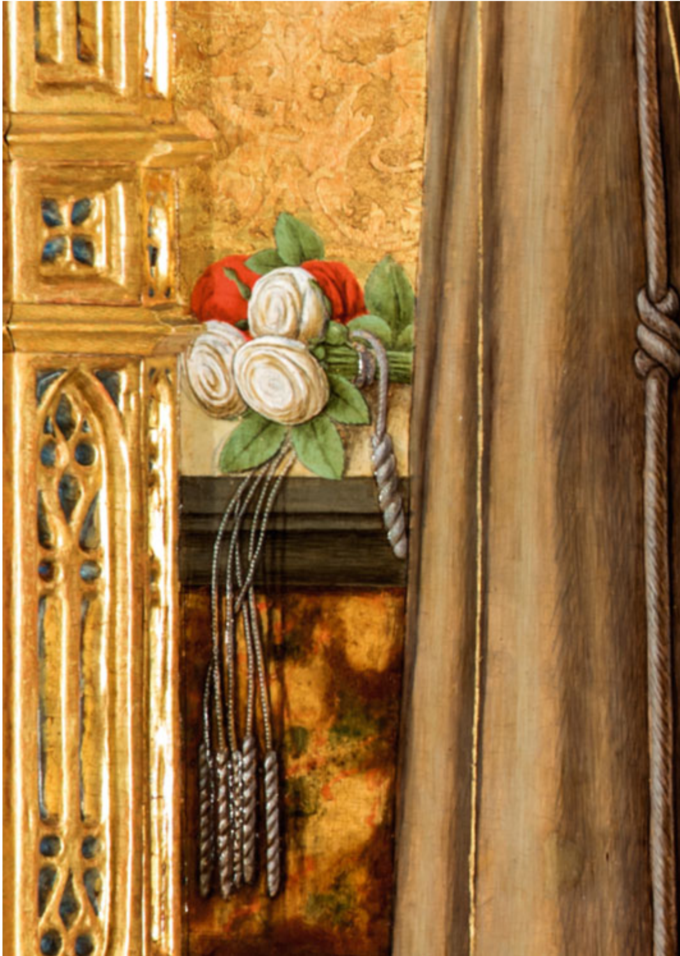

Fig. 11 Vittore Crivelli, *St Francis* (detail of the roses), Sant'Elpidio a Mare, Pinacoteca Civica (© Servizio Cultura del Comune di Sant'Elpidio a Mare / Photo: Roberto Dell'Orso)

Notes

1. On Sister Battista, see Zarri (2003) and Messa et al. (2010).
2. Boccanera found a manuscript copy of the lyrics of the *lauda* in the Cartella Santoni Ms. III A 1–8, preserved in the Valentiniana Library in Camerino. This copy was trascribed from the *Rime scelte de' poeti ferraresi antichi e moderni* 1713 (22) where the text is attributed to Sister Caterina da Bologna. Boccanera read the same text in the Ms. A. 93 preserved in the Archiginnasio Library of Bologna, where no author is mentioned. Sister Caterina Vigri, who was a writer, painter and miniaturist and was canonised in 1712, was the founder of the monastery of the Clarisse in Bologna, which, under her management, became an important centre of humanistic culture. Cf. Leonardi (2004), Fortunati and Leonardi (2004), and Arthur (2018).
3. Serventi (2005). The *lauda* is attributed to Sister Caterina in the Ms. 2848 of the University Library of Bologna and in the Ms. 138 of the Oliveriana Library of Pesaro. In other codices it is ascribed to Jacopone da Todi, Bianco da Siena and Clemente Pandolfini. See Vigri (2000, LXXIV–LXXV).
4. See Bembo (2001, 70). In this case, Sister Illuminata probably employed a religious *topos*, since in a biography of Jacopone da Todi which is contained in the 'Franceschina' (a text written at the end of the fifteenth century by the Franciscan friar Francesco Oddi from Perugia), the author tells that Jacopone, infirm and close to dying, started to sing the same *lauda*. Cf. Oddi (1981, 153–154).
5. Vigri (2000, 55–57): 'Anima benedetta | dall'alto Creatore | reguarda il tuo Signore | che confitto t'aspetta | reguarda i pei' forati | confitti d'un chiavello | sì forte tormentati | di così gran fragello. || Pensa ch'egli era bello | sopr'ogni creatura | e lla sua carne pura | era più che perfetta. | Poi guarda quella piaga | ch'egli à dal lato dritto, | vedi el sangue che paga | tutto il tuo diletto. || Pensa ch'egli era afflitto | d'una lancia crudele: | per ciaschedun fedele | passò el cuor la saetta. | Resguarda quelle mani | che tti ferono e plasmaro, | vedrai come que' cani | Giudei lo conficaro. || Allora con pianto amaro | grida: "Signor, veloce | per me corresti in croce | a morir con gran fretta". | Resguarda il santo capo | ch'era sì dilettoso, | vedil tutto forato | di spine sanguinoso. || Anima, egli è el tuo sposo: | dunque perché non piangi, | sicché piangendo

bagni | ogni tua colpa infetta? || Poi guarda quella faccia | ch'era sì rilucente, | tutta piena di sputi | e di sangue corrente. | Pensa, anima dolente, | ch'egli è il tuo Signore, | che fu morto d'amore | solo per dare vita. || Vedilo tutto piagato | per te nel duro legno, | pagando il tuo peccato | morì il Signor benigno. Per menarci al suo regno | volse esser crocifisso: | anima, guardal fisso | e di lui ti diletta'.

6. I have analysed the images that Sister Battista saw in her mystical experience in Capriotti (2015). See also Wood (1996, 112–120).
7. Da Varano (1958, 308): 'riguardare Cristo con l'occhio della mente e portarlo continuamente nella memoria, e che sempre si figuri vederlo in croce o alla colonna o nel sepolcro o in qualunque altro luogo dove meglio gl'insegnerà la divotione'.
8. Vigri (2000, 59–60): 'O populo ingrato e pravo non guardi el costato che piove sangue e acqua insino alla terra [...]?'.
9. On the ability to look as a result of culturally oriented training, see Marazzi (2002) and Grasseni (2007, 2008).
10. The notion of 'techniques of the body' was introduced by Marcel Mauss in a famous essay from 1936. Cf. Mauss (1936). As a *habilis* animal (an animal adapted for survival in the environment in which it lives), man addresses his body as the main tool of his technical equipment, before building external instruments and tools, in order to be successful. According to Mauss the 'technique of the body' is linked to the 'cultural tradition', which enables us to transmit socially acquired skills and to create new improved ones. In this way, the body acquires proper *habitus,* which is not a set of habits, but rather a toolkit of skills and experiences that enable one to adapt to the particular styles and goals of a society. Cf. Lock (1993).
11. On this general issue see Capriotti (2013).
12. Cf. Zampetti (1986, 264) and Ligthbown (2004, 143–183).
13. For more data on these paintings see Zampetti (1986) and Ligthbown (2004).
14. St Bonaventure (1898, 120): 'Accede ergo tu, o famula, pedibus affectionum tuarum ad Iesum uulneratum, ad Iesum spinis coronatum, ad Iesum patibulo crucis affixum, et cum beato Thoma Apostolo non solum intuere *in manibus eius fixuram clauorum*, non solum mitte *digitum tuum in locum clauorum*, non solum mitte *manum tuam in latus eius* (Ioan. 20, 25–27), sed totaliter

per ostium lateris ingredere usque ad cor ipsius Iesu, ibique ardentissimo Crucifixi amore in Christum transformata, clauis diuini timoris confixa, lancea praecordialis dilectionis transfixa, gladio intimae compassionis transuerberata, nihil aliud quaeras, nihil aliud desideres, in nullo alio uelis consolari, quam ut cum Christo possis in cruce mori. Et tunc cum Paulo Apostolo exclames et dicas: *Christo confixus sum cruci. Viuo iam non ego, uiuit uero in me Christus* (Gal. 2, 19–20)'.

15. Da Varano (1958, 171–172): 'E fòme mostrato che tanta differenzia è da chi se deletta solo dell'umanità de Cristo apassionata e da chi se deletta delle pene mentale de Iesù Cristo, quanta differenzia è dal vaso, che dentro sta el mèle o vero el balsamo, al vaso che de fora è irigato un poco de quello liquore che sta dentro. Cusì chi vole gustare della passione de Cristo, non de' gire sempre licando le righe del vaso, cioè le piaghe de Cristo, del sangue del quale è rigato el vaso divino de la sua umanità, che mai, non se saziaria chi de tali cibi fosse afamato. Ma, che vole saziarse, entre dentro al vaso, cioè al core e mare de Iesù benedetto e serà saziato più che non vole'.
16. On the likelihood that Sister Battista had a Neoplatonic background, connected with the presence of her cousin Fabrizio da Varano (a bishop) and of the court humanist Lodovico Lazzarelli in Camerino, see Capriotti (2006).
17. For this important Renaissance season in Camerino, see De Marchi (2002).
18. On the origin and diffusion of the *devotio moderna*, see Van Engen (2008).
19. On the iconography of the Mass of Gregory and the connected theme of the *imago pietatis*, see Arasse (1992, 66–73), Meier (2006), and Blundetto (2014).
20. On this painter see Caamano Martínez (1964, 134–139).
21. The painting by Petrus Christus is now preserved in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. For a good explanation of this devotional image and its iconographic tradition see Upton (1990, 55–56, figs. 53–57).
22. The possible reference sources for this representation of Jesus displaying his wounds could be the Gospel episode in which Christ appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, inviting them to look at his wounds (Luke 24, 39–49 and John 20, 20).

23. See Haeger (2004), Most (2005), and Murray (2006).
24. On the roles that Mary Magdalen assumes in the paintings in the early modern period see Erhardt and Morris (2012) and Capriotti (2002, 233–262).
25. Ferrari and Scavizzi (1992, 12, 253, 464) and Hermoso Cuesta (2010, 183–207).
26. See Barnes et al. (2004, 271) and Larsen (1988, 513, cat. A308/1–6).
27. On the panting now preserved in the Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, see Díaz Padrón (1990, 41–53).
28. For this suggested dating see Barnes et al. (2004, 272). After being printed by Schelte a Bolswert, this composition was also copied by Alonso Cano in a painting now in the Museo Cerralbo in Madrid. See Wethey (1983, 52, 91, 119 and 182, cat. 23).
29. The painting is now in the Pinacoteca Civica of Jesi. See Comai (1971, 113).
30. See the entry on this altarpiece by Casamassima in Capriotti and Coltrinari (2018, 146–148).
31. Bonaventure (1898, 4): 'miles quidam litteratus et prudens, Hyeronimus nominee, vir utique famosus et cele ber, cum de huiusmodi sacris signis dubitasset essetque incredulus quasi Thomas'.
32. Rusconi (2010). On the belief in the resurrection of St Francis, see Manselli (1976).
33. See Capriotti (2011, 73–85) and Capriotti (2017).
34. The polyptych is now preserved in the Pinacoteca Civica of the same city. For the history of the church and a more detailed description of the work see the entry on the altarpiece by Capriotti (2017, 142–144).
35. See Frugoni (1993). In this case the rays are not specular. In the compartment with St Francis and St Anna by Vittore, today in the Pinacoteca di Brera, in Milan, the saint also receives nails of flesh through golden and specular rays originating from a similar crucifix. In the Franciscan triptych with the *Visitation*, now in the Pinacoteca Civica of Sant'Elpidio a Mare, the position of the saint is identical, but the specular rays (emanating from a similar crucifix) are red and carry real wounds, the most common stigmata. On the problem of the different meaning of specular or non-specular rays see Frugoni (1993, 203–232).

36. See Cobianchi (2013, 109) and Tanzi (1997, 30–31, 119).
37. Thomas from Celano, *Vita prima*, pars. II, cap. 3, parr. 94–95.
38. Thomas from Celano, *Vita prima*, pars. II, cap. 9, parr. 112–113.
39. Some of these were however found in the nineteenth century in Dominican convents. For the problem of sources, we refer again to Frugoni (1993, 3–49).
40. On this literary work and its author see Messa (2003).
41. Oddi (1981, 179–180): 'Nelle mane et nelli piedi apparsero li chiovi, li quali erano fatti propriamente de la substantia de la propria sua carne, o vero materia creata de novo, secondo che dice papa Alexandro quarto nel privilegio de le stigmate. Ma quisti chiovi comenzavano de la parte dentro le mane, et riuscivano da la parte de fuore. Nelli piedi comenzavano de la parte de sopra, et ruscivano de la parte de sotto. Et quilli che riuscivano, erano rivotati, cioè le ponti d'essi chiovi, como dice santo Bonaventura nella terza decima parte de la *Legenda maiore*. Li capi de li chiovi nelle mane et nelli piedi erano negri. Ecco certamente grande miracolo, che essendo de nervi, o vero de carne, per ragione doveano essere simili'. In his text, Giacomo Oddi quotes the *Legenda maior* by Bonaventure (*Legenda maior*, XIII, 3), which describes the signs left by real nails and not nails of flesh. Roberto Rusconi was the first to suggest that Oddi's text was the source for representation of the nails in fifteenth century Franciscan iconography. Cf. Rusconi (2009, 22–26) and Rusconi (2010, 174–175).
42. The dispute was closed in favour of St Francis by the Franciscan Pope Sixtus IV with the bull *Spectat ad Romani ponteficis* in 1472. Even though the Pope prohibited visual representations of St Catherine's stigmata, the debate continued requesting news papal pronouncements in 1475 and 1480. The debate still continues for other years. Cf. Warr (2011), Giunta (2012), and Bartolomei Romagnoli (2013).

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CHAPTER 17

'What Are These Wounds?' Stigmata and/as Memory in Italian Religious Literature

Andrea Torre

1 Memory, Violence and Christian Preaching

In the second controversial dissertation of the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche initiates the genetic analysis of the dialectical concepts of responsibility, guilt, and punishment, recognizing in the moral will and man's technical ability to *fabricate a memory* the most frightful and sinister illusion of happiness, as well as the most unconsciously masochistic practice of violence, based on the (physio)logical connection between the depth of the pain and the duration of the memory:

> One burns something in so that it remains in one's memory: only what does not cease to give pain remains in one's memory — that is a first principle from the most ancient (unfortunately also longest) psychology

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> on earth. [...] Whenever man considered it necessary to make a memory for himself it was never done without blood, torment, sacrifice; the most gruesome sacrifices and pledges (to which sacrifices of firstborn belong), the most repulsive mutilations (castrations, for example), the cruelest ritual forms of all religious cults (and all religions are in their deepest foundations systems of cruelties)—all of this has its origin in that instinct that intuited in pain the most powerful aid of mnemonics. In a certain sense the entirety of asceticism belongs here: a few ideas are to be made indelible, omnipresent, unforgettable, "fixed," for the sake of hypnotizing the entire nervous and intellectual system with these "fixed ideas" — and the ascetic procedures and forms of life are means for taking these ideas out of competition with all other ideas in order to make them "unforgettable". (Nietzsche 1998, 37–38)

The main focus of this fierce and precise examination is all those *theaters of the passions* built by Christian culture to aid the spiritual discipline of the religious and as an aid to the indoctrination of the faithful; theatres in which mnemotechnics is offered as a methodological support for the mental work required of the believer, as an instrument that stirs the affections so as to help to redefine a person's life on the level of his psyche and identity, and finally as a pre-codified repertoire of images outlined in the form of an emblematic synthesis of the *Passio Christi*; images that every believer must internalize in memory, translate in the *vis imaginativa*, and offer to the labile human will as instruments of prayer. According to Nietzsche, these true workshops of conscience—very productive in the Patristic work of proselytizing, in monastic practices and, in particular, in the Jesuit militant experience—carefully mould the faculty of the memory, making it a device at the full service of sustaining the psychological mechanism of causality between promise and debt on which the strategic *religio* between the (divine) debtor and the (human) creditor is founded; a mechanism historically translatable into the perennial conflict between *progenitors* and *contemporaries*,[1] and able to be socially activated in the guilt-punishment dialectic as a reasonable control instrument:

> With the help of such images and processes one finally retains in memory five, six 'I will nots', in connection with which one has given one's *promise* in order to live within the advantages of society, – and truly! with the help of this kind of memory one finally came 'to reason'! (Nietzsche 1998, 39)[2]

They are thus images and processes of extraordinary impact, but which acquire meaning only through that 'paradoxical and horrifying remedy in which tortured humanity found temporary relief, *Christianity's* stroke of genius: God sacrificing himself for the guilt of man, God himself exacting payment of himself' (Nietzsche 1998, 63)[3] that is, images that are activated following the recall of a single individual memory that rises to the status of a univocal collective memory; following the ritual assimilation and ritualization of a univocal model; following the reading and rewriting of a single text, the wounded body of Christ. Again, based on Nietzsche, it can thus be stated that from that moment on, violence loses its univocal connotation as a natural and original anthropological element, and it starts to be defined either on an explicit value-related plane of moral condemnation or on an implicit functional plane of use, which sometimes makes of it a De Certau-*esque practice of everyday life*.

The wound—shapeless, painful, which lays bare one's interiority—can then be conceived as the most effective and significant expression of Christian aesthetics and rhetoric; and we must underline above all its performative character, which predominates over the representative one, its value as an indicative denotation, as a symptom, as a trace for a research in progress, for a memory that is being inscribed or being recovered:

> Indeed, to imitate Christ is not to paint or to affect a look, but to repeat a proces: to anoint Christ [...] and be simultaneously flayed, *laceratus*, crucified with him. The Christian appearance [...] corresponds much less to the search for a figurative likeness than to the search for virtue itself made image, that is to say, the search for contact, for indicia, for carnal witness, and thus for martyrdom [...]. But the search for what could be called a color-martyrdom - a color of carnal testimony - clashes with the christological problem of time and of the limit. How is it possible to perpetuate the truth, the acuity of the moment in which the sacrifice of Christ, that is, the wound, culminates? What is an art of memory in which memory would be anointing, that is, contact? (Didi-Hubermann 2008, 110)

Specifically, the physical and moral violence that accompanied the greatest human memorial (the crucifixion of Christ as the apex of the humanization of the divine and the divinization of the human) finds precisely in the sign-trace of the stigmata its most realistic representation and its greatest strategy for exaltation. In this case, therefore, violence seems to be a necessarily intrinsic element to the act of artistic creation,

conceived as a narrative process of the imagination in which the memorial dynamics of memorization and anamnesis play a fundamental role.[4] In order to verify the ways in which this cultural construction has been realized, it can therefore be helpful to address the concept of the wound as a semantic and mnestic trace, investigating its presence and meaning within Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Italian religious literature in prose and poetry, where the mental page that offers itself first to (meditative) contemplation and then to (imitative) writing is the wounded body of Christ, where the stylus is the lance of every sinner, and the characters, the wounds that indelibly fix the memory of the Sacrifice. Within sacred discourse, the image of the stigmata is presented in the form of a synthetic concept, which stratifies within itself, according to their value and purpose, several figurative variations of the idea of a sign, and is offered as a privileged expression of the metaphorical register of memory as writing and of the cultural practice of textualizing the body.[5] The *open memory* of these wounds, with all their manifest and protracted violence, is thus organized into a discourse; it requires an active interlocutor.[6]

Continuing to reason on the plane of diachrony, it should also be noted that violence (linguistic, iconic, physical) represents a primary function in the techniques of memorization and recall, from their first codifications in classical rhetoric to their most complex modern elaborations. It is precisely an act of violence that is recognized as the wellspring of oratorial mnemonic praxis in the famous anecdote whose protagonist is the Greek Presocratic lyric poet Simonides of Ceos (ca. 556–468 B. C.)—the true foundational myth of *ars memoriae*, a story that gives it an identity and marks its canonical *incipit* in subsequent codified mnemotechnical treatises. This is how Cicero tells the tale, in the section of *De Oratore* (II, 86–88, 350–361) explicitly dedicated to the mnemonic art: invited to the banquet of the wealthy nobleman Scopas to celebrate poetically a successful pugilist, Simonides dedicates much of his carmen to the Dioscuri, simultaneously arousing the wrath of his host and the benevolence of the two divinities; called away by the message that two young men wanted to see him, Simonides sees the ceiling of the banquet room collapse behind him just as he crosses the threshold: Castor and Pollux in their own way repaid their debt for the poetic praise they had just received. While the first part of the story celebrates the 'divine' admiration for Simonides' melic poem, the second exalts his formidable visual memory, which allowed him to return to the men's relatives their horribly mutilated remains by identifying them based on where they sat in the

room. Although the anecdote primarily recounts a case of extraordinary visual memory, the story has been seen as a sort of mythical origin of the artificial processes of memorization, as here the two fundamental principles of any mnemotechnics are quite evident: spatial order, which presides over the composition of well-proportioned and measured mental places (the arrangement of the guests in the banquet hall); and emotional potential, which every image captured by memory must be able to join to the content of the memory (the striking multitude of bodies mangled by the ruins). The 'inventive' dimension of Simonides's experience lies in his ability to reproduce these past events in their every detail, relying solely on the mind's capacity of visualization. For my research, the most important element lies in this attempt to *remember* the bodies *dismembered* by the violent collapse of the building,[7] but we must not overlook the first aspect, that of order, since it offers what appears to be the most legitimate representation of what we consider memory to be: while it is true that violence facilitates memorization by way of the strong impression it makes on the senses, it is equally true that violence also represents the greatest negation of memory, as it is a form of extreme disorder, irreducible to any logical sequence. Therefore, as far as memory is concerned, one could distinguish a positive aspect of violence, in that it acts as a psychophysical principle helpful to memorization, and a negative aspect of violence which can be regarded as an element that disturbs the rational recovery of the data memorized by the conscious mind. The memory-violence nexus cannot, therefore, but be addressed with a level of complexity in some respects similar to that characterizing the relationship between memory and truth, and between truth and violence. In the oral universe of Greek myth, memory is a divinity, Mnemosyne: she inspires through her daughters the oracular beauty of poetry, is the guarantor of the concept of truth (*a-letheia*, etymologically 'lack of oblivion') and above all, in a world where writing had not yet become pervasive, assures the survival of the human community by transmitting its values and knowledge, thus perpetuating its identity. All this is progressively diminished with the advent of the written word, which desacralizes memory and relativizes the indispensability of remembering, and which became an indispensable requirement only in certain circumscribed fields: in the forum, where the orators practice their craft, or at banquets where lyricists like Simonides exhibit their skills in well-paid poetic performances. It thus enters the dimension of artifice, and memory, too, abandons its sacred absoluteness to become a tool for the creation of discourses, of *one* truth among

others. In another passage of *De Oratore*, in which Cicero depicts the human body as a harp whose strings are referred to as *fidiculae*, a term also used to denote the whips used for flagellation, Cicero himself places the violent act of torture in the rhetorical dimension of *inventio* as a moment of finding/producing convenient narrative content for the situation (those tortured never tell the truth, but always *a* truth, a story convenient to their liberation). If a truth extracted by torture is suspect because it is produced by pain and fear, the act of reminiscence that attempts to give a readable order to memories confusedly split apart in the spaces of memory can only possess the same nucleus of unnaturalness, inauthenticity, artifice; mnestic reconstruction functional to the formulation of a discourse cannot therefore constitute a true narrative elaboration (characterised by a more or less extensive, more or less explicit, more or less conscious fictional nature) which does violence to the factual reality.

2 The Spiritual Exercise of Wounding: A Figurative Example

In the pages of the *Spiritual Exercises*, for example, Ignatius of Loyola suggests several times to join to the meditation of Christian teachings a re-creation, through the senses, of the sacred episodes, or rather, to apply the external senses to the spiritual realities on which the meditation has been made; and all this in order to transpose the unity and dialogue between the senses and the intellect from the common plane of the phenomenal reality—which is always potentially misleading—to the intimate one of spiritual interiority: in this dimension the senses do not need an external element to function but enter into relation exclusively with the subject matter meditated upon, and find a reason for being only in relation to it. This work of transposing objectivity into subjectivity (a work of translation and dislocation: a forced composition of a *new* memorable place) is not only one of the fundamental teachings of the *Exercises* but also, and above all, the main predisposition that allows for their correct and effective use; moreover, it is perhaps the main motivation that led the Jesuits to furnish their *guidebook* with a strategic iconographic apparatus. In 1649 an edition of the Ignatian meditation manual was published by the typography shop run by the heirs of Manelfo Manelfi in Rome, furnished with 27 chalcographs (many of which had been circulating, as independent prints, at least since 1609) which visually narrate or emblematically and allegorically translate not only the content but also the dynamics of how

the *exercises* work. A *text to operate* such as the *Spiritual Exercises* thus comes to be illustrated by *images to operate*. Consider, for example, the emblematic and mnemonic illustration that opens the *Exercise of the Daily General Examination of Conscience*, an examination that seeks to gain full knowledge of the 'inner roots of our vices' and a clear understanding of the 'external occasions of our falls', and arrive at a radical act of contrition, 'an *instrument*, with which in this garden of his delights every day the weeds are *uprooted*, and flowers planted, cultivated, and grow in perfection'. The xilography—inspired by Psalm 118 ('Anima mea in manibus meis sempre'; see Fig. 1) and through the motif of the palm of a hand—shows (and makes active) the space of memory within which the entire path of thanksgiving, invocation, examination, contrition, and proposal develops, a path which is followed by the soul carrying out the exercises. A physical aid and conceptual model of mnemonic practices (from Quintilian to Giordano Bruno),[8] the image of the hand represents an immediate and intimate visual guide that can accompany the man who makes the exercises in the act of analyzing his soul (marking the fundamental five stages of his investigation: *quid*, *quare*, *quantum*, *quomodo*, *quamdiu*) and in the consequent path of purification; a guide always present to the senses (and therefore at all times translatable into an inner image) and concretely linked to the peculiar identity of the person who pray. This primary, natural, mnemonic device is also that which can be activated in the experience of the stigmata.

Another interesting example is furnished by the exercise devoted to the reflection on venial sins. Here we witness the convergence of text and illustration on the physical, corporal, violent dimension of sin—closely related to the original sinful precondition of the body—which threatens the individual like a disease or weapon. The sinner in the illustration finds himself on the very edge of the abyss ('Puteus abyssi', from *Rev* 9:2; see Fig. 2), having become a target for the swords of the seven capital sins and placed, like a new Damocles, beneath a *gladium ultionis* that with its verticality marks the individual's destiny to fall into that mortal sin, which will condemn him to eternal punishment ('in punctus ad inferna descendunt' the caption reminds us, from *Job* 21:13). An emblem of a condition from which to flee, this illustration, too, has been crafted to be remembered, and to help those who make the exercises remember the Ignatian textual instruction it prefigures. Almost by extension of the previous image of the hand, the whole human body will be here the penitent's mnemonic map; the obligatory stages of the emotional and

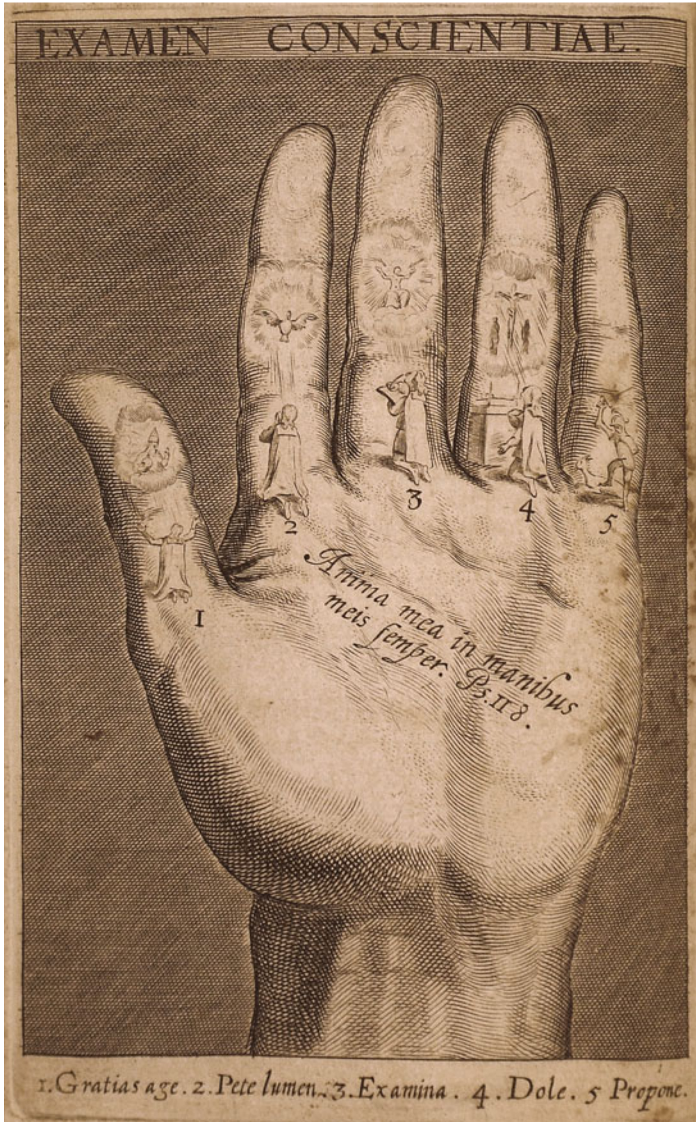

Fig. 1 *Esercizi spirituali di s. Ignazio*. Rome: Stamperia del Varese, 1673, p. 40 (By permission of the Andrea Torre private collection / Photo: Andrea Torre)

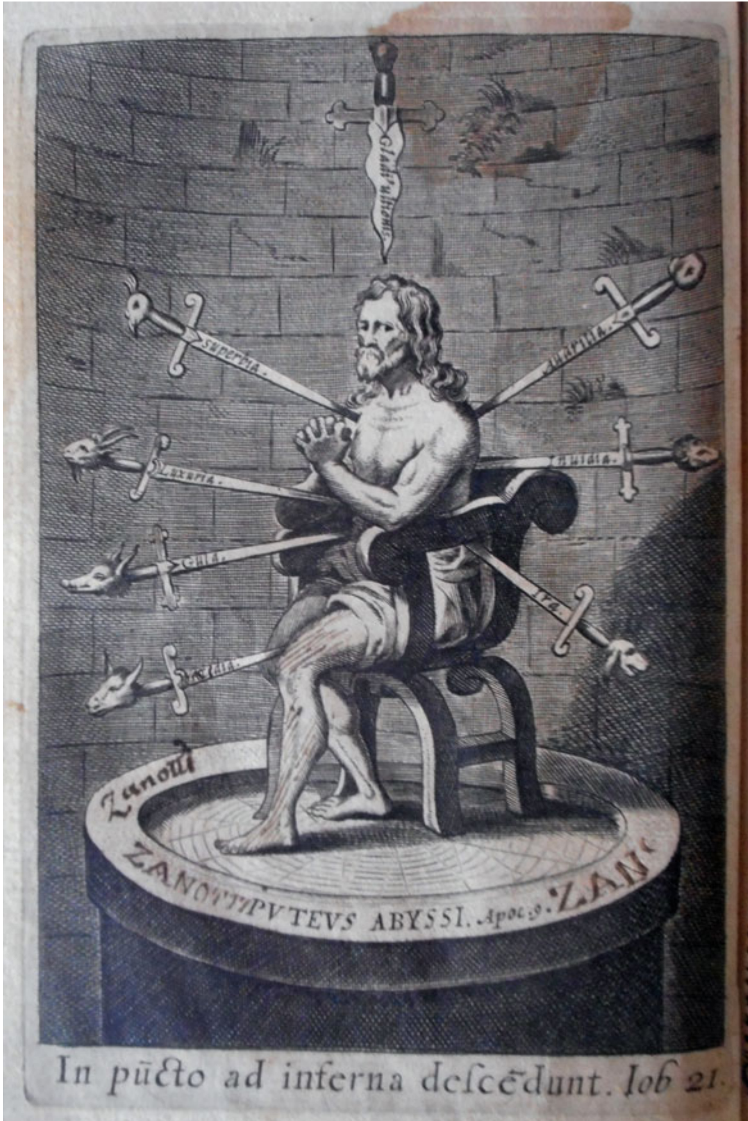

Fig. 2 *Esercizi spirituali di s. Ignazio*. Rome: Stamperia del Varese, 1673, p. 52 (By permission of the Andrea Torre private collection / Photo: Andrea Torre)

psychophysical path, which he must follow as a cognitive background for his meditations (the Ignatian exercise that follows will in fact instruct the penitent to "conceive a vehemently intense pain, and weep bitterly for his […] sins") are the different points of the body that the swords threaten to strike, each in close semantic association with the sins represented in the image (pride thus wounds the chest, lust and gluttony the belly in its twofold significance, sloth the knees, envy and avarice the shoulders, wrath the liver); finally, the wounds of sins reopened by the examination of conscience will serve as mnemonic traces and will be contrasted with the blessed wounds of the salvific sacrifice of Christ. The sinner's mind will therefore have to immerse itself totally within Christ's wounds, while his memory must spatially overlap this *locus* of pain.

3 Two Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Treatise on Stigmata

An articulate Jesuit reflection on the stigmata as a product of the 'practices used and taught by Saints to build their Room in Christ Crucified in life, and in death' is offered by Tommaso Auriemma (1614–1671) with the treatise *The Room of the Soul in the Wounds of Christ* (first published in Naples in 1651 by Roberto Mollo and then repeatedly reprinted also in the eighteenth century). Right from the title, the memorial configuration of the Christic wound is explicit; the wounds are presented as a *thesaurus memoriae* to be activated through meditation to build up the imagination of the Christian in a manner in conformity with the magisterium of the Scriptures. Auriemma's work consists of two parts but in fact is divided into three sections, devoted to a theoretical exposition of the mystery of the stigmata, a series of spiritual exercises conducted through meditation on the wounds, and finally a rich repertoire of edifying anecdotes about the beneficial effects obtained by ancient and contemporary saints and religious by contemplating the wounds of the Passion. The theoretical introductory part is canonically constructed as a tapestry of Patristic and scriptural quotations, with commentary: following Jerome's example, for instance, Auriemma identifies God as the sublime *artifex* who, through the human hand, has carved the deformed and sublime statue of Christ in his Passion to give completion to his coming, to realize the Word through its incarnation, that is, its violent humanization ('for the artificer, or the architect was the Eternal Father, who for our good worked upon that great stone of Christ; nor would he have had enough strength to hollow

it out, if love did not give him the mettle').[9] Following Augustine's example, he then recalls how the wound's essence as a hospitable *locus* is inherent in John the Evangelist's use of the verb 'to open' rather than 'to wound' or 'to strike' to recall the piercing of the body; finally, he explains how the number of wounds is directly related to their salvific effect on the five senses of the human body, and by doing so, highlights their value as organs of perception and tools of knowledge for man, chosen paths to communion—sensual more than spiritual—with Christ:

> From the hands you shall pass to the Most Holy Side, and there you must excite ardent desires to soon embrace your beloved wounded one; oh my soul, too happy and fortunate, if Jesus should want you to participate in the distinguished favor, which he granted to his beloved bride St. Geltrude: 'Having (she says) received communion on a feast day, while my mind was absorbed in God and in myself, I felt that my soul, liquefied like wax in the fire of God's love, was marked with the seal of the Side of Christ, and also filled with immense treasures'; so the blessed God is accustomed to treat the souls who worthily approach him in the Sacrament, and they enter his sacred wounds.[10]

Therefore, physical sensation is closely linked to a work on the imagination that finds its origin and goal in the active spaces of memory; and the more intense the violence, the more effective it proves ('Recalling Jesus' most sacred wounds pleases him greatly, but it pleases him much more, when this is accompanied by some bodily affliction' [57: 'La memoria delle piaghe sacratissime piace assai a Giesù Christo, ma molto più la gradisce, quando con essa vi è congiunta qualche afflittione corporale']).

Before entering the heart of the treatise (11–12) Auriemma lists some of the epithets by which the holy fathers defined Christ's wounds, variously highlighting their specificity as a *place of refuge* (asylum, treasury, bath, bed, nests, harbor, shelter, room), an *instrument of wisdom* (mouths, keys, channels, springs, furnaces, meritorious instruments, *liber vitae*, tongues, oil lamps, breasts, medicine, nourishment, doors, a remedy, salvation, signs, banners, a mirror, seals, treasure, witnesses), an *object of wonder* (accomplishments, bleeding flowers, eternal fire, triumph, victory). Those epithets were often drawn upon (and developed and amplified) by Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century poets and orators, and have a strong memorial value.

We must also remember that even the conscious practices of the violent affliction of the body, which accompany and sometimes constitute the

whole of the spiritual exercises, contribute to reinforce and revive the memory of Christ's supreme pain; Auriemma recommends adopting these practices, and proposes examples and methods for their implementation:

> But leaving aside so many, and such serious penances done by God's servants to honor the sacred passion, I will speak only of two of them, which are the Cross, and the Discipline, because these in particular were done by them out of reverence for the painful wounds of their Lord; [...] and our Father Simon Rodriguez *Rho. de Relig*. for the same effect, carved one [*scilicet*, a cross] for himself in his chest, of a palm's span, with repeated blows of an iron; as he stamped in his heart the memory of the Crucified One, so he impressed in his flesh many wounds that lasted all his life. [...] You may thus wear on your chest, hanging from your neck, a Cross with five-points, neither very raised nor very sharp, in reverence for the five wounds, and in the morning as you put it on, kiss it with reverence, while making some act of devotion [...]. And in the evening when you take it off, kiss it in the same manner, and keep it near your bed, to never be without this armor. Behold, Christian, a beautiful clock which, by beating your heart with those points, will remind you of the Redeemer's painful hours.[11]

The image of the clock obviously implies the constant presence of the *exemplum Christi*, its fungibility in every moment of our lives, but it also displays the temporal component that defines the exercise of meditation on the wounded body as an act of observation of spaces that develops temporally; the reference model can only be that of the human body as a collection of memorial spaces:

> It was St. Bernardine of Siena's advice that we take that great book written with the pen of the lance, and of nails, I mean the Crucifix, and by reading it carefully, seek to make the book of conscience conform to it; [...] at his feet I will examine my movements since I woke up; at his hands my thoughts, words and works; in his side my disordered passions, my excessive affections towards myself, and creatures; moreover, whether I have entered into his wounds, whether I have remembered them often.[12]

The faithful can thus contemplate Christ's wounds, using them as an instrument and space for meditation that can be activated at every moment of daily life (not by chance is the heptameric partition chosen to organize the *exercises*). One of the many ways of making practical use of the wounds of Christ, it, too, of complex metaphorical and symbolic

value (also in regard to memory) is, for example, the use of the body of the Passion as food and dinner table, as a source of nourishment. The memorial liturgies of the stigmata and the Eucharist here fully compenetrate:

> […] the practice, while eating, to enter the wounds of the Lord. When we eat, we will first dip each food, even each bite, in the Side of Christ, and we will drink from the cup, as from the same sweet source; in this way, we will not complain of badly prepared foods, and while the body eats and drinks, the soul will find *in vulneribus Christi nutrimentum, quo convalescat*, as St. Gregory says.[13]

The memorial expression of the stigmata as a protected dwelling of the soul of the believer, however, belongs to some extent to all the sacred Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century literature, and particularly to its spiritual lyric poetry (e.g., in Vittoria Colonna, Tommaso Stigliani, Angelo Grillo, etc.).

Another Jesuit work dedicated to the mystery of the stigmata are the *Meditations* composed by Bartolomeo Amico (1562–1649), a vast volume with no lack of passages reserved for reflection on the memorial value of the wounds of Christ deriving from the exceptional acts of violence that produced them; just as the violent act facilitates quick and lasting memorization, the extreme act of violence against Christ has established his everlasting memory among men.[14] The stigmata are, moreover, explicitly referred to as a 'memorial of the man' in a meditation collected in the third book and canonically articulated in points:

> First point. Consider what the Redeemer says in Isaiah: *In manibus meis descripsi te*. Since I wanted to have a constant reminder of you, O soul *bought* with so many pains of mine, *I wanted to write you on my hands, and wanted the pen to be the nail*. Admire the greatness of divine love towards us, since, as it seemed to him almost a small thing to have given us so many incentives to love him, […] he wanted to paint us on his hands, so that he could keep us continually before his eyes. […] So those most holy wounds are like a *canvas*, on which *we are drawn*, so that, he, *seeing his wounded hands, might think of me*.[15]

Here are displayed the main metaphorical variants of the stigmata as a trace of memory that is organized in signs, in writing: through martyrdom Jesus traced in his flesh a portrait of sinful humanity so that the memory

of this duty to save would be always present to him, and be an everlasting *memorandum* of mercy to God the Father. We also see in these passages a sort of mingling between the figures traditionally associated with the wounds and those related to the Shroud: in the wounds inflicted by men, Christ continually sees (i.e., remembers) humanity again (his own as God incarnate, and that of earthly humanity which he came to save), in the same way, that through the stains of the sacred canvas, men continually perceive (i.e., remember) divinity (that of Christ who descended among them, and that which they should strive for in their new life). With more elegant wit, the preacher Giacomo Lubrano unfolds the concept in the sermon entitled *Faith in the Resurrection. A Foretaste of Paradise* (*La Fede della Resurrezione. Assaggio del Paradiso*):

> Meanwhile, I adore from afar the Sacred Shroud *painted in blood* by the Crucified one. [...] In this charming *volume of canvas* are *printed the memories* of the Passion at the price of Divine scars. The lines of the *characters* are dark, to reveal that they have been printed in the workshop of a tomb. A beautiful gift from our Sun that, in setting, managed to enrich itself even with its *shadows*; and *coloring with blood* the benefits of redemption.[16]

The metaphor of memory as a graphic product, whether articulated in verbal discourse or not, represents for baroque preachers the preferred semantic field for elaborating an image of the stigmata in the form of a synthetic concept that stratifies within itself, according to value and purpose, several figurative variations of the idea of *sign*, several traces of the metaphorical-cognitive effect of a *legible body*.

Notes

1. Nietzsche (1998, 60): 'Here the conviction holds sway that it is only through the sacrifices and achievements of the ancestors that the clan *exists* at all, — and that one has to *repay* them through sacrifices and achievements: one thereby acknowledges a *debt* that is continually growing, since these ancestors, in their continued existence as powerful spirits, do not cease to use their strength to bestow on the clan new benefits and advances'.
2. See, in this regard, Gymnich and Hauthal (2007, 341–358).
3. Cf. a passage of *I miracoli del dolore* (*The Miracles of Pain*), a sacred discourse by Emanuele Tesauro: 'Hor questo fu il gran

Miracolo dell'ingegnoso Dolore, in un caso tanto estremo [...] che una Idea della Fortezza divenisse Idea del Cordoglio' ['This was the great miracle of the ingenious pain, in a case so extreme [...]: that an idea of power became an idea of sorrow'] (in Tesauro 1671, vol. III, 262–297, quotation on 270). On Tesauro's mnemonic metaphor of stigmata see Torre (2016).

4. See in this regard Bolzoni (2004, especially 217–226) and Carruthers (1998, especially 159–160 and 225–236).
5. See at least Kamper (2002, 409–418).
6. See Merback (1999, 113): 'Once a wound appears before our eyes, it is as if a fault line has opened up across the body's topography, one that threatens to tear open ever wider expanses of the body's hidden interior'.
7. Cf. Enders (1999, 75): 'In that sense, the Simonides legend founds an exemplary epistemological space according to which mnemotechnics makes things present by requiring that they first be absent and revives things by requiring that they first be dead'.
8. See, in this regard, Rodriguez de la Flor (1995, 255–275) and Richter Sherman (2000).
9. Auriemma (1680, 14): 'perché l'artefice, o l'architetto fu l'Eterno Padre, che per nostro bene fè lavorare quella gran pietra di Christo; né avrebbe avuto tanta forza d'incavarla, se l'amore non gli dava la tempra'.
10. Auriemma (1680, 43): 'Dalle mani passerai al Sacratissimo Costato, et ivi ecciterai ardenti desiderii di presto abbracciare, il tuo diletto impiagato; oh anima mia troppo felice e ben aventurata, se Giesù ti volesse far partecipe di segnalato favore, che concesse alla sua diletta sposa S. Geltruda: "Essendomi (dice ella) una festa comunicata, mentre mi stava con la mente assorta in Dio et in me stessa, sentii che l'anima mia liquefatta come la cera al fuoco dell'amor di Dio, fu segnata col suggello del Costato di Christo, e riempita insieme d'immensi tesor"; così Dio benedetto suole trattare l'anime che degnamente se gli accostano nel Sacramento, et entrano nelle sue sacre ferite'.
11. Auriemma (1680, 57–58): 'Ma lasciate da parte tante, e sì gravi penitenze fatte da' servi di Dio per honorare la sacratissima passione, ne dirò solamente di due, che sono la Croce, e la Disciplina, perché queste in particolare furono fatte da essi per riverenza delle dolorose ferite del lor Signore; [...] et il nostro Padre Simon

Rodriguez *Rho de Relig*. per lo medesimo effetto se ne scolpì una [*scilicet*, croce] nel petto pur di un palmo a forza di replicati colpi di un ferro, il quale come stampò nel suo cuore la memoria del Crocifisso, così impresse nella carne molte piaghe che gli durarono tutta la vita. […] Potrai dunque portare nel petto, pendente dal collo una Croce con cinque punte non molto alte, né molto acute, in riverenza delle cinque piaghe, e la mattina nel ponertela, baciarla riverentemente, facendo qualche atto divoto […]. E la sera quando te la levi, baciala parimenti, e la terrai vicin'al letto, per non mai star privo di tale armatura. Eccoti Christiano un bellissimo orologio che battendoti il cuore con quelle punte ti ricorderà l'hore dolorose del Redentore'.

12. Auriemma (1680, 68–69): 'Fu consiglio di San Bernardino da Siena che pigliamo quel gran libro scritto con penna della lancia, e de' chiodi, dico il Crocifisso, e leggendolo attentamente, procuriamo di conformarvi il libro della coscienza; […] esaminerò a' suoi piedi quali siano stati i miei andamenti da che mi sono svegliato; alle sue mani i miei pensieri, parole et opere; nel costato le mie passioni disordinate, i miei affetti soverchi verso me stesso, e le creature; inoltre se sono entrato nelle sue piaghe, se me ne sono ricordato spesso'.
13. Auriemma (1680, 73): '[…] la pratica nel mangiare d'entrare nelle piaghe del Signore. Quando mangeremo, prima intingeremo ogni cibo, anzi ogni boccone nel Costato di Christo, e beveremo nella tazza, come nel medesimo dolcissimo fonte, così non ci lamenteremo de' cibi malamente conci, e mentre il corpo si ristora, ritroverà l'anima *in vulneribus Christi nutrimentum, quo convalescat*, come parla San Gregorio'. On the cultural theme of the *corpus Christi* see Rubin (1991) and Beckwith (1993).
14. See Amico (1635, 375): 'Heaven cannot be possessed without great violence, *Regnum celorum vim patitur*, and this violence no one could do better than Christ, who as Master, and legitimate heir of the Kingdom because of his own authority, could command to all the angels *Aperite mihi portas Iustitiae, et ingressus in eas confitebor Domino* (*Ps.* 117). That hand that on Calvary deprived the sun of light and covered the earth in darkness, that today passes through the gates of Heaven, with the key of the Holy Cross. O most holy hand of my victorious Jesus how much I owe you, since by the iron's opening you through so much impiety of mine, you

open to me the doors of Heaven with so much love'. ['Il cielo non si può possedere senza gran violenza, *Regnum celorum vim patitur*, e questa violenza niuno poteva farla meglio di Christo, quale come Padrone, et herede legittimo del Regno per propria potestà, potè ordinare a gli angioli tutti *Aperite mihi portas Iustitiae, et ingressus in eas confitebor Domino* (*Ps.* 117). Quella mano che privò nel Calvario il sole di lume e sparse la terra nelle tenebre, quella hoggi supera le porte del Cielo, con la chiave della santa Croce. O santissima mano del mio vittorioso Giesù quanto ti devo, poiché aprendoti il ferro con tanta mia empietà, tu m'apri le porte del Cielo con tanto amore'.]

15. Amico (1635, 368–369): 'Primo punto. Considera quel che va dicendo il Redentore per Isaia: *In manibus meis descripsi te*. Volendo io aver continua memoria di te, o anima *comprata* con tante mie pene, *ti volsi scrivere nelle mie mani, e volsi che penna fosse il chiodo*. Ammira la grandezza dell'amor divino verso di noi, poiché parendogli quasi poco l'aver tanti incentivi dell'amor suo verso di noi, [...] s'ha voluto pinger noi nelle sue mani, acciò ci tenesse continuamente avanti gli occhi. [...] Sicché quelle piaghe santissime sono come una *tela*, nella quale *siamo delineati*, acciò egli *vedendo le sue mani impiagate venghi a raffigurarmi*' (the italics are mine).
16. Lubrano (1702, 622): 'Intanto adoro da lungi la Sagra Sindone *pennellata a sangue* dal Crocifisso. [...] Veggonsi nel *volume di tela* sì graziosa *stampate le memorie* della Passione a spesa delle cicatrici Divine. Sono oscure le linee de' *caratteri*, per palesarsi impresse nelle officine d'un tumulo. Bel regalo del nostro Sole che tramontando seppe arricchirsi fino coll'*ombre* sue; e *colorando a guazzo di sangue* i benefici della redenzione'.

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