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Cynthia N. Nazarian. *Love's Wounds: Violence and the Politics of Poetry in Early Modern Europe*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017. xvi + 299 pp. Illustrations. \$49.95 (hb). ISBN 1501705229.

Review by Jessie Hock, Vanderbilt University.

“Early modern love poems are often more than they seem” (p. 121), writes Cynthia Nazarian halfway through her excellent *Love's Wounds*. Nazarian's book (her first) shows how the rhetorics of violence in early modern Petrarchan sequences are coded to the historical and political circumstances of their times, engaging larger sociopolitical conversations and “launch[ing] high ethical and political critiques” (p. 3). Nazarian argues that the Petrarchan poet's enduring voice, strengthened through suffering, becomes in early modernity a privileged site of political resistance and agency. While the political potential of the suffering yet unstoppable lyric voice is largely latent in Petrarch's own poetry, later French and English poets develop and exploit what Nazarian calls the “countersovereign” voice as a political tool, wielding loquacity and delay against sovereign violence and power.

Chapter one, “Strategies of Abjection: *Parrhēsia* and the Cruel Beloved from Petrarch's *Canzoniere* to Scève's *Délie*,” sketches the development of countersovereignty in lyric between Petrarch and Maurice Scève. Nazarian argues that a political understanding of voice, grounded in the classical concept of *parrhēsia*, uncovers strategies of abjection in Petrarch's *Canzoniere* “for which religious readings that accept Petrarch's claims of repentance at face value cannot fully account” (p. 23). There is a “deep consanguinity” between the *Canzoniere*'s political poems and its love poems, which share these strategies of abjection (p. 19). This interplay of love and politics fosters lyric counteragency, but the Petrarchan lyric voice only becomes properly critical and political in the hands of later poets. Scève's sixteenth-century lyric sequence, the *Délie*, concentrates power and violence in the Beloved's hands, figuring her as a sovereign. Subjected to the sovereign will of his Beloved, the poet's blameless suffering contests the validity of the her actions and shakes the foundations of her authority. The poet's voice gains authority *because* it suffers, and suffers blamelessly. Nazarian is careful in this chapter to express her debts to feminist critics who have done foundational work on abjection and fragmentation in Petrarchan poetry, while also critiquing them for linking this abjection only with female figures (this point reappears in chapter four).

Love's Wounds is a book about the political affordances of early modern lyric, but this does not mean that it is a book only about lyric. One of the richest veins of Nazarian's argument is her emphasis on inter-generic collaborations. Chapter two, “Violence and the Politics of Imitation in

Du Bellay's *La Deffense et illustration de la langue françoise* and *L'Olive*," establishes a pattern that will be repeated in all of the chapters that follow: Nazarian links a sonnet sequence to another work by the same author, showing "intergenre collaboration" that illuminates the political nuances of both. In chapter two, she argues that Joachim Du Bellay's underappreciated first sonnet sequence, *L'Olive*, shares goals and methods with the *Deffense*, his celebrated manifesto on French language and literature: both are treatises on politicized imitation and composition. This chapter makes an important intervention into scholarship on Du Bellay by reading *L'Olive* not as an embarrassingly derivative misstep in Du Bellay's otherwise shining career as a sonneteer, but as a first step towards the exclusively political sonnet sequences that come later. While *L'Olive* has been frequently criticized as slavishly imitative and Du Bellay depicted as anxious about the degree of his poetic imitation, Nazarian shows that the sequence turns imitation into appropriation. Du Bellay's sonnets do not imitate their Italian models, they *plunder* them. It is in this sense that Nazarian is able to argue that "the sequence succeeds where the manifesto fails" (p. 100). While the *Deffense* is "vexed" by servility and indebtedness (of French literature to its classical and continental models), the *Olive* makes bold to ransack its sources and so "litigates" in verse the military rivalry between France and the Holy Roman Empire, which were in Du Bellay's time tussling over Italian land holdings.

Chapter three also emphasizes lyric's political flexibility and capacity: as a genre, lyric accommodates complex political ideas and affects that other genres (particularly epic, to which it is contrasted in both chapters three and four) cannot. Chapter three, "Martyrdom, Anatomy, and the Ethics of Metaphor in d'Aubigné's *L'Hétacombe à Diane* and *Les Tragiques*" argues that d'Aubigné's tragic-epic *Les Tragiques* and his sonnet sequence *L'Hétacombe à Diane* are deeply entwined and must be read together for either to be understood. D'Aubigné himself was dismissive of his sonnets and discouraged readers from comparing them with *Les Tragiques*, and Nazarian's point is a salutary warning against taking D'Aubigné and other early modern poets too much on faith when they describe their sonnet sequences as frivolous or immature endeavours. (Throughout the book she evinces a consistent interest in reading a poet's career without credulity for self-representations, in order to get a sense of cross-generic interplays and resonances and an appreciation for the political work of sonnets that we would otherwise miss.) Writing in the midst of the French Wars of Religion, the Protestant D'Aubigné, Nazarian argues, brings metaphorical violence as close to real violence as possible. Yet while *Les Tragiques* strives to "divide violence ethically along ideological lines," that is, to condemn Catholic violence while excusing Protestant violence, *L'Hétacombe* refuse ethical simplifications and work through the complexities of violence on both sides (p. 122).

This is the most interesting and sophisticated chapter of *Love's Wounds* because Nazarian here allows herself more space to theorize the broad stakes of the chapter's argument, exploring ethical questions about the representation of violence in literature. "What," she asks, "does it mean to put real war to work for fictionalized love?" (p. 119). Nazarian argues that linking real and metaphorical violence vexes allegory, offering a rethinking of allegories that do not "speak otherwise." *L'Hétacombe à Diane* delays the allegoresis of violent imagery, producing a lyric poetry "that anatomizes the ethics of metaphor itself, pushing Petrarchism to its furthest limit in order not only to question its methods and commonplaces, but also to push the genre toward a strikingly contentious ethics and aesthetics" (p. 127).

Thanks to the reign of Elizabeth I, which overlapped with England's sonnet craze, scholars of early modern English lyric have long been attuned to the political power of sonnetting.

Nazarian is clear throughout the first three chapters of *Love's Wounds* that her work on sixteenth century French lyric imports this methodology. In chapter four, "Petrarchan Tyranny and Lyric Resistance in Spenser's *Amoretti* and *The Faerie Queene*," Nazarian offers a new interpretation of one of the most overtly political poems to come out of Elizabethan England, Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, by placing it into close dialogue with the *Amoretti*, his sonnet sequence. As she crisply puts it: "the sonnets' Petrarchism is political, and the long poem's politics are Petrarchan" (p. 181). Reading across genres, Nazarian extracts a larger political argument from Spenser, for "a devolved, feudal model of monarchy reliant on knights or noble actors who carry out the work of government, one that is hindered when these same knights willingly lay down their arms, colluding with the centralized state" (p. 215). She sees Petrarchan love at play in *The Faerie Queene*, where it serves to disempower knights as a class. "Reaching across genres, *The Faerie Queene* translates the sonnet poet's private subjugation into a collective threat to 'great warriors'" (p. 191).

Inversely, she links specific sonnets to specific moments in the epic-romance and convincingly reads the *Amoretti* as offering lyric meditations on scenes in *The Faerie Queene*. As in D'Aubigné, where epic silenced the ethical complexity of poetic violence, Spenser's epic stifles the complexity and resistance contained in its amorous idylls. This is where the *Amoretti* supplements and even outdoes *The Faerie Queene*, by offering up a space for the contestation of and (moderate) resistance to the consolidation of sovereign power. "It is in the *Amoretti*—through the possibilities for contestation and collaboration within the Petrarchan sonnet—that *The Faerie Queene's* pleasure-drugged knight explores his self-imprisonment" (p. 211). Here we see once more a major concern of Nazarian's book, namely to establish lyric as a privileged and particularly potent site for the exploration of political resistance. Lyric, Nazarian writes of *The Amoretti*, has "mechanisms of contestation that the long poem lacks... *lyric* means by which the vulnerable subject can grapple with disempowerment and tyranny" (p. 186). The suffering voice of the Petrarchan poet, rendered "countersovereign" by its endurance of unjust violence, embodies one such mechanism. Nazarian's point is strong, but perhaps too strong. Surely lyric has other tools with which to do politics, but other options and exceptions are rarely explored. For a book about spaces of delay that resist teleology and simplification, *Love's Wounds* does not allow itself many spaces of theoretical or argumentative contradiction and delay. Nazarian is well aware of certain areas that deserve more consideration. For example, in the introduction she acknowledges the absence of women sonnetteers from her study. They "are absent," she writes, "only because I have not yet found in their Petrarchan sequences all of the necessary elements of countersovereignty... I leave them for other, future pages." (p. 5). This is dutiful, and too quick. Could these women poets do politics in their lyrics by other means?

Love's Wounds closes with a short consideration of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. "Conclusion: The Paradoxes of Pain: Shakespeare beyond Petrarchism" steps back to consider the paradoxes inherent to violent imagery in verse. On the one hand, we endow the speech of those subjected to violence with "an almost-sacral status, valuing it as unquestionable, as transparent and authentic" (p. 237). On the other hand, it is also agreed that pain unmakes language. We don't trust loquacious suffering because suffering ought to silence speech. Another consideration is ethical: why is violence rhetorically compelling? Why do we associate pain with frankness? *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* both explore these paradoxes. In the former poem, Venus's loquacity in suffering shows that "Shakespeare's lovers are liars, and his liars are lovers; the bard insists on that which sixteenth-century Petrarchism seeks to hide: that a martyr's very capacity for speech... suggests that the fires are not really hot enough" (p. 242). In *The Rape*

of *Lucrece*, on the other hand, agency lies in vulnerability. Lucrece's wound proves her authenticity in contrast to the corrupt sovereign Tarquin. Thus while *Venus and Adonis* "deconstructs the elements of Petrarchan countersovereignty to lampoon the genre's contradictions," *The Rape of Lucrece* uses countersovereignty to identify the same political potential in the suffering voice that Petrarchism finds (p. 249). For Nazarian, the contradictions in Shakespeare's use of Petrarchan countersovereignty mark the end of an era, as Shakespeare overwrites Petrarch as the model lover for centuries to come.

Nazarian's book would be noteworthy for its study of the politics of early modern (particularly French) lyric alone, but it also offers theoretical reflections on the ethics of poetic violence and broad interventions into our understanding of intergeneric collaboration and the poet's career in early modernity. This is an exciting and stimulating book that rewards its readers richly.

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