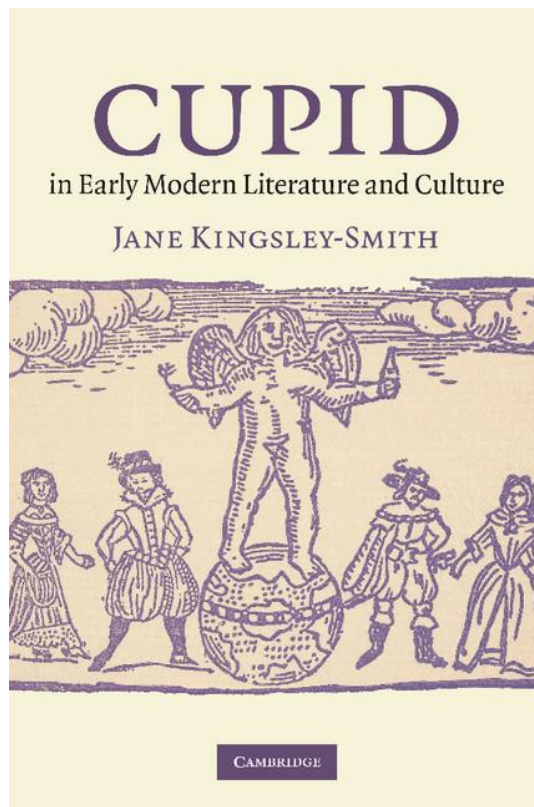


Cupid in Early Modern Literature and Culture

Jane Kingsley-Smith



10 November 2010

Contents

Synopsis	4
About the Author	4
Title Page	4
Copyright	4
Dedication	5
Illustrations	5
Acknowledgements	6
Introduction	7
The Image of Cupid: Classical, Medieval, Renaissance	12
Visualizing Cupid in Early Modern England	21
Redefining Love in Reformation England	26
Chapter I: Cupid, Art and Idolatry	33
The Cupid-idol: Medieval to Renaissance	36
<i>Tottel's Miscellany</i> and Cupid-worship	42
Sidney and Cupid-art	45
Condemning Iconoclasm: <i>The Arcadia</i> and <i>Cupid's Revenge</i>	55
Cornets. Descendit Cupid.	60
Cupid and Iconoclasm in <i>The Faerie Queene</i>	62
Cupid and the Art of Busirane	66
Chapter 2: Cupid, Death and Tragedy	72
Part One: Love and Death Come Closer Together	72
Here Love Dies: The <i>Putto</i> and the Skull	75
Cupid and Death! 'De Morte & Amore'	77
The Cupidean Plague-Angel	84
Part Two: Cupidean Tragedy	88
Cambyses, King of Persia	90
<i>Gismond of Sáleme</i> and <i>Tancred and Gismund</i>	91
Cupid's Revenge	99
Cornets. Descendit Cupid.	100

Chapter 3: Cupid, Chastity and Rebellious Women	108
Producing Female Desire: Cupid and Mary Stuart	111
Cupid, Chastity and Time	113
Succumbing to Cupid	118
Threatening Female Chastity: Cupid and Elizabeth I	121
Churchyard's <i>Shew of Chastity</i>	121
<i>Sappho and Phao</i>	126
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	128
<i>The Faerie Queene</i> : Belphoebe and Amoret	133
Displacing Male Desire: Cupid and Lady Mary Wroth	137
Pamphilia to Amphilanthus	141
Love's Victory	146
 Chapter 4: Cupid and the Boy — the Pleasure and Pain of Boy-love	 150
Cupid as Beautiful Boy	152
Desiring Cupid in Italian Renaissance Art: Pontormo, Bronzino, Caravaggio .	154
<i>Dido, Queen of Carthage</i> and Cupid as Boy Actor	160
Cupid and Effeminacy: Middleton's <i>The Nice Valour</i>	165
Cupid, Sodomy and Castration: <i>Soliman and Perseda</i> and <i>Cupid's Whirligig</i> .	168
The Pleasures of Infantilism: Sidney vs. Greville	172
Cupid and Maternal Nurturance on the Early Modern Stage	176
 Chapter 5: 'cupid and Psyche': The Return of the Sacred?	 182
<i>Cupid and Psyche</i> : Apuleius, Fulgentius and Boccaccio	182
Reading Adlington's Cupid	185
Heywood's <i>Love's Mistress</i>	190
Cupid in the Caroline Masque: <i>Love's Triumph Through Gallipolis and the</i> <i>Temple Oe Love</i>	195
Conclusion: <i>Cupid in the English Civil Wars</i>	202
 Bibliography	 205
Primary Material	205
Secondary Material	212
 Index	 235

Cupid became a popular figure in the literary and visual culture of post-Reformation England. He served to articulate and debate the new Protestant theory of desire, inspiring a dark version of love tragedy in which Cupid kills. But he was also implicated in other controversies, as the object of idolatrous, Catholic worship and as an adversary to female rule: Elizabeth I's encounters with Cupid were a crucial feature of her image-construction and changed subtly throughout her reign. Covering a wide variety of material such as paintings, emblems and jewellery, but focusing mainly on poetry and drama, including works by Sidney, Shakespeare, Marlowe and Spenser, Kingsley-Smith illuminates the Protestant struggle to categorise and control desire and the ways in which Cupid disrupted this process. An original perspective on early modern desire, the book will appeal to anyone interested in the literature, drama, gender politics and art history of the English Renaissance.

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For Roxana

Illustrations

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Introduction

In John Donne's lyric poem 'Loves Deitie' the speaker expresses nostalgia for a time before Cupid:

I long to talke with some old lovers ghost,
Who dyed before the god of Love was borne;
I cannot thinke that hee, who then loved most,
Sunke so low, as to love one which did scorne.¹

Unrequited passion is attributed to an essentially sadistic deity. Yet it is the cultural reinvention of Cupid specific to early modern England that is ultimately to blame. Love's natural 'Correspondencie' (line 12) has been replaced by passion for one who scorns through the influence of Petrarchism, whilst his 'Tyrannie' has been enhanced by an expansion in divine power, perhaps attributable to Calvinism (line 19). The present book argues that Cupid did indeed extend his range of identities (and thence his facility for performing 'cultural work') in early modern England — 'To rage, to lust, to write to, to commend, / All is the purlewe of the God of Love' (lines 17–18) — but that what unites his disparate roles and makes Cupid a controversial, often seductive, figure for poets, dramatists and polemicists alike is his adversarial relationship to English Protestantism. Through this minor love-deity, matters of grave importance to the establishment of the 'true' faith were articulated and debated.

Cupid's sudden cultural ubiquity in England coincided with the aftermath of the Reformation. In *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (1582), Stephen Gosson describes how the Devil, 'feeling such a terrible push, given to his breast by the chaunge of religion' has 'sente over many wanton Italian bookes, which being translated into english, have poysoned the olde maners of our Country with forcine delights... bre[eding] a desire of fancies & toyes'.² As a protagonist in Petrarch's *Rime Sparse* and *Trionfi*, Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Italian Senecan tragedy, Cupid might well be accounted one of these 'fancies & toyes' (he was often condemned as 'toyful') and his hostility towards the principles underlying the Reformation can be perceived in two main areas. First,

¹ John Donne: *The Complete English Poems*, ed. C. A. Patrides (London: Everyman, 1991), p. 102, lines 1–4.

² Stephen Gosson, *Markets of Bawdrie: The Dramatic Criticism of Stephen Gosson*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Universität Salzburg, 1974), pp. 138–200, 153. See also Roger Ascham's argument that the translation of Italian erotic fiction has been encouraged by English Catholics in order to convert the young by 'allur [ing them] to wantonnes', *English Works*, ed. William Aldis Wright (Cambridge University Press, 1904), p. 230.

while he was hardly unknown in the medieval period, Cupid became *visually* familiar to an unprecedented extent in sixteenth-century England, his image disseminated via the tapestries and painted cloths, paintings, prints and emblems that circulated throughout Renaissance Europe. Whilst, as Leonard Barkan has shown, the ‘power of the image’ was fundamental to the transmission and interpretation of paganism in the Renaissance,³ unlike the other classical deities Cupid’s visual appeal was also the means of his power. Not only did his arrows pierce through the eye, he wielded his own beauty as a weapon at a time when English visual culture represented nakedness only in contexts of devotional vulnerability or shame. Moreover, the popular medieval theme of the Court of Love (in which the lover prays before an image of Cupid) now represented the kind of idolatry against which Protestantism defined itself and which it was literally in the process of pulling down. Thus, Cupid threatened to reverse the major achievement of the Reformation: the transition from ‘a culture of orality and image’ to one based on print; from an intensely visual religion to one devoted to the primacy of ‘the invisible, abstract and didactic word’.⁴

At a more basic level, the kinds of desire that Cupid embodied were fundamentally opposed to the ‘erotic politics’ of English Protestantism. The value that the latter placed on marriage may have redeemed sex as a form of pleasure and mutual amity, but it also placed a far greater emphasis on chastity, without which ‘Mariage is but a continual! fornication, sealed with an oath’.⁵ Not only was the wife to remain pure for her husband, she was also ‘the only delectable object he must desire and behold’ — thus marriage partners should be chosen with the utmost care.⁶ By contrast, Cupid represents love’s blindness, in the sense of its disregard for social hierarchy, and its transience, given that he can remove affection as easily as he imposes it. Though he plays a role in epithalamic poetry and masques, Cupid shows no necessary affinity with marriage and may just as easily inspire the kind of lust that leads to rebellion, murder and suicide.⁷ Moreover, the multiplicity that defines Cupidean desire — which may be heteroerotic, but is also homoerotic, pederastie, maternal and incestuous — defies the process (identified as just beginning in this period) by which ‘true love was

³ Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 184.

⁴ Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Macmillan, 1988, repr. 1991), p. 99.

⁵ John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953–62), vol. 11, p.34<5-

⁶ J. Wing, *The Crown Conjugad, or Spouse Royal: A True Discovery of the True Honor and Happiness of Christian Matrimony* (London, 1620), p. 99.

⁷ Robert Burton identifies heroic love as ‘immoderate, inordinate, and not to bee comprehended in any bounds. It will not containe it seife within the union of marriage, or apply to one object, but is a boundlesse, an irrefragable, a destructive passion’. See *Tire Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), ed. Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K. Kiessling and Rhonda L. Blair, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, (1989–94), vol. in, p. 54.

... to domesticate desire and outlaw seduction ... to line up sexual preferences as either acceptable or perverse'.⁸

The paradox that defines Cupid's position in early modern culture is that he was deployed to 'police' desire, as Foucault uses that term, suggesting 'not the rigor of a taboo, but the necessity of regulating sex through useful and public discourses'.⁹ For example, the figure of a castrating Cupid functioned to condemn sodomitical, male-male relationships but also to warn against the emasculating effects of excessive heterosexual love. As a mythological deity uniquely interested in imposing such passion he is also caught up in what Rebecca Bach calls 'the heterosexual imaginary'. Though some of its defining features were already in place, for example, the emphasis on marriage as the ideal situation for mutually satisfying sex, 'many of that imaginary's apparatuses had yet to be developed' and Cupid could play an important part in this work.¹⁰ More generally, although he operates prior to Foucault's teleology (which begins in the later seventeenth century) we can see in Cupid the beginnings of the 'translation of sex into discourse'.¹¹

Nevertheless, the failure to assert 'true love' and to 'domesticate desire' in the early modern period was also contingent upon Cupid (whose name in Latin meant 'desire'). In John Florio's 1598 Italian-English dictionary, '*Cupido*' is defined as 'the god of love or lust'. Thirteen years later, in the expanded edition, he is 'the god of lust or love'.¹² The moral uncertainty surrounding erotic desire appears more explicitly in *Cupido*'s linguistic derivatives. The term 'concupiscence', for example, was used from 1340 onwards to mean covetousness, 'libidinous desire, sexual appetite, lust'.¹³ 'Cupidity' seems to have been an early modern coinage, again signifying 'ardent desire, inordinate longing or lust'.¹⁴ But if Florio was more inclined to see Cupid as 'lust' in 1611, he needed to

⁸ Catherine Belsey, 'Cleopatra's Seduction', in *Alternative Shakespeares 2*, ed. Terence Hawkes (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 38–62, at p. 62. I am indebted to Belsey's discussion of Renaissance Cupid as indicative of the fact that 'at the very moment when desire was being brought under the control of the Law ... it was still possible to recognize as seductive images that were more heterogeneous than the resulting taxonomies have been willing to allow'.

⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Allen Lane, 1978), p. 25.

¹⁰ Bach, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Literature before Heterosexuality* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 1–24, quotation at p. 17.

¹¹ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 3, 5, 17.

¹² Compare John Florio's *A Worlde of Wordes* (London, 1598), p. 94, with his *Queen Annas New World of Words* (London, 1611), p. 134. 'Cupidine' and 'Cupidità' are also listed as nouns meaning respectively 'desire, lust, longing', 'covetousnes, greediness, avarice', p. 94.

¹³ All these terms recall St Augustine's '*cupiditas*': the means by which we 'conform ... to this world in placing our final end in [worldly] goods and in directing our desire for happiness towards them'. See *Tire Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), Book 13, p. 21, and *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1958), Book 3, p. 10.

¹⁴ The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites Andrew Boorde's *Tire Breviary of Healthe* (1547) as the first usage.

keep 'love' in play, and in this respect Cupid's mythological ambiguity (his capacity for imposing both romantic and carnal passion) reflects a larger linguistic problem. As Catherine Belsey has demonstrated, 'love' and 'lust' remained mostly interchangeable until well into the seventeenth century.¹⁵ In *L'Académie française* (*The French Academy*, 1577), Pierre de La Primaudaye suggests that desire for the good (what he calls 'Love') may also be called '*Cupiditie, Lusting, or Coveting*' but 'because this affection is so out of square in this our corrupt nature, these names are commonly taken more in the evill then in the good part'.¹⁶

If Cupid's name reinforced the difficulty of distinguishing between love and lust so too did his physical attributes and the multiple forms in which he appeared. By the latter, I do not mean the *erotes*, *amorini* and *putti* that feature in classical mythology, and thence in both Italian Renaissance painting and English poetry, but the multiple incarnations of a desireproducing deity. Since Plato's division of Cupid into two, Cicero had expanded that number to three, Ficino four and Boccaccio at least six.¹⁷ Visual attributes were used to distinguish between them. For example, the Neoplatonic Eros was generally considered to be sighted: in a painting by Lucas Cranach he removes the blindfold associated with his profane incarnation whilst standing on the complete works of Plato.¹⁸ The Cosmogonic Cupid was often imagined astride a globe and holding a fish and a flower rather than threatening Creation with his darts. Nevertheless, an elaborate mythographic tradition, extending from the fifth to the late sixteenth centuries, had reinterpreted Cupid's most iconic features to the point of meaninglessness, with the effect that one version might easily blur into the other. For example, blindness usually suggested sin and shame but it might also signify 'the awesomeness of divine decrees which utterly confound humanity, leaving it infant-like and in the dark . . .',¹⁹ Cupid's wreath of roses suggests either his Lucretian domination over nature or his lechery, since the rose 'blushes at the outrage to modesty and pricks with the sting of sin'.²⁰ Wings signify his divinity as a pagan god or his identification with the Christian angel, but they are also symptomatic of flightiness, moral errancy and infidelity.²¹

¹⁵ Catherine Belsey, 'Love as *Trompe-l'œil*: Taxonomies of Desire in *Venus and Adonis*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46.3 (Fall 1995), 257–76.

¹⁶ Pierre de la Primaudaye, *Tire French Academie*, trans. T. Bowes (London, 1596), Pp.479–80.

¹⁷ See Theresa Tinkle, *Medieval Venuses and Cupids: Sexuality, Hermeneutics, and English Poetry* (Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 50 and 228, n. 26.

¹⁸ *Cupid Unblindfolding Himself* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, c. 1525–30) as discussed by Erwin Panofsky in *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 128, fig. 106.

¹⁹ Natale Conti, *Natale Conti's Mythologies: A Select Translation*, trans. Anthony DiMatteo (New York and London: Garland, 1994), p. 248.

²⁰ Fulgentius, *Fulgentius the Mythographer*, trans. Leslie George Whitbread (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971), p. 67.

²¹ Isidore, *Tire Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 188.

In Cupid's confrontation with an opposite, this hermeneutic difficulty was supposedly resolved. But when Cupid shared a stage with Diana, goddess of chastity, the fact that they were both armed with arrows and required to preside over weddings and the marriage-bed could create an awkward similarity between the two. Hence, the Triumph of Chastity might inadvertently run up against the epithalamium, as it does in Robert White's masque *Cupid's Banishment* (1617). Similarly, when Eros confronts his brother Anteros, he sees not only his opposite but also his mirror image, for Anteros signified either virtuous or reciprocal love — both identities that Cupid had been known to embody. In Andrea Alciato's emblem '*Anteros, id est amor virtutis*' (1531), the speaker addresses the boy in the *pittura*-. 'Tell me, where are your arching bows, where your arrows, Cupid ... where your wings?' only to be told that this is Anteros not Cupid. Whilst the emblem demonstrates the importance of Cupid's attributes, it does so by implying that without them one naked boy looks very like another.²²

One of the main contentions of this book is that although Cupid attained a new distinctiveness in early modern England he was also elusive in a way that frustrated many of the polemical functions that he was required to perform. Focusing on the years 1557, when *Tottel's Miscellany* was first published, to 1635, when William Davenant staged *The Temple of Love*, the book argues that not only does this period represent a highpoint in the cultural visibility of Cupid in England, it was also defined by a series of political renegotiations with the ideals of English Protestantism: in the 1560s–80s, Elizabeth came under pressure to implement more extensive Protestant reforms; in the 1620s–30s, Catholic influence at the Stuart courts was met by an increasingly hostile 'Puritan' response. It is no coincidence that Cupid should have achieved his greatest cultural status at a time when he was required as an adversary, embodying the 'Catholic' sins of lust and idolatry in order to exorcize the dangers perceived to threaten the establishment of the Reformed faith. Nevertheless, Cupid's innate ambivalence also encouraged his appropriation by those who wished to express their opposition to Protestantism's more extreme doctrines. Poets suspicious of iconoclasm, hostile to Calvinist predestination or at war with the idea of sexual repression used the newly sadistic and tyrannical Cupid to manifest the tragic consequences of 'Puritanism', or they exposed him as a travesty illustrative of Protestant 'misreading' (there is something of this in 'Loves Deitie').²³ More generally, Cupid's confounding of the distinction between desires undermined the Protestant attempt to separate licit from illicit love and even extended to the limits that defined early modern patriarchy. In the case of both male and female gender identities, Cupid reinforced the norm and punished transgressions but he was also manipulated by women to assert their capacity for self-government and literary authorship, and by men to play out scenarios of subjection and disempowerment. Thus, even as Cupid was required as an agent of

²² Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata: Lyons, 1550*, trans. Betty I. Knott (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), p. 119.

²³ For further discussion, see Theresa M. DiPasquale, *Literature and Sacrament: Tire Sacred and the Secular in John Donne* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2001), pp. 154–72.

repression he embodied forbidden fantasies, and it is this that makes him such an irresistible figure in early modern literature and art.

The Image of Cupid: Classical, Medieval, Renaissance

In order to discuss Cupid's reinvention in early modern England, we need to familiarize ourselves with the genealogical, iconographic and hermeneutic traditions accrued in the previous centuries, beginning with Ancient Greece. Traces of Eros-worship have been discovered on the north slope of the Acropolis in Athens and at Thespieae in Boeotia.²⁴ Pausanias' *Description of Greece* (c. 143 ad) also records the existence of shrines at Parion and Leuctra.²⁵ Nevertheless, Eros-worship remained a relatively small, local cult, a fact that is sometimes testified to in classical literature. For example, in Plato's *Symposium* (c. 385 bc), Aristophanes observes: 'It seems to me that people have completely failed to appreciate how powerful Love is; otherwise, they'd have built vast temples and altars in his honour, and would have instituted enormous sacrifices'.²⁶ It was arguably Ancient literature rather than religion that was initially responsible for Love's fame.

Hesiod's *Theogony* (eighth century bc) was the first extant text to define Eros as a deity. Born out of Chaos, alongside Earth and Tartarus, he was a cosmogonic force,²⁷ worshipped at Thespieae in the form of a simple, phallic column. Indeed, it has been argued that his relatively lowly status as the object of a fertility cult might explain Aristophanes' perception that Eros was hardly worshipped at all.²⁸ Yet Hesiod also proffered a more Olympian conception of Eros, observing that he was not only the oldest but also 'the most handsome among the immortal gods', one who overcomes the reason and purpose in the breast of all gods and all men' (6). Subsequently, the temple at Thespieae would become home to statues of Eros as a beautiful, winged boy, including a marble by Praxiteles thought to surpass that of Aphrodite,²⁹ whilst in

²⁴ See O. Broneer, 'Eros and Aphrodite on the North Slope of the Acropolis in Athens', *Hesperia* 1 (1932), 31–55, and Floyd A. Spencer, 'The Literary Lineage of Cupid in Greek Literature', *Tire Classical Weekly* 25.16–18 (1932), 121–7, 129–34, 139–44. On the debate over the dating and spread of Eros-worship, see Barbara Breitenberger, *Aphrodite and Eros: Tire Development of Erotic Mythology in Early Greek Poetry and Cult* (London: Routledge, 2007), PP-137–44, at p. 138.

²⁵ Pausanias, *Pausanias*, trans. W. H. S. Jones, 6 vols. (London: William Heinemann, 1918), vol. iv, Book 9, ch. 27, pp. 285–9; vol. 11, Book 3, ch. 26, p. 165.

²⁶ Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford University Press, 1994, repr. 2008), i89c–d.

²⁷ Hesiod, *Theogony and Works and Days*, trans. M. L. West (Oxford University Press, 1988, repr. 1999), p. 6.

²⁸ Euripides, *Euripides' Hippolytos*, trans. W. S. Barrett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964, repr. 1992), p. 261.

²⁹ See *Pausanias*, vol. iv, pp. 285–9.

literary terms the *Iheogony* would inspire the images of Eros fashioned by Euripides, Plato and Anacreon.

Fifth-century Greek tragedy takes Eros as one of its principal agents of destruction. In Sophocles' *Antigone* (442 bc), the Chorus blames the heroine's approaching death on that deity, for 'The grip of his madness / Spares not god or man, / Marring the righteous man, / Driving his soul into mazes of sin / And strife, dividing a house'.³⁰ In Euripides' *Medea* (431 bc), the protagonist's murder of her children is partly attributed to Desire.³¹ However, it was *Hippolytos* (428 bc) that would prove most influential to early modern drama, providing the template for a specifically Cupidean tragedy. Not only is this the first literary text to provide the deity of love with arrows, Aphrodite is 'as cruel and vindictive as she is ever shown by anyone in antiquity',³² inspiring love not simply as an affliction but as a death sentence. Moreover, although Aphrodite is the only love deity to appear on the stage, the Chorus anticipates a larger role for Eros, attributing to him a particular motive for revenge in the widespread neglect of his worship:

man's premier tyrant,
 Eros the god, is never worshipped
 By any such honorable slaughter [as enjoyed by Apollo],
 Though he demands honour, since his keys
 Open to ultimate delight
 The dark, sensual chamber of Aphrodite –
 Tittle wonder he is violent among us,
 Imagining bitter adventures
 For those of our hearts he commandeers. (Lines 835–43)

This tragic conception of Eros would serve as a dramatic foil to the work of Plato, 'antiquity's most indefatigable theorist of desire',³³ whose *Symposium* addresses not only Eros' lack of religious worship but also the absence of poetic encomia in its seven speeches on Love. Traces of Hesiod are found in Phaedrus' assertion that Eros is a 'primordial god', and Eryximachus' acknowledgement of Love's cosmic influence (186a). Hesiod's theory that he was present at Aphrodite's birth and became her attendant (9) is also expanded upon in Phaedrus' distinction between a Celestial and a Common Eros, as defined by a Celestial and Common Aphrodite. But perhaps the *Symposium's* major contribution to the iconography of Eros is its denial that he is beautiful or even divine.

³⁰ Sophocles, *Tire Tireban Plays*, trans. E. F. Watling (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1947), lines 790–94.

³¹ Euripides, *Euripides: Alcestis, Medea, Hippolytus*, trans. Diane Arnson Svarlien (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2007), lines 651–2.

³² Euripides, *Hippolytos*, trans. Robert Bagg (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p.4–

³³ Barbara E. Goff, *Tire Noose of Words: Readings of Desire, Violence and Language in Euripides' Hippolytos* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 29.

Socrates' definition of love as the 'desire for something which is inaccessible and absent' (200e) offers a radical challenge to Agathon's idealization of Eros. For a start, it requires a new genealogy, with Diotima explaining that Eros is the offspring of Penia (Poverty) and Poros (Plenty/ Contrivance), conceived at a feast to celebrate Aphrodite's birthday. His maternal inheritance means that Eros is neither beautiful nor good but 'a vagrant, with tough dry skin, and no shoes on his feet. He never has a bed to sleep on', but he overcomes these disadvantages through his father's ability to contrive 'captivating stratagems', as well as his 'desire for knowledge' and 'pursuit of education' (iojb-d). Perhaps most importantly, Eros can no longer be a god, since they are, by definition, already wise, beautiful and happy. Rather, he occupies the in-between state of the *daemon*, who mediates between men and gods, and of the philosopher who is wise enough to perceive his ignorance. Thus, Eros' chief function is to guide man towards the perception of beauty that is also true wisdom.³⁴ The lover will move from loving the specific physical beauty of an individual, to admiring physical beauty *per se*, to focusing on mental beauty and 'what makes people's activities and institutions attractive', until he arrives at an appreciation of 'absolute beauty, divine and constant' (2096–2120).

It would be difficult to overestimate the influence of this theory on the literary and artistic tradition of Cupid. Nevertheless, from the Hellenistic period onwards (323–146 bc),³⁵ a more light-hearted, erotic and playful notion of Eros also became popular, not unrelated to the symposiastic setting of Plato's seminal work and its valorization of boyish beauty. Alexandrian poets tended to reject the epic mythology of their predecessors in favour of familiar, everyday subjects, and they were particularly preoccupied with erotic love.³⁶ Hence, in the poetry of Anacreon, Eros functions as a flattering mirror for the youths to whom the lyrics are addressed. Yet he is also given a childish character of his own whose qualities of mischief and amorality inspire new narratives. For example, Theocritus' nineteenth *Ode* tells the story of an infantile Love being stung by a bee and complaining to Aphrodite, only to be told that his own 'stings' cause far more suffering. In Moschus' first *Idyll*, Love appears as a runaway, with his mother delivering a lengthy description of her son and offering a lascivious reward for news of him. Meanwhile, Meleager warns Eros not to abuse Psyche lest she use her new wings to fly away.³⁷

Roman literature inherited all of these Greek forms of Eros, now renamed 'Amor' or 'Cupid', and in the work of Virgil and Seneca he retains much of his ancient threat. For example, in Virgil's eighth Eclogue, he is blamed for Medea's crimes: 'He taught a

³⁴ See Charlotte Osborne's discussion of Eros' role as guide and philosopher in *Eros Unveiled: Plato and the God of Love* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp.92-4-

³⁵ See Breitenberger, *Aphrodite and Eros*, pp. 181,187–8.

³⁶ See C. A. Trypanis, 'The Character of Alexandrian Poetry', *Greece & Rome* 16.46 (January 1947), 1–7.

³⁷ *Tire Greek Anthology*, trans. W. R. Paton, 5 vols. (London: William Heinemann, 1918), vol. 1, p. 157, no. 57.

mother, once, to stain her hands with her own children's blood. A cruel mother — yes; but was she worse than that remorseless Boy?'³⁸ Seneca's Latin versions of Euripidean tragedy, in particular *Phaedra*, specifically expand Cupid's power to the exclusion of Venus. Finally, in Virgil's tenth Eclogue, Gallus coins a phrase that would inspire numerous Renaissance emblems, paintings and poems: "*Omnia vincit amor* ('Love conquers all').³⁹ Nevertheless, Cupid was not an important Roman deity (certainly not in comparison with his Greek antecedent) and it is the Ovidian Amor that would represent the most sustained Roman influence on medieval and Renaissance Cupid.

In the *Metamorphoses*, we find new narratives describing Cupid's persecution of Apollo and Venus, as well as an account of the two kinds of arrows by which he imposes and withdraws desire (Book i, lines 466–74). But equally influential was the attitude adopted by the narrator of Ovid's erotic treatises who urges the reader to take Love less seriously. In the *Remedia Amoris* (*The Remedies for Love*), Cupid interprets the title as an act of aggression but is reassured that the poet intends only to preserve lovers driven to thoughts of suicide. At odds with the arguments of Virgil and Seneca, he insists that '[Cupid's] darts are free from deadly blood'.⁴⁰ The perception of Cupid as antithetical to Mars opens the *Amores*, in which the poet is not only subjected to Love but deflected thereby from his ambition to write epic poetry. He responds by translating the military triumph into an amorous context:

[Cupid,] Bind thy locks with the myrtle, yoke thy mother's doves; thy step-sire himself shall give thee fitting car, and in the car he gives shalt thou stand, while the people cry thy triumph ... In thy train shall be captive youths and captive maids; such a pomp will be for thee a stately triumph. Myself, a recent spoil, shall be there with wound all freshly dealt, and bear my new bonds with unresisting heart.⁴¹

This image would gain severity in Petrarch's *Trionfo dell'Amore* but here it remains pleasingly absurd, not least because elsewhere Ovid draws upon the Anacreontic tradition of a childish Cupid. *Mie Ars Amatoria* (*The Art of Love*) begins with the narrator's assertion that he is now so proficient at seduction that Venus has chosen him as Cupid's schoolmaster: 'Wild indeed is he, and apt often to fight against me; but he is a boy, tender his age and easily controlled'.⁴²

In the medieval period, Cupid's status fell still further. Theresa Tinkle identifies a greater range — 'both male and female, blind and sighted, child and adult, playful and sinister, angelic and demonic' (i) — but finds this symptomatic of Cupid's marginality.

³⁸ Virgil, *Tire Pastoral Poems*, trans. E. V. Rieu (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949), p.67-

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁴⁰ Ovid, *Tire Art of Love and Other Poems*, trans. J. H. Mozley (London: William Heinemann, 1929), p. 179.

⁴¹ Ovid, *Heroides and Amores*, trans. Grant Showerman (London: William Heinemann, 1914), p. 323.

⁴² Ovid, *Tire Art of Love and Other Poems*, p. 13.

In particular, his lack of any significant historical forebear, planetary associations or interesting etymology alienated medieval mythographers, causing Cupid to remain a ‘curiously fugitive [figure] ... sporadically emerging and then flitting away as swiftly as if he were fleeing the scene of some soon-to-be-discovered mischief’ (59). But perhaps the most obvious innovation represented by the medieval Cupid is how distanced he has become from his classical past. This is partly a result of the moralizing impulse, for example, blindness was not a feature of the Greek or Roman deity but became a crucial iconographical attribute of Cupid in the thirteenth century as a symbol of love’s sinfulness.⁴³ Similarly, although there was a tendency to interpret all of the pagan deities as descended from demons, Cupid’s function as the inciter of lust made him particularly synonymous with the Devil.⁴⁴ However, Cupid’s de-classicisation was also an effect of his assimilation into medieval culture, as a symbol of Christian love and as the deity of *amour courtois*.

The ease with which twelfth-century mystics interpellated Cupidean imagery into their religious lyrics may seem surprising until we recall the biblical texts that potentially blurred the distinction between pagan and Christian Amor: the gospel of St John twice asserts that ‘God is Love’ (1 John 4:8, 16) and the Bride in the *Song of Songs* declares herself to be ‘wounded with love’.⁴⁵ Under this influence, medieval lyricists invoked the power of Cupid: ‘Lat now love his bow bende / And love arowes to my hert send’,⁴⁶ and imagined Christ as similarly subject:

Li mylde boones love ha[> to-drawe,
 fie naylis [m feet han al to-gnawe;
 he lord of love love ha[> now slawe –
 Whane love is strong it ha[> no lawe.⁴⁷

Not only the pagan iconography but the classical narratives that defined Cupid were also revisited. For example, *De laude charitatis* by the twelfth-century French theologian, Hugo of St Victor, rewrites the triumph from the *Amores* with *caritas* in the Cupid role: ‘you have drawn Him [Christ] to you bound in your chains; you have drawn Him to you wounded by

⁴³ See Erwin Panofsky, ‘Blind Cupid’, in *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 95–127.

⁴⁴ See Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, trans. Barbara F. Sessions (Princeton University Press, 1940, repr. 1972), pp. 44–5, and Judith H. Arias, ‘Donjuán, Cupid, the Devil’, *Hispania* 75 (1992), 1108–15.

⁴⁵ For further discussion see Osborne, *Eros Unveiled*, pp. 72–3.

⁴⁶ See ‘Jhesu Pat hast me dere i-boghf, as quoted by Rosemary Woolf in *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), P.165.

⁴⁷ ‘Crist makij) to man a fair present’, reprinted in *ibid.*, pp. 167–8. See also Robert Taylor, ‘Figures of Amor in the Old Provençal Narrative Allegories’, in *Court and Poet: Selected Proceedings of the Third Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society* (Liverpool, 1980), ed. Glyn S. Burgess (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1981), pp. 309–18, at pp. 310–11.

your arrows. A man ought to be ashamed to resist you when he sees that you have triumphed even over God.’⁴⁸

In secular love poetry, the troubadours and poets of the *dolce stil nuovo* exploited this parallelism to elevate their passion into a kind of religion. Either Love was rendered in the most vague and disembodied terms, demonstrating a principle so spiritual and sublime that it transcends by definition the realm of sensual experience’, or he was imagined as angelic.⁴⁹ In the *Roman de la Rose* (1230,1277), Guillaume de Lorris observes of Amor: ‘He seemed to be an angel come straight from heaven’,⁵⁰ whilst in Dante’s *La Vita Nuova* (1292–4), Love echoes the first commandment, ‘Ego dominus tuus’, and later appears clothed entirely in white, recalling the angel of the sepulchre in Mark 16:5.⁵¹ But it was Love’s translation into the feudal lord that had the most sustained and deleterious effect upon his classicism. In the *Roman de la Rose*, he retains his Ovidian status as a beautiful and commanding youth and some of his mythological attributes, including the wreath of roses, torch and the bow and arrows, but he is now dressed in medieval finery, exerting a lordly authority in claiming the lover as his vassal, issuing commands and bestowing a kiss of fealty (lines 2023–42). He is also spatially conceived of in new ways: seated on a throne in his own castle or in a garden, and attended by a train of personifications such as Sweet Looks, Beauty, Wealth and Generosity (lines 905–1278).

It seems to have been Chaucer who began the process of restoring the classical Cupid to English poetry. The temple of Venus scenes in both *The House of Fame* and *The Knight’s Tale* reveal a departure from courtly love conventions:

<verse>

in portreyture
I sawgh anoon-ryght hir figure
Naked fletyng in a see,
And also on hir hed, pardee,
Hir rose garlond whit and red,
And hir comb to kembe hyr hed,

⁴⁸ As quoted by Thomas Hyde in *The Poetic Theology of Love: Cupid in Renaissance Literature* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986), p. 31.

⁴⁹ Tinkle, *Medieval Venuses and Cupids*, p. too. See also C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936, repr. 1953), pp. 18–21.

⁵⁰ Guillaume de Lords, *Use Romance of the Rose*, trans. Frances Horgan (Oxford University Press, 1994, repr. 2008), p. 51.

⁵¹ Dante Alighieri, *Dante’s Vita Nuova*, trans. Mark Musa (Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 6, 19. See also the illustrations in Guillaume de Lorris, *Use Romance of the Rose*, trans. Charles Dahlberg (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), figs. 14–16.

Hir dowves, and daun Cupido
Hir blynde sone, and Vulcano,
That in his face was ful broun.
(*The House of Fame*, Book 1, lines 131–9)

Cupid may still be blind, but the fact that he is naked and understood in relation to Venus and Vulcan associates him with the Roman tradition, thereby liberating him from a contemporary, medieval setting to embrace ‘the ambiguities and universality of desire’.⁵² Furthermore, although the Cupid of *Troilus and Criseyde* remains a composite figure of feudal lord, ecclesiastical guide and mythological deity,⁵³ the suffering and desire for self-destruction that erotic passion inspires in Troilus recall the tragedies of Euripides and Seneca and hint at a graver conception of Eros. From the start, Chaucer has invoked the classical Fury, Tisiphone, as muse to his love story (lines 6–7) and in this respect his poem anticipates and may have inspired sixteenth-century tragedies such as *Gismond of Sáleme*, in which the Fury, Megaera, works alongside Cupid to achieve his revenge (see Chapter 2).

Cupid’s most vivid and profound engagement with his classical past was, however, an effect of the Renaissance. More specifically, it was the consequence of artists’ and poets’ encounters with Cupid through the rediscovery of statues, reliefs and coins; *ekphrastic* descriptions of paintings and sculpture; and poetic blazons and narratives. By contrast, Renaissance mythography appears surprisingly monochrome and conservative. Boccaccio’s *Genealogia deorum gentilium* (*Genealogy of the Gentile Gods*, 1370s, pub. 1472) remained the standard reference work for two centuries, its most valuable contribution to Renaissance Cupid being the text and interpretation of Apuleius’ *Cupid and Psyche* (even if Boccaccio did not smuggle the manuscript from the abbey at Monte Cassino, as was once imagined).⁵⁴ Yet the *Genealogia* was mainly based on medieval texts, from whence derived many of its quotations from Latin authors. Similarly, although the remarkable triumvirate of Giraldi’s *De deis gentium varia et multiplex historia* (*The History of the Gods*, Basel, 1548); Conti’s *Mythologiae* (*Mythology*, Venice, 1551); and Cartari’s *Sposizione degli dei degli antichi* (*The Images of the Gods*, Venice, 1556) would do much to establish the vogue for mythological allusion in Renaissance texts, becoming required reading for their interpreters, even these mid-sixteenth-century encyclopaedia were often based on medieval sources and remained surprisingly closed off from the world of Renaissance art.⁵⁵

⁵² Tinkle, *Medieval Venuses and Cupids*, p. 114.

⁵³ See William George Dodd, *Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower* (Boston and London: Ginn and Co., 1913), pp. 189–205.

⁵⁴ See Robert H. Carver, *The Protean Ass: The Metamorphoses of Apuleius from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 108–12, and my discussion of ‘Cupid and Psyche’ in Chapter 5.

⁵⁵ Seznec demonstrates that only Giraldi made much use of the fruits of Renaissance archaeology, *lise Survival of the Pagan Gods*, pp. 244–7.

The real innovations in imagining Cupid came from rediscovered classical texts and artifacts, and the imitations they inspired. For example, the publication of the *Greek Anthology* (1494, trans. Latin 1529) and the *Anacreontea* (1554, trans. French 1556) reintroduced a mischievous Cupid that had been largely forgotten during the medieval period, and brought back into poetic use narratives such as Theocritus' 'Cupid and the Bee' and Moschus' 'Fugitive Cupid'.⁵⁶ These subjects charmed the poets of the Pléiade — Clément Marot wrote two poems on Fugitive Love and Pierre de Ronsard adapted Cupid and the bee in 'Le petit enfant Amour' — and, among contemporary Italian poets, Torquato Tasso reinterpreted them in the *Rime* and the Prologue to *Aminta*. In England, Spenser had translated Moschus' poem by 1579,⁵⁷ and later expanded upon it in *The Faerie Queene*, Book 3, and the epigram which brings the *Amoretti* to a close is on the subject of Cupid and the bee. The tradition of ending English sonnet sequences with Anacreontic poems is followed by Shakespeare, despite his resistance to mythological allusion throughout the *Sonnets*.⁵⁸

In the mid-fourteenth century, Pierre Bersuire had had to apologize for relying on written sources for his *Reductorium morale* 'since ... I could nowhere find ... paintings of the gods themselves'.⁵⁹ But more than a century and a half later, ancient statues, reliefs and coins had all been uncovered in Rome, inspiring an immediate response in some of Italy's most gifted artists. For example, Michelangelo would sculpt a *Sleeping Cupid* (1496, now lost) in imitation of an antique statue that he had seen in the Medici garden,⁶⁰ whilst newly discovered cameos and carved gems featuring Cupid inspired similar versions by Benvenuto Cellini. Artists were also being commissioned to reproduce lost classical works. For example, the Cupids that frolic across the canvas of Titian's *Worship of Venus* (1518–19, Prado, Madrid) were conceived in response to the painting described in Philostratus' *Imagines* i.6.⁶¹

⁵⁶ On the history of their appropriation, see James Hutton, 'Cupid and the Bee', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 56.4 (December 1941), 1036–58, and 'The First Idyll of Moschus in Imitations to the Year 1800', *American Journal of Philology* 49.2 (1928), 105–36.

⁵⁷ In the March Eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calendar* (1579), E. K. recommends that 'who liste more at large to behold Cupids colours and furniture, let him read ether Propertius, or Moschus his Idyllion of wandring love, being now most excellently translated into Latine by the singular learned man Angelus Politianus: whych worke I have scene amongst other of thys Poets doings, very wel translated also into English Rymes', Edmund Spenser, *Spenser: Poetical Works*, ed. J. C. Smith and E. De Selincourt (Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 430.

⁵⁸ For further discussion of the convention, see Lisle Cecil John, *The Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences* (New York, Morningside Heights: Columbia University Press, 1938), pp. 67–77, and Janet Levaire, 'Renaissance Anacreontics', *Comparative Literature* 25 (1973), 221–39. On Shakespeare's response, see Katherine Duncan-Jones, 'Was the 1609 Shakespeare *Sonnets* Really Unauthorized?', *Review of English Studies* 34 (1983), 151–71.

⁵⁹ Translated by Seznek, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, p. 175, fn. 63.

⁶⁰ On the possibility that the statue was bought by Charles I, arriving in England c. 1632, see Paul F. Norton, 'The Lost *Sleeping Cupid* of Michelangelo', *The Art Bulletin* 39.4 (December 1957), 251–7.

⁶¹ See Harold E. Wethey, *Use Paintings of Titian*, 3 vols. (London: Phaidon, 1975), vol. in, pp. 34–5.

More generally, the Italian taste for classical mythology was a major factor in Europe's familiarity and artistic engagement with Cupid. It began as something small and domestic: in fifteenth-century Tuscany and the Veneto, bridal couples were given wedding chests (*cassoni*) painted with scenes from erotic mythology.⁶² Not only the occasion but the rectangular shape of the panels favoured Cupid scenes such as Petrarch's *Trionfo dell'Amore* and *della Pudicizia*, and 'Cupid and Psyche'. The same images were extended to other domestic objects such as *deschi da parto* (birth trays), *pastiglia* boxes (receptacles for trinkets) and *maiolica* (tin-glazed earthenware). Yet this fashion remained local and had largely declined by the mid-sixteenth century. The more famous wave of Renaissance mythological art, represented by frescos, tapestries, paintings, statuettes, fountains, gems, *intermezzi* and processions, all of which would feature Cupid, was primarily fostered by the tastes of wealthy patrons, originating in Rome but becoming concentrated in the courts of Genoa, Mantua and Florence, and by the cultural prestige with which they imbued the antique. Mythological art gained most favour as the subject of interior design, and it was in the suburban pleasure-palaces, specifically in the private spaces of the bedchamber and the *studiolo*,⁶³ that Cupid was to be found, partly as a result of his presence in the Ovidian narratives from which these schemes were drawn, partly reflecting the pleasure taken from the beautiful boy in contemporary Italian culture (see Chapter 4).

But if Cupid-designs proved popular for their naked eroticism, they also coincided with the rise of Italian Neoplatonism. Marsilio Ficino referred to Apuleius a number of times and the Neoplatonic credentials of his *Cupid and Psyche* (second century ad) influenced its choice as the theme of fresco cycles by Raphael (1517–18) and Giulio Romano (1527–8). Neoplatonic theory also illuminates (and may have inspired) the depiction of Cupid in paintings by Botticelli and Titian. For example, *La Primavera* (c. 1478, Uffizi, Florence) imagines Venus and an airborne Cupid transforming carnal love (represented by Flora) into heavenly contemplation (represented by Mercury).⁶⁴ By reading the painting from right to left, 'the soul of the beholder is gradually led from the beauty of this world to the far greater beauty of the heavenly spirit which pervades all things'.⁶⁵ Similarly, in Titian's *Sacred and Profane Love* (c. 1514, Borghese Gallery, Rome) we find Ficino's two Venuses, the celestial and generative, sitting side by side. A single Cupid is placed between them, stirring the water in a fountain, suggesting

⁶² See Malcolm Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods: Classical Mythology in Renaissance Art* (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 37–41.

⁶³ Stephen Campbell argues that the *studiolo* became so identified with 'elite forms of cultural consumption' including the collection of antiquities that it may even have inspired the genre of mythological painting. See *The Cabinet of Eros: Renaissance Mythological Painting and the Studiolo of Isabella d'Este* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 1.

⁶⁴ The possibility that this painting was directly influenced by Ficino is explored by E. H. Gombrich in 'Botticelli's Mythologies: A Study of the Neoplatonic Symbolism of His Circle', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 8 (1945), 7–60, at 16–17, 22.

⁶⁵ Mirella Levi D'Ancona, *Botticelli's Primavera: A Botanical Interpretation Including Astrology, Alchemy and the Medici* (Florence: Olschki Editore, 1983), p. 21.

love's ability to mix cosmic elements together and to mediate between the earthly and the divine.⁶⁶

The dissemination of Renaissance Cupid beyond Italy relied upon the fact that the mythological often travelled further than other types of art'.⁶⁷ Rivalry between patrons prompted them to lure renowned artists from one European court to another, for example, François I brought Leonardo da Vinci to France and commissioned Francesco Primaticcio to transform Fontainebleau until it became 'a kind of new Rome'.⁶⁸ The Northern Renaissance was particularly indebted to the willingness of its artists to travel: Albrecht Durer, Lucas Cranach and Peter Paul Rubens all studied in Italy, before returning to the North to reproduce what they had seen.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the vogue for mythological art was not solely dependent upon direct contact with Italy or another European court. Printmaking revolutionized the transmission of images in the sixteenth century and many influential mythological artists also worked in this medium. For example, Raphael collaborated with Marcantonio Raimondi to replicate images from his fresco cycle as well as original designs; Primaticcio and his collaborators produced a number of prints based on Fontainebleau; Dürer's prints were repeatedly copied by German and Italian artists including Raimondi.⁷⁰ It is this kind of second-hand knowledge we must presume when we come to discuss England's encounter with Cupid.

Visualizing Cupid in Early Modern England

One of the main arguments of this book is that the experience of Cupid as a visual phenomenon in early modern England contributed significantly to his literary interpretation. But where 'the Renaissance' had been stimulated in Italy by the sight of Graeco-Roman remains, England was forced to reimport its antique culture. The new style was slow to take hold, with classical themes being adopted in a superficial and decorative manner by craftsmen who lacked the requisite training and remained committed to the traditional.⁷¹ Nevertheless, from the beginning of the sixteenth century the image of classical and Italian Renaissance Cupid became established in England, largely due to patrons such as Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leices-

⁶⁶ Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 151–2.

⁶⁷ Bull, *The Mirror of the Gods*, p. 84.

⁶⁸ Vasari, *lives of the Artists*, translated by R. J. Knecht in *Francis I* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 268.

⁶⁹ See Craig Harbison, *Use Art of the Northern Renaissance* (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1995), pp. 161–7.

⁷⁰ Lisa Pon, *Raphael, Dürer and Marcantonio Raimondi* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 39–41. For further discussion see David Landau and Peter Parshall (eds.), *Use Renaissance Print, 1470–1550* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 308–15.

⁷¹ See David Evett, *literature and the Visual Arts in Tudor England* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1990), p. 4.

ter and Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, who were ambitious to continue the work of their Italian predecessors in acquiring and commissioning mythological art.

Thomas Wolsey (1471–1530) was one of the principal supporters of continued artistic contact between England and Italy, as initially established by Henry VII, and he expressed this enthusiasm through a lavish use of *putti* and the Petrarchan Cupid. In the design for a tomb commissioned from the Florentine sculptor, Benedetto da Rovezzano, we find four, gilded *putti* holding his coat of arms.⁷² A similar design featured on one of the terracotta roundels executed by Giovanni da Maiano to adorn the gateway at Hampton Court,⁷³ and in 1527, the seal for the treaty between Henry VIII and François I featured *putti* holding a Tudor rose.⁷⁴ Wolsey's pleasure in Cupid became notorious when he was rebuked by John Skelton in 'Collyn Clout' (1521–2) for possessing Arayse of rych aray' in which 'Cupyde shaken / His dart, and bent his bowe'⁷⁵ — Wolsey's tapestry collection contained at least three sets on the theme of Petrarch's *Trionfi* as well as one on the *Roman de la Rose*.⁷⁶ He also brought the Petrarchan Cupid to life when, on 3 January 1527, *A Mask of Venus, Cupid, Six Damsels and Six Old Men* (Anon.) was performed after a play and banquet at Hampton Court. The masque features Cupid asking Venus to intercede with her damsels on behalf of the old men, but its design was clearly informed by Petrarchan iconography: 'the trumpets flourished and a car appeared, drawn by three boys stark naked, on which was Cupid, dragging after him, bound by a silver rope, six old men'.⁷⁷

Compared with tapestries and masques, mythological paintings took longer to be imported into England, were largely ignored by English painters who continued to focus their attention on portraiture,⁷⁸ and remained mostly inaccessible to a wider public. Nevertheless, Cupid was still conventionally described as the subject of art. In the play *Love's Metamorphosis* by John Lyly (1590) the nymph, Nisa, acknowledges that although she has never seen Cupid in the flesh she knows what he looks like, not only from poets' descriptions but from the 'many other devices, which the Painters

⁷² See P. G. Lindley, 'Playing Check-mate with Royal Majesty? Wolsey's Patronage of Italian Renaissance Sculpture', in *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art*, ed. S. J. Gunn and P. G. Lindley (Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 261–85.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, fig. 69.

⁷⁴ Alfred Benjamin Wyon, *Use Great Seals of England* (London, 1887), p. 71, pl. 19. On Wolsey's involvement with this design see 'Introduction' by Gunn and Lindley, *Cardinal Wolsey*, p. 39.

⁷⁵ John Skelton, *Use Complete Poems of John Skelton*, ed. Philip Henderson (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1948), lines 940–9.

⁷⁶ See Tom Campbell, 'Cardinal Wolsey's Tapestry Collection', *Antiquaries Journal* 76 (1996), 73–138, at 103.

⁷⁷ *Calendar of State Papers: Venetian, 1527–1555*, ed. Rawdon Brown (London, 1871), pp. 2–3.

⁷⁸ Very occasionally the two were combined, for example in the portrait of Henry, 5th Earl of Windsor (Anon., c. 1588, owned by the Earl of Plymouth) which includes an image of Cupid firing at a unicorn in the top left-hand corner. See *Use Age of Shakespeare* exhibition catalogue (Whitworth Gallery: Manchester, 1964), figs. 24 and 29.

... have taken as great paines to shaddow'.⁷⁹ An art collection which enables us to be more specific about painted Cupid is that of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (1533–88). In an inventory taken on 22 December 1588 at Leicester House, we find a highly unusual mixture of historical and contemporary portraits, religious paintings and mythological works, the latter including no fewer than three Cupid paintings, described as 'One of Venus and Cupid', Another Picture of Venus and Cupid' and A Picture of a naked Lady sleeping and Cupid menaicing hir with his darte'.⁸⁰ What is particularly significant about this collection is the way in which it influenced Cupid as he appears in the *Arcadia* and *The Faerie Queene* (discussed in Chapter 1). Sidney was Leicester's nephew, Spenser his secretary and poetic protégé, and both writers lived for a time at Leicester House.

Finally, Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel (1585–1646) and his wife, Aletheia (née Talbot, d. 1654) amassed perhaps the greatest range of Cupid-art in early modern England at Arundel House on the Strand.⁸¹ An inventory dated 1655 (though the collection may have been largely complete by 1627) includes paintings of 'Venus and Cupid' by Titian, Paolo Veronese, Parmigianino and Sebastiano del Piombo.⁸² More unusual still is Arundel's possession of a full-sized marble sculpture of Eros — a winged adult, bearing his quiver of arrows, but standing with his head propped against a staff as though asleep.⁸³ This statue has a prominent position in the portrait of Arundel by Dutch painter Daniel Mytens (1616, Arundel Castle), though its influence on English artists and craftsmen remains to be determined. More obvious is the impact of the collection's architectural *putti* which informed the design for the House of Oceanus in the masques *Neptune's Triumph* (1624) and *The Fortunate Isles* (1625) by Inigo Jones.⁸⁴ Finally, we should acknowledge the Countess's contribution in obtaining for Prince Charles a model of the Palazzo Te in Mantua, with its famous 'Cupid and Psyche' cycle. The detailed description of the palace's contents and decoration that

⁷⁹ John Lyly, *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, ed. R. Warwick Bond, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), vol. in, 2.1.53–5.

⁸⁰ William J. Thoms, 'Pictures of the Great Earl of Leicester', *Notes & Queries* 3rd ser. (1862), 201–2, 224–6.

⁸¹ See Jonathan Scott, *The Pleasures of Antiquity: British Collectors of Greece and Rome* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 11–22, and David Howarth, 'The Patronage and Collecting of Aletheia, Countess of Arundel, 1606–54', *Journal of the History of Collections* 10:2 (1998), 125–37.

⁸² See Mary F. S. Hervey (ed.), *The Life, Correspondence and Collections of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel* (Cambridge University Press, 1921), pp. 473–500.

⁸³ Michael Vickers speculates that this may have been the statue upon which Caravaggio based the angel in his painting *St Matthew and the Angel* (c. 1599, destroyed), as cited by David Howarth in *Lord Arundel and His Circle* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 77–8, pls. 46–7.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pl. 78, pp. 109–11. Jones had travelled to Italy with Arundel in 1613–14, where he also sketched *putti* from paintings by Parmigianino. See Joan Sumner Smith, 'The Italian Sources of Inigo Jones' Style', *The Burlington Magazine* 94:592 (1952), 200–7, figs. 25 and 22.

she requested in 1623 may have been read by Jones, inspiring plans for a ‘Cupid and Psyche’ theme in the Queen’s House, Greenwich sixteen years later.⁸⁵

It seems clear, then, that wealthy, halophile patrons were crucial to Cupid’s increasing presence within English culture. And yet it would be wrong to assume either that the artifacts they introduced only encouraged Cupid’s reproduction in elite forms or that there was no ‘popular’ tradition of Cupid existing independently. There was certainly a trickle-down effect. For example, Wolsey’s collection may have inspired the themes of cheaper tapestries and also the painted cloths used to decorate Tudor homes and alehouses.⁸⁶ The Cupid that appeared in Italian masques at the Henrician court was reproduced in Elizabethan progresses and mayoral pageants and may also have been popularized by the *commedia dell’arte*, performed by Italian actors in English towns and seen by English travellers abroad.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, it was through the print trade that a more sustained, popular tradition of Cupid images was established. The vast majority of English people might never have seen an Italian Renaissance painting,⁸⁸ but they would have been able to purchase one of the Flemish or Dutch engravings, adapting Italian designs, which were sold as prints in London booksellers. Moreover, it was as the cheapest kind of print, the single-sheet woodcut or broadside, that the two most popular forms of Cupid art were available, namely the emblem and the ballad.

Perhaps the founding text of the emblem-tradition was Andrea Alciato’s *Emblematum liber* (Augsburg, 1531), reprinted many times in a range of languages across sixteenth-century Europe,⁸⁹ and a major source for the first English emblem books, most notably Geoffrey Whitney’s *A Choice of Emblèmes* (Leiden, 1586) and Henry Peacham’s *Minerva Britannae* (London, 1612). Among its various allegorical and mythological subjects, the *Emblematum* included a distillation of the Renaissance

⁸⁵ See David Howarth, “‘Mantua Peeeces’: Charles I and the Gonzaga Collections”, in *Splendours of the Gonzaga*, ed. David Chambers and Jane Martineau (London: V & A, 1981), pp. 95–103. For further discussion of the ‘Cupid and Psyche’ theme at the Caroline court, see Chapter 5.

⁸⁶ See Francis W. Reader, ‘Tudor Domestic Wall-Paintings’, *Archaeological Journal* 92 (1935), 243–86.

⁸⁷ In the pastoral comedy *II Ritratti* (*The Portraits*) Cupid emerges from his temple to arrange the amours of his worshippers. See K. M. Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy: A Study in the Commedia dell’Arte, 1560–1620*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), vol. 11, pp. 553–67. He also appears on a games board featuring *commedia* characters, dating from about 1589, reproduced in M. A. Katritzky’s *The Art of Commedia: A Study in the Commedia dell’Arte 1560–1620* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 245–6, pl. 38.

⁸⁸ Susan Foister’s examination of 613 contemporary household inventories finds only sixty-three including works of art. See ‘Paintings and Other Works of Art in Sixteenth-Century English Inventories’, *Use Burlington Magazine* 123.937 (April 1981), 273–82, at 279.

⁸⁹ New editions (among others) appeared in 1534, 1547, 1550, 1577, 1581 and 1621 and the text was also translated into French in 1536, German in 1542, Spanish in 1549 and Italian in 1551. No English translation was ever produced but in 1566 Thomas Palmer included a number of Alciato’s emblems in his manuscript, *Two Hundred Poosees*, dedicated to the Earl of Leicester. More influential was Whitney’s *A Choice of Emblèmes*, also dedicated to Leicester, which borrowed eighty-six of Alciato’s emblems.

knowledge of Cupid. It was here that an English reader might first have seen Cupid driving a chariot pulled by lions, or holding flowers and a fish, or contending with his brother, Anteros. Here, he might also have discovered the narrative of Cupid and the Bee, or the tale of his accidentally exchanging arrows with Death. In fact, so popular was Cupid as a subject for emblems that in 1608 Otto Vaenius published *AieAmorum Emblemata*, a collection solely focused on love and illustrated with Cupids, which gave rise to a subgenre called ‘Cupid prints’.⁹⁰

Furthermore, whilst emblems were one of the chief resources for the literary description of Cupid, they were also responsible for his popularity as a decorative motif. Alciato was not precious about the application of his work, expressing the hope that his readers would find in them

something that he may inscribe or engrave on the walls of his house, the glass in his windows, on curtains, hangings, pictures, vases, statues, signet rings, garments, a table, the back of a couch, armour, a sword, in short on every piece of equipment anywhere at all ... Then the things of common use will present on every side a form endowed with speech, delightful to contemplate.

Indeed, Peter Daly suggests that emblems may have been as immediately and graphically present in this period as illustrated advertising is today’.⁹¹ To give a few examples, the embroidered coverlet known as ‘The Shepherd Buss’ (Anon., c. 1600) in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, includes images of armed Cupid, and he seems also to have appeared on the back of a miniature and in a pair of andirons.⁹²

But perhaps the widest audience for any image of Cupid was created by the ballad.⁹³ These were sometimes adapted from Petrarchan poems — ‘The cruel assault of Cupid’s fort’ being extracted from *Tottel’s Miscellany* and published alone in 1565—6.⁹⁴ But Cupid was also a theme on which the balladeer seems likely to have improvised. Among the different types described by George Puttenham are those ballads ‘made purposely for the recreation of the common people at Christmasse diners and brideales, and in taverns & alehouses, and such other places of base resort’. He also acknowledges their recurrence on the public stage, referring to those ‘light or lascivious Poems ...

⁹⁰ Otto Vaenius, *Amorum Emblemata*, ed. Karel Porteman (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), p. 12.

⁹¹ Peter Daly, ‘England and the Emblem: The Cultural Context of English Emblem Books’, in *The English Emblem and the Continental Tradition*, ed. Daly (New York: AMS Press, 1988), pp. 5–6.

⁹² See Jonson’s *A Challenge at Tilt*, lines 32–3 and Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, 2.4.88–91.

⁹³ It is estimated that approximately 3,000 different songs were printed in the second half of the sixteenth century. See Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge University Press, 1991, repr. 1994), pp. h, 42.

⁹⁴ For further discussion of *Tottel* and Cupid, see Chapter 1. A range of anonymous Cupid lyrics, drawn from poets possibly including Sidney, can also be found in William Byrd’s *Songs of Sundrie Natures* (1589). I am indebted to K. Dawn Grapes, currently researching Byrd for a PhD at the University of Colorado, for drawing my attention to these poems.

more commodiously uttered by these buffoon [sic] or vices in playes then by any other person'.⁹⁵ Quotations from Cupid-ballads can be found in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* and although in each case the ballad had already been published the plays' aural performance of these narratives further incorporated them into popular culture.⁹⁶ Moreover, even the illiterate may have made use of the printed texts. In 1595, Nicholas Bownd described how broadsides were pasted up 'in the shops of artificers & cottages of poore husbandmen', being used for decoration even by those who could not read,⁹⁷ an option that must have seemed even more desirable when verbal and visual Cupids began to be combined through the broadside's inclusion of woodcut illustrations. Thus, we find images of Cupid aloft, with arrow poised, accompanying 'Celinda's Last Gasp' and 'The Bleeding Lover', whilst in 'Cupid's Court of Equity' he stands in the centre, holding his bow and arrow, as Venus rides her chariot in the background.⁹⁸

Redefining Love in Reformation England

Having traced the iconographie and interpretative history of Cupid, and acknowledged the novelty of his visual incarnation in England, we must begin to consider the uses to which he was put by early modern culture. Most obviously, the paradoxical Cupid embodied the conflicting ideologies of love inherited by England during the sixteenth century, a conflict intensified by the fact that they arrived in such rapid succession. In Renaissance Italy, innovations in the theory of love had appeared and been assimilated more gradually. Petrarch's challenge to the troubadour ideal came in the mid-fourteenth century, with the publication of the *Rime Sparse* (1347). More than two years later, Neoplatonism became fashionable through Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love* (1469, pub. 1484). Finally, a kind of proto-Reformation reaction against the eroticism of literature and art may be discerned in Savonarola's infamous bonfires in Florence at the turn of the century. By contrast, England's reception of 'Renaissance love', i.e. Petrarchism, Neoplatonism and Protestantism, was compressed into a far shorter timescale,⁹⁹ and the belatedness with which these ideas appeared in England partly explains the cynicism with which they were greeted and the

⁹⁵ Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (c. 1569) (Eondon, 1589), sig. Mi.

⁹⁶ Mercurio recalls 'Young Abraham Cupid, he that shot so trim / When King Cophetua lov'd the beggar maid' (2.1.13–4), thereby quoting directly from 'The King and the Beggar', a version of which appears in Richard Johnson's *A Crowne-Garland of goulden Roses* (Eondon, 1612), D4r. In *Much Ado*, Benedick quotes a ballad called 'The God of Tove' (1562) in his attempt to write love poetry for Beatrice (5.2.22–5). His plagiarism is made more obvious by the great number of imitations and spin-offs this particular ballad had already inspired (see Chapter 1).

⁹⁷ Nicholas Bownd, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath Plainely Layde Eorth* (Eondon, 1595), p.242.

⁹⁸ *The Roxburghe Ballads*, ed. William Chappell, 9 vols. (Hertford: Stephen Austin & Sons, 1880), vol. in, pp. 488, 459 and 526.

⁹⁹ See Mark Rose, *Heroic Love: Studies in Sidney and Spenser* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 22. On the influence of French Neoplatonism as expressed in Petrarchan terms, see Sears

rapid development of counter-discourses (to which Cupid would also make a significant contribution).

One of Petrarchism's persistent themes is the contradiction between the speaker's idealization of love and its degrading, destructive effects. For example, in the *Secretum*, 'Francesco' tries to defend his passion as a chastening and spiritually ennobling force, only to concede under the pressure of Augustine's argument that it is, in fact, lustful and idolatrous. Similarly, in the *Rime Sparse*, the battle between *cupiditas* and *caritas* ends with the speaker concluding that the beloved was right not to return his affection. He transfers his desire from Laura to the Virgin Mary, his service from Cupid to Christ, suggesting that ultimately 'Petrarch was himself antiPetrarchan'.¹⁰⁰ English poets particularly evinced, from the start, a keen scepticism regarding the transcendent promise of Petrarchan love, with Sir Thomas Wyatt applying its themes of domination and submission to a range of political as well as amorous situations. In sonnet sequences of the 1580s and 90s, anti-Petrarchan poems appear alongside the Petrarchan to anatomize the latter's perceived defects, 'substituting ... their spirituality for the amorality of Petrarchism, their frank eroticism for its frustrated desires, or their more direct styles of writing and loving for its banalities and excesses'.¹⁰¹ Cupid becomes more visible in English culture as a means of repudiating Petrarchism's displacement of the Christian God with the beloved mistress (as discussed in Chapter 1), but he also embodies other objections to Petrarchism, including the lover's sexual frustration: in erotic verse, Cupid's arrow is often a euphemism for the sexually successful penis or for the mistress's dildo.¹⁰²

Neoplatonism was often used to defend the Petrarchan vision, yet Neoplatonic love itself met with considerable ambivalence in early modern England. The primary texts arrived as late as 1578.¹⁰³ Thus, readers were reliant on Castiglione's *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (Venice, 1528), translated by Sir Thomas Hoby in 1561, for the dissemination

Jayne, 'Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance', *Comparative Literature* 4 (1952), 214–38, at 235. On the overlap between Petrarchism and Protestantism, see Stephen Hamrick, 'Tottel's *Miscellany* and the English Reformation', *Criticism* 44.4 (Fall 2002), 329–61, at 329, discussed further in Chapter 1.

¹⁰⁰ Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca and Eondon: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 62.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁰² See the manuscript poem, 'Riddle me Rachell whats this ...', as quoted by Ian Frederick Moulton in *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 48, and also Eyly's *Sappho and Phao*, where the former declares Cupid's arrow to be 'a toy made for ladies', *Campaspe and Sappho and Phao*, ed. G. K. Hunter and David Bevington (Manchester University Press, 1991, repr. 1999), 5.3.105.

¹⁰³ This is when Jean de Serres dedicated the first volume of his *Eatin Opera Platonis* to Elizabeth I, and Guy Ee Fèvre de la Boderie published a French translation of Ficino's *De amore*. See Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. Sears Jayne (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1985), p. 21.

of some of its most compelling ideas and images.¹⁰⁴ Among these were a male love deity praised by Bembo as ‘the father of true pleasures, of all grace, of peace, of gentleness, and good will, enemy of boorish savagery and baseness’.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, sceptical voices can be heard even within this text: Morello doubts that female beauty is necessarily good or that one can attain beauty without sexual possession (247) and Bembo describes at length the boredom and self-disgust that physical satisfaction inevitably produces (245). This cynicism would become endemic in Elizabethan poets’ responses to Neoplatonism.¹⁰⁶ In Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella*, sonnet 71, for example, the acceptance of various key tenets is ultimately negated (the ladder pulled from under the lover’s feet) by the obstinacy of carnal passion: “‘But ah”, Desire still cries, “give me some food”” — the original conception of Love being replaced by an infantilized and erotic Cupid. Similarly, Spenser’s *An Hymne in Honour of Love* (pub. 1596) deploys the image of a Neoplatonic Cupid in order to celebrate secular passion. Yet *An Hymne of Heavenly Love* views such imagery as morally reprehensible, part of the ‘lewd layes ... [That] did loose affection move’ (lines 8 and 11).

Perhaps the most vociferous challenge to the English appropriation of Petrarchan and Neoplatonic love was expressed by Protestantism. Luther’s insistence that the clergy should marry broke with the medieval belief that virginity and abstinence were the ideal forms of sexual behaviour.¹⁰⁷ Anthony Fletcher attests to the remarkable ease with which a Puritan clergy ‘cut through the weight of Augustinian objection to sexual pleasure ... rejecting the whole Gnostic Manichean strain of Christianity which stressed the inherent sinfulness of the flesh’.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, this liberation was also a more narrow confinement, given that the only lawful expression of desire was now limited to marriage, and this in a prescribed form. In Thomas Beard’s *A Theatre of God’s Judgement* (1597), the chapters that we might expect to be taken up by lust are dedicated to adultery and unlawful marriage, the latter characterized as secret, incestuous and mismatched. Although John E. Curran is surely right to observe that ‘with Protestantism, outside the safe borders of a faithful stable monogamous marriage

¹⁰⁴ See John Charles Nelson, *Renaissance Theory of Love: Lise Context of Giordano Bruno’s Eroici furori* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 102–7, 116–19, and Jill Kraye, ‘The Transformation of Platonic Love in the Italian Renaissance’ in *Platonism and the English Imagination* ed. Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 76–85.

¹⁰⁵ Baldassare Castiglione, *Lise Book of the Courtier*, ed. Daniel Javitch, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2002), p. 256.

¹⁰⁶ See John Roe, ‘Italian Neoplatonism and the Poetry of Sidney, Shakespeare, Chapman and Donne’, in Baldwin and Hutton, *Platonism and the English Imagination*, pp. 100–16, at 103–7, and Robert Ellrodt, *Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser* (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1960), p. 211.

¹⁰⁷ See William and Malleville Haller, ‘The Puritan Art of Love’, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 5 (1941–2), 235–72, and Mary Beth Rose, *Th’Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988).

¹⁰⁸ Anthony Fletcher, ‘The Protestant Idea of Marriage in Early Modern England’, in *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 161–81, at p. 179.

lay unmitigated corruption'¹⁰⁹ to take excessive sexual pleasure with one's spouse was also sinful. As St Jerome intones: A wise man ought to love his wife with judgement, not affection. Let him control his impulses and not be borne headlong into copulation. Nothing is fouler than to love a wife like an adultress.'¹¹⁰ Furthermore, where Catholicism had categorized sexual incontinence as a venial sin for which there were various forms of penance, the Protestant divine Thomas Becon insists that merely to feel desire is to be eternally damned:

If the spirit and inward man be once polluted with filthy lusts and fleshly concupiscences, we are straightways before God transgressors and breakers of his law, and worthy to be condemned unto everlasting fire, although we appear never so pure, and honest before the blind world.¹¹¹

It is from this perception of the irresistibility and destructiveness of desire that a tragic English Cupid would emerge.

In general, there is a correlation between the new visibility of Cupid in early modern literature and the overproduction' of love-discourses that characterized the Renaissance. In *The French Academie*, Primaudaye justifies his inclusion of a chapter entitled 'Of the affection of love, of the nature, kindes and object of it ...' by pointing out man's confusion:

For being, as we must needes be during this life, subiect unto, and tossed on every side with an infinite numer [sic] of strange passions, if they be unknowne unto us, we cannot discerne amongst a multitude of contrarie opinions, which of them is soundest, every one of them pretending some shew of good & of truth. (479)

Cupid was animated by this same anxiety, heightened in England by the Protestant insistence on the tragic consequences of mistaking desire. Hence, he was required to differentiate between lawful and unlawful loves, passions that originate in heaven and hell, those that inculcate virtue and those that degrade. And yet, as we have seen, Cupid's ambivalent iconography, as well as his own pleasure in disguise, meant that he was a figure for the very elusiveness of desire that made such distinctions necessary. Indeed, this study will argue that Cupid would more often succeed in challenging the dominant Protestant ideology of love, exposing its cruelties and inconsistencies, than in upholding the requisite distinctions.

¹⁰⁹ John E. Curran, *Hamlet, Protestantism and the Mourning of Contingency* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 170–1.

¹¹⁰ See Stephen Greenblatt's reading of *Othello* in *Renaissance Self Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980, repr. 1984), pp. 222–54, at p.248.

¹¹¹ Thomas Becon, *Use Catechism of Uromas Becon*, ed. John Ayre (Whitefish, MO: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), p. 120.

Chapter 1 examines Cupid as a figure for Catholic idolatry in a time of Protestant iconoclasm. It begins by considering how the medieval, poetic trope of the worship of Cupid came under fire after the Reformation, reinforcing a perceived link between the erotic and the blasphemous not only in contemporary verse but in contemporary Catholic rites. At the same time, Cupid's association with beauty and his ability to produce desire by striking through the eye made him deeply sympathetic to Protestant poets who adhered to the dictum '*ut poesis pictura*'. Focusing on the work of Sidney and Spenser, this chapter argues that Cupid not only encouraged criticism of Elizabethan iconophobia — both the *Arcadia* and *The Faerie Queene* feature acts of iconoclasm against Cupid which inspire regret — he was also a means of defending art's affective power. Hence, both poets use Cupid to justify their literary ambitions even as they acknowledge the dangers of writing in his name.

The tragic reinvention of Cupid in response to the Protestant suspicion of desire is the subject of Chapter 2. It begins by exploring the iconographical tradition in which Cupid came increasingly to resemble Death, focusing on visual themes that were new to sixteenth-century Europe — the *putto* and the skull, 'De Morte & Amore' and the Cupidean plague-angel — and the ways in which they influenced early modern drama. It then focuses on a small group of English tragedies in which Cupid appears on stage, including the Inner Temple's *Gismond of Sáleme* and Beaumont and Fletcher's *Cupid's Revenge*, to make a case for 'Cupidean tragedy' as a subgenre of love tragedy, expressive of early modern England's darkest fears about the power of lust. Where love tragedy has usually been seen to advance (or at least emerge from) a Protestant agenda, Cupidean tragedy is revealed as more ambivalent, exposing the destructive consequences of 'Puritan' repression. Moreover, by reimagining Cupid as a tyrannical deity who punishes the lover for the passion which He has himself imposed these plays interrogate a specifically Calvinist image of God.

In the next two chapters, we consider how Cupid's challenge to norms of gender identity and sexuality represents a further destabilizing of Protestant orthodoxies. Despite insisting on the spiritual equality of men and women, Protestantism contributed to a 'resurgence of patriarchalism'¹¹² which emphasized the political and religious consequences of any challenge to male authority, resulting in greater limitations being imposed on female desire and sexual transgression. Cupid acted as an agent of this patriarchalism, not only in penetrating the woman with his dart (thereby proving her need to be mastered) but by demonstrating the shameful emasculation of men who submitted to female power. Yet he was also capable of undermining such polarities. Chapter 3 examines the careers of three elite women — Mary Stuart, Elizabeth I and Lady Mary Wroth — who found their public identity defined by their relationship to Cupid but who developed their own literary and performative strategies of defiance. These range from appropriating Cupid's arrows, to redefining him in Christian

¹¹² Eyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (Eondon: Routledge, 2003), p. 38.

and Neoplatonic terms, to replacing him with a new image of female Desire. In Chapter 4, an examination of Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*, Sharpham's *Cupid's Whirligig* and Middleton's *The Nice Valour* reveals Cupid threatening effeminacy, sodomy and even castration to excessively desiring men. And yet, infantile Cupid proves to be a figure of identification for the male reader/spectator, allowing fantasies of maternal nurturance and male vulnerability to be secretly indulged. In general, the image of boy-Cupid (newly eroticized in Italian Renaissance painting) is a source of pleasure for both sexes, confounding the distinctions between a range of desires by rendering the maternal erotic, the heteroerotic homoerotic and so on.

Finally, in the last chapter the various retellings of a single narrative, 'Cupid and Psyche', allow us to focus on the reception of Neoplatonic Eros in early modern England. From William Adlington's *The xi Bookes of the Golden Asse* to Thomas Heywood's play *Love's Mistress*, Cupid's eroticism disrupts and discredits the Platonic reading, an effect not only of the erotic English tradition of Cupid explored throughout this book but particularly identified with the popular theatre. Hence, even at the height of the Neoplatonic cult' at the court of Henrietta Maria, expressed through masques by Jonson and Davenant, Cupid remains a troubling figure, existing largely off stage' and/or substituted by an alternative figure of idealized love. The chapter ends by looking forwards briefly to the literature produced during the English Civil Wars, where much of Cupid's ambiguity has been lost in the Royalist cause.

Throughout this book, my approach is more historicist than mythographic, which is to say that I am more interested in the cultural uses of early modern Cupid than in tracing precise sources for every literary description or explaining in broader terms how the pagan gods survived into the Renaissance.¹¹³ Hence, although some lines of transmission will be traced between medieval and early modern Cupids, such a narrative is not the main ambition of this book. Rather, it shares some assumptions with Alistair Fox's account of the English appropriation of Italian literary forms as a response to 'the awesome cultural separation from a Continental Latinate system of values — religious, moral, aesthetic and political — that was being enforced upon [the English people] by the successive political and evangelical reformations of the sixteenth century'.¹¹⁴ I argue that Cupid was potentially a metonym for the Italian Renaissance and a means by which this 'cultural separation' might be resisted. More specifically, this study concurs with Stephen Hamrick's findings that erotic poetry in the first twenty-five years of Elizabeth's reign 'engaged extensively with the Reformations'.¹¹⁵ I argue for the need to position Cupid within a 'Catholic imaginary', defined as a system

¹¹³ Readers are directed to Douglas Bush's *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1932), Seznec's *Le Survival of the Pagan Gods* and Barkan's *Le Gods Made Flesh*, especially ch. 3, for illuminating studies in these fields.

¹¹⁴ Alistair Fox, *Le English Renaissance: Identity and Representation in Elizabethan England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 3.

¹¹⁵ Hamrick, *Le Catholic Imaginary and the Cults of Elizabeth, 1558—1582* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 2.

of ‘celebratory, iconoclastic, and overtly neutral representations of Catholic practices, beliefs and worldviews’ (5–6), although my study is focused on a single erotic image and extended over a longer period. Finally, it is worth recalling Thomas Hyde’s assertion in *The Poetic Theology of Love* (the only monograph-length study of this Renaissance deity to date) that

Cupid plays so many roles in so many different kinds of literature, not to mention in all sorts of visual arts and hybrid forms like emblem books, parlor games, and pageantry, that even to undertake a catalogue of his appearances would be a mad endeavour. (19)

I acknowledge the justice of this sentiment but argue that there is a consistency to Cupid’s reinvention across a range of literary genres in the early modern period that rewards detailed discussion. Furthermore, since his prominence was partly achieved through paintings, emblems and pageants, and his power identified with the dangerous manipulations of beauty, it seems crucial to consider literature in relation to the visual arts, and to allow ourselves the luxury of speculation about the ways in which Cupid might have been seen. Ultimately, I believe we can come closer to understanding Protestantism’s difficulty in exerting control over desire, art and worship by looking at the period through its Cupids.

Chapter I: Cupid, Art and Idolatry

In 1613, Captain John Saris, leading the first English trade expedition to Japan for the East India Company, described in his diary ‘an odd Mistake, in a matter of Devotion, made by some of the *Japanese* Gentlewomen whom I admitted into my Cabin’:

These were some whom the *Portuguese Jesuits* had been at work upon, and had receiv’d from them some little Matters of Christianity, about as much as the saying of a few Gibberish Prayers, or the cringing before an Image or Picture might come to.

The good Women being in the Cabin, chanc’d to cast their Eyes upon a picture of *Venus* and *Cupid* that hung there; at which sight they were immediately seiz’d with a Fit of Devotion, and clapp’d upon their Knees without any more adoe, tumbling out all the Religion they had learn’d of the Fathers; and very zealous they were in their Addresses to the two modest Deities there painted before them. The Business was, they mistook this Pair for the Blessed Virgin *Mary* and her Son, whom the Jesuits had given them so very slender an Account of, that they knew no difference between them, and *Cupid* and *Venus*. A very strange thing, that the Reverend Planters of Christianity in these Parts, which make two thirds of the Religion they teach, to consist in a Concern with Pictures, shou’d do that Work so sleevelessly: That they shou’d not make their Converts perfect in such an important Point, as knowing the Picture of the Blessed Virgin, especially from that of a lewd Strumpet, that’s always drawn with an Air of Eeoseness and Immodesty, and plainly discovers her self at the first Glance: ’Tis to be fear’d, such *Japanese* Christians as these, are no profound Scholars in the Doctrines of Religion.¹

This fascinating account tells us more about the attitudes of early modern English Protestants towards Catholicism than about religious conversion in Japan. For example, ‘Gibberish Prayers’ alludes not only to the women’s difficulty in pronouncing foreign words, but also to the privileging of Latin over the vernacular in Catholic

¹ Reprinted in John Harris, *Navigantium atque Itineratium Bibliotheca: Or, A Compleat Collection of Voyages and Travels*, 2 vols. (Eondon, 1705), vol. 1, ch. 23, pp. 123–4. I am grateful to Dr Clare McManus for bringing this passage to my attention.

liturgy — the accessibility of the Word through translation being one of the central tenets of Protestantism.² The ‘cringing before an Image or Picture’ suggests Protestant disgust at the Catholic rites of kneeling and prayer before an image, perceived as not only degrading but also ineffectual (see Saris’ reference to the ‘little’ that such gestures will come to). But of most interest to this study is the scenario in which a Catholic worshipper mistakes an image of Venus and Cupid for the Madonna and Child.

In Italian Renaissance painting, these sacred and profane couples were often depicted in the same poses, with the infant in the mother’s lap, and although we might assume that nakedness would distinguish Venus from the Madonna, the former was sometimes clothed.³ But rather than refer to art history to explain the converts’ mistake, Saris sees only the religious controversies of the present. His mock astonishment that the Jesuits ‘[who] make two thirds of the Religion they teach, to consist in a Concern with Pictures’ have not taught their acolytes to distinguish the ‘blessed Virgin’ from the ‘lewd Strumpet’ invokes the oft-repeated argument that Catholicism transforms its saints into whores through visual representation. *An Homily against Peril of Idolatry* (1563) complains that an image is ‘more like to a *Venus* or *Flora*, then Mary Magdalen, or if like to Mary Magdalen, it is when she played the harlot, rather then when shee wept for her sinnes’.⁴ More specifically, the confusion of Venus for Virgin was a well-worn anecdote in the anti-idolatry debate. Charlemagne’s *Libri Carolini*, written in the eighth century in response to the Byzantine controversy, relates how a man who venerate[d] pictures’ found it impossible to distinguish between the Virgin Mary and Venus. It was only when the painter labelled these images that he was able to respond appropriately:

The picture with the caption: Mother of God, was elevated, venerated and kissed, and the other, because it had the caption: Venus, was maligned, scorned and cursed, although both were equal in shape and colour, and were made of identical material, and differed only in caption.⁵

Saris would seem to agree that the perception of divinity is in the eye of the beholder: not only is the Protestant not confused by these images he is not seduced by them.

² See Edward VI’s 1547 Injunctions on the use of the English language in *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation*, ed. W. H. Frere and W. M. Kennedy, 3 vols. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1910), vol. it, p. 129, no. 33. All subsequent references are abbreviated as 144.

³ The postures of the Holy Family in Michelangelo’s *Doni Tondo* (c. 1503, Uffizi, Florence) seem to have influenced Bronzino’s *Allegory of Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time* (1544–5, National Gallery, London), a painting discussed further in Chapter 4. For examples of a clothed Venus, see Battista Dossi’s *Venus and Cupid* (c. 1350–40, Philadelphia Museum of Art) and Titian’s *Cupid Blindfolded* (c. 1565, Villa Borghese, Rome).

⁴ *Certain Sermons or Homilies appointed to be read in churches*, ed. Mary Ellen Rickey and Thomas B. Stroup (Gainesville: Scholars Facsimiles, 1968), pp. 11–76, p. 72.

⁵ Translated by Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz in *History of Aesthetics*, 3 vols. (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), vol. 11, p. 100. The *Libri Carolini* (pub. 1549, Paris) was often referred to in the early modern debate over Catholic idolatry. The *Homily* alludes to its being ‘now put in print, and commonly in mens hands’, p. 35.

And yet, the most obvious reason for Saris to keep a painting of Venus and Cupid in his cabin was as a form of pornography.⁶ Not only were these two figures associated with Italian visual erotica (Cupid appearing in both Giulio Romano's *I Modi* (*The Positions*) and Jacopo Caraglio's *Gli amori degli dei* (*Loves of the Gods*)), but the allusion to Venus' Air of Looseness and Immodesty' suggests that the figures were suggestively posed, with Cupid naked and Venus perhaps lying on a bed.⁷ Saris' interest in possessing this material and in circulating it was certainly understood as erotic at the time. In December 1614, he was condemned by the East India Company for possessing 'certeine lascivious bookes and pictures brought home by him and divulged ... which is held to be a greate scandali unto this Companye and unbeseeming their gravitie to permitte'.⁸ Whilst this appears to undermine Saris' pose of detachment from an art whose titillating potential he acknowledges, it also identifies him with the Catholic idolatry he condemns. Those who deplored the importation of erotic literary texts (usually from Italy) often assumed that their incitement to 'whoredom' was also one to 'idolatrie & poperie' and that idolatry was experienced in the same way, being 'as sweet to the corrupted conscience & mind of man, as lust and fornication, is to any wanton body'.⁹ Hence, it may be appropriate that Saris' collection (perhaps including this very painting) was publicly burnt, thereby suffering the same fate as Catholic art and statuary throughout the Elizabethan period.

But perhaps most intriguing is Saris' attempt to reinforce the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism through oppositional readings of Cupid. As this chapter will show, the Japanese gentlewomen were not necessarily wrong to mistake Cupid for a figure of Catholic adoration. Not only was there a medieval tradition of figuring Christ as Amor, but the substitution of Cupid for a Catholic deity was one repeatedly (if derisively) made by early modern Protestants. Nor was the passionate response this Cupid painting inspires in the women ('seiz'd with a fit of Devotion [they] clapp'd upon their Knees') unknown to Protestant men, for whom Cupid retained a powerful allure. This chapter begins by arguing that, after a period of medieval neglect, Cupid was newly identified as a pagan and thence as a Catholic idol in Reformation England. In the hostile responses to *Tottel's Miscellany* and other collections of amorous verse, he emerged as the avatar of the idolatrous impulse in being both erotic and profane. Nevertheless, the Protestant poets Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser negotiated with

⁶ On the problems of applying this term to any literature or art produced in the early modern period, see Moulton, *Before Pornography*, p. 3.

⁷ In the *I Modi*, Cupid is to be found in Position 14, where he pulls the lovers on a cart. In the *Gli amori degli dei*, he appears in every image.

⁸ See *Pise Voyage of Captain John Saris to Japan, 1613*, ed. Sir Ernest M. Satow (London: Hakluyt Society, 1900, repr. 1967), p. Ixviii.

⁹ See John Northbrooke, *A Treatise against Dicing, Dancing, Plays and Interludes* (1377) (London, Shakespeare Society Reprint, 1843), p. 55, and Henry Ainsworth, *An Arrow Against Idolatrie: Taken out of the quiver of the Lord of hosts* (Amsterdam, 1611), p. 43.

Cupid, lingering over his image as much for the possibilities he afforded to defend art and poetry as to condemn them.

The Cupid-idol: Medieval to Renaissance

In *The Poetic Theology of Love*, Thomas Hyde perceives a shift between the medieval/early Renaissance interpretation of Cupid and that of the later Renaissance. The former compulsively unveils the pagan deity as a fictional idol, either by juxtaposing the lover's belief in Cupid with the narrator's scepticism or by a more overt act of self-correction (82, 45). Thus, even Dante's chastened and angelic Amore in the *Vita Nuova* is finally repudiated as 'false'.¹⁰ By contrast, the later Renaissance tends to reverse this trajectory, reinforcing belief in Cupid as the means to a higher (often Neoplatonic) truth, or ignoring the dilemma entirely:

The defense of fiction, the prestige of antiquity, and a general if not pervading secularism ... join to make Renaissance poets less troubled by figurative divinity, less disposed to figure erotic obsession as idolatry or paganism, and less likely to accept moral responsibility for readers who misunderstand or abuse their fictions. (85)

And yet, my own study of early modern Cupid suggests the reverse: instead of English poets being 'less disposed to figure erotic obsession as idolatry or paganism', they seem to have found Cupid a figure of anxiety precisely because he was an idol, that is, both a pagan deity and a delusive fiction. The explanation for this discord is partly to be discovered in Hyde's frame of reference, for he defines later Renaissance poetry as fifteenth-to-sixteenth-century Italian and French verse and Spenser, with no consideration of the wider field of English poetry or drama. The major distinction between his 'Renaissance' Cupid lyrics which 'do not challenge either the status of poetry as fiction or the poet's religious faith' (74) and their English equivalents is the historical and political context in which the latter were conceived and read: a Reformation world in which Cupid's paganism gained a new visibility precisely because it *did* identify the poet with an oppositional faith, and because it could expose the deceptions of art and poetry against which Protestantism increasingly defined itself. But before developing this argument any further, we need to retrace some of Hyde's steps and return to the question of Cupid's status in medieval culture.

As the number and type of religious artifacts designed to elicit devotion flourished in the medieval church, culminating in an 'image explosion' in the fifteenth century,¹¹

¹⁰ Dante, *Dante's Vita Nuova*, p. 54.

¹¹ Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge University Press, 1989, repr. 1991), p. 219. This section is particularly indebted to his chapter 'The Gothic Anti-Image', pp. 27–72. For further discussion of the conflict over images in the late fourteenth to early fifteenth centuries, see Sarah Stanbury, *The Visual Object of Desire in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 1–32.

there was a more pressing need to distinguish between false images and true, and to identify ritual abuse and righteous use. One way of meeting this need was to produce art on the subject of iconoclasm, featuring recognizably pagan idols such as Mars, Diana, Venus and Jupiter.¹² Cupid was, however, noticeably absent. His status as a minor Roman deity, worshipped within Venus' temple rather than his own, meant that he did not appear in the biblical texts that provided the main source for medieval iconoclastic art: it is the trade in images of Diana that St Paul threatens in Acts 19:24–8, and it is her temple that St John destroys in the Apocalypse. Nor does Cupid seem to have been judged an opponent worthy of a saint, given that the *Golden Legend* features St Nicholas defying the worship of Diana, and St Benedict and St Alban the worship of Apollo, but not Cupid.¹³ His idolatry even lacks a historical dimension. According to the legend of the founding of Britain, Brutus was directed to seek out this particular island by a statue of Diana after he had offered a sacrifice in her temple.¹⁴ Although Spenser would subsequently provide Cupid with a role in the foundation of the Artegall-Britomart dynasty in *The Faerie Queene*, there was no historical basis for his invention.

More deleterious to Cupid's identification as a pagan idol was his reinvention as the medieval God of Love. As discussed in the Introduction, this required the stripping away of many of his pagan attributes, including those that would have been particularly resonant in iconoclastic art. For example, in de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*, he is wearing an elaborately patterned gown and a chaplet of roses, thus distinguishing him from the shameful nakedness of the medieval idol.¹⁵ His ability to see distances him from avatars such as the blindfolded Synagogue, toppled in images of the Crucifixion.¹⁶ Moreover, even in medieval love poems depicting Cupid as an idol, his paganism tends to be overshadowed by his erotic symbolism. For example, in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (1390), Amans finds that even in church 'al mi devoción / And al mi contemplación / With al min berte and mi corage / Is only set on hire ymage'.¹⁷ The presence of Venus and Cupid (described by Genius as inventions of man's desire (Book 5, lines 1405–42)) only serves to emphasize his erotic/poetic idolatry: Amans exists as a literary convention, and his meeting with the imagined supernatural representations of his love fulfills the expectation of that convention.¹⁸

¹² Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, pp. 14–15 and 103–5.

¹³ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Selections*, trans. Christopher Stace (London: Penguin, 1998), pp. 13, 106.

¹⁴ See Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136), in *lise History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966, repr-1973), pp. 64–6.

¹⁵ De Lords, *lise Romance of the Rose*, p. 15. On the identification of the idol with nakedness, see Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, pp. 87–101.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 316, 178–9.

¹⁷ John Gower, *The English Works of John Gower*, ed. G. C. Macaulay, 2 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, 1900), Book 5, lines 7125–28.

¹⁸ Tinkle, *Medieval Venuses and Cupids*, p. 179.

Finally, in the medieval period the religion of love seems not to have been perceived as a threat to the established faith. Since they derived from the same source and affirmed the same practices and beliefs, the love religion could exist as a parody of Catholicism without necessarily undermining it.¹⁹ As C. S. Lewis explains:

It is as if some lover's metaphor when he said 'Here is my heaven' in a moment of passionate abandonment were taken up and expanded into a system. Even while he speaks he knows that 'here' is not his real heaven; and yet it is a delightful audacity to develop the idea a little further. If you go on to add to that lover's heaven its natural accessories, a god and saints and a list of commandments, and if you picture the lover praying, sinning, repenting, and finally admitted to his bliss, you will find yourself in the precarious dream-world of medieval love poetry. An extension of religion, an escape from religion, a rival religion. (21)

The English Renaissance Cupid emerges from the ruins of these medieval assumptions. Although he still lacks any precedent in the Bible or chronicle history, he has become a symbol of idolatry, not least through his association with medieval poetry. With the Renaissance rediscovery of Cupid's classical origins, he is divested of the medieval garb that made him familiar and 'safe'. But perhaps most importantly, the religion of love now exists in an antithetical relationship to the 'true' faith rather than serving as an affectionate parody and this has a profound effect on the interpretation of Cupid. Although it will continue to be a popular literary theme until well into the seventeenth century — we find scenes of Cupid-worship and sacrifice not only in the reprinted works of Chaucer,²⁰ but in *The Faerie Queene*, Book 3, Lyly's *Love's Metamorphosis* and William Percy's *Cupid's Sacrifice* — for the Protestant polemicist and preacher the religion of love with its blasphemous worship of Cupid not only painfully recalls England's Catholic past, it threatens to undo the Reformers' work in the present.

The first official acts of iconoclasm in England had come about through the dissolution of the monasteries and were partly a political gesture, signalling the fall of a medieval and papal *ancien regime*.²¹ It was the second set of royal Injunctions in 1538 that expressed the Henrician government's ideological commitment to the eradication of idolatry. Here, the clergy were enjoined to preach against any act of worship not based on Scripture but 'devised by men's phantasies', including 'wandering to pilgrimages, offering of money, candles, or tapers to images or relics, or kissing or licking the

¹⁹ Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, p. 20.

²⁰ John Stows 1562 *Woorkes* includes 'The Court of Love' (c. 1525), a poem wrongly attributed to Chaucer, in which the lover joins a throng of worshippers before Cupid's image. See Walter W. Skeat (ed.), *Chaucerian and Other Pieces*, vol. vn of his *Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), pp. 409–47.

²¹ See John Phillips, *Tire Reformation of Images: Destruction of Art in England, 1535–1660* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 63–81.

same' (VA 2.34–43, 37). More specifically, for the first time, the clergy of each parish was empowered to 'take down and delay' images that were so abused 'for avoiding that most detestable sin of idolatry' (38). What exactly was meant by 'delay' remained uncertain. It was not until 1547 and the Royal Injunctions of Edward VI that a more rigorous and detailed persecution of images was articulated. The royal visitors were now required to

take away, utterly extinct and destroy all shrines, covering of shrines, all tables, candlesticks, trindles or rolls of wax, pictures, paintings, and all other monuments of feigned miracles, pilgrimages, idolatry, and superstition: so that there remain no memory of the same in walls, glass-windows, or elsewhere within their churches or houses. (VA 2.126)

Not only did this Injunction emphasize the necessity for destroying images rather than simply preventing them from being worshipped, it also extended the objects over which suspicion was cast. For example, stained-glass windows were not usually thought to inspire pilgrimage or oblation but they were now to be defaced.²² The grounds for defending images had also been considerably reduced. Where they had been justified by the Lollard and Henrician Reformers as '*bibli pauperum*' ('books for the unlearned', in Pope Gregory the First's phrase), the Edwardian Injunctions allowed only for their commemorative function (*E11*^6, 258), with the royal visitors instructed to ask the clergy 'Whether they have taught the people the true use of images; which is only to put them in remembrance of the godly and virtuous lives of them that they do represent: and have taught that if the said people use the images for any other purpose, they commit idolatry to the great danger of their souls' (VA 2.107).

By Elizabeth's reign, we find legislation struggling to control a popular fervour for iconoclasm, exacerbated by the return of the Marian exiles from the Continent. In the year after her accession, many of the clergy took it upon themselves to purge their churches of the statues, images, stained-glass windows, Catholic rituals and Latinate prayers that Mary Tudor had attempted to restore (*EI* 277–93). This work was taken up by the royal visitors, resulting in two huge bonfires of 'roods and of Maries and Johns and other images' in London in August and September 1559.²³ Moreover, despite Elizabeth's attempts to limit the social threat represented by iconoclasm — in September 1560, she issued a proclamation to prohibit the destruction of funeral monuments, stained-glass windows and church bells (*EI* 314–16) — the definition of idolatrous art continued to expand. Not only books, images, copes, vestments and altar cloths were

²² Margaret Aston notes that even Zwingli did not include stained glass windows in his prohibitions. In its intrusion into the domestic sphere Edwardian reform also 'outdid the purification of Zurich, where individual donors had been allowed to retrieve works of art for their own private possession when the churches were cleared', *England's Iconoclasts*, vol. 1: *Laws against Images* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 257–8, hereafter abbreviated to *EL*

²³ Henry Machyn, *Tire Diary of Henry Machyn*, ed. J. G. Nichols (London, 1848), pp. 207–9.

burnt, but by 1580 the mystery plays, religious ballads and biblical illustrations that the Edwardian regime had allowed were suppressed, with a censorious eye increasingly cast upon secular drama and poetry.²⁴

The reception of Cupid would henceforth be shaped by two contradictory impulses: to embrace classical mythology for its artistic possibilities and to repudiate it in recognition of its blasphemous past. The first response, the translation of paganism into art, was inherited from the medieval period. 'The aesthetic aestheticizes. It annihilates function, taking the object of interest out of the realm of necessity into the disinterested contemplation of the subjective viewer's consciousness.'²⁵ Moreover, the fact that Catholic statuary and images had become synonymous with the idol potentially directed opprobrium away from the pagan gods. Hence, as Keith Thomas has shown, 'there was no very obvious incompatibility between strenuous Protestantism and a taste for classical art',

it is possible to compile a tolerably long list of later Puritan art-collectors who did not scruple to acquire paintings, prints, tapestries, and embroideries depicting classical myths, gods, and goddesses, just as it is not difficult to enumerate godly nobles and gentlemen who commissioned architects to build them classical houses or were buried under classical funeral monuments.²⁶

Moreover, it is clear that classical mythology was valued as an alternative source of decorative themes and motifs. When the imagery of saints and the Virgin Mary became too controversial to be depicted on tombs, sculptors turned to non-Christian symbols such as the weeping *putto* with an inverted torch.²⁷ Paganism could often ensure the partial survival of Catholic art. For example, the West Cheap Cross in London originally featured a statue of the Virgin and Child, but when it was defaced in 1600, with the Virgin losing her crown and nearly her head and having the stone baby stolen from her arms, she was replaced by a semi-clothed image of Diana.²⁸ More radically, when Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, appropriated the clerical copes from Lilleshall Abbey to use as hangings for Chatsworth she had the saints' heads replaced by those of classical gods and goddesses, adding embroidered labels to fix their

²⁴ See Patrick Collinson, *From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia: The Cultural Impact of the Second English Reformation* (University of Reading, 1986), p. 11.

²⁵ Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, p. 78.

²⁶ Keith Thomas, 'English Protestantism and Classical Art', in *Albion's Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550–1660*, ed. Lucy Gent (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 221–38, at 229–30.

²⁷ See Fred H. Crossley, *English Church Craftsmanship* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1920), p. 107.

²⁸ See Aymer Vallance, *Old Crosses and Lychgates* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1920), pp. 102–8. The absurdity of such an alteration was not lost on commentators, including Amorphus in Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*, who mocks magistrates for 'pulling downe a superstitious crosse, and advancing a VENUS, or PRIAPUS, in place of it (1.4.94–5).

identities,²⁹ an act which suggests a particularly intriguing meld of iconoclastic and iconophilic sentiments. On the one hand, decapitation was a contemporary means of destroying the power of the idol.³⁰ The Catholic saints' transformation into pagan gods not only endorsed the Protestant argument about their shared origins (see below), it also undermined the 'particularity' that individual saints and their relics had achieved in late medieval culture — a 'particularity' that was seen directly to cause idolatry.³¹ On the other hand, Elizabeth's replacement of the heads suggests a contrary impulse to preserve and to rehabilitate. In 1643, Bishop Joseph Hall would adopt the same policy when iconoclasts threatened the stained-glass windows (depicting St Ambrose and St Augustine) in his chapel at Norwich:

[I] obtained leave that I might, with the least loss and defacing of the windows, give order for taking off that offense, which I did by causing the heads of those pictures to be taken off, since I knew the bodies could not offend.³²

Nevertheless, it is clear that many Protestants did feel a heightened suspicion of classical literature and art in light of their ambitions for reform and that it retained its capacity for offence, perhaps because of this very policy of translating the Catholic into the pagan. One of the major arguments of the *Homily Against Peril of Idolatry* is that biblical prohibitions apply as much to Catholic as to pagan and Jewish idols and that 'our Images, and idoles of the Gentiles bee all one' (46). This similarity is traced throughout the last third of the sermon, beginning with the idols' physical resemblance and extending to their function in everyday life (46). For example, trades and professions have their own saint, just as in pagan times they had a particular god: 'Schollers have Saint *Nicholas* and Saint *Gregory*; Painters, Saint *Luke*; neither lacke souldiers their *Mars*, nor lovers their *Venus*, amongst Christians', and all diseases have a saint to whom prayers are offered for a cure (47). But perhaps most importantly, Catholic rites such as kneeling before images, lighting candles, burning incense, and venerating relics can all be traced back to pagan practices (48–54). As the *Homily* laments: Alas, wee seeme in thus thinking and doing to have learned our religion, not out of GODS word, but out of the Pagan Poets' (47).

Cupid is not the most ubiquitous pagan in the anti-idolatry, antiCatholic discourse of early modern England, but he does have a unique position within it. Not only is he able to stand as a metonym for false gods and misplaced religious worship, he also

²⁹ See Ethel Carleton Williams, *Bess of Hardwick* (London and New York: Longmans Green, 1959), p. 72.

³⁰ The Elizabethan accounts for St Martin's Church at Leicester include an entry of is. 8d. 'for cutyng downe the ymages hedes in the cherche'. See Roy Strong, *Lost Treasures of Britain* (London: Viking, 1990), p. 54.

³¹ See Michael O'Connell, *Tire Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Threater in Early- Modern England* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 59–60.

³² Hall, *Hard Measure* (1647) in *Tire Shaking of the Olive-Tree* (London, 1660), pp. 62–3.

figures the erotic impulse behind them. For example, the *Homily* castigates pilgrimage by asserting that ‘by this means Lady *Venus* and her sonne *Cupide*, were rather worshipped wantonly in the fleshe, then God the Father and our Saviour Christ his Sonne truely worshipped in the spirit’ (49). Furthermore, Cupid’s embodiment of the impulse to create fiction as well as to fashion idols made him particularly attractive to early modern poets. Both Venus and Cupid were venerable patrons of poetry, with Ovid and Chaucer moving between the two in *the Amores*, *the Ars Amatoria*, *the House of Fame* and *The Parliament of Fowls*, but Cupid could also claim to be the invention of poets. Unlike Venus, who had a celestial alter ego to explain her influence, Cupid was inherently poetic without one.³³ The epithets that degraded him in the early modern period — ‘vain’, ‘wanton’, ‘idle’ — were also liberally applied to the works of man’s imagination. Moreover, Cupid’s increasing familiarity as the subject of Renaissance emblems and engravings, and his own manipulation of beauty in order to produce desire, further identified him with the methods of ‘Idolatrie’. Thus, Cupid became both a figure for the repudiation of art and the means of its vindication, encouraging greater self-reflexivity in Protestant poets and acting as muse to their self-defence.

Tottel’s Miscellany and Cupid-worship

The Renaissance poet’s fear that love-worship might be a serious kind of blasphemy seems to begin with Petrarch. But although in the *Secretum* lovers are blamed for calling Love a god and using him to justify the worship of the beloved (a kind of double idolatry),³⁴ the speaker’s affection remains firmly fixed on his lady. We have almost no physical description of Cupid in the *Rime Sparse* and he is certainly never imagined in terms of an idol to which the poet performs acts of worship. Rather, it is Laura who is ‘l’idolo mio scolpito in vivo lauro’ (‘my idol carved in living laurel’, no. 30).³⁵

English adaptations of Petrarch were less clear on this distinction, however. Originally entitled *Songs and Sonnettes*, Richard Tottel’s collection of mostly lyric poems, including work by Surrey, Wyatt and Grimald, was immediately popular, inspiring three editions in 1557 and a further six by 1587. The effect was to disseminate the conventions of Petrarchan love poetry, such as the beautiful but chaste mistress before whom the lover prostrates himself and the cruel Cupid, actively hostile to the lover’s desires, yet *Tottel* would also conflate the two, making Cupid the object of Petrarchan idolatry. We can see the beginning of this process in Wyatt’s translation of *Rime* 360, in which he accuses Cupid: ‘God made he me regardlesse, than I ought, / And to my

³³ See Lewis, *Tire Allegory of Love*, p. 121, and my Introduction.

³⁴ Francesco Petrarch, *Petrarch’s Secretum with Introduction, Notes and Critical Anthology*, ed. Davy A. Carozza and H. James Shey (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p. no.

³⁵ See Robert M. Darling’s illuminating reading of this poem, ‘Petrarch’s “Giovane Donna Sotto un Verde Lauro”’, *Modern Language Notes* 86.1 (1971), 1–20.

self to take right little hede', suggesting a blasphemous redirection of love.³⁶ But it is in the poems more loosely indebted to Petrarch that we find Cupid emerging as the object of worship. For example, in no. 233 Sir John Cheke's speaker adopts a posture of adoration:

Thou Cupide God of love, whom Venus thralles do serve,
 I yeld thee thanks upon my knees, as thou dost well deserve ...
 If I do false my faith in any point or case,
 A sodein vengeance fall on me, I aske no better grace.
 (lines 1–2, 29–30)

In Surrey's 'Description of the restlesse state of a lover' (no. 3) a more detailed description of the practices of Cupid-worship is proffered:

And nowe the covert brest I claime,
 That worshipt Cupide secretly,
 And nourished his sacred flame:
 From whence no blasyng sparkes doe flye. (Lines 29–32)

Both Cheke and Surrey may simply have been following the conventions of the medieval religion of love, which they perceived to be sympathetic to Petrarchism. But, as Stephen Hamrick has shown, when read by an Elizabethan audience over thirty years after he wrote it, Cheke's prayer for grace through the intercession of Cupid is implicitly Catholic, as is Surrey's nourishing] his sacred flame', which recalls the practice of maintaining votive candles. Moreover, the necessity of worshipping 'secretely' must have suggested Elizabethan prohibitions against Catholicism. Hamrick does not explore why Cupid should have been chosen as a cipher, but his assumption that poets 'inscribed Catholic and Protestant pieties in their poems to renegotiate the Reformation conflict over "true religion" on a battlefield of Petrarchan lyric' is crucial to an understanding of Cupid's function in later Elizabethan poetry.³⁷

The perception that Petrarchism might act as a stalking-horse for Catholic sentiments is twice suggested by George Whetstone's verse tract, *The Rocke of Regard* (1576). Not only does P. Plasmos mock his former love from a position of apostasy, recalling his attempts to win 'grace' through sacrifices and the intercession of a profane saint, but a note in the margin reads: '*The religion of wanton lovers like the papistes*' (too). *TotteTs Miscellany* was not only taken as further evidence of this likeness, it was blamed for attempting to convert the reader. For example, in *A Briefe and necessary Catéchisme or Instruction* (1572, reprinted fifteen times by 1606) Edward

³⁶ 'Wiates complaint upon Love ...' in *Richard Tottel's Songes and Sonettes: Tire Elizabethan Version*, ed. Paul A. Marquis (Tempe: ACMRS and Renaissance English Text Society, 2007), no. 69, lines 29–30. The Italian is '*Questi m'à fatto men amare Dio / ch' i' non deveva, et men curar me stesso*' ('He has made me love God less than I ought and be less concerned for myself', lines 31–2).

³⁷ Hamrick, '*Tottel's Miscellany and the English Reformation*', 330.

Dering places *Tottel* within a category of books that are not only ‘wanton’ and ‘idle’ but that ‘kindle in mens hearts the sparkes of superstition’ (Azv). In the past, these included not only Arthurian legend and fairy tales but overtly Catholic texts such as ‘their Legendary, [and] their Saintes lives’, dispersed ‘under the Popes priviledge’. Yet contemporary erotic literature surpasses even these fictions:

As thought [sic] the wickednesse of our forefathers were not yet full, we will make up their measure, and set up Shrines to the Worde of God and the Writtings of all his Saintes, which our Forefathers had cast out of all honor, that their own dreames & illusions might be had in price. To this purpose (I trowe) wee have multiplyed for our selves so many newe delights, that wee might iustifie the idolatrous superstición of the elder worlde ... To this purpose we have gotten our Songes & Sonets, our Pallaces of Pleasure, our unchast Fables, & Tragedies. (Azv)

Dering’s emphasis on the multiplication of ‘newe delights’ not only refers to the burgeoning trade in profane books but recalls the proliferation of religious images under the late medieval church (what Johan Huizinga describes as ‘the evil of superfluity’).³⁸ Rather than replace the circulation of Catholic visual arts with the more godly Protestant word, the print trade has been seduced by the same idolatrous impulses, as acknowledged by the titles of recent works: ‘the court of Venus, the Castle of Love, and many other as shameless as these’ (Azv). Dering’s contempt may be aimed at specific texts,³⁹ but when read alongside the imagery of putting up shrines and replacing the Word of God with men’s ‘own dreams and illusions’ it suggests a more general scorn for the medieval religion of love.

It is through the work of Thomas Brice, who waged a campaign against erotic miscellanies by publishing his own emended versions, and the poet Barnabe Googe, whose *Eclogs, Epytaphes and Sonettes* (1563) was partly based on *Tottel*, that Cupid enters the fray. Two of Brice’s works (now lost) are *The Court of Venus Moralised* (1566–7) and another *Tottel’s Miscellany* (1576),⁴⁰ and it would be fascinating to know what Brice did with Cupid here, whether he inveighed against or simply excised him. In

³⁸ Johan Huizinga, *Lire Waning of the Middle Ages*, trans. F. Hopman (London: Penguin, 1924, repr. 2001), p. 149.

³⁹ *Lire Court of Venus*, attributed to Robert Shyngleton (pub. c. 1537, 1547, 1557, 1561), was a pre-*Tottel* poetic miscellany of which only fragments remain including a number of poems by Wyatt. It may have been chosen by Dering on account of its Prologue, in which the lover’s unburdening of himself acts as a parodic version of priestly confession, and Genius offers to intervene in order to procure the lover ‘grace’. See Robert Shyngleton, *Tire Court of Venus*, ed. Russell A. Fraser (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1955), pp. 49–50. *The Castell of Love* (pub. 1547, 1550, 1560, 1564) is a translation by John Bouchier, Lord Berners, of a Spanish romance, *Cárcel de amor* (1492) by Diego de San Pedro, consisting of a number of amorous letters and speeches between the protagonists, Leriano and Laureola. Dering may have singled it out because Berners had also translated *Huon of Bordeaux and Arthur of Little Britain*, which are also denigrated in his preface.

⁴⁰ Shyngleton, *Tire Court of Venus*, p. 62.

a sample of his polemic that does remain, a broadside *Against Filthy Writing and Such Like Delighting* (London, 1562), his reading of erotic literature prompts the question: ‘Tel me is Christ, or Cupide Lord? Doth God or Venus reigne? / And whose are wee? Whom ought we serve?’ (lines 5–6).⁴¹ As a writer of ‘profane’ lyrics but one seeking to forge a new kind of Protestant poetry,⁴² Barnabe Googe also critiques religious and poetic idolatry through Cupid. In the final poem of his *Eclogs*, ‘Cupido Conquered’, the latter is a Catholic tyrant whose torments resemble those endured by Protestant martyrs in the reign of Mary Tudor,⁴³ until he is finally defeated by a chaste, female monarch (Diana/Elizabeth). This defeat is also a redemption of poetry, as anticipated by eclogue 8, where Cornix urges the other shepherds to abandon Petrarchism in favour of divine lyrics: ‘leave Cupido’s camp, / the end whereof is vile; / Remove Dame Venus from your eyes / and harken here a while’ (lines 41–4). But if the collection exposes ‘the emasculating idolatrous tyrannical power of courtly love’⁴⁴ through Cupid, it still leaves itself open to the scorn of polemicists such as Dering and Brice by deploying the religion of love.⁴⁵ It is this difficulty of working within the conventions of an erotic poetry that required Cupid but from a Protestant position that was innately suspicious of him that we find being negotiated by two other poetic successors of *Tottel*: Sidney and Spenser. What is distinctive about their response is, first, their engagement with Cupid as a subject of visual art, and second, the way in which they manipulate him as a means of critiquing not only Elizabethan iconophobia but the policy of iconoclasm by which it was expressed.

Sidney and Cupid-art

The erotic in Sidney’s work is insistently and profoundly ocular. In Book i of the *New Arcadia*, Pyrocles tells how his passion for Philoclea began when he gazed on her portrait. Subsequently confronted by her beauty in the flesh, he continues to frame it in terms of painting and to indulge his ravished sight:

⁴¹ Brice’s use of Cupid may have been specifically informed by the ballad ‘The Gods of Love’, published in the same year, in which Cupid is appealed to by the frustrated lover and implored to ‘Grant [his] request...’ See Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, p. 40.

⁴² See Tom Betteridge, *Literature and Politics in the English Reformation* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 187–98, p. 197.

⁴³ ‘Cupido Conquered’, lines 437–48. See also eclogue 1, lines 87–90 and eclogue 8, lines 125–40. Googe’s Protestant step-grandfather, Sir James Hales, killed himself after he was imprisoned by Mary Tudor. See Judith M. Kennedy, *Eclogues, Epitaphs and Sonnets* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1989), pp. 5–6.

⁴⁴ Betteridge, *Literature and Politics*, p. 188. For further discussion of Googe’s critique of court culture through Cupid, see Hamrick, *Tire Catholic Imaginary*, pp. 35–70.

⁴⁵ ‘Cupido Conquered’ begins with the dreamer being reassured by Mercury that the Muses appreciate his efforts, even if ‘the cankered sort’ do not (lines 153–204). For further discussion, see Betteridge, *Literature and Politics*, pp. 188–91.

Sometimes my eyes would lay themselves open to receive all the darts she did throw, sometimes close up with admiration, as if with a contrary fancy they would preserve the riches of that sight they had gotten, or cast my lids as curtains over the image of beauty her presence had painted in them. (86–7)⁴⁶

Pyrocles' terms are explicitly idolatrous: his eyelids become the curtains to a shrine, drawn back to reveal not simply 'image' as painting, but 'image' as idol. Nor is he alone in this erotic worship: Basilius literally blasphemes against Apollo: 'She doth possess, thy image is defaced' (*OldArcadia* (OA) 156); Zelmane describes her betrayal of Philoclea as committing] a sacrilege against the sweet saint that lived in her inmost temple',⁴⁷ and the romance is littered with personal objects transformed into relics, passionately kissed and revered. As we have seen, profane love had long been described in terms of religious worship, but the instinctual and compulsive idolatry with which Sidney's lovers respond to one another in the *Arcadia* is striking. Not only does it escape explicit censure by the narrator or punishment by the plot,⁴⁸ it was authored by a supposedly militant Protestant in an England where iconoclasm had been official policy since 1559.

One explanation might be offered by the revisionist historiography which has problematized the notion of a 'Calvinist consensus' to acknowledge a range of Protestantisms including Calvinist, anti-Presbyterian and proto-Arminian.⁴⁹ Indeed, Sidney can be seen to have adopted various Protestant identities throughout his life. His early education was notably Calvinist, and he was capable of virulent anti-Catholic sentiments in his private correspondence as well as in the 'Letter ... to Queen Elizabeth, Touching Her Marriage to Monsieur' (1580). Yet, in his literary career, Sidney seems inclined to Lutheranism, as suggested by his defence of human reason and assertions of free will.⁵⁰ More specifically, critics have been urged to abandon 'the failed paradigm

⁴⁶ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (*The New Arcadia*), ed. Victor Skretkowicz (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). References to the *Old Arcadia* are taken from Katherine Duncan-Jones' edition *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (*The Old Arcadia*) (Oxford University Press, 1985, repr. 1999)-

⁴⁷ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 660.

⁴⁸ Andrew Weiner reads the *Arcadia* as more critical of idolatry and assumes that this would have alienated Sidney's readers from the protagonists. See *Sir Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Protestantism: A Study of Contexts* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), p. 87. However, the *Arcadia's* contemporary reputation as a sexually titillating work suggests that its readers were far more sympathetic to the lovers' erotic idolatry. See Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 106–7.

⁴⁹ These are Penry Williams' categories from his book, *The Later Tudors: England 1547–1603* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

⁵⁰ See Steven R. Mentz, 'Reason, Faith and Shipwreck in Sidney's *New Arcadia*', *Studies in English Literature* 44 (2004), 1–18, and Ake Bergvall, 'Reason in Luther, Calvin and Sidney', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 23 (1992), 115–27.

of Calvinist piety for interpreting Sidneian poetics' in favour of Philippism, inspired by the work and influence of Philip Melanchthon.⁵¹ His defence of an emotional response to the sacraments, asserting the value of man's visual sense (As the Word enters the ears to strike the heart, so the rite itself enters through the eyes to move the heart'),⁵² seems likely to have appealed to Sidney the poet. His refusal to condemn images outright, arguing that they are *adiaphora*, that is indifferent in themselves and to be prohibited only in the abuse, is also suggestive.⁵³

Nevertheless, Melanchthon's teaching hardly explains the violent attraction to the image that we find throughout the Sidneian canon. Rather than assert the doctrine of *adiaphora*, Sidney's writing is often imbued with a Calvinist anxiety produced by the extreme (and, I would suggest, deeply Catholic) pleasure that he takes in the visual arts.⁵⁴ For example, in *Astrophil and Stella* sonnet 5, the impulse to erotic worship, as prompted by beauty and art, inspires not Philippan justifications but Calvinist selfcastigation:

It is most true, what we call Cupid's dart,
An image is, which for ourselves we carve;
And, fools, adore in temple of our heart
Till that good god make church and churchmen starve.
(lines 5–8)

This dart is not only a graven image but a relic, and the idolater deceives himself by 'calling] it Cupid's dart when it is an artifact fashioned by man's hand. Here, Astrophil may be recalling Calvin's *Treatise on Relics* (1543, English 1561) in which the theologian expresses disgust at the blindness of relic-worshippers 'that whatever name was imposed upon any rubbish presented to them, they received it without any examination or judgement'.⁵⁵ In line 7, we hear St Paul's warning to the Corinthians: 'What hath the temple of God to do with idols?' (2.8), while the echoes of Deuteronomy 27 offer a prognostication for Astrophil's future: 'Cursed be he that maketh a carved image or a cast or molten image, which is abomination against the Lord'. Finally, in

⁵¹ Robert E. Stillman, "“Deadly Stinging Adders”: Sidney's Piety, Philippism, and the *Defense of Poesy*, *Spenser Studies* 6 (2002), 231–70, at 236.

⁵² Melanchthon, *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, as quoted by Michael B. Aune, *To Move the Heart: Philip Melanchthon's Rhetorical View of Rite and Its Implications for Contemporary Ritual Theory* (San Francisco: Christian University Press, 1994), p. 1.

⁵³ *Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci Communes 1555*, trans. Clyde L. Manschreck (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 308.

⁵⁴ Katherine Duncan-Jones has suggested that it was Sidney's Catholic sympathies, implied by his meeting with Edmund Campion in Prague in 1577, that explain Elizabeth's apparent mistrust of him. See *Sir Philip Sidney: Courtier Poet* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 89, 124–7, 150–1, 216–17, 219–20.

⁵⁵ Jean Calvin, *A Treatise on Relics*, trans. Count Valerian Krasinski (Edinburgh: Johnstone, Hunter & Co., 1870), p. 221.

line 8, Astrophil ventriloquizes a familiar medieval and Lutheran objection to religious art, namely that the money would have been better spent relieving the poor.⁵⁶

But despite the authority that this tissue of anti-idolatry quotations gives to Astrophil's argument, his catechism does not persuade, largely due to the distracting charisma of the figure he sets himself against. Cupid's dart may be a relic (and a metonym for Petrarchan poetry) but it retains a powerful attraction for Astrophil (we create it '*for ourselves*'). Moreover, he takes pleasure throughout the sequence not only in his imagined encounters with Cupid, but in their complicity.⁵⁷ Perhaps Sidney is critiquing the idolatrous Astrophil from a position of enlightened Calvinism, but elsewhere in the canon Cupid is equally appealing and hard to disavow. This is attributable not simply to the value that Sidney places on love or the erotic, but his pleasure in the visual arts, particularly those of the Italian Renaissance.⁵⁸

Where the majority of Elizabethan poets were reliant on literary descriptions of Cupid and the images disseminated in tapestries, emblems and book illustrations, Sidney came to know Cupid as the subject of Renaissance painting during his travels in Italy in the early 1570s. We know that he had his portrait painted by Veronese when in Venice; he may also have visited Titian's studio.⁵⁹ However, it is a painting that Sidney saw in London, 'A Picture of a naked Lady sleeping and Cupid menaicing hir with his darte' in his uncle, the Earl of Leicester's, collection, that most strongly implies his debt to Italian Renaissance art. Although the painting remains unidentified,⁶⁰ its description recalls Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus in a Landscape* (1507–8, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden, retouched by Titian c. 1510) which has been credited with establishing the theme of the reclining female nude across Europe.⁶¹ As this painting now appears, Venus is sleeping alone but contemporary descriptions, restoration work

⁵⁶ See Carl C. Christensen, *Art and the Reformation in Germany* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979), pp. 43–7.

⁵⁷ Not only are they both Stella's victims, but they share the same heraldic use of the arrow (sonnet 65), a detail that also connects Astrophil with Sidney. In fact, all of the *Arcadia*'s most devout believers in Cupid, namely Histor, Pyrocles, Philisides and Amphialus, have been identified as figures for Sidney. See Edward Berry, *Use Making of Sir Philip Sidney* (London and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) and Alan Sinfield, 'Sidney and Astrophil', *Studies in English Literature* 20 (winter 1980), 25–41.

⁵⁸ Important studies of Sidney's appreciation of art are Katherine Duncan-Jones, 'Sidney's Pictorial Imagination,' BLitt thesis, Somerville College, Oxford, June 1964, and Elizabeth Klein Geren, '“The Painted Gloss of Pleasure”: Sir Philip Sidney and the Visual Arts in Sixteenth-Century England', PhD thesis, Yale University, October 1998.

⁵⁹ See Katherine Duncan-Jones, 'Sidney and Titian', *English Renaissance Studies*, ed. John Carey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 1–11.

⁶⁰ Duncan-Jones has proposed a copy of Titian's *Jupiter and Antiope or Pardo Venus* (1535–40, retouched c. 1560) in 'Sidney's Pictorial Imagination', 48, n. 2. Yet Cupid appears here as a small and rather minor figure and his gesture of aiming an arrow at Venus from the sky lacks the intimacy that the inventory and other Venetian paintings of the two figures lead us to expect.

⁶¹ Bruce Cole, *Titian and Renaissance Painting, 1450–1590* (Oxford and Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), p. 55.

and recent X-rays all point to the original presence of Cupid,⁶² much as we find him in a subsequent imitation where he directs his arrow with a more explicitly libidinous intent (see Figure 1).

It seems to me highly likely that Sidney saw a copy or imitation of this theme during his stay in Venice and perhaps exported one back to England. That the image lingered in his mind is suggested by the following description of Pamela and Philoclea retiring to bed in the *New Arcadia*:

they impoverished their clothes to enrich their bed, which for that night might well scorn the shrine of Venus. And there, cherishing one another with dear though chaste embracements, with sweet though cold kisses, it might seem that [L]ove was come to play him there without dart, or that weary of his own fires, he was there to refresh himself between their sweet-breathing lips. (151)

According to the conventions of Italian Renaissance art, Cupid's presence defines the naked woman as Venus, thus celebrating her peerless beauty. It also places the figures in a context of profane or illicit love.⁶³ As Sidney uses it, only the first of these expectations is fulfilled, for the writer exceeds his source by representing two nudes yet coyly denies their erotic power. Cupid's appearance *sans* dart signals the temporary abandonment of his libidinous career, whilst the absence of the phallus (mimicked by his lack of an arrow) suggests the chaste passion of the sisters. And yet, so strong is Cupid's erotic symbolism that we might doubt his disarmament. For the absence of Cupid's dart does not preclude sapphic passion (indeed, this scene occurs immediately after Philoclea's discovery that she loves Zelmane, a figure the reader knows to be a man but whom Philoclea believes to be a woman).⁶⁴ More importantly, perhaps, the sisters' naked beauty seems intended to have a titillating effect upon the imagined spectator. Hence, if Cupid's presence does not describe the feeling between the sisters, he might yet symbolize the *reader's* inflamed desire, reminding us that Cupid does not require arrows to inspire love when he has placed such an amorous image before us.

This scene focuses our attention on a crucial aspect of Cupid throughout Sidney's work, namely his manipulation of visual images to demonstrate his power. Hence, although Cupid may be the subject of the spectator's gaze in a painting or narrative

⁶² In 1525, on seeing the painting in the house of Gerolamo Marcello in Venice, Marcantonio Michiel described it as 'The canvas of the naked Venus sleeping in a landscape with a small Cupid'. See Cole, *Titian and Renaissance Painting*, p. 54. On the history of the restoration work that discovered and then obscured the Cupid, with a reconstruction by Hans Posse, see Jaynie Anderson, *Giorgione: The Painter of Poetic Brevity* (Paris and New York: Flammarion, 1997), p. 86.

⁶³ For example, in Tintoretto's *Vulcan surprises Venus and Mars* (1555, Die Alte Pinokothek, Munich), we understand, through Cupid's presence, that the figure hiding under the table is Mars, interrupted in his dalliance with Venus.

⁶⁴ On the lesbian eroticism of this scene, see Richard A. Tevin, 'What? How? Female-female Desire in Sidney's *New Arcadia*', *Criticism* 39 (Fall 1997), 463-79.



Figure i. After Titian, *Sleeping Venus*

description, he always stands both inside and outside the work. *Astrophil and Stella* offers numerous examples of the way in which Cupid appropriates a woman's beauty: 'Fair eyes, sweet lips, dear heart, that foolish I / Could hope by Cupid's help on you to prey; / Since to himself he doth your gifts apply' (no. 43, 1–3). Whilst the conceit of the love-god positioning himself in a woman's eyes, on her cheek, or in her bosom was conventional,⁶⁵ perhaps no other Elizabethan poet used it to such intense effect as Sidney. In sonnet 12, he constructs a kind of double blazon in which Stella's every physical perfection becomes a Cupidean attribute:

Cupid, because thou shin'st in Stella's eyes,
 That from her locks, thy day-nets, none 'scapes free,
 That those lips swell, so full of thee they be,
 That her sweet breath makes oft thy flames to rise,
 That in her breast thy pap well sugared lies,
 That her grace gracious makes thy wrongs, that she,
 What words so e'er she speaks, persuades for thee,
 That her clear voice lifts thy fame to the skies ...⁶⁶

Moreover, in Sidney's romance, Cupid is imagined arranging spectacles of love, not just through the beauty of an individual but through the interaction of various figures. For example, in the *Old Arcadia*, 'it seemed that love had purposed to make in those solitary woods a perfect demonstration of his unresistible force' (44). In the *New Arcadia*: 'Truly it were a notable dumb show of Cupid's kingdom to see my eyes, languishing with over-vehement longing, direct themselves to Philoclea; and Basilius ... making such suits to me ... while the terrible wit of Gynecia, carried with the beer of violent love, runs through us all' (88).

In this sense, Sidney and Cupid share the same artistic strategy. For not only does Sidney use paintings to demonstrate the power of love (see the examples in Kalanders picture gallery) and as an incitement to love (Pyrocles is entranced by Philoclea's portrait), but his narrative method is profoundly pictorial. As Jon S. Lawry observes: 'Pictures tend to inform the action, on the one hand, and narratives tend to recede into a collection of instructive tableaux on the other'.⁶⁷ There

⁶⁵ See M. B. Ogle's extensive list of examples in 'The Classical Origin and Tradition of Eiterary Conceits', *American Journal of Philology* 34 (1913), 125–52, at 140–6.

⁶⁶ Lines 1–8. For further discussion of this sonnet, see Chapter 4.

⁶⁷ Eawry, *Sidney's Two Arcadias: Pattern and Proceeding* (Ithaca and Eondon: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 156. For further discussion of Sidney's relationship to art, particularly in light of his revisions to the *New Arcadia*, see Judith Dundas, *Pencils Rhétorique: Renaissance Poets and the Art of Painting* (Eondon and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1993), pp.22–53.

may be a moral difference between Cupid's use of visual art and that of Sidney, but both artists are dedicated to achieving their ends through the affective power of beauty.⁶⁸ Where this similarity potentially undermines Sidney's Protestantism is in its assertion that such images can and should inspire belief. For example, when Pyrocles reveals his true identity to Philoclea, ashamed that he appears before her in the guise of an Amazon, he describes his unwilling transformation:

<verse>

If ever the sound of love have come to your ears, or if ever you have understood what force it hath had to conquer the strongest hearts and change the most settled estates, receive here, not only an example of those strange tragedies, but one that in himself hath contained all the particularities of their misfortunes; and from henceforth believe it may be, since you shall see it is. *You shall see, I say, a living image and a present story of the best pattern [L]ove hath ever showed of his workmanship.* (OA 105, *New Arcadia* (NA) 230–1, italics mine)

Here, Love has not simply transformed the protagonist from male to female he has rendered him into a variety of Cupidean artworks. Pyrocles refers to the emblem (we see a visual image of Love's strange power, to which is appended a verbal description); the love tragedy; and the romance or 'present story' of neglected heroism and metamorphosis that is the *Arcadia* itself. Nevertheless, there is also something hagiographie about this new Cupidean art. Though Luther had criticized the veneration of saints, he defended 'the lives of the saints' declaring that 'next to Holy Scripture there is no more useful book for Christendom ... For in these stories one is greatly pleased to find how they sincerely believed God's Word, confessed it with their lips, praised it by their living, and honoured and confirmed it by their suffering and dying.'⁶⁹ Pyrocles has reinvented himself as one of Love's saints. He bears witness to the transforming power of Love upon his own life; he attests to his suffering; and he urges the spectator to believe through his example: 'henceforth believe it may be, since you shall see it is'.

What makes Pyrocles' hagiography more contentious is the fact that he describes himself as a 'living image'. Religious statuary aroused the greatest antipathy among Reformers, not just because of the second commandment but on account of its aesthetic appeal. Statues of the Virgin Mary and the saints were often painted, plated with gold and silver and encrusted with jewels, and their three-dimensionality was thought to encourage a kind of erotic devotion — Erasmus complained of Catholics kissing and fondling statues (*EI* 410–18). Moreover, since Scripture had defined idolatry as a kind of spiritual fornication (Ezekiel 23,1 Romans 18), idols were by definition whores: 'as

⁶⁸ See William Craft, 'The Shaping Picture of Tove in Sidney's *Arcadia*, *Studies in Philology* 81 (Fall 1984), 395–418, at 395.

⁶⁹ Martin Euther, *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, ed. Ewald M. Plass, 3 vols. (St Eouis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), vol. in, p. 1251.

the looking on a harlot will infect one with bodily uncleanness, so also the looking upon an Idol will pollute an ignorant and blind heart with Idolatry, & bring it to confusion'.⁷⁰ It is Philoclea's response to Pyrocles that defines him as not just an 'image' but an idol:

the joy which wrought into Pygmalion's mind while he found his beloved image wax little and little both softer and warmer in his folded arms, till at length it accomplished his gladness with a perfect woman's shape, still beautified with the former perfections, was even such as, by each degree of Cleophila's words, stealingly entered into Philoclea's soul, till her pleasure was fully made up with the manifesting of his being, which was such as in hope did overcome hope. (*OA* 106, *NA* 231)

Medieval poetry had long alluded to the Pygmalion legend in order to condemn the lover's erotic idolatry, but the latter took on a more specific, anti-Catholic resonance in the early modern period.⁷¹ For example, in 'Pygmalion's Friend, and his Image' (1576), George Pettie describes the sculptor's passion for an inanimate object but concludes that it is no 'more to be marvelled at in him, than in an infinite number that live at this day, which loves images right well, and verily persuade themselves that images have the power to pray for them, and help them to heaven'.⁷² Similarly, in John Marston's *The Metamorphoses of Pygmalion's Image* (1598), the sculptor is ridiculed for his amorous gestures towards the statue, though he is merely representative of a more widespread delusion:

Look how the peevish Papists crouch and kneel
To some dumb idol with their offering,
As if a senseless carved stone could feel
The ardour of his bootless chattering. (Lines 79—82)⁷³

Sidney's romance anticipates a fate worse than mockery for its Pygmalion and Galatea, yet it also defends their erotic worship in implicitly Catholic terms. At his trial, Pyrocles is condemned for 'whorish beauty' (*OA* 338) and sentenced to be thrown from a high tower, while Musidorus is ordered to suffer beheading (*OA* 353). These punishments may be encoded in Arcadian law but they also allude to the practices of Elizabethan iconoclasts who, as Huston Diehl observes, 'almost never looted the

⁷⁰ John Dod, *A Plaine and Familiar Exposition of the Ten Commandments with a Catechism* (Eondon, 1605), p. 61.

⁷¹ See Jane M. Miller, 'Some Versions of Pygmalion', in *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and the Arts from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 205–14.

⁷² George Pettie, *A Petite Pallate of Pettie his Pleasure* (London, 1576), pp. 129–30.

⁷³ Reprinted in *Amorous Rites: Elizabethan Erotic Verse*, ed. Sandra Clark (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1994), pp. 117–25, at p. 120.

images for material gain, instead preferring to deface or desecrate them in certain highly symbolic ways, gouging out their eyes or piercing their sides ... in a symbolic kind of killing'.⁷⁴ Euarchus' decision to smash the beauty of both princes might thus be a tacit admission of the idolatry they inspire. Nevertheless, Pyrocles' appearance as a 'living image' also encourages a more sympathetic reading, as borne out by the romance's conclusion. Where the foolishness of praying to an image in Pettie and Marston is predicated on the impossibility of communicating with a block of stone or wood, Philoclea's prayers before the statue are not uttered in vain. Unlike the *Homily*, which deplores the worship of idols because they are merely the 'dead and dumbe workes of mans handes, having mouths and speake not, eyes and see not, handes and feele not' (46), Pyrocles can speak, see and touch. Hence, like those Catholics who insisted on the presence of the saint within the icon, Philoclea finds that the body she desires *does* exist beneath metaphorical marble and Amazonian disguise. Elsewhere, the Catholic defence of image-worship (that it is directed not at the object but at the saint or God represented) is subtly endorsed. In Book 5, Philoclea describes Pyrocles as a statue again in a letter defending him against charges of rape and regicide:

Are the gods, think you, deceived in their workmanship? Artificers will not use marble but to noble uses. Should those powers be so overshot as to frame so precious an image of their own, but to honourable purposes? O speak with him, O hear him, O know him. (OA 342)

Pyrocles' language is similarly ocular and religious, insisting that Philoclea look, that she will see, that she will then know and believe (OA 105, NA 231). This association between seeing and knowing can be traced to both classical philosophy and the Bible.⁷⁵ Here, it anticipates the nexus of associations more famous from *The Winters Tale*: 'If you can behold it, / I'll make the statue move indeed ... / It is required you do awake your faith' (5.3.87–8, 95), except that in Shakespeare's play, the characters are careful to distinguish between this art and the idolatry associated with Catholicism. Paulina insists that this is nothing unlawful, nothing blasphemous, whilst Perdita is anxious that her desire to kiss the statue should not be understood as 'superstition' (43).⁷⁶ Yet Sidney does not try to avoid this association. Pyrocles enjoins Philoclea to perceive 'a miserable miracle of affection' (OA 105, NA 231) and she responds with the appropriate Catholic wonder: the true 'manifesting of his being' is a triumph of hope, perhaps alluding to Christ's Incarnation, one of the most obvious arguments in

⁷⁴ Huston Diehl, 'Bewhored Images and Imagined Whores: Iconophobia and Gynophobia in Stuart Love Tragedies', *English Literary Renaissance* 26.1 (1996), in-37, at 118.

⁷⁵ It recurs in Plato and Epicurus, the Books of Moses and St John, as discussed by Forest G. Robinson, in *Else Shape of Things Known: Sidney's Apology in Its Philosophical Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

⁷⁶ For an extended discussion of the play's uneasy relationship with Catholicism, see Walter S. H. Lim, 'Knowledge and Belief in *Use Winter's Tale*', *Studies in English Literature* 41:2 (spring 2001), 317–34.

defence of the Church's use of the visual. But above all, it is 'the desire to see' that suggests Sidney's innately Catholic approach to imagery. As Sarah Stanbury argues, this desire was at the heart of medieval literature,

shaping the language of desire in lyrics of the Passion, with their repeated calls to look on the suffering Christ; structuring the trajectories of desire in dream visions such as *Pearl*: offering a set of terms for meditation in the *Shewings* of Julian of Norwich; grounding the narrative of religious instruction in Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*: and offering defining metaphors for Chaucer's explorations of love, sanctity, and chivalric spectacle. In many texts the gaze itself, the very privilege of vision, is not only a solitary desire but a carefully orchestrated act mediated by others who tell the viewer how and what to see.⁷⁷

If Sidney was secretly resistant to the Reformation's inhibition of the desire to see (with its concomitant diminution in the ability to believe), his position is most daringly expressed in the *Arcadian* iconoclasm directed against Cupid.

Condemning Iconoclasm: *The Arcadia* and *Cupid's Revenge*

In the first Eclogue of the *Old Arcadia*, the shepherd, Dicus, manifests a powerful hatred of Love as both a passion and a deity:

So now he came, as a man should say, armed to show his malice; for in the one hand he bare a whip, in the other a naked Cupid, such as we commonly set him forth. But on his breast he ware a painted table, wherein he had given Cupid quite a new form. (57)⁷⁸

Dicus acts as a scourge of Cupid, a kind of Erotomastix, by threatening the small statue that he carries with a whip. However, his performance is also iconoclastic in the sense that it deconstructs the familiar icon of Cupid and launches an attack upon art itself. As well as the statue, Dicus bears a scurrilous painting of Cupid, in which the latter is no longer the son of Venus but the monstrous birth of Io and Argus, a hangman resembling a devil with horns and cloven feet, wrinkled and covered with eyes (57). Not only does this new icon recall the devilish features of the medieval idol,⁷⁹ it also emphasizes love's (and the idol's) abuse of the visual sense. As the accompanying

⁷⁷ Stanbury, *The Visual Object of Desire in Late Medieval England*, p. 6.

⁷⁸ This new form would be recognized as Sidney's own invention by John Florio in *Florios Second Frutes* (1591), p. 167.

⁷⁹ See Camille, *The Gothic Idol*, p. 57.

poem explains, ‘To open eyes all beauties he doth rain; / Creeping to each with flatfring of desire’ (59) and the painting depicts Cupid carrying ‘the pictures of a goodly man and an excellent fair woman’ (57). Thus, Dicus’ iconophobia is also directed at those artists who perpetuate the false image of Cupid:

Poor painters oft with silly poets join
 To fill the world with strange but vain conceits:
 One brings the stuff, the other stamps the coin,
 Which breeds naught else but glosses of deceits.
 Thus painters Cupid paint, thus poets do,
 A naked god, blind, young, with arrows two. (58)

The irony is, of course, that Dicus has produced a poem and a painting in order to demystify Cupid, and he may be indebted to the Renaissance emblem tradition for his attempt. ‘*In statuam Amoris*’ from Alciato’s *Emblemata* (1550, 123–4) begins with a statue of Cupid and proceeds to blame poets for perpetuating various fictions about that deity.⁸⁰ Unlike the Italian emblem, however, Dicus’ hostility towards Cupid and his poets has an anti-Catholic resonance. ‘Vain’ in line 2 is one of the adjectives most frequently used to denigrate pagan and Catholic idols, implying that what the poets and painters produce is ultimately futile and even barren: ‘breeding] naught’ (4). ‘Gloss’ is used elsewhere in Sidney’s work to mean a deceptive or seductive surface. Hence, ‘glosses of deceits’ (4) might mean ‘false images based on fictions’, as Maurice Evans has suggested (856, n. 14). But if we read ‘gloss’ as an interpretation of a text, often associated with biblical passages and used in a derogatory sense (*OED* sb², 1: A sophisticated or disingenuous interpretation), the phrase could also signify ‘false [Catholic] readings of fictional [pagan] texts’. In 1601, William Perkins insisted that Catholics ‘doe nothing els but varnish over the Idol-service of the Pagans, and present to us old things with new names’.⁸¹

Dicus’ hostility towards the deceptions of art and his conflation of pagan and Catholic idolatry might seem to afford us another glimpse of Sidneian Calvinism. And yet, within the romance, no one apart from old Geron agrees with him. Rather, they hiss and stamp their feet at what they take to be ‘unpardonable blasphemy’ (58). Moreover, the shepherd Histor (a potential cipher for Sidney himself)⁸² looks anxiously up at the sky and ‘with great vehemency desired all the hearers to take heed how they seemed to allow any part of his speech against so revengeful a god as Cupid was’ (59). In order to persuade them from further blasphemy, he relates the tragedy of Plangus and Erona:

⁸⁰ Alciato’s list of paradoxes, such as the fact that Cupid is blind and yet an archer, is echoed in the second stanza of Dicus’ poem. Like Dicus, Alciato displaces the conventional icon with his own version of ‘what Love truly is’, here represented by a naked youth with a shield.

⁸¹ William Perkins, *A Warning Against the Idolatrie of the Last Times* (Cambridge, 1601), p. 130.

⁸² See Anne Sussman, ‘Histor, History, and Narrative Memory in Sidney’s *Arcadia*’, *Sidney Journal* 21 (2003), 39–49.

Of late there reigned a king of Lydia who had for the blessing of his marriage his only daughter Erona, a princess worthy for her beauty as much praise as beauty may be praised. This Erona being fourteen years old, seeing the country of Lydia so much devoted to Cupid as that in each place his naked pictures and images were superstitiously adored, procured so much of her father (either moved thereunto by the hate of that god, or the shamefast consideration of such nakedness) utterly to deface and pull down all those pictures of him; which how terribly he punished quickly after appeared. For she had not lived a year longer when she was stricken with most obstinate love to a young man, but of mean parentage. (OA 60, NA 205)

Erona insists on marrying Antiphilus despite her father's objections. Subsequently, the king dies of grief; a rejected suitor makes war upon Erona's kingdom; Antiphilus mistreats and betrays his wife, before being captured and tortured to death; Erona herself will be burnt at the stake unless the two princes rescue her; and Plangus despairs at his inability either to make Erona love him or to save her. It is not surprising that Histor refers to Cupid as 'so revengeful a god' (59) since he perceives Cupid's agency in each tragic action, from Erona's initial passion, to the tyrant's invasion, to Antiphilus' betrayal, and finally to Plangus' doomed love.

Before considering this tragedy further, it is worth pausing to appreciate how discordant it appears within the limits that Sidney set himself. Neither version of the *Arcadia* features the kind of allegory that recurs in *The Faerie Queene* — we cannot imagine Pyrocles and Musidorus encountering Mammon or Suspicion, or Una and Redcrosse for that matter. Yet this story of Plangus and Erona may be Sidney's most Spense-rian episode, featuring as it does a character called Erona (Possessed by Love) and Antiphilus (Opposed to Love),⁸³ in a conflict overseen by Cupid. Furthermore, where the *Arcadia* eschews the explicit *deus ex machina*, resolving its plot by the discovery of human error and through chance or providence, Erona's story is shaped by repeated acts of divine intervention. The resulting sense of helplessness militates against the whole moral/ pedagogical thrust of *Ate Arcadia* wherein the protagonists are encouraged to confront the consequences of their own moral choices. What makes Sidney's Cupidean tragedy more remarkable is that it probably represents a considerable alteration of its source. I have argued elsewhere that Sidney was indebted to 'Euphimia of Corinth' from Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*, translated into English by William Painter in *The Palace of Pleasure* (1567, repr. 1575),⁸⁴ yet this narrative makes no reference to Cupid's agency. If Sidney did not invent this aspect of the narrative, he must have taken it from another source — but to what effect? Critics have tended to focus on

⁸³ Walter Davis, 'Thematic Unity in the *New Arcadia*', *Studies in Philology* 57 (April 1960), 123–43, at 130.

⁸⁴ See Jane Kingsley-Smith, 'Sidney, Cinthio and Painter: A New Source for Sidney's *Arcadia*', *Review of English Studies* 57.229 (April 2006), 169–75.

the moral allegory behind the episode. For example, Nancy Lindheim reads ‘Plangus and Erona’ as demonstrating ‘the irrationality of love, which is responsible both for dire consequences and poor judgment on the part of Erona and for spurring loyal but self-defeating service on the part of Plangus’.⁸⁵ But if we take the Cupidean framework seriously, Love’s actions are far from irrational for he punishes a rebel in demonstration of his power. Nor is there anything random in the fact that Erona becomes enamoured of a man of inferior social status, for this was a much-feared Cupidean revenge.⁸⁶

More generally, Erona’s downfall has been understood in terms of the triumph of Passion over Reason.⁸⁷ Weiner argues that ‘as Erona’s example shows, it is not enough just to hate all that Cupid stands for; one must find some way of preventing the passions from taking control’.⁸⁸ This is persuasive up to a point; it mirrors the main plot in which Musidorus and Pyrocles have abandoned their heroic duties to indulge in reckless love. Yet this interpretation also underestimates the Cupidean frame and its insistence that there is nothing Erona could have done. She did not choose to love Antiphilus, nor did she choose to indulge this passion beyond all rational restraints, if we believe Histor when he insists that ‘the ground and maintenance’ of the tragedy ‘was only Cupid’ (59). This argument also shifts our attention away from the moment that Sidney has designated as the beginning of the catastrophe: not Erona’s infatuation with Antiphilus but her rejection of Cupid. If, however, we view Erona’s tragedy in terms of historical/religious allegory, we find a more satisfying reason for the inclusion of this Cinthian narrative and for Sidney’s addition of Cupid.

Erona’s antipathy towards naked pictures and images’ echoes the suspicions of English Protestants about nude statuary, a concern that also influenced the Counter-Reformation so that in 1566 Pope Pius V ordered the dispersal of his sculpture gallery.⁸⁹ More specifically, Erona’s command that paintings and statues be destroyed in order to eradicate a false religion from the realm recalls Elizabeth’s own insistence that the clergy ‘shall take away, utterly extinct and destroy all shrines, covering of shrines, all tables, candlesticks, trindals, and rolls of wax, pictures, paintings’ (R4 3.16). In the terms of the *Homily*, Erona would be considered an exemplary ruler (perhaps more so than Elizabeth) in fulfilling the prince’s duty to avoid ‘God’s horrible wrath, and our most dreadfull danger’ by ‘the destruction and utter abolishing of all such Images and idoles out of the Church and Temple of GOD’ (75). What must have surprised Sidney’s readers, then, is the absence of any providential end to this Reformation. Rather, it serves as a warning against the personal and national implications of iconoclasm. Moreover, although there remains no documented evidence of such a

⁸⁵ Nancy Lindheim, ‘Sidney’s *Arcadia*, Book II: Retrospective Narrative’, *Studies in Philology* 64 (1967), 159–86, at 183.

⁸⁶ See Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book 1, lines 906–9.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Davis, ‘Thematic Unity’, 130, 135–7; araci Lawry, *Sidney’s Two Arcadias*, p. 66.

⁸⁸ Weiner, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Protestantism*, p. 117.

⁸⁹ See Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: the Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500–1900* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 14.

response (those passages of the *Arcadia* considered relevant to contemporary political history focus on tyranny, the threat of deposition and the chaos contingent upon the death of a monarch),⁹⁰ would argue that at least two of Sidney's readers, Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher in their tragedy, *Cupid's Revenge* (1608), understood and even expanded upon its iconoclastic subtext.

Before examining this play as a response to 'Plangus and Erona', it is important to acknowledge the differences between Cupid in the *Old Arcadia* and in the text Beaumont and Fletcher read.⁹¹ It seems clear that when he came to revise the romance Sidney was more cautious about asserting his characters' belief in the God of Love.⁹² For example, Histor remarks of Erona's error 'which how terribly [Cupid] punished quickly after appeared' (60), but in the *New Arcadia* Philoclea distances herself: 'which how terribly he punished — for to that the Lycians impute it — quickly after appeared' (205). Similarly, where Histor states 'Then, lo was Cupid's work well seen' (61), Philoclea ponders: 'Then, lo, if Cupid be a god, or that the tyranny of our own thoughts seem as a god unto us' (207). But perhaps most importantly, the sequence of the 'Poor Painters' poem and 'Plangus and Erona' has been reversed. Not only does this weaken the threat of Cupid's vengeful response to blasphemy, it also places the poem in a more comical and bawdy context. Instead of the passionate iconoclast, Dicus, we have the ignorant Miso, who describes the painting and reads the 'Poor painters' poem but has had no hand in their invention. Moreover, the transmission of these artifacts — from a ballad-maker to a painter to an old woman to Miso — damages their credibility (ballad-makers being notorious for their fictions), not least because it is implicitly erotic. Rather than being used to expose the lust behind Cupid's invention, as Dicus had intended (*OA* 57), the poem and the painting have apparently been given to the old woman as payment for sexual favours,⁹³ and Miso becomes sexually promiscuous under their influence. She is so frightened of Cupid's devilish form that she determines to follow the old woman's advice to 'do what thou list with all those fellows, one after another, and it reckes not much what they do to thee, so it be in secret'

⁹⁰ See H. R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts 1558–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

⁹¹ For a more detailed discussion, see Winfried Schleiner, 'Differences of Theme and Structure of the Erona Episode in the "Old" and "New Arcadia"', *Studies in Philology* 70 (1973), 377–91.

⁹² R. W. Zandvoort overstates the case considerably when he suggests that, in the revised text, 'Love as a human passion, even if still spelled with a capital, all but replaces Cupid', *Sidney's Arcadia: A Comparison between the Two Versions* (Amsterdam: N. V. Swets & Zeitlinger, 1929), p. 102. In some ways, Cupid is actually more present. For example, when Erona is struggling between her chastity and her desire to save Antiphilus' life, Cupid is brought onto the 'stage' of the *Arcadia*: '[L]ove, in her passions like a right makebate, whispered to both sides arguments of quarrel' (pp. 207–8). Sidney even gives Cupid direct speech, pointing towards the dramatic aspirations that would be partly fulfilled by Beaumont and Fletcher.

⁹³ Miso tells us that the painter 'for a little pleasure, had bestowed both book and picture of her'. There are also hints that the old woman may be a prostitute in Miso's assertion that 'All the town knew her!' (p. 211), and the fact that she displays the Cupid painting on the wall of her house. Brothels seem to have been commonly indicated by a sign bearing Cupid's image.

(211). Finally, rather than this reformed Cupid-image acting to expose the deceptions of poets, painters and Catholics, we are told that Miso keeps the anti-Cupid icon within the pages of her prayer book (210, 212). This not only suggests that the Protestant prohibition of Bible illustrations goes against human instinct (and will inevitably be defied) but also that the anti-Cupid image is as capable of inspiring misinterpretation (and therefore lust and idolatry) as any other.

Yet, despite these changes, what remains constant in both versions of *the Arcadia* is the catastrophe of Erona's iconoclasm, and it is this aspect of the romance that emerges particularly strongly in Beaumont and Fletcher's dramatization. In *Cupid's Revenge*, the princess, Hidaspes, is granted a birthday wish and, like Erona, she demands 'That these erected obscene Images / May be pluckt downe and burnt: and every man / That offers to 'em any sacrifice, / May lose his life' (1.1.74–7). The tragic *anagnorisis* suggested in both texts, wherein Erona discovers the real might of Cupid, is here made much more persuasive by the actual appearance of the god. After the destruction of his images, Cupid enters:

Cornets. Descendit Cupid.

Cupid: Am I then scornd? is my all-doing will
 And power, that knowes no limit, nor admits none,
 Now look't into by lesse then gods and weakned?
 Am I, whose Bow strooke terror through the earth,
 No lesse then Thunder, and in this, exceeding
 Even gods themselves, who kneel before my Altars,
 Now shooke off and contemd by such, whose lives
 Are but my recreation! (1.3.1–8)

Cupid's subsequent revenge is terrible, for he kills the king and both his children, decimating the royal house of Lycia. He thereby recalls Deuteronomy on the punishment of idolaters: ye shall quickly perish out of the land which you shall possess: you shall not dwell in it any long time; but the Lord will destroy you, and will scatter you amongst all nations' (4.25–7), but with the irony that here it is iconoclasm that is being punished.⁹⁴ Where the play further exceeds Sidney's *Arcadia* is in its power to persuade us that Cupid is responsible for these deaths. In the romance, none of the main characters ever directly attributes their fate to Cupid's revenge but in Beaumont and Fletcher Leucippus brings both his own life and the play to a close with the words: 'I pray you let / The broken Image of Cupid be reedified, / I know all this is done by him' (5.4.215–17).

The historical relevance of *Arcadian* iconoclasm is also more explicit in *Cupid's Revenge*. Hidaspes condemns Cupid-worship as A vaine and fruitlesse Superstition;

⁹⁴ This passage is quoted in the *Homily*, p. 14.

/ So much more hatefull, that it beares the shew / Of true Religion' (1.1.48–50). The term 'Superstition' recalls Erona's concern that Cupid's images are 'superstitiously adored' (OA 60, NA 205) but its appearance in juxtaposition with the phrase 'trew Religion' must have reminded the theatre audience of Protestant invective against Catholicism. Furthermore, this scene alludes to recent anti-Catholic legislation through Nisus' remark: 'Would I had gi'n an hundred pound for a toileration, that I might but use my conscience in mine owne house' (114–16).⁹⁵ In 1606, two new bills had been passed, 'An Act for the better discovering and repressing of Popish Recusants' and 'An Act to prevent and avoid dangers which may grow by Popish Recusants'. By this means, the monthly fine imposed on Catholics for non-attendance at church was replaced by the confiscation of the offender's entire personal property and two-thirds of his landed wealth though in practice the offenders were encouraged to avoid the full implementation of the law by paying bribes. Thus, Nisus' regret that he has not paid an hundred pound for a toileration' seems to allude to contemporary Catholic persecution, perhaps motivated by the fact that one of the recusants who did forfeit his property seems to have been John Beaumont, the dramatist's brother.

The most extended Reformation analogy comes in act one scene two, where a religious ceremony is interrupted by the iconoclast, Nilo, who proceeds to pull down images of Cupid and to 'deface' his church (37). Subsequently, Cupid's priest is advised that he must change his coat (43), reflecting the ongoing vestimentary controversy.⁹⁶ Nilo also states, rather regretfully, that a statue of Cupid 'must make a Scarcrow / For any thing I know, or at the best, / Adorne a Chimney-peece' (38–40), reflecting the practice of appropriating church artifacts for domestic use. We might even discern an allusion to Henry VIII's 'blasphemy' in declaring himself Head of the Church of England in Nilo's lament that 'all service now / Is given to men' (43–4). Moreover, whilst this linguistic subtext is being established, the audience is watching 'reformation' in action. Cupid-art is being taken down if not destroyed, and the objects removed may have deepened the analogy between Cupid-worship and Catholicism. For example, there must have been a statue of Cupid, but there may also have been paintings, perhaps even an altar.⁹⁷ When reference is made to the priest's coat we might wonder whether this was a garment fashioned specifically to invoke Cupid or whether the players followed their traditional practice of wearing real vestments, thereby drawing attention to the Catholicism beneath the Cupidean surface.

Returning to the *Arcadia*, it seems clear that, whilst its pagan setting created a relatively safe context in which to question Protestant iconoclasm, the figure of Cupid

⁹⁵ The following explanation is indebted to James E. Savage, 'The Date of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Cupid's Revenge*', *English Literary History* 15 (December 1948), 286–94, at 287–9.

⁹⁶ For further discussion see Phillips, *Lise Reformation of Images*, p. 131.

⁹⁷ Gary Taylor has suggested that, just as the theatre appropriated organs banned from the church, so Catholic altars may sometimes have been granted a new theatrical lease of life in plays such as *Sejanus* (1603) and *A Game at Chess* (1624). See 'Divine []sences', *Shakespeare Survey* 54 (2001), 13–30, at 18, n. 24, 21 n. 40–1.

represented something more: an opportunity to consider the pleasure of visual beauty and its stimulus to belief. Nevertheless, Sidney's ability to control the effect of his Cupidean art seems to have been doubted by the poet himself. At the end of his life, he bequeathed destruction to the romance, 'seeing that even beauty itself, in all earthly complexions, was more apt to allure men to evil than to fashion any goodness in them'.⁹⁸ Fortunately, the *Arcadia* endured, but its troubled relationship with Cupid-idolatry and Cupid-iconoclasm would live on in the poetry of Edmund Spenser.

Cupid and Iconoclasm in *The Faerie Queene*

In general, Spenser seems less seduced by Cupid than Sidney. *The Faerie Queene* often alludes to him with only the most perfunctory, physical description: 'that false winged boy' (1.1.47.8), 'the false Archer' (3.2.26.7) and 'the winged god of love' (3.6.11.2), suggesting a greater interest in his moral iconography than his visual appeal.⁹⁹ Moreover, although Spenser probably knew the mythological paintings at Leicester House, I have found nothing to suggest that he drew his Cupid from any identifiable work of art.¹⁰⁰ His favourite image of Cupid seems to be the cloud of little cupids or *amorini* that play about the shoulders of the statue of Venus (4.10.42), float in the eye-beams of the beloved in *Aie Amoretti* (no. 16), or flutter around the newly married couple's bed in the *Epithalamion* (lines 357–63), more likely inspired by Spenser's reading of Philostratus or Statius than by his gazing on Titian's *Worship of Venus*. Above all, we need to acknowledge the extraordinary variety of Cupid in the Spenserian canon. As Hyde notes: 'The god of love, or, more precisely, of amorous desire, appears in Spenser's poetry more often and in greater variety than any other god or goddess'.¹⁰¹ Examples can be found of the Anacreontic Cupid, the medieval lord of love, the Petrarchan tyrant and the Neoplatonic deity. Moreover, it is Spenser's conflation of different Cupids — fatal, mild, tyrannical, playful, tragic, providential, demonic and angelic, as figured in his fondness for the *amorini* — that prevents him from attaining any real definition.¹⁰² But if Spenser's visual imagination

⁹⁸ *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney* (1633) in Sir Fulke Greville, *lise Prose Works of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke*, ed. John Gouws (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. it.

⁹⁹ As Paul J. Alpers and John Bender have demonstrated, Spenser is generally less concerned with enabling the reader to visualize specific works of art or pictorial scenes than with guiding their moral and psychological responses to what is seen. See Paul J. Alpers, *Ilse Poetry of The Faerie Queene* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1967, repr. 1982), pp. 9–13, and John Bender, *Spenser and Literary Pictorialism* (Princeton University Press, 1972).

¹⁰⁰ On Spenser's visual resources, see W. B. C. Watkins, *Shakespeare and Spenser* (Princeton University Press, 1950), pp. 223–58, and Rudolf Gottfried, 'The Pictorial Element in Spenser's Poetry', *English Literary History* 19 (September 1952), 203–213, 208–9.

¹⁰¹ 'Cupid' in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (Toronto and London: Routledge and University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 201.

¹⁰² For a contrary argument see C. S. Lewis' assertion of a distinction between true and false Cupids in *Spenser's Images of Life*, ed. Alastair Fowler (Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 18–35.

was less stimulated by Cupid, his characters experience considerable pleasure (and moral confusion) in the presence of Cupidean art. At the end of *The Faerie Queene*, Book 3, Cupid appears in a profusion of visual forms: tapestries, a statue, *has reliefs* and a masque. It is here that Spenser engages with the Sidneian definition of Cupid as both idol and artist and incorporates Cupid-iconoclasm into his poem not so much to critique anti-Catholicism as to defend his reputation as a poet.

In the House of Busirane, Britomart confronts a statue of Cupid placed upon an altar. According to the narrator, this is the object of repeated acts of ‘fowle Idolâtrée’ by the people of that house (3.11.49.3—5) and yet Britomart sees something different:

That wondrous sight fair Britomart amazd,
Ne seeing could her wonder satisfie,
But evermore and more upon it gazd,
The whiles the passing brightnes her fraile senses dazd.
(lines 6–9)

The contradictory attitudes within this single stanza — moral and religious opprobrium versus an overwhelming aesthetic and erotic response — suggest not only the lure of the idol, but something of its ambivalence. What does the sensual beauty of the artifact mean? How is the performance of ‘fowle’ idolatry to be distinguished from a more righteous kind? To what extent does the perception of idolatry lie in the moral corruption of the beholder? Similarly, the destruction of the Cupid-idol provokes a range of responses including the narrator’s rejoicing, Busirane’s grief and Britomart’s dismay (12.42.4).

In order to gain a clearer sense of Cupid’s meaning in the House of Busirane, we need first to consider the acts of iconoclasm that occur elsewhere in the poem. Of particular relevance is the pattern Carol V. Kaske has discerned whereby ‘various ecclesiastical objects and actions are presented by the plot, the narrator and normative characters first from an anti-Catholic perspective, but later in a positive light, as if Spenser had switched to the Catholic side’.¹⁰³ Although Spenser’s Protestantism is not in doubt, his position on a scale whose extremes are Calvinism and proto-Anglicanism has been a subject of debate, not least because of *The Faerie Queenes* remarkably engaged, even passionate, appropriation of Catholic language and iconography and its inconsistent attitudes towards the same.¹⁰⁴ For example, it will endorse the use of prayer beads at one moment and repudiate them the next, associating the girdle-book with the

¹⁰³ Carol V. Kaske, ‘The Audiences of *The Faerie Queene* — Iconoclasm and Related Issues in Books I, V and VI’, *Literature dr History* 3 (autumn 1994), 15–35, at 15. ;

¹⁰⁴ On Spenser’s Protestantism, see John N. King, ‘Was Spenser a Puritan?’, *Spenser Studies* 6 (1985), 1–31, who argues for his adopting ‘the posture of a progressive Protestant’, versus Virgil K. Whitaker who argues for Spenser’s conservative Anglicanism in *The Religious Basis of Spensers Thought* (Stanford University Press, 1950). For a particularly insightful account of the way in which Spenser builds on the Catholic tradition, see James Kearney, ‘Enshrining Idolatry in *The Faerie Queene*’, *English Literary Renaissance* 32 (2002), 3–30.

hypocritical friar but also with the devout Protestant. Similarly, *The Faerie Queene's* most explicit acts of Protestant iconoclasm suggest Spenser's defence of Elizabethan policy but also a kind of Sidneian grief at the destruction of the 'sacred [Catholic] Church'.

In Book 5, Arthur destroys Geryoneo's idol, the altar upon which it sits, and the monster that lies beneath it, each having been defined in implicitly Catholic terms. For example, the statue was 'frame[d]' by Geryoneo of his owne vaine fancies thought' (11.19.4), recalling the terms of the *Homily against Peril of Idolatry*. The monster beneath utters 'blasphemous speeches' and 'bitter curses' and is destroyed with a pun: 'Then downe to ground fell that deformed Masse' (32.1). Arthur's violence is authorized both by Queen Mercilla and by the dispossessed Queen Beige, who begs that he not depart 'Till yee have rooted all the relickes out / Of that vilde race' (11.18.6–7). Perhaps most important is the political allegory that justifies iconoclasm, for the tyrant Geryoneo signifies the Spanish occupation of the Netherlands with Arthur the Elizabethan hero ready to extirpate Catholicism where it has been tyrannically imposed.¹⁰⁵

Similarly, in Book 6, the Blatant Beast's rampaging through a monastery and a church recalls the beginnings of the Protestant Reformation. Henrician distaste for the monastic life is suggested by what he uncovers in the cloisters, namely 'secrets', 'filth and ordure' (6.12.24.4–5). And yet, the Beast also despoils the act of iconoclasm itself. Not only does he lack the authority of Arthur (empowered by Beige and Mercilla), he also replaces the former's piety with contempt for the sacred, 'Regarding nought religion, nor their holy heast' (24.9). The rabid pleasure the Beast takes in the act of destruction is most to be deplored in his attack on the 'sacred Church' wherein he

robd the Chancell, and the deskes downe threw,
And Altars fouled, and blasphemy spoke,
And th'Images for all their goodly hew,
Did cast to ground, whilst none was them to rew;
So all confounded and disordered there. (25.2–6)

Spenser's regret is partly informed by his fear of social disorder.¹⁰⁶ Once the Blatant Beast has finished with the church, he goes on to threaten the state: 'Ne Kesars spared he a whit, nor King, / But either blotted them with infamie, / Or bit them with his banefull teeth of iniury' (28.7–9). But it is also specifically critical of the rampaging zeal of late Elizabethan iconoclasts, with Jonson observing that 'by ye Blaring beast

¹⁰⁵ For further discussion, see Viola Blackburn Hulbert, 'The Beige Episode in *The Faerie Queene*', *Studies in Philology* 36 (1939), 124–46, and Jan Karel Kouwenhoven, 'Sidney, Eeicester and *The Faerie Queene*', in *Sir Philip Sidney: 1586 and the Creation of a Legend*, ed. Jan van Dorsten, Dominic Baker-Smith and Arthur F. Kinney (Eeiden: Brill, 1986), pp. 149–69.

¹⁰⁶ Richard F. Hardin attributes this to Spenser's aristocratic principles in *Civil Idolatry: Desacralizing and Monarchy in Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), p. 91. Kaske suggests that Spenser was tailoring his work to the Queen and her own defence of images in 'The Audiences of *The Faerie Queene*', 17–20, 29–30.

the Puritans were understood'.¹⁰⁷ Thus, Kaske sees Spenser actively promoting a *via media*, 'by showing that Puritanism — with its censoriousness and its privileging of scripture over tradition — has stripped away too much and becomes as blasphemous as the "beast" it set out to counteract'.¹⁰⁸

More generally, we might say that for Spenser the righteousness of iconoclasm does not inhere in the nature of the idol but in the way it is used, recalling Melanchthons theory of images as *adiaphora* (though Spenser's emotional response to beauty's destruction suggests that he is closer to Sidney). In the House of Busirane, it is the 'fowle' manner in which the Cupid-idol is worshipped that initially condemns it. In the House of Geryoneo, it is the idol's function to endorse tyranny that demands its destruction. But when the idol is destroyed lustfully and sacrilegiously, this itself is a kind of idolatry. As Donne suggests in *Satire IIP*. 'To adore, or scorne an image, or protest; / May all be bad; doubt wisely' (lines 76–7).

It is not enough, then, to say that the Cupid-idol of Book 3 must fall because it is pagan and/or Catholic. Elsewhere in *The Faerie Queene*, there are scenes of pagan idol-worship, specifically in the temples of Venus and of Isis, which not only do not require desecration but which meet with no disapproval from the narrator.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, although Busirane's Cupid bears some traces of his Catholic heritage, these remain muted and confined to the Masque, as suggested by false Hope with her 'holy water Sprinkle' (3.12.13), and Amoret with her sacramental heart placed in a silver bowl.¹¹⁰ The idol itself is Catholic mainly in the sense that it resembles Geryoneo's statue in being made of gold, the dragon beneath its feet recalling blasphemous beasts such as Geryoneo's monster, Error and St George's dragon. Rather than attempting to find Catholicism in the Cupid idol, then, we need to consider whether the act of iconoclasm has become intrinsically Protestant and here John N. King's examination

¹⁰⁷ As quoted in Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton and Hiroshi Yamashita, 2nd edn (Eondon and New York: Eongman, 1977, repr. 2001), p. 686, n. 23–5.

¹⁰⁸ Kaske, 'The Audiences of *The Faerie Queene*', 31. See also Maryclaire Moroney's discussion of Spenser's ambivalence towards iconoclasm in 'Spenser's Dissolution: Monasticism and Ruins in *The Faerie Queene* and *The View of the Present State of Ireland*', *Spenser Studies* 12 (1991), 105–32, 31124–7.

¹⁰⁹ There is no space here to consider the worship of Venus scene (Book 4, canto 10) in detail, but its main distinctions from Cupid-idolatry would seem to be the fact that Venus presides over procreative and marital love, as suggested by the Eucretian hymn by which she is praised; that the statue is made of a substance like glass and the acts of worship prove similarly transparent, leading the lover to a direct encounter with the deity, Venus, rather than confining him to her material representation; and finally that the episode is related retrospectively, making deliberately nostalgic use of the medieval religion of love. For further discussion of this scene as a rejoinder to the House of Busirane, see Alan McColl, 'The Temple of Venus, The Wedding of the Thames and the Medway, and the End of *lise Faerie Queene*', *Review of English Studies* 40 (1989), 26–47, at 29.

¹¹⁰ John N. King and Kenneth Gross read the masque as a parodic form of monasticism and of Catholic mass respectively. See John N. King, *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 103, and Kenneth Gross, *Spenserian Poetics: Idolatry, Iconoclasm and Magic* (Ithaca and Eondon: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 162.

of Spenserian iconoclasm is compelling. Shifting the focus away from the religious to the poetic debate, he argues that ‘Spenser’s poetry is inherently iconoclastic in its attack of the abuse or misapplication of art’ and that such attacks inevitably employ ‘the idiom of Reformation polemics against religious idolatry’ (65–6). Thus, Cupid may look Catholic because he is the victim of iconoclasm, the inverse of Sidney’s practice where the destruction of Cupid illuminates the victimization of Catholic art.

A more appropriate context within which to read the destruction of the Cupid-idol, therefore, may be Guyon’s attack on the Bower of Bliss in Book 2. This artwork is not specifically religious but develops Catholic associations through its implicitly Protestant desecration.¹¹¹ Moreover, as Gilman suggests: ‘The point of these associations is not that the Bower is an allegory of the perils of idolatry, but that the roots of idolatrous veneration are sunk deep in the Bower’s appeal to venereal man’ (71). The seductive beauty of the gardens, the fountain with its carvings of naked boys, and the bathing nymphs inspires not only lust but a kind of Eros-worship, represented by the sacrilegious image of Verdant with his head in Acrasia’s lap.¹¹² Moreover, despite its undeniable skill and beauty, the Bower represents a false art which has literally written over the old monuments’ on Verdant’s shield (now ‘fowly ras’t’ (80.4)) and caused his honour to be ‘deface[d]’ (79.4). Itself iconoclastic, Acrasia’s art calls forth an iconoclastic response, with Guyon now ‘defac[ing]’ gardens and ‘rac[ing] buildings’ (83.6, 8). The statue of blind Cupid in Book 3 therefore extends these associations between lust, erotic worship and religious idolatry. It also concretizes the dangers of the visual sense, given that beneath Cupid’s feet is a dragon, blinded in both eyes, and that the reader is warned: Ah man beware, how thou those darts behold’ (11.48.5). But above all, it is the idol’s position within Busirane’s larger artistic scheme that makes its destruction necessary.

Cupid and the Art of Busirane

In the 1596 text, Busirane is described as ‘Th’Enchaunter ... which all that fraud did frame, / To have efforst the love of that faire lasse’ (12.43.7–8). In this respect, Busirane works like Cupid in his attempt to impose desire, but he also works *through* him, creating images of Cupid intended to inspire both fear and lust. It is fear that initially predominates. In the first chamber, the tapestries of ‘Cupid’s warres (11.29.5) depict the gods’ violence against women and the latter’s terrified response. The statue of Cupid depicts him holding in ‘cruell fist / A mortali bow and arrows keen’ (48.1–2) and its dedication by the castle’s inhabitants ‘Unto the Victor of the gods ... ’ (49.2) is clearly an attempt to propitiate that deity and to avoid tragedy. The Masque of

¹¹¹ See Ernest B. Gilman, *Iconoclasm and Poetry in the English Reformation: Down Went Dragon* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 70 and King, *Spenser’s Poetry*, pp. 100–2.

¹¹² Greenblatt describes this as an ‘uncanny parody of the Pietà in *Renaissance Self Fashioning*, p. 189.

Cupid includes Repentance with his whips, Reproach with sharp stings and ‘Death with infamy’, though it is the vision of Amoret that represents the most Gothic terror. Paraded between Despight and Cruelty (the two personifications that her defiance of Busirane has apparently called into being), she is an image of Cupid’s revenge, represented by the victimization of her heart ‘drawne forth, and in silver basin layd, / Quite through transfixèd with a deadly dart’ (12.21.2–3).

Nevertheless, Busirane’s Cupid art is also intended to incite desire. As has often been noted, the House of Busirane brings together various features from *Amadis de Gaule*, Book 8, chapters 85–8 (trans. French 1577).¹¹³ For example, Amoret with the dagger in her heart recalls the enchantment wrought by the magician upon Mirabella when she refuses to love, and the river of her blood flows into the Cupid tapestries in Spenser’s poem (3.11.46). The masque of Cupid recalls the procession watched at midnight by Amadis and Zahara in the enchanted castle, celebrating the triumph of Cupid. What has not been remarked upon, however, is the shared assumption that Cupidean statuary is a means of inspiring lust. Among the artworks created by the magician to make Mirabella fall in love is a statue at the entrance to the Valley of Love, described as ‘l’effigie du Dieu d’Amour tenant son arc bandé, & en l’autre main un escriteau contenant ces mots: “Voici l’endroit du val d’amour qui n’ayme & ne le cherche, retourne hardiment arriéré”’.¹¹⁴ A further two statues (the last naked, suggesting that they are also Cupids) render Amadis and Zahara so amorous that they have sex there and then. In the House of Busirane, Britomart remains chaste, but her response to the Cupid-statue is potentially erotic (its ‘passing brightnes her fraile sences dazd’ (11.49.9)), an effect that is repeated by the music which accompanies Cupid’s masque: ‘the rare sweetnesse of the melody / The feeble sences wholly did confound, / And the frayle soule in deepe delight nigh drown’d’ (12.6.3–5).

Spenser does not leave his reader in such a daze. Rather, he disrupts the illusion in order to issue warnings, varying from narratorial intrusions such as ‘Beware how thou those dartes behold’, to more subtle kinds of mirroring. For example, Cupid’s cruel delight in the torture of Amoret (12.22.7–9) tacitly rebukes the reader’s own sadistic pleasure. However, Spenser also undercuts the truth of Busirane’s art by exposing the way in which it ‘abuses’ various pictorial and theatrical traditions.¹¹⁵ As Laurel L. Hendrix has shown, Busirane’s Cupid reproduces a number of popular emblems, but it specifically inverts ‘Cupido cruciatus’, based on a poem by Ausonius, in which the love-god is bound and whipped with roses by the women he has made to suffer. In

¹¹³ See John J. O’Connor, *Amadis de Gaule and its Influence on Elizabethan Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1970), pp. 176–82. Spenser also makes use of Mirabella in Book 6, cantos 6 and 7, where she is blamed for her pride and forced by Cupid to process through the forest, accompanied by Disdain and Scorn.

¹¹⁴ *Le Huitième Livre d’Amadis de Gaule*, trans. Nicolas de Herberay (Lyons, 1577), p.325-

¹¹⁵ On the significance of Busirane’s name, see Thomas P. Roche, *The Kindly Flame: A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Lise Faerie Queene* (Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 82–3.

Busirane's masque, it is Amoret who is bound to a pillar and tortured.¹¹⁶ Elsewhere, Busirane's art leaves out important aspects of its original. For example, we are told in Book 4 that the Masque of Cupid was performed as an entertainment at the wedding of Amoret and Scudamour (1.2–3). The presence of Fancy, Desire, Distrust and Jealousy is not incompatible with a wedding when positive elements are included, as in the Cupid masque of *Amadis de Gaule* which features Joy and Mirth. Yet, as it is reperformed in the House of Busirane it has become all antimasque ... to which the author provides no redemptive ceremonial antithesis'.¹¹⁷ Rather than bringing the bride and groom to consummate the marriage, Busirane's Cupid performs an anti-epithalamic function in abducting the bride and displacing mutual, wedded love with wasted passion and torture.

Finally, it is Busirane's manipulation of Petrarchan conceits that demonstrates not only how he abuses that poetic tradition but also how poetry may itself constitute an abuse, producing misshapen images of love. The marriage of Venus's ward, Amoret, with Scudamour, 'Cupids man' (4.10.54.7), has obviously taken them beyond the limits of the Petrarchan relationship. Yet, by the intervention of Cupid's 'hurtful art' (as Dicus calls it in the *Arcadia*) the characters are forced to perform these prescribed roles. Thus, Amoret's double has her heart exposed to Cupid's vengeful dart in an emblem of the Petrarchan lady punished for her scorn, even though the 'real' Amoret embodies mutual love, her defiance of Busirane an act of marital chastity rather than proud disdain.¹¹⁸ Scudamour is also abused by his translation into Petrarchan terms. His helplessness and immobility outside the House of Busirane fix him as an emblem for frustrated Petrarchan desire,¹¹⁹ even though his pursuit of Amoret was defined by masculine aggression in defiance of her will. More specifically, the image of Cupid on his shield that facilitated Scudamour's courtship (4.10.55) now disempowers him. Not only does it prevent him from passing through the enchanted fire that surrounds the castle, it creates a disturbing parallel between himself and Busirane. Cupid's 'cruell shafts' are translated into the 'sharpe steele' with which the enchanter tortures Amoret, just as love for Scudamour causes her pain (3.11.11).¹²⁰ It may also be significant that elsewhere in *The Faerie Queene* the shields of Spenser's virtuous knights are devoid of

¹¹⁶ For further discussion, see Laurel L. Hendrix, 'Pulchritudo vinciti: Emblematic Reversals in Spenser's House of Busirane', *Spenser Studies* 16 (2002), 23–54.

¹¹⁷ Gross, *Spenserian Poetics*, p. 164. On the tapestries' misreading of Ovid by leaving out his irony, see Syrithe Pugh, *Spenser and Ovid* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 146.

¹¹⁸ For the argument that the masque expresses Amoret's sexual fears, see Roche, *The Kindly Flame*, pp. 76–7, 80–1, subsequently repudiated by Elizabeth Story Donno, 'The Triumph of Cupid: Spenser's Legend of Chastity', *Yearbook of English Studies* 4 (1974), 37–48, and James W. Broaddus, *Spenser's Allegory of Love: Social History in Books III, IV and V of The Faerie Queene* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), pp. 66–8,

¹¹⁹ See Joseph Parry, 'Petrarch's Mourning, Spenser's Scudamour, and Britomart's Gift of Death', *Comparative Literature* 41 (2005), 24–49.

¹²⁰ For further discussion of Scudamour's responsibility for Amoret's suffering, see A. Kent Hieatt, 'Scudamour's Practice of *Maistrye* upon Amoret', in *Essential Articles*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (Hamden:

painted imagery: that of Redcrosse bears a cross ‘scor’d’ into its surface, while Arthur’s lacks any image at all. It is Scudamour’s identification with the painted image that arguably prevents him from rescuing Amoret, the victim of Cupidean art, as signalled by her name — Amor-art.

Ultimately, however, it is poetry (and the poet) that has produced the visual images that misrepresent the lovers to each other and traduce their love. At the start, Amoret is described as being ‘cruelly penned’ (3.11.10.9) within the House of Busirane, and in the final chamber, Busirane is discovered writing spells in her blood. As critics have often noted, *The Faerie Queene* assuages anxiety about the misleading power of its own art through the creation of a false artist.¹²¹ Yet this process is not without its dangers. Archimago’s doubling of Spenser’s invention, substituting a False Una for Spenser’s original, not only emphasizes their likeness but makes Spenser partly dependent on the simulacrum. This is also true of his manipulation of Cupid. In Book i, Archimago sends to Morpheus for a dream in which False Una will offer to seduce Redcrosse, lamenting ‘how that false winged boy, / Her chaste hart had subdewd’ (1.47.8–9). On waking, Redcrosse finds himself confronted by the real False Una, who repeats the same arguments with regards to Cupid (51.4). The fact that the latter is visually and physically absent may reinforce the extent to which Cupidean agency is a false fiction, and therefore appropriate to Archimago’s deception. However, in the same book we find another erotic dream in which agency is ascribed to Cupid but interpreted quite differently. In canto 9, Arthur reveals how he managed to deflect all of Cupid’s arrows until he finally succumbed to ‘that proud avenging boy’ through a dream of Gloriana (10, 12.3). Whether we ascribe the invention of this dream to Cupid or to Spenser, it seems that the ‘Cupid-justification’ now belongs to a redeemed form of art.

Elsewhere, Cupid is seen to collaborate with the true artist when Britomart sees an image of her future husband in Merlin’s mirror and falls victim to ‘the false Archer’ (3.2.26.7). When she seeks Merlin’s advice, he interprets Cupid as an agent of divine providence, substituting the ‘fatali lore’ by which Britomart has learned to fear love (3.3.21.6–7) with a vision of desire’s dynastic power. That this is the kind of Cupid-use to which Spenser aspires is suggested by the beginning of Book 3, canto 3, in which he explains what he means by ‘Love’:

Not that same, which doth base affections move, In brutish mindes, and
filthy lust inflame, But that sweete fit, that doth true beauty love, And
choseth vertue for his dearest Dame, Whence spring all noble deedes
and never dying fame. (1.5–9)

Nevertheless, Spenser’s attempt to align himself with Merlin through their shared approach to Cupid is undermined by the lure of Busirane as poetic double, specifically

Archon, 1972), pp. 199–201, and Maurice Evans, *Spenser’s Anatomy of Heroism* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 160.

¹²¹ See A. Leigh DeNeef, *Spenser and the Motives of Metaphor* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1982), pp. 91–141.

his wielding of Cupid to inspire ‘base affections’ and ‘filthy lust’. By the end of Book 3, rather than assert yet another competing version of Cupid, Spenser turns iconoclast. Having forced the enchanter to undo his spell over Amoret, Britomart watches as

those goodly rowmes, which erst
She saw so rich and royally arayd,
Now vanisht utterly, and cleane subverst
She found, and all their glory quite decayd.
(12.42.1–4)

The fact that Busirane’s art is not violently destroyed does not disqualify this as a scene of iconoclasm, if we understand idolatry as a psychological state.¹²² The use of the word ‘decayd’ alone suggests its resemblance to the destruction wrought by Guyon or the Blatant Beast, as does its tone of regret: Busirane ‘seeing his worke now wasted deepe engrieved was’ (1596, 43.9). Nevertheless, the question of what this vanishing]’ means for Spenser’s Cupid and for Spenser’s status as a Cupid-artist remains uncertain.

A. Leigh DeNeef has argued that ‘the conventional literary myth of Cupid’ is deployed in Book 3 as an exercise in hermeneutics for the reader.¹²³ The interpretation of the Cupid-wound as debilitating and potentially fatal is replaced by the perception of Cupid as an inspiration to heroic action and procreative love: ‘Freed from the various distorted readings to which men and women subject him, Cupid can now be conceived as the opportunity “to love”’ (173). This argument is not only persuasive in itself, it is consistent with *The Faerie Queene’s* definition of idols as *adiaphora*. And yet, this revelation about Cupid has no lasting effect. The love-god that the narrator addresses in Book 4 is once again that of Busirane, suggesting not only that Cupid has not been redeemed by the idol’s destruction in Book 3,¹²⁴ but that his interpretation cannot be a matter of reading aright since the Spenserian narrator asserts the truth of a sadistic Cupid. Moreover, the fact that the misconception of Book 3 needs to be corrected by iconoclasm suggests that the author is still required to take responsibility for the dangers of his own art, rather than having equipped his readers to ‘behold’ it correctly.

But perhaps most suggestive of the dangers of erotic writing is Spenser’s attempt at the end of Book 3 to substitute an image of Chaste Love for Cupid. The fusing of Amoret and Scudamour’s bodies together in ‘sweete ravishment’ (45.7) defies the Petrarchan poetry that had previously ‘penned’ them apart (11.10.9), and is achieved only through the repudiation of a lustful and aggressive Cupid. And yet, the consequences for Spenser’s readers have apparently been the same as if this Cupid had remained in power. At the beginning of Book 4, Spenser acknowledges the criticism he has received

¹²² As Judith Dundas suggests, such acts are ‘not always necessary, once the mind is cleared of what Latimer called “juggling deceits”’. See *Pencils Rhétorique*, p. 99.

¹²³ DeNeef, *Spenser and the Motives of Metaphor*, p. 112.

¹²⁴ Hendrix argues that Amoret is effectively rebound, given that in Book 4 she becomes a victim of Lust and the narrative of her courtship by Scudamour a tale of violent force, ‘*Pulchritudo vinciti*’, 47.

For praising love, as I have done of late,
 And magnifying lovers deare debate;
 By which fraile youth is oft to follie led,
 Through false allurement of that pleasing baite,
 That better were in vertues discipled
 Then with vaine poemes weeds to have their fancies fed.

(Pr.2.4–9)¹²⁵

In the context of Spenser's poetic ambitions, this is a spectacular admission of failure: 'Through false allurement of that pleasing baite' identifies him not only with the enchantments of Busirane but with Cupid's artful tricks and snares. Moreover, there is a painful irony to the fact that the 'image' of Amoret's and Scudamour's embrace, described in terms of a white marble statue (46.2–3), has acted like the very idol it was intended to replace. It is even defined as such by Spenser's response, which was to 'vanish' those five stanzas from the 1596 edition. Hence, although Cupid may have escaped the 'false art' of Busirane to be reimagined later in the poem, the taint of Cupidean art clings to Spenser himself. By smashing his own conclusion, imagined in terms of naked statuary, he indicts himself as a false poet as well as an aspiring true one.

To conclude, this chapter has suggested that Cupid was newly identified with idolatry in post-Reformation England. Through *Tottel's Miscellany* and the hostility it aroused, this association was developed by poets including Sidney and Spenser as a cynosure for Protestantism's forbidden attraction to the visual arts and to the religious affect of the idol. In both the *Arcadia* and *The Faerie Queene*, acts of iconoclasm against Cupid facilitate the poet's defence of his own art. And yet he cannot entirely shake off the stigma of perpetuating the image (and perhaps performing the erotic work) of Cupid, inspiring both men to issue an order of iconoclasm against their own writing. Thus, rather than being a trivial archaism, Cupid proves painfully relevant to contemporary debates over art, *eros* and religious worship. In the next chapter, we will consider how Cupid embodies tragic, sexual desire as defined by early modern Calvinism and yet also critiques that definition.

¹²⁵ On the relationship between this criticism and the 1590 ending, see Anne K. Tuell, 'The Original End of the *Faerie Queene*, Book III', *Modern Language Notes* 36 (May 1921), 309–11.

Chapter 2: Cupid, Death and Tragedy

Perhaps the most important divergence between the twenty-first century perception of Cupid and that of early modern England is that, where the former is strongly influenced by his French Rococo decorativeness and Victorian infantile charm, the latter believes in Cupid's capacity for murderous sadism. As the Chorus of Euripides' *Hippolytos* observes:

Your assault waves of crushing delight
Pour into hearts marked by you for destruction.
May the cruel hand of your power
Never touch me, may I escape
Ever bearing too much of you, who
Stampede to distraction our quiet pulse-beats.
Neither the shooting stars nor the slashing lightning
Surpass in terror those shafts of Aphrodite
Aimed and thrown by your own hand:
They set our lives on fire. (Lines 817–28)

This revelation was made available to early modern audiences through the revival of classical Greek and Roman tragedy in the mid-sixteenth century. It was also inscribed within Renaissance mythography, for example, Conti describes Cupid as a 'God of the insane and the mad ... there is nearly no unspeakable act, sacrilege, or arrogant deed that Cupid has not authorized' (245). Yet, perhaps the most important influence was a Protestant sense of the self-destructive nature of desire and the impossibility of controlling it. This chapter explores the fatal power of Cupid in early modern culture, first as it was imagined visually in a series of artistic confections of Love and Death, and then as it was manifest on the stage through Cupid's reinvention as a tragic antagonist.

Part One: Love and Death Come Closer Together

Philippe Ariès's tantalizing assertion that after the sixteenth century love and death came closer together¹ has mainly directed attention to an eroticized Death, familiar

¹ Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (1977), trans. Helen Weaver (London: Penguin, 1983), p. 393.

from Hans Baldung Grien's painting of *Death and the Woman* (1518–19, Kunstmuseum, Basel) and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Receiving considerably less critical attention is the vengeful and bloodthirsty Eros that was conceived at the same time and whose existence may be partly explained by the critical work on Death.² For example, Alberto Tenenti has argued that 'a violent disturbance of the Christian world view' in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries led to a new secularity, emphasizing the pleasures of the earthly world and the tragedy of its loss. Not only did this make Death terrifying and repulsive, it rendered his tragic affect dependent upon *avaritia* or *cupiditas*.³ Thus, it was the possibility of Cupid (his pleasures and his values) that made Death tragic. At the same time, the bubonic plague which broke out in 1348 but recurred sporadically across Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries rendered Death a more intimate figure.⁴ In the *Danse Macabre des Femmes* (Paris, 1486), the analogy between the Bride undressing for her lover and being stripped of her flesh by worms and the equation of marriage-bed and death-bed reinforced a perception of desire (as well as death) threatening a fearful dissolution of the self. Finally, history proved to be on the side of the moralists when desire's deprivations took tragic form as venereal infection. The 'plague' of syphilis beginning in the fifteenth century, apparently imposed on a guilty multitude for their lechery and recourse to prostitution, inevitably endorsed the Protestant excoriation of lust and vilification of the whore.⁵

These are all useful starting-points to explain the emergence of a tragic Eros in the sixteenth century. But rather than begin with such theories, I want to focus on their incarnation in the visual arts, examining three artistic themes which were also Renaissance innovations: the *putto* and the skull, 'De Morte & Amore' and the Cupidean plague-angel. I will argue that the darkening conception of Eros in English culture was attributable to iconographic conventions established across Europe. More specifically, as they were disseminated through paintings, emblems and book illustrations, these images of a fatal Cupid would influence the early modern tragic stage in plays such as *The Broken Heart*, *Soliman and Perseda* and *Women Beware Women*.

² Two notable exceptions are Roger Stilling, *Love and Death in Renaissance Tragedy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976) and Jonathan Dollimore, *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture* (London: Allen Lane, 1998).

³ Tenenti, *La vie et la mort: à travers l'art du XVe siècle* (Paris: Colin, 1952), p. 38, translated by Ariès in *Lise Hour of Our Death*, p. 129. See also Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, pp. 136–7.

⁴ See Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 15.

⁵ See Johannes Fabricius, *Syphilis in Shakespeare's England* (London and Bristol, PA: Jessica Kingsley, 1994), pp. 133–46.



Figure 2. Bartholomaeus Spranger, *Vanitas*

Here Love Dies: The *Putto* and the Skull

Among the paintings owned by the Earl of Leicester is one entitled 'A naked boye with a ded man's skull in his hand and an houre glass under his arm'.⁶ Its identity is unknown but it may have resembled the *Vanitas* by Bartholomaeus Spranger (c. 1600, Wawel Castle, Krakow) in which a curly-haired *putto* is leaning on a skull and pointing at an hourglass (see Figure 2). The appeal of such paintings was their sensational juxtaposition of the voluptuous but innocent *putto*, a symbol of life and pleasure, with the unfleshed, malevolent skull as a symbol of death. The spectator was required to superimpose one image onto the other, thereby undergoing the same tragic epiphany as the *putto*. In a remarkable painting by Durer, the naked infant even holds the skull as a mask against his face.⁷

The 'putto and the skull' theme seems to have begun with the Venetian artist Giovanni Boldù, who, in 1458, produced a medal bearing the image of a winged and naked infant leaning upon a skull, while to his left is a youth with his head in his hands.⁸ Boldù's work suggests a typically Renaissance fusion of Christian and classical iconography. The fact that the *putto* holds flames (symbolic of the soul) identifies him as an angel ready to transport the youth to heaven. Yet this angel was usually an adult, clothed and carrying a small image of the man, and the despair he inspires here seems hardly appropriate to the Christian theme. Perhaps a more likely model was the funereal Eros originally depicted on Roman tombs and revived in Italian Renaissance sculpture (though he was usually standing and with an upturned torch in his hands).⁹ However, Boldù's immediate source suggests another origin for the *putto*: this was a medal by Pietro da Fano (1452–7) celebrating marital love, and here the naked child, complete with bow and arrows, is clearly Cupid.¹⁰

Boldù's design was swiftly appropriated and split into two parts: the man meditating upon a skull (a popular feature of saint iconography, the *memento mori* and *Hamlet*),¹¹ and the *putto* and skull. The *putto* was now the sole figure, but no longer so easily confused with the angel or Cupid for he had lost both his flames and his wings. In the late fifteenth century, an Italian woodcut called *L'Hora Passa* emphasized its theme of mutability by adding an hourglass,¹² and it was this version that would become popular with Northern artists such as Durer and Spranger. By 1635, George

⁶ Thoms, 'Pictures of the Great Earl of Leicester', 225.

⁷ The following discussion is indebted to Horst W. Janson, 'The Putto with the Death's Head', *The Art Bulletin* 19 (1937), 423–49. See his reproduction of the undated Durer (New York, private collection), 439, fig. 20.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 428–9, fig. 7.

⁹ On the confusion of Thanatos with the funereal Eros, see Edgar Wind, 'Amor as a God of Death', in *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), pp. 129–41.

¹⁰ G. F. Hill, *A Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance*, 2 vols. (1930), vol. 1, n. 407.

¹¹ See Roland Mushat Frye, 'Ladies, Gentlemen and Skulls: *Hamlet* and the Iconographie Traditions', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 30 (1979), 15–28.

¹² Janson, 'The Putto with the Death's Head', 434, fig. 10.

Withers emblem collection offered no less than three different versions, acknowledging its popularity: ‘When some, in former Ages, had a meaning / An *Emblem*, of *Mortality*, to make, / They form’d an *Infant*, on a *Deaths-head* leaning, / And, round about, encircled with a *Snake*’.¹³

Although by this point the *putto* was merely a representative infant, some recollection of its Cupidean origins seems to have lingered. For example, one of the main uses of ‘the *putto* and the skull’ was to moralize on the fleetingness of earthly pleasure and to inspire repentance. In an anonymous French woodcut (c. 1525–50), multiple *putti* are playing together in the shade of a sleeping Death who is likely to awaken at any moment.¹⁴ Moreover, for many Northern artists, the *putto* was a symbol of lust, born of various representatives of illicit sexuality including Venus, *Luxuria* and the witch.¹⁵ Hence, the *putto* and skull came to suggest that man’s desire is what results in his death, an interpretation strengthened by a particular reading of his reclining posture. Where this was merely contemplative in *L’Hora Passa*, there was a tendency in the North to translate it into sleep, which was in turn moralized as a state of sloth or spiritual apathy.¹⁶ From thence, it was an easy transition to the most shocking adaptation of the *putto* and the skull in which the *putto* is not sleeping but dying. The German artist Barthel Beham produced the first surviving expression of this theme in an engraving from 1525 that shows the *putto* resting its head and arms on the skull, its eyes closed, its face expressive of pain. Later, Beham would make the *putto*’s decay more explicit by placing it in a charnel house where the back of its head competes for space with three skulls. In another version, the *putto* lies next to an hourglass in a posture that, through the arrangement of its hands, recalls the laid-out corpse.¹⁷

If the ‘*putto* and the skull’ reached England through the art collection of an elite patron such as the Earl of Leicester and found a wider audience through the emblem tradition, it was also alluded to on the early modern stage. In John Ford’s *The Broken Heart* (c. 1629) Penthea’s offstage death is accompanied by a song:

Love is dead; let lovers’ eyes.
 Lock’d in endless dreames,
 Th’extreme of all extremes,
 Ope no more, for now love dies,
 Now love dies, implying
 Love’s martyrs must be ever, ever dying.
 (4-3-147-52)

¹³ George Wither, *A Collection of Emblèmes, Ancient and Moderne* (London, 1635), p. 45. See also number 18 (Book 3, p. 152) and number 50 (Book 3, p. 184).

¹⁴ Janson, ‘The Putto with the Death’s Head’, 436, fig. 16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 435. See also Margaret A. Sullivan’s discussion of lustful *putti* in ‘The Witches of Durer and Hans Baldung Grien’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000), 332–401.

¹⁶ Janson, ‘The Putto with the Death’s Head’, 436.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 437, 439–40, figs. 22, 27 and 28.

The play's depiction of the tragedy attendant upon frustrated desire, represented by the deaths of Orgilus and Penthea, warns against preventing a love-match. However, the image of Love dying, reminiscent of 'the *putto* and the skull', also implies the immanence of death within any desiring subject. The fact that Penthea has starved herself suggests desire hollowing the body out from within, depicted in the fleshy Cupid's contemplation of the skull, and inviting a Lacanian reading that Jonathan Dollimore has extended to early modern desire *per se*:

the lack which *is* desire comes to be regarded as inherently incapable of satisfaction and linked to death. Thus apparently always defeating itself, desire comes to seem destructively insatiable, a permanent lack whose attempted fulfilment is at once the destiny of the self and what destroys it.¹⁸

But if Love appears fundamentally passive in *The Broken Heart*, elsewhere there are hints of its reinvention as a tyrant and a killer, as 'destructively insatiable'.

Cupid and Death! 'De Morte & Amore'

Appearing first in the unauthorized *Emblematum Liber* (1531) and then in succeeding editions for at least a century, Alciato's emblem 'De Morte & Amore' (no. 167, 1551 edition) relates how Cupid and Death accidentally exchanged arrows. Thus, when Cupid attempted to inspire young people with love he killed them, while Death's elderly victims became amorous (Figure 3). The blame for this confusion was attributed to Fortune,¹⁹ or less frequently to Death,²⁰ but what all versions are agreed upon is that, despite the title's suggested equivalence of Mors and Amor, and despite the Petrarchan theme of Love's cruelty which may have inspired it,²¹ Cupid was not culpable. Taking his cue from Alciato, Geoffrey Whitney invents a youth who cries out: 'Oh Venus sonne, thy dartes thou doste not knowe, / They pierce too deepe: for all thou hittes, doe

¹⁸ Dollimore, *Death, Desire and Loss*, p. xvii.

¹⁹ In James Sandford's English translation of Guicciardini's *Detti et fatti piacevoli et gravi* (1565), the personifications change darts 'by cancred fortunes case'. See *Hoares of Recreation, or Afterdinneres* (1576), pp. 121–2. Similarly, in Geoffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblèmes*, ed. Henry Green (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1866, repr. 1967), 'each by chaunce the others quiver takes', lines 8–10.

²⁰ Death's responsibility is suggested not so much by Alciato's 'De Morte' but by the emblem which immediately followed it: '*In formosam fatopraereptam*' ('On a beautiful woman, dead before her time', no. 168). Here, Death is represented with an arm raised to strike Cupid, and the epigraph asks: 'Death, why did you so audaciously and with evil intent steal from the boy Love? — So that he might shoot your weapons, thinking them his own.' The two emblems were confused in the 1577 Antwerp edition, *Omnia Andreae Alciati V. C. Emblemata*, nos. 154 and 155.

²¹ Judith Dundas suggests the emblem's 'literary inevitability' in 'De Morte et Amore: A Story-Telling Emblem and Its Dimensions', in *The Art of the Emblem*, ed. Michael Bath, John Manning and Alan R. Young (New York: AMS Press, 1993), pp. 39–70, 41.

die'.²² In James Shirley's masque, *Cupid and Death* (1653), Nature appears on stage to warn a lover and his mistress: 'Fly, fly, my children! Love, that should preserve, / And warm your hearts with kind and active blood, / Is now become your enemy, a murderer'.²³ There is, however, little sense that death could be immanent in Love, and the masque ends with the murdered lovers dancing in Elysium and with Love's arrows rightfully restored to him.

Nevertheless, though it may have established a tradition of exonerating Love, Alciato's emblem had also invented a malevolent Cupid, wielding a fatal desire, and its *pittura* would gradually erase the distinctions between Cupid and Death. This is the more noticeable because elsewhere in the *Emblemata* those personifications are markedly different: Amor is always a young child, naked, with curly hair, usually winged and carrying a bow and arrows; Mors is an adult skeleton, sometimes wearing a cloak or a mask, but neither blind, winged, nor always armed.²⁴ Their visual conflation in 'De Morte & Amore' evolved over time. In the first authorized edition of 1534, Death towers over Cupid, and his skeletal form acts as a foil to Cupid's voluptuousness.²⁵ By 1547, however, in a new illustration by Bernard Saloman, symmetry is being used to equate the two deities, with Cupid and Death taking to the skies on opposing sides of the image, bearing the same curved bow and arrows, and with their victims arranged beneath them.²⁶ It is this version that Whitney's *A Choice of Emblèmes* would reproduce (Figure 4), following the 1577 Antwerp edition, in which the size and postures of Cupid and Death are even more closely mirrored. It was also in this form that 'De Morte & Amore' probably became familiar to early modern dramatists.

Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (c. 1587) features three personifications, Love, Fortune and Death, who manipulate the play's mortal characters in order to demonstrate their own power. They remain on stage for the duration, commenting on their own achievements at the end of each act, until finally Death triumphs and belittles his rivals: 'Packe, *Love* and *Efortune*, play in *Commedies*; ! For powerful *Death* best fitteth *Tragedies*' (5.5.27–8). But although this play has often been quoted as proof of how unnatural the early modern period considered love tragedy,²⁷ the relationship it suggests between Love and Death is considerably more ambiguous. Throughout the

²² Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems*, pp. 132–3, lines 21–2, italics mine.

²³ James Shirley, *The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*, ed. William Gifford and Alexander Dyce, 6 vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), vol. vi, lines 358–40.

²⁴ Compare Amor and Mors in the *Emblemata* (1550), pp. 115–17 and 168, and Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (Rome, 1593; illustrated edn 1603), pp. 185 and 361.

²⁵ See Andrea Alciato, *Andreae Alciati Emblematum Fontes Quatuor*, ed. Henry Green (London: Trübner & Co., 1870).

²⁶ Andrea Alciato, 'De Morte et Amore', in *Clarissimi Viri D. Andreae Alciati Emblematum Libri Duo* (Lugduni, 1547), BL, c 125.cc.19, p. 67, no. 6y

²⁷ See Franklin M. Dickey, *Not Wisely But Too Well: Shakespeare's Love Tragedies* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1966), pp. 5–6.

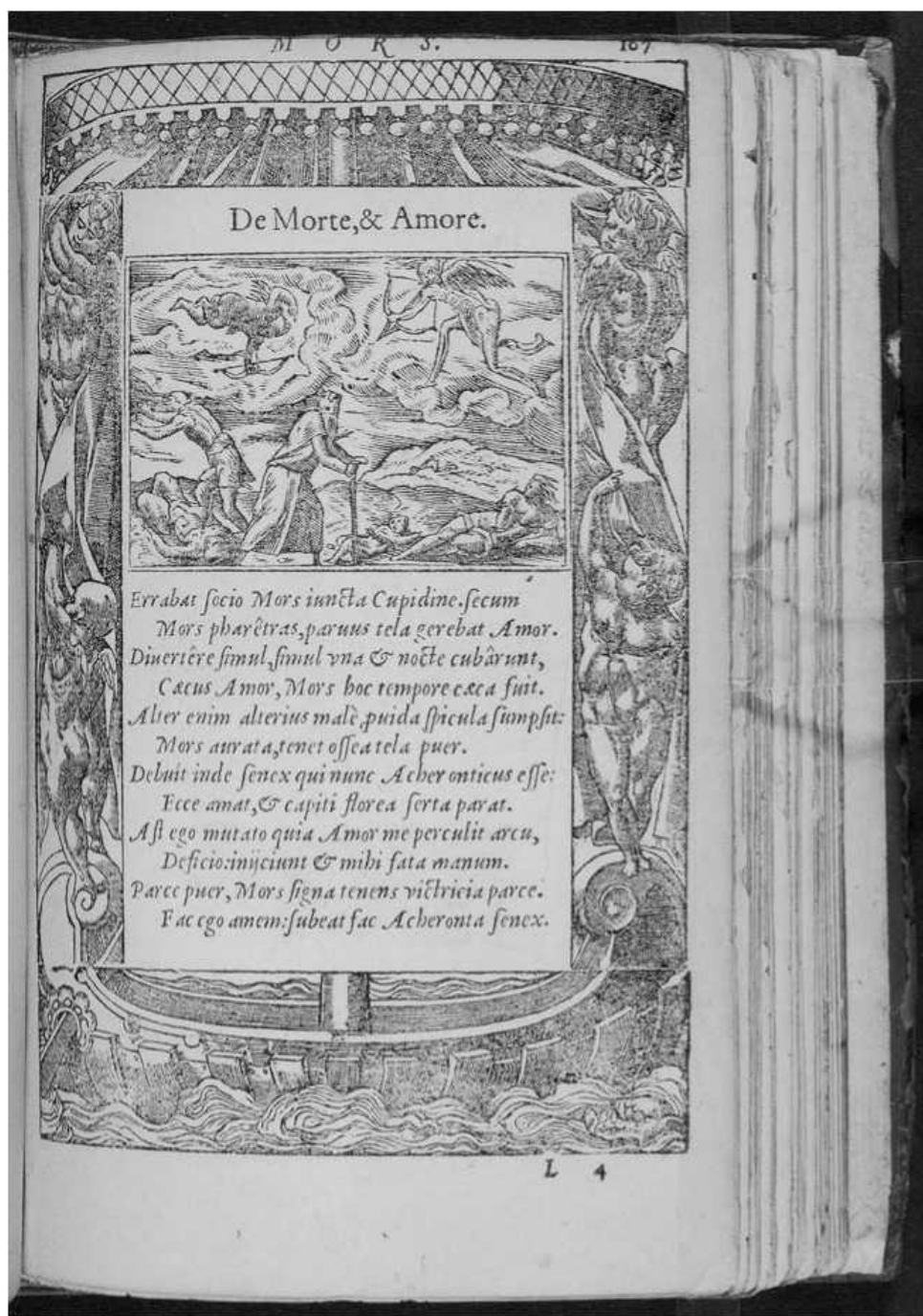


Figure 3. Andrea Alciato, 'De Morte, & Amore', *Emblemata*



Ioachim. Belleus.
Mutantur arma inter
se Mors atque Cupido:
Hic filium tellus
gestat at illa facem.
Afficit hunc amoris
arripit sed conficit ille:
Sic moritur iuuenis
se moribundus aetat.

WHILE furious Mors, from place, to place did flie,
And here, and there, her fatall darts did throwe:
At length shee mette, with Cupid passing by,
Who likewise had, bene busie with his bowe:
Within one Inne, they bothe together stay'd,
And for one night, awaie their shooting lay'd.
The morrowe next, they bothe awaie doe haste,
And each by chaunce, the others quiver takes:
The frozen darts, on Cupiddes backe weare plac'd,
The fierie darts, the leane virago shakes:
Whereby ensued, such alteration straunge,
As all the worlde, did wonder at the chaunge.
For gallant youthes, whome Cupid thoughte to wounde,
Of loue, and life, did make an ende at once.
And aged men, whome deathe woulde bringe to grounde:
Beganne againe to loue, with sighes, and grones;
Thus natures lawes, this chaunce infringed foe:
That age did lone, and youthe to graue did goe.
Till at the laste, as Cupid drewe his bowe,
Before he shotte: a younglinge thus did crye,
Oh Venus sonne, thy darts thou doste not knowe,
They pierce too deepe: for all thou hittes, doe die:
Oh spare our age, who honored thee of oulde,
These darts are bone, take thou the darts of goulde.

Which

Figure 4. Geoffrey Whitney, "De morte, dr amore", *A Choice of Emblèmes*

play, Love is seen to oppose Death by working towards the lovers' happiness.²⁸ For example, when Fortune forces Perseda and Erastus apart through exile, Love gives them faith to endure their separation and finally marry. When Soliman attempts to kill Perseda, Love renders him incapable of doing so. At the climax, following Erastus' execution, Perseda's suicide and Soliman's murder (all set against a backdrop of martial bloodshed), Love insists upon his/her continued defiance of Death: 'I go, yet *Love* shall never yeeld to *Death*' (5.5.29). And yet, Love has begun the play by aggressively defying Fortune and Death and threatening to 'make it knowne to you and to the world / What intrest *Love* hath in Tragedies' (1.1.31–2). S/he later claims that tragedy is inherent in that passion: 'Twas I that made their harts consent to love ... Had I not beene, they had not dyed so soone' (1.1.15,18). Moreover, at the moment of romantic climax, when Soliman has been unable to kill Perseda, has renounced his claim and has even celebrated her marriage to Erastus, Love sabotages the romantic comedy ending by making Soliman repent his generosity:

What was it but abuse of *Fortunes* gift?
 And therefore *Fortune* now will be revengde.
 What was it but abuse of *Loves* commaund?
 And therefore mightie *Love* will be revengd.
 (4.1.208—11)²⁹

The ambiguity that surrounds Love's iconography in *Soliman and Perseda* is also intriguing (and incriminating). Although we are told that Death is male and Fortune female, the play provides neither a name nor a gender nor any details in the stage directions that would help us to visualize Love. Yet, there is sufficient evidence elsewhere in the text to conjecture that it was played as Cupid.³⁰ Perseda swears that 'with loves goulden wings' (2.2.35), she will follow Erastus to Constantinople. In the subsequent scene, Love himself declares: 'But with my goulden winges ile follow him, / And give him aide and succour in distresse' (2.3.13–14). In the history of Western art, Venus is only rarely winged; Cupid nearly always is. Moreover, Love's language is specifically Anacreontic. In Act 3, Fortune tries to claim responsibility for the affection that has sprung up between Erastus and Soliman but Love contradicts him:

²⁸ Love plays a similar role in another supernatural-frame play, once attributed to Kyd, *Lise Rare Triumphes of Love and Fortune* (c. 1582). For discussion of this play in relation to Kyd, see Lukas Erne, *Beyond lise Spanish Tragedy: A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 157–67.

²⁹ In Kyd's source, Henry Wotton's *A Courtlie Controversie of Cupid's Cautels* (1578), the narrator describes how, at the wedding, 'love, whom [Soliman] pretended to resist, planted his proude foote upon the Princes heade'. Similarly, in his letter to Persida, Soliman attributes his infatuation to 'the vengeance of cruell love, because I have despised his invisible forces', pp. 61, 63.

³⁰ In *A Courtlie Controversie*, Fortune is female, Death male and blind, and Love also gendered male, pp. 37, 44, 61. In the frame narrative, masculine love is imagined as 'an infant having wings', p. 21.

Nay, that was *Love*, for I coucht my seife
In poore *Frastus* eyes, and with a looke
Orespred with reares, bewitched *Solyman*. (3.64–6)

Again, it is the childish Cupid who plays hide-and-seek in the beloved's eyes, not Venus. Finally, there is a hint of Love's status as blind Cupid when he warns that ensuing events will prove that 'though *Love* winke, *Loves* not starke blinde' (3.6.20): the question of whether or not the lovegod could be blind was a much-repeated trope in Elizabethan poetry.

The explanation for Love's being played as Cupid rather than Venus here may be quite straightforward. In the English plays printed and/or performed between 1500 and 1660, Venus appears in only three tragedies, and then always with Cupid.³¹ By contrast, Cupid appears in twelve, and in nine he acts alone. Four of his appearances are in inset masques, leaving eight plays in which his actions advance the main plot, suggesting that whenever a tragic Eros was required he was played as Cupid. Nevertheless, there is nothing perfunctory in *Soliman and Perseda* about this piece of casting, for it supports the play's blurring of the distinctions between love and death. For example, Death's weapon of choice is a 'sable dart' (1.1.28), creating a visual resemblance between himself and Cupid, who also, according to Basilisco, wields an arrow:

Why, sawst thou not how *Cupid*, God of Love, not daring looke me in the
marshall face, came like a coward stealing after me, and with his pointed
dart prickt my posteriors? (4.2.35—8)³²

Nor is this the only attribute in *Soliman and Perseda* that Death might have been seen to share with Cupid, for he may also have appeared winged and blindfolded, as indeed might Fortune.³³ In the subplot, the particular equation of Cupid and Death is reinforced not only by Basiliscos being killed for stealing a kiss, but by the fact that his reference to Cupid was, in another theatrical life, an allusion to Death. Basiliscos question 'sawst thou not how *Cupid*...' is a parodic version of Tamburlaine's observation:

See where my slave, the ugly monster Death,
Shaking and quivering, pale and wan for fear,
Stands aiming at me with his murdering dart,
Who flies away at every glance I give,
And when I look away comes stealing on.

³¹ These are *Cambyzes*, *Dido*, *Queen of Carthage* and *Lise Courageous Turk*, though in the latter she appears only in an inset masque. See the Cupidean Tragedy section for further discussion.

³² The sodomitical associations of Cupid's arrow here are explored further in Chapter 4.

³³ The fifteenth-century poem by Pierre Michault *La Danse aux Aveugles* features Love, Fortune and Death as three blind deities. See *La danse aux aveugles et autres poésies du XV siècle: Extraites*, ed. Lambert Douxfls (Lille, 1748), p. 21.

(*Tamburinine*, Part 2, 5.3.67—71)³⁴

More generally, Kyd's translation of the arrow-wielding Death into the arrow-wielding Cupid suggests at least a passing familiarity with 'De Morte & Amore'. It was arguably this emblem that inspired the double perception of Love as the lovers' defender and their enemy and suggested that the arrows of one personification could stand in for those of the other.

A tragedy that takes the iconography of '*De Morte & Amore*' further, to the extent that Cupid replaces Death, is Middleton's *Women Beware Women* (1621). Here, the supernatural agents are confined to the final scene where the mortals' revenge plots are performed in a masque featuring mythological deities. Thus, the human subjects of *Soliman and Perseda* have reversed the balance of power, exposing their divine persecutors as theatrical roles by which human desires might be fulfilled. This was an accusation repeatedly levelled at Cupid and he is synonymous throughout *Women Beware Women* with the erotic and morally degenerative power of Italian art.³⁵ But for all the irony of the final masque, it takes seriously the identification of Cupid and Death latent in Alciato's emblem. Guardiano describes his intended revenge against Hippolito:

The pages that present the swift-wing'd cupids
Are taught to hit him with their shafts of love
(Fitting his part) which I have cunningly poison'd.
He cannot 'scape my fury; and those ills
Will be laid all on fortune, not our wills.
That's the sport on't! For who will imagine
That at the celebration of this night
Any mischance that haps can flow from spite?
(5-1.30-7)

Guardiano attests to the incongruity of murder at the wedding feast, represented metonymically by the use of pretty, smiling, epithalamic cupids as the agents of his fatal revenge. But he also presupposes the naivety of his audience: 'For who will imagine ... Any mischance that haps can flow from spite'. As in Alciato's emblem, 'Fortune' will be blamed, not Cupid(s), though given that Hippolito is being punished for lust and incest, it seems appropriate that he should be killed by cupids, reinforcing the identification of sex and death that is stated at many points in the play.

Perhaps more intriguing is the connection *Women Beware Women* establishes between Cupid and plague, thereby anticipating the last of our artistic themes. The

³⁴ I am indebted to Erne for pointing out this allusion in *Beyond the Spanish Tragedy*, p. 158.

³⁵ Guardiano describes how he prepared Bianca for 'Cupid's feast' by showing her 'naked pictures' (2.1.404-5). See Lisa Hopkins, 'Art and Nature in *Women Beware Women*, *Renaissance Forum* 1 (1996), and A. A. Bromham, 'Women Beware Women, Danae and Iconographie Tradition', *Notes & Queries* 50 (March 2003), 74-6.

tragedy is set in Florence, a city famously associated with the epidemic by Boccaccio (see below), and its susceptibility to infection is subtly alluded to throughout. For example, the Mother suggests that in bringing Bianca to Florence and keeping her shut up indoors, Leantio is ‘like a fellow / That rids another country of a plague / And brings it home with him to his own house’ (3.1.171–3). Leantio later warns his adulterous wife that her sins will be punished by heaven: A plague will come’ (4.1.103).³⁶ But most significant is Hippolito’s response to his death-wound — ‘Plague of those cupids!’ (5.2.141) — for Cupid was easily mistaken for the bearer of plague.

The Cupidean Plague-Angel

In an illustrated manuscript by Giovanni Sercambi (1400), describing an outbreak of bubonic plague at Lucchese in 1348, we find angels on the left and right of the picture casting plague arrows upon a group of victims below, whilst the central figure is releasing poisoned air (*miasma*) into the atmosphere.³⁷ The repetition of this image later in the chronicle has led to its being described as a ritualised picture of the plague’.³⁸

For millennia in Western culture, the infliction of plague has been attributed to an arrow-wielding deity. At the beginning of Homer’s *Iliad*, it is Apollo who fires down arrows upon the Greek camp. In the *Old Testament*, Job complains: ‘the arrows of the Almighty are within me, / The poison whereof my spirit drinketh up’ (6.4). However, the image of God, Christ or His angels wielding plague-arrows became particularly popular through the response to bubonic plague in fifteenth-century Umbria.³⁹ Frescos and banners (*gonfalon*i) were commissioned by various cities to chronicle the plague’s destruction but also in the hope of prompting divine mercy. For example, Benedetto Bonfigli’s fresco in the S. Francesco del Prato church at Perugia, the *Plague Madonna della Misericordia* (1464) represents Christ, or possibly God Himself, as a winged angel, hurling plague-arrows down at the city. On his right is an angel bearing the sword of justice and on his left another with sheathed sword to suggest mercy and the plague’s

³⁶ Swapan Chakravorty discusses the recurrent imagery of plague in the play and suggests Middleton’s plague pamphlets as a likely influence but he does not mention the likeness between Cupid and the Italian plague-angel. See *Society and Politics in the Plays of Thomas Middleton* (Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. Mi-3-

³⁷ See the image in the *Chronicle*, fol. 49V, in the Lucca State Archives, as reproduced by Joseph Polzer, ‘Aspects of the Fourteenth-Century Iconography of Death and the Plague’ in *Lise Black Death: Tire Impact of the Fourteenth- Century Plague*, ed. Daniel Williman (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), pp. 107–30, at p. 115, fig. 5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

³⁹ See Raymond Crawford, *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), p. 77, and Louise Marshall, ‘Manipulating the Sacred: Image and Plague in Renaissance Italy’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1994), 483-532-

cessation. Offering resistance to plague, we find the Madonna who shields the city with her mantle from which the arrows of pestilence rebound, broken and harmless.⁴⁰

The similarity between the plague-angel and the arrow-wielding Cupid may have influenced Alciato's 'De Morte & Amore' (and thence the poisonous cupids of *Women Beware Women*), for its depiction of Cupid and Death aloft, facing one another, with arrows pointed at subjects below recalls the arrangement of angels and their victims in Sercambi's manuscript and subsequent *gonfalon*.⁴¹ Moreover, Guicciardini insisted that the emblem had been inspired by Alciato's own experience of plague: 'When there were deade at Milan in short space, of divers diseases certayne noble and courteous yong men, Alciato made upon that occasion in the Italian tongue these wittie verses'.⁴² However, a more persistent analogy between love and plague was inscribed within Boccaccio's *Decameron*. At the beginning of the First Day, the narrator relates how, in 1348, 'the noble city of Florence, which for its great beauty excels all others in Italy, was visited by the deadly pestilence' (5). The fictional Florentines, who have taken refuge outside the city, distract themselves by telling stories of erotic disaster. Yet, from the start, the *Decameron* asserts the contiguity between plague and lovesickness.⁴³ The narrator describes how he was once 'inflamed beyond measure with a most lofty and noble love ... [an] immoderate passion engendered within my mind by a craving that was ill-restrained' (1). The fact that this desire subsequently eased is not attributable to his own efforts or to the intervention of others, rather love has 'diminish[ed] of its own accord', just as the narrator avers that human action has no power to end the plague. Moreover, if desire is as unavoidable and relentless as plague, it also acts upon the body in similar ways. Boccaccio uses the word *enfiato* to describe Pasquino's death from lovesickness (novella 7, Day Four) but *enfiatura* is also used to describe the swellings in the lymph nodes and particularly the groin that were symptomatic of plague.⁴⁴ Finally, we should note love and plague's similar relationship to boundaries. The *Proemio* suggests that the female reader's narrow confinement intensifies lovesickness, just as the plague victim is immured with Death in the quarantined house. At the same time, Death's defiance of social and moral codes creates an unlicensed sexuality. The *brigata* fear that by remaining in the city they are not only more susceptible to plague but to the threat of unchastity that goes with it.

This identification of love and plague, as expressed through the Cupidean plague-angel, would find further justification in the experience of sexually transmitted disease.

⁴⁰ See the reproduction in *ibid.*, 509, fig. 10.

⁴¹ Alciato addresses Cupid as 'Dreade pestilence' in another emblem, '*Potentissimus affectus amor*' ('Love, the all-powerful emotion', no. 115).

⁴² Translated by Sandford in *Houres of Recreation*, pp. 121–2. For the evidence that Alciato did not, in fact, invent this narrative, see Dundas, 'De Morte', 39–42, and Joseph G. Fucilla, 'De Morte et Amore', *Philological Quarterly* 14 (1935), 97–104, at 98.

⁴³ See Aldo S. Bernardo, 'The Plague as Key to Meaning in Boccaccio's *Decameron*', in Williman, *Tire Black Death*, pp. 39–64.

⁴⁴ See Jessica Levenstein, 'Out of Bounds: Passion and the Plague in Boccaccio's *Decameron*', *Italica* 73 (autumn 1996), 313–35, at 315.

Syphilis was often described as a ‘plague’,⁴⁵ not so much because of the numbers of the dead as for its imposition by a wrathful deity, recalling the most common definition of ‘plague’ as ‘any affliction, calamity, evil or scourge’ (*OED* za). On defining the new disease in 1495, the Emperor Maximilian had blamed man’s blasphemy.⁴⁶ Yet the infection was more consistently attributed to his sexual transgressions. As the physician Ambroise Paré puts it, syphilis is sent ‘as a scourge or punishment to restrain the too much wanton and lascivious lusts of unpure whoremongers’.⁴⁷ Practical measures were taken to control the disease, specifically orders for the closure of brothels and the punishment of prostitutes, but early sixteenth-century Europe also marshalled many of the same artistic strategies adopted in response to bubonic plague. For example, syphilis had its own saints, St Minus and St Denis; once again, the Madonna was required to shield potential victims with her cloak; and an infant Christ was depicted firing arrows at a sinful multitude covered in horrible lesions.⁴⁸

In his resemblance to the plague-angel, Cupid might yet be understood as a punitive figure, chastising lust through the imposition of syphilis (a possibility that recurs in Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Cupid’s Revenge*, where one of Cupid’s instruments of revenge, Bacha, is repeatedly described as infectious (5.2.50–1, 63–5)).⁴⁹ And yet, as a figure for desire, Cupid was also culpable and even liable to succumb to the disease himself. In an Italian madrigal by Hubert Naich, *Per Dio, Tu ei Cortese* (1540–6), the speaker seeks revenge on Cupid for making him enamoured of an infected woman: ‘So, since it is thus, may you be full of it, / And may your wings be riddled with this French pox!’⁵⁰ But this was not the most obvious part of Cupid’s anatomy to be affected. In Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*, illicit love has proven fatal to both Greeks and Trojans, not only through wars but lechery. As Valerie Traub observes: A rhetoric of contagion not only “contaminates” the action of the play, it supplies the

⁴⁵ See, for example, Andrew Boord’s *Breviary of Helthe* (1547), fol. xlvir and Dekker’s play, *Westward Ho!* (1605), 4.1.83–4. See also Margaret Healy’s discussion of the comparison in *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England: Bodies, Plagues and Politics* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 123–4.

⁴⁶ See Darin Hayton, ‘Joseph Gurnpeck’s Astrological Explanation of the French Disease’ in *Sins of the Flesh: Responding to Sexual Disease in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Kevin Siena (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2005), pp. 81–108, at pp. 82–5.

⁴⁷ Ambroise Paré, ‘Of the Causes of Lues Venerea’, in *Workes*, trans. T. Johnson (London, 1634), p. 724.

⁴⁸ See the woodcut accompanying Conrad Renter’s poem, *Mortilogus* (Augsburg 1508) and Sebastian Brant’s poem *Eulogium depestilentialis scorra sive mala de Franzos* (Basel 1496), both reproduced in Fabricius, *Syphilis in Shakespeare’s England*, figs. 12 and 7.

⁴⁹ Her lover, Timantus, is specifically described as having syphilis: ‘Hee lay with his Mother, and infected her, and now she begges ith Hospitall, with a patch of velvet, where her Nose stood, like the queen of spades, and all her Teeth in her purse’ (4.1.176–9).

⁵⁰ Quoted by Margaret Healy in ‘Bronzino’s London “Allegory” and the Art of Syphilis’, *The Oxford Art Journal* 20.1 (1997), 3–11, at 8.

central signifier of desire: desire *is* disease.⁵¹ More specifically, in Pandarus' ballad Cupid's arrow becomes indistinguishable from the infected phallus:

Helen: Let thy song be love. 'This love will undo us all.' O Cupid, Cupid,
Cupid!

Pandarus: Love? Ay, that it shall, i'faith.

Paris: Ay, good now, 'Love, love, nothing but love.'

Pandarus: In good truth, it begins so.

(*Sings*)

Love, love, nothing but love, still love still more!

For O love's bow

Shoots buck and doe.

The shaft confounds

Not that it wounds,

But tickles still the sore.

These lovers cry 'O! O!', they die.

Yet that which seems the wound to kill

Doth turn 'O! O!' to 'ha ha he!'

So dying love lives still.

'O! O!' a while, but 'ha ha ha!'

'O! O!' groans out for 'ha ha ha!'

Heigh-ho.

Helen: In love — ay, faith, to the very tip of the nose. (3.1.106–23)

The ballad adopts a mocking, tragi-comic tone, suggesting that the violence represented by 'wounds', 'sore', 'kill' and 'confounds' becomes a pleasurable tickling and ends in an erotic climax. Yet its identification of the vulva as a sore and the shaft as something that infects, as well as Helen's reference to the tip of the nose (famously eaten away in advanced cases of syphilis), maintains the analogy between Cupid's imposition of desire and of disease. In fact, this ballad demonstrates all three visual traditions of Desire as Death. Not only does Cupid act like a punitive angel, his arrow once again substitutes for Death's fatal dart and there may even be hints of 'De Morte & Amore' in the lovers' appeal to Cupid — '“O! O!”', they die' — as if he were unaware of his arrows' effect. Moreover, the reference to 'Dying love' might recall the more macabre versions of the *putto* and the skull in which Cupid is killed by his own lust. The only way in which his tragic agency could be made more explicit is if he were brought physically onto the stage.

⁵¹ Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 73.

Part Two: Cupidean Tragedy

Not all tragedies that feature Cupid are ‘Cupidean tragedy’. In some instances, he appears as part of a character’s dream or in an inset masque, often in celebration of a wedding.⁵² Even where he does feature as an instigator of action within the main plot, he is not always tragic.⁵³ Nevertheless, there are at least four plays in which he functions as the agent of the lovers’ destruction, namely *Cambyzes* (1561), *Gismond of Sáleme* (1566), *Tancred and Gismund* (1591) and *Cupid’s Revenge* (1608). The plots of these plays are mainly concerned with illicit sexuality and incestuous love, causing the destruction of private and political bodies. As the instigator of these plots and the embodiment of the passion that drives them, Cupid endorses Nicolas Coeffeteau’s definition of desire as

A fatali source, from whence flow all kinds of horror, uncleanness, adulteries, incests, sacriledges, quarrels, warres, treasons, murders, parricides, cruelties and violences ... drawing [lovers] many times to despaire, and to do things whereat heaven and earth blush and are ashamed.⁵⁴

As such, Cupid can be distinguished from the Love of love tragedy. The latter is primarily a civilizing force, his purpose ‘to combine single human individuals, and after that families, then races, peoples and nations, into one great unity, the unity of mankind’.⁵⁵ He is invariably prevented from achieving this aim by representatives of Hatred and Death, but the end of the play will testify to the power and beauty of Love and to the cruelty of its frustration.⁵⁶ By contrast, in Cupidean tragedy, desire is fundamentally anti-social and has always been imagined as an agent of death, being imposed by Cupid to punish his enemies. The precise causation is not always clear: the lovers may be killed by ‘justice’ or revenge, combined with the suicidal impulse that desire unleashes. But what is certain is that Cupid’s arrows, the agents of desire and death, are now his own — the fiction of ‘De Morte & Amore’ is rendered obsolete.

More generally, this Cupid embodies passion’s defiance of limit; in *Gismond of Sáleme* he boasts of how little ‘Natures bond, or lawes restraint availles against my

⁵² See, respectively, *The Rebellion*, *Timon of Athens*, *Tire Tragedy of Charles*, *Duke of Byron*, *Women Beware Women* and *Tire Courageous Turk*.

⁵³ For example, in Marlowe’s *Dido*, Cupid’s actions lead to Dido’s committing suicide but he never expresses the intention of killing her (see also Chapter 4). Similarly, in William Gager’s *Hippolytus* (1592), Cupid deplores the notion of love being used to destroy the protagonists and remains a primarily comic figure.

⁵⁴ Coeffeteau, *A Table of Humane Passions*, trans. Edward Grimeston (London, 1621), pp. 154–5.

⁵⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930) in *Tire Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, 24 vols. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1960), vol. xxi, p. 122.

⁵⁶ Stilling argues that Elizabethan love tragedy is characterized by the belief in romantic, heterosexual love as a good, *Love and Death in Renaissance Tragedy*, pp. 3–4, 97–9. His perception of an anti-romantic tradition in which love internalizes hatred and death, emerging after *Hamlet*, relates to Cupidean tragedy though the latter considerably predates it: pp. 99–103.

power'.⁵⁷ Fathers are betrayed by their children's exogamous desire, but they also allow their own passions to run wild, harbouring incestuous feelings for their daughters or acting as love-rivals to their sons. More commonly, the defiance of 'lawes restraint' is expressed by the plays' dismissal of marriage. Either Cupid imposes a lust that cannot be sanctified or he invents parental opposition, ensuring that the lovers' desire will remain illicit and therefore shameful and destructive. This represents an extreme version of love tragedy in which marriage can only partially reconstitute desire because it is secret and either eludes or defies patriarchal authority (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello* and *The Duchess of Malf*). Nevertheless, these protagonists actively desire marriage, and their unions are often depicted sympathetically, as life-affirming and even fruitful. By contrast, Cupidean tragedy assumes that marriage is inadequate to restrain what it defines as 'a boundlesse, an irrefragable, a destructive passion'.⁵⁸ It seems to delight in its own erotic transgressions, anticipating the arguments of Denis de Rougemont and Julia Kristeva that marriage is 'antinomic to love ... the law is deadly for it'.⁵⁹

Finally, Cupidean tragedy is more engaged with the political consequences of desire, anticipating 'Jacobean sex tragedies' such as Middleton's *The Lady's Tragedy* and Fletcher's *Valentinian*, in which the tyrant's 'sexual misconduct and abuse of power are coextensive'.⁶⁰ The Cupid of Cupidean tragedy embodies the desire that drives the tyrant and that will invariably lead to his downfall, but Cupid also imitates the violent self-assertion and lawlessness of the tyrant, as suggested by his cruelty towards lovers: 'Their death shall make the earth to know my might' (*Gismond*, 3.1.21). The lovers' victimization at the hands of such a deity pushes these plays towards an engagement with broader philosophical and religious questions, relating to the possibility of free will and the justice of punishment for sins that have been divinely imposed. It is this aspect of Cupidean tragedy that suggests its conflicted attitude towards Calvinism.

The following discussion of four Cupidean tragedies does not negate the considerable differences between them in terms of intended audience, performance and genre. For example, *Camhyses* is a hybrid of morality and chronicle history, written for a popular audience and performed by Leicester's Men, probably on provincial tour; *Gismond of Sáleme* (revised as *Tancred and Gismund*) is a Senecan revenge tragedy, written and performed by Inns of Court students, with a performance at court; *Cupid's Revenge* is a mix of political tragedy and pastoral romance first performed by a boys' company at the Blackfriars though later taken on by Lady Elizabeth's Men. The category of Cupidean tragedy is not intended to replace these definitions. Nevertheless, I would

⁵⁷ J- W. Cunliffe (ed.), *Early English Classical Tragedies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), 1.1.45–6.

⁵⁸ Burton, *Tire Anatomy of Melancholy*, vol. in, p. 54.

⁵⁹ See Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, trans. Montgomery Belgion (New York: Schocken Books, 1940, repr. 1983), pp. 33–4, 74–6, and Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp. 209–10.

⁶⁰ See Martin Wiggins (ed.), *Four Jacobean Sex Tragedies* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. ix.

argue that the tragic agency of Cupid creates connections between these plays that distinguish them from the larger body of love tragedy.

Cambyzes, King of Persia

Thomas Preston's *Cambyzes, King of Persia* (1561, pub. 1570) might be rejected as a Cupidean tragedy for two reasons: first, desire is not directly used to bring about the destruction of the tyrant; and second, it is Venus who plots its imposition, not Cupid. Nevertheless, *Cambyzes* anticipates the development of Cupidean tragedy in important ways.

The play dramatizes the outrageous cruelty of the tyrant-king Cambyzes, which includes having a man flayed alive, murdering a child in the presence of its father, and giving orders for the execution of his own wife and brother. The intrusion of Venus and Cupid suggests an amorous interlude in this increasingly bloody tragedy — perhaps literally so, for these scenes were probably inspired by Italian *intermedii*. breaks between the acts of a comedy (and later tragedy), featuring mythological deities, spectacle, music and song.⁶¹ However, *intermedii* usually had no specific relationship to the rest of the play and were sometimes written by a different author, whereas Preston has allowed Venus and Cupid to appear on stage at the same time as the protagonists and, to a limited extent, relates their scenes to the rest of the action.

As we would expect, their function is to impose love upon unsuspecting mortals. Venus' initial target is the Lady, a kinswoman of Cambyzes, whose beauty and chastity inspire the goddess's envy. But although the Lady's capitulation to marriage is viewed as the defeat of her chastity, it also procures her death: she is taken away for execution from her own wedding feast. How deliberately Venus plots this outcome is unclear, for it is overshadowed by the larger ambiguity concerning the role of desire in the downfall of the tyrant. It is Cambyzes rather than the Lady who is the victim of Cupid's arrow:

King: ... But, oh behold, where I do see a lord and lady fair!

For beauty she most worthy is to sit in prince's chair.

Venus: Shoot forth, my son; now is the time that thou must wound his heart.

Cupid: Content you mother; I will do my part.

[Shoot there, and go out Venus and Cupid]

King : Of truth, my lord, in eye of mine all ladies she doth excel.⁶²

⁶¹ On the play's sources, see W. A. Armstrong, 'The Background and Sources of Preston's *Cambyses*', *English Studies* 31 (1950), 129–35. On the influence of *inter-medii* on early modern drama in general, see Dieter Mehl, *Tire Elizabethan Dumb Show: Tire History of a Dramatic Convention* (London and New York: Methuen, 1964), pp. 16–17, and J. W. Cunliffe, 'Italian Prototypes of the Masque and Dumb Show', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 22 (1907), 140–56.

⁶² Thomas Preston, *Cambyzes*, in *The Minor Elizabethan Drama: Pre-Shakespearean Tragedies*, ed. Ashley Thorndike (Tondon and New York: Everyman, 1958, repr. 1967), lines 877–81.

If it is easy to see how desire proves the undoing of the Lady, what is less clear is the extent to which it provokes Cambyzes' self-stabbing, an accident apparently unrelated to his marriage or his treatment of his bride. David Bevington suggests that, although audiences 'would not have failed to recognize the causal link between Cambises' iniquitous doings and his "accidental" death ... Its moral function is underplayed ... there is little direct invocation of a vengeful Providence exacting punishment for sin.'⁶³ Nevertheless, Venus hints that Cambyzes' tragic fall may develop out of his infatuation, particularly since it goes against Nature by being incestuous, urging Cupid 'To wound his heart in lovers' wise, his grief for to unfold' (line 850).

More subtle is the link suggested between Cupid's action and one of Cambyzes' most heinous crimes: his shooting Praxaspes' son through the heart with an arrow. There is something grotesquely Petrarchan (and Cupidean) in Cambyzes' wager: 'If heart of his I do not kill, I yield to thee in this' (line 514) and in the fact that he has the heart cut out and displayed. Subsequently, the real love-god appears on stage to fire an arrow at Cambyzes and the display of the heart recurs linguistically when the tyrant tells the Lady that her beauty has not only wounded his heart but revealed it: 'my heart hath you out-found' (line 906). Finally, the fact that, according to the first quarto's division of parts, the actor playing Cupid also played Praxaspes' son strengthens the impression that for Cambyzes to be love-struck is an act of tragic *peripeteia*.⁶⁴

Although its teleology of desire and death remains undeveloped, then, *Cambyzes* brings together some of the key dramatic features of Cupidean tragedy, including the tyrant victimized by an inappropriate (incestuous) passion and the evisceration and displaying of a human heart. What is lacking is a Cupid who acts in pursuit of his own will, and a plot that affords him larger scope for tragedy.

Gismond of Sáleme and Tancred and Gismund

Six years after *Cambyzes*, five gentlemen of the Inner Temple collaborated to produce a tragedy called *Gismond of Sáleme*. It was performed before Elizabeth at Greenwich in 1566, and later revised and published as *Tancred and Gismund* in 1591.⁶⁵ The play is based on the tragic tale of Ghismonda and Guiscardo, from the first novella of Day Four of the *Decameron*. This narrative was second only to that of Romeus and Juliet as a tale of tragic love in early modern England, translated in William Painter's

⁶³ Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 214.

⁶⁴ James Phares Myers notes the appropriateness of Cambyzes being stabbed through the left side in 'The Heart of King Cambises', *Studies in Philology* 70.4 (October 1973), 367–76, at 374–6.

⁶⁵ The main revisions include the addition of four dumbshows, a more spectacular entrance for Cupid and the replacement of some of the rhyming passages with blank verse. See Kyoko Iriye, 'A Stylistic Comparison of *Gismond of Sáleme* and *Tancred and Gismund*', *Shakespeare Studies* 4 (1965–6), 1–31, and David Klein, '“According to the Decorum of these Daies”', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 33 (1918), 244–68.

Palace of Pleasure (vol. i, 1566) and inspiring at least five English tragedies by 1623.⁶⁶ It tells how a young and beautiful widow returns to her father's house after the death of her husband. Unwilling to part with her again, the father, Tancred, forbids her remarriage, forcing Ghismonda to pursue a clandestine love affair with one of her father's courtiers, Guiscardo, whom she meets via a secret cave. Their relationship is discovered when Tancred, waiting in his daughter's bedchamber, falls asleep and wakes to find Ghismonda and Guiscardo having sex. He has Guiscardo arrested and killed, and his heart cut out and delivered to Ghismonda in a golden cup. Ghismonda fills the cup with poison, drinks from it and dies, having made her father promise that she and her lover will be buried in the same tomb.

The main innovation represented by *Gismond of Sáleme* is its fashioning of Cupid as a tragic antagonist, appearing for the first time on the English stage and in defiance of the Boccaccian source. For, although love is personified there, it is Fortune whom the narrator and the lovers blame for their relationship being discovered and cruelly punished. Love is generally viewed as sympathetic, for example, discovering to Ghismonda the secret cave where they might meet: 'But Love, from whose bright discerning eies, nothing can be so closely concealed, but at the length it commeth to light, had made this amorous Lady mindefull thereof'.⁶⁷ By contrast, the Cupid of *Gismond of Sáleme* is blind and sadistic; the passion he imposes is an infectious and mortal disease; and the lovers who indulge him have made a fatal error. In this respect, the dramatists may have recalled English verse adaptations of the Gismond narrative that denigrated desire by identifying it with Cupid. For example, in William Walter's poem, *Guystarde and Sygysmonde* (pub. 1532), the narrator describes the heroine's predicament: 'The chaunce of love she coude no wyse refuse / Cupyde so sore her berte had set on fyre / That need she must accomplysshe her desyre'. This is moralized by the printer Robert Coplande: 'O blynde love / suche is thy properte / Youthe to enclose with thy lubrycke fyre / Nothyng regarded / but to do theyre desyre'.⁶⁸ Cupid's blindness also recurs as an indicator of sin in *Gismond*. For example, the Chorus expresses horror at Guiscard's grisly execution but insists that 'the end of wicked love is blood' (4.4.12) and that only a chaste lover could have escaped such a fate:

[For] he that doeth in vertue his lady serve,
Ne willes but what unto her honor longes,
He never standes in cruel point to sterve:
He feleth not the panges, ne raging thronges

⁶⁶ For a listing of other verse and dramatic adaptations in English, and for a more detailed consideration of the play in its historical context, see my 'Gismond of Sáleme: An Elizabethan and Cupidean Tragedy', *Yearbook of English Studies* 38 (2008), 199–215.

⁶⁷ Giovanni Boccaccio, *Boccaccio's Decameron*, trans. Edward Hutton (1620) (Eondon: David Nutt, 1909), p. 144.

⁶⁸ See lines 68–70 and 131–3, as reproduced in Herbert G. Wright (ed.), *Early English Versions of the Tales of Guiscarde and Ghismonda and Titus and Gisippus from the Decameron* (Eondon: Early English Text Society, 1937).

Of blind Cupide: he lives not in despeir. (Lines 13–17)

Similarly, in the Epilogue, chaste English women are differentiated from the dead Italian heroine by being ‘worthy to live where furie never came, / where Love can see and beares no deadly bowe’ (lines 29–30).

Ultimately, however, it was Euripides and, more immediately, Seneca who supplied this bloodthirsty Cupid and insisted on the irresistibility of the desire he imposed.⁶⁹ The Chorus at the end of each act; the presence of Megaera; the Messenger who relates the extreme violence which happens off-stage — all these features of *Gismond* reflect the fascination with Senecan tragedy that defined Inns of Court drama in the 1560s.⁷⁰ *Gismond*’s description of Cupid is at times specifically indebted to *Octavia* or to *Phaedra*: ‘Full mighty is thy power, O cruel Love, / If Jove himself can not resist thy bowe’ (Cho. 3.1–2).⁷¹ But it is the opening speech, borrowed from a contemporary Italian tragedy, Lodovico Dolce’s *Didone* (1547), which most obviously suggests the play’s Senecan conception of Cupid.⁷² Dolce had translated and published all ten of Seneca’s tragedies by 1560, as well as writing his own plays, heavily influenced by classical tragedy, and his work was well known at the Inns of Court: Gascoigne’s *Jocasta* (1566) is a translation of Dolce’s *Giocasta*.⁷³ In the same year, the dramatists of *Gismond* borrowed almost verbatim the Cupid speech from *Didone*:

Cupido in forma d Ascanio
O, che dimostro in viso,
A la statura, e à i panni,
D’esser picciol fanciullo,
Si come voi mortale:
Son quel gran Dio, che’l mondo chiama Amore.
Quel, che pò in cielo, e in terra,
Et nel bollente Averno;
Contra di cui non vale
Forza, ne human consiglio:

⁶⁹ Euripides’ *Hippolytos* is a fundamental source for Cupidean tragedy through its representation of Eros’ wrath at the neglect of his worship. There is also something of Phaedra in female protagonists such as Gismond and Bacha. Nevertheless, it was Seneca who made Eros rather than Aphrodite the author of the tragic action in *Phaedra*, and it is Seneca to whom the dramatists tend to allude (see note below). For further discussion of Euripides’ influence on early modern tragedy, see Emrys Jones, *Tire Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, repr. 1978), pp. 90–7.

⁷⁰ William Webbe’s praise for the tragedy in the 1591 quarto refers to its being ‘inferior to none of the best in that kinde: no, were the Roman Seneca the censurer’. For a more detailed discussion of its borrowings, see John W. Cunliffe, ‘Gismond of Sáleme’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 21 (1906), 435–61, 451–8, and also H. B. Charlton, *Tire Senecan Tradition in Renaissance Tragedy* (Manchester University Press, 1946), pp. clix-clxvi.

⁷¹ See Cunliffe, ‘Gismond of Sáleme’, 452–3.

⁷² See Cunliffe (ed.), *Early English Classical Tragedies*, pp. xxxvi–vii.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. xxxvii and lxxxv.

Ne d'ambrosia mi pasco,
Si come gli altri Dei,
Ma di sangue, & di painto.
Ne luna mano io porto
Dubbia speme, fallace, & breve gioia;
Ne l'altra affanno, & noia,
Pene, sospiri, & morti. (*Didone*, lines 1–16)

[O, I, who have the face,
Have the stature, and have the clothes,
Of a little boy,
Like you mortal:
I am that great
God that the world calls Love,
The one who has power in heaven and on earth,
And in the boiling Avernus;
Against whom no strength counts,
Nor human advice:
Nor am I nourished on ambrosia,
Like the other Gods,
But on blood and tears.
In one hand I bring
Uncertain hope, deceptive and brief joy;
In the other, anxiety and affliction
Sorrows, sighs, and death.]

In *Gismond*, Cupid '*cometh downefrom heaven* to declare:

Loe, I, in shape that seme unto your sight
a naked boy, not clothed but with wing,
am that great god of love that with my might
do rule the world, and everie living thing.
This one hand beares vain hope, short ioyfull state,
with faire semblance the lover to allure:
this other holdes repentance all to late,
warr, her, blood, and paines without recure.
On swete ambrosia is not my foode,
nor nectar is my drink, as to the rest
of all the Göddes. I drink the lovers blood,
and eate the living hart within his brest.
Well hath my power in heven and earth ben tried.
The depe Avern my percing force hath knowen.

What secret hollow do the huge seas hide
 where blasting fame my actes hath not forthblowen?
 To me the mighty love him self hath yeld. (1.1.1–17)

The English dramatists have made some significant alterations. First, since Cupid's disguise as Ascanius is no longer relevant, they have altered Dolce's lines to suggest the 'disguise' represented by Cupid's boyish appeal, 'with faire semblance the lover to allure' (line 6). Second, his autonomy is reinforced by the fact that where, in *Didone*, he acts in the service of Venus, in *Gismond* he acts alone (as emphasized in a variant stage direction which reads '*Cupido solus*').⁷⁴ But most important is the English dramatists' darkening of the Italian Cupid.⁷⁵ For example, he bears not uncertain but vain hope and brings not anxiety' but 'repentance all to late'. Though the reference to his bringing death ('Pene, sospiri, & morti') is omitted, it returns in *Tancred and Gismund*, where Cupid addresses his attendant personifications, Too-late Repentance, Vain Hope, etc., but draws attention to another: 'But after me, comes death, and deadly paine'.⁷⁶ There is no indication in the opening stage direction that this personification should appear on stage but it is an intriguing possibility. Finally, we might note that, unlike the Italian *Cupido*, nourished on blood and tears, *Gismond's* Cupid 'drink[s] the lovers blood, / and eate[s] the living hart within his brest' (lines 11–12). In this respect, he anticipates not only the final scene of *Gismond*, in which she drinks from a poison cup containing Guiscard's heart, but also *Hamlet*, where this action is associated with the ability to commit homicide: 'Now could I drink hot blood / And do such bitter business as the day / Would quake to look on' (3.2.379–81). While the eating of the lover's heart recalls Dante's *La Vita Nuova*, where Love commands this of the poet's mistress, here it is Cupid who describes himself vengefully, perhaps enviously, consuming the heart.

Nor is this the only Senecan role inhabited by *Gismond's* Cupid, for he combines the bloodlust of the villain with the will-to-power of the Senecan tyrant. Once again, this represents an alteration to the Boccaccian source in which Love's power is set against the cruel oppression of Tancred. Traces of this assumption remain in Guiscard's translation of the Boccaccian dictum *Amor può troppo più che nè voi nè io possiamo* to explain his crime against Tancred:⁷⁷

[For] greater lord is love, and larger reigne
 He hath upon eche god and mortal wight,

⁷⁴ The stage direction is taken from the Hargrave 205 MS, reproduced by Cunliffe, *ibid.*, p. 162.

⁷⁵ We might also compare *Gismond* with an Italian tragedy, based on the same narrative, *Filostrato e Panfila* by Antonio Cammelli (1499, pub. 1508), performed before Duke Ercole I at the court of Ferrara. Here, Amore appears on stage but he is sympathetic towards the lovers, asking the Chorus to look over them. There is no evidence that the *Gismond* playwrights knew this version. See Marvin T. Herrick, *Italian Tragedy in the Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), p. 32.

⁷⁶ Lines 76–80. All quotations from this play are taken from Robert Wilmot, *The Tragedy of Tancred and Gismund* (London: Malone Society, 1914).

⁷⁷ Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. Vittore Branca, 2 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1980), vol. i, p. 23.

Than yow upon yor subiectes have, or I
Upon my self. (4.4.36–9)

Yet although *Gismond* essentially concurs by making Tancred a victim of Cupid's power, the tragedy refuses to endorse any moral distinction between them. Just as Cupid eats lovers' hearts so Tancred 'fede[s]' on the sight of Guiscard's heart (5.1.192). At the end of the revised play, he tears out his own eyes, rendering himself a bloody version of blind Cupid (lines 1846–7). But above all, in his violent despoiling of Guiscard's body, he follows Cupid's declared intent to subdue his rebellious subjects 'by sight of others smartes' (1.1.60).

Unlike the *Decameron*, which limits itself to Tancred's command '[that] they should strangle him ... and taking the heart forth of his body ... bring it to him, which they performed according to their charge' (152), *Gismond* imagines the process and aftermath of this execution in grisly detail:

ReNuchio : wth a swerd they pearce
His naked belly, and unrippe it soe
That out the bowelles gush. Whoe can rehearse
The dolefull sight, wherewth my hart even bledde?
The warme entrailes were toren out of his brest
Wthin their handes trembling not fully dead:
His veines smoked: his bowelles all to strest [reeked]
Ruthless were rent, and throwne amide the place:
All clotted lay the blood in lompes of gore,
Sprent on his corps, and on his paled face.
His hart panting out from his brest they tore,
And cruelly upon a swordes point
They fixe the same, and in this woful wise
Unto the King this hart do they present,
A sight longed for to fede his irefull eyes. (5.1.178–92)

This speech clearly serves the play's Senecanism: the dismembered body, its parts twitching with horrible animation, recalls *Thyestes*.⁷⁸ But more important is the identification it posits between physical torture and the effects of desire, as defined by the symptoms of lovesickness.⁷⁹ For example, in his account of the body's reactions to the

⁷⁸ Cunliffe notes a borrowing from *Thyestes* here: '*erepta uiuis exta pectoribus tremimi / spirantque uenae corque adhuc pavidum salit*' (lines 755–6). He argues that the dramatists were translating Seneca from the Latin rather than using an English translation, 'Gismond of Sáleme', 457.

⁷⁹ For further discussion of lovesickness as a disease in early modern England, see Donald Beecher, 'The Lover's Body: The Somatogenesis of Love in Renaissance Medical Treatises', *Renaissance and Reformation* 12 (1988), 1–11, and Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

executioner's knife, Renuchio describes how the 'bowelles gush', an effect of evisceration but one that recalls the lovesick father whose eyes overflow or Gismond whose 'sweat all cold brast forth incontinent' and 'flowing / teres streame fourth' (3.2.28–9, 33–4). Guiscard's veins smoke, suggesting that the executioner's knife has generated heat within the body but also recalling the burning sensation produced by Cupid (3.3.6–8) and the 'smoky sighes' that manifest Gismond's 'whote desire' (3.2.17–20). Most important, however, is the cutting-out and displaying of the heart, an image that would have been familiar from the contemporary execution of traitors (treason being the charge for which Guiscard is killed (4.2.37, 113)) but also as an emblem of Cupid's power and of the lovers' fatal self-loss.

This equation between the traitor and the lover, the Tyrant and Desire, recurs in an example of what Jonathan Sawday has called the 'lover's vivisection poem',⁸⁰ Donne's 'Loves Exchange'. It deploys Guiscard's situation as a witty and cynical metaphor for the experience of lovesickness:

if I must example bee
To future Rebels; If th'unborne
Must learne, by my being cut up, and tome:
Kill, and dissect me, Love; for this
Torture against thine owne end is,
Rack't carcasses make ill Anatomies. (Lines 37–42)

The speaker, imagining himself as a 'Rebell' facing execution and thence anatomization (since the bodies of executed criminals were the main resource of the anatomist) pleads for immediate death by urging the practical consideration that corpses that have not been wounded or beheaded make for better subjects. Nevertheless, the power he has offended is Cupid, and the tortures he already endures are the pains of love, imposed as revenge for the speaker's initial resistance to desire ('For this, love is enrag'd with mee' (line 36)). Perhaps the main revelation here (and what further associates it with *Gismond*) is that Love is less interested in the outcome of any love affair than in a demonstration of his might: either through a prolonged public spectacle of torture, such as the lover now endures, or his public anatomization. Not only does Cupid feel no empathy for his devotees, he behaves as though he hates them. He views the destruction of love as a manifestation of Love, with no sense of paradox.

It is this perspective that seems to be the most sustained influence exerted by Cupidean tragedy upon love tragedy, its theatrical sibling. Although there is no evidence of its having been performed, allusions to *Tancred and Gismund* (pub. 1591) occurred on public and private stages alike.⁸¹ In *Romeo and Juliet*, the heroine's last words

⁸⁰ Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 50.

⁸¹ In the dedication to the gentlemen of the Inner Temple, Wilmot spurns the public theatre but recommends the play for performance 'within the walles of your house' (line 50). In the dedication to

before drinking the sleeping draught, ‘Romeo! Romeo! Romeo! Here’s drink. I drink to thee’ (4.3.57), recall Gismund’s last words before she drinks a real poison: ‘(mine Earle) I drinke to thee’ (line 1719). Similarly, the display of the lover’s heart finds its way into Fletcher’s *The Mad Lover* (1616) where it is viewed as an absurd affectation and subsequently faked, and *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* (1632), where it is horrifyingly real.⁸² Moreover, in *Romeo* and *’Tis Pity*, we find a distinctly Cupidean identification of love and hate. Shakespeare’s allusions to Cupid may be self-consciously mocking, defining him as an outdated theatrical convention (1.4.3–6).⁸³ Yet the perception of a ‘death-marked Love’ lingers in the language of *Romeo and Juliet*, even as it remains embedded in the plot: ‘See what a scourge is laid upon your hate, / That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love’ (5.3.291–2). Rather than follow Kristeva in attributing to Shakespeare this perception of ‘hatred at the very origin of the amatory surge’,⁸⁴ we might see it as an inheritance from Cupidean tragedy, specifically *Tancred and Gismund*, which arguably embodies this hatred-in-love more precisely than *Romeo*. For example, Gismund’s impulse to devour her lover’s heart and entomb it within her body is implicitly hate-ful.

In *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*, the fact that the lover, Giovanni, becomes his beloved’s murderer is not only a punishment for their incestuous passion (itself a key Cupidean motif) it also invokes this idea of hatred as intrinsic to love. The initial opposition between the lovers’ vows, ‘love me or kill me’, dissolves until there is no difference between taking sexual possession of Annabella and murdering her.⁸⁵ Moreover, just as in *Tancred and Gismund*, where the king’s display of Guiscard’s heart identifies him with vengeful Love, so in *’Tis Pity* the iconic moment of Giovanni wielding Annabella’s heart on the point of his dagger recalls Cupid, as the lover himself seems to acknowledge. When Giovanni describes his appearance on stage ‘trimmed in reeking blood / That triumphs over death; proud in the spoil / Of love and vengeance!’ (5.6.10–12), ‘spoil’

his Essex patrons, Lady Mary Peter and Lady Anne Grey, he suggests that ‘For a solemne revel against this Festivall time, *Gismunds* bloudie shadow, with a little cost, may be intreated in her selfe-like person to speake to ye’ (lines 32–4). Echoes have been detected in William Percy’s *A Country Tragaedye in Vacunium or Cupid’s Sacrifice* (1602) (based on the same Boccaccian narrative) and Fulke Greville’s *Mustapha* (pub. 1609). See Madeline Hope Dodds, ‘A Forrest Tragedye in Vacunium’, *Modern Language Review* (1945), 246–58, at 250, and Ants Oras, ‘Fulke Greville’s *Mustapha* and Robert Wilmot’s *Tancred and Gismund*’, *Notes dr Queries* n.s. 7 (January 1960), 24–5.

⁸² See also Michael Neill’s discussion of the relationship between these three plays in ‘“What Strange Riddle’s This?”: Deciphering *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*’, in *John Ford: Critical Re-Visions*, ed. Neill (Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 153–80, at pp. 158, 173–4.

⁸³ I have discussed possible reasons for this in ‘Love’s Labour’s Scorned: The Absence of Cupid on the Shakespearean Stage’, *Cahiers Elisabethains* 73 (spring 2008), 9–22.

⁸⁴ Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, p. 221. For a refutation, see Robin Headlam Wells, ‘Neo-Petrarchan Kitsch in *Romeo and Juliet*’, *Modern Language Review* 93 (1998), 9U-33.

⁸⁵ See Georges Bataille’s discussion of the lover’s impulse to destroy the beloved as a means of destroying their separateness in *Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969), p. 14.

means both destruction and plunder, identifying Giovanni as Death, vainglorious in his defeat over Love, but also as Love expressing his power through death.

Cupid's Revenge

In the final Cupidean tragedy with which we are concerned, Cupid has a much stronger motive for his persecution of the lovers, yet he shows no interest in their redemption but remains vengeful and inexorable. What this play particularly demonstrates is the difficulty of anticipating Love's wishes and of acting in a way that might prevent his wrath.

Like *Gismond*, *Cupid's Revenge* (1608, pub. 1615) seems to have been popular in its own time. It was performed by three different companies: the Children of the Queen's Revels, the Lady Elizabeth's Men and Beeston's Boys, remaining in the repertoire from 1608 to 1642, and being reprinted in 1630 and 1635.⁸⁶ Again like the *Gismond* tragedies, however, the play has inspired little critical favour or even interest. It has often been condemned for its bipartite structure (the initial protagonist is dead by act two, at which point the play restarts)⁸⁷ and for its weak and uncharismatic male protagonist,⁸⁸ defects that contribute to what is usually considered the play's major flaw, namely its failure to be tragic. It is hard to disagree with this perspective. Yet I would argue that the play makes considerably more sense if we read it as a Cupidean tragedy.

Where *Gismond* and *Tancred* is based on a single novella, *Cupid's Revenge* brings together three different narratives from Book 2 of Sidney's *New Arcadia* that share the theme of desire's destructiveness.⁸⁹ As discussed in the previous chapter, the eradication of Cupid-worship instigated by the princess Hidaspes, her brother Leucippus and their father, Duke Leontius, brings Cupid's revenge down upon all three. Hidaspes becomes enamoured of a dwarfish servant, named Zoylus, who is subsequently executed by her father, causing Hidaspes to die of grief. The Duke falls in love with and marries the lustful widow, Bacha, his son's cast-off mistress, causing the Duke's death. Finally, through Bacha's plotting, Leucippus is sentenced to death for treason and then forced

⁸⁶ On the play's performance history and popularity, see John H. Astington, 'The Popularity of *Cupid's Revenge*', *Studies in English Literature* 19 (1979), 215–27, and Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 120–4.

⁸⁷ Munro argues that the two-part structure is so odd as to suggest it must have been deliberate and proffers Chapman's *Lise Widow's Tears* as a possible source. See *Children of the Queen's Revels*, p. 120.

⁸⁸ See Philip J. Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* (Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 134.

⁸⁹ These are, respectively, Erona's defiance of Cupid and her disastrous infatuation with Antiphilus (p. 302); the King of Iberia's love for Andromana and his neglect of his son, Plangus (pp. 312–20); and the cross-dressing and death of Zelmane (pp. 359–67). For a more detailed comparison, see James E. Savage, 'Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* and Sidney's *Arcadia*', *English Literary History* 14 (September 1947), 194–206.

into exile. His life is preserved when Urania, disguised as a page, gets in the way of the murderer's knife but he is subsequently killed by Bacha.

From the *Arcadia's* disparate narratives, Beaumont and Fletcher have fashioned a structure based on Cupid's revenge against each of his enemies in turn, as suggested both by the play's title and by the deity himself as he appears in acts one, two and five. In this respect, the play might be said to employ the sequential structure of Cupidean tragedy apparent in *Cambyses*, where the tyrant persecutes a series of victims, but also in *Tancred*, where Cupid describes his revenge:

Gismund I have entised to forget
her widdowes weedes, and burne in raging lust:
Twas I enforst her father to denie
her second marriage to any peere ...
The Countie *Palurin*, a man right wise ...
I have like wounded with her pearsing eyes ...
(lines 594–7, 600–2)

Another criticism levelled against *Cupid's Revenge*, namely its transformation of that deity into a tragic agent, is similarly mitigated by an understanding of Cupidean tragedy. We may sympathize with Thomas Seward's position in 1750: 'I cannot take leave of this Play without again regretting the farcical *Intermixture* of the Machinery of *Cupid* from whence it takes its Name'. But, as we have seen in Chapter 1, Cupid was already a tragic actor in the play's main source, the *Arcadia's* Plangus and Erona narrative. Nor can we agree with the rest of Seward's complaint: 'From such a phantasticke Deity as this, would any one expect more than a comic Revenge?' if we are familiar with *Gismond of Sáleme* and *Tancred and Gismund*.⁹⁰

That Beaumont and Fletcher recalled these plays is suggested by Cupid's opening speech. Whereas in *Tancred*, he reacts to a general contempt for his power (lines 56–66), in *Cupid's Revenge* he defies a policy of iconoclasm. Hence, the play delays Cupid's vengeance speech until 1.3 so that he may respond to Hidaspes' actions. When he does speak, however, he sounds very much like his Elizabethan predecessor:

Cornets. Descendit Cupid.

Cupid: Am I then scorn'd? is my all-doing will
And power, that knows no limit, nor admits none,
Now look't into by lesse then gods and weakned?
Am I, whose Bow stroke terror through the earth,
No lesse then Thunder, and in this, exceeding
Even Gods themselves, who kneel before my Altars,

⁹⁰ Francis Beaumont, *Lise Works of Beaumont and Eletcher*, ed. L. Theobald, T. Seward and J. Simpson (London: Tonson and Draper, 1750), 10 vols., vol. ix, p. 504, fn. 53 and p. 433, fn. 7.

Now shooke off and contemd by such, whose lives
 Are but my recreation! Anger rise,
 My sufferance and my seife are made the subject
 Of sinnes against us. Goe thou out displeasure,
 Displeasure of a great god, flying thy seife
 Through all this Kingdome: sowe what ever evils
 Proud flesh is taking of, amongst these Rebels;
 And on the first heart that despisd my Greatnesse,
 Tay a strange misery, that all may know
Cupids revenge is mightie; with this arrow,
 Hotter then plagues or mine owne anger, will I
 Now nobly right my seife: nor shall the prayers
 Nor sweete smokes on my Altars hold my hand,
 Till I have left this a most wretched Eand.
 (1.3.1–20)

This Cupid is less bloodthirsty than that of *Tancred*, yet anger remains his predominant emotion, expressed by the Senecan invocation: ‘Anger rise’ (line 8). Moreover, his potential as a tyrant is hinted at in his boast of ‘all-doing will / And power’ (lines 1–2), which recalls Cupid’s ‘al-daring power’ in *Tancred* (line 57). Both Cupids speak of themselves in the third person, a self-dramatization intended to redress their diminished reputations: ‘That all may know / *Cupids* revenge is mightie’ (*Cupid’s Revenge*, lines 15–16); ‘that now ye know ... Love is a mightie lord’ (*Tancred and Gismund*, lines 84–5). Finally, there may be an allusion to *Gismond* in *Tancred’s* most enduring theatrical image in Cupid’s order that he will lay ‘on the first heart that despisd my Greatnesse ... a strange misery’ (lines 14–15).

What Beaumont and Fletcher significantly add to this speech is the identification of Cupid’s revenge with plague. Suspended above the stage, brandishing an arrow which he describes as ‘Hotter then plagues or mine owne anger’ (1.3.17), Cupid recalls the plague-angel to whom prayers will be offered to make him ‘hold [his] hand’ (line 19).⁹¹ His identification as such implicitly refutes the play’s permissive attitude towards sex. For example, Dorialus insists:

The Duke hee’s old and past it, he would never have brought such a plague
 upon the land else, ’tis worse then Sword and Famine: Yet to say truth,
 we have deserv’d it, we have liv’d so wickedly. (1.1.117–20)

At first, the word ‘plague’ in the sense of ‘catastrophe’ is applied to the chastity that Hidaspes imposes upon the kingdom. Yet the assumption that it has been incurred by

⁹¹ See, for example, the wrathful Christ with a single arrow aimed at the city in Bonfigli’s banner at the church of S. Maria Nuova in Perugia, reproduced in Crawford, *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art*, fig. 16 and discussed P-139-

their 'liv[ing] so wickedly' activates the discourse of plague as a real disease incurred by the sins of blasphemy and lechery, both of which have been recently indulged there. Moreover, a play written and performed *c.* 1608 could hardly have avoided a reversion to the literal meaning of 'plague'. As Leeds Barroll has shown, the theatres were closed by the epidemic for the entirety of 1607 (with the exception of April), from July to December in 1608, and for the whole of 1609.⁹² In Dekker's *The Dead Tearme* (pub. 1608, entered in the Stationer's Register *c.* November 1607) London describes how she at first welcomed the plague 'because I knew she was a messenger sent from Above' but now wonders how much longer London will have to suffer this visitation.⁹³

As *Cupid's Revenge* maps a metaphorical (and ironic) 'plague' onto a literal disease, the characters are forced to adjust their assumptions about Cupid. Initially, they assume that his revenge will be no more than an extension of Hidaspes' state-sanctioned punishment, i.e. enforced chastity. As Agenor reveals, there is some historical precedent for this belief:

agenor: I remember once the people did but slight him in a sacrifice: and what followed? Women kept their houses, grew good huswives, honest forsooth, was not that fine? wore their owne faces, though they wore gay cloathes, without survaying: and which was most lamentable, they lov'd their husbands.

nisis: I doe remember it to my grief. Young Mayds were as cold as Cowcumbers, and much of that complexion: bawds were abolisht: and to which misery it must come againe, there were no Cuckolds. (1.1.128–37)

Rather than hardening women's hearts, Cupid has merely repealed female desire (which seems always to have been in his control). Hence, the men remain tormented by a lust that can now find no outlet. But, although this is painful, their suffering is not mortal and in the absence of female lust marital chastity flourishes. Such revenge identifies the love-god with the Epithalamic Cupid, who was required to channel desire into marital love and to ensure fidelity in both sexes. For his second revenge, however, Cupid's imposition of chastity is replaced by a fatal desire inflicted upon both sexes. Hence, Hidaspes dies of frustrated love when her marriage is prevented and her lover executed; Leucippus dies because his own sated desire provokes Bacha to fury and revenge; Leontius dies from the 'miseries' that marriage to Bacha has brought him; Urania dies because her passion for Leucippus prompts her to sacrifice her life to preserve his own. What each instance has in common is not the degree to which passion has been satisfied, but rather the sense that to love is to create the agent of one's own destruction.

⁹² Leeds Barroll, *Politics, Plague and Shakespeare's Theater: The Stuart Years* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991, repr. 1995), pp. 172–209, at pp. 173, 178–9.

⁹³ Thomas Dekker, *Non-Dramatic Works*, ed. A. B. Grosart, 4 vols. (London, 1884–6), vol. tv, p. 77.

Having discovered that his revenge has taken a tragic turn, the characters alter their perceptions of Cupid accordingly. Yet they assume that their blasphemy can be atoned for by expressions of faith and repentance. For example, Leontius appeals: ‘Thou power abusde, great Love whose vengence now / We feele and feare, have mercie on this Land’ (1.5.84–5). Similarly, Hidaspes capitulates almost as soon as she has felt Cupid’s arrow:

Forgive me, *Cupid*, for thou art a god,
 And I a wretched creature; I have sinn’d,
 But be thou mercifull, and graunt that yet
 I may enjoy what thou wilt have me love. (1.4.33–6)

But Hidaspes’ last line expresses a fundamental misapprehension: namely, that Cupid desires lovers to love. She believes that her chastity has offended Cupid (as in a comedy it might have) and that by submission to desire (and specifically marriage) she will appease him. What the audience is aware of, but Hidaspes is not, is that this is a Cupidean tragedy in which Cupid is defined by vengeance against and even hatred of lovers.

Subsequently, the play stages the failure of their prayers and the absence of intercession, implicitly alluding to Catholic rites and Italian plague-art. For example, when Leontius denies Hidaspes’ marriage, she declares: ‘Then be no more my Father, but a plague / I am bound to pray against’ (1.5.93–4), and Ais is exactly what her supporters do as Hidaspes falls ill. Thus, Cleophila follows the precedent set by Italian *gonfalon*i in assuming that it may be more effective to address the Madonna than her arrow-wielding son: ‘*Venus* looke / Downe mildely on us: And commaund thy Sonne / To spare this Ladie’ (1.4.98–100). With Hidaspes on her deathbed, Cleophila kneels and implores Cupid directly:

Cupid pardon what is past,
 And forgive our sinnes at last,
 Then we will be coye no more,
 But thy Deitie Adore. (2.5.9–12)

Nevertheless, Hidaspes dies. It seems that the only way to have avoided tragedy would be to have submitted in the first place, hence, Leucippus’ dying words: ‘T pray you let / The broken Image of *Cupid* be reedified, / I know all this is done by him’ (215–7). Yet both these conclusions — the promise to abandon chastity, and the apology for not succumbing to Cupid at once — are ironic in the context of plague (which was considered a punishment for sexual sin) and the assumption in moral and psychological tracts that Love must be rebuffed at the start: ‘Resist his first assault, / Weake is his bow, his quenched brand is cold’ (*Tancred and Gismund*, lines 840–1).

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of *Cupid’s Revenge* is its struggle to offer any consistent advice on the subject of desire. By re-imposing Cupid-worship, Leucippus

orders a return to ideals that can hardly have been endorsed by an early modern audience, no matter how anti-Puritan.⁹⁴ The Priest's boy (who may have doubled as Cupid) sings of the hostility to female virginity that is intrinsic to his cult: '*Then wise men, pull your Roses yet unblowne,/Love hates the too ripe fruite that falles alone*' (1.2.33–4). Thus, Cupid enables male sexual satisfaction at the expense of female virtue or '*frozen honour*' (21). Moreover, the female victims of Cupid's coercion are specifically underage: '*No more faint-hearted Gyrles shall dreame of harmes,/ And cry they are too young: the god hath said,/Fifteene shall make a Mother of a Mayd*' (1.2.30–2, see also 2.5.13). Cupid not only defies marriage (the maid goes straight to motherhood without passing through wifhood), he also ignores contemporary medical advice that warned against pregnancy at too young an age.⁹⁵ When understood in these terms, Hidaspes' repudiation of Cupid-worship looks considerably more appealing.

Yet, although the majority of Beaumont and Fletcher's audience must have found her arguments (if not her actions) unexceptionable, the play goes out of its way to refute them. By bringing Cupid onto the stage in 1.3, it denies that he is a fiction invented to justify man's lust as Hidaspes had argued (1.1.56–7, 59–60), thus implying that desire can be imposed from outside and that it may be beyond man's power to resist. Moreover, it appears that chastity, or rather the repression of erotic desire, results in something worse than lust, a '*madde love ... the rage / Of Cupid*' (2.1.12–13) which is specifically death-marked. If there is a moral that can be taken from this play, it would seem to be that a moderate, state-sanctioned Cupid-worship is better than the sacrilege and rebellion which inspire Cupid's anger. Put another way, marriage prevents the depradations of desire inadvertently unleashed by abstinence and repression. Hence, at the beginning of the play we are told that Hidaspes has '*refus'd all the great Princes in one part of the world: sheele dye a Maide*' (i.i.19–20) and it is as a warning against this course of action that Hero interprets her death:

Let us all now living bee,
 Warnd by thy strict Chastitie,
 And marry all fast as we can.
 Till then we keepe a piece of man,
 Wrongfully from them that owe it:
 Soone may every Maide bestow it. (2.5.40–5)

Nevertheless, Leucippus' call for a return to Cupid-worship does not uphold the value of marriage since, as we have seen, that worship is mainly focused on the pleasures

⁹⁴ Finkelpearl argues for the play's representation of Cupid-worship as 'happy and natural', emphasizing by contrast 'the dehumanizing effects of puritanical attitudes toward sex' in *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher*, pp. 129, 132.

⁹⁵ According to Ann Jennalie Cook, the average age of marriage for gentlewomen at this time was about twenty, and for women of lower social class it was closer to the mid-twenties. See *Making a Match: Courtship in Shakespeare and his Society* (Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 17ft.

of illicit sexuality. Moreover, the union of Leontius and Bacha does not limit desire's fatal power; rather, it facilitates Cupid's revenge. Ultimately, the play asserts man's powerlessness in the face of desire — to abstain or to indulge excessively, each procures suffering. Moreover, in Cupid we find a paradoxical figure who punishes mortals by imposing chastity or lust but is driven only by his own will-to-power, and it is in this respect that Cupidean tragedy touches upon wider issues.

Most recent criticism assumes that early modern love tragedy is dynamically engaged with (and even emerges from) Protestantism. For example, Robert N. Watson reads *Othello* as a piece of 'propaganda' that 'uses the appeal of romantic love to enhance the appeal of Protestantism'.⁹⁶ A Jesuitical Iago, furious that his own good works and other people's intercession have not been able to win him Othello's favour, corrupts the Moor by imposing on him his own Catholic beliefs: 'Instead of experiencing Desdemona's love as self-evident and self-justifying, a transcendent manifestation of the goodness of the universe, Othello is coaxed back into experiencing it as ... the contingent reward of merit' (244). His insistence on the power of the handkerchief 'parodies the Catholic insistence on honouring the physical Eucharist or relic rather than the spirit it signifies' (247). More generally, Huston Diehl has demonstrated that in Stuart love tragedy the impulse to worship the beloved is idolatrous, with female beauty described in terms of a seductive, Catholic art.⁹⁷ Diehl perceives an implied critique of Protestant hypocrisy in the actions of lovers-turned-murderers like Othello and Giovanni 'who bewhore and "kill" sacred images they had once adored'. Nevertheless, she concludes that the Protestant cause is still served by this drama in that it enacts on a symbolic level the kind of radical, inner purification that the reformers call for ... theatrical images of eroticised women are displayed, demystified, and destroyed, their power to enchant exhausted, their capacity to enthrall contained' (128).

Cupidean tragedy fits into this post-Reformation reading of early modern love tragedy, not least through its engagement with questions of idolatry and iconoclasm (as discussed in Chapter 1). Yet, if love tragedy can also be characterized by its 'fatal deconstruction of the contradictions and paradoxes inherent in the Protestant marriage ideal',⁹⁸ then Cupidean tragedy goes further through its addition of Cupid. The latter seems at first to endorse Calvinist attitudes towards desire, including its suspicion of virginity/abstinence and its sense of the fatal consequences of lust. Yet this Cupid is so extreme in his aggression that these plays generate their own resistance to the perception of desire he embodies. We might recall Curran's reading of *Hamlet* as a play that casts Calvinistic Protestantism in a negative light even by making a total commitment to it — by revealing, through a confirmation of the simple but absolute conclusions Calvinism necessitates about a range of religious matters, what it really

⁹⁶ Watson, 'Othello as Protestant Propaganda', in *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*, ed. Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 234–57, at p.234.

⁹⁷ Diehl, 'Bewhored Images and Imagined Whores', 125.

⁹⁸ Rose, *Th'Expense of Spirit*, p. 96. See Rose's discussion of *Othello* and *Lise Duchess of Malfi*, pp. 93–177.

means' (6). Furthermore, in a theatrical innovation that may reflect the Protestant attempt to separate Christ from the Madonna,⁹⁹ the Cupid of Cupidean tragedy is estranged from Venus. This means not only that he is solely responsible for his victims' fate but that they have lost their figure of intercession (Venus being consistently associated with mercy). In *Cupid's Revenge*, the deity insists:

The time now of my Revenge drawes neere;
 Nor shall it lessen, as I am a god,
 With all the cryes and prayers that have beene;
 And those that be to come, tho they be infinite,
 In neede and number. (5.3.1–5)

The first of a number of parallels with the debate over predestination begins with the perception that there is nothing Cupid's victims can do to avoid disaster. As Calvin, speaking of the reprobate, put it: 'they shall neither with their prattling voices hinder his worke, nor with throwing stones of tauntes into heaven shall hitt or hurt his righteousness'.¹⁰⁰ Cupidean tragedy seems to ponder the injustice of this, given that its protagonists are often singled out for punishment without having offended against Love. For example, there is no sense in which the kingdom of Sáleme has offended Cupid: Gismund has been married once already and it is only through Cupid's intervention that her remarriage is prohibited. Similarly, in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* Giovanni's incestuous passion precedes his blasphemy and, despite his Catholic background, his understanding of his fate is markedly Calvinist: 'Lost. I am lost. My fates have doomed my death, / The more I strive, I love; the more I love, / The less I hope: I see my ruin certain' (1.2.139–41). Once again, we might recall the reprobates in Calvin's *Institution*.

Agayne they except and saye: were they not before predestinate by the ordinance of God to the same corruption whiche is now alledged for the cause of damnation: when therefore thei perish in their corruption, thei do nothing but suffer the punishment of that miserie into which by his predestination Adam fel & drew his posteritie hedlong with him. Is not he therefore uniust, whiche doth so cruelly mocke his creatures. (3.21.4)

Finally, the characterization of Cupid seems to draw upon early modern perceptions of a Calvinist God.¹⁰¹ As the creator of love and the patron of lovers, it is presumed

⁹⁹ See Frances E. Dolan, 'Marian Devotion and Maternal Authority in Seventeenth-Century England', in *Maternal Measures: Figuring Caregiving in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 282–92.

¹⁰⁰ Calvin, *Tire Institution of Christian Religion, wrytten in Latine by maister Jhon Calvin*, trans. Thomas Norton (London 1561), fol. 241, 3.21.5.

¹⁰¹ On the use of other pagan deities, including Diana and Jupiter, to signify a Catholic deity on the stage, see Taylor, 'Divine []sences', 13–30.

that Cupid will feel some sympathy for his acolytes and that, although it may be necessary to punish them, he will do so in order to correct and even to save them. But what we get is something quite different: a vengeful and ambitious deity who goes under the name of Love but has no interest in the lover's salvation. As such, he imitates the Calvinist God's 'iudgement of revenge' against the reprobate, by which 'he useth his wrath against them, confoundeth them, destroyeth them, and bringeth them to nought' (*Institution*, 3.4.13).

Part of the tyranny of Calvinism in early modern England may well have been the fact that there was no 'ideological outlet' by which the feelings of resentment it produced could be relieved.¹⁰² Cupidean tragedy may have provided just such a space, allowing audiences (both Catholic and Protestant) to indulge their hostility towards a Calvinist deity who is surprisingly hateful and wantonly destructive. To conclude, we might set 'Cupidean tragedy' against the definition of love tragedy offered by Catherine Bates:

In tragedy things by definition go wrong but in love tragedy what goes wrong are the very best things — goodness, mercy, and love. The forces of redemption are shown to be inferior to the forces of death, as if God had lost out in his struggle against darkness and evil. The result is a degree of nihilism and despair that often surpasses that of the grimmest tragedy ...¹⁰³

I would argue that Cupidean tragedy offers us something more devastating. Not only is its conception of desire inherently materialist and death-marked, but its presiding deity, Cupid, dissolves the distinction between 'the forces of redemption' and 'the forces of death'. That he does so is partly a reflection of the process by which Cupid and Death had come to be visually identified with one another. But it also expresses the Calvinist perception of desire as a means of eternal death, and the God of Love as a vengeful destroyer. Hence, Cupid was both a 'phantasticke Deity' and the stuff of early modern nightmares.

¹⁰² John Stachniewski, *Tire Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 80.

¹⁰³ Bates, 'Shakespeare's Tragedies of Love' in *Ure Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. Claire Elizabeth McEachern (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 182–203, at p. 182.

Chapter 3: Cupid, Chastity and Rebellious Women

Looking back over the first three books of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser's narrator perceives a disturbing pattern of female torture. He challenges the artist behind the design:

Great God of love, that with thy cruell dart
Doest conquer greatest conquerors on ground,
And setst thy kingdome in the captive harts
Of Kings and Keasars, to thy service bound,
What glorie, or what guerdon hast thou found
In feeble Ladies tyranning so sore;
And adding anguish to the bitter wound,
With which their lives thou lancedst long afore,
By heaping stormes of trouble on them daily more?
So whylome didst thou to faire *Fiorimeli*-,
And so and so to noble *Britomarf*.
So doest thou now to her, of whom I tell,
The *lovely Amoret*, whose gentle hart
Thou martyrest with sorow and with smart. (4.7.1.1—2.5)

In condemning Cupid's sadism, the narrator attests to women's innate vulnerability and subjection. Love's 'cruell dart' has only 'add[ed] anguish to the bitter wound, / With which their lives thou lancedst long afore', a wound that is synonymous not merely with women's lovesickness but with their sex.¹ But just as the fictional authorship of Cupid stands in for that of Spenser, so the victimization described seems more like a fantasy than the 'reality' of the poem. Passive suffering at the dart of Cupid may reflect the fates of Florimel and Amoret, but Britomart is empowered by love, taking up the sword to pursue her own erotic fulfilment. Furthermore, the poem's implied reader and its ideal of female power, Elizabeth I, clearly disrupts the opposition presumed between 'Kings and Keasars' and 'feeble Ladies'. This chapter argues that Cupid was a particular enemy to women in the late sixteenth century, but that this

¹ On the eroticization of weapons and wounds in *Ure Faerie Queene*, see Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (London: Penguin, 1990, repr. 1992), pp. 170–93.

conflict was potentially empowering — a literary and theatrical event actively sought out (if not written and performed) by a small number of elite women for their own private and political ends.

There are two main reasons why Cupid's hostility against women appeared to intensify during this period. The first has to do with a heightened anxiety about the power of female sexuality. From the 1550s onwards, Europe was dominated by female rulers, including Mary Tudor, Mary Stuart, Elizabeth I and Catherine de Medici, whose enemies refuted their capacity for government on the basis of woman's susceptibility to desire. In *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558), for example, John Knox recalls those who 'have burned with such inordinate lust that, for the quenching of the same, they have betrayed to strangers their country and city'.² Illicit sex/adultery becomes a form of political betrayal, a consequence of the physical vulnerability the female ruler transfers from herself onto the body politic. In the domestic realm, a heightened concern about the crimes of prostitution, adultery and infanticide similarly testifies to the danger of female sexuality.³ The Protestant dread of unlawful sex was often projected onto the prostitute: 'As the harlot destroieth his soule that doth frequent her, so she is a plague to the flesh'.⁴ Yet wayward female lust might do even more damage within a marriage, hence the whore became 'a moral category ... [who] stood for the lust of all women'.⁵ In this context, a punitive Cupid, penetrating the female body with his dart, exposes the 'true' nature of female desire where it is hidden or resisted and thereby proves the necessity of female subjection. But he is equally required to produce a desire that is not there. The Calvinist insistence on man's vulnerability to lust requires the production of illicit female sexuality as an act of displacement. The spectacle of a woman controlling her sexual appetites more easily than a man and, by her rejection of his advances, forcing him into a kind of lustful self-disgust must be revenged.⁶

At the same time, a heightened pleasure in the contemplation of female desire, experienced by women as consumers of literature and perpetuated through certain new literary genres and themes, also accounts for Cupid's enmity. At courts across Europe, Petrarch's *Trionfo della Pudicitia* inspired masques, pageants and poetry in which a female ruler played the part of Chastity defeating Cupid, thereby asserting her ability to govern herself and others. The 1560s also saw the impact of two Continental imports, the prose romance and the love tragedy, whose (often shared) erotic plots

² John Knox, *Five Political Writings of John Knox*, ed. Marvin A. Breslow (Washington, DC and London: Folger Books, 1985), pp. 44–5.

³ See Anthony Fletcher, 'Men's Dilemma: The Future of Patriarchy in England 1560–1660', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6th ser., vol. 4 (1994), 61–81, and Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 17–27.

⁴ Barnabe Riche, *My Ladies Looking-Glasse* (London, 1616), p. 36.

⁵ Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 130–1.

⁶ See Hamlet's relationship to Ophelia as discussed by Curran in *Hamlet, Protestantism and the Mourning of Contingency*, pp. 196–7.

gave prominence to women, and whose popularity may be attributable to a new female readership/audience desirous of representation.⁷ Cupid's enmity towards the heroine is strongly implied (if not rendered explicit) by the fact that her suffering ensues from frustrated love and her sexual transgressions are often punished by death. And yet, in this conflict between love and death a new female heroine is created,⁸ defined by her constant passion and achieving tragic status through her willingness to suffer and die for love.

This chapter focuses on Cupid's encounters with three early modern women: Mary Stuart, Elizabeth I and Lady Mary Wroth. There are obvious differences between two monarchs at the centre of image-producing courts, whose decisions about desire are public and political, and an aristocratic poet who did much of her writing in seclusion and who seems to have enjoyed an unusual degree of sexual freedom. Nevertheless, each of these women found her public identity shaped by her supposed relationship to Cupid, and attempted to control that image by incorporating him within her own literary texts. We begin with Mary Stuart, whose insistence that 'my heart is my own' was challenged by her depiction as a victim of Love, with grave consequences for her political authority. The second section examines the complex negotiations between Cupid and Chastity during the reign of Elizabeth I, arguing that the *Triumph of Chastity* took on an increasingly sadistic or menacing tone when it became clear that the queen would remain unmarried, and exploring Elizabeth's attempt to defuse the situation with her own Cupidean lyric. Finally, we conclude with Lady Mary Wroth, whose sonnet sequence and pastoral tragicomedy manipulate Cupid in order to project the author's erotic and artistic self-definition. Hence, whilst extending the previous chapter's theme of a punitive Cupid — here castigating transgressive female desire — this chapter also demonstrates the way in which Cupid's authority could be subverted. The multiplicity and ambivalence of the love-god that we have noted elsewhere become the features that enable his reinvention by a female poet.⁹

⁷ On the importance of this new female market to the romance, see Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge University Press, 1985). On the influence of female theatregoers, see Richard Levin, 'Women in the Audience', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (1989), 165–74. These readings have been challenged by Hackett in *Women and Romance Fiction*, pp. 4–19, and Dympna Callaghan in *Shakespeare Without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 139–45, who emphasize the fact that, although romance and some forms of tragedy were identified as 'feminine', or as being popular with women, these assumptions served particular male interests. Steve Mentz has recently argued that 'educated men seem to have made up the bulk of the potential and actual readers [of the romance] in most cases': *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England: The Rise of Prose Fiction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 17.

⁸ See Lisa Hopkins, *The Female Hero in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002), and Naomi Conn Liebler, *The Female Tragic Hero in English Renaissance Drama* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 1–31.

⁹ This does not extend to Cupid's being gendered female, though he had been so in Provençal poetry and German art by virtue of his grammatical gender, see Tinkle, *Medieval Venuses and Cupids*, p. 59 and n. 48.

Producing Female Desire: Cupid and Mary Stuart

In Jenny Wormald's 1990 preface to her book *Mary, Queen of Scots: Politics, Passion and a Kingdom Lost* she urges that the romantic cult of Mary be debunked in favour of 'historical reality', and 'the arguments about her shifted from the bedroom at Holyrood or Dunbar to the world of sixteenth-century politics, which is where she belongs'.¹⁰ Wormald's work offers a compelling deromanticization of Mary's history, explaining her disastrous decisions to 'follow her heart' as part of a more general lack of political acumen and disregard for her responsibilities as a ruler of Scotland (132). And yet, as Wormald acknowledges even in her title, Mary's contemporary erotic image did impinge upon her political fate. The fact that two of the many damaging narratives about Mary — the Chastelard tragedy and the Darnley courtship — placed her 'in the bedroom' contributed to her practical exclusion from the world of sixteenth-century politics. Similarly, her negotiations with Cupid were not only indicative but partly constitutive of her loss of political power. I want to begin by considering Mary's successful manipulation of Cupid through her jewellery and her staging of a banquet show, *Cupid, Chastity and Time* (1564), before examining how she allowed him to be turned against her in the scandal of her Scottish marriages.

In 1556, plate and jewels previously owned by James V were transported to his daughter in France. The inventory includes 'Une enseigne ou il y a ung Cupido et ung gros coeur de rubis et ung petit rubie en sa main'. An *enseigner* was a medal featuring religious or mythological scenes, sometimes in gold and precious stones, worn in the hat or headdress.¹¹ Five years later, Mary's jewels were again inventoried before her return to Scotland and this time they included 'Une autre enseigne dun Cupido ou il y a ung petit rubiz au bout dune torche'.¹² Jewels featuring Cupid had been popular love-gifts in classical antiquity, enjoying a renaissance in fifteenth-century Europe onwards, and there are records of another Cupid jewel being given to Mary by the Dauphin as a betrothal gift.¹³ Such designs may also have been chosen because of the opportunity they provided to display rubies (in the burning torch and lover's heart), these being the most highly prized gems in the Renaissance and a particular favourite of Mary's relatives, the French Guises, with whom these pieces may have originated.¹⁴ By wearing

¹⁰ Jenny Wormald, *Mary, Queen of Scots: Politics, Passion and a Kingdom Lost* (London and New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 1988, rev. 2001), p. 8.

¹¹ See Yvonne Hackenbroch, *Renaissance Jewellery* (Munich and New York: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1979), p. xi.

¹² *Inventaires de la Roynie Descosse Douairière de France: Catalogues of the Jewels, Dresses, Furniture, Books and Paintings of Mary Queen of Scots 1556–1569*, ed. Joseph Robertson (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1863), pp. 5, 15.

¹³ On the history of the Cupid jewel, see Geoffrey C. Munn, *The Triumph of Love: Jewellery 1550–1950* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993), and Hackenbroch, *Renaissance Jewellery*, pp. 252–4, pl. 690–2, 694–5. On the Dauphin's gift of a pendant featuring Cupid, see Nancy Armstrong, *Jewellery: An Historical Survey of British Styles and Jewels* (Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1973), p. 100.

¹⁴ See *Inventaires*, p. xxxiv.

such jewels, Mary was defined by her uncles as an object of desire, her value based on her attractiveness as a marriage prospect.

Beyond the French court, however, the meaning of Mary's jewels changed with her altered circumstances, namely the fact that she was now neither a fiancée nor a wife but a queen in her own right. She quickly became renowned at the Scottish court for her erotic power, 'some enchantment whareby men ar bewitched',¹⁵ perhaps partly an effect of the brilliance for which even Knox betrayed a grudging admiration: 'Shee brought with her als faire jewels, pretious stones and pearles as wer to be found in Europe.'¹⁶ By wearing Cupid jewels, Mary advertised an erotic appeal that was more her own (even as some of these gems were now her possessions), but she also asserted control over desire, for the Cupid jewel could be worn in such a way as to signify the wearer's chastity. For example, in an early seventeenth-century Flemish painting, the female subject (once thought to be Isabella Clara Eugenia, elder daughter of Philip II of Spain)¹⁷ wears a gold and jewelled Cupid, suspended in mid-flight on the left side of her bodice (Figure 5). Whilst he symbolizes her beauty and desirability, the fact that Cupid's arrow is pointing outwards, from the vantage-point of her heart, implies her own invulnerability to love.¹⁸ Perhaps Mary wore a Cupid jewel in this fashion, but she also owned another piece, described in the 1561 inventory as 'Une enseigne dor ou il y a une femme qui chasse *Cupido*' (16), whose meaning was more explicit. The verb *chasser* means to pursue but also to hunt or shoot at, suggesting that this medal depicted Chastity/Diana's defeat of Cupid (Mary was described as Diana in the early years of her reign in Scotland).¹⁹ Hence, the potential seduction represented by the jewel is transformed into desire's defeat, shifting the meaning of its glittering materials into an expression of what Spenser calls 'rare chastitee' (Pr.3.5.9).

The interpretation of Mary's Cupid jewels remains hard to determine without knowing their context — where she wore them, how she wore them, who gave them to her and on what occasion. Moreover, the effect of the Cupid jewel is inherently ambivalent. By directing attention to her body, in a reification of the Cupidean blazon, the jewel eroticizes its wearer. Furthermore, even if Mary intended to use these jewels to express her Petrarchan power as the inaccessible object of her courtiers' desire, she was also potentially signifying her submission, for the *enseigne* was related to the pilgrim badge, purchased from shrines as a sign of devotion to a particular saint and worn in hope

¹⁵ Robert Campbell, as quoted by John Knox in *The History of the Reformation in Scotland*, in *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing, 6 vols. (Edinburgh, 1848), vol. II, p. 276.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

¹⁷ See Munn, *The Triumph of Love*, pp. 28–9. This has been refuted by Christopher White in *The Later Flemish Paintings in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen* (London: Royal Collection, 2007), No. 142, RON 402850.

¹⁸ If the subject were Isabella, it might reflect the long years of her devotion to her father, when courtiers despaired of his ever arranging her marriage (she eventually married two months after Philip's death at the age of thirty-three). See Edward Grierson, *King of Two Worlds: Philip II of Spain* (London: Collins, 1974), pp. 175–6.

¹⁹ See Knox, *Works*, vol. 11, p. 381.

of their protection.²⁰ Hence, for Mary to wear the badge of Cupid at all potentially defined her as his subject. Nevertheless, in the first few years of her Scottish reign Mary seems to have been in control of the Cupidean spectacles in which she participated, including not only jewellery but masques.

Cupid, Chastity and Time

Performed in February 1564 at Holyrood House, before an audience of Mary's nobles, *Cupid, Chastity and Time* was the climax to a royal banquet. 'Blind Cupid' entered first, while the servants sang an Italian sonnet. Next came a 'fayre yong maid', representative of Chastity, as the servants sang Latin verses written by George Buchanan. Finally, Time brought the banquet to its concluding course, again with the singing of Latin verses composed by Buchanan.²¹

As Sarah Carpenter has pointed out, 'sung or spoken debates between Love and Chastity were performed at all three courts [England, Scotland and France] between 1564 and 1565'.²² But whereas the conflict between Juno and Diana (resolved in favour of marriage) implies Elizabeth's coercion by her courtiers and her alienation from the source of cultural production, *Cupid, Chastity and Time* comes out in favour of chastity and reveals Mary using the masque to serve her own political (and matrimonial) ambitions.²³ Crucial to this distinction is the influence of Petrarch's *I Trionfi*.²⁴ This poem, expanded upon and rewritten between 1340 and 1374, describes six triumphal pageants, beginning with Love, then showing Love's defeat by Chastity, Chastity's defeat by Death and so on through Fame, Time and Eternity.²⁵ What made it particularly suitable for a female court was not only the fact that it provided a visual iconography for female rule, but that it saw no contradiction between Laura's eloquence and

²⁰ See Herbert Norris, *Tudor Costume and Fashion* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1997), p. 122.

²¹ See *Inventaires*, p. Ixxxiii, and Randolph's description in a letter to Cecil, 21 February 1563/4, *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots*, ed. Joseph Bain (Edinburgh, 1900), vol. 11, p. 47.

²² Carpenter, 'Performing Diplomacies: The 1560s Court Entertainments of Mary, Queen of Scots', *The Scottish Historical Review* 82 (October, 2003), 194–225, at 196.

²³ The Spanish ambassador, Guzman, recorded Elizabeth's response to the debate, staged on 12 March 1565, as 'This is all against me.' See *Calendar of Letters and State Papers: Spanish*, ed. M. A. Hume (London, 1892), p. 404.

²⁴ The English masque is the only one in 1564–5 not based on the *Trionfi*. At Fontainebleau on 13 February 1564, two *intermèdes* to a comedy called *La Belle Genevieve*, based on Ariosto's *Ginevra*, were staged for the young Charles IX and Catherine de Medici. Written by Ronsard, they featured Amour asserting his supremacy (the *Trophée d'Amour*), followed by Chastity declaring Love's defeat (the *Trophée de la Chasteté*). The epilogue focused on the transitory nature of earthly life.

²⁵ On the *Trionfi*'s influence, see Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: Tire Imperial Tíreme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 112–13, at pp. 155–6.

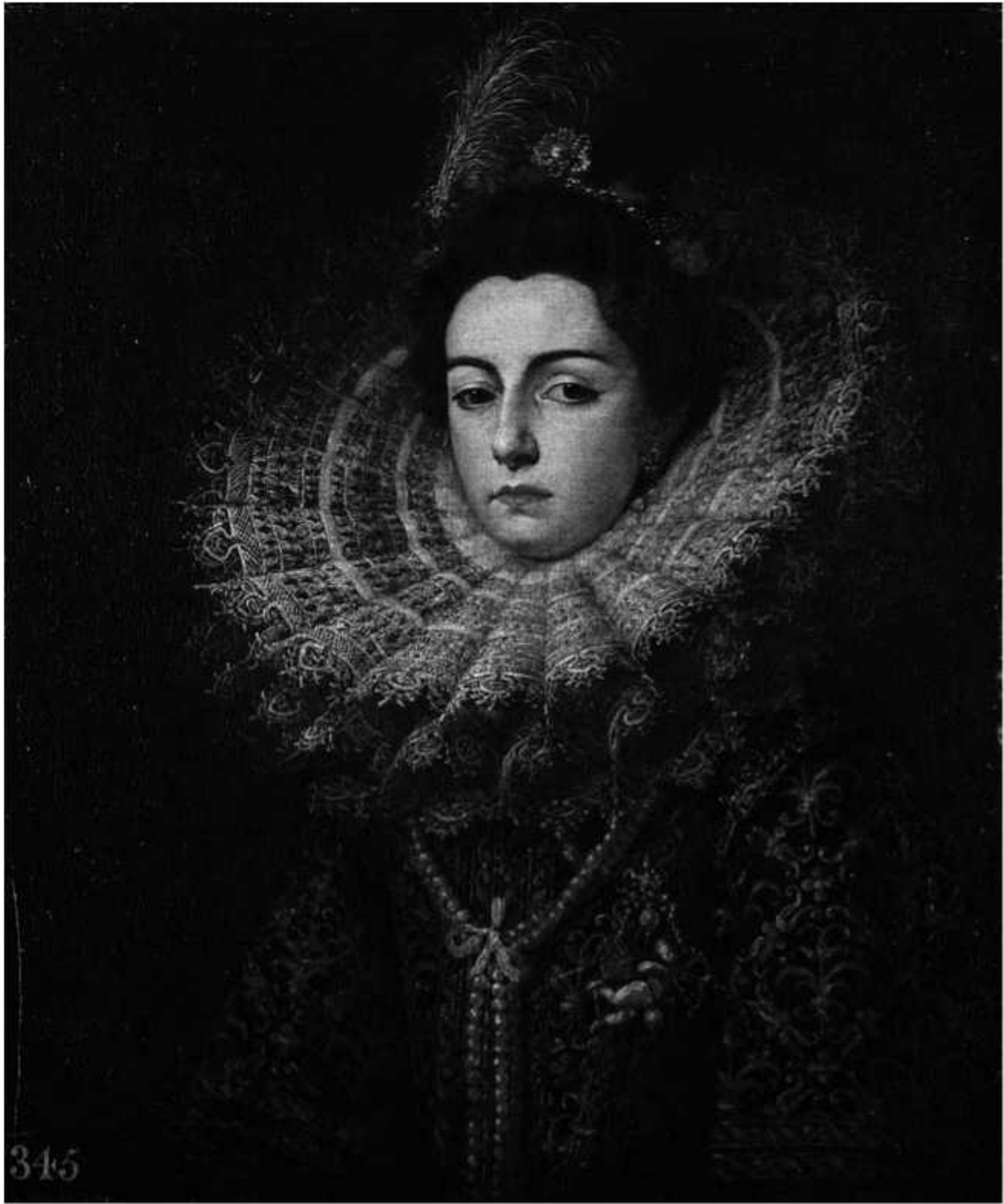


Figure 5. Anon., 'Portrait of a Lady'

her chastity.²⁶ Hence, the *Trionfi* were particularly popular with early modern women writers, ‘providing] an invitation to female poetics’²⁷ that was accepted by Elizabeth I who translated part of the *Triumph of Eternity*, by Mary Sidney who translated the *Triumph of Death*-, and by the Scottish poet, Anna Hume, who published *The Triumphs of Love: Chastity: Death* in 1644.²⁸ Mary Stuart should perhaps be added to this number. The author of the Cupid lyric in *Cupid, Chastity and Time* (the only song not composed by Mary’s chief poet and Latin tutor, Buchanan) is usually assumed to have been David Riccio, the queen’s Italian musician and later secretary.²⁹ Yet it could just as easily have been the work of Mary herself. Not only was the queen able to speak and write in Italian, she had studied under Ronsard who penned the *Triumphs of Love and Chastity* at the French court (see note 24), and she owned a copy of Petrarch’s *Trionfi*.³⁰ Moreover, Mary’s correspondence with Elizabeth often included her own original verses, such as those she sent with a ring bearing a heart-shaped diamond in 1562, or the Petrarchan sonnet composed in both French and Italian six years later.³¹

If Mary did write the Cupid lyric, she would have been taking a perspective on love rather than identifying herself as one of his victims:

Quest’è colui che’l mondo chiama amore,
 Amaro come vedi et vedrai meglio
 Quando fia tuo, com’è nostro signore,
 Mansueto fanciulo et fiero veglio
 Ben sa ch’il prova, et fiati cosa piana,
 Anzi mill’anni e infin adhor ti sueglio.
 El nacque d’otio et di lascivia humana,
 Nutrito di pensier dolci et soavi,
 Fatto signor et dio da gente vana.
 Quale è morto da lui, qual co’ più gravi

²⁶ See Danielle Clarke, ‘“Lover’s Songs shall turne to Holy Psalmes”: Mary Sidney and the Transformation of Petrarch’, *Modern Language Review* 92.2 (April 1997), 282–94, at 283–5.

²⁷ See Nona Fienberg, ‘Mary Wroth and the Invention of Female Poetic Subjectivity’, in *Reading Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England*, ed. Naomi J. Miller and Gary Waller (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), pp. 175–90, at p. 184.

²⁸ For further discussion, see Elizabeth I, *Tire Poems of Queen Elizabeth I*, ed. Leicester Bradner (Providence: Brown University Press, 1964), pp. xiv, 13–16; Clarke, ‘“Lover’s Songs shall turne to Holy Psalmes”’; and Sarah M. Dunnigan, ‘“Daughterly Desires”: Representing and Re-imagining the Feminine in Anna Hume’s *Triumphs*’, in *Woman and the Eeminine in Medieval and Early Modern Scottish Writing*, ed. Dunnigan (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2004), pp. 120–35.

²⁹ See *Inventaires*, p. lxxxiii, fn. 3.

³⁰ Julian Sharman reproduces the entry, ‘The Morali Triumphis of Petrark in Italiane’, from the 1578 inventory in *Tre Library of Mary, Queen of Scots* (London, 1889), pp. 72–3.

³¹ See the letter from Randolph to Cecil, 17 June 1562, in *Calendar of State Papers: Scotland*, vol. 1, p. 632. The French verses are lost but two Latin translations survive, by Thomas Chaloner (1579) and George Conn (1624). See Mary Stuart, *Bittersweet Within my Heart: Tre Collected Poems of Mary, Queen of Scots*, ed. Robin Bell (London: Pavilion Books, 1992), pp. 21–5.

Leggi, mena sua vita aspra et acerba,
 Sotto mille cathene et mille chiavi.³²
 [What is the power that the world calls love?
 Bitter if known, worse when he is thine own
 when you are in his power, he will prove,
 child or tyrant, you before him prone,
 is not this felt by those his talents rue,
 I tell you, and my words are true,
 if you should live a thousand years or so,
 Love's born of leisure, and desire,
 feeds on sweet thoughts, and fair words won,
 is made a god, by those who feed his fires,
 some die for him, others he keeps in
 shackled locks and chains.]

Unlike Ronsards 'Trophée d'Amour', there is no celebration of Love's power here,³³ only details borrowed from the *Trionfo dell'Amore* to describe his tyranny and the lover's suffering, imprisoned in 'shackled locks and chains', lying 'before [Cupid] prone.' Moreover, unlike the Ronsardian version in which the second stanza begins: 'Rien ne sçauroit à mon arc resister / Rien ne pourrait mes fleches éviter', the lyric stresses the individual's responsibility. The fact that love is 'born of leisure, and desire' makes it particularly dangerous in a courtly setting but also implies that the courtier (or monarch) is capable of resistance since Love is only 'made a god, by those who feed his fires'.

At this point, Mary seems to have handed the text over to Buchanan, and his Triumph of Chastity extends the enmity implied between Cupid and the queen. Though there are no stage directions to confirm it, there was presumably an immediate visual resemblance between the twenty-three-year-old Mary, with her penchant for dressing in white,³⁴ and the 'fair yong maid' playing Chastity, perhaps the only female performer in the show. The lyric goes on to describe Chastity as 'Castitas blandi domitrix amoris' ['Chastity, conqueror of alluring love'],³⁵ whose victory over desire guarantees her subsequent triumphs over Death and Fate, and thus asserts her right to rule:

Morte cum vieta sodata membris
 pura mens puris radiantis aulam

³² *Inventaires*, p. Ixxxiii. The translation is taken from David Tweedie's *David Rizzio and Mary Queen of Scots: Murder at Holyrood* (Stroud: Sutton, 2006), p. 64.

³³ Compare the first stanza of the Cupid speech in 'Le Trophée d'Amour à la Comedie de Fontainebleau', in Ronsard, *Œuvres*, vol. v, pp. 135–6.

³⁴ See the portrait, *Mary Queen of Scots in White Mourning* by François Clouet (1561, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh).

³⁵ The Latin translations of Buchanan are taken from Philip J. Ford, *George Buchanan: Prince of Poets* (Aberdeen University Press, 1983), pp. 138–9.

incolet aethrae,
una nec certam Veneris sagittam
iura nec fati metuis severi
(Lines 6–10)

[when Death has been conquered, and the pure soul united with a pure body
will inhabit the courts of the radiant heavens, you alone fear neither the
sure arrow of Venus nor the laws of stern Fate].

Yet even as the masque averred Mary's commitment to chastity it was also part of her ambition for remarriage. In the audience of *Cupid, Chastity and Time* was Thomas Randolph, the English ambassador, who was waiting for Mary's response to proposals that she confine herself to Elizabeth's choice of suitor if she wished to be named as her successor. Thus, we can see the masque as a public refutation of Mary's 'desire', reassuring Elizabeth that her heart is still free in order to play for more time. It may also hint at her defiance of Elizabeth's power as matchmaker — an impulse which, perhaps as much as erotic desire, would propel Mary into her disastrous marriage with Darnley. But such a conclusion was as yet far off. The masque ends with the appearance of Time (the penultimate figure of Petrarch's *Trionfi*) who translates the threat of erotic desire into sisterly love:

durabit usque posteris
intaminata saeculis
sincera quae Britannidas
nectit fides Heroidas.
rerum supremus terminus
ut astra terris misceat,
regina Scota diliger
Anglam, Angla Scotam diliger. (Lines 13–20)

[The fidelity which binds together the heroines of Britain will always endure
undefiled and unimpaired throughout future generations. Though the
final end of the universe confounds the heavens with the earth, the
Queen of Scots will love the English Queen, the English Queen the
Queen of Scots.]

The chiasmus of the last line acts as a true-love-knot, implying a kind of alternative marriage between Mary and Elizabeth,³⁶ though it may also emphasize that, whatever

³⁶ The masque may allude to a joke that Mary herself had made, relayed to Cecil by Randolph in a letter of 11 November 1561, that 'thys Queen wysshed that one of the two were a man, to mayke an ende of all debates. Thys I trowe, was spoken in her merrie moode', *Calendar of State Papers: Scotland*, vol. 1, p.570-

decision Mary makes about marriage, her love for Elizabeth is eternal (Eternity being the last figure of the *Trionfi*).

Cupid, Chastity and Time can thus be understood as Mary's manipulation of Cupid for her own political purposes, dramatizing her lack of desire in order to further her ambitions for marriage. Yet, as is implicit in the form of the *Trionfi* (a model of domination and submission, where each virtue triumphs only to be subjected to a superior one'),³⁷ Chastity's triumph over Cupid would not be lasting. The marriages made by Mary, associated first with disorderly passion, then with murder and rape, rendered a Triumph of Chastity increasingly inappropriate. Moreover, by ceasing even to attempt to control her public image through Cupid, Mary found herself on the other end of an arrow wielded by her political enemies.

Succumbing to Cupid

On 21 May 1565, Randolph described the queen as being 'seized with love, all care of the commonwealth set apart' in her infatuation with Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley. Two weeks later, Randolph wrote to Leicester:

She is now so much altered from what she lately was, that who now beholds her does not think her the same. Her majesty is laid aside — her wits not what they were — her beauty another than it was ... The saying is that surely she is bewitched, the parties, the persons, are named to be the doers — the tokens, the rings, the 'braceletes' are found and daily worn that contain 'the sacred misteries'³⁸

It seems that Mary had played the role of Chastity too effectively, her lovesickness contradicting the image she had constructed for herself to the extent that she could no longer quite be herself. Whilst this reflects many of the clichés of modern romantic fiction extended to Mary's life by historians including Antonia Fraser ('Mary had fallen violently, recklessly and totally in love ... swept away in a tide of tumultuous feelings which [she] can scarcely have known she possessed'),³⁹ the allusion to her being bewitched might equally apply to a male subject. In *The First Blast of the Trumpet*, for men to allow themselves to be governed by a woman is evidence of a Circean enchantment (43, 57). Hence, by emphasizing Mary's former majesty, Randolph envisions the effects of desire upon her as though she were a man. Where subjection to desire becomes a sign of Mary's femininity (and of her innate unfitness to rule) is in the attribution of her passion not to magic love charms but to Cupid.

³⁷ See Clarke, 'Love's Songs shall turne to Holy Psalmes', 284.

³⁸ *Calendar of State Papers: Scotland*, vol. 11, p. 172.

³⁹ Antonia Fraser, *Mary, Queen of Scots* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969, repr. 1994), pp. 224–5. See also Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 24–8.

‘Maister Randolphe Phantasey’ is a manuscript poem, dated December 1565 but circulated in early 1566, and written by Thomas Jenye, an English member of the diplomatic service who was at the Scottish court with Randolph.⁴⁰ It describes the ambassador’s fall from favour after she had ‘bewytcht me wth her wiles’ (line 83), but its main focus is the political disasters resulting from the queen’s passion for, and advancement of, Darnley. As Mary appears in Randolph’s dream she admits her inability to govern herself and the kingdom on account of lust, more than once describing herself as ‘Ledd wth th’affection’ (lines 354, 412), though she also insists upon some degree of responsibility: ‘for all things Succeded my will as I wold’ (line 341). Nevertheless, according to ‘Randolph’ there was nothing willed about her infatuation: ‘It was the winged boy had perst her tender thought, / and Venus Joyes so tickled her ... / This was affection force’ (lines 87–8, 99).⁴¹ This reference to Cupid is particularly ironic given that Randolph (and perhaps Jenye) was a spectator at the 1564 banquet show.

At the same time as ‘Maister Randolphe Phantasey’ was being read in Scotland, a similar theory of Mary’s infatuation was being enacted at the Elizabethan court.⁴² *Gismond of Sáleme*, an Inner Temple tragedy adapted from Boccaccio (discussed in the previous chapter), features a heroine who shares a number of similarities with the Scottish queen. Like Mary, whose first husband died shortly before her eighteenth birthday, Gismond begins the play as a young widow, and just as Mary left France after her husband’s death to return to Scotland, so Gismond returns to her father’s kingdom of Sáleme. Where Mary was rumoured to have been transformed by love, losing her beauty and ‘la[y]ing aside’ her majesty, so Gismond falls sick and pursues her desires illicitly, resulting in the destruction of her royal house. But perhaps most tellingly, Gismond’s enemy is the vengeful Cupid, who boasts that he has ‘perced her youthfull vaines’ with lust, much as Jenye imagines Mary being ‘persf.’⁴³

If the spectacle of Mary’s submission to Cupid inspired pity (and it is given tragic status in both poem and play), it was also a kind of propaganda disseminated by her enemies. Recent historians have pointed out that Mary’s decision to marry Darnley was not necessarily a miscalculation, given that it strengthened her claim to the English throne and promised her support for a more visible embrace of Catholicism.⁴⁴ Equally, Mary’s insistence on going through with the marriage despite the English queen’s disfavour occurred at a moment when her desire for Darnley had apparently slackened, suggesting that Mary was ‘on the rebound’ from her political lover, Elizabeth, and

⁴⁰ Thomas Jenye, ‘Maister Randolphe’s Phantasey’, reprinted in *Satirical Poems of the Time of the Reformation*, ed. James Cranstoun, 2 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1891), vol. 1, pp. xvii–xxv.

⁴¹ For further discussion of Mary’s passionate nature as represented in this poem, see James Emerson Phillips, *Images of a Queen: Mary Stuart in Sixteenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964), pp.34–7.

⁴² The poem may actually have been sponsored by Lord Burghley. See *ibid.*, p.36.

⁴³ For a more detailed discussion of the analogy between Gismond, Mary Stuart and Elizabeth I, see my ‘*Gismond of Sáleme*’.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Gordon Donaldson, *All the Queens Men: Power and Politics in Mary Stewart’s Scotland* (London: Batsford Academic & Educational, 1983), pp. 70–82.

acting in revenge rather than desire. Indeed, some of the emphasis on Mary's transformation may have been a response to her new, political autonomy, deliberately misread as infatuation.⁴⁵ On 18 October 1565, after her marriage, Randolph declared that 'a wylfuller woman, and one more wedded unto her owne opinion, withowte order, reason, or dyscretion, I never dyd knowe or hearde of'.⁴⁶ The word 'wylfull' usefully reinvents political self-determination as erotic desire. Furthermore, the attribution of her passion to Cupid means that the power Mary had previously wielded over her male courtiers (often to tragic effect, as in the case of Chastelard and Sir John Gordon) could be reclaimed by male authority. Before Bothwell's rape revealed the vulnerability of Mary's body (and the casket sonnets presumed a similar intrusion into her heart), Cupid had proven Mary's penetrability through his arrow. In this manner, he not only imaginatively reaffirmed the patriarchal order, endorsing the argument that women were not suited for rule, but became part of the discourse that justified Mary's deposition.

This fact seems to have been acknowledged by Mary's son, James VI, whose ambition to reform Scottish poetry by eschewing the Roman Catholic love lyric in favour of Protestant epic has been understood as a response to the casket sonnets and the political damage they did to his mother.⁴⁷ Although these sonnets do not feature Cupid, the erotic and Petrarchan deity symbolizes all that James rejects in his translation of du Bartas' *L'Uranie ou Muse Celeste* (Edinburgh, 1584):

I thought to sing the fickle boy
Of Cypris soft, and loves to-swete anoy,
To lofty spirits that are therewith made blynd,
To which discours my nature and age inclynd ...

But Urania, the heavenly muse, intervenes and warns him:

Let not your art so rare then be defylde,
In singing Venus, and her fethered chylde:
For better it is without renowme to be,
Then be renowmde for vyle iniquitie.⁴⁸

Mary's example inspired James to exert tighter control over not just the question of monarchical legitimacy but 'the capacity for the monarch to be eroticized: to be the agent and object of desire', and one of the most efficient means of doing this was to

⁴⁵ See Kristen P. Walton, *Catholic Queen, Protestant Patriarchy: Mary Queen of Scots and the Politics of Gender and Religion* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 124–6.

⁴⁶ *Calendar of State Papers: Scotland*, p. 225.

⁴⁷ See Sarah M. Dunnigan, *Eros and Poetry at the Courts of Mary Queen of Scots and James VI* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002), p. 6.

⁴⁸ James VI, *Tire Poems of James VI of Scotland*, ed. James Craigie, 2 vols. (London and Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1955), vol. 1, pp. 19–39, lines 25–31, 231–6.

banish Cupid.⁴⁹ Yet this was easier for a king, whose virtues were in no way reliant upon the staging or referencing of Cupid, than for a queen.

Threatening Female Chastity: Cupid and Elizabeth I

Elizabeth I's erotic career is, in some respects, the reverse of Mary's, for she emerges from the scandal of the Seymour and Leicester dalliances to carve out a reputation for virginal chastity. This 'reinvention' was the result not just of private and political decisions made by Elizabeth but of a vast propagandistic effort in which Cupid played a central role. His enmity was repeatedly produced so that it might be defeated, thereby proving the political power of Chastity over Desire and justifying Elizabeth's decision not to marry. Yet even as he contributed to the enormous success of this public image, Cupid also embodied the political and sometimes amorous frustrations of Elizabeth's courtiers. The following discussion will trace Elizabeth's interactions with Cupid across three decades, from Thomas Churchyard's *Shew of Chastity* (1578) and Lyly's *Sappho and Phao* (1583–4), when it was hoped that the queen might combine chastity with wedded love, to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1596) and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (pub. 1590, 1596), when hopes for her marriage and production of a natural heir had faded.⁵⁰ In the triumphs of chastity featured in these later works we find a new sense of resentment and a desire to punish.

Churchyard's *Shew of Chastity*

Unlike *Cupid, Chastity and Time*, with which Mary seems to have been closely involved, there is no evidence that Elizabeth had any input into the Triumph of Chastity that was staged during her progress at Norwich in August 1578, though its author, Thomas Churchyard, tells us that he had 'gracious words of the Queene openly and often pronounced by Hir Highnesse'.⁵¹ The main action of the pageant sees Cupid, banished from heaven and having run away from Venus, approaching Elizabeth to ask

⁴⁹ Dunnigan, *Eros and Poetry*, p. 7. In fact, James's reign was defined from early on by his erotic friendships with male courtiers. His cousin, Esmé Stuart, later Duke of Lennox, requested that his heart should be embalmed and sent to James in 1583, the year before the king's public rejection of love poetry. See Michael B. Young, *James VI and I and the History of Homosexuality* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 10–11.

⁵⁰ On the different ways in which Elizabeth's chastity was construed according to the political situation, her current suitor, and her perceived capacity to bear a child, see John N. King, 'Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of the Virgin Queen', *Renaissance Quarterly* 43.1 (1990), 30–74, at 32, and Susan Doran, 'Juno versus Diana: The Treatment of Elizabeth I's Marriage in Plays and Entertainments, 1561–1581', *Tire Historical Journal* 2 (June 1995), 257–74.

⁵¹ Thomas Churchyard, *A Discourse of the Queenes Majesties Entertainment in Suffolk and Norfolk* (London, 1578), sig. D2r.

for succour at her court, to which he receives ‘neyther aunswere nor ayde’ (sig. Ü4r). More eloquent is the response that he receives from Chastity,

[For she] sette upon him, threwe him out of his golden seate, trode on hys pompe, spoyled him of his counterfeyte Godhead and cloke, and tooke away his bowe and his quiver of arrowes (the one headed with leade, and the other with golde), and so sent him like a fugitive away, and mounted up into the coatche hir seife and hir maydes. (Sig. D4r)

Chastity then offers Cupid’s weapons to Elizabeth and the pageant ends with a song in praise of that virtue.

Petrarch’s *Trionfo della Pudicizia* clearly supplied the theme and structure of this *Shew* which ‘triumph makes of fickle fond desire’ (sig. Djv). It may also have suggested some of the visual spectacle. Unfortunately, Churchyard does not include any description of how Cupid and Chastity were dressed or what their chariots looked like, but we may extrapolate from his description of the previous day’s entertainment in which a sumptuously costumed Mercury arrived by coach,

the whole wherof was covered with Birdes, and naked Sprites hanging by the heeles in the aire and cloudes, cunningly painted ... And on the middle of that Coatch stoode a high compassed Tower, bedeckt with golden and gay iewels, in the top whereof was placed a faire plume of white feathers, all to bespangde and trimmed to the most braverie. (Sig. C4r)

The tower recalls the Cupidean chariot as it was often depicted in illustrations of Petrarch’s *Trionfi*, for example in Francesco Rosselli’s engraving of *The Triumph of Love* (c. 1485–90, New York, Metropolitan Museum; see Figure 6).⁵² What must have made the scene even more Petrarchan is the fact that, according to Churchyard, crowds of local people ‘beholding the manner thereof, and greedie to gaze on that shoulde bee done, followed, as their fancies did leade them’ (sig. Dir), thus resembling the enslaved lovers who follow in the Petrarchan Cupid’s wake.

The political intent behind this costly entertainment remains a matter of debate. Obviously, it endorses Elizabeth’s identification with chastity but, like the Marian show, it does so at a moment when she was contemplating marriage. In the previous month, two envoys from the French court had arrived to discuss Elizabeth’s possible union with the Catholic prince François, Duke of Anjou, and they followed the queen to Norwich, where they watched at least the previous day’s entertainment and dined

⁵² See the reproduction by D. D. Carnicelli in *Lord Morley’s ‘Tryumphes of Frauncis Petrarcke’: Fise First English Translation of the ‘Trionfi’* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), fig. 10.



Figure 6. Francesco Rosselli, *The Triumph of Love*

with Elizabeth at Lord Surrey's house the day after.⁵³ The pageant's celebration of chastity might thus imply criticism of her matrimonial plans by those who arranged and paid for it.⁵⁴ Churchyard was a professional soldier and poet, aligned with the militant Protestant clique at court, specifically Sir Christopher Hatton and Sir Francis Walsingham, and he had been commissioned to produce the masque by the Lord Mayor and aidemen of Norwich, a city described as a notorious hotbed of radical Protestant sentiment' that also had some connections with Leicester.⁵⁵ From this perspective, the pageant might seem to warn the French ambassadors against presuming on their success:

chastity: Then sith (O Queene) chast life is thus thy Choyce,
 And that thy heart is free from bondage yoke,
 Thou shalt (good Queene) by my consent and voyce,
 Have hálfe the spoyle; take eyther bowe or cloke.
 The bowe (I thinke) more fitte for such a one
 In fleshly forme, that beares a heart of stone
 That none can wound, nor pearce by any meane.
 Wherefore take heere the bow, and learne to shoote
 At whome thou wilt; thy heart it is so cleane,
 Blind *Cupid's* boites therein can take no roote. (Sig. Djv)

Elizabeth's invulnerability to Cupid's arrows (and therefore any love suit) is here implicitly politicized. By praising her heart as being 'free from bondage yoke', the pageant assuages fears about the loss of England's political and religious autonomy as a result of the proposed French marriage. Later, it will allude to chastity as counteracting the supposedly enervating and effeminizing effects of female rule: 'It breedes great force and courage still in men' (sig. Djv). Furthermore, the only penetration of the queen's body it imagines is by female virtues. Chastity's maids, Modestie, Temperance, Good Exercise and Shamefastnesse, will

creepe in princely hart,
 And gide the mind, & throughly serch, the soule & every part.
 That still the feare of God, be burning in hir brest,
 Ther is the only house O Quene, wher we four maids wil rest.
 (Sig.E3v)

⁵³ See *Lise Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. John Nichols, 3 vols. (London: Society of Antiquaries of London, 1788), vol. 11, pp. 159,198.

⁵⁴ Doran describes it as 'the most outspoken and explicit criticism of Elizabeth's matrimonial diplomacy during 1578', *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 150, 152, though she admits that the French ambassadors made no mention of the pageant in their dispatches.

⁵⁵ King, 'Queen Elizabeth I', 48.

This is the inverse of Desire's invasion of the female subject as staged in *Gismond of Sáleme*, where Cupid enters the royal palace and Gismond's body to inspire a profane 'burning' that brings about the destruction of their 'house'.

But if Elizabeth is invulnerable to Cupid's dart and possesses a 'heart of stone', these are also the attributes that qualify her for matrimony, and for all its insistence that chastity is 'thy Choyce' Churchyard's *Shew* carefully develops this as an alternative. Not only does Chastity hand over Cupid's bow as a sign of Elizabeth's victory over desire, she requires the queen to 'learne to shoot at whom thou wilt', a gesture more striking because it rewrites the Petrarchan source. In the *Trionfo della Pudicizia*, Penelope and Lucretia have

broken in pecis small
Loves bowe, his dartes, arrowes and all
And pulled his wynges quyte from hys backe.
Thus this greate God dyd go to wracke. (Lines 203–6)

Obviously, this expression of trust in the queen's judgement was intended to please, and perhaps to redefine the Leicester opposition as not against marriage *per se* but against this particular suitor, with its implication that Elizabeth has yet to choose and might choose differently. But it also suggests that there is no contradiction between Elizabeth's performance as Chastity and as Cupid, an assumption partly based on the similarity between these two deities when viewed from an epithalamic perspective. Diana as Cynthia, the moon goddess, was thought to combine not only the virtue of chastity but also female fertility through her monthly cycles. Hence, she is invoked at the end of Spenser's *Epithalamion* to ensure the couple's fertility (lines 385–7), and collaborates with Hymen in *Cupid's Banishment* (see Chapter 4). Similarly, although Cupid was sometimes depicted as the enemy to marital love, he could also be an indispensable part of marriage festivities, appearing in both Middleton's *Masque of Cupids* and Jonson's *A Challenge at Tilt* to celebrate the marriage of Frances Howard and Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset in 1613.

That the encounter between Cupid, Chastity and Elizabeth in 1578 needs to be understood in these epithalamic terms is suggested by one of the other entertainments performed at Norwich. In an after-dinner pageant, written by Bernard Goldingham for the Thursday night (after Churchyard's on the Tuesday), a procession of mythological deities — Mercury, Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Venus, Apollo, Pallas, Neptune, Diana and Cupid — enters the Privy Chamber, each one delivering a brief encomiastic speech and offering a gift to the queen.⁵⁶ Diana's is a bow and arrows headed with silver which she defines as both her tribute to Elizabeth's chastity and the weapons to defend it: 'Accepte my Bowe, since beste thou doest deserve / Though well I knowe thy minde can thee preserve' (163). Cupid enters next, embodying the libidinal threat against which Diana has armed the virgin queen. Yet, as if to reinforce and extend the message of

⁵⁶ *Progresses*, pp. 159–64.

Churchyard's masque, he willingly bestows his own arrow on Elizabeth, urging her to 'Shoote but this shafte at King or Caesar: he, / And he is thine, and if thou wilt allowe' (164). Thus, Elizabeth is encouraged to make her choice in the European marriage market, as further signalled by the fact that Hymen is at her disposal. This god had initially 'den[ied] his good-will' to Elizabeth but has been 'so countre-checked' by Diana 'as he shall ever hereafter be at your commaundement' (160).

This insistence that the queen might engage with desire without becoming subject to it, enabling her to enter into marriage without any danger to her political authority, is crucial to the success of Churchyard's *Shew* and Goldingham's banquet entertainment. What would threaten to undo the delicate reconciliation of Chastity and Cupid was the addition of another mythological role for Elizabeth to play, namely that of Venus.

Sappho and Phao

Lyly's romantic comedy *Sappho and Phao*, celebrating a chaste, female ruler who resists desire, has long been understood as a compliment to the queen. Its allusions to the Triumph of Chastity, such as Sappho's fantasy of leading Venus 'in chains like a captive' (5.2.72–3), and her appropriation of Cupid's weapons ('I will direct these arrows with better aim and conquer mine own affections with greater modesty' (5.2.28–30)) suggest a relationship with earlier Elizabethan panegyric, not least Churchyard's *Shew*.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Sappho was an unlikely cipher for Elizabeth, given her lesbianism and her depiction in the *Heroides* as ugly, middle-aged and sexually rapacious,⁵⁸ and although little of this gets in to Lyly's revision, the play does express doubts about its protagonist's resistance to desire.

Sappho's reputation for chastity is initially signalled by the revenge she inspires in Venus (1.1.37–8) and by Cupid's fearful testimony: 'they say she hath her thoughts in a string, that she conquers affections and sendeth love up and down upon errands' (45–7). Yet when Sappho first appears on stage, she describes herself as Venus' surrogate child (3.3.95) and devoted worshipper: 'O Venus, have I not strewed thine altars with sweet roses, kept thy swans in clear rivers, fed thy sparrows with ripe corn, and harboured thy doves in fair houses ...?' (lines 89–92). If this seems an inappropriate history for the representative of Elizabethan Chastity, the solecism is compounded by Sappho's susceptibility to desire. She is shot by Cupid's arrow twice and presented 'in her bed', languishing with lovesickness — an unflattering image of Elizabeth, not least because its emphasis on her body's vulnerability appears in the absence of any depiction of her

⁵⁷ See Michael Pincombe, 'Cupid and Eliza: Variations on a Virgilian Icon in Plays by Gager, Lyly, and Marlowe', in *Lise Iconography of Power: Ideas and Images of Rulership on the English Renaissance Stage*, ed. György E. Szónyi and Rowland Wymer (Szeged: Institute of English and American Studies, 2000), pp.33–52, at p. 35.

⁵⁸ On the classical background of Sappho, see Michael Pincombe, *The Plays of John Lyly: Eros and Eliza* (Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 63–4.

public, monarchical self.⁵⁹ Moreover, contrary to what critics have usually assumed,⁶⁰ Sappho does not vanquish desire or even decide to remain chaste. When Venus promises that ‘Phao shall yield’, the queen is torn between shame at such a match and the fear that she may die of frustrated love (4.1.16–8). When Venus exits with the promise ‘I will work for thee’ (line 20), Sappho does not demur, implying that she might be ready to capitulate to desire. Indeed, she later expresses resentment that ‘unkind Venus’ has failed in her promise (5.2.26–7). Furthermore, Lyly makes it quite clear through Sappho’s testimony (if not also through the actions performed on stage) that she only overcomes her passion for Phao when she is struck for the second time by Cupid’s dart:

Sappho: What hast thou done, Cupid?

Cupid: That my mother commanded, Sappho.

Sappho: Methinks I feel an alteration in my mind and as it were a withdrawing in myself of mine own affections.

Cupid : Then hath mine arrow his effect. (5.2.1—5)

In these respects, Sappho falls far short of the ideal of chastity as inviolate and inveterately opposed to lust. When she rebukes Venus,

You are not worthy to be the lady of love, that yield so often to the impressions of love. Immodest Venus, that to satisfy the unbridled thought of thy heart trans-gressest so far from the stay of thine honour! (5.2.64–7)

her moral superiority is undercut by her insistence that she herself will become ‘goddess of affections’ (line 70). Although Elizabeth was sometimes likened to the Venus Virgo, an embodiment of chaste love,⁶¹ the resemblance was based on the queen’s ability to provoke desire rather than her capacity to feel it and it is precisely this distinction that *Sappho and Phao* threatens to undo, not only through its dramatization of the queen’s lovesickness but through her relationship with Cupid. Whilst the image of Sappho with Cupid on her lap expresses her usurpation of Venus’ power over desire and of her authority as a mother (perhaps recalling Elizabeth’s sponsorship of over a hundred godchildren in order to extend her own ‘maternal’ image),⁶² it can also be read

⁵⁹ See Theodora Jankowski, ‘The Subversion of Flattery: The Queen’s Body in John Lyly’s *Sappho and Phao*’, *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 5 (1991), 69–87, at 71–2.

⁶⁰ Bernard Huppé suggests that it depicts ‘a poetic learned queen’s conquest over love’ whilst for David Bevington it reflects how ‘a monarch, adored by her subjects and drawn briefly into a strong affection for one of them, chooses singleness of life as best befitting her responsibilities to the entire kingdom’, *Allegory of Love in Lyly’s Court Comedies*, *English Literary History* 14 (1947), 93–113, at 98, and *Sappho and Phao*, in Lyly, *Campaspe*, pp. 166–7, respectively.

⁶¹ In Goldingham’s pageant, the goddess recognises Elizabeth as ‘another Venus’, p. 161. For other examples, see Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Macmillan, 1995, repr. 1996), pp. 107–8 and 114–15.

⁶² On the identification of Elizabeth as a mother, see *ibid.*, pp. 4, 50–2, 77–8, 164–5.

as implying that Sappho's victory over her affections will not be permanent. According to Petrarch's *Trionfo* and Churchyard's *Shew*, Cupid must be not only disarmed but violently displaced from his chariot, if not physically restrained. He is certainly not allowed to clamber onto Chastity's lap, for it is in the moments of physical intimacy between Cupid and a mother-figure that the latter is in most danger of suffering desire.⁶³ That this might be Sappho's fate is suggested by Venus' threat: Well, I will be even with you both, and that shortly' (5-3-IO2.).

Thus, *Sappho and Phao* extends the terms of Churchyard's *Shew* in that it attempts once again to reconcile Chastity and Love. By representing sympathetically Sappho's struggle against desire and her maternal embraces with Cupid, Lyly might even be said to offer a more appealing depiction of Elizabethan chastity. And yet, he has also undermined the queen's moral and political authority, both by denying her agency in the repudiation of desire and by placing so much emphasis on her subjection. Contemporary allegory may have required 'Sappho' to be infatuated with an inappropriate suitor — candidates for Phao's role have been found in the Duke of Anjou and the Earl of Leicester.⁶⁴ But the pleasure that the play seems to take in Sappho's wounding also looks forward to the 1590s, when Elizabeth could no longer unproblematically combine the roles of Diana and Cupid, and when her production of desires that could not be fulfilled was increasingly met with resentment.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

In act two, scene one of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Oberon quarrels with Titania over the changeling boy. Alone with Puck, he is prompted by his wife's unruly desire and his own vengeful impulses to recall a vision of Cupid:

Oberon (to puck): That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
 Flying between the cold moon and the earth
 Cupid, all armed. A certain aim he took
 At a fair vestal, thronèd by the west,
 And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow
 As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
 But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
 Quenched in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon. (2.1.155–62)

In all the source-hunting that the first half of the speech has inspired (with its allusion to the mermaid on the dolphin's back and shooting stars), this passage's debt to Petrarch's *Trionfo della Pudicizia* has been overlooked.⁶⁵ Yet the key elements are

⁶³ For further discussion see Chapter 4.

⁶⁴ For a summary of these arguments, see Bevington, *Sappho and Phao*, PP-164-7.

⁶⁵ There is no conclusive proof that Shakespeare knew the Italian text, but Carnicelli suggests some possible debts to the general iconography (excluding *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) in *Lord Morley's 'Tryumphes'*, pp. 57–63, at pp.57-8-

there: Cupid fires his arrow at a female virgin but it is deflected by Chastity, represented by the moon and by the mortal herself. More specifically, Oberon's observation 'But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft / Quenched in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon' recalls Cupid's defeat in the *Trionfo*-,

che già in fredda onestate erano estinti
i dorati suoi strali, accesi in fiamma
d'amorosa beliate e' n piacer tinti. (Lines 67–9)
[For now his gilded shafts, lit with the flame
Of amorous beauty, and in pleasure dipped,
Were by the coldness of her honor quenched.⁶⁶

Shakespeare follows the Petrarchan original, rather than Lord Morley's English translation,⁶⁷ by using the word *estinti* or 'quenched' and placing it at the beginning or end of a line for emphasis. There may also be an allusion to the Triumph in performance. In 1578, Chastity described how her virtue 'quencheth sparkes and flames of fancies fire' (sig. Djv) and a further use of 'fancy' as a synonym for erotic love ('A leawd delight, a flying fansie light' (sig. DZR)) could have informed Oberon's reference to the vestal as 'fancy-free'. Thus, at the risk of adding to the number of pageants upon which Shakespeare is supposed to have relied for this speech,⁶⁸ we might speculate that he had seen an entertainment based on the *Trionfo della Pudicizia* in which the role of 'fair vestal, thronèd by the west' (line 157) was taken by Elizabeth.

The effect of these allusions, however, is to *teveA A Midsummer Night's Dream's* defiance of Petrarch. For the play reverses the positions of the Triumph of Chastity and the Triumph of Love so that the latter conquers, an alteration partly attributable to its celebration of marriage,⁶⁹ but also to its deeper ambivalence regarding Elizabeth's virginity. In the first scene, Hippolita, who, as an Amazon, might have taken her place in the *Trionfo della Pudicizia*, finds herself forced to play a part in Theseus' *Trionfo dell'Amore* when the latter promises 'to wed [her] in another key — / With pomp, with triumph and with revelling' (1.1.18–19). Rather than a tautology, this use of

⁶⁶ *Le Rime Sparse e i Trionfi*, ed. Ezio Chiorboli (Bavi, 1930), trans. Ernest Hatch Wilkins in *The Triumphs of Petrarch* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 42.

⁶⁷ 'For this loves golden and fyery shafte / Even by it seife there it fell aparte, / Seyng the honestie (as I have here tolde) / In my loves breste that then was colde', Carnicelli, *Lord Morley's 'Tryumphes'*, pp. in-12, lines in-14.

⁶⁸ In 1794, W. Whiter observed Oberon's speeches to be 'very naturally derived from the *Masque* or the *Pageant*', *A Specimen of Commentary*, p. 186, reprinted in William Shakespeare, *A Midsommer Nights Dreame: A New Variorum Edition*, ed. H. H. Furness (Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott, 1895), pp. 78–9, at p. 78, thereby initiating the quest for a specific pageant, with Kenilworth (1575) and Elvetham (1591) as frontrunners. Neither contains a Cupid.

⁶⁹ On the theory that the play was written for a wedding attended by Elizabeth, see E. K. Chambers, 'The Occasion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', in *Shakespearean Gleanings* (Oxford University Press, 1944), pp. 61–7, and Paul N. Siegel, *A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Wedding Guests*, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 4 (1953), 139–44.

the word ‘triumph’ alongside ‘pomp’ seems to me deliberate. Theseus is impatient to defeat Chastity, represented not only by Hippolita’s virginity but by ‘the old moon’ (a symbol of Diana and perhaps Elizabeth) that wanes and ‘lingers [his] desires’ (1.1.4).⁷⁰ He denigrates chastity more explicitly when required to determine Hermia’s future, asking if she is willing

To live a barren sister all your life,
 Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
 Thrice blessèd they that master so their blood
 To undergo such maiden pilgrimages
 But earthlier happy is the rose distilled
 Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
 Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness. (1.1.72–8)

The fact that this speech is spoken by a future bridegroom, and one famous in classical mythology as a rapist and serial adulterer, somewhat mitigates its authority. Nevertheless, Theseus’ reference to ‘the rose distilled’ echoes Lyly’s *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1.234) and other conventional exhortations to marriage, even as it subverts one of the most enduring symbols of Elizabethan chastity (Belphoebe’s virginity is described as ‘That daintie Rose’ (3.5.51.1)). Moreover, his juxtaposition of the verb ‘master’ with ‘maiden pilgrimage’ potentially compliments Elizabeth’s unusual, masculine ability to govern her own appetite, while implying how unnatural (because unfeminine) this is.

Theseus’ dispraise of chastity does not go uncontested. Rather, it provides a foil to Oberon’s ‘fair vestal’ speech in which he echoes Theseus’ arguments but inverts their conclusions. Hence, the moon is again ‘cold’ but not barren or fruitless; Hermia’s dreaded vow of chastity on ‘Diana’s altar’ becomes an act of empowerment that leaves the vestal ‘fancy-free’; and Theseus’ reference to a ‘maiden pilgrimage’ is translated into the vestal’s passing] on in maiden meditation’, again recalling the *Trionfo della Pudicizia*, in which Laura ‘dyd away from loves stroke glyde’ (line 83). But rather than leave Cupid’s power diminished or destroyed, as in Petrarch, Shakespeare extends the arrow’s trajectory to ‘a little western flower — / Before, milk-white; now, purple with love’s wound’ (lines 166–7). Thus, Chastity provokes desire, in the sense that it calls upon Cupid to take aim at it, but it also creates desire through the pansy’s ability to ‘make or man or woman madly dote’ (line 171), thereby replacing one Triumph with another. Moreover, Elizabeth is identified with those who succumb to Cupid’s arrow. The pansy was known to be one of her favourite flowers, appearing not only in her embroidery but also on the dress that she wears in the Rainbow Portrait,⁷¹ and

⁷⁰ On the way in which Diana references became critical of the Queen in the 1590s, see Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 54–5.

⁷¹ See Lisa M. Klein, ‘Your Humble Handmaid: Elizabethan Gifts of Needlework’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 50 (summer 1997), 459–93, at 477–8.

it was used as a cipher for Elizabeth in the April! eclogue of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579).⁷² Hence, its piercing by Cupid's arrow suggests a fantasy of Elizabeth's penetration, aptly described by Louis Montrose as 'a displaced and literalized defloration'.⁷³

Similarly, the erotic encounter between Titania and Bottom can be read both as a celebration of Elizabeth's chastity and as a fantasy of its degradation. The absurd spectacle of a fairy queen enamoured of an ass may be a satirical allusion to the inappropriateness of the Anjou courtship. The duke was popularly known as 'Monsieur', a title that Bottom deploys eleven times in 4.1.7–26, and the use of 'love juice' to bewitch Titania echoes the Earl of Leicester's remark that Elizabeth must be the victim of love charms if she could be enamoured of a man as ugly as Anjou.⁷⁴ But if the Titania-Bottom coupling emphasizes Elizabeth's avoidance of sexual humiliation through her commitment to chastity, it also fantasizes about her abject self-betrayal, dallying with an ass who was not only the animal most hated by the moon-goddess but an archetype of 'phallic sexuality and lust'.⁷⁵ Moreover, Titania is subjected to passion in order to undermine her political autonomy. The Fairy King (a potential cipher for all Elizabeth's frustrated male courtiers) precedes his plot with the rhetorical question, 'Am not I thy lord?' (2.1.63), and Titania's shame at her misjudgement inspires a new submissiveness (4.1.77–85).

A Midsummer Night's Dream reveals the patriarchal agenda behind Cupid's enmity towards woman in early modern culture. On the one hand, as Kate Chedgzoy has argued, Shakespeare seems to have distrusted Cupid, perceiving him as 'an anti-marital force ... too disruptive of normative social hierarchies to facilitate the reintegration of erotic desire with patriarchal imperatives through the institution of marriage'. Thus, 'Cupid is summoned to the aid of the erotic and romantic passions of the young, in opposition to patriarchally imposed marital arrangements, when Oberon calls on the alliance of Venus and Cupid to assist his intervention in the affairs of the human

⁷² On the criticism of the Elizabeth/Anjou marriage detected in these lines (142–4), see Paul E. McLane, *Spenser's Shepherd's Calendar: A Study in Elizabethan Allegory* (University of Notre Dame, 1961), pp. 13–26, and Robert Lane, *Shepherds Devises: Edmund Spenser's Shepherd's Calendar and the Institutions of Elizabethan Society* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), pp. 60–1.

⁷³ Louis Montrose, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Shaping Fantasies of Elizabethan Culture: Gender, Power, Form', in *Rewriting the Renaissance: Else Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret M. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 65–87, 83. See also Laura Levine, 'Rape, Repetition and the Politics of Closure in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', in *Eeminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, ed. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan and Dymphna Callaghan (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 210–28, at p. 215.

⁷⁴ Maurice Hunt, 'A Speculative Allegory in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', *Comparative Drama* 34 (winter 2001), 423–53, at 431–3. Compare this with the love-charms accusation levelled against Mary Stuart in her passion for Lord Darnley, discussed above.

⁷⁵ See Philippa Berry, *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen* (New York: Routledge, 1989 repr. 1994), p. 145.

lovers'.⁷⁶ Yet *A Midsummer Night's Dream* also demonstrates Cupid's manipulation by a male author in order to reimpose patriarchal values. Traditionally, it was Venus who indicated where Cupid should aim his arrows; in the Triumph this role was given to Chastity and thence to Elizabeth. But in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Oberon directs Cupid's mortal surrogate, Puck,⁷⁷ where to apply the love-juice, and then applies it to Titania himself. His description of Cupid (a figure whom we never see on stage and whose narrative is curiously detached in space and time, like a piece of Renaissance art)⁷⁸ distracts attention from the Fairy King's own responsibility for Titania's adulterous desire, just as Spenser blames Cupid for Amoret's plight rather than his own narrative design.

Above all, what is distinctive about this adaptation of the Triumph of Chastity is its inclusion of an eroticized double for the 'fair vestal'. As Susan Frye has argued, 'Most of the strategies that worked to preserve [Elizabeth's] power created a figure so remote in her material and discursive autonomy — so *chaste* - that penetrating that chastity attained enormous value.'⁷⁹ The invention of a violated, erotic double clearly satisfies this impulse. Indeed, it has become preferable to the idea of Elizabeth playing Cupid which is now viewed with hostility for the damage it does not only to the rejected suitor but to the women who suffer in Elizabeth's place. For example, the 'fair vestal' speech has been seen to allude to the Kenilworth entertainments, where the queen's chastity deflected Leicester's desire onto Lettice Knollys, who was subsequently disgraced by their secret marriage.⁸⁰ We find another historical 'love triangle' behind the narrative of Belphoebe, Amoret and Timias in *The Faerie Queene* Book 4, where Elizabeth's rejection of Raleigh causes his desire to be redirected onto Elizabeth Throckmorton with similar effects.⁸¹ In fact, it seems to have been Spenser's ambivalence towards

⁷⁶ Chedgzoy, 'Playing with Cupid: Gender, Sexuality and Adolescence', in *Alternative Shakespeares* 3, ed. Diana E. Henderson (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 138–57, at p. 148.

⁷⁷ On the translation of Cupid into Puck, see Jan Kott, 'The Bottom Translation', in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York and Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1987), pp. 73–85, at pp. 75–6, and Teah Scragg, *The Metamorphosis of Gallathea: A Study in Creative Adaptation* (Washington: University Press of America, 1982), pp. 571F. On Shakespeare's use of Cupid surrogates in general, see Chedgzoy, 'Playing with Cupid', pp. 141–4, 146.

⁷⁸ On the ekphrastic nature of this speech, see my article 'Tove's Tabour's Scorned'.

⁷⁹ Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 98.

⁸⁰ See J. Boaden (*On the Sonnets of Shakespeare* (1837)), and Rev. N. J. Halpin ('Oberon's Vision', *The Shakespeare Society* (1843)), as summarized in the *New Variorum*, pp. 80–1, 83–7. Stephen Greenblatt is a more recent advocate of this theory, suggesting that Oberon's speech 'clearly alludes to Leicester's attempt, some twenty years earlier, to charm the queen' in *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (Tondon: Jonathan Cape, 2004), p. 47.

⁸¹ See William Oram, 'Elizabethan Fact and Spenserian Fiction', *Spenser Studies* 4 (1983), 33–48, and James P. Bednarz, 'Raleigh in Spenser's Historical Allegory', *Spenser Studies* 7 (1983), 49–70, 62.

Elizabethan chastity and his invention of chaste and erotic doubles for the queen that influenced the Shakespearean comedy.⁸²

The Faerie Queene: Belphoebe and Amoret

At the beginning of Book 3, Spenser offers Elizabeth the opportunity to view herself in the figure of 'rare chastitee' represented by Belphoebe (Pr.5.9). The latter is such a pure incarnation of this virtue that she seems barely mortal, and her Triumph over Cupid is a foregone conclusion, contracted into a single stanza:

In [her eyes] the blinded god his lustfull fyre
To kindle oft assayd, but had no might;
For with dredd Maiestie, and awfull yre,
She broke his wanton darts, and quenched bace desyre.
(2.3.23.6–9)

The reader may feel some sympathy for the frustrated Cupid whose attraction is met with 'dredd Majestic and awfull yre'. More dubious still is the effect of Belphoebe's chaste beauty upon mortals, for in her eyelids the Graces are discovered 'Working belgardes, and amorous retrate' (25.3), suggesting that her beauty actively allures but then withholds itself. Such unattainability nearly procures the death of Timias, and it is in this respect that Belphoebe proves most dangerous and most worthy of a Cupidean revenge.

Tracking her wounded prey in Book 3, canto 5, she comes upon the Squire. Though his injury was inflicted by one of the fosters, a causal relationship is implied between Belphoebe's aggression and Timias' suffering, particularly given that he is 'bleeding out his hart-bloud neare' (32.9). As he continues to ail despite Belphoebe's best ministrations, the narrator offers his own diagnosis:

She his hurt thigh to him recurd againe,
But hurt his hart, the which before was sound,
Through an unwary dart, which did rebownd
From her faire eyes and gracious countenaunce.
What bootes it him from death to be unbownd,
To be captived in endlesse duraunce
Of sorrow and despayre without aleggeaunce? (42.3–9)

By inflicting the sufferings of love on another while remaining herself immune to passion, Belphoebe plays the role of Cupid as well as Diana. There may also be something in the randomness with which she strikes ('an unwary dart') that identifies her

⁸² James P. Bednarz discusses the relationship between what he calls Shakespeare's 'most Spenserian play' and *The Faerie Queene* in 'Imitations of Spenser in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', *Renaissance Drama* 145 (1983), 79–102.

with the capricious, ‘blind’ god. But her failure to give ‘aleggeaunce’ (relief) is now viewed with resentment, shaping an impulse to revenge that manifests itself in the taking-up of an arrow against Belpheobe herself: ‘Full of soft passion and unwonted smart: / The point of pittie perced through her tender hart’ (30.8–9). Immediately after Belpheobe has felt this new emotion, stanza 31 begins: ‘Meekely shee bowed downe’. This submissiveness is not sustained for long, but the reader is encouraged to view the desired spectacle of Belpheobe’s erotic subjection through her double, her twin sister, Amoret.

Given that she was named after Cupid, educated by Venus, and has married a knight who bears the love-god on his shield, Amoret hardly seems to have deserved Cupid’s enmity. Yet, having been tortured in the House of Busirane, she falls into the hands of Lust in Book 4, where her plight is repeatedly described in terms of sexual pollution: she is ‘rapt by greedie lust’ (7.Arg.i), ‘bestaine[d]’ by his blood (27.9), and wounded by Timias in a manner akin to defloration (35.9). Rather than explain these wounds in terms of her character, or as a manifestation of Cupid’s irrational sadism, it seems clear that Amoret is the vulnerable Other of the impenetrable Belpheobe, and therefore a displacement of the desire and revenge inspired by Elizabeth herself.⁸³ That this is the case is suggested by the similarity with which Timias responds to the sisters (and it is here that Raleigh’s relationship with the two Elizabeths comes into play). Having fallen in love with Belpheobe, Timias rebukes himself for presumption in aiming so high and for his ‘villeinous’ desire ‘to blott her honour’ (45.4, 5), only to find in Amoret a more accessible (and blottable) version. After Belpheobe has killed Lust, she returns to find Timias engaged with her sister:

There she him found by that new lovely mate,
Who lay the whiles in swoune, full sadly set,
From her faire eyes wiping the deawy wet,
Which softly stild, and kissing them atweene,
And handling soft the hurts, which she did get.
(35-3-7)

The phrase ‘new lovely mate’ — punning on Amoret’s name and recalling Timias’ earlier appellation as ‘that lovely boy’ (23.6) — implies both that the pair are ideally suited and that Belpheobe has been replaced in Timias’ affections.⁸⁴

This preference for a more yielding version of Elizabeth (achieved through the patriarchal might of Cupid) is expressed elsewhere in *The Faerie Queene*. At the beginning of Book 4, ‘Spenser’ asks Cupid to prevent Elizabeth from misjudging his work:

Do thou dred infant, *Venus* dearling dove,

⁸³ Frye demonstrates ‘the repeated assault or undermining of the figures of the queen in Spenser’s later books’, *Elizabeth I: Tire Competition for Representation*, p. 122.

⁸⁴ See Bednarz, ‘Raleigh in Spenser’s Historical Allegory’, 62.

From her high spirit chase imperious feare,
 And use of awfull Maiestie remove:
 In sted thereof with drops of melting love,
 Deawd with ambrosiall kisses, by thee gotten
 From thy sweete smyling mother from above,
 Sprinckle her heart, and haughtie courage soften,
 That she may hearke to love, and reade this lesson often.
 (Pr.5.2–9)

Although Cupid is required to make Elizabeth more benevolent towards the author, the terms of his imagined intervention are also political and coercive. He is asked to repeal Elizabeth's 'use of awfull Maiestie' in a reversal of the Triumph of Chastity in which she deprived Cupid of *his* power, and of Belpheobe's Triumph — 'For with dredd Maiestie, and awfull yre, / She broke his wanton darts'. Though the next few lines avoid the possibility of a phallic attack since Cupid's only weapons will be 'drops of melting love' (a detail that may have inspired *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), the implied transformation of Elizabeth into the typical romance reader — private, passive, apt to be seduced, above all female — further detaches her from the role of 'awfull Maiestie'. Finally, the stanza suggests a motive for Elizabethan chastity that is less laudable than the usual panegyric allows, namely 'imperious *feare*' (*italics mine*).⁸⁵ Elizabeth has feared to be subject to Cupid, but Spenser implies that such apprehensions are themselves destructive, preventing the queen from playing the maternal role desired for her.

If Spenser could be thus explicit, we might wonder to what extent the queen was conscious of the desire that she submit to Cupid. In a manuscript miscellany collected by the courtier John Finer we find a lyric entitled 'Verses made by the queen when she was supposed to be in love with Monsieur' (c. 1586–90).⁸⁶ It reads as follows:

When I was fair and young, and favor graced me,
 Of many was I sought their mistress for to be.
 But I did scorn them all, and answered them therefore,
 'Go, go, go seek some otherwhere,
 Importune me no more.'
 How many weeping eyes I made to pine with woe;

⁸⁵ Kimberley Ann Coles argues that Amoret's fear of *eros* recalls the 'national process of mutually reinforced fear' created by the prospect of Elizabeth's marriage. See '“Perfect Hole”: Elizabeth I, Spenser and Chaste Productions', *English Literary Renaissance* 32 (2002), 31–61, at 55.

⁸⁶ The lyric does not exist in Elizabeth's own hand — it is reproduced here from a manuscript copy — and the title ascribed to it represents the intrusion of a second unknown hand into the poem. See the Bodleian Eibrary, University of Oxford, MS Rawlinson Poetical 85, fol. ir. On the other extant versions of this poem, some of which are also attributed to Elizabeth and some to the Earl of Oxford, see *Henry Stanford's Anthology: An Edition of Cambridge University Library Manuscript D.dy.yy*, ed. Steven W. May (New York and Eondon: Garland, 1988), pp. 329–31.

How many sighing hearts I have no skill to show.
 Yet I the prouder grew, and answered them therefore,
 'Go, go, go seek some otherwhere,
 Importune me no more.'
 Then spake fair Venus' son, that proud victorious boy,
 And said: 'Fine dame, since that you be so coy,
 I will so pluck your plumes that you shall say no more
 "Go, go, go seek some otherwhere,
 Importune me no more. "'
 When he had spake these words, such change grew in my breast
 That neither night nor day since that, I could take any rest.
 Then lo, I did repent that I had said before,
 Go, go, go seek some otherwhere,
 Importune me no more.
Finis
*Elizabetha Regina?*⁸⁷

The uncertain attribution of this poem (whose title ascribing it to Elizabeth has been crossed out) suggests two alternative scenarios: either it represents the male courtier's ventriloquization of Elizabeth or it demonstrates how she has internalized those conventions and worked within them to achieve a range of possible effects, from self-disclosure to calculated deception. Certainly, the lyric represents an iconoclastic attack on Elizabeth's image that might have satisfied the anger of a frustrated courtier.⁸⁸ For it presents a lovesick, ageing queen at a time when eternal beauty was an essential prerequisite of the Petrarchan mistress and a necessary legal fiction given the uncertainty of the English succession. The fact that the subject's repeated denials have led to a slackening of desire also contradicts Petrarchism, which assumes that the beloved's elusiveness heightens her attraction. Finally, by representing Elizabeth as subject to Cupid, the poem rewrites the Triumph of Chastity, which was, as we have seen, a central feature of her iconography.

If we accept Elizabeth's authorship, however, we find a further range of possibilities. Most obviously, the poem might proffer an insight into her private thoughts, perhaps her regret at having lost the affections of a favourite like Leicester, or having allowed the chance of marriage to Anjou to elude her?⁸⁹ The nostalgia for her own beauty that resounds in the line 'When I was fair and young' suggests a reappraisal of her own present desirability, perhaps brought on by the Anjou courtship in which the likelihood

⁸⁷ As reproduced in Elizabeth I, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Eeah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago and Eondon: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 304–5.

⁸⁸ For further examples, see Julia M. Walker, *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana* (Durham, NC, and Eondon: Duke University Press, 1998).

⁸⁹ Elizabeth is recorded as having angrily rebuked Sir Francis Knollys for his opposition to the marriage, saying: 'It was a fine way to show his attachment to her, who might desire, like others, to have children', as quoted by Anne Somerset, *Elizabeth I* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1991), p. 315.

of a young man's infatuation with the ageing queen was much discussed.⁹⁰ The fact that Elizabeth should use the figure of Cupid to explore her feelings might acknowledge the extent to which the success of Chastity over Cupid in the public sphere, through theatrical and poetic appropriations of the Triumph, has created her susceptibility to Cupid within the private sphere.

Perhaps more likely is that the image of Elizabeth as a lovelorn, desiring female was as politically astute and self-serving as her pose of militant chastity. During the Anjou courtship Elizabeth was sensitive to any questioning of her sincerity, possibly because she was sincere but certainly to make herself appear a willing partner to the Protestant cause in the Netherlands even as she delayed from engaging directly in it. Hence, she may have written the lyric and allowed it to circulate at court in order to create the impression of her lovesickness, not unlike the poem 'On Monsieur's Departure' also written at around this time. But perhaps most interesting is the possibility that Elizabeth was responding to the increasingly aggressive tone that characterized her male-authored encounters with Cupid, faking subjection in order to avoid having to endure it for real. In this context, the poem's slight alterations to the *Trionfo dell'Amore* are significant. For example, this is a scene of Cupid's revenge without any visible penetration or any reference to the phallic dart or firebrand.⁹¹ By contrast with the female protagonists of *Gismond of Saleme*, *Sappho and Phao* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the speaker's experience of desire remains vague and disembodied; regret and loneliness are more acutely felt than anything approximating lust. Finally, the gendered position of the queen within the poem is ambiguous, for she is both the Petrarchan speaker and the object of his gaze.

Thus, having used the Triumph of Chastity to fashion her encounters with Cupid across three decades, Elizabeth seems to have discovered towards the close of her reign the advantages of letting him win. Nor was she alone in this perception. Unconstrained by the political advantages of the Triumph of Chastity, female poets increasingly embraced Cupid's enmity in the Triumph of Love and adapted it for their own purposes. Among these, none explored the scenario with more enthusiasm or imagination than Lady Mary Wroth.

Displacing Male Desire: Cupid and Lady Mary Wroth

Wroth's sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (c. 1613) suggests some immediate similarities with 'When I was fair and young'. In both cases, erotic subjection becomes a stimulus to the creation of female subjectivity and authorship. Moreover, the

⁹⁰ Where John Stubbs' *Else Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf* (August 1579) partly got him into trouble was in its blunt scepticism that Anjou could find the queen attractive (p. 72).

⁹¹ The one exception to this is in the Cambridge MS, in which Cupid boasts: 'I will so wound thie hart', though his means of doing so is not described. See *Henry Stanford's Anthology*, no. 202, p. 129.

male beloved is marginalized and replaced as antagonist by Cupid. These similarities might be explained by Wroth's acquaintance with this specific poem in manuscript or printed form, but they also suggest the influence of a tradition of female Petrarchism, most established among Italian and French writers,⁹² whose devotees wrote from inside Petrarchism's masculinist bias in a manner that exposed or challenged its conventions. Among Mary B. Moore's list of such 'revisionary strategies' we find a number that relate directly to Wroth's adaptation of Petrarchism and the Petrarchan Cupid. These include

using self-reflexivity and deixis to exemplify and model females as authors and as subjects of speech, vision, writing, and desire; directly revising Petrarch's language to exclude or include elements related to gender and sex; alluding to and transforming myths that involve women ... revising conventional Petrarchan tropes and images to reveal or undercut implicit assumptions about gender.⁹³

But if Wroth could have learned these strategies from her Elizabethan predecessors, her relationship to Cupid is also specifically Jacobean.⁹⁴

Following the death of Elizabeth, the relationship between the elite woman and Cupid had undergone some significant changes. A famously virginal, unmarried queen had been replaced by Anna of Denmark, a royal wife and mother, whose court would tend to define female chastity in terms of marital love.⁹⁵ At the same time, the very limits of Anna's status as married consort roused her to become more culturally engaged and innovative:

[Having been] thoroughly marginalized in both the public and the personal sphere by James' ideology of patriarchal rule and his emotional ties to a series of homosexual favourites, she developed an oppositional role, manifested in her separate court, entourage, and patronage, her Roman Catholic proclivities, her pro-Spanish politics, and especially in

⁹² See Ann Rosalind Jones, *Else Currency of Eros: Womens Love Lyric in Europe, 1540–1620* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990). The possibility that Wroth was influenced by Louise Labe's (*Œuvres* (1555), specifically a débat poem featuring Cupid, is suggested by Anne Lake Prescott in 'Mary Wroth, Louise Labe and Cupid', *Sidney Journal* 15 (1997), 37-41-

⁹³ Dubrow, *Desiring Voices: Women Sonneteers and Petrarchism* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), pp. 12–13.

⁹⁴ On the way in which the performative female body at the Jacobean court influences Pamphilia's self-display, see Rebecca Lemon, 'Indecent Exposure in Mary Wroth', in *Women and Culture at the Courts of the Stuart Queens*, ed. Clare McManus (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 140–60.

⁹⁵ On the devaluing of female virginity at the Jacobean court and its effect on Wroth, see Margaret Anne McLaren, 'An Unknown Continent: Lady Mary Wroth's Forgotten Pastoral Drama, *Love's Victory*', in *Lise Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), pp. 276–94, at pp. 285–6.

the masques she commissioned, produced, helped create, and performed in.⁹⁶

The Jacobean masque would be fundamental in altering the relationship between early modern woman and Cupid, not just in the variety of Loves it imagined but in the expanded opportunities it allowed for aristocratic women to encounter Cupid.⁹⁷ Two masques in particular suggest this evolution.

In Ben Jonson's *A Challenge at Tilt* (1613), performed at Whitehall for the marriage of Robert Carr to Frances Howard, two nearly identical Cupids represent the interests of both bride and groom. Though we find his inveterate danger to women assumed in the First Cupid's warning: 'Beware, young ladies, of this impostor and mothers, look to your daughters and nieces, a false Cupid is abroad' (lines 20–1), the Second Cupid takes it upon himself to defend not only the bride's virtue but the superiority of women: 'FIRST CUPID: I serve the man, and the nobler creature. SECOND CUPID: But I the woman, and the purer, and therefore the worthier' (lines 5–6). Second Cupid then challenges the other to a tilt on the assumption that 'that love is most true and perfect that still waiteth on the woman and is the servant of that sex' (lines 68–70), and he is elevated from the status of Second Cupid to First when he appears as the challenger. In this respect, the masque represents a significant variation on Cupid's conventional role of proving female chastity by his enmity towards it.⁹⁸

Four years later, Robert White's *Cupid's Banishment* (performed at Greenwich on 4 May 1617) appropriates the Triumph of Chastity but uses it to express a remarkable range of female identities and interests. The masque was executed by the members of a girls' school, Ladies Hall, Deptford, before Queen Anna in the absence of James I, thereby establishing] ... a female court in opposition to the performances of the king's favourites'.⁹⁹ It was dedicated to, and partly conceived by, Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford; and it included the first female speech in a masque by Mistress Ann Watkins in the role of Fortune.¹⁰⁰ Although Cupid was still acted by a male, his banishment was performed by women, with a number of 'feminist' innovations. For example, the scene's phallic power was redistributed when the dancers appeared '*With darts in their hands to shew they had a dart could conquer CUPID*'. They then crowned him with Actaeon's

⁹⁶ Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 4–5.

⁹⁷ See Clare McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage: Anna of Denmark and Female Masoning in the Stuart Courts (1590–1619)* (Manchester University Press, 2002), and Sophie Tomlinson, *Women on Stage in Stuart Drama* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). For discussion of Henrietta Maria's use of the masque, see my Chapter 5.

⁹⁸ The masque's defence of female virtue may already have been ironic, given that Lady Frances had been married before, though David Lindley makes a persuasive case for its sincerity in 'Embarrassing Ben: The Masques for Frances Howard', *English Literary Renaissance* 16 (1986), 343–59, at 349–50.

⁹⁹ Clare McManus, 'Memorialising Anna of Denmark's Court: *Cupid's Banishment* at Greenwich Palace', in McManus, *Women and Culture at the Courts of the Stuart Queens*, pp. 81–99, at p. 89.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

horns, thus condemning his transgression into a chaste, female court, before forcing him off the stage: *After many pretty figures they chase[d] him forth into the woods by violence and banish[ed] him that presence*’ (SD 218). Not only does this banishment of Cupid display the young women’s chastity and their education through the ‘pretty figures’ of the dance, it also redeems female performance, for *Cupid’s Banishment* is explicitly distinguished from the sexually provocative entertainments endorsed by Cupid (lines 41–6) and from the scandal that had previously attached to Queen Anna’s own masquing.¹⁰¹

The circumstances of Mary Wroth’s appropriation of Cupid can thus be seen as propitious. Not only had the court culture to which she belonged opened up new possibilities for female encounters with Cupid, Wroth had herself participated in Jonson’s *Masque of Blackness* (1605) and *Masque of Beauty* (1608), the latter featuring Cupids as ‘chaste loves’.¹⁰² Moreover, as a noblewoman rather than a queen, Wroth had greater freedom to challenge contemporary definitions of female chastity and desire. She could eschew the Triumph of Chastity, with its justification of female rule, in favour of the Triumph of Love which is cited throughout her work, from the title of her play, *Love’s Victory*, to the opening imagery of *Pamphilia*, to specific lines: ‘[Love] captive leads mee prisoner, bound, unfree’ (P16, line 4). Furthermore, following her withdrawal from court life (perhaps as a result of the disgrace incurred by her bearing two illegitimate children to her married cousin, William Herbert),¹⁰³ Wroth had the critical distance and perhaps the motive to reinvent her relationship to Love, setting Cupid up as an enemy in order to defend her sexual reputation.

The following discussion focuses on *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* and *Love’s Victory* to explore how Wroth manipulates Cupid in order to redefine female chastity and desire.¹⁰⁴ Where the sonnets invoke different versions of this deity, *Love’s Victory* focuses on the Petrarchan Cupid, disseminating possible responses to his enmity among the female characters. In both cases, the Elizabethan Triumph of Chastity is adapted to encompass a new range of scenarios including desires that cannot be ratified by marriage and that, if they are not to be condemned as lust, are not straightforwardly chaste either. This involves a complex relationship with Cupid, characterized by identifica-

¹⁰¹ See Tomlinson, *Women on Stage in Stuart Drama*, p. 43.

¹⁰² On Wroth’s inclusion of masques in her own writing, including a masque of Cupid and Honour in the *Urania*, see Mary Wroth, *Use Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, ed. Josephine Roberts (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), p. 13, and Tomlinson, *Women on Stage in Stuart Drama*, pp. 95–9.

¹⁰³ On Wroth’s biography, see Wroth, *Tire Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, pp. 3–40, at p. 26.

¹⁰⁴ For discussion of Venus and Cupid in the *Urania*, see Josephine Roberts, ‘Deciphering Women’s Pastoral: Coded Language in Wroth’s *Love’s Victory*’, in *Representing Women in Renaissance England*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1997), pp. 1–3–74, at pp. 167–8, and Marion Wynne-Davies, ‘The Queen’s Masque: Renaissance Women and the Seventeenth-Century Court Masque’, in *Gloriana’s Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance*, ed. S. P. Cerasano and M. Wynne-Davies (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 79–104, at pp. 95–9.

tion as well as repudiation, but ending with the female protagonist herself becoming a figure of Desire.

Pamphilia to Amphilanthus

In the opening poem of Wroth's sonnet sequence, Pamphilia has a dream in which Venus appears in a chariot with Cupid at her feet, adding fire to burning hearts. The goddess holds towards Pamphilia one hart more flaming than the rest' (line 9) and commands Cupid to enclose it in her bosom:

Hee her obay'd, and mártir'd my poore hart,
I, waking hop'd as dreames itt would depart
Yet since: O mee: a lover I have binn. (Pi, lines 12–14)

The inception of Pamphilia's desire is also the moment when she became a writer and, through its echoes of Dante and Petrarch, this opening conveys authority upon Wroth's poetic efforts.¹⁰⁵ Yet the alterations Wroth has made to her Italian predecessors also emphasize the agency of Venus rather than of Cupid. For example, the description of the chariot of Love, as perceived by a dreaming lover/poet, naturally recalls the *Trionfo dell'Amore*, but whereas Petrarch's Cupid rides the chariot alone, brandishing his murderous arrow,¹⁰⁶ Wroth's Cupid sits passively at his mother's feet. Similarly, the image of Venus holding the burning heart recalls *La Vita Nuova*, except that the Dantean Amor is 'a lordly man' who acts alone, insisting 'Ego dominus tuus' ('I am thy master').¹⁰⁷ Interestingly, however, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* does not sustain this redistribution of power. Rather, Venus' authority is almost immediately undercut, as both the goddess's power to affect the love affair and the benefit of her patronage are called into question.

In a song halfway through the sequence (P58), Pamphilia urges Venus to assert herself: 'Remember then you ar the Goddess of desire' (line 5):

¹⁰⁵ For further discussion of this opening sonnet and the way in which it positions Wroth in relation to Petrarchism, see Fienberg, 'Mary Wroth and the Invention of Female Poetic Subjectivity', pp. 184–5; Mary Moore, 'The Labyrinth as Style in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*', *Studies in English Literature* 38 (1998), 109–25, at 113–14; and Lemon, 'Indecent Exposure in Mary Wroth', pp. 146–8.

¹⁰⁶ 'There sawe I a boye on a fyre chayre on hyghte / Drawen with foure coursers all mylke whight / Wyth bowe in hande and arrows sharpe and keene', *Lise Triumph of Love*, trans. Carnicelli, *Lord Morley's 'Tryumphes'*, pp. 80–1, lines 33–5.

¹⁰⁷ *Dante's Vita Nuova*, trans. Musa, pp. 5–6. This expansion of Venus' role is also a feature of *Love's Victory*, where again it represents a rewriting of its prestigious, male source. In the prologue to Tasso's *Aminta* (1573–4, pub. 1580), the love-god enters alone, intending to prove his superiority to Venus: 'For not to her, but me allotted were / The ever awfull brande, and goulden bowe' (lines 22–3), and Venus' appearance on stage is limited to the epilogue. In *Love's Victory*, by contrast, Venus contrives the revenge action from the beginning, dominates their shared scenes, and insists on sole authorship of the joyful conclusion.

Command that wayward child your sonn to grant your right,
 And that his bowe, and shafts hee yeeld to your fayre sight
 To you who have the eyes of joye the hart of love,
 And then new hopes may spring, that I may pittie move:
 (lines 13–16)

The crucial action of the Elizabethan *Trionfo della Pudicizia* — Cupid’s voluntary relinquishing of his bow and arrows — will be reperformed with Venus in the role of Chastity, thereby ensuring the female lover’s satisfaction in love. In so doing, Wroth also adapts the Petrarchan sonnet in which the male lover implores Cupid to fire at his mistress to win him ‘pitty’. Yet the weakness that Pamphilia perceives in Venus threatens this innovation, allowing the Triumph to fall back into Cupid’s hands:

Lett him nott triumph that hee can both hurt, and save,
 And more brag that to you your self a wound hee gave.
 Rule him, or what shall I expect of good to see
 Since hee that hurt you, hee alas may murder mee.
 (Lines 17–20)

Venus’ inability to control Cupid reflects Pamphilia’s own plight in being unable to affect the actions of Amphilanthus. Her susceptibility to Cupid’s arrow recalls the goddess’s tainted sexual reputation, from which Pamphilia is also eager to distance herself. Hence, in the corona, she condemns ‘Venus follyes’ and switches her allegiance to Cupid:

O Cupid! lett thy mother know her shame
 ’Tis time for her to leave this youthfull flame
 Which doth dishoner her, is ages blame,
 And takes away the greatnes of thy name;
 Thou God of Love, she only Queene of lust,
 Yett strives by weakning thee, to bee unjust.
 (P95, lines 9–14)

Curiously, then, it is Cupid rather than Venus whom Pamphilia invokes to defend her desire, but which Cupid?¹⁰⁸

Most strongly identified with the sonnet sequence are the Petrarchan and Anacreontic Cupids: the one a blind, tyrannical lord to whom the lover concedes his subjection;

¹⁰⁸ I concur here with Lewalski’s emphasis on a range of Cupids as opposed to Beilin and Roberts, who focus on two: for Beilin he is earthly versus divine love, Eros and Anteros; for Roberts, he is the Anacreontic versus the medieval ‘King Cupid’. See Lewalski, *Writing Women*, p. 258; Elaine Beilin, “‘The Onely Perfect Vertue’: Constancy in Mary Wroth’s *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*’, *Spenser Studies* 2 (1981), 229–45, and Roberts in a paper given at the 1978 MLA Convention, referred to by Beilin, fn. 13.

the other a childish, even infantile archer who must be approached with blandishments and threats. Their manipulation by Wroth is initially significant as an allusion to her Sidneian inheritance. Some of the lines addressing Cupid in *Pamphilia* could easily have been written by her uncle, Philip, or her father, Robert, and offer an important rejoinder to the assumption that, inevitably, 'the speaker's relation to Cupid shifts when the sonneteer is a lady'.¹⁰⁹ In fact, Pamphilia reproaches Cupid with the same direct, ostentatiously reasonable tone as Astrophil: 'Then Love butt play thy part' (P3, line 1); 'Love leave to urge, thou know'st thou hast the hand' (P8, line 1). Astrophil's mockery of Cupid's 'boyish' ways in *Astrophil and Stella* 11¹¹⁰ is also echoed in Wroth's sonnet 16: 'T fly / Thy babish trickes, and freedome doe profess' (lines 11–2), as is Astrophil's characteristic moral collapse in the last two lines: 'But O my hurt, makes my lost hart confess / I love, and must: so farwell liberty' (lines 13–14; comparers 5).

These few examples suggest not only how Wroth might use such allusions to legitimise her work as 'Sidneian',¹¹¹ but also how the antagonism with Cupid provokes a more assertive voice in the female speaker. More specifically, it empowers her to define her own passion through repudiation. For example, the blind Cupid serves Pamphilia's rejection of a purely sensual, irrational love. When she concedes 'Your charmes I obay, butt love nott want of eyes' (P8, line 14), she transfers into direct speech that which was attributed to Stella in AS 62: 'That love she did, but loved a love not blind' (line 6). In P72, Pamphilia describes how she became enslaved by desire through the promptings of Folly, and her suffering is that of the archetypal Petrarchan lover (lines 9–12), yet at the end she is able to distance herself: 'When love came blindfold, and did chaleng mee / Indeed I lov'd butt wanton boy nott hee' (lines 13–14).

Elsewhere, we can see Wroth adapting the profane Cupid in order to circumscribe the poems' eroticism. For example, there is in her Anacreontic sonnets none of that playful intimacy (and physical possessiveness) that Astrophil indulges when Cupid nestles against Stella's breast, feeds on her lips, etc. Wroth also eschews the possibility of using this relationship to construct a blazon — apart from a few references to the power of his eyes, Amphilanthus is physically absent from the sequence. Rather, the likeness between Cupid and the male beloved is used critically, to demonstrate Amphilanthus' flaws such as deceitfulness, fickleness (P74) and a tendency to 'wanton play' (P95, line 6). Finally, we might observe that the encounters between Cupid and Pamphilia are distinctly non-phallic. Wroth prefers an image of the female martyr's heart burned rather than pierced by Cupid's dart in the opening sonnet and, with a

¹⁰⁹ Naomi J. Miller, 'Rewriting Lyric Fictions: The Role of the Lady in Lady Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*', in Haselkorn and Travitsky, *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print*, pp. 295–310, at p. 298.

¹¹⁰ *Astrophil and Stella*, reproduced from *Sir Philip Sidney: The Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford University Press, 1989, repr. 2002); hereafter *AS*.

¹¹¹ On the empowering nature of the Sidney connection, see Mary Ellen Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 20–2.

few exceptions,¹¹² she avoids the image of the female body as penetrated by Cupid's arrow, perhaps because it eroticizes that body but certainly because of how it would situate Pamphilia as a subject.

Having used the Petrarchan and Anacreontic Cupids in a largely negative fashion, to demonstrate what her desire is not, Pamphilia switches to a more positive approach and a different Cupid. Indeed, she now blames herself for having earlier misrepresented him:

I curse that thought, and hand which that first fram'd
For which by thee I ame most justly blam'd,
Butt now that hand shall guided bee aright (P76, lines 9–11)

Tacitly acknowledging that Cupid is a function of her art, Pamphilia is free to alter her conception of that deity and thus redeem her own desire. The fact that she offers him 'a crowne unto [his] endlesse prayse' (P76, line 12) signals the transition from the Petrarchan/Anacreontic Cupid who wields his bow and arrows in spite to the weaponless, laurel-bound god, described as *Amor virtutis* in Alciato's *Emblemata* and as *Amor di virtu* in Ripa's *Iconologia*. Love's subsequent identification with light, reason and virtue all suggest the Neoplatonic Eros, while the references to him as a lord of love (P89), presiding over a court (P79) recall the medieval religion of love.¹¹³ Specifically Christian allusions also cluster around this Cupid, who is described as a 'Prophet' (P81, line 14), and whose love is a purifying flame 'Which sinne abolisheth, and doth impart / Salves to all feare' (lines 6–7). As Elaine Beilin observes: 'The worship of Cupid, so foolish in the earlier sonneteer, now assumes the importance of true faith' (237).

And yet, Wroth might have gone further to differentiate this divine Cupid from the Petrarchan deity. For example, she imagines him as angry and vengeful at having been maligned (P76). She sees him armed him with an arrow that pierces the heart and makes it burn, though now with divine fire (P80). She even addresses him as 'Cupid' and alludes to his being blind (P81, P83). Hence, we are prepared for Pamphilia's fall back into the labyrinth and for her reversion to the Petrarchan Cupid (P92), not simply because the latter is too expressive of her own 'blind' desire to be repudiated but because the corona's celebration of Cupid's 'chaste art' is so transparently self-serving (P81, line 8). Wroth inserts herself into the male poetic tradition by identifying Cupid as the Muse who inspires and authorizes her depiction of love (P83, lines 9–12), just as he had done for Ovid and Chaucer. In emphasizing his '*chaste art*' (P81, line 8),

¹¹² These are the 'sweet Sylvia song' (P92) in which Cupid takes revenge on the nymphs who mock him by 'shooting of his murderous dart' (line 17) and an unpublished sonnet in the Folger manuscript (F5) that describes Cupid's 'sharp wounds, and cruell smarts' (line 2). Neither poem relates specifically to Pamphilia.

¹¹³ See Beilin, ' "The Onely Perfect Vertue" ', 236–8, and W. A. Neilson, *The Origins and Sources of the Court of Love*, p. 55.

she endorses her own claim to chastity, insisting that it is no longer incompatible with the self-exposure and public speech required of the female poet.

In the end, Pamphilia finds it impossible to align herself with any particular Cupid. Yet this may ultimately be Wroth's point: he enables Pamphilia's self-definition by providing alternately a figure of identification and of repudiation, until she can signify her own desire, at which point she has no need of Cupid. This has been a possibility anticipated from the start of the sequence. Although the opening sonnet defines Pamphilia as singularly lacking in agency, it nevertheless focuses attention on her as a sign of love: 'Yet since: O mee: a lover I have binn'. Rather than this inception of desire being defined by loss, we are told that Venus placed a burning heart inside her bosom, thereby imbuing her with passion. A more extended version of this conceit is offered by P48, in which Pamphilia insists that she has become 'that hartles trunk of loves depart' but gives the impression of her capacity to be filled with and thus to 'embody' love:

If ever love had force in humane brest?
If ever hee could move in pensive hart?
Or if that hee such powre could butt impart
To breed those flames whose heat brings joys unrest.
Then looke on mee; I ame to thes adrest,
I, ame the soule that feeles the greatest smart;
I, ame that hartles trunk of loves depart
And I, that one, by love, and grieve oprest;
None ever felt the truth of loves great miss
Of eyes, till I deprived was of bliss;
For had hee scene, hee must have pittie show'd;
I should nott have bin made this stage of woe
Wher sad disasters have theyr open showe
O noe, more pittie hee had sure beestow'd.

Although Pamphilia is once again the passive victim of Cupid, the spectacle she makes (even as she regrets such theatricality)¹¹⁴ transforms her into a superlative: 'I, ame the soule that feeles the greatest smart'. She may still prove the existence of Cupid — he must be blind because if he had eyes he would pity the miserable sight of her — but she also displaces him in a poem that uses the first person more than any other in the sequence,¹¹⁵ suggesting that the power of love is better demonstrated by looking on Pamphilia than on Cupid. Similarly, in P55, Pamphilia appropriates other Cupidean functions. Wroth may be punning on her own lover's name in the line 'Then love I *will* till I butt ashes prove' (line 14), but Pamphilia also implies that she loves from her own 'will', that she chooses to desire irrespective of Cupid. Moreover, the sonnet

¹¹⁴ See Lemon, 'Indecent Exposure', p. 156.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

concludes with her name, signifying not only her authorship of the poem but that this is the last word about love ('Pamphilia' means 'all-loving').¹¹⁶

In the final poem, Pamphilia abandons Venus and Cupid altogether: 'Leave the discourse of Venus and her son / To young beginners' (P103, lines 9–10). This was a standard form of erotic renunciation: in Wyatt's 'Farewell, Love', for example, the speaker tells Cupid to 'go trouble younger hearts' (line 9). However, Pamphilia uses it to reject Petrarchan vacillation, fixing instead on a single, alternative image of Love which is Constancy,¹¹⁷ and embodying it for herself. No longer defined by her subjection to Amphilanthus or to Venus and Cupid, Pamphilia makes herself the focus of a new erotic mythology.¹¹⁸

Love's Victory

By contrast with *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, in which Wroth deploys a wide range of Cupids to define her experience of love, in *Love's Victory* (c. 1621) Cupid is fixed as the blind, Petrarchan deity who dictates the passions and the ensuing relationships of his mortal subjects. Now it is the mortals who represent different kinds of love and refractions of Cupid's power: 'They your images do prove, / In them may you see great Love' (4.2.27–8). This approach might suggest another of Wroth's debts to Philip Sidney — in the *Arcadia*, the protagonists represent a 'dumbshow of Cupid's kingdom' — but it also recalls the form of Cupidean tragedy, as discussed in Chapter 2, to which the play bears an intriguing resemblance. For example, it begins with Cupid's neglect, and with Venus urging him to demonstrate his power by making the mortals suffer (1.1.1–19). Subsequently, he uses for his revenge a villain who shares his own attributes and is motivated by frustrated desire. Finally, Cupid's surprising hatred of lovers is manifest in the apparent suicides of Musella and Philisses: 'Love hath now found means to kill' (5.7.4).

But if the play initially develops along the lines of a Cupidean tragedy, it swerves away from the tragic conclusion through the women's ability to redefine and thereby repudiate Cupid. This is most explicitly the case when Venus intervenes to prevent the lovers' deaths,¹¹⁹ but it is also apparent in the strategies towards Cupid adopted by Silvesta and Musella. As in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Faerie Queene*,

¹¹⁶ See Roberts, 'The Biographical Problem of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 1 (spring 1982), 43–53, at 44.

¹¹⁷ For further discussion of the theme of constancy in the sequence, see Beilin, '“The Onely Perfect Vertue”', Lewalski, *Writing Women*, pp. 262–3, and Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, p. 154.

¹¹⁸ Ben Jonson singled out Wroth's ability to combine the roles of Cupid and Venus in 'A Sonnet to the Noble Lady, the Lady Mary Wroth' in *Use Underwood* (pub. 1640), repr. in *Ben Jonson: Poems*, ed. Ian Donaldson (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 175.

¹¹⁹ This is attributed to Venus by the goddess herself ('Lovers be not amazed! This is my deed' (5.7.67)), and by Silvesta: 'Venus the praise must have ...' (lines 93–6). For further discussion of Venus' role, see Lewalski, 'Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory* and Pastoral Tragicomedy', in Miller and Waller, *Reading Mary Wroth*, pp. 88–108, at p. 89, and Roberts, 'Deciphering Women's Pastoral', 172–3.

the erotic submission of one is partly dictated by the chastity of the other, except that here the chaste figure works towards the happiness of her 'sister', facilitating the satisfaction of love through the public, lawful means of marriage.

Unlike Pamphilia, Musella does not find desire a stimulus to selfexpression or poetic creativity. She reveals her love only to Silvesta: 'For sooner should my heart with silence break / Than any else should hear me thus much say / But you, who I know will not me betray' (3.1.46–8). This reticence in acknowledging her passion is partly a reflection of Musella's inability to act upon it — parental authority will determine her choice of marriage partner¹²⁰ — and there is a consensus among the shepherds and shepherdesses that it is inappropriate and unseemly for a woman to initiate courtship (3.1.78–9). But Musella's introversion is also a response to Cupid. From the start of the play, Venus has urged her son to ruin love affairs by exploiting his particular insight: 'Thou shalt discern their hearts' (1.1.11), a characteristic reiterated by Cupid's Priests: 'He your secret thoughts can spy, / Being hid else from each eye' (2.3.9–10). Musella's anxiety is ultimately justified when Areas publishes the rumour that she 'wantonly / Did seek Philisses's love' (5.5.128–9), Areas being an obvious cipher for Cupid. Though this parallel seems to have gone unnoticed by critics, it is easily explained by Wroth's debt to the pastoral episodes in the *Arcadia*. As we saw in Chapter 1, the shepherd Dicus identifies Cupid as the illegitimate son of Argus, who retains his father's features of a 'thousand eyes ... winking wily shifts' and 'long large ears, where never rumour dies'. This genealogy was acknowledged by Florio as Sidney's own invention, and it seems highly unlikely that Wroth would have chosen the name Areas' for a villain characterized not just by his pleasure in spreading rumours but by his ability to see into Musella's heart without being aware of the *Arcadian* precedent. Furthermore, Areas is repeatedly described in Cupidean terms. Where Venus urges Cupid to 'Shun no great cross that may their crosses breed' (i.i.19–20), Areas is presented as having a history of 'lov[ing] crossbaits in love' (5.2.29). In defending himself against this charge, he insists 'I have left that foul error in my youth' (line 39), perhaps an ironic allusion to the fact that Cupid was eternally young. But most suggestive is the Mother's claim that Areas has 'plotted ... with skilful art, / To ruin me and, living, eat my heart' (5.5.126–7). 'Skilful art' reminds us again of Cupid, condemned for his authorship of the sadistic masque in Spenser's House of Busirane. Moreover, the image of the Mother's heart being eaten recalls Cupid's voracity in *Gismond of Sáleme*, *Tancred and Gismund* and *The Mad Lover*.

Musella is, then, doubly the victim of Cupid, in that she suffers an inconvenient desire for Philisses and is defamed for her passion by Areas. What she needs is a figure of Chastity, like Britomart for Amoret, who might redeem her. But although she turns to Silvesta to fulfil this role, the latter's commitment to chastity is less than

¹²⁰ There are obvious biographical echoes here, with Musella's fate alluding not only to Wroth's enforced marriage and affair with her cousin, but also to Philip Sidney's thwarted passion for Penelope Rich. See Carolyn Ruth Swift, 'Feminine Self-Definition in Lady Mary Wroth's *Love's Vittorie*', *English Literary Renaissance* 19 (1989), 171–88, at 175–6.

straightforward. Her decision to abandon Venus in favour of Diana (1.2.84–9) is the result of an unreciprocated desire for Philisses, rendering her as much a victim of Cupid as Musella. And yet, when she wants to distance herself from her Venetian past, she is able to manipulate the idea of Cupid:

All virtue hates his kingdom's wantonness:
His crown, desires; his sceptre, idleness;
His wounds, hot fires are; his help's like frost,
Glad to hurt but never heals; thinks time lost
If any gain their long-sought joy with bliss;
And this the government of folly is. (1.2.103–8)

Since her passion for Philisses (and her rejection by him) is already well known, Silvesta needs to redeem her sexual reputation. Part of the way in which she does this is to construct an unambiguously immoral Cupid onto which she can deflect her desires (thereby rewriting the 'fair vestal' scene in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). At the same time, she claims that Cupid only fires his arrows at those who defy him (lines 101–2), thereby transforming her victimization into an acknowledgement of her virtue. Thus, despite the fact that her decision to remain chaste was based on the impossibility of satisfying her desire, she takes her seat in the Triumph of Chastity (lines 118–20).

But if Silvesta potentially undermines the purity of the Triumph through her own erotic history, exposing it as a useful fiction, she also undoes the distinctions it was intended to uphold through her advocacy of chaste desire'. This is initially viewed as a means of avoiding victimisation by Cupid: 'For he doth seek to kindle flames of fire, / But never thinks to quench a chaste desire' (1.2.99–100). As we saw in the discussion of Cupidean tragedy, virginity may provoke too violent a revenge from that deity; some acknowledgement of passion may be safer. At the same time, it is Silvesta's public insistence on the possibility of chaste desire' that threatens to disarm Cupid whose danger to women's reputations depends on a wider cultural assumption that all female desire is inherently 'wanton', that Musella could not but pursue Philisses 'wantonly'.

It is this assumption that 'chaste' and 'desire' might work together that shapes Silvesta's subsequent role in *Love's Victory*. Rather than attempt to convert Musella to a virginal life, she warns her against unrequited passion (3.1.30) but becomes the ally of her illicit love. Thus, although she remains the acolyte of Diana, she acts on behalf of Venus and is even described as the latter's 'instrument ordained' (5.7.71). This identification is reinforced by the fact that in 4.2, Venus takes pity on the lovers and implores Cupid to cease tormenting them with his arrows: 'O, hold thy hand' (line 3), just as Silvesta interrupts the suicide scene with the same cry of 'O, hold your hands!' (5.4.57). Moreover, Venus' disinclination to 'suffer your dear hearts to bleed' (5.7.68) is acted upon by Silvesta, who has literally prevented bloodshed by replacing the dagger with a sleeping-potion. In her new role as Chaste Venus, Silvesta not only furthers the relationship of Musella and Philisses but acts as its guarantor:

musella: ... two hearts ... will serve
 You ever with so true and constant love
 Your chastity itself shall it approve.
 siLvesta: I do believe it, for in so much worth
 As lives in you, virtue must needs spring forth. (3.1.92–6)

By the end of the play, she is collapsing a range of different loves together under the adjective ‘chaste’, addressing first Musella and Philisses and then the Forester:

Chaste love relieved you, in chaste love still live,
 And each to other, true affections give.
 For you, kind Forester, my chaste love take,
 And know I grieve now only for your sake.
Exit (5.7.97–100)

It is not clear whether the ‘chaste love’ that relieved the couple is Silvesta herself or their own erotic fidelity, but this ambiguous construction obscures the distinctions between them, implying that Silvesta might embody chaste love’ through marriage as through virginity. Thus, when she turns to the Forester, the meaning of her own ‘chaste love’ remains uncertain. Is it that same purified passion offered by the Forester who ‘waste[s] in chastest fire’ (1.2.237) and offers to die for her? Or have Silvesta’s actions as Venus’ agent, but also her own redemption of desire, allowed for the possibility she might marry?

In the end, Silvesta remains true to her virginal chastity, excluding herself from the final match-making and from Venus’ triumphal celebrations. In this respect, the play preserves its initial juxtaposition of Musella and Silvesta — one the figure of erotic desire that must guard itself from discovery, the other chastity that has defeated Cupid and obtained a degree of invulnerability. But if we are reminded of the female doubles of *The Faerie Queene* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* here, we are also made aware of their difference. Where Belpheobe and Amoret, the ‘fair vestal’ and Titania, serve to praise but also to punish a female monarch’s impenetrability, in Wroth’s hands such doubling represents mutual female empowerment and undermines the binary of virginity/sexual abjection. Silvesta’s choice to remain single is respected, but equally she is afforded the possibility of married ‘chaste desire’. Furthermore, her enabling of Musella’s passion stands as a testament to its virtue, directly contradicting its Cupidean construction. In this fashion, Wroth has written a ‘Love’s Victory’ that manages to reconcile the *Trionfo della Pudicizia* and the *Trionfo dell’Amore* to effect a genuine innovation in the literary, erotic roles available to women.

Hence, we have seen that, although Cupid’s enmity could produce effects of sexual humiliation and repression in his female victims, it might also be manipulated to their advantage. This is a pattern that we will find repeated in the following chapter, where Cupid threatens various types of emasculation to the adult male lover but also extends his liberty in thrilling and illicit ways.

Chapter 4: Cupid and the Boy — the Pleasure and Pain of Boy-love

On each side her
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-coloured fans whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool, And what they undid did.
(*Antony and Cleopatra*, 2.2.208—12)

Although Cupid's imposition of desire is often a means of asserting patriarchal authority over powerful and transgressive women, thus tacitly identifying him with the adult male, he was also an archetype for the beautiful boy in early modern culture. This rendered him an object of pleasure for both men and women, capable of arousing a remarkable range of desires while blurring the distinctions between them.

Immediately, we encounter the problem of setting an age on the early modern boy.¹ This seems normally to have been between ten and eighteen, but he could be as young as three or as old as late-twenties, reflecting the use of 'boy' as a derogatory term, connoting social, moral or intellectual inferiority.² Cupid's boyhood is further complicated by iconographie and literary traditions that fix him at different ages — in Ovid and Petrarch he is generally an adolescent; in Anacreontic poetry, a toddler or young child — and by early modern poets' vacillation between these traditions. For example, in *Astrophil and Stella* 73 'Love still a boy, and oft a wanton is' (line 1), 'wanton' being used to describe the child's cruelty and rebelliousness whilst also carrying its adult meaning of 'lascivious, unchaste, lewd' (*OED* ta, 4a, 2). In sonnet 12, however, he is more like an infant, given that he feeds on 'pap ... well sugared' (line 5) and, in sonnet 17, 'crows' with inarticulate delight at a new toy (line 12).

If this variability in Cupid's age could be sustained by the sonnet sequence, the performance of a play like Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1586) necessarily resolved ambiguity through its casting. Nevertheless, the age range of the boy actor allowed for differences between productions if not within a single performance. Boy players seem

¹ On the nature of early modern boyhood, see Kate Chedgzoy, 'Shakespeare in the Company of Boys', *Shakespeare and Childhood*, ed. Chedgzoy, Susanne Greenhalgh and Robert Shaughnessy (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 184–200. For a more general survey, see Germaine Greer, *The Boy* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003).

² See Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England 1560–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 25ff, 102.

usually to have been nine to fourteen years old, but could also be younger.³ For example, one member of Paul's Boys joined at the age of six, and in Lady Rachel Fane's May masque of 1627 (written for private performance and featuring Cupid) the youngest male actor was five.⁴ In general, the actions required of Cupid suggest this was a role for the youngest member of both boys' and adults' companies. In *Sappho and Phao* and *Dido* he must be picked up by another boy actor and played with on his lap. In *Gallathea*, he insists that 'Cupid, though he be a child, is no baby' (2.2.6),⁵ perhaps implying his diminutive appearance in comparison with the boys playing Venus and Diana. In other instances, his childishness may have been deployed to satirical effect. As a recent editor of Edward Sharpham's comedy *Cupid's Whirligig* has argued, the fact that a childish Cupid directs the action emphasizes 'the ridiculous depravity of the whole adult world in which supposedly mature people are driven by urges they can neither control nor understand'.⁶

But even if we could be specific about the age early modern authors assigned to Cupid, or how old he appeared on stage (an effect of costume and gesture, as well as contrast with the other players), it may have been in the interests of contemporary poets and dramatists to blur the distinctions between Cupid as infant, young child, pre-adolescent and adolescent in order to expand the range of desires he was able to elicit. Pederastie relationships seem to have been one of the most basic (and socially acceptable) models for 'homosexual' behaviour in early modern Europe.⁷ But although we tend to assume that the boy concerned was at least pubescent, he may often have been significantly younger. In the six prosecutions for sodomy recorded in England's Home County Assizes for 1559 to 1602 the boys' ages, where included, are specified as five, eight and ten.⁸ Though their victims' being 'underage' may be one of the reasons why these cases came to court, the evidence also points to the supposed desirability of the childish boy. In a fictional dialogue by the Venetian scholar Antonio Rocco,

³ See Lucy Munro, 'Coriolanus and the Little Eyases: The Boyhood of Shakespeare's Hero', in Chedgzoy *et al.*, *Shakespeare and Childhood*, pp. 80–95, 84.

⁴ See Shen Lin, 'How Old Were the Children of Paul's?', *Theatre Notebook* 45 (1991), 121–31, at 124. For further discussion of the Fane masque and Cupid's role in it see Chedgzoy, 'Playing with Cupid'.

⁵ John Lyly, *Gallathea and Midas*, ed. Anne Begor Lancashire (London: Edward Arnold, 1969). In Spenser's *Amoretti*, Anacreontics no. 1, the poet refers to Cupid as 'The blynd boy, Venus baby' (line 2).

⁶ Christopher Gordon Petter (ed.), *A Critical Old Spelling Edition of Ere Works of Edward Sharpham* (New York and London: Garland, 1986), p. 410.

⁷ See Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: Tire Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 58. For further discussion of the normalcy of this relationship in early modern England, see Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982); Mario DiGangi, *Tire Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford University Press, 1992).

⁸ Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 51.

L'Alcibiade fanciullo a scola (*Young Alcibiades Goes to School*, c. 1630 MS, pub. 1652), the ideal age for the boy as sexual partner begins at nine but Filotimo explains that 'there is no fixed rule, since some retain their boyishness longer, and others fade early. Just as some full, round, little boys excite you from infancy on.'⁹

This chapter begins by examining the sexualization of Cupid as a beautiful boy, first in Italian Renaissance art, and then on the early modern stage through the figure of the boy actor. Whilst he continues to perform a punitive function in English culture, critiquing excessive masculine desire in plays such as *The Nice Valour*, *Soliman and Perseda* and *Cupid's Whirligig*, the infantile Cupid also enables a pleasurable fantasy of maternal nurture for the adult male that can be experienced through the sonnet sequences of Sidney and Greville but is also part of the complex eroticism of *Dido*, *Queen of Carthage* and *Sappho and Phao*.

Cupid as Beautiful Boy

Cupid plays an important role in the signification of beauty in early modern culture. He is a witness to female attractiveness when he mistakes the sonneteer's beloved for Venus,¹⁰ (in 'Cupid and Psyche' this is a mass delusion), but his own physical beauty also translates into that of a woman. For example, Stella's lustre depends on the presence of Cupid in her face, 'Playing and shining in each outward part' (*AS* 11, line 13). In Lyly's *Campaspe*, the heroine is said to have won her beauty in a cardgame where Cupid threw down 'The coral of his lip, the rose / Growing on's cheek ... The crystal of his brow, / And then the dimple of his chin'.¹¹ More obviously patterned on Cupid was the beauty of the early modern boy. Drawing upon classical precedents such as the *Metamorphoses*, in which Adonis is likened to naked Cupid or the *Greek Anthology* in which this simile is extended to a range of nubile boys,¹² Sidney's *Arcadia* praises Pyrocles for possessing 'a Mars's heart in a Cupid's body'.¹³

Intrinsic to this Cupidean beauty and its capacity to inflame desire was a submissive quality, partly based on physical immaturity. In Jonson's poem 'Her Man described by her own Dictamen', Charis imagines a lover who resembles Cupid, not only in the shape of the eyebrows and the mouth but in his lack of a beard: 'Chin, as woolly as the Peach; / And his lip should kissing teach, / Till he cherish'd too much beard, / And make *Love* or me afeard' (lines 21–4). Sex with such a male would be pleasure without

⁹ Translated from the Italian by Michael Rocke in *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 95.

¹⁰ See, for example, Spenser's *Amoretti*, Anacreontics no. 3.

¹¹ Lyly, *Campaspe*, 3.5.75–81.

¹² 'His face was such as spyght / Must needes have prayd. For such he was in all condicions right, / As are the naked Cupids that in tables picturd bee', Ovid, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: Tise Arthur Golding Translation*, ed. John Frederick Nims (London and New York: Macmillan, 1965), Book 10, lines 525–7. See the epigrams by Aesculapius and Meleager in *Tise Greek Anthology*, vol. iv, pp. 56–7 and 75–8.

¹³ Sidney, *Tise Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, ed. Evans, p. 103.

fear of pregnancy since male facial hair was thought of as a by-product of semen and was thence a sign of ‘the Masculine generative faculty’.¹⁴ Moreover, as Germaine Greer has demonstrated, part of the boy’s enduring appeal across a range of historical periods and cultures is that he exists outside of patriarchal power, possessing a penis but not a phallus and thereby enabling female fantasies of social and sexual dominance.¹⁵

Nevertheless, this boy’s appeal was not limited to women. Recent discussions of early modern desire have emphasized the priority of social status over gender in the identification of a sexual object.¹⁶ Lisa Jardine argues that male ‘erotic attention’, in particular, was ‘bound up with sexual availability and historically specific forms of economic dependency’ so that it was ‘focused upon boys and upon women in the same way’.¹⁷ The primary model of male ‘homosexual’ relations in Renaissance Europe would seem to endorse this assumption. In his study of medieval and early modern Florence, Michael Rocke observes ‘the absolute prevalence of homosexual behaviour organized around age difference and a rigid distinction in sexual roles’. Hence, the dominant male is the adult whilst the passive partner is considerably younger, between the ages of twelve and eighteen.¹⁸ By this means, the dominant partner’s virility is untainted (the submissive boy will later be replaced by a submissive bride) and as the ‘passive’ grows up he is expected to claim masculinity through his own acts of sexual domination. Although this model does not precisely map on to patterns of homosexual behaviour in England,¹⁹ Alan Bray argues for a similar emphasis on the verticality of desire, with the passive partner most often a servant or apprentice.²⁰ He also suggests that it was its conformity to ‘patriarchal mores’ that enabled much homosexual activity in England to avoid the attention of the law (74).

Cupid, by dint of his pre-adolescent beauty, potentially typifies this ‘passive’ boy. The homoerotic desire he elicits is a consequence of his being Desire, but it is also appropriate to his subordinate status as the son of Venus and Mars/Vulcan, and a minor Roman deity. But whilst early modern poets and artists would continue to imagine him as an essentially desire-less boy (and therefore one half of a normative

¹⁴ See Will Fisher, ‘The Renaissance Beard: Masculinity in Early Modern England’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 (2001), 155–87, at 173–6.

¹⁵ Greer, *Ere Boy*, p. 228.

¹⁶ For discussion of the ways in which the cross-dressed boy appealed to female theatre audiences, see Orgel, *Impersonations*, p. 81 and Peter Stallybrass, ‘Transvestism and the “Body Beneath”: Speculating on the Boy Actor’, in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 64–83, at pp. 67–8.

¹⁷ Lisa Jardine, ‘Twins and Travesties: Gender, Dependency and Sexual Availability in *Twelfth Night*’, in Zimmerman, *Erotic Politics*, pp. 27–38, 28, 34–5. Wendy Wall also argues that ‘desirability — homoerotic or heteroerotic — was experienced and expressed in the grammar of social position ... [which] could be indifferent to gender’, in *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 180.

¹⁸ Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, p. 88.

¹⁹ Smith demonstrates that pederastie relations were only one aspect of early modern English ‘homosexuality’ in *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare’s England*, p. 76.

²⁰ Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, pp. 48–53.

homosexual relationship), a newly eroticized and subversive Eros was also emerging, capable of feeling desire for himself and of seeking its satisfaction.

Desiring Cupid in Italian Renaissance Art: Pontormo, Bronzino, Caravaggio

In his biography of Caravaggio, Peter Robb writes of the shock produced by the full-frontal, naked Cupid in *Amor Vincit Omnia* (c. 1602, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin; see Figure 7):

If you were used to benignly gazing at the young boy in art — the kind of neopagan art lately renewed by Annibale Carracci on the Farnese ceiling — of the plump, cheeky, pretty well sexless *putto* as witness and ornament to the gods' adult sexual pleasures, with or without cherubic wings, indeed with or without body ... peeing into helmets, peering under skirts, riding dolphins or crabs as they had at Pompeii, wrestling, simpering, tumbling through the clouds and adoring virgins in the *trompe l'œil* air — the grinning boy M chose as *Love* ... seemed like a reality you'd never seen before, or even imagined.²¹

Robb's account of the effect of Caravaggio's innovation is important, but the challenge to the conventions of representing Cupid had begun much earlier, with Pontormo's *Venus and Cupid* (c. 1532–4, Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence),²² based on a cartoon by Michelangelo (1532–3). In this painting, the love-god has a well-developed, muscled torso, though he retains his cherubic face. More importantly, he adopts a sexually aggressive stance towards Venus, turning her face with his left hand so that he may kiss her on the lips, while his left leg curves over the top of hers – a pose that signified *coitus* in classical art. Combining androgynous, childish beauty with adolescent male sexuality, this Cupid would be reproduced in a number of Italian paintings, for example, in Parmigianino's *Cupid Makes a Bow* (1533–4, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) he is a male nude, viewed from behind, looking seductively over one shoulder in the same pose as the more overtly homoerotic Ganymede.²³ Two of the most controversial examples, however, are the *Allegory of Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time* (1544–5, National Gallery, London, see Figure 8) by Pontormo's apprentice and friend, Agnolo

²¹ Peter Robb, *M* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), p. 192.

²² Rona Golfen identifies this painting as an important innovation in the representation of Cupid, noting that 'In most sixteenth-century images, as in classical antiquity, Cupid is generally depicted as a *putto*. But here, his size and development — both physical and emotional — make Cupid seem more a small adult than a child', *Renaissance Rivals: Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael, Titian* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 322.

²³ On the confusion of Ganymede and Cupid, see James M. Saslow's *Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homosexuality in Art and Society* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 125–37.



Figure 7. Caravaggio, *Amor Vincit Omnia*

Bronzino, and Caravaggio's *Amor Vincit Omnia*. Both paintings appear somewhat aberrant in the context of their respective *oeuvres*: Maurice Brock points out that the *Allegory* is often considered as the epitome of the master's style while in fact it partakes of an erotic register in which Bronzino rarely indulged', while Caravaggio's *Amor* is one of only two paintings in which he depicts a boy's full-frontal nudity.²⁴ Nevertheless, the tradition they established of eroticizing Cupid would resonate throughout Europe.

Though he is not the main figure in Bronzino's *Allegory*, Cupid has become increasingly central to its interpretation. Where Panofsky argued that the theme was love, attended by its pleasures and dangers,²⁵ critics have subsequently considered the deities as competing allegorical figures, focusing particularly on whether the painting depicts 'Cupid Disarmed' or 'Venus Wounded'. According to Michael Levey, Venus has triumphantly seized Cupid's arrow: 'When Venus conquers Cupid she has nothing else to fear; herself beauty, she has disarmed love.' Rather than being 'an allegory of lechery or luxury', then, the painting celebrates 'the erotic power of Venus'.²⁶ However, William Keach argues that the arrow Venus steals is poised to wound her own flesh. Referring to the Michelangelo cartoon which was one of Bronzino's main sources,²⁷ where the arrows in Cupid's quiver are pointing towards Venus's thigh, he suggests that both artists were indebted to the *Metamorphoses* Book 10:

namque pharetratus dum dat puer oscula matri,
 inscius exstanti destrinxit harundine pectus;
 laesa manu natum dea reppulit: altius actum
 vulnus erat specie primoque fefellerat ipsam.
 (Lines 525–8)

[For while the goddess's son, with quiver on shoulder, was kissing his mother, he chanced unwittingly to graze her breast with a projecting arrow. The wounded goddess pushed her son away; but the scratch had gone deeper than she thought, and she herself was at first deceived.]²⁸

This interpretation leads to a more moralistic reading of the *Allegory* which anticipates Venus' tragic infatuation with Adonis: 'Through an act of careless and implicitly incestuous sensual indulgence, the goddess of love comes to experience the desperation, and eventually the loss, which is normally felt only by mortal lovers' (330). The

²⁴ See Maurice Brock, *Bronzino*, trans. by David Poole Radzinowicz and Christine Scultz-Touge (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), p. 214, and Robb, *M*, p. 204. On the paintings' relationship to the 'homosexual' tastes of both artists, see Emmanuel Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective: Homosexuality and Art in the Last 100 Years in the West* (London and New York: Routledge, 1986, repr. 1994), pp. 8–21.

²⁵ Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pp. 86, 90.

²⁶ Michael Levey, 'Sacred and Profane Significance in Two Paintings by Bronzino', in *Studies in Renaissance and Baroque Art Presented to Anthony Blunt* (London, 1967), pp. 30–3, at pp. 32, 33.

²⁷ William Keach, 'Cupid Disarmed, or Venus Wounded? An Ovidian Source for Bronzino and Michelangelo', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978), 327–31, at 327, pl. 49c. For further discussion of Bronzino's debt to Michelangelo, see Brock, *Bronzino*, pp. 229–30.

²⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Frank Justus Miller (London: Loeb, 1916).



Figure 8. Agnolo Bronzino, *Allegory of Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time*

question of which form of Love triumphs — Venus by disarming Cupid, or Cupid by wounding Venus — directs our attention to the kinds of desire Bronzino's *Allegory* produces and the erotic agency it imagines.

Since the painting was executed for François I and seems to have been hung privately,²⁹ we can assume it was intended for a male spectator and its subject matter would initially suggest a heteroerotic gaze. Venus is the visual centre of the painting. She is completely naked, lacking even the decorous wisp of fabric deployed by other painters to preserve the modesty of their nudes, and her posture fills the canvas from top left to bottom right. The blue satin cloth on which she is displayed is raised up by Time and Truth, suggesting a private space that reveals something precious but also illicit — not just the woman's boudoir but the female body itself. Cupid's aesthetic appeal as another curvaceous, marble-fleshed nude can be understood simply as enhancing Venus' own. He literally displays her body, holding her head with his left hand, and enclosing her breast with his right.

At the same time, Cupid is undeniably an object of erotic interest himself. His face is that of a young, rosy-cheeked boy, similar to the *putto* who represents Pleasure/Folly on the right, but unlike that *putto* he has a long, muscular body. If this reflects the difficulty that most Renaissance commentators had in reconciling Cupid's youth with his power, it also seems calculated to exert an alluring combination of innocence and sexual provocation, female beauty and male potency. As we have seen, this combination was perceived to be appealing to both men and women; but the fact that Cupid is naked and viewed from behind like Ganymede, with the buttocks thrust outwards and the quiver acting as a visual cipher for anal penetration, strongly implies that this was a painting designed to arouse homoerotic desire. What is potentially subversive is the assumption it makes about Cupid's role in that desire.

Though it may be unusually explicit, the visual perspective on the boy initially suggests a conventional power-relationship: the male spectator is invited to sodomize a passive, youthful Cupid. But if he is also encouraged to imagine himself in the posture of Venus, the painting becomes more risqué. Though Venus is an adult, and physically more imposing, she is not only manipulated but kissed by Cupid. Perhaps she allows this as a means of distracting him with a view to stealing his arrows, but desire is thereby located in Cupid rather than in Venus: he has no other motive for the kiss. Thus, Bronzino would seem to have been influenced by Pontormo's image of Cupid as a beautiful boy capable of sexual pleasure. At the same time, he may have been responding to a shift in the nature of homosexual relationships beyond the world of the painting. In line with classical tradition, the passive partner was not expected to derive pleasure from the sexual encounter. However, reported cases of *fellatio* in sixteenth-century Florence increasingly testify that it was the older partner who tended to the

²⁹ Janet Cox-Rearick suggests that the painting may have been kept in the king's own apartments, *The Collection of Francis I: Royal Treasures* (Antwerp: Fonds Mercator Paribas, 1995), pp. 227–34.

boy, a fact that was commented upon with disgust but that may suggest a new ethos of mutual enjoyment'.³⁰

This perception of Cupid as an active, even aggressive, desirer is further developed in Caravaggio's *Amor Vincit Omnia* (Figure 7). This winged and naked boy looks provocatively at the viewer, totally exposed but seeming to feel neither vulnerability nor shame. The fact that he is resting his leg against a rumpled bed-sheet suggests not only that he has recently climbed off the bed but that he has dismounted from his adult lover after anal penetration.³¹ The fact that his left arm is hidden behind his body draws attention to his buttocks, 'brazenly invit[ing] the viewer to sodomize him'.³² Moreover, since the brightest area of the painting is the white sheet, the viewer's gaze is directed not just towards Cupid's penis but to the cleft between his buttocks, thereby reinforcing this invitation to anal sex and/or hinting that it has already been accepted. Such a posture does not make sense in mythological terms, given that Cupid was associated with heterosexual love and would produce a child with Psyche. Moreover, Caravaggio's tousle-haired, black-eyed boy, with dark eagle's wings and dirty toenails, is nothing like the *putti* of Raphael or the Botticellian Cupid and appears strikingly profane even in comparison with Michelangelo's homoerotic images.³³ His provocative, half-winking gaze at the viewer gives him far more personality than a Cupid usually enjoys. In all, we seem to be looking at the boy beneath the Cupid role — but then so may Caravaggio. According to Richard Symonds, an Englishman in Rome between 1649 and 1651, *Amor* features 'ye body & face of his owne boy or servant thait laid with him', later identified as his apprentice, Francesco Boneri.³⁴ A year after the painting's completion, Caravaggio was accused of keeping a '*bardassa*' (male prostitute) named Giovanni Battista, and it might have been this boy who modelled for the *Amor*.³⁵ Indeed, the term *bardassa* may illuminate what is fundamentally transgressive about the painting's image of Cupid. In *L'Alcibiade*, Filotimo explains that this opprobrious name 'ought not to be given to those 'who out of affection and kindness couple graciously with civil and praiseworthy lovers'. Rather, 'the *bardassa* correctly means mercenary or venal *putto*'³⁶ who sells himself as mere merchandise ... and cares about nothing but his servile earnings'.³⁷ Caravaggio's *putto* strongly sug-

³⁰ Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, p. 94.

³¹ See Greer, *The Boy*, p. 69.

³² Robert S. Liebert, *Michelangelo: A Psychoanalytic Study of his Life and Images* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 278, n 17.

³³ Howard Hibbard suggests that Caravaggio set out 'to tear the idealizing mask' from Michelangelo's homoerotic imagery in *Caravaggio* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1983), pp. 157–9.

³⁴ Robb, *M*, p. 195.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 226–7. See also Donald Posner's influential article, 'Caravaggio's Homo-Erotic Early Works', *Art Quarterly* 34.3 (autumn 1971), 301–24.

³⁶ In Florio's 1598 Italian-English dictionary, *A Worlde of Wordes*, he glosses '*putto*' without sexual connotations: 'a boy, a lad, a striplin[g], a lacquey', p. 304. Nevertheless, we might use the appearance of this term in Rocco as evidence of the further eroticization of Cupid.

³⁷ *L'Alcibiade*, pp. 63–4, quoted in Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, p. 106.

gests the same cupidity. Moreover, in the image of him trampling upon the symbols of male achievement such as armour, books and musical instruments he implies the desirable boy's threat to adult masculinity.

That this Italian visual Cupid influenced English literary culture in the late sixteenth century is obviously difficult to prove. Of the Cupid paintings we have considered, most accessible to early modern England was probably a version of Pontormo's *Venus and Cupid*. Both Bartholomeus Spranger (1546–1611) and Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617) executed pen-and-ink drawings in which Venus is straddled by Cupid who points an arrow at her breast.³⁸ Goltzius' engraving *Venus* (1596, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), in which the tip of Cupid's arrow is touching the top of her left breast, may even have been for sale in London booksellers.³⁹ By contrast, Bronzino's *Allegory* was limited to a relatively private audience, inhibiting the making of copies and thence of prints.⁴⁰ Nor is there any evidence of Caravaggio's *Amorbeing* copied or imitated by any but Italian painters before 1650 (with the possible exception of Simon Vouet) though English visitors to Rome may have been able to see the original in Guistini-ani's gallery.⁴¹ But despite the difficulty of tracing precise lines of influence, the ways in which Cupid was eroticized in Italian Renaissance painting (the combination of a childish face, with a muscled, adolescent body); the kinds of desire he produces (heteroerotic, homoerotic and pederastie); even the attitude towards sex that he suggests (amoral, exploitative) are intriguingly analogous to Cupid as he was sometimes conceived of on the early modern stage.

Dido, Queen of Carthage and Cupid as Boy Actor

In *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, we find the playful, polymorphous desire that characterizes Cupid in the Bronzino painting shadowed by a more threatening (we might say Caravaggesque) subtext, given the consequences of that desire. Marlowe may even have known one of the paintings discussed above. Although he follows Virgil in taking Cupid as the agent of passion, he has altered the means by which *eros* is inflicted. In the *Aeneid*, Cupid is told that when Dido

³⁸ See Sprangers *Venus and Cupid* (unknown date, London, British Museum) and Goltzius' *Venus and Cupid* (1590, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam), as reproduced by Keach, 'Cupid Disarmed', 327–31.

³⁹ See Huigen Leeftang and Ger Luijten, *Hendrick Goltzius: Drawings, Prints and Paintings* (Amsterdam and New York: Waanders Publishers, 2003), p. 205, fig. 81. Henry Peacham recommends Goltzius as a model for the gentleman artist to imitate in *Pise Art of Drawing* (1606) and *Fise Gentlemans Exercise* (1612). In *Pise Compleat Gentleman* (London, 1622), he notes that 'his primes are commonly to be had in Popeshead alley', p. 108.

⁴⁰ Brock, *Bronzino*, p. 214.

⁴¹ See Benedict Nicolson, *Pise Pnternational Caravaggesque Movement: Lists of Pictures by Caravaggio and His Followers throughout Europe from 1590—1650* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1979), pp. 20, 37, 54, 82.

Shall take thee upon her lap and tightly embrace thee
And print sweet kisses upon thee, thou mayest inbreathe
A hidden fire in her, poison her all unawares⁴²

but in the play Cupid is ordered to 'touch her white breast with this arrow head, / That she may dote upon Aeneas' love' (2.1.326–7). Marlowe's alteration seems not to reflect a theatrical tradition (it was ignored by Gager in 1583),⁴³ but suggests familiarity with a version of Pontormo in which Venus is distracted by a kiss while Cupid threatens her with his arrow. The effect is to focus attention on Cupid's sexuality, his act of phallic penetration and his appeal to a female audience.

Dido's conflict between her desire for the beautiful, submissive boy and the aggressive adult is demonstrated by her vacillation between Cupid and Iarbas:

IARBAS: Come, Dido, leave Ascanius; let us walk.

DIDO: Go thou away; Ascanius shall stay.

IARBAS: Ungentle Queen, is this thy love to me?

DIDO: O stay, Iarbas, and I'll go with thee.

CUPID: And if my mother go, I'll follow her.

DIDO: (*to Iarbas*): Why stay'st thou here? Thou art no love of mine.
(3-1-34-9)

Dido's indecision is probably explained on stage by her being repeatedly touched with Cupid's arrow. The pleasure that this constitutes includes both phallic sexuality (Cupid's dart acting as a kind of foreplay to her sexual relationship with his brother, Aeneas) and maternal eroticism (discussed below). Unfortunately, as Venus learnt in the *Metamorphoses*, a kiss from the love-god is never simply a kiss. Dido's passion for Cupid, whether focused on the boy or the infant, is a kind of mis-taking by which she renders herself vulnerable to an overpowering sexual passion. Cupid's dart is replaced by the phallus of Aeneas which effectively undoes Dido's subjectivity and her queenship (echoing the strategy of Cupid versus Woman explored in the previous chapter) and leads to her suicide.

The self-destructive consequences of embracing Desire are also explored through the play's male-male dalliances. Initially, boys are associated with pleasure by both sexes, and the play's opening image of 'JUPITER *dandling GANYMEDE upon his knee*' anticipates the delight experienced by Dido when she takes Cupid onto her lap.⁴⁴ The pairings are also linked by the bestowal of gifts and by the same terms of affection — Jupiter describes Ganymede as 'sweet wag' (1.1.23) and 'my little love' (42);

⁴² Virgil, *Virgil's Aeneid*, trans. Michael Oakley (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1957), Book i, p. 20.

⁴³ See Pincombe's comparison of these scenes in 'Cupid and Eliza', p. 37.

⁴⁴ For the reader, the parallel is reinforced by the repetition of 'dandling' between the stage direction and Aeneas' comment: 'No marvel, Dido, though thou be in love, / That daily dandlest Cupid in thy arms!', 5.1.44–5.

Dido's Cupid is a 'sweet boy' and 'wag' (3.1.24, 31).⁴⁵ The visual resemblance between Ganymede and Cupid may also have been heightened by the same boy actor playing both roles.⁴⁶ However, just as Dido's infatuation becomes self-annihilating so the boy as love-object appears to threaten adult masculinity. We recall Venus chastizing Jupiter for 'playing with that female wanton boy' (1.1.51) and it appears that Aeneas might be similarly affected by his homoerotic interaction with Ascanius/Cupid. Mercury is notably impatient with Aeneas' pleasure on seeing his son: 'Spend'st thou thy time about this little boy / And giv'st not ear unto the charge I bring?' (5.1.51-2). 'Spend', here, implies a kind of wasteful ejaculation and echoes Ganymede's promise to Jupiter that he will 'Spend [his] time in thy bright arms' (1.1.22), whilst 'giv[ing] ear' suggests Aeneas' 'sodomitical' (in the sense of disorderly, unhierarchical) desire to be penetrated by a boy.⁴⁷ But what is perhaps most intriguing about Cupid's performance as Ascanius is the way in which it incriminates the boy actor and the theatre for which he performs. Mercury's rebuke could be extended to Marlowe's audience for wasting their time on a theatrical entertainment performed by boys,⁴⁸ but also for allowing themselves to be seduced by a Cupid.

In Jonson's *Christmas His Masque*, performed by the King's Men in 1616, Cupid is literally synonymous with the boy actor. The masque purports to be a kind of mummings' play by the various trades of London in loyalty to their king, but ongoing tensions between Court and City over the celebration of Christmas have required the roles to be taken by professional actors.⁴⁹ Cupid is fundamental to exposing this political feint. Although ostensibly a bugle-maker's apprentice from Love Lane, attir'd in a flat Cap, and a Prentices Coat, with wings at his shoulders' (line 22), he is also recognizable from the Jacobean court masque and from the professional theatre (having appeared for the King's Men two years before in *More Dissemblers Besides Women*).⁵⁰ His incompetence as an actor, thrust unwillingly onto the stage by his ambitious mother, Venus, whose pridefull interruptions cause him to forget his lines, is obviously ironic, not least because of his ability to inspire erotic desire:

⁴⁵ The idea that a sexual favourite might be treated in the same way as a small child, even a son, is explored by Marie Rutkowski in 'Breeching the Boy in Marlowe's *Edward PF*, *Studies in English Literature* 46.2 (spring 2006), 281- 304, at 286.

⁴⁶ This is Simon Shepherd's suggestion in *Marlowe and the Politics of Elizabethan Pheatre* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), p. 200.

⁴⁷ On the distinctions between orderly and disorderly homoerotic relationships, see DiGangi, *Pise Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama*, p. ix.

⁴⁸ See also Clare R. Kinney on the play's critique of the boy actor in 'Epic Transgression and the Framing of Agency in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*', *Studies in English Literature* 40 (spring 2000), 261-76, at 270-1.

⁴⁹ See Leah S. Marcus, *Pise Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell and the Defence of Old Holiday Pastimes* (University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp.76-85.

⁵⁰ See John Jowett on *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, in Thomas Middleton, *Plsomas Middleton: Pise Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 1034.

He'll say his part, I warrant him, as well as e'er a playboy of'em all. I could ha' had money enough for him, an' I would ha' been tempted, and ha' let him out by the week to the King's players: Master Burbage has been about and about with me, and so has old Master Hemminges too; they ha' need of him. (lines 117—22)⁵¹

Venus' being 'tempted' to 'let [Cupid] out by the week' and the desperation of 'old Master Hemminges' to 'have' him both hint at the boy player's sexual currency, a theme much played upon by anti-theatricalist pamphleteers.

'Trained up in filthy speeches, unnatural and unseemly gestures ... brought up by these schoolmasters in bawdry and in idleness', the boy actor resembles Cupid in his effect upon the audience, for 'the effeminate stage-player, while he faineth love, *imprinteth wounds of love*' (italics mine).⁵² Whilst this effect was clearly an aspect of the adult companies' performances, it was more obviously associated with the boy companies. Surviving records from the beginning of the Tudor period to their first cessation of playing in 1591 testify to the popularity of classical mythology in the boy companies' repertoires.⁵³ In the Induction to Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* (1599), a member of the Chapel Children declares: 'take anie of our play-bookes without a CUPID, or a MERCURIE in it, and burne it for an heretique in Poetrie' (lines 46–9). That this subject matter was in turn related to (and perhaps a pretext for) the eroticism of the boy actors is suggested by an early anti-theatrical tract *The Chapel Children Stript and Whipt* (1569, now lost). Here, the anonymous author complains of 'her maiesties unfledged minions flaunt[ing] it in silkes and sattens':

Even in her maiesties chappel do these pretty vpstart youthes profane
the Lordes Day by the lascivious writhing of their tender limbs, and
gorgeous decking of their appareil, in feigning bawdie fables gathered
from the idolatrous heathen poets.⁵⁴

The suspicion that the boys not only inspire lust in the spectator but stimulate their own sexual desire relates them to the Italian Cupid, the 'lascivious writhing of their tender limbs' recalling the Mannerist poses of Bronzino's *Allegory*. Moreover,

⁵¹ Jonson, *Ben Jonson: Pise Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 246–7.

⁵² Anthony Munday, *A Second and Phird Blast of Retreat from Plays and Pheaters* (1580) and John Rainolds, *Use Overthrow of Stage Plays* (1599), in Tanya Pollard (ed.), *Shakespeare's Pheater: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 79 and 174.

⁵³ R. Mark Benbow (ed.), *The Arraynement of Paris*, in George Peele, *Use Life and Works of George Peele*, gen. ed. Charles Tyler Prouty, 3 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952–70), vol. in, p. 35. Mythological plays of the 1580s featuring Cupid include Peele's *The Arraignement of Paris* (1581) and *The Hunting of Cupid* (1586, now lost); Lyly's *Sappho and Phao* (1583–4), *Gallathea* (1585) and *Love's Metamorphosis* (1590); Marlowe's *Dido* (1586); and a lost *Cupid and Psyche* (1581, Anon.).

⁵⁴ E. K. Chambers (ed.), *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1923), vol. it, pp. 34–5.

the term ‘minion’ is only the more subtle of a number of contemporary allusions to the boy actors’ sexual availability off stage. We might recall Ovid Senior’s rhetorical question: ‘Shall I have my sonne a stager now? An enghle for players?’ in *Poetaster* (1601, 1.2.15–16) or Dekker’s coupling of ‘Enggles and Plaiers-Boyes’ in *News from Gravesend* (1604).⁵⁵

But if this availability was acknowledged as a kind of exploitation, there were also glimpses (as in Caravaggio) of something in it for the boy. In Middleton’s *Michaelmas Term*, performed by the Children of Paul’s c. 1604–6, Shortyard (his name alluding to his diminutive penis) is required by his master to seduce Easy, to ‘creep into bed to him / Kiss him and undo him’ (1.2.132). But although he remonstrates (in a line that might well have caused the audience some guilty reflection) ‘I’ll venture my body no further for any gentleman’s pleasure’ (3.5.67–8), he pursues his own profit.⁵⁶ Similarly, in Middleton’s *The Nightingale and the Ant* (1604), a youth is advised that if he goes to the Blackfriars he will see ‘a nest of boys able to ravish a man’ (159). Whilst this ravishment might be aesthetic it retains its primary meaning of rape, both in the sense of theft (the boys’ fleecing the gallants of their cash) and of sexual despoliation.

Subsequently, when the boy actor played the part of Cupid, he drew attention to the desire upon which his own professional and financial success was based. Perhaps because it was Marlowe’s only play written for a boys’ company, *Dido* seems particularly uneasy about its exploitation of boy actors.⁵⁷ Both ‘Ganymede’ and ‘naked boy’, i.e. Cupid, were contemporary terms for a male prostitute,⁵⁸ and just as Ganymede had been abducted by Jupiter (perhaps performed by an adult), so this was sometimes the beginning of the boy’s entry into the theatrical profession. At the same time, Marlowe seems to internalize anti-theatrical polemic when he has Cupid assert that by putting on the appearance of ‘sweet Ascanius’ he will ‘so play [his] part / As every touch shall wound Queen Dido’s heart’ (2.1.332–3), recalling the boy player’s notorious ability to ‘imprint wounds of love’.⁵⁹

But if Cupid alludes to the sexual danger posed by the boy actor, he also embodies the threat to adult masculinity represented by any extreme desire. Another way of

⁵⁵ See also Michael Shapiro, *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp.38–9.

⁵⁶ See Theodore Leinwand, ‘Redeeming Beggary/Buggery in *Michaelmas Term*’, *English Literary History* 61.1 (1994), 53–70, at 61, and Amanda Bailey, who argues that gallants were notorious for being exploited by the boys who attended them, ‘“Monstrous Manner: Style and the Early Modern Theater”, *Criticism* 43.3 (summer 2001), 249–84, at 262–4.

⁵⁷ See Jackson I. Cope in ‘Marlowe’s *Dido* and the Titillating Children’, *English Literary Renaissance* 4 (1974), 315–25, and Kinney, ‘Epic Transgression’.

⁵⁸ In Chapman’s *May Day*, a boy being considered as an actor is asked: ‘Hast ever practiced, my pretty Ganymede?’ (3.3.233). In *The Alchemist* (1610), Face promises that the alchemist’s art will bring in enough money to enable a ‘cast commander ... to keep himself, / His punk and naked boy, in excellent fashion’, 3.4.98–9.

⁵⁹ See also Goldberg’s discussion of ‘the voice of antitheatricity’ in Marlowe’s work in *Sodometries*, pp. 130,106.

looking at Cupid's naked body on the early modern stage, whether an effect of costume or its absence, is not so much as an object of erotic titillation (though certainly this) but as a mirror in which the male spectator might see the effects of desire upon his own person. Cupid's diminutive penis, his blindness symbolic of castration,⁶⁰ even his nakedness could all be read as evidence of desire's emasculating power. Furthermore, in the plays discussed below, Cupid threatens literally to effeminize, sodomize and castrate his victims.

Cupid and Effeminacy: Middleton's *The Nice Valour*

Effeminacy in the early modern period seems to have been more commonly associated with the effects of heteroerotic than homoerotic passion, manifesting itself in 'the "womanish" sensuality that might cause a man to indulge an excessive desire for women or boys'.⁶¹ One way in which Cupid demonstrated this effect was through his own cross-dressing. In *Gallathea* he implies desire's femininity by appearing as a nymph and his actions further effeminize his victims — the chaste thoughts of Diana's virgins are made 'wavering, weak, and wanton' (2.24–5) by Cupid's arrows. In Middleton's *The Nice Valour* (1622), Cupid becomes a theatrical role performed by a girl, but one used to demonstrate desire's effect upon the male.

The play begins with an unmarried Lady forced to adopt a disguise in order to conceal her pregnancy.⁶² She chooses the role of Cupid and appears in two masques before her seducer, the Passionate Lord; first, to force him into marriage, and then 'to draw all his wild passions / To one point only, and that's love' (3.1.12–13). But whilst this disguise enables the Lady to bring about her marriage, it also exacerbates her shame. Though her brothers observe some likenesses between actor and role, as when the Lady is like to 'weep her eyes out, / To play a cupid truly' (3.1.22–3), it is also understood as mockingly inappropriate, for she is Cupid's victim despite wielding his bow and arrow. Thus, when she threatens one of the masque-spectators with this weapon, the First Gentleman reassures her:

'Tis nothing but device; fear it not, lady.
You may be as good a maid after that shaft, madam,

⁶⁰ Rosalind makes this association in *As You Like It* when she criticizes 'that same wicked bastard of Venus ... that blind rascally boy that abuses everyone's eyes because his own are out', 4.1.201–4.

⁶¹ DiGangi, *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama*, p. 7

⁶² In Middleton's *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, Lactantius' former mistress disguises herself as a page in order to remain in his household and conceal her pregnancy. Her role may have been doubled with that of A Cupid', who sings a song about his conquest over women (1.3.77–87), perhaps suggesting this as a disguise for the later play. See John Jowett, in *Thomas Middleton: Complete Works*, pp. 1034–73.

As e'er your mother was at twelve and a half.
'Tis like the boy that draws it; 't'as no sting yet. (2.1.131–4)

The joke depends on the sexual immaturity of Cupid (and of the boy actor), but it also alludes to the female character playing Cupid, who lacks the power to wound emotionally or sexually. Moreover, this particular costume not only fails to conceal the Lady's shame (5.1.6–8), it exposes her sexual transgression and even threatens to repeat it.⁶³ To be 'sicke of Cupid' was sometimes used as a synonym for pregnancy,⁶⁴ and the Second Brother urges haste in the acknowledgement of his sister's marriage: 'There is no tamp'ring with these Cupids long; / The mere conceit with womankind works strong' (5.1.9–10).

This female impersonation of Cupid might seem to endorse an essential difference between masculinity, which imposes desire and is sexually dominant, and femininity, which receives desire and is sexually passive (the Lady is a 'receptacle / Of luxury and dishonour' (5.1.99—too)). And yet, Cupid in *The Nice Valour* also reveals the effeminacy of the *male* lover, thus suggesting desire's capacity to destabilize gender. From the start, the Passionate Lord's capitulation to lust, melancholy, mirth and wrath places him at the other end of the masculinity-scale from Chamont or the Soldier, but his effeminacy is particularly staged by the encounter with Cupid and the six female masquers in 2.1. Here, the Passionate Lord sings a song in which he identifies himself as one of Love's willing victims, insisting that, had the deity emptied all his quiver into him, 'Yet thy power would I adore / And call upon thee to shoot more. / Shoot more, shoot more' (2.1.122–4). Thus, he presents himself as a permeable, and therefore specifically feminine, body, appearing less masculine than the female masquers who acknowledge their vulnerability but plead with Cupid not to shoot (lines 148–54).

Where the Passionate Lord's subjection becomes more explicitly sodomitical! is in the second Cupidean masque. The author of this masque is Lepet, who has rejected the honour code of both the Soldier and Chamont to avoid the more dangerous consequences of duelling (3.2.10–14, 20–2).⁶⁵ He has catalogued a series of blows, including tweaking of the nose, thumps and kicks, which he sets down in his book: '*The Uprising of the Kick / And the Downfall of the Duello*' (4.1.327–8). The idea of a man receiving a kick is so strongly homoerotic that it affects even the typeface — Lepet and the Clown repeatedly draw attention to the fact that 'your backward blows' must be printed in '*italica*', with a pun on the association of Italy with anal sex (4.1.240–1, 5.3.29–30).

⁶³ Susan Wiseman suggests this Cupid might have appeared 'ruined or disgraced' in the context of Middleton's *Masque of Cupids*, which had been performed for the wedding of the murderous Robert Carr and the unchaste Frances Howard, in *Thomas Middleton: Complete Works*, p. 1681.

⁶⁴ See the *Gesta Grayorum* (c. 1617) as cited by Gordon Williams in *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature* (London and Atlantic Heights: Athlone Press, 1994), vol. 1, p. 354.

⁶⁵ See Gary Taylor, 'Thomas Middleton, *Use Nice Valour*, and the Court of James F, *Use Court Historian* 6 (2001), 1–36.

Yet, in the victim's willingness to receive the kick, the image becomes 'sodomitical' in the disorderly, transgressive sense, as the Clown remarks of one of the illustrations:

Oh master, here's a fellow stands most gallantly,
Taking his kick in private behind the hangings,
And raising up his hips to't. (4.1.348–50)

In David M. Halperin's attempt to categorize pre-modern homosexuality, he defines the 'invert' as one who expresses the 'desire to submit... "passively" to sexual penetration by men'. One consequence is that inverts 'are seen as having a woman's desire, subjectivity, and gender identity'.⁶⁶ This critique of male effeminacy is fundamental to the performance of *'The Uprising of the Kick'*. The masque begins: *'Enter Lep et and Clown, and four other like fools, dancing, the Cupid leading, and bearing his Table, and holding it up to Lepet at every strain, and acting the postures'* (5.1.79 SD).⁶⁷ Since the Table depicts the actions of both aggressor and victim, it seems likely that Cupid and Lepet mime blows which the male masquers receive. Their particular focus on the buttocks (lines 80, 85–6) creates a spectacle in which adult males feign sexual penetration by a girl-playing-Cupid, thereby castigating the Passionate Lord for his effeminizing lust, a moral that is further reinforced by the Soldier's violent interjection. As the performers lie sprawled on the stage, he enters and tramples upon the Clown, effecting a real kind of emasculation: 'He's stamped my puddings [testicles] into pancakes' (line 95). By contrast, the Passionate Lord is stabbed by the Soldier in an act of honour-based aggression that masculinates him anew.⁶⁸ He is purged of 'blood' (desire) through his wounding, and the fact that his assailant is not a female Cupid but a male soldier restores the Passionate Lord to his patriarchal roles as husband and father.

Nevertheless, Cupid's reappearance in the final scene serves once again to unsettle gender distinctions. The Passionate Lord introduces his bride while she is still disguised as Cupid, causing the Duke to believe that he has married a boy, which in the context of a theatrical performance he has. As J. Cocke warns in his 'character' of the adult actor: 'If hee marries, hee mistakes the Woman for the Boy in Womans attire ... But so long as he lives unmarried, hee mistakes the Boy, or a Whore for the Woman; by courting the first on the stage, or visiting the second at her devotions'.⁶⁹ Having been

⁶⁶ Halperin, 'How to Do the History of Homosexuality', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 6 (2000), 81–124, at 103.

⁶⁷ Wiseman points out that the use of the word 'postures' may recall the title of Aretino's famous set of pornographic images, thus reinforcing the erotic implications of Leper's violence, in *Thomas Middleton: Complete Works*, p. 1707, fn. 79.4.

⁶⁸ Clare McManus reminds me that in Fletcher and Massinger's *The Custom of the Country*, Duarte is similarly reformed by being wounded in a duel.

⁶⁹ 'A Common Player' in John Stephens' *Satyrical Essayes Characters and Others* (London, 1615), quoted by Chambers in *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. iv, pp. 256–7. William Prynne also warns that audiences will be tempted to do what they have seen actors do, i.e. dress up a boy in women's clothes before sodomizing him, in *Histrion-mastix Tire Players Scourge, or, Actors Tragedie* (London, 1633), pp. 208–14.

disabused of his error, the Duke remains disturbed by the image of Cupid. He turns to one of his most masculine courtiers:

duke: Chamont, didst ever read of ashe-Cupid?
chamont: Never in fiction yet, but it might hold, sir,
For desire is of both genders. (5.3.179–80)

Most obviously, Chamont suggests that both genders feel desire and therefore a woman can play Cupid as well as a man. Yet, the play also implies the need to differentiate between excessive ‘female’ desire, such as that suffered by the Passionate Lord, and a more orderly, ‘masculine’ love, exemplified by Chamont.⁷⁰ Although the Lady divesting herself of her Cupid guise would seem to make that distinction — just as the danger of the Lord’s being the passive, erotic object of a boy is dispelled by the fact that ‘Cupid’ is really his pregnant bride — it is deferred until after the play has ended. Hence, the male-female figure of Cupid attests to the ongoing difficulty of imposing limits on male desire.

Cupid, Sodomy and Castration: *Soliman and Perseda* and *Cupid’s Whirligig*

In at least two other early modern plays featuring Cupid, excessive, heteroerotic desire leads not only to the male lover’s physical castration, but renders him vulnerable to sexual victimization by a boy.

In Kyd’s *Soliman and Perseda*, the braggart soldier, Basilisco, has converted to Islam rather than suffer death in Turkish-occupied Rhodes. This has required him to be circumcised: ‘Amidst their Church they bound me to a pillar, and to make trial! of my valiancie, they lopt a coilop of my tendrest member’ (4.2.15–7). But although this indicates the removal of foreskin (‘coilop’ suggesting ‘slice’), the effect seems to be considerably more disabling (‘coilop’ hinting at the loss of a testicle). As Jonathan Burton has shown, circumcision and castration were often confused in plays featuring enforced English conversion to Islam,⁷¹ and Piston’s insistence that Basilisco has ‘lost a capitoli part of [his] Ladyware’ in an act ‘preiudiciall to [women’s] mulebritie’ (4.2.41–3) strongly suggests that he has been castrated. In this abject state, the wretched Basilisco is also imagined as vulnerable to anal rape. An extraordinary series of sodomitical puns commences when the aptly named Piston ‘pricks him with a pin-.

⁷⁰ See DiGangi, *Tire Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama*, p. 145.

⁷¹ Burton argues that castration allowed enforced conversion to be treated comically in order to distract from the threat of voluntary apostasy. See ‘English Anxiety and the Muslim Power of Conversion: Five Perspectives on “Turning Turk” in Early Modern Texts’, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 2.1 (spring/summer 2002), 35–67, at 54.

basilisco: O shoote no more; Great God, I yeeld to thee.

piston: I see his skin is but pistol profe from the girdle upward. What suddaine agonie was that?

basilisco: Why, sawst thou not how Cupid, God of Love, not daring looke me in the marshall face, came like a coward stealing after me, and with his pointed dart prickt my posteriors?

piston: Then, here my opinion concerning that point; the Ladies of Rhodes, hearing that you have lost a capitoli part of your Ladyware, have made their petition to Cupid to plague you above all other, as are preiudiciall to their mulebritie. Now sir, Cupid, seeing you already hurt before, thinkes it a greater punishment, to hurt you behind. Therefore I would wish you to have an eye to the back doore.

basilisco: Sooth thou saiest, I must be fencd behinde; He hang my target there.

piston: Indeede, that will serve to beare of some blowes when you run away in a fraye. (4.2.32–49)

Basiliscos susceptibility to anal penetration is presented as an extension of his innate cowardice: he has always presented his backside to an enemy by running away. Moreover, it was fear of death that made him accede to circumcision in the first place. Nevertheless, the main cause of his supposedly inadequate masculinity is desire.

The image created on stage in 4.2 is obviously sodomitical, with Piston ‘prick[ing]’ Basilisco in the ‘posteriors’, but it becomes comically transgressive in the way that the sexual roles are assigned. Basilisco is abused by a character renowned for his shortness and his youth (described as ‘that petite pigmie’ and ‘minoritie’ (4.2.53, 54)); one whose diminutive weapon, a pin, may be a cipher not merely for Basiliscos reduced penis but for the proportions of Piston (and the boy actor who played him). What makes Basilisco susceptible to this sexually aggressive boy is not, however, homoerotic but heteroerotic desire. Piston suggests that Cupid acts on behalf of the women of Rhodes who seek to revenge their loss of him as a sexual partner by transforming him into the passive (female) sexual object. But more importantly, it is Basiliscos susceptibility to love through an earlier penetration by Cupid’s arrow that has ensured his vulnerability now, and what emasculates is his passion for a woman not a boy.

As Basilisco acknowledges, the reason for his return to Rhodes is his loyalty to Perseda: ‘whom I love so well / That I would follow her though she went to hell’ (3.5.15–16). When explaining this decision, he specifically invokes his subjection to Cupid: ‘The mighty pincky-eid, brand-bearing God, to whom I am long servitour ... bad me follow’ (5–3.7–9). Cupid even appears on stage to insist that he was responsible not only for Basiliscos infatuation but for making him choose conversion:

And lastly *Love* made *Basiliscos* tongue

To countercheck his hart by turning Turke,
And save his life, in spighi of *Deaths* despight.
(3.6.10–12)

Hence, Basiliscos subjection to Cupid and to Perseda leads to a state of emasculation that results in his being ‘hurt before’ and ‘behind’. Nor is *Soliman and Perseda* the only play to make this connection.

Cupid’s Whirligig (1607), a comedy written by Edward Sharpham for the Children of the King’s Revels at Whitefriars, begins with Cupid repudiating childishness:

My mother kis’d me at our parting, But did charge me leave my darting,
And with a strict command did say, Boy, on a Whirligig goe play. But
such a round ile make him runne, As he shall end, where first begunne.
(1.1.5–10)

Cupid’s ‘play’ becomes the disruption of mature sexual relationships. His pleasure in such whirling (and his antipathy towards adult masculinity) is most apparent in the case of Sir Timothy Troublesome, who is so tormented by jealousy over his lubricious wife that he pays to have himself castrated:

knight: Come heather [sic] Wages, my olde resolution is come on me againe,
and it shall make me doe much, for I will geld my seife.

WAGES: Alasse sir that’s the onely way to make you doe little.

knight: Therefore goe fetch me the Opperator.

WAGES: What’s he sir?

knight: The stone-Cutter.

wages: O you meane the Sow-gelder.

knight: O ! He’s an excellent fellow, he takes away the cause of a mans
beastlie desires.

wages: I, and of their manly performance too. (2.4.82—91)

Despite the explicit references to gelding and to the removal of ‘stones’, suggesting a testicular castration that would leave sexual performance undamaged, it is repeatedly implied that the Knight has also lost his penis and thence all sexual function.⁷² When he wishes to win his wife back, Wages protests: ‘Have yee not gelded and cut off al the content of marriage?’ (4.3.42–3) and the Knight admits not only that he ‘may now lie with any Ladie in Europe for any hurt I can doe her’ but also that ‘I can cuckold no

⁷² Both *Soliman* and *Cupid’s Whirligig* contradict Gary Taylor’s emphasis on early modern castration as the removal of male fertility without the loss of sexual performance in *Castration: An Abbreviated History of Western Manhood* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 60–1, 121.

man' (3.1.50, 52), clearly pointing to his impotence rather than his sterility. But while the castrated male's plight is a cause for merriment, as in *Soliman and Perseda* it is equally a consequence of extreme love, and Sharpham has notably altered his source to this effect. Where Guicciardini tells the story of a man who castrates himself to prove his wife's sexual betrayal (*L'Hore di Recreatione* (1568, trans. English 1573)),⁷³ Sharpham emphasizes Troublesome's wish to eradicate his own passion, to take away 'the cause of a mans beastlie desires'. Thus, the play enacts the paradox that Cupid has imposed such an extreme heteroerotic desire upon the Knight that he disables himself from heterosexual sex.

Although this does not appear to incur Cupid's revenge, it does issue in a kind of sodomy. At the end of the play, the men's attempts to choose wives have been foiled by Cupid, who furthers the desires of the women. Thus, the Knight's wish to marry Peg is cancelled out by the Lady's longing to have her husband back. But rather than a romantic conclusion, this remarriage of the impotent Knight to a Lady who has recently declared: "Slight I had rather lie with a man, and never marrie him, then marrie a man and never lie with him" (5.7.28–30) is inherently 'sodomitica!'. The marriage of any man lacking both testicles had been banned by Pope Sixtus V in 1587 and those unions that had already taken place were annulled.⁷⁴ More relevant to a boys' play is the fact that this stricture was extended to cases where the bridegroom was exceptionally young. In Massinger's *The Guardian* (1633), Durazzo declares that to marry 'in a beardless chin / 'Tis ten times worse than wenching' (1.1.63–4), suggesting that if sex cannot be justified by the production of children it is as sinful as extramarital promiscuity.

Nevertheless, the Knight's remarriage is also sodomitica! in a less figurative sense, for what Cupid has done is to create of the aggressive adult male (perhaps played by one of the older boys) a *castrato*⁷⁵ who will now be the passive sexual partner to the Lady (acted by a younger boy). Nor should we overlook the implications of the play's performance by the Children of the King's Revels, a company notorious for the homoeroticism of its repertory, in a theatre located in a renowned brothel district, whose plays often invited the audience to imagine the naked body beneath the boy actor's clothes.⁷⁶ There are no such bawdy quibbles in Cupid's opening speech, but given his physical appearance there was, perhaps, no need. Cupid's nakedness on stage was usually the effect of a particular costume: Beaumont's 'Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn' (1613) includes the stage direction *Enter foure Cupids*

⁷³ See Sharpham, *A Critical Old Spelling Edition of Tire Works of Edward Sharpham*, p. 349.

⁷⁴ Taylor, *Castration*, p. 123.

⁷⁵ The Knight implicitly refers to himself as such by offering as an excuse: 'I did it only to preserve my voice', 5.1.76.

⁷⁶ See Mary Bly, *Queer Virgins and Virgin Queens on the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford University Press, 2000), particularly her discussion of Bordello's obscene wordplay in *Tire Turke*, pp. 2, 61–74.

... attired inflame coloured Taffita close to their bodie like naked Boyes'.⁷⁷ Yet, in Italy Cupid was sometimes performed literally naked,⁷⁸ and it is possible that this practice extended to England for certain private audiences. For example, in one of the first Italian masques performed for Henry VIII, Cupid appeared on a triumphal car 'drawn by three boys stark naked', presumably meant to represent *putti*.⁷⁹ In *Coelum Britannicum* (1634), a masque by Thomas Carew and Inigo Jones praising Charles I's reform of the Jacobean court, Cupid is enjoined to 'go no more so scandalously naked, but ... to make him breeches, though of his mother's petticoats'.⁸⁰ If a theatre like the Whitefriars took the liberty of performing Cupid naked, not only would the play's homoerotic subtext be enhanced but the Knight's castration could be read back onto the boy's body: desire's physical immaturity reflecting desire's inevitable punishment. And yet, this infantilized body was not without its consolations.

The Pleasures of Infantilism: Sidney vs. Greville

Perhaps the most extreme form of effeminization threatened by Cupid is a return to infancy. But rather than straightforward condemnation, there is an illicit pleasure to be found in the idea of being unmastered. Indeed, I would suggest that adult male identification with an infantile Cupid is perhaps the ultimate early modern fantasy of abjection, though given the emphasis placed on the performance of masculinity in this period, and considering the 'inconsistent, difficult or disrupted nurture'⁸¹ that often characterized the experience of infancy, perhaps this should not surprise us. Twenty-first century psychiatry recognizes a condition called 'paraphilic infantilism' or 'adult baby syndrome', usually found among heterosexual men, where the subject takes pleasure in the abandonment of responsibility and inhibition through becoming an infant. As one subject of a recent case study put it, 'I won't ever get married or have kids if I am stuck as a baby' But it is also an opportunity to revisit (or to heal the absence of) loving, maternal nurturance: '[I want] to be taken care of by a mommy who can

⁷⁷ Francis Beaumont, 'Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn', in *Five Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge University Press, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 124–39, at p.132. Jonson's masque *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly* (1611) required 'three yards of flesh-coloured satin for Cupid's coat and hose'.

⁷⁸ See, for example, the *intermezzi* for Francesco d'Ambra's *La Cofanaria*, performed in 1565 for a Medici wedding in Florence (also discussed in the final chapter). The printed account describes 'Cupid approaching with wings and quite nude as he is described by the Poets', Alessandro Striggio, A Description of Alessandro Striggio and Francesco Corteccia's Intermedi "Psyche and Amor", trans. Theodore Baker, in *Miscellaneous Studies in the History of Music*, ed. O. G. Sonneck (New York: Macmillan, 1921), pp. 269–86, at p. 277.

⁷⁹ *Calendar of State Papers: Venetian*, pp. 2–3. See also my Introduction.

⁸⁰ Thomas Carew, *Five Poems of Thomas Carew*, ed. Rhodes Dunlap (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), pp. 151–85, at p. 159.

⁸¹ Gail Kern Paster, *Five Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 217.

hold me and rock me and give me a bottle.’⁸² Without underestimating the differences between twenty-first and sixteenth-century gender construction, there seems to me to be some correspondence between this modern aspiration to play the part of a baby and Cupid as a figure of identification for the early modern reader and theatre-goer.

‘Spineless, beseeching, and at a loss, Astrophil is also — and more specifically — feminised, castrated and unmanned’.⁸³ Critics have tended to defend this aspect of the sequence by arguing that Sidney merely ‘rehearses the role of the disappointed young man’ and that he transforms Astrophil’s abjection into ‘a symptom of the poet’s rhetorical command’. However, Catherine Bates rejects this explanation, urging us to perceive

in the lover’s shattered, dismembered frame not an intact masterly self but those ‘bits and pieces of masculinity which Judith Butler finds scattered across the psychic landscape, ‘dispositions, sexual trends, and aims’ that ‘are diffuse and disorganized, unbounded by the exclusivity of a heterosexual object choice’.⁸⁴

This proposition is consistent with the disruption to polarities of gender and sexuality that we have seen being authored by Cupid, though Bates refers to him only briefly as a cause of Astrophil’s humiliation. Rather than pursue this argument in more detail, I would like to extend it in another direction, to focus on the pleasure Astrophil experiences through identification with Cupid.

Sidney’s tendency to define the neediness of desire in infantile terms extends throughout his poetry. In ‘Lamon’, Strephon’s passion for Urania is likened to ‘a babe, [which] with milke of Sight he nurst: / Desire the more he suckt, more sought the brest’.⁸⁵ An extended version can be found in his lyric ‘Sleepe Babie mine, Desire’, where the speaker’s Petrarchan frustration identifies him directly with the infant, kept awake by its lust for milk/sexual satisfaction from the nurse, Beautie. However, the most sustained identification between adult male and desiring infant is to be found in *Astrophil and Stella*, anticipated in the famous close of sonnet 71: “‘But ah”, Desire still cries, “give me some food””, but becoming more complex through the babe’s reinvention as Cupid.

The latter’s infancy is exploited by both speaker and poet in a variety of ways. His needing Stella’s body for warmth, protection and sustenance (nos. 8, 12 and 46) implies Astrophil’s Petrarchan life-or-death dependence on the beloved and her unnatural, unfeminine cruelty in neglecting him. At the same time as it supports the case

⁸² See Jennifer E. Pate and Glen O. Gabbard, ‘Adult Baby Syndrome’, *American Journal of Psychiatry* 160 (November 2003), 1932–6, at 1932.

⁸³ Catherine Bates, ‘Astrophil and the Manic Wit of the Abject Male’, *Studies in English Literature* 41.1 (winter 2001), 1–24, at 1–2.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 3–4, 8.

⁸⁵ Sidney, *Tire Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, Other Poems*, no. 4, lines 201–4.

for Astrophil's satisfaction, this metaphor exposes the real nature of his desire: the material demands of the infant interrupt and cancel out the lover's Neoplatonic pretensions. Moreover, by invoking Cupid Astrophil creates an image of his own arrested development. In sonnet 53, he insists that Love has ruined his performance in the tournament and elsewhere his sense of failure is reinforced by Cupidean imagery: 'My youth doth waste; my knowledge brings forth toys' (no. 18, line 9). And yet, the most lasting effect of Astrophil's identification with Cupid is vicarious pleasure: as Cupid is nurtured by Stella, adult and infantile eroticism merge. For example, in sonnet 73, the same language is used to describe Astrophil's stealing a kiss (a 'sugared kiss / In sport I sucked') as Cupid's breast-feeding (sucking 'pap well sugared' at Stella's breast) in sonnet 12. Maternal love is further eroticized in the latter's Cupidean blazon:

Cupid, because thou shin'st in Stella's eyes,
That from her locks, thy day-nets, none 'scapes free,
That those lips swell, so full of thee they be,
That her sweet breath makes oft thy flames to rise (Tines 1–4)

Not only is Stella apparently aroused by the presence of Cupid, as suggested by the swelling of her (labial?) lips, but Cupid responds in kind with the tumescent implications of 'rise'.

One reader who clearly noted Astrophil's identification with Cupid is Sidney's life-long friend and poetic rival, Sir Fulke Greville. Not only does he seem to have been writing his sonnet sequence *Gaelica* at the same time as Sidney was writing *Astrophil and Stella*⁸⁶ he repeats some of the same Cupid narratives and themes from a more critical perspective. Whilst this is consistent with Greville's larger tendency to 'subject romantic love and the desires of the flesh to sceptical and disenchanted commentary',⁸⁷ it is also directed against the threat of an infantile Cupid. For example, in sonnet 12 the lover who trusts in Cupid deserves what he gets: 'Fie, wanton, fie; who would show children kindness?' (line 5). Sonnet 26 adapts the colloquial style of Sidney to a Grevillian sense of shame at emasculation: 'Was ever man so over-match'd with boy?' (line 1), whilst sonnet 42 begins: 'Who worships Cupid doth adore a boy'. Contempt is, however, only the most straightforward of Greville's strategies to distance himself from Cupid. He persistently identifies children and women as one sex through their passionate and inconstant natures, thereby casting into relief his own masculine rationality

⁸⁶ On the relationship between Sidney and Greville, see Joan Rees, *Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, 1554–1628: A Critical Biography* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 102, at pp. 90–1. Joan Curbet suggests that the secular poems in *Gaelica* were written between 1579 and 1583, 'the precise years during which his friend Sidney was working on his own *Astrophil and Stella*' in "Changeling Love": The Function of Cupid in Fulke Greville's *Gaelica*, *SEDERI jy* (1998), 163–70, at 163.

⁸⁷ Rees, *Fulke Greville*, p. 103. Morris W. Croll identifies nine sonnets featuring Cupid in *Astrophil* that seem to have influenced a further seventeen sonnets in *Gaelica* in *Tire Works of Fulke Greville: A Tiresis* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1903), pp. 8–9. On Greville's use of Cupid to critique Petrarchism, see Curbet, ' "Changeling Love" ', 165–9.

and self-control (no. 26). Elsewhere, he adopts an authoritarian approach to Cupid by transforming him into his servant (no. 72). The abuse that Cupid suffers represents the speaker's own disappointment in sonnet 25, yet he begins with a commanding imperative that reasserts the hierarchy of age and power:

Cupid, my pretty boy, leave off thy crying,
Thou shalt have bells or apples; be not peevish;
Kiss me sweet lad; beshrew her for denying;
Such rude denials do make children thievish. (Tines 1–4)

This poem is clearly indebted to *Astrophil* 73 in that both speakers imagine Cupid incurring the beloved's unreasonable anger after he has taken a liberty. However, Greville specifically addresses the threat of male emasculation in the final couplet, where he seizes Cupid's weapon and recasts the beloved in a subordinate role: 'Give me a bow, let me thy quiver borrow, / And she shall play the child with love, or sorrow' (lines 13–14). Finally, when Greville's speaker identifies with Cupid he does so having first reimagined him as a kind of rake or seducer, a figure not found in *Astrophil and Stella* and seeming rather to anticipate *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* when he describes their seduction pact:

With open hand thou offered'st me her heart,
Thy bow and arrows, if I would conspire,
To ruin honour, with whose frozen art
She tyranniz'd thy kingdom of desire. (no. 27, lines 5–8)

But for all that he has gained in terms of mastery by repudiating the Sidneian Cupid, Greville has also lost an aspect of the sequence's eroticism and of its consolation. Although at times Cupid is as vulnerable as *Astrophil*, he more fully possesses *Stella*:

When he will play, then in her lips he is,
Where, blushing red, that *Love's* seife doth them love,
With either lip he doth the other kisse:
But when he will for quiet's sake remove
From all the world, her heart is then his roome,
Where well he knows, no man to him can come.
(No. 43, lines 9–14)

Cupid is able to satisfy his needs without any threat of repudiation, and it is this fantasy that infantile Cupid particularly embodies.

In an influential study of the mother-child bond, *The Origins of Love and Hate* (1935), Ian D. Suttie identifies a particular stage in the maturation of boys when maternal affection is suddenly withdrawn in order to encourage 'manliness', what he calls the 'tenderness taboo'. To redress this loss, adult sexual relationships will ideally be defined by a return to the infantile state:

It seems to me that the complete passion of love integrates genital appetite with that ‘love’ or tenderness which is the descendant or derivative of infantile need. It utilizes it, as it were, as a means of restoring the lost sense of union with the mother; for sexual intercourse and suckling are alike and unique in this respect, that in neither should there be any difference or conflict-of-interest between the partners ... The act or rather its culmination, is totally reciprocal, otherwise it becomes associated with anxiety. It restores the free give-and-take of infancy where there is as yet no doubt of ‘welcome’ or ‘acceptance’.⁸⁸

The early modern practice of creating a masculine child through ‘breeching’ and separation from the female bears some comparison with the prewar rituals that Suttie describes and in the remainder of this chapter we will consider Cupid’s ability to perform his reparation — ‘the free give-and-take of infancy, where there is yet no doubt of “welcome” or “acceptance”’ — on the stage.⁸⁹ Although the actor playing Cupid was a boy and not an infant, the performance of early childhood may have been similar to that of femininity, being a composite of costume (the coat of the unbreeched child), physical interaction (dandled in the maternal lap) and gesture. Moreover, the ease with which the boy actor could be infantilized is suggested by *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* in which the Wife exclaims: ‘didst thou ever see a prettier child? how it behaves it seife, I warrant yee, and speakes, and lookes, and pearts up the head?’ (1.2.23–5). The neutral pronoun ‘it’ was generally applied to children under the age of seven and it is this, as much as her astonishment at the child’s ability to hold up its head, that infantilizes the boy actor.⁹⁰ Even so, it may have been necessary to the fantasy I am proposing that the child was not an infant and that, as Cupid, he indulged in maternal nurturance whilst armed against its dangers.

Cupid and Maternal Nurturance on the Early Modern Stage

The prevailing image of early modern infancy seems to have very little to do with pleasure, being defined by maternal rejection, contaminated wet-nursing and the threat of infanticide. More specifically, the infant/ young child was seen as suspended between two poles of damaging maternal nurture.⁹¹ Warnings against neglect are most often

⁸⁸ Ian D. Suttie, *Ure Origins of Love and Hate* (London: Kegan Paul, 1935), p.72.

⁸⁹ On the possibility that both plays were performed by the same boys’ company, see Martin Wiggins, ‘When Did Marlowe write *Dido, Queen of Carthage*?’, *Review of English Studies* 59 (2008), 521–41.

⁹⁰ See also Wall’s discussion of this response in *Staging Domesticity*, p. 177.

⁹¹ For recent critical discussion, see Kathryn Schwarz, ‘Mother Love: Cliches and Amazons in Early Modern England’, in Miller and Yavneh, *Maternal Measures*, pp. 293–305; Mary Beth Rose, ‘Where are

sparked by the debate over feeding, with the mother accused of abandoning her child to the ministrations of an untrustworthy or infectious wet-nurse. Yet an excess of maternal love was also considered dangerous. In *A Godly Forme of Houshold Government* (1598, repr. 1621), Robert Cleaver and John Dod argue that by spoiling the child through blandishments and a lack of discipline, the mother not only encourages it to grow up vicious, she incites a jealous God to punish her idolatry, thus excessive love might bring about its death (297).

These forms of flawed nurturance were often critiqued through tales of infant substitution. In *De la Nourriture et Gouvernement des Enfants*, translated as *The Nursing of Children* (1612), Jacques Guillemeau warns that the nurse may be tempted to replace one child with another when ‘by some ill chance [the original] be stifled, over-laid, be let fall, and so comes to an untimely death: or else may be devoured, spoiled or disfigured’ (Iijv). In fairy mythology, the mortal child is replaced with a changeling, often marked by some deformity or sickness, as a punishment for parental neglect, and one interpretation of the myth is that it explains ‘the failure of the parent-infant bond and the physical consequences that flow from that failure’.⁹² The tradition of Cupid as substitute child begins with the *Aeneid* Book 1, in which his impersonation of Ascanius allows him to exploit Dido’s maternal affection, but it may also have persisted in the early modern period due to Cupid’s unique ability, first to punish inappropriate or inadequate nurturance, and then to produce intense maternal love.

In *Sappho and Phao*, name-calling and physical threats are the characteristics of Venus’ mothering. After being struck by one of his arrows, she becomes more submissive to Cupid, imploring him to intervene in the Sappho/Phao love affair with ‘Good my boy’ (5.1.14), ‘sweet child’ (line 20) and ‘Sweet Cupid’ (line 22). But when he betrays her by climbing onto Sappho’s lap, Venus reverts to bullying and threats: And as for you, sir boy, I will teach you how to run away: you shall be stripped from top to toe, and whipped with nettles, not roses’.⁹³ Hence, although Cupid’s transfer of power to Sappho is motivated by revenge, it is also defined by the wish for a different kind of nurture (5.2.16–7). Sappho has no interest in Cupid’s affection; she merely wishes to use him to defeat Venus. Yet she detects his weakness and thus reinvents herself

the Mothers in Shakespeare? Options for Gender Representation in the English Renaissance’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42.3 (autumn 1991), 291–314, and Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 65–81.

⁹² See ‘Changeling’ by JoAnn Conrad, in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales*, ed. Donald Haase (Westport and London: Greenwood, 2008), pp. 179–80, and Joyce Underwood Munro, ‘The Invisible Made Visible: The Fairy Changeling as a Folk Articulation of Failure to Thrive in Infants and Children’, in *Ure Good People: New Fairylore Essays*, ed. Peter Narváez (New York and London: Garland, 1991), pp. 251–83, at pp. 251–2.

⁹³ Lyly alludes to two of the most famous classical narratives about Cupid in these lines: Moschus’ *Fugitive Cupid* and Ausonius’ *Cupido Cruciatu*s. The threat of Lyly’s Venus pointedly exceeds that of Ausonius who only whips him ‘with a wreath of Roses’, Anacreon, *Anacreon. Bion. Moschus* (1651), p. 72.

as an indulgent and cossetting mother: 'thou shalt be my son. Mileta, give him some sweetmeats ... Thou shalt sit in my lap; I will rock thee asleep and feed thee with all these fine knacks' (lines 9—11, 22—4).

If the contrast between Venus and Sappho is based on a bullying versus an affectionate maternal style, also significant is the sexuality that informs these alternatives. The incestuous nature of Venus' motherhood is made clear when she threatens:

I will set you to blow Vulcan's coals, not to bear Venus's quiver. I will
handle you for this gear ... Come, Cupid, she knows not how to use
thee. Come with me, you know what I have for you. Will you not?
(5.2.78–82, 98–100)

The bawdy puns on 'handle', 'gear' and 'use' suggest that Venus has previously controlled her son by masturbation. This may have been less shocking to an early modern audience than it is now. Ariès suggests that small boys were often subject to adult sexual fondling, citing the example of the infant Louis XIII, who is recorded as having had his penis touched and/ or kissed by a number of courtiers including the king's mistress and his own mother.⁹⁴ But although Ariès concludes that 'the child under the age of puberty was believed to be unaware of, or indifferent to, sex. Thus gestures and allusions had no meaning for him; they became purely gratuitous and lost their sexual significance' (103–4), Ais is belied by manuals on child-care which specifically warn parents not to perform lewd acts before their children or to encourage them by laughing 'at any words or deedes of their children, done lewdly, dishonestly, naughtily, wantonly, or shamefully, not to kisse or commend them for so dooing'.⁹⁵

That the relationship between a doting mother and her son was potentially erotic is acknowledged in a variety of ways. For example, in *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622), William Googe suggests that inordinate parental affection may result in incest: 'what may be said of those that are so hellishly enamoured with their children as to commit incest or buggery with them?' (500). A less extreme manifestation is the child's sexual vice in adulthood. In *A Godly Forme of Houshold Government*, Cleaver and Dod warn that mothers who can hardly bear to let their child out of their sight will be punished by being 'compelled to see its unbridled wantonness' (297–8), an outcome that is rendered in more graphic detail by Juan Luis Vives' *Instruction of a Christian Woman* (trans. Richard Hyrde, 1522). Here, one of the author's male friends expresses gratitude that his mother died when he was young, for 'if she had lyved, I had never come to Paris to lerne: But had syt styll at home all my lyfe, amonge dicing, drahhes, delicates, and pleasures, as I begounne' (Mjv). Not only does the friend blame extreme maternal love for adult sexual debauchery ('drabbes' taking the place of the mother),

⁹⁴ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960, repr. 1973), pp. 98–100.

⁹⁵ Robert Cleaver and John Dod, *A Godly Form of Householde Governement* (London, 1598, repr. 1621), pp. 260–1, at p. 294.

he attributes other features of his decadence to the same source. Thus, his taste in ‘délicates’ is implicitly formed at the maternal breast, whilst his syt[ing] styll at home’ amidst such ‘pleasures’ eroticizes his sitting in the maternal lap.⁹⁶

But if this maternal fondness was debilitating for the average early modern boy, it held no dangers for Cupid. On rare occasions, he might be understood as the victim of impure nurturing. In Wroth’s *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, the speaker blames Venus: ‘What faults he hath, in her, did still begin, / And from her breast he sucked his fleeting pace’ (P85, lines 7–8). But, in general, Cupid exploits his erotic appeal to procure the pleasures of extreme maternal love. In *The Nursing of Children*, Guillemeau describes how the boy actively woos his mother’s affection:

He endeavours to shew her a thousand delights, and to make her forget or take in good part, so much care and paines, as shee hath taken with him. He playes a number of apish trickes about her, he kisseth her, strokes her haire, nose, and eares: he flatters her, he counterfeits anger, and other passions, and as he groweth bigger, hee finds other sports with her, which causeth that they beare one another such an affection, as cannot be expressed; & makes that they can never be parted. (Ii3r)

The subtext to this dalliance is the child’s vulnerability to abandonment and his need to use sexuality (implied by the puns on grow[eth] bigger’ and other sports’) to secure maternal affection. In Shakespeare’s *The Winters Tale*, Mamillius’ attempt to tell his mother a ghost story is not unlike the courtship advocated by Guillemeau, particularly the physical proximity it encourages, as Hermione urges: ‘give’t me in mine ear’ (2.1.34). Yet the child is interrupted by Leontes, who proceeds to have him forcibly removed from Hermione’s care. The subsequent death of Mamillius, whose name derives from *mamilla*, meaning breast or teat, seems to be caused by this withdrawal of maternal nurturance, for although weaned he is not yet independent of his mother’s bodily presence.⁹⁷ Moreover, it is the fear of permanent exile that reportedly kills him: ‘The prince your son, with mere conceit and fear / Of the Queen’s speed, is gone’ (3.2.143–4).

There is no Cupid in *The Winters Tale*, but that play’s emphasis on the threat of maternal estrangement informs his appearance elsewhere. Indeed, Cupid’s capacity for seduction makes him the ideal substitute to create the scene of mutual pleasure that Guillemeau imagines: ‘they beare one another such an affection, as cannot be expressed; & makes that they can never be parted’. The play that most obviously exploits Cupid’s infantile matchmaking is *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. Dido’s marriage to Sichaeus was childless (one of the reasons why Anna urges remarriage in the *Aeneid*, Book 4) and her

⁹⁶ On the use of ‘lap’ as a synonym for the vulva, see Helkiah Crooke, *Microcosmographia* (London, 1615), ‘Of the Lap or Privities’.

⁹⁷ See also Susan Snyder, ‘Mamillius and Gender Polarization in *Tire Winter’s Tale*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50 (1999), 1–8.

frustrated maternal affection becomes one of the key elements in Cupid's seduction.⁹⁸ But the idea of Cupid as substitute may also have had an obvious appeal for the early modern female spectator. Avoiding the dangers of childbirth and embracing a 'child' whose divinity ensures that it will be untouched by time or death (a particular concern during a period of high infant mortality), Dido is enraptured by the vulnerability and neediness of her charge:

anna: Look, sister, how Aeneas' little son
 Plays with your garments and embraceth you.
 cupid: No, Dido will not take me in her arms;
 I shall not be her son, she loves me not.
 dido: Weep not, sweet boy; thou shalt be Dido's son;
 Sit in my lap, and let me hear thee sing.
Cupid sings.
 ... How lovely is Ascanius when he smiles!
 cupid: Will Dido let me hang about her neck?
 dido: Ay, wag, and give thee leave to kiss her too. (3.1.20–5, 29–31)

If Dido's maternal nurturance initiates heterosexual desire, the two are continually confused. Not only does the boy offer a kind of emotional reciprocity that the adult male withholds, he encourages various kinds of petting and cossetting which produce inordinate pleasure in both. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, similarly, Titania's passion for the changeling boy is a mingling of maternal care (since she stands in for the boy's dead mother) and heteroerotic passion, given that she performs the same actions for Bottom as for the boy: crowning him with flowers, feeding him delicacies and having him sung to sleep in her bower.

But if the male spectator was encouraged to take pleasure in such scenes by identifying with the infant's extreme vulnerability and neediness, the use of Cupid controls the threat of such abjection. Kathryn Schwarz has argued for the perception that 'From the moment of conception, through an excess of involvement or through its lack, women's bodies might always do damage to the bodies of their sons.'⁹⁹ In *Venus and Adonis*, the danger of maternal desire is suggested by the way in which Venus imprints upon Adonis' flesh: 'His tend'rer cheek receives her soft hand's print / As apt as new-fall'n snow takes any dint' (lines 353–4).¹⁰⁰ By contrast, in *Dido*, as it touches or pierces the mother, Cupid's dart is a symbol of the child's ability to control the

⁹⁸ On the fact that neither Sappho nor Dido has an heir, thus potentially alluding to the condition of Elizabeth I, see Deanne Williams, 'Dido, Queen of England', *English Literary History* 73 (spring 2006), 31–59, and Pincombe, 'Cupid and Eliza', p. 37.

⁹⁹ Schwarz, 'Mother Love', p. 298.

¹⁰⁰ Snyder describes the child's innate liquidity: 'The urge to push the child onward had to be balanced against his perceived frailty and softness, his literally fluid state of extreme malleability, which needed protection and cherishing', 'Mamillius and Gender Polarization', 4.

distance between their two bodies. Moreover, through the direction of the arrow Cupid repudiates the child's dependence on the breast at a time when weaning was often delayed until the age of two or three.¹⁰¹ In these circumstances, Janet Adelman argues that it would have been particularly problematic for the male child to 'form the specifically masculine selfhood against the matrix of [the mother/wet nurse's] overwhelming femaleness'.¹⁰² Once again, Cupid proves the ideal cipher, given that he possesses his own power at the same time as he is physically immature and emotionally dependent. Finally, the specific quality of Cupid's arrows — the fact that he can impose desire with one and slacken it with another — puts him in a unique position to choose the moment of his own detachment and self-differentiation. Ultimately, then, what enables Cupid to idealize maternal nurturance is the fact that he is not a child. As such, he can acknowledge the eroticism that early modern culture was inclined to perceive beneath parent-child relationships, but he can also control its consequences and even manipulate it to his advantage. The result is a complex fantasy for a culture in which disrupted or unsatisfying nurture was the norm, and in which a prescriptive notion of masculinity made the expression of adult vulnerability taboo.

To conclude, I have argued that the ambiguity surrounding Cupid's boyhood was fundamental to his erotic appeal in the visual arts and lyric poetry, and in the early modern theatre which was indebted to both. By combining pre-adolescent beauty with submissiveness Cupid appealed to the desires of men and women and at the same time. Hence, although he was used to punish *eros*, demonstrating the emasculation that might be suffered by the male lover consumed by passion, he also peddled a pleasurable ideal of maternal nurturance in which the man became the child. Even as he was manipulated by the adult male as a means of subduing a woman, he afforded that woman a glimpse of an alternative emotional and physical satisfaction. Thus, Cupid not only confuses the categories of early modern desire, he asserts the impossibility of categorization.

¹⁰¹ See Kathryn Schwarz, 'Missing the Breast: Desire, Disease and the Singular Effect of Amazons', in *Tire Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 147–70, at pp. 153–4. For more general discussion, see Melanie Klein, 'Weaning' (1936), in *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921–1945*, ed. Hanna Segal (London: Vintage, 1998).

¹⁰² Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays: Hamlet to 'Tire Tempest'* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 4–5, 7–

Chapter 5: ‘cupid and Psyche’: The Return of the Sacred?

‘Cupid and Psyche’¹ is the narrative in which Cupid finally comes of age. He is the morally upright husband of Psyche, the father of Pleasure, and the guide who leads humanity towards knowledge of the divine. Yet such an idea of Cupid is profoundly at odds with the profane and rebellious deity that we have seen troubling early modern England. This final chapter explores the way in which the Neoplatonic reading of ‘Cupid and Psyche’ inherited from Apuleius was baffled in England by the charged eroticism of Cupid. His redemption would depend on Continental and elite influences, requiring a change of performance space and genre from the Elizabethan popular theatre to the Caroline court masque, but ultimately seeming to demand the material absence of Cupid. In this respect, the English appropriation of ‘Cupid and Psyche’ from 1566 to 1635 traces a larger narrative arc: from the most lustrous period of Cupid’s fame to his gradual fading-out in the Caroline era.

Cupid and Psyche: Apuleius, Fulgentius and Boccaccio

The union of Cupid (Love) with Psyche (Soul) seems to have been imagined as early as the fifth century bc, when Greek terracotta reliefs used these figures to symbolize the soul’s journey after death.² A more profane interpretation soon took hold, inspired by ‘the Hellenistic taste for sentimentality and sensuality’, which defined the figures in a more romantic relationship.³ For example, in a Roman statue from the second century ad (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence), the couple are perfectly matched, being the same size (their bodies differentiated by Cupid’s full nakedness); both winged (Cupid’s feathered, Psyche’s with butterfly markings); and mirroring one another’s posture (Cupid is touching Psyche’s face and drawing it closer for a kiss). Whilst this arrangement echoes the Platonic idea of the Soul being perfected by Love and of the kiss as a means of transcendence, when the wings were dispensed with ‘the two

¹ My use of inverted commas refers to the generic narrative rather than any specific text.

² See Sonia Cavicchioli, *Tire Tale of Cupid and Psyche: An Illustrated History* (New York: George Braziller, 2002), pp. 39–56, fig. 14.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 47–8.

personifications ... represent a pair of lovers, nothing more'.⁴ Thus, the secular pull exerted by the narrative's erotic theme is apparent from its very beginnings.

The first extant narrative of 'Cupid and Psyche' was included by Lucius Apuleius in his Latin novel *The Golden Ass* (second century ad), Books 4–6. Although he was indebted to ancient sculpture,⁵ Apuleius also drew upon the Platonic texts that were popular at the time, in particular two Socratic dialogues: the winged soul's struggle to ascend in *Phaedrus* (248), and the idea of Love as a *daemon*, leading the Soul up to union with the divine, in the *Symposium* (212b). In Apuleius' novel, these would inspire Psyche's clinging to Cupid as he flies into the air and her subsequent fall to earth, as well as Cupid's interventions to save her life and render her immortal. But they were not Apuleius' only debts. Paradoxically, his reading of *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* also introduced an assumption that threatened to undermine the Platonic allegory for centuries to come. This was the conception of Cupid as a pure, celestial love which ennobles the soul, but also as the impulse to sexual desire and procreation.

When he is still the unidentified, future husband of Psyche, Cupid's nature is presented as a riddle. He is both a 'cruel and wild and snaky monster' and the epitome of male attractiveness: 'I would not even compare Cupid himself with you.'⁶ When Psyche illuminates his sleeping figure in all its resplendent beauty, Cupid appears in his Neoplatonic role to the exclusion of more profane incarnations. As E. J. Kenney puts it: 'The dangerous toys of a naughty, unbiddable child ... are transformed into the venerable attributes of a mighty god ... The potent and worshipful reality of love is revealed in its true splendour'.⁷ And yet, Psyche proceeds to offer Cupid a passion that is only appropriate to his profane self: 'Then more and more enflamed with desire for Cupid she leaned over him, panting desperately for him' (293). Moreover, the love-god berates himself for his self-inflicted love for Psyche which he now acknowledges as 'a frivolous thing' (295).

In the rest of Apuleius' narrative, Cupid remains unstable and elusive, shifting between sacred and profane selves (Kenney refers to Amor I and Amor II in order to distinguish them). If a natural climax is suggested by his ascent after the revelation of his godhead, he seems to fall back into his old persona. We are told that after Venus has discovered his sexual relationship with Psyche, he is locked in solitary confinement 'for fear that he would aggravate his wound by wanton self-indulgence' (331). Moreover, his reputation as an irresponsible seducer is repeatedly attested to by Venus and Jupiter. The former is more *Vulgaris* than *Coelestis* herself, which may explain why she persists in seeing only a disobedient son whose indulgence of harlots is done to spite her. Yet

⁴ *Ibid.*, fig. 18 and p. 48.

⁵ See Carl Schlam, *Cupid and Psyche: Apuleius and the Monuments* (University Park: The American Philological Association, 1976).

⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. J. Arthur Hanson, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1989), vol. 1, Books 4–6, pp. 237–355, at pp. 247, 263.

⁷ Kenney, 'Psyche and her Mysterious Husband', in *Antonine Literature*, ed. D. A. Russell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 175–98, 183–4.

Jupiter also testifies to boy-Cupid's lascivious appetites and the need to curb them with marriage (353). Hence, the joyous union of Love and Soul is not only a shotgun wedding but a sexual palliative. Finally, the fact that Cupid and Psyche's child is named Voluptas further reinforces the ambiguity, since this was a philosophical term for the soul's ravishment and an Epicurean term for sensual pleasure.

Apuleius' text never fully resolves this ambiguity about Cupid, and it would subsequently become a major point of difference in the mythographic tradition of 'Cupid and Psyche' inherited by the Renaissance. Perhaps most influential was the darkly moralistic Christian reading offered by Fulgentius in *Mitologiae* (c. 550), Book 3. This begins Platonically enough by identifying Psyche as the Soul and her parents as God and Matter but it views her gazing upon the naked form of Cupid as a sin of disobedience and of passion, equivalent to Adam tasting the fruit of the tree of knowledge.⁸ Somewhat uncharacteristically for a profane love-god, Cupid warns Psyche not to look upon his face lest she awaken the pleasure of desire. But this is exactly what happens when, holding the lamp whose flame reveals his beauty and her burning passion, Psyche gazes upon Cupid. The hot oil that burns his shoulder symbolizes how libidinal flesh is stained with the mark of sin (90) and also presumably how Cupid's own desire has turned against him. Fulgentius subsequently omits Psyche's pregnancy, Cupid's preservation of her life and the joyful celebration of their marriage leading to her immortality in order to emphasize the tragedy of Psyche's fall, as instigated by Cupid, whom he conceives of as profane Desire or 'cupiditatem' (90).

An important counter-argument is offered by Boccaccio. He encountered the manuscript at the beginning of the *trecento* and his transcription made a major contribution to the legend's dissemination via Italy to the rest of Europe.⁹ Yet his exegesis in the printed edition of the *De Genealogia deorum* was also crucial. In Book 9, chs. 4–5, he acknowledges the existence of a profane Cupid, paraphrasing Cicero's account of him as the son of Mars and father of Voluptas (Sensual Pleasure), and cites the passage where Psyche sees him sleeping as evidence of Cupid's own lasciviousness.¹⁰ Nevertheless, in his retelling of *Cupid and Psyche* (Book 5, ch. 22), Boccaccio renders Cupid synonymous with the Christian God or (since he describes Psyche's father, Apollo, as God) with His earthly incarnation and mediator, Christ.¹¹ Where traces of the libidinous Cupid linger, they are produced by Psyche's flawed vision: in his sleeping form 'she sees the gorgeous image of a man'. But in her final

⁸ Fulgentius, *Fulgentius the Mythographer*, p. 89.

⁹ For discussion of the narrative's transmission across Europe via manuscript and print, see Carver, *The Protean Ass*, pp. 108–82.

¹⁰ See Claudio Moreschini, 'Towards a History of the Exegesis of Apuleius: The Case of "The Tale of Cupid and Psyche"', trans. Coco Stevenson, in *Latin Fiction: The Latin Novel in Context*, ed. Heinz Hofmann (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 215–28, at p. 220.

¹¹ For further discussion of Boccaccio's alterations to Fulgentius, see Julia Haig Gaisser, *The Fortunes of Apuleius and the Golden Ass* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 114, 118.

redemption, she again receives the gift of divine love and contemplation', symbolized by her union with Cupid:

And so she joins herself to him for ever, and, having renounced mortal things, she is brought into eternal glory and there, out of love, she gives birth to Pleasure, that is, everlasting happiness and delight.¹²

Thus, both Fulgentius and Boccaccio respond to a different aspect of the Apuleian Cupid and truncate the narrative accordingly. Their attitude to desire/Desire is not only shaped by their Christian beliefs but by the prevailing historical attitude to paganism. As Julia Haig Gaisser observes: 'Fulgentius, still viewing classical mythology from a defensive position, sees its fables as "lying fictions"; Boccaccio, by contrast, is concerned to vindicate them' (118). In the case of William Adlington, the first English translator of *Cupid and Psyche*, it is the humanist's dedication to reproducing the original Latin text; the Renaissance author's acceptance of the purely literary merits of classical mythology;¹³ but, most importantly, a Protestant suspicion of Cupid that will shape his retelling.

Reading Adlington's Cupid

As ever in the transmission of Renaissance Cupid, 'Cupid and Psyche' arrived belatedly in England. There is no evidence of a manuscript copy of Apuleius' tale until 1439, when Duke Humphrey of Gloucester bequeathed one to Oxford University, and despite his familiarity with other Boccaccian texts and his travels to Italy, Chaucer appears not to have known it.¹⁴ The first translation into English was thus similarly delayed. By 1566, when *The xi Bookes of the Golden Asse ... with an excellent narration of the Manage of Cupide and Psiches* appeared in print, there were already versions in Spanish (1513), German (1538), Italian (1518, 1550) and French (1522, 1553, 1558). But although Adlington was highly dependent upon Beroaldo's Latin edition (1500) and the most recent French translation by Jean Louveau (1558),¹⁵ his hermeneutic debt was comparatively slight. He ignores Beroaldo's Platonic explanation of Lucius' final metamorphosis, signifying 'the recovery of reason when pleasures are trampled underfoot and corporeal delights cast off and the return of the inner man (who is the true man) from that foul penitentiary, with virtue and religion as his guides, to the dwelling-place full of light'.¹⁶ Adlington also strips out Beroaldo's paraphrase of Fulgentius within the

¹² This is Carver's translation in *Tire Protean Ass*, pp. 138–9.

¹³ Moreschini observes that 'in the Renaissance, voices of dissent about the allegorical interpretation of the tale began to emerge ... owing to the greater weight given by critics to explaining ancient texts mainly from a literary point of view', 'Towards a History of the Exegesis', p. 223.

¹⁴ Carver, *Tire Protean Ass*, pp. 151–4.

¹⁵ On the debate over Adlington's sources, see *ibid.*, pp. 300–15.

¹⁶ Beroaldo also name-checks Plato's *Symposium*. See *Scriptoris intentio atque consilium*, trans. Carver, *Tire Protean Ass*, p. 179.

text of *Cupid and Psyche* and makes no attempt to offer his own exegetical account or to borrow anyone else's. The explanation for this may well be Adlington's 'sturdy Anglo-Saxon empiricism'¹⁷ or his sense of a readership more focused on the pleasures than the profits of Italian *novelle* (the first volume of Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* was published in the same year). It is also true that, although Neoplatonic ideas of love were circulating at court through *trattati d'amore* such as Castiglione's *Courtier*, they were by no means as fashionable in England as they were on the Continent. It is not until 1578 that the first edition of Plato would be published, and Spenser's allusions to it in the *Shepherds Calendar* would have to wait until 1579. Nevertheless, I would argue that Adlington's 'failure' to produce a Neoplatonic reading is also a consequence of a specifically English attitude towards Cupid.

The first obstacle to such a reading is the negative images of Cupid that Adlington reproduced from Apuleius. These include the Apollonian prophecy which defines Cupid as a 'serpent dyre and fierce as may be thought / Who flies with winges above in starry skies / And doth subdew eche thyng with firy flight' (45t), and the idea of Cupid as a debauched youth, 'amorous of wenches and harlottes' (55t), who 'by his evil manners, contemninge all publique justice and lawe ... corrupt[s] the lawfull marriages of every person, [and] doth nothings but that whiche is evill' (44t). Both features relate to (and potentially invoke) the English traditions previously explored in this study. The 'serpent dyre' recalls the destructive, infernal Amor, familiar from Euripides and Seneca, being adapted for the early modern stage in Cupidean tragedy. The image of Cupid as a desiring boy returns us to the fear of sexual exploitation uncovered in the previous chapter. Moreover, when Venus charges Cupid that 'beeinge of tender and unripe yeeres, thou hast with too licentious appetite embraced my mortali Foe' (55t), Adlington not only associates his youth with betrayal, he expresses a particularly early modern anxiety about the biological consequences of boyhood sexuality.¹⁸

In general, for all the work that has been done to exonerate Adlington from the charge of prudishness,¹⁹ his translation of *Cupid and Psyche* demonstrates a marked unease with Cupid's erotic appeal. Having Beroaldo and Louveau in front of him, Adlington consistently opts for the latter's chastened text, though even this requires some alterations. He renders the incestuous embrace offered by the Apuleian Venus, '[she] kissed her son long and intensely with parted lips' (243), as 'she embraced and kissed her sonne' (45V), thereby eschewing Louveau in which it is Cupid who does the kissing: 'après l'avoir longuement baisé de grande affection, il print son chemin'.²⁰

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

¹⁸ In *Loves Mistress* (1634), an English dramatization of 'Cupid and Psyche' discussed in detail below, Pan also takes aim at contemporary sexual mores: 'for all are up to th'eares in love; / Boys without beards get boys, and girls bear girls', Thomas Heywood, *Love's Mistress, or the Queen's Masque*, ed. Raymond C. Shady (Salzburg: Institut für englische Sprache und Literatur, 1977), 1.3.45–6.

¹⁹ See Carver, *The Protean Ass*, p. 326.

²⁰ Lucius Apuleius, *Luc. Apulee de l'Ane doré* *XI livres* (Lyons, 1558), p. 139.

Adlington also diminishes the sensuality of the sleeping Cupid. In Apuleius, Psyche gazes upon her husband:

On his golden head she saw the glorious hair drenched with ambrosia: wandering over his milky neck and rosy cheeks were the neatly shackled ringlets of his locks, some prettily hanging in front, others behind; the lightning of their great brilliance made even the lamp's light flicker. Along the shoulders of the winged god white feathers glistened like flowers in the morning dew; and although his wings were at rest, soft and delicate little plumes along their edges quivered restlessly in wanton play. (291)

Where Apuleius' description of Cupid's wings has a kind of onanistic thrill to it, 'quiver[ing] restlessly in wanton play' (291), in Adlington they merely 'trembl[e] hither and thither' (53V).²¹ He also lessens the sexual innuendo surrounding Psyche's handling of her husband's arrow and heightens the disapproval with which her pricking is described. In Apuleius, 'Insatiably and with some curiosity, Psyche scrutinised and handled and marvelled at her husband's arms' until, pricking herself with one of his arrows, 'more and more enflamed with desire ... She eagerly covered him with impassioned and impetuous kisses' (293). Adlington's Psyche merely marvel[s]' at her husband's weapon (53t) and, having pricked herself, she is 'more broyling in the love of Cupide' but avoids the breathless desperation and hungry kissing of Apuleius (53t). Finally, where Apuleius eroticizes the wound to recall Psyche's loss of virginity ('tiny drops of rose-red blood moistened the surface of her skin' (293)), Adlington simply asserts that she drew blood.

Such alterations suggest that, if Adlington was uninterested in a Neoplatonic reading of *Cupid and Psyche*, he was anxious to control the narrative's erotic effects. In their response to this and subsequent editions (1571, 1582, 1596 and 1639), however, his readers would prove considerably less scrupulous, not only playing up the narrative's voyeurism but parodying its pretensions to a sublimated desire. This shift in emphasis may be partly attributable to an increasingly erotic visual tradition. There was at least one fresco cycle on the theme of *Cupid and Psyche* in England, commissioned by Sir Thomas Smith c. 1570 for Hill Hall, Essex (where it would have been easily accessible to the Sidneys of Penshurst). Although it survives in only two fragments, neither of which features Cupid, the whole appears to have been modelled on Michiel Coxie's adaptation of designs by Raphael, engraved by the Master of the Die and Agostino Veneziano and published as *The Story of Psyche* (c. 1536).²² This set of thirty-two engravings includes

²¹ Adlington is much closer to the relatively chaste account of Louveau, *ibid.*, PP-169-70.

²² See J. F. A. Roberts, 'English Wall-Paintings after Italian Engravings', *Burlington Magazine* 28 (1941), 86-92, and Tobit Curteis, 'The Elizabethan Wall Paintings of Hill Hall: Influences and Techniques', in *Painting Techniques: History, Materials and Studio Practice*, ed. Ashok Roy and Perry Smith (London: International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 1998), pp. 131-5.

a naked Cupid, discovered by Psyche, which was reproduced in ceramics, stained glass windows and frescos across Europe, and was also one of the most popular stand-alone images from the cycle, its eroticism particularly exploited by painters in the Mannerist tradition.²³ Furthermore, the theme of ‘Cupid Sleeping’ sculpted by Michelangelo but later painted by Caravaggio (1608, Palazzo Pitti, Florence) and Caracciolo (1628, Royal Collection, London) intensified the erotic interest around this prostrate figure and may have contributed to his profane identity. One of the conventional morals extracted from it was that the mind can only find tranquillity when passion sleeps.

In early modern literature, allusions to ‘Cupid and Psyche’ are not only deployed in erotic contexts, they expose the baser impulses of the original. For example, in Sidney’s *Old Arcadia* the shepherd, Dametas, gazes upon the post-coital slumbers of Philoclea and ‘Cleophila’:

looking with the lamp in his hand, but neither with such a face nor mind, upon these excellent creatures, as Psyche did upon her unknown lover, and giving every way freedom to his fearful eyes, [he] did not only perceive it was Cleophila (and therefore much different from the lady he sought), but that this same Cleophila did more differ from the Cleophila he and others had ever taken her for. (237)

The initial joke is Dametas’ bathetic impersonation of Psyche (‘neither with such a face nor mind’). Yet this substitution also takes Sidney’s readers back to the original narrative, recalling the sexual passion with which Psyche gazed on Cupid and its punitive consequences. Furthermore, the fact that the revelation is not of Cleophila’s divinity but of her gender not only underlines the princes’ sexual motivations throughout the *Arcadia* (here satisfied by extra-marital intercourse), but also recalls the libidinal nature of the Apuleian Cupid that would only be reformed by marriage.

Other contemporary allusions focus on Cupid’s desire. For example, in John Dicken-son’s romance *Arisbas, Euphues among his slumbers: or Cupids iourney to Hell* (1594), Beauty asserts her superiority over Love by recalling how ‘Psyche gained / Cupids heart’ and mocks the fact that the latter was ‘Vanquishde by a womans sight’ (Fjr). Rather than being a sign of *Amor vincit omnia* or an allusion to Christ’s Passion,²⁴ Cupid’s wounding himself so that he might become infatuated with Psyche is understood as inherently degrading. Thus, the speaker in Thomas Watson’s *Hekatompathia* (1582) scorns him:

²³ See, for example, Lorenzo Sabbatinis *Psyche Discovering Cupid’s Identity* (late sixteenth century). As Cavicchioli observes: ‘The Mannerist style of the late sixteenth century — whether flourishing at Fontainebleau, in the courts of Italy, or at Prague — was a great creator of erotic images, made licit through the filter of classical mythology’, *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*, p. 171.

²⁴ In Adlington, Cupid rebukes Psyche for ingratitude, asserting that he ‘did come my seife from heaven to love thee, and wounded mine owne bodie with my proper weapons to have thee to my spouse’, William Adlington, *lise xi Bookes of the Golden Asse ... with an excellent narration of the Mariage of Cupide andPsiches* (London, 1566), p. 53t.

If *Psyches* beames could set thy heart on fire,
 How can I hope, of thee to have reliefe,
 Whose minde with mine doth suffer like desire?
 Henceforth my heart shall sacrifice elsewhere
 To such a *Sainte* as higher porte doth beare.
 (No. 76, lines 2–6)

Even Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, which focuses on the end of the narrative, struggles to maintain its chastened conclusion. In Book 3, canto 6, the mischievous and erotic Cupid is apparently transformed by becoming the husband of Psyche. The deity that 'hath with spoiles and cruelty / Ransackt the world' (49.5–6) suffers a change of heart on entering the Garden of Adonis where he 'lay[s] his sad dartes / Asyde' to commit himself to family life:

his trew love faire *Psyche* with him playes,
 Fayre *Psyche* to him lately reconcyld,
 After long troubles and unmeet upbrayes,
 With which his mother *Venus* her revyld,
 And eke himselfe her cruelly exyld:
 But now in stedfast love and happy state
 She with him lives, and hath him borne a child,
Pleasure, that doth both gods and men aggrate,
Pleasure, the daughter of *Cupid* and *Psyche* late. (50)

But although this suggests an Apuleian end to Cupid's reign of terror, it is clearly temporary. Cupid 'resortes' to the Garden, where he lays aside his darts only to take them up later at the House of Busirane and again at the beginning of Book 4. Moreover, his homoerotic toying with the garden's namesake ('with faire Hoorah [he] playes his wanton partes' (49.9)), even as he is wedded to Psyche, suggests the impossibility of delimiting Cupidean *eros*.²⁵

In his overview of sixteenth-century literary appropriations of 'Cupid and Psyche' Robert Carver suggests that the narrative's main disadvantage was its ending: 'The binding of Cupid to Psyche robs love-elegy, mythological narrative, and comedy of one of their principal agents: the "winged boy" whose "sad darts" set so many plots and poems in motion'.²⁶ To avert this danger some poets hinted at a faithless Cupid, capable of abandoning Psyche,²⁷ whilst others, like Spenser, merely dropped one conception of Cupid for another. But if it was necessary to sabotage the 'Cupid and Psyche' ending in

²⁵ For an alternative reading that sees the 'Cupid and Psyche' allusion promising the maturation of Adonis into a husband, see Lisa Celovsky, 'Early Modern Masculinities and *The Faerie Queene*', *English Literary Renaissance* 35.2 (2005), 210–47.

²⁶ Carver, *The Protean Ass*, p. 388.

²⁷ In sonnet 5 of R. L.'s *Diella* (1596), Cupid 'gan loathe his *Psiches* lovely face' in preference for the speaker's beloved.

order to sustain an erotic narrative, it is equally the case that English Cupid never had been fixed by his union with Psyche: the erotic and Neoplatonic aspects of his identity remained irreconcilable. Where this clash becomes most apparent is the performance of 'Cupid and Psyche' on the English stage.

Heywood's *Love's Mistress*

There were at least three 'Cupid and Psyche' plays performed in London between 1557 and 1634. The first was by Paul's Boys, presumably at the Blackfriars theatre, in 1581 and though the text is unfortunately lost it may have paved the way for other Cupid plays such as Peele's lost *The Hunting of Cupid* and Lyly's *Gallathea* and *Love's Metamorphosis*. While both dramatists habitually deploy Neoplatonic ideas in the service of royal panegyric, Lyly's Cupid is also a mischievous deity whose relationship with Venus is erotic and incestuous (as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4). The second *Cupid and Psyche*, written by Chetile, Dekker and Day and also lost, was performed in 1600 by the Admiral's Men, perhaps in an attempt to reproduce the kind of material that had made their rivals popular.²⁸ Again, it seems to have been part of a repertory that was characterized by new and revived mythological plays, including a two-part *Hercules* and Marlowe's *Dido*, suggesting that the audience would already have been familiar with a carnal and destructive Cupid.

This leaves Thomas Heywood's *Love's Mistress* (1634) as the only surviving dramatic text of 'Cupid and Psyche' from this period. Whilst it looks back to the subject's history on the public stage, the play's indebtedness to the court masque (to the extent that it was renamed 'The Queen's Masque') also suggests the changes that were required for a Neoplatonic revival, offering us the clearest sense yet of the ways in which a stubborn English Cupid continued to resist the elevating influence of 'Cupid and Psyche'.

Though no direct echoes have been found, Heywood probably used Adlington's translation as well as the Latin text,²⁹ but more intriguing is his indebtedness to Chetile, Day and Dekker. In the anthology *England's Parnassus* (1600), two poems are attributed to Dekker — one directed to the praise of Apollo (no. 1988), the other describing the descent into a beautiful valley through the power of Zephyrus (no. 2232) — which subsequently appeared almost verbatim in *Love's Mistress*. Hence, these poems have been understood as extracts from the 1600 *Cupid and Psyche*, which starts to look like an immediate source for Heywood's play. This does not mean that he had an authorial hand in the original; he may have acted in it 'and cribbed years afterwards

²⁸ See Jean McIntyre, *Costumes and Scripts in the Elizabethan Theatre* (University of Alberta Press, 1992), pp. 101–2.

²⁹ See Heywood, *Love's Mistress*, p. xlii.

from the manuscript of his part'.³⁰ What is illuminating about the second of these poems is the kind of alteration it suggests Heywood had to make in order to platonize his subject. In *England's Parnassus*, the poem appears as follows:

When many a weary step
Had brought us to the top of yonder mount,
Milde Zephirus embrac'd us in his armes,
And in a donde of sweete and rich perfumes,
Cast us into the lap of that greene meade,
Whose bosome stucke with purple Violets,
Hälfe budded Lillies, and young Musk-rose trees,
About whose waste the amorous woodbine twines,
Whilst they seeme maidens in a lovers armes,
There on the curled forehead of a banke,
That sweld with camomill, over whose bewtie
A wanton Hyacinth held downe his head,
And by the winds helpe oft stole man a kisse,
He sate us downe, and thus we did arrive.

In *Love's Mistress*, only the first five lines are given (2.1.5—9), thereby omitting the most erotic and Cupidean features of the original. For example, the imagery of the female body used to blazon Nature, including the 'bosome stucke with purple Violets' and the 'Hälfe budded Lillies', has been cut, as has the amorous woodbine' twining about the 'waste' of the 'young Musk-rose trees' which might have recalled Psyche's defloration by and subsequent clinging to Cupid. Similarly, the image of 'wanton Hyacinth' as a parallel for Cupid's beauty and the swelling bank which anticipates Psyche's pregnancy are excised. Even the replacement of the Venerean 'mount' with 'rocke' maybe indicative of Heywood's attempt to reduce the eroticism of the narrative as a whole.

More generally, a comparison between Apuleius and *Love's Mistress* reveals the latter's de-eroticized Cupid. Not only does Heywood omit both Apuleian and Adlingtonian references to him as a wanton youth, married off to control his lust, but the bedroom scene directs attention away from the seductive power of Cupid's beauty. Psyche's response is more about her pride at being married to a deity than any sexual arousal (3.1.16–23) and Heywood has cut the sequence wherein Psyche handles his arrows, pierces herself and falls into a more passionate love of Cupid. Although there is an implied stage direction for a kiss, there is none of that excess envisaged by Apuleius. Finally, in the end-of-act commentary, Heywood's Apuleius' suggests that Psyche was in no way infected by desire in this scene but was filled with 'amorous raptures' that are both virtuous and divine (3.3.31–4).

³⁰ Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. in, p. 346. See also W. L. Halstead, 'Dekker's *Cupid and Psyche* and Thomas Heywood', *English Literary History* 11.3 (September 1944), 182–91.

This redirection of *eros* is only part of a more explicit programme by which Heywood platonizes Cupid (and thereby redeems ‘Cupid and Psyche’ as a whole). For example, at the end of act one, Apuleius’ renames him ‘True Desire’ and explains how,

Dot[ing] on the Soul’s sweet beauty, [he] sends his servant
Zephyrus, in whom Celestial Pleasure’s meant,
To entice his love, the Soul, to his chaste bed,
Giving her Heaven for her lost maidenhead. (1.6.78–82)

Cupid’s possession of a chaste bed’ is in stark contrast to his serial philandering in Apuleius and Adlington. Moreover, Heywood has expanded his role so that it is Cupid who assists Psyche in completing the tasks set for her by Venus. Whilst this is dramatically expedient (avoiding the need to stage a talking ant, eagle, and tower), it is also consistent with the Neoplatonic thesis ‘that where love fixes its attention there is beauty, and that where there is beauty love cannot but respond’.³¹ By the end of the play, rather than Cupid’s marriage being a means to control his desire, he has become a guarantor of faithful love, urging his royal spectators to ‘prove of one faith, one mind’ (5.3.145).

The royal audience for whom Heywood’s play was conceived certainly encouraged his choice of subject matter and his interpretation of it. ‘Cupid and Psyche’ was one of the central myths by which Charles and Henrietta Maria constructed the public image of their marriage. The analogy began even before the union was consecrated, when Buckingham travelled to Paris to escort the future bride to London and suggested to Rubens that he execute a painting commemorating the event. Only a drawing remains, *Mercury Conducting Psyche to Olympus* (1625, collection of the Prince of Liechtenstein), in which Psyche is Henrietta Maria and Mercury Buckingham, whilst Cupid (Prince Charles) kneels before Jupiter (a posthumous James I) to receive his blessing on the marriage. Such an interpretation of ‘Cupid and Psyche’ was very much dictated by its occasion. The submissive image of Cupid was appropriate to Charles as prince not king (as we will see, he would ignore masquing opportunities to play Cupid). Moreover, Buckingham’s centrality emphasizes the homosocial significance of the marriage (for which he had been an advocate) rather than its romantic, heteroerotic possibilities. As ‘Cupid and Psyche’ was later appropriated by Henrietta Maria, however, its amorous and proto-feminist themes came to the fore. Not only did it serve as a subject for *Love’s Mistress*, by 1639 the queen had chosen ‘Cupid and Psyche’ as the decorative scheme of her withdrawing chamber at the Queen’s House, Greenwich.³² Jacob Jordaens was commissioned to produce twenty-two paintings to decorate the ceiling and the walls, eight of which had been installed by 1641 (now lost).³³ The pleasure

³¹ Heywood, *Love’s Mistress*, p. fix.

³² See John Bold, *Greenwich: Tire Architectural History of the Royal Hospital for Seamen and the Queen’s House* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 59–61, 74–6.

³³ The only surviving evidence is a drawing of ‘Psyche consoled by Pan’ (Stedelijk Prentenkabinet, Antwerp, reproduced in *ibid.*, fig. 107), the first painting of the cycle to arrive in England in May 1640.

that Henrietta Maria took in this subject must have been partly the heroic light in which it placed Psyche, whose elevation to divinity was the centrepiece of the ceiling design, as specified by Inigo Jones in his instructions to the painter.³⁴ However, it also facilitated the expression of the Neoplatonic philosophy that she had brought from the French court, specifically the love-doctrine of Honoré d'Urfé in *LAstrée* (1607–27) and St François de Sales in *Le Traité de l'amour de Dieu* (1616).³⁵

There are a number of reasons, beyond its fashionable, Continental status, why this philosophy should have appealed to the queen. First, the ethical and spiritual status it gave to women through its valorization of beauty enabled Henrietta Maria to assert power at the English court despite the disadvantages of her national and religious otherness' and after a troubled period in the royal marriage.³⁶ According to Heywood's Cupid, she 'Commands the hearts and eyes of high and low' but 'without my quiver and my bow' (Pro. 2, lines 17–18),³⁷ and rather than emphasize her erotic appeal the masque celebrates 'so pure a mind, / As if tinctured from heaven' (lines 21–2). The Neoplatonic emphasis on love as a source of unity (expressed in *Love's Mistress* through the marriage of the protagonists) and of cosmic harmony (the epilogue has Cupid '*pointing to the several planets*') also served Henrietta Maria's interests. Not only did it imply a Caroline repudiation of the bawdiness and homoeroticism of the Jacobean court, it became a means by which the queen might appear to support the king's moral reforms even as she occasionally critiqued them.³⁸ Finally, the Neoplatonic principles extolled by the queen's masques allowed the covert expression of her Catholicism, advancing her ambition if not to convert Charles then at least to demonstrate her faith's compatibility with his Arminian Protestantism. An anti-predestinarian agenda has been detected in the play's insistence on the possibility of repentance through divine grace, potentially endorsing Charles' and Archbishop Laud's campaign against that doctrine.³⁹ Moreover, in light of Chapter 1's discussion of Cupid as a cipher for Catholic worship and its Protestant persecution, his final commitment to 'one faith,

³⁴ Jones allows the painter considerable freedom in choosing which episodes he wishes to depict. Unfortunately, no details of Cupid are included but he does insist that at its heart should be 'Cupid and Psyche in Heaven, and Jove ... presenting a cup of Nectar unto her'. See John Webb's transcription in *ibid.*, Appendix 7, p. 75.

³⁵ For detailed discussions of Henrietta Maria's debt to French Neoplatonism see Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion: Queen Henrietta Maria and Court Entertainments* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), and Karen Britland, *Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁶ On the potential empowerment offered by Neoplatonism to elite women, and Henrietta Maria in particular, see Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature*, pp. 137–40, and Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558–1660* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 148–55.

³⁷ In Thomas Carew's poem 'To the Queen' he explicitly prefers her dominion to that of Cupid: 'From his prophaner Altars, we / Turne to adore Thy Deitie', *Tire Poems of Thomas Carew*, p. 90.

³⁸ On the way in which the Queen used *Tire Temple of Love* to comment on the sexual indiscretions of her favourite, Henry Jermyn, see Britland, *Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria*, pp. 142–4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

one mind' implies the reconciliation of these faiths through one of their most contested figures.

But if Heywood's Neoplatonic reading of 'Cupid and Psyche' dominates *Love's Mistress*, it does not exclude a more 'popular' interpretation. Alongside the masque-writer who stages 'Cupid and Psyche' to prove that 'all true poets' raptures are divine' (1.1.78) there is Midas, whose taste is considerably more earthbound, preferring a boisterous dance by Pan and the country wenches over drama, and ballads over the music of Apollo. Like Gosson, who criticized the 1581 *Cupid and Psyche* for presenting 'thinges ... fained, that never were',⁴⁰ Midas rejects the same subject matter as 'villainous lies' (2.5.3). But the particular focus of his contempt is Cupid, whose relationship with Psyche he can only understand in terms of lust, and whose theatrical representation he finds it impossible to take seriously:

thou bringst here on the stage
A young green-sickness baggage to run after
A little ape-faced boy thou term'st a god!
Is not this most absurd? (1.6.52–5)

The reference to Cupid as a little ape-faced boy' not only refers to the discrepancy between his divinity and his boyhood but also to the absurdity of his being performed by a boy actor ('ape' being a common term for such a player).⁴¹

Midas' illegitimate son, Corydon (2.3.105), subsequently extends this mockery of Cupid through terms derived from the Elizabethan popular stage. For example, in mocking Cupid's immaturity through his arrows, which are mere 'bird bolts' (2.3.16), Corydon deploys a standard jibe from both *Much Ado About Nothing* (1.1.42) and *Love's Labour's Lost* (4.3.25). He also repeats a formula established by Berowne (3.1.174–81) when he invokes Cupid as the

King of cares, cogitations and coxcombs; Viceroy of vows and vanities;
Prince of passions, prate-apaces, and pickled lovers; Duke of disasters,
dissemblers, and drowned eyes; Marquis of melancholy and mad folks;
Grand Signor of griefs and groans; Lord of lamentations; Hero of heigh-
hos; Admiral of ay-mes and Monsieur of mutton-laced. (Lines 21–7)

Here, Corydon satirizes boy-Cupid's apparent endorsement of hierarchy (the list works from highest to lowest), even as he is himself an affront to patriarchy and one

⁴⁰ Stephen Gosson, *Playes Confuted*, in *Markets of Bawdrie*, p. 168. On Midas as a figure for another anti-theatricalist, William Prynne, so recently prosecuted for *Histriomastix*, see Arthur Melville Clark, *Thomas Heywood: Playwright and Miscellanist* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1931), pp. 138–41.

⁴¹ Samuel Pepys was also struck by this disparity. In his diary entry for 8 March 1661, he describes his thoughts on watching a production of *Love's Mistress* by the Duke's Company as it was revived at Salisbury Court: 'above all it was strange to see so little a boy as that was to act Cupid, which is one of the greatest parts in it'.

who transforms his victims into the anti-social forms of the fool, the dissembler and the madman. At the same time, Cupid's bawdiness is stressed in the allusion to prostitutes ('mutton-laced'), echoing Berowne's identification of Cupid as a 'Dread prince of plackets, king of codpieces' (line 80).

We might expect to find comic subplot characters resisting a Neoplatonic reading of 'Cupid and Psyche'. More surprising is the difficulty that the main plot has in sustaining this interpretation. The Cupid fashioned by Apuleius' is an uneasy fusion of medieval and Anacreontic traditions. With Psyche and her family he is the 'Dread Cupid' (4.1.255), his language all reproof and imperative, encouraging us to visualize a physically mature, lordly Cupid who might have wandered out of the *Roman de la Rose*. But elsewhere in the same scene his minority is emphasized, with Vulcan declaring: 'I think my little boy / Cupid must blow the bellows' (4.1.39–40), and his language becomes that of the young boy when he pleads with Vulcan 'Sweet honey sugar-candy dad', and cajoles Venus 'Sweet mother Queen' (4.1.72, 130). This contradiction between Cupid as husband/god and son/small child is further endorsed by his varied entrances. When he appears to Psyche in 3.2 he uses the descent apparatus (part of the play's dedication to masque spectacular) but in the domestic scenes, such as 1.3, he walks onto the stage. Finally, he may have become a figure of homoerotic desire by lying on a bed, despite Heywood's careful censorship. Whilst serving as court painter to Charles I and Henrietta Maria, Orazio Gentileschi had produced a *Cupid and Psyche* (c. 1628–30, The Hermitage, St Petersburg; see Figure 9)⁴² in which the Caravaggesque beauty of boy Cupid overshadows that of Psyche, who is depicted clothed and with her back to the spectator. That Cupid's appearance in *Love's Mistress* produces a titillating effect is implied by Midas: 'Thy little Cupid I like pretty well, / And would see something else what he can do, / More than belongs to Psyche' (3.3.15–17).

Heywood may thus have been committed to the Neoplatonic redemption of 'Cupid and Psyche' and yet have found it difficult to avoid either the tradition of Cupid as mischievous boy that belonged to the popular theatre or the Italian, eroticized Cupid which Caroline patronage of Renaissance art had brought to London. But he was not alone in this difficulty. If we consider the other masques performed at the Caroline court which profess a Neoplatonic ideal of love we find Cupid increasingly absent.

Cupid in the Caroline Masque: *Love's Triumph Through Gallipolis and the Temple Oe Love*

Among the differences that Kevin Sharpe has observed between the Jacobean and the Caroline masque, two are immediately suggestive for the representation of Cupid:

⁴² For further discussion of Gentileschi's role at the Caroline court, see Gabriele Finaldi (ed.), *Orazio Gentileschi at the Court of Charles I* (London: National Gallery, 1999), pp. 9–38. No mention of the *Cupid and Psyche* is made in the inventories of Charles' collection, though these are incomplete, pp. 99–100.



Figure 9. Orazio Gentileschi, *Cupid and Psyche*

first, a greater emphasis on ‘the transcendence from [the] material and sensual world to that of the intellect and soul ... it is the masque proper (rather than the anti-masque) that dominates’ and second, ‘the triumph of love over illicit passion’.⁴³ But if the latter suggests that Cupid would play an important role as the antagonist who defines love, perhaps because of the anti-masque’s demotion, perhaps because of the dematerialization of *eros*, Cupid loses power and agency at the Caroline court.

This is apparent in another example of demotion, namely the masquing career of Ben Jonson pre- and post-1625. Jonson resembles Spenser in his deployment of multiple forms of Cupid, taken from a range of mythographical and literary sources.⁴⁴ For example, *The Masque of Beauty* (1608) dramatizes the cupids playing with apples described by Philostratus, though the poet may have relied upon second-hand descriptions in Giraldi’s *De Deis gentium syntagmata* (1565) and Pierio Valeriano’s *Hieroglyphica* (1575).⁴⁵ *The Haddington Masque* (1608) takes its entry of Cupid with Joci and Risus (lines 134–7) from the *intermezzi* at the 1565 Medici wedding, whilst in the anti-masque Venus’ search for her son is based on Moschus’ ‘Runaway Cupid’ but also alludes to Venus’ promise of a kiss in Apuleius’ *Cupid and Psyche* (lines 80–5).⁴⁶ From this richness and diversity emerges a pattern of the mis-taking of Cupid and the revelation of his true nature. This begins in the play *Cynthia’s Revels*, where Cupid has disguised himself as Anteros and must be unveiled and banished at the end. It then transfers to *The Masque of Beauty*, where the precise nature of ‘a multitude of Cupids ... all armed with bows, quivers, wings and other ensigns of love’ (lines 200–3, SD) provokes discussion. The first singer insists that they would be dangerous only if they were blind like ‘their wanton brother’; the second that, nevertheless, ‘It was no polity of court, / Albe the place were charmèd, / To let, in earnest or in sport / So many Loves in armèd’ (lines 280–1, 288–91). Both are subsequently reassured by the third singer, who stresses that these are not blind, impure or deceitful cupids: ‘They do not war with different darts, / But strike a music of like hearts’ (lines 301–2). Moreover, Jonson clarifies his intent in the notes, explaining that they are the followers of Venus Coelestis rather than Vulgaris: ‘I make these different from him which they feign *blind with desire or wanton* ... These being chaste Loves that attend a more divine beauty than that of Love’s common parent’ (n. 281). In fact, the differentiation of Cupids is one of the central authorial acts performed in the Jonsonian masque, and it certainly patterns the rest of his Jacobean productions. In *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly*

⁴³ Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment: Lise Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge University Press, 1987, repr. 1990), pp. 189, 183.

⁴⁴ For further discussion of Jonson’s Cupid, see Allan FF. Gilbert, *Lise Symbolic Persons in the Masques of Ben Jonson* (Durham, NG: Duke University Press, 1948), and John C. Meagher, *Method and Meaning in Jonson’s Masques* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), pp. 125–43.

⁴⁵ See D. J. Gordon, ‘The Imagery of Ben Jonson’s *Use Masque of Blacknesse* and *The Masque of Beautie*’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1943), 122–41, at 130.

⁴⁶ See D. J. Gordon, ‘Ben Jonson’s “Haddington Masque”: The Story and the Fable’, *Modern Language Review* 42.2 (1947), 180–7.

(1611), the Sphinx as symbol of Ignorance is shown to misjudge Cupid, who is rescued and crowned by the Graces. In *Love Restored* (1612), Plutus has been masquerading as Cupid and must be unmasked before the love-god enters in triumph at the conclusion. Finally, in *Challenge at Tilt* (1613), the distinction between two identical-looking Cupids is resolved by Hymen, who identifies them as Eros and Anteros, both required to secure the happiness of the married couple.

The Caroline masque, by comparison, is less concerned with the process by which either the audience or the author learns to interpret Love aright, and it is far less tolerant of ambiguity. For example, *Love's Triumph through Callipolis* (1631) is the first extant masque that Jonson wrote for the Caroline court and it begins with a contention over the precise nature of love. However, the figure who raises this question immediately provides an answer. Euphemus descends from Heaven to report

that *Love*, who was wont to be respected as a special deity in court, and tutelar god of the place, had of late received an advertisement, that in the suburbs or skirts of Callipolis were crept in certain sectaries [heretics], or depraved lovers, who neither knew the name or nature of Love rightly, yet boasted themselves his followers, when they were fitter to be called his furies, their whole life being a continued vertigo, or rather a torture on the wheel of love, than any motion either of order or measure, (lines 17–25)

Euphemus is interrupted by the appearance of these distracted lovers, members of ‘the sensual school / Of lust’ (lines 86–7) who are clearly Cupid’s followers. Indeed, we might expect Cupid to appear with them since he is so strongly present in Euphemus’ description — the likening of Love’s followers to Furies recalls Francis Bacon’s assertion that ‘in life [love] doth much mischief; sometimes like a syren, sometimes like a fury’,⁴⁷ whilst the image of the lover bound upon a wheel would have been familiar from *Cupid's Whirligig* (reprinted 1630). Moreover, the physical act required to eradicate this false image — the Chorus cleansing the air with their censers until ‘th’infection [is] gone’ (line 72) — reminds us of Cupid’s role as a bringer of plague (discussed in Chapter 2).

Nevertheless, in an example of the masque’s lack of conflict, Euphemus follows the dance of distracted lovers with a song celebrating the Neoplatonic truth about Love. He replaces Cupid’s Venetian origins with his genealogy from the *Symposium*: Love is now the offspring of Plenty and Want (line 53). The passion he inspires is no longer self-destructive but ‘the right affection of the mind, / The noble appetite of what is best’ (lines 49–50). Finally, the masque’s focus shifts to the power of Beauty (embodied by Henrietta Maria) to draw Love towards her and inculcate virtue. With spectacle once again used to illustrate a speech rather than to dramatize an argument, the true

⁴⁷ Sir Francis Bacon, ‘Of Love’ (1625), in *Essays, or, Counsels, Civil and Moral*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 32.

lovers enter: ‘*The triumph is first seen afar off... It consisteth of fifteen lovers and as many Cupids, who rank themselves seven and seven on a side, with each a Cupid before him with a lighted torch, and the middle person (which is his majesty) placed in the center*’ (lines 94–9, SD). These, it is made clear, are ‘gentler Cupids’ who illustrate the ordering function of love in the ‘just perfections’ of their dance (lines 127–8).

Yet, despite this abundance of cupids, there is a curious vacancy at the heart of *Love’s Triumph*. This is partly Cupid’s absence from the anti-masque (presumably to represent him on the stage would give credence to what Euphemus insists is a false idea), but it is also the failure of a male personification of Love to fulfil the expectations created by the masque’s title. Perhaps Charles’ role is underwritten — he is identified as the ‘Heroical Lover’ rather than as an embodiment of Love, and his pairing with a cupid, though it suggests control over passion, also identifies the latter as an external force. However, the masque is also preoccupied with female power. It is Amphitrite, the wife of Oceanus, who appears on the chariot and leads in the triumph. She then directs attention to Henrietta Maria, whose court is a ‘temple of beauty’ where lovers will not be allowed to languish in despair: ‘For Love without his object soon is gone; / Love must have answering love to look upon’ (lines 113–14). Thus, Jonson rejects the Petrarchan *Trionfo dell’Amore*, in which Cupid led in a troupe of lovers ruined by unrequited passion, and replaces it with a female-centred version, dedicated to wedded chastity. In order to reinforce the point, Love is finally personified on stage in the form of Venus. By drawing attention to her girdle and flame and to ‘the arts / Of gaining and of holding hearts’ (lines 273–4), she emphasizes the masque’s theme of marital love. Moreover, her watery birth supports its Neoplatonic allegory:

Love, emergent out of chaos, brought
The world to light!
And gently moving on the waters, wrought
All form to sight! (lines 135–8)

But for all this, the expectation created by Euphemus that some kind of redeemed Cupid would materialize — ‘Love in perfection longeth to appear, / But prays of favour he be not called on / Till all the suburbs and the skirts be clear / Of perturbations, and th’infection gone’ (lines 69–72) — has been disappointed, and thus some lingering doubt remains as to whether or not the Caroline court has been sufficiently purged of *eros*.

This doubt becomes more compelling when we consider the way in which the masque and its Neoplatonism were perceived by ‘Puritan’ commentators. According to Prynne, court culture is typified by ‘effeminate mixt Dancing ... amorous Pastoralls, lascivious effeminate Musiche’⁴⁸ and despite the promise in *Coelum Britannicum* that Cupid should go no more naked, for commentators like Prynne he was still active among the

⁴⁸ Prynne, *Histrio-Mastix*, ‘To the Christian Reader’.

revellers. Furthermore, the idolatrous worship of beauty and the celebration of extra-marital love which its enemies claimed to be at the heart of Caroline Neoplatonism⁴⁹ were often perceived as under the patronage of Cupid, not least by the conduct books that advised lovers how to manipulate its conceits. One such was *Cupids Messenger or, a Trusty Friend Stored with Sundry Sorts of Serious, Witty, Pleasaunt, Amorous, and Delightfull Letters. What Cupid Blushes to Discover, thus to write he learns the lover* (Anon., 1633) whose title-page depicts Cupid aiming an arrow at a courtly couple. The fact that in *Love's Triumph* the king and courtiers intermingle freely with cupids may have appeared ill-advised in retrospect, recalling the caution of Jonson's *Masque of Beauty*: 'It was no polity of court... / To let, in earnest or in sport / So many Loves in armèd'.

Four years later, the presence of Cupid was anticipated by another court masque. Written by William Davenant and designed by Jones, *The Temple of Love* was performed on 10, 11 and 12 February 1635 beneath a proscenium arch, decorated with 'naked children' and a sign that read 'Templum amoris'.⁵⁰ It must therefore have recalled the Cupid temples and Eros-worship that featured in, for example, Lyly's *Love's Metamorphosis* (published for the first time in 1632) and Jonson's *Haddington Masque*. Yet the identity of Love is subsequently clarified by the addition of the adjective 'Chaste' and materialized in the figure of Amianteros, who descends in a cloud from heaven 'clad all in carnation and white' (line 491, SD). His name recalls Cupid's old sparring partner and brother Anteros, synonymous with virtuous and/or reciprocal love and obviously more appropriate for a Neoplatonic masque. Nevertheless, Cupid's being kept off the stage is now as much a religious as a moral statement.

Commissioned by the queen, *The Temple of Love* could not have failed to invoke her faith and may even have implied her ambition to restore England to Catholicism. At that very moment, a Capuchin temple at Somerset House was nearing completion and the laying of the foundation stone in 1632, bearing the words 'Templum hoc', had been watched by more than 2,000 people.⁵¹ The masque was also performed by the queen before Gregorio Panzani, an envoy of the Pope, perhaps in order to signal her commitment to her faith: it is through the power of Indamora that 'the Temple of Chaste Love should be re-established in this island', having been long hidden (lines 2—6). The anxiety that this allegory might have aroused in a Protestant audience was potentially assuaged, however, by the masque's representation of love/Love. It begins with Divine Poesy upbraiding Homer, Hesiod, Sappho, etc. for disseminating a false idea of that passion through lascivious verse:

⁴⁹ For further discussion of how this was vilified by 'Puritans' and exacerbated their conflict with the king, see G. F. Sensabaugh, 'Platonic Tove and the Puritan Rebellion', *Studies in Philology* 37.2 (1940), 457–81.

⁵⁰ All quotations are taken from Inigo Jones, *Inigo Jones: Use Theatre of the Stuart Court*, ed. Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, 2 vols. (Sotheby Parke Bernet: University of California Press, 1973), vol. 11, pp. 598–629.

⁵¹ Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion*, pp. 136–7.

Rise you from your dark shades below,
That first gave words an harmony,
And made false Love in Numbers flow,
Till vice became a mystery. (Lines 95–8)

As we saw in Chapter 1, Cupid as the invention of pagan poets had long been identified with false, Catholic worship. Therefore, the poets' renunciation of their old conception of love acts as a kind of banishment of Cupid, and thus as a ritual purification of Catholic *eros*. When Amianteros rather than Cupid appears at the end he is crowned with laurel and bears two laurel wreaths in his hand, signalling the reformed poetry over which he will preside. This substitution is consistent with the Caroline monarchy's attempt to incorporate a kind of redeemed Catholic aesthetic into the established faith. In Gerald Honthorst's painting *The Liberal Arts Presented to King Charles and Queen Henrietta Maria* (1628, Royal Collection, London), the queen as Chastity receives the arts whilst the vices 'like the figures of an anti-masque, are tumbled into the darkness below the throne'.⁵² Similarly, in *Coelum Britannicum*, Mercury refuses 'as of old, to whisper amorous tales / Of wanton love' (lines 56–9), whilst Momus relates Jove's command that 'the ribald Poets ... be immediately disbanded and casheerd' (lines 207–15). As Veevers argues, this was 'no puritanical Reformation, austere and iconoclastic, but a "new Reformation", conservative and aristocratic, in which beauty, morality, and pleasure go hand in hand'.⁵³ But although there would still be a place for love poets and for a figurative representation of Love, Cupid is compromised by his long association with Catholic idolatry and the Protestant antipathy it inspired. In Honthorst's *The Liberal Arts*, the vices look very much like cupids and on the title-page of Thomas Hawkins' *The Holy Court* (1626), a translation of Nicolas Caussin's *La Cour sainte* (1624) dedicated to Henrietta Maria, we find cupids being knocked down from their pedestals.

The depiction of the magicians in *The Temple of Love* also exploits the negative connotations of Cupid. Their affiliation is implied by the magicians' use of 'pleasant arts' (line 127) to 'seduce the more voluptuous race / Of men to give false worship' (lines 173–4). Moreover, the temple that they raise is implicitly Cupidean (and Catholic) in its dedication to visual and sensual pleasure, being filled with 'Persian quilts, embroidered couches, / And ... standing beds' (lines 206–7).⁵⁴ Hence, just as the pagan poets' renunciation of Cupid served to define a reformed poetry, so the opposition between the magicians and the chaste Indamora implies a redeemed Catholic worship. Nevertheless, the magicians also castigate 'Puritanism' and it is here that their Cupidean perspective is allowed to be more sympathetic and constructive. Their anti-masque suggests antipathy towards the doctrine of predestination, embodied by 'a

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 150–1.

⁵⁴ Veevers suggests that they may have been identified with the Jesuits, who had been accused of plotting against Panzani himself, *ibid.*, pp. 138–9.

sect of modern devils, / Fine precise fiends ... that claim / Chambers and tenements in heaven as they / Had purchase there' (lines 273–7).⁵⁵ They also come out against the Puritan repression of desire through their emphasis on the materiality of the body and the consequences of lovesickness.⁵⁶ As Sharpe has observed, their critique of the Neoplatonic 'sect' is drawn from the king's own invective against Puritans (245). But equally, their contempt for the Persian men's desire 'To read grave frosty homilies, / And antique laws of chastity' (lines 250–1) recalls the resistance to the suppression of Cupid-worship in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Cupid's Revenge* (repr. 1630, 1635). Just as that deity's opposition to sexual inhibition was not wholly reprehensible, suggesting a desire to trace a median path between licentiousness and total abstinence, Catholic idolatry and Puritan iconoclasm, so in *The Temple of Love*, the magicians imply that the perspectives of moderate Protestants and Catholics are not so different.

Conclusion: *Cupid in the English Civil Wars*

To conclude this chapter and this study, we might look ahead briefly to the literature of the 1640s and ask how Cupid fared with the outbreak of the English Civil Wars. Unsurprisingly, we find his cultural presence considerably diminished. This is an extension of the decline already evident in the 1630s: not only was Cupid identified with the aristocratic, masquing culture of an increasingly introverted court,⁵⁷ but the royal pageants and progress shows in which he had often played a part were avoided by Charles, who preferred to spend money on the Cupids in his private art collection. As the country became absorbed in a series of bitter conflicts, the lovegod's opportunities for play were further curtailed by the official closure of the theatres,⁵⁸ the infrequency of masques at the displaced court,⁵⁹ and the fact that many poets turned their attention from lyric to political satire. Cupid may also have seemed quite inappropriate to the darkening public mood; as the injunction closing the theatres in 1642 states: 'Publike Sports do not well agree with Publike Calamities, nor Publike Stage-plays with the Seasons of Humiliation, this being an Exercise of Sad and pious solemnity,

⁵⁵ For further discussion of anti-predestinarianism in the masque see Britland, *Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria*, pp. 147–8.

⁵⁶ See Dawson's discussion of the way in which this discourse counters the masque's Neoplatonic aspirations in *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern Literature*, pp. 150–62.

⁵⁷ An attempt to break away from the Royalist values of the masque is apparent in Milton's *Cornus*, whose villain is clearly modelled on Cupid. See Barbara K. Tewalski, 'Milton's *Cornus* and the Politics of Masquing', in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, ed. David Bevington and Peter Ffolbrook (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 296–320.

⁵⁸ On the politically engaged theatre that continued during this period, see Susan Wiseman, *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵⁹ George Wither in *Mercurius Rusticus, or, A Countrey Messenger* (1643) observes that the Queen is thought to be planning fewer masques at Christmas and Shrovetide 'because *Inigo Jones* cannot conveniently make such great Heavens and Paradises at *Oxford* as he did at *White-hall*; *U.* because the Poets are dead, beggared, or run away', p. 10.

and the other being Spectacles of Pleasure, too commonly expressing lascivious Mirth, and Levitie'.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, Cupid does linger on in the work of Charles' supporters. Where he is used to comment on political events, the effect is often risible, exposing the trivialization that characterizes Cupid in the 1640s.⁶¹ For example, in Abraham Cowley's *A Poem on the Late Civil War* (pub. 1679), the reunion of Henrietta Maria and Charles near the scene of their previous victory at Edgehill is prepared for:

Through the Glad vail, Ten thousand *Cupids* fled
And Chas'd the wandring spirits of *Rebels* dead,
Still the lewd scent of Powder did they fear,
And scatter'd *Eastern smells* through all the Air. (p. 29)

It is notable that these cupids (representative of the lost glamour of the Caroline court) are now opposed to "*Rebels*" rather than embodying any rebellious spirit themselves, and their former quality of lewdness is transferred from Love to War.

In the lyric poetry of the 'Cavaliers', however, Cupid retains some of his defiant spirit. As in previous decades, he is co-opted by the enemies of Puritanism 'to expand the boundaries of permissible sexual and emotional practice',⁶² his association with extramarital sexuality challenging the law of 1650 which made adultery punishable by death.⁶³ As a cohort of dancing Venus and drunken Bacchus, Cupid is also part of the Royalist protest against Puritan prohibitions on festivity.⁶⁴ Moreover, in the celebration of pastoral retirement he represents a continued opposition, even in defeat. Syrithe Pugh argues that by invoking in his title the garden of the Hesperides, where the immortal fruit were preserved, Robert Herrick creates a haven for the royalist values expelled from London and from the political reality of England'.⁶⁵ The image on the frontispiece of five *putti* dancing in a circle, echoed by the allusion within to 'Love's *Chorus* led by Cupid',⁶⁶ strengthens the collection's definition of itself as an

⁶⁰ 'Order for Stage-plays to Cease', *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642— 1660*, ed. C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (London: HMSO, 1911), vol. 1, pp. 26–7.

⁶¹ One interesting exception is the staging of Shirley's *Cupid and Death* at the republican 'court' before the Portuguese ambassador on 26 March 1653. Wiseman suggests that its 'banishment of love from the court of princes puts the state on an entirely new footing and suggests the abandonment, for ever, of the resolution of struggle between monarch and people through the mystification of state power embodied in love', Wiseman, *Drama and Politics*, p. 124.

⁶² Joshua Scodel, 'The Pleasures of Restraint: The Mean of Coyness in Cavalier Poetry', *Criticism* 38 (spring 1996), 239–79.

⁶³ See Thomas N. Corns, *Uncloistered Virtue: English Political Literature, 1640— 1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 75.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Thomas Stanley's poem, 'Roses V' in *lise Poems and Translations of Thomas Stanley*, ed. Galbraith Miller Crump (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 77.

⁶⁵ Pugh, 'Ovidian Exile in the *Hesperides*; Herrick's Politics of Intertextuality', *Review of English Studies* 57.232, (2006), 733–65, at 751.

⁶⁶ Herrick, 'The Apparition of his Mistresse calling him to Elizium', lines 21–2.

ideologically oppositional space where Royalist poets can come together and find fame, 'Where Poets sing the stories of our love' (line 24).

But for all the ways in which Cupid's appropriation remains consistent with what we have seen of Elizabethan and Jacobean England, it cannot be denied that, in terms of his imaginative reinvention, Cupid has faded like the Cavalier rose in this later period. There seem to me to be two main reasons why he no longer inspires the same kind of creativity, even among Royalist poets. First, he has become irrevocably mortal and profane, an effect in part of the Cavaliers' enthusiasm for the *Anacreontea*, in which the gods are little more than 'genial rhetorical decoration', combining to create 'a general haze of pleasurability',⁶⁷ but also reflecting the way in which religious dissent is now expressed. Where for the *Tottel* poets, Sidney and Spenser, the lighting of candles before a statue of Cupid or acts of iconoclasm against him were a means of engaging with contemporary anti-Catholicism, in the Civil War years religious conflict has largely dispensed with allegory.

The second reason for Cupid's diminution is the 'failure of love' that defines the poetry of the 1630s onwards.⁶⁸ The rationalizing, sceptical perspective that we find in Carew and Suckling renders obsolete in any but a playful sense the image of an external force imposing desire, just as the lover's whims and fancies and his appetite for a range of women undermine the possibility of a Cupid able to inspire a self-destructive, inappropriate passion for one particular mistress. Through the focus on the biological processes of tumescence, ejaculation and detumescence it has become clear that man's eroticism inheres in the body. The value placed on romantic love has also changed, being 'no longer the figure of a relationship between our nature and a higher one [but] ... whatever we can personally make of the human attraction between men and women'.⁶⁹ It is this perspective that ultimately disempowers Cupid and transforms him into the trivial figure that his Protestant enemies had so long wished him to become.

From 1557 with the publication of *Tottel's Miscellany* to some point in the 1620s, perhaps with Wroth's appropriately named *Love's Victory*, Cupid enjoyed an unusual and never-to-be-repeated cultural dominance in England. Although it is now commonplace to view him as a marginal and decorative figure, sentimental and cherubic, this study has argued that the early modern Cupid was deployed in a range of fiercely argued political and religious debates contingent upon the Protestant Reformation, even as he also enabled fantasies of greater sexual and authorial freedom. The attempt to define and therefore to control *eros* through the depiction of Cupid is a central feature of some of the greatest literature and art of early modern Europe. As such, this elusive figure deserves our more considered attention.

⁶⁷ Douglas Bush, *Use Classics and English Renaissance Poetry: Three Case Studies* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 200.

⁶⁸ See A. J. Smith, 'The Failure of Love: LoveLyrics After Donne', in *Metaphysical Poetry*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), pp. 41-71-

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

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Index

adiaphora, 36, 53, 58
 Adlington, William
Cupid and Psyche, 22, 166—8, 171, 173
 Alciato, Andrea, 4, 16, 44, 64—6, 70, 71, 126
Amadis de Gaule, 55, 56
 Amianteros, 181
 Amor (*see also* Cupid), 8—9, 10, 26, 66, 124, 164, 188
amorini, 3, 50
 Anacreon, 6, *y*
Anacreontea, ii, 184
 Anna of Denmark, 121, 122, 123
 Anteros, 4, 16, 177, 178, 181
 Aphrodite (*see also* Venus), 6, 7, 60, 207
 Apollo, 8, 28, 36, 71, no
 Apuleius
Cupid and Psyche, 11, 13, 164—5, 166, 167, 168, 177—173 > *U?*
 Ariès, Philippe, 61, 158
 Arundel, Thomas Howard, Earl of, 14, 15
 Ascham, Roger, 186
 Ausonius, 55, 225
 Bacchus, 184
 Bacon, Sir Francis, 229
 ballad tradition, 16, 17, 73, 196
bardassa, 141
 Bataille, Georges, 209
 Beaumont, Francis
Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn, 152
The Knight of the Burning Pestle, 157
 Beaumont, Francis and John Fletcher
Cupid's Revenge, 21, 47—50, 73, 74, 76, 84—90,

91,182
 Beham, Barthel, 63
 Belsey, Catherine, 2, 3
 Boccaccio, Giovanni, 3, 70
 'Cupid and Psyche', 165—6
Decameron, 1, 71, 72, 78, 81, 82
Genealogia, 11
 Boldu, Giovanni, 62
 Botticelli, Sandro, 13,141
 boys, 133—4
 as objects of desire, 135—6,142—6,148—9
 Brice, Thomas, 34, 35
 Bronzino, Agnolo,
Allegory of Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time,
 138—40,142,145,194
 Buchanan, George, 98,100
 Calvin, Jean, 37, 91, 92
 Calvinism, 1, 5, 21, 36, 37, 45, 52, 59, 75, 90—3, 95
 Cammelli, Antonio, 208
 Caracciolo, Giovanni Battista, 169
 Caraglio, Giovanni Jacopo, 25
 Caravaggio, 169
Amor vincit omnia, 136—7,138,141—2
 Carew, Thomas, 228
Coelum Britannicum, 153,180,181,182
 Cartari, Vincenzo, 11
 Castiglione, Baldassare, 18,167
 castration, 149,151,152, 224
 Catholic imaginary, 22
 Catholicism, 5,19, 20, 24—59, 88—9, 90,174,181,
 182,184
 changeling, 157
 Charles 1,153,173,179,183
 chastity, 2, 89, 90, 94—132
 Chaucer, Geoffrey, 10,11, 29, 32,127,
 166
 Cheke, Sir John, 33
 Churchyard, Thomas
Shew of Chastity, 105,106—10,112,113
 Cicero, 3
 circumcision, 149
 Cleaver, Robert, 157,159

commedia dell'arte, 16
 Conti, Natale, 11, 60
 Court of Love, 2,195
 Court of Venus, 34,196
 Cowley, Abraham, 183
 Coxie, Michiel
The Story of Psyche, 168
 Cranach, Lucas, 4,13
 Cupid
 age, 6,133,134
 Anacreontic, 7—8, ii—12, 51, 68,125,126,133, 175
 and beauty, 38, 50,135
 and Chastity, 95, 96, 98, 99,101,102,105—132 and female chastity, 94—132
 and infantilism, 153—62
 and Italian Renaissance art, 12—13,¹⁴—^{5j} ²²> ²⁵> 37—8, 63,134,136—42,145,177
 and masculinity, 5,141,143,146
 and maternal nurture, 22,135,154,157—62
 and paganism, 26, 27
 and Pleasure, 141,163
 and the boy actor, 134,143,144—6,148,150, ^{!5}²> VS
 and the Fury, 11
 as Christian angel, 4,10, 62, 74
 as devil, 9, 44
 as idol, 24—59
 as feudal lord, 10
 as monster, 164,167
 as patron of poetry, 32,127
 as plague-angel, 21, 61, 71—4, 87,179, 205
 as sign of brothel, 200
 beauty as weapon, 2, 20, 23, 32, 38, 40 castration threat, 3, 21,146,149,153 Christian
 interpretation, 10, 21, 26, 28,126, 127,165,169
 Classical, 5—9,10,14, 60
 cosmogonic, 4, 6
 crucified, 55, 225
 divinity, 6, 7
 effeminacy, 21,146,147,153,155 emasculation threat, 3, 21,132,146,151,155, 162
 in the English Civil Wars, 22,183,184 epithalamic, 2, 4, 56, 74, 88,109 genealogy, 6,
 7, 44,129,136,165,179 Greek tragedy, 6, 60 hatred, 83, 92,129
 hostility to women, 21, 89, 94—6,105,115,121, 122,143
 iconography
 arrows, 2, 4, 6, 8,126,161
 beauty, 6, 7,136,162,172

blindfold, 4
 blindness, 2, 4, 9, 78, 125
 boyhood, 22, 133—4, ibt disguise, 20, 80, 146, 177 gender, 9, 146, 211
 heart, 77, 81, 82, 124, 130 infancy, 21, 135, 153—62, 176 nakedness, 2, 45, 146, 152, 153
 wings, 4, 68 wreath of roses, 4
 love for Psyche, 164
 medieval, 11, 20, 26, 27—8, 51, 126, 175
 name, 3, 8
 Neoplatonic, 4, 21, 22, 51, 126, 163—8, 172—81
 Petrarchan, 14, 32—35, 51, 105, 108, 121, 123, 125, 126, 127, 128, 154
 pornography, 25
 Roman, 8—9, 10, 27, 136 sodomy threat, 21, 146, 149, 152 syphilis, 72, 74
 ‘Cupid and Psyche’, 8, 12, 22, 135, 163—77 *Cupid and Psyche* (15 81), 170, 171, 174, 2
 23 *Cupid and Psyche* (1600), 171
 Cupid, Chastity and Time, 97, 98—102, 106 Cupidean tragedy, 6, 20, 21, 46, 74—
 93, 128, 129, 131, 167, 206, 207
 d’Ambra, Francesco, 224
 daemon, 7
 Dante Alighieri, 10, 26, 81, 124
 Davenant, William
 The Temple of Love, 4, 180—2
 ‘De Morte et Amore’, 21, 61, 64—71, 74, 75
 De Rougemont, Denis, 75
 Dering, Edward, 34
 desire
 and social status, 135, 136, 162
 destabilizes gender, 147
 failure to differentiate, 5, 20, 22, 162 homoerotic, 2, 38, 134—53, 170, 176 maternal,
 2, 138—9, 143, 154, 161 pederastie, 2, 134, 142—6
 Protestant conception of, 21, 60, 91, 95 repression of, 5, 21, 89, 90, 131, 182
 Diana, 4, 27, 28, 31, 35, 98, 99, 109, no, 112, 114, 117, 130, 131, 134, 146, 210
 Dickenson, John, 169
 Dolce, Lodovico, 79—81
 Donne, John, 1, 5, 53, 82, 83
 Dürer, Albrecht, 13, 62, 63
 Elizabeth I, 4, 21, 22, 35, 47, 77, 94, 95, 96, 99, 100, 102, 104, 105—21, 197, 226 en-
 counter with Cupid, 105—10, 121 identified with Venus, no, in, 112 marriage negotia-
 tions, 36, no, 115, 120 violated doubles, 116—18
 ‘When I was fair and young’, 119—20,
 121
 emblem tradition, 4, 16, 17, 55, 63, 64—6
 Eros (*see also* Cupid), 5—8, 15, 178

funereal, 63
 Eros-worship, 5, 6, 54,180 *erotes*, 3
 Euripides, 6,11, 60, 79,167, 207
 Fane, Lady Rachel, 134 Ficino, Marsilio, 3,13,18 Fletcher, John
The Mad Lover, 83,130
 Florio, John 3,129,199, 221
 Ford, John
The Broken Heart, 61, 64
'Tis Pity She's a Whore, 83, 84, 92
 Foucault, Michel, 2, 3
 Fulgentius, 165,166
 Gager, William
Hippolytus, 142, 206
 Ganymede, 138,140,143,145
 Gentileschi, Orazio
Cupid and Psyche, 176
 Giorgione, 38
 Giraldi, Lilio Gregorio, 11,177
Gismond of Salerne, 11, 21, 74, 75, 77—84, 85—6, 104,109,120,130
 Goldingham, Bernard, no
 Goltzius, Hendrik, 142
 Googe, Barnabe, 35
 Googe, William, 159
 Gosson, Stephen, 1,174
 Gower, John, 28
Greek Anthology, The, 11,135
 Greville, Sir Fulke, 208
Gaelica, 135,155—6
 Guicciardini, Francesco, 71,152
 Guillemeau, Jacques, 157,159,160
 Hardwick, Elizabeth, 31
 Henrietta Maria, 22,173—4,176,179,181,183, 217
 Herrick, Robert, 184
 Hesiod, 6, 7,181
 heterosexual imaginary, 3
 Heywood, Thomas
Love's Mistress, 22,171—7, 227
Homily against Peril of Idolatry, 25, 31, 32, 42, 47, 52,194, 200
 Hume, Anna, 100
 Hyde, Thomas, 22, 23, 26, 27, 51
 Hymen, no, 178
 iconoclasm, 2, 5, 20, 26, 29—3 2, 3 5, 3 6, 42, 44, 47—50, 50—9, 86, 91,182,184

idolatry, 2, 5, 20, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 36, 37, 41, 42, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53,
 54, 59, 90, 91, 157, 180, 182
 incest, 2, 70, 139, 158, 159
intermedii, 76, 177, 224
 James VI, 105
 Jenye, Thomas, 103
 jewellery, 97, 98
 Jones, Inigo, 15, 153, 173, 180
 Jonson, Ben, 53, 135, 219
A Challenge at Tilt, 109, 122, 178
Christmas His Masque, 144
Cynthia's Revels, 144, 177, 195
Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly, 178, 224
Love Restored, 178
Love's Triumph through Callipolis,
 178–80
The Haddington Masque, 177, 180
The Masque of Beauty, 123, 177, 178, 180
 Jordaens, Jacob, 173
 Jupiter, 27, no, 145, 165, 210
 Kenilworth, 116
 Knox, John, 95, 97, 103
 Kristeva, Julia, 75, 83
 Kyd, Thomas, 204
Soliman and Perseda, 21, 61, 135, 149–51, 152
 Leicester, Robert Dudley, Earl of, 14, 15, 38, 50, 62, 64, 103, 105, 108, 112, 115, 116, 120
 love
 religion of, 28, 29, 33, 35, 126, 127, 201
 Renaissance theories of, 17–20
 Love
 and Death, 16, 21, 61–74, 93
 and Fortune, 64, 66, 78
 love tragedy, 21, 66, 74, 75, 76, 83, 90, 91, 92, 95, 206
 lovesickness, 72, 82, 103, in, 112, 120, 182
 lust, i, 2, 3, 5, 9, 19, 21, 26, 48, 54, 55, 57, 61, 63, 73, 74, 75, 77, 89, 90, 91,
 95, 103, 104, in, 115, 120, 123, 145, 147, 148, 154, 172, 174, 178
 Luther, Martin, 41
 Lyly, John
Campaspe, 135
Euphues The Anatomy of Wit, 114
Gallathea, 134, 146, 171
Love's Metamorphosis, 15, 29, 171, 180

Sappho and Phao, 105, no—12,120,134,135, 158,192
 Marlowe, Christopher
Dido, Queen of Carthage, 133,134,135,142—4, 145,146,160—i, 206
Tamburlaine, 69
 Marot, Clement, 11
 marriage, 2, 3,19, 75, 89, 90, 91, 95,115,123,
 129
 Mars, 8, 27, no, 135,165
 Marston, John, 42
 Mary Stuart, 21, 95, 96–105, 215
 masque, 14,16, 22,134,147—8,183
 Caroline, 178—82
 Jacobean, 122—3, M4> V?^
 masturbation, 158
 maternal nurture, 157,160,161,162
 Melanchthon, Philip, 36, 53
 Meleager, 8
 Mercury, no, 143
 Michelangelo, 12,137,138,141,169,194
 Middleton, Thomas
Masque of Cupids, 109, 223
Michaelmas Term, 145
More Dissemblers Besides Women, 144,
 223
The Nice Valour, 21,135,146—9
The Nightingale and the Ant, 145
Women Beware Women, 61, 70—1, 206
 Moschus, 8, h, 12,177, 225
 Neoplatonism, 13,18, 22,163,167
 Caroline, 173—4,180
 Elizabethan, 18,19
 Ovid, 13, 32,127,133, 202
Amores, 8, 9
Ars Amatoria, 9
Metamorphoses, 8,135,138,143
Remedia Amoris, 8
 Painter, William, 46, 78,167
 paraphilic infantilism, 153
 Parmigianino, 15,138
 Peacham, Henry, 16, 222
 Peele, George
The Hunting of Cupid, 171, 223

Pepys, Samuel, 229
 Percy, William, 29, 208
 Petrarch, 124,133
Rime Sparse, 1,18, 33
Secretum, 18, 32
Trionfi, i, 8,12,14, 95,100,101,102,106,109,
 112,113,124,132,179
 Petrarchism, 1,17,18, 33—5, 56,120,121,154
 Pettie, George, 42
 plague, 61, 70, 71, 72, 86, 87, 89
 Plato, 3, 6,167,199
Symposium, 5, 6—7,179, 227
 Pléiade, h
 Pontormo, Jacopo da, 137,140,141 predestination, 5, 91,174,182 pregnancy, 147
 Preston, Thomas
Cambyses, 74, 75, 76—7, 85
 Primaudaye, Pierre de la, 3, 20 prostitution, 48 61, 72, 95,141,145 Protestantism,
 1—2, 4, 5,18,19, 20, 21, 23, 24—59, 90—3,174
 Prynne, William, 180, 224, 228
 Puritanism, 53, 89,182,183
 Puttenham, George, 17
putti, 3,14,15, 63,140,141,153,180,184, 221 funereal, 31
putto and the skull, 21, 61, 62—4, 74
 Pygmalion, 41, 42
 Queens House, Greenwich, 15,173
 Raleigh, Sir Walter, 116,118
 Randolph, Thomas, 102,103,104
 Raphael, 13,141,168
 Riccio, David, 100
 Ripa, Cesare, 126, 204
 Rocco, Antonio, 134,141
Roman de la Rose, 10,14, 28,175
 Romano, Giulio, 13,15, 25
 Ronsard, Pierre de, 11,100,101, 212
 Rubens, Peter Paul, 13,173
 Saris, John, 13, 24—6,173
 Seneca, Lucius Annaeus, 8,11, 79, 81, 86,167, 207
Phaedra, 8, 79, 207
Thy estes, 82, 208
 Sercambi, Giovanni, 71
 sex tragedy, 75
 Shakespeare, William

A Midsummer Night's Dream, 106,112—6,118, 120,129,130,132,161
Antony and Cleopatra, 133
As You Like It, 223
Hamlet, 81, 91, 204
Love's Labour's Lost, 175
Much Ado About Nothing, 17,175
Othello, 75, 90
Romeo and Juliet, 17, 61, 75, 83, 84
Sonnets, 12
The Winter's Tale, 43, 160
Timon of Athens, 206
Troilus and Cressida, 73—74
Venus and Adonis, 161

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