



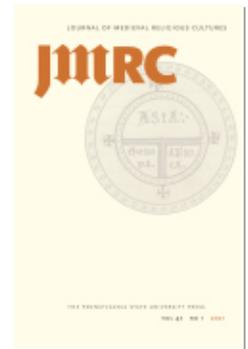
PROJECT MUSE®

Christian Lovesickness: Richard of St. Victor's *The Four Degrees of Violent Love*

Travis Stevens

The Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures, Volume 47, Number 1,
2021, pp. 21-46 (Article)

Published by Penn State University Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/779925>



CHRISTIAN LOVESICKNESS: RICHARD OF ST.
VICTOR'S *THE FOUR DEGREES OF VIOLENT
LOVE*

Travis Stevens
Santa Clara University

ABSTRACT

This article argues that Richard of St. Victor's *The Four Degrees of Violent Love* makes use of the literary and medical concept of lovesickness in order to create a Christian spirituality that conceives of love in new ways. This article traces Richard's translation of lovesickness from the literary and medical to the theological, in order to reveal the effects on those wounded by the love of God. By uniting violent love with lovesickness, Richard opens lovesickness to Christian meaning and interpretation, placing it at the center of an individual's journey to God, and transforms lovesickness by associating it with the wound and with violence more broadly.

KEYWORDS: lovesickness, Richard of St. Victor, violent love, medieval, theology

Among Richard of St. Victor's best-known works is a short, influential treatise called the *Four Degrees of Violent Love*.¹ Penned in the mid-twelfth century, the treatise depicts love for God not in terms of pleasurable erotic union, but of painful longing.² For Richard, the pain of desiring God is the result of love's highest expression: *caritas violenta*, a love so intense that it wounds the lover. Richard defines this new category of love not only in terms of the love wound and Christ's passion, but also as "vehement" love, and as "ardent" or burning love, to describe the highest form of passion, which, properly directed toward God rather than lusty passion for another person, ultimately leads to self-sacrificing love in imitation of Christ.³ The Christian is meant to fall in love with Christ such that Christ's physical wound, suffered on the cross in the Passion, finds an analogue in the Christian's wounded soul. Previous scholars have noted in passing that Richard's treatise takes up the discourse of lovesickness in his account of violent love, but none have accounted for the

implications of this move.⁴ My intervention here is to trace the translation of lovesickness from the literary to the theological, in order to reveal the effects on those wounded by the love of God. Quite literally, Richard pathologizes loving God, even as he commends this divine lovesickness to his reader. By uniting violent love with lovesickness, Richard opens the literary conception of lovesickness to Christian meaning and interpretation, placing it at the center of an individual's journey to God, and transforms lovesickness by associating it with the wound and the self-sacrificing love of the Passion. Moreover, Richard's treatise marks the first time that lovesickness enters Christian spirituality as a central concern and model for Christo-mimetic affective piety. A new form of Christian embodiment takes shape as Richard introduces and reimagines lovesickness as a transformative, embodied affect that prepares the soul for the highest form of love: the insanity of martyrdom.

At the time of the composition of the treatise, Richard was prior of the Augustinian canons at the abbey of St. Victor in Paris. These canons formed a community of prayer based on the Rule of St. Augustine. Though founded only in 1108, the abbey had already achieved a wide reputation for the intellectual rigor of its school, which was open to religious and laymen alike. While surviving sources tell little about Richard's life, it is clear that he preached often at the abbey, and that he had teaching responsibilities at the school, particularly for forming novices. *The Four Degrees of Violent Love* can be characterized as both a theoretical and a practical guide for his fellow canons regular; it describes how to pursue God through cultivating a particular sort of love within one's affections. Richard addresses the treatise to his brothers and exhorts them to aspire to "violent love" for God, with an aim not only to bind them in union to God, but also to transform them into the image of Christ's love for humanity. Elsewhere in his corpus, more specifically in *On the Trinity*, Richard describes love in the rather technical and erudite language of inter-Trinitarian relations. In *The Four Degrees*, however, Richard draws on simple but challenging imagery and ideas, which may account for its popularity.⁵ To give some context to Richard's treatise, I will begin by surveying his possible theological, literary, and medical sources before turning to the treatise itself.

I. RICHARD'S CONTEMPORARIES ON LOVE: WILLIAM OF ST. THIERRY AND BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

Among Richard's contemporaries, William of St. Thierry (d. 1148) and Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) were the most influential theoreticians of

Christian love. William and Bernard knew one another and convalesced together in 1125 at Clairvaux.⁶ During their shared time, the two monks reflected on the importance of love as expressed in the Song of Songs, though they left behind somewhat differing accounts of that love, especially in relation to the body, a category central to Richard's concept of violent love.

William of St. Thierry views the body in terms familiar to Western monasticism: rather than obeying the body's every whim, one must purify the body through ascetic practice and the pursuit of the contemplative life through monasticism. In *The Golden Epistle*, William describes the animal, rational, and spiritual man as progressive stages in Christian development. The animal man represents the spiritual novice. "The beginning of good in the animal way of life is perfect obedience; progress for it is to gain control of the body and bring it into subjection, perfection for it is when the habitual exercise of virtue has become a pleasure."⁷ The body has a utilitarian function and must be disciplined and purified so the monk can ascend to higher degrees of Christian perfection. In particular, "[the animal man] must be taught to deaden in accordance with reason those passions in him which belong to earth (Gal. 3:5)."⁸ Here William is consistent with his earlier work, *The Nature and Dignity of Love*, which encourages the young lover of God to control the body and the emotions.⁹

Because of his views of the body and its limitations, William is sharply critical of carnal love and of the literature that celebrates it. In the prologue to *The Nature and Dignity of Love*, he excoriates Ovid for perverting the natural inclination to love.¹⁰ According to William, Ovid's work destroys the entire ordering of nature by aiming love not upwards, as the weight of love is supposed to pull, but downwards, following his map of the human person in which the heart is meant to follow and cooperate with the head, rather than sink into desires for food and sex, which are situated in the belly and loins.¹¹ It is worth remembering that William by no means condemns the whole of literature; he writes in *The Golden Epistle* that literature, as well as art, architecture, and other arts, "are very beautiful in their own order, [and] have been made and are being made both by good men and by evil men."¹² He merely sees Ovid's works in particular as morally depraved, and does not, like Richard of St. Victor, see profound connections between literary depictions of carnal love and the mystical love between the soul and Christ.

Bernard of Clairvaux treats erotic love of God most extensively in his famed *Sermons on the Song of Songs* and in *On Loving God*.¹³ Three features of

Bernardine love are critical to understanding Richard of St. Victor's treatise: the centrality of *experientia* in the contemplative practice of loving God, the importance of the flesh as a starting place for that pursuit, and the sequence of loving God first before one can properly love one's neighbor. In the *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, Bernard writes that he will read "from the book of experience."¹⁴ In the first sermon of the collection, Bernard describes experience in terms of pedagogy:

Only the touch of the Spirit (1 Jn 2:27) can inspire a song like this, and only personal experience can unfold its meaning. Let those who are versed in the mystery revel in it; let all others burn with desire rather to attain to this experience than merely to learn about it.¹⁵

Through his sermons, Bernard teaches his monks to experience, rather than simply study, the Song of Songs. The monks must burn with desire to have that experience, that is, they must inculcate that desire within themselves. This affective dimension of *experientia* is also central to Richard of St. Victor's *Four Degrees*. Richard evokes personal experience in two ways: first, by inviting his readers into certain affects, and second, by applying examples drawn from life experience: a war prisoner who is tied up to immobilize him, a sick person laid up in bed, and a man and woman marrying and producing a child, to name a few. Richard builds upon the new emphasis on experience Bernard has established.

The second important precedent Bernard sets for Richard is the idea that flesh is the starting point of the journey of experience that leads to God.¹⁶ In particular, flesh is the location for the human capacity for love and desire. For Bernard, flesh is sometimes associated with sinful desire, and at other times is a more neutral fact of bodily existence. With proper direction, purification, and God's grace, desire can be directed toward God, and humans can even learn to love God for God's own sake. Loving begins, however, in flesh, and is naturally attracted to flesh, as Bernard describes in *On Loving God*:

But truly, since we are carnal and born of carnal desire (*carnis concupiscentia*) (Rom 7:14), it is unavoidable that our desire (*cupiditas*) and love (*amor*) should begin with the body and if it is rightly directed, it will then proceed by grace through certain stages, until the spirit is fulfilled (Gal 3:3) . . . In the first instance therefore man loves himself for himself. He is a bodily creature (*caro*), and he cannot see beyond himself.¹⁷

Here Bernard acknowledges that our carnality, rooted in the Pauline “carnal desire” (*carnis concupiscentia*), is the starting place for either our disordered desire (*cupiditas*) or love (*amor*). The flesh is at the same time marked by sin, but also constitutes a general condition of human bodily existence, and as the latter, is redeemable through the grace of God. Once self-love is rightly ordered, it finds its proper object not in the self, but in God.

Moreover, we begin to love God through loving God’s flesh, as found in the Incarnation. For example, in sermon 20 of the *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, Bernard considers incarnation, the taking on of flesh, as necessary to win human love; human hearts are most attracted to fleshly things:

I think this is the principal reason why the invisible God willed to be seen in the flesh and to converse with men as a man. He wanted to recapture the affections of carnal men who were unable to love in any other way, by first drawing them to the salutary love of his own humanity, and then gradually to raise them to a spiritual love.¹⁸

Christ takes on flesh to draw people to himself and simultaneously to divert them away from carnal pleasures and toward spiritual ones. Thus, Bernard’s contribution is that such fleshly existence requires a ranked set of affective dispositions, beginning with the fleshly. This is where Bernard’s and Richard’s theologies of human-divine erotic love overlap: humans must love God not first by means of their highest intellectual and spiritual faculties, but from body to body, in a fleshly manner, as devotees of an embodied God.

The third element in Bernard’s writings that is significant for Richard’s work is that true love of neighbor comes only after love of God. Although Pacificque Delfgaauw describes Bernard expanding carnal love, first to include neighbor, and then to stretch toward God, in the following example, Bernard begins with loving God.¹⁹ As Bernard writes in *On Loving God*:

But he who does not love God cannot love in God. You must first love God, so that in him you can love your neighbor too.²⁰

This primacy of loving God before neighbor also appears in Richard, as will be discussed below.

These three elements are significant for understanding the Bernardine inheritance even as Richard develops Christian erotic love in a new direction with violent love. While Richard’s work is certainly innovative, it is true that

Bernard touches on Passion spirituality and something akin to Richard's violent love at a few different points in his corpus. I will review the most salient examples of Passion spirituality in Bernard's corpus, though it should be stressed that these moments represent passing reflections rather than a sustained, central theme.

In sermon 62, Bernard indicates several possible interpretations for the clefts in the rock in order from most spiritually advanced to most accessible. It is in this latter category that Bernard mentions meditation on the cross: "If even this is not possible to someone, let him place before him Jesus and him crucified (I Cor 2:2), that without effort on his part he may dwell in those clefts of the rock at whose hollowing he has not labored (Jn 4:38)."²¹ Thus, Passion-centered contemplation figures in Bernard's view as the lowest form of spirituality, available to the spiritually inept, and does not stand as the central image or model for contemplative devotion, as it will in Richard's treatise. Despite Bernard's insistence on experiential and affective paths to God, devotional attention to the Passion functions as a last resort for those incapable of less bloody routes to spiritual enlightenment.

In sermon 61, Bernard refers to another author whom he does not name, but who is identified in the *Sources Chrétiennes* as Apponius by way of Bede, who interprets the clefts in the rock as the wounds of Christ, though that interpretation is standard by the twelfth century, and goes back at least to Gregory the Great.²² Bernard conceives of the wounds as healing: "For 'he was wounded for our transgressions' (Isaiah 53:5). What sin is so deadly as not to be forgiven in the death of Christ? If therefore a medicine so powerful and efficacious finds entrance to my mind, no disease, however virulent, can frighten me."²³ In this instance, Bernard does not consider the Passion as exemplary as much as redemptive, and Bernard does not identify Christ's wounds here primarily as wounds of love, as he does in sermon 29.

In sermon 29, Bernard specifically treats an excerpt of Song of Songs 2:5 in the Old Latin translation,²⁴ "*vulnerata caritate ego sum.*" This is the same verse and translation that forms the textual basis for Richard's treatise, and so represents a helpful point of comparison for how Bernard conceived of violent love. Interestingly, Bernard's interpretation of the verse centers neither on the soul's wound nor on Christ's, but on a third figure:

In the process [Mary] experienced through her whole being a wound of love that was mighty and sweet; and I would reckon myself happy if at rare moments I felt at least the prick of the point of that sword.

Even if only bearing love's slightest wound, I could still say: "I am wounded with love."²⁵

By placing Mary as the mediatrix between humans who accept the wound, which is the love of Christ, and Christ who inflicts the wound, Bernard renders that love qualitatively different than its context in the Song of Songs would suggest; erotic love between lovers, which Bernard might have imagined between the soul and Christ, takes on a maternal color.²⁶ By interpreting the wounding love in the Song of Songs as maternal, Bernard transposes what was in the biblical context a love between two lovers, and resorts to an allegorizing exegetical strategy that allows him to displace this wounding love from its original context. Bernard asserts that humble humans can experience this love at a remove, through the mediation of the perfect maternal love of Mary.

Bernard also quotes the same phrase, "*vulnerata caritate ego sum*," in *On Loving God*.²⁷ Here, the point is primarily that Christians, unlike Jews and pagans, are moved by the wounds of love, which he interprets in this context as the wounds of Christ's Passion. This moment fits into Bernard's larger rhetorical purpose in the treatise by connecting the individual Christian to the broader church through various modes of loving, of which Passion spirituality is only a passing theme.

Taken as a whole, Bernard's scattered comments about what Richard would call violent love point to the conclusion that he did not consider it the most important path to God. While Bernard's writings on love certainly contribute to an increasing attention to the role of experience in the affective path to God, his meditations on the Song of Songs do not emphasize the wounds of Christ, but a more general desire for God that shapes the life of the monastic on his or her path to salvation. At the same time, Bernard of Clairvaux, like William of St. Thierry, wrote about love as a personal, affective, and experiential path to the divine, and pushed Christian theological reflection on love in ways that would allow for Richard's later treatise, *The Four Degrees of Violent Love*, to innovate a powerful variation on the theme of the *via affectiva*: violent love.

II. A SHORT HISTORY OF VIOLENT LOVE

Although Richard's treatise was the first to explore violent love in a sustained, focused manner, other Christian writers before him had touched on

the theme. Earlier associations between love and violence in Christian theology often centered on the body of Christ as the site where the violence of the Passion meets the love of God. Gospel accounts of the Passion provide the key scriptural sources for these earlier thinkers. These gospel accounts point to the fulfillment of Hebrew prophecies and provide the basis for typological interpretations of the Hebrew Bible. The Christian writers who precede Richard in writing about violent love interpret the Passion as a fulfillment of three major texts: the Psalms; the suffering servant passages from Isaiah, read liturgically during Holy Week (Isaiah 53:2–5, 7; 63:1–3); and the Song of Songs.²⁸ For example, Origen's commentary on the Song of Songs describes the wound of love as the health-bestowing wound of salvation.²⁹ In so doing, he clearly links the wounds of Christ on the cross with the wound of love in Song of Songs.

Another early Christian writer, Gregory the Great, whose work was later compiled by William of St. Thierry, interprets the violent love passage from Song of Songs with a veiled reference to classical tropes. Gregory comments on Song of Songs 2:5: "But [our hearts] are wounded that they may be healed because God strikes unfeeling minds with the darts of love for him and soon makes them full of feeling through the burning heat of charity. Hence here the Bride says; I have been wounded by love, . . ."³⁰ Here Gregory sees the arrows of love as a tool God uses to inspire a proper love within Christians, a love that will bring them back to God. The notion of a god that shoots people with arrows that cause them to fall in love recalls Cupid, here Christianized so that the wounded fall in love with God rather than with other human beings.

Centuries later, the *Meditations of Saint Augustine*, written in large part by John of Fécamp (d. 1079), provide another, more graphic example of the confluence of love and violence in Christian theology. John writes:

By the saving wounds which you suffered on the cross for our salvation and from which flowed the precious blood of your redemption, wound this sinful soul of mine for which you were willing even to die; wound it with the fiery and powerful dart of your charity that is beyond compare. You are the living Word of God, "effectual and more piercing than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12). You are the choice arrow and sharpest of swords, so powerful that you can penetrate the tough shield of the human heart: pierce my heart, then, with the dart of your love, so that my soul may say, "I have been wounded by your love" (Song of Songs 2:5), and abundant tears may flow day

and night from this wound of your rich love. Strike, Lord, strike this hard heart of mine with the sharp spear of your love and by your power pierce deep into my inmost self. Grant me an abundant source of water and make my eyes a real fountain of ever-flowing tears.³¹

John's striking language pulls together the image of violent love found in the Song of Songs with the violence of the Crucifixion, just as Origen had done before him, but the personal, devotional character of the work, in addition to its emphasis on personal sin, set it apart and render it much more like Angela of Foligno's late thirteenth-century writings than Origen's commentary. Still, this excerpt from the *Meditations* represents a passing moment in the work, rather than the sustained development of the idea of violent love that Richard would achieve in his treatise.

Intense focus on the Passion of Christ in devotional sources is characteristic of the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, though precedents appear in the early Middle Ages.³² Certain twelfth-century sources, other than Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry, likewise included passing references to violent love. Anselm of Canterbury's (d. 1109) *Orationes sive meditationes*, in particular the prayer to Christ, conceive of Christ's passion as a prism through which the subject might identify with Christ, either directly through him, or sometimes through the intermediary of Mary.³³ Aelred of Rievaulx (d. 1167) invites further participation in the Passion of Christ through the use of richly sensuous imagery in *De institutis inclusarum*.³⁴ Gilbert of Hoyland (d. 1172), the first of the Cistercians to continue Bernard of Clairvaux's unfinished commentary on the Song of Songs, refers to the love between the lovers of the Song as violent, but interestingly puts the arrows in the Beloved's hands: "Do not hesitate, O Bride, to aim such weapons at your Spouse. Use devout glances as your darts . . . do not be content to wound your Beloved once, but strike Him with wound after wound (Job 16:15)."³⁵ Baldwin of Canterbury (d. 1190) explicitly compares "I am sick with love" (Song of Songs 2:5, the same verse with which Richard begins his treatise, but in the Vulgate translation) to Ovid's dictum from the *Metamorphoses*: "Alas for me, since love is not curable by any herbs."³⁶ These twelfth-century sources each mention what Richard would describe as violent love in some manner, but although interest in violent love appears to grow in this time period, it is still the case that Richard is the first to provide sustained analysis of the concept.

Finally, Barbara Newman makes the case that precedents for each of the four degrees of violent love listed in Richard's treatise can be found in literature, in particular, lyric poets such as Chrétien of Troyes.³⁷ Here I want to pay particular attention to her example from *Yvain*:

Love's pursuit's a gentle art:
 through the knight's eyes she strikes his heart.
 The wound that Love has dealt the lord
 won't heal like wounds from lance or sword,
 for any wound a sword has cut
 the doctors can cure quickly, but
 the wounds of Love, by definition,
 are worst when nearest their physician.³⁸

The love wound here plays on the classical heritage of the winged god of love, Cupid, and his arrows that strike the sufferer with desire. Since such images abound in lyric poetry of the Middle Ages, it is possible to trace a double lineage in Richard's use of the wound of love, which not only draws on Song of Songs and the Passion narratives, but also on literary themes.³⁹

From this brief survey of Christian authors writing on the violence of love, it is clear that Richard was not the first to broach the topic, but likewise that none of the aforementioned authors developed the theme at any length. It was not until *The Four Degrees* that violent love would take center stage.

III. A SHORT HISTORY OF LOVESICKNESS

In demarcating the new category of violent love, and in employing it to analyze the proper love between the soul and Christ, Richard builds upon the brief references to the topic in other Christian writers, but also explicates this violent love with reference to the theme of lovesickness. What follows is a summary of how medieval literature came to speak of lovesickness, and in particular those avenues through which Richard of St. Victor may have encountered it.⁴⁰ Lovesickness is a ubiquitous theme in medieval sources, found in any number of overlapping webs of cultural exchange, from medicine, to Christian spiritual texts, to literature. Richard may have come across lovesickness by reading Ovid, or through direct or indirect contact with literature, by reading medical texts, or most likely, through more than one of these avenues. Mary Wack's *Lovesickness in the Middle*

Ages: The Viaticum and Its Commentaries remains the most comprehensive study of medieval conceptions of lovesickness, but she focuses primarily on medical texts in order to point to how the ubiquitous medieval literary theme was grounded in medical writings stretching back through Arabic-speaking sources to classical roots.⁴¹

Among the most influential classical authors to write on love is the poet Ovid (d. 17 or 18 CE).⁴² The resurgence of interest in Ovid's works in the 12th century lent his writings on love the diffusion necessary to influence the literature, art, and theology of the Middle Ages.⁴³ Ovid's *Ars amatoria* and its sequel, the *Remedia amoris*, bequeath a number of tropes about lovers. Those particularly salient to this inquiry are a set of symptoms for lovers, including pallor, insomnia, and thinness:

But let every lover be pale; that's the right color for lovers
though many may think it's not so great, it is.
Pale over Sidë, Orïon used to wander the forests;
pale was what Daphnis was for the stubborn naiad.
Let leanness, too, prove your feelings, and don't think there's
any shame
in placing a dark hood on your gleaming hair.
All-night vigils whittle down the bodies of youths,
and care, and the pain arising from great love.
In order to obtain your desire, be a wreck,
so anyone who sees you can say, "You're in love!"⁴⁴

Ovid's symptomatology was reflective of classical medical understandings of the disease. With his resurgence in popularity in the Middle Ages, Ovid bequeathed this picture of lovesickness to medieval writers.

Perhaps the most important text for thinking about lovesickness in medicine is Constantine the African's *Viaticum*. The two extant biographies of Constantine provide conflicting narratives about his origins, but it is likely that Constantine befriended the archbishop of Salerno in Italy and then the abbot of Montecassino.⁴⁵ He probably converted to Christianity in Italy, and most importantly, undertook the task of translating a number of Arabic medical treatises into Latin at Montecassino, a flourishing scriptorium with a number of students who aided him and continued his work after his death.⁴⁶

Included among these texts was Ibn al-Jazzar's (d. 979) *Kitab Zad al-musafir wa-qut al-hadir* (Provisions for the traveler and the nourishment of the settled). Ibn al-Jazzar wrote the treatise as a medical handbook for

the traveler who might need to treat an illness without the aid of a trained physician.⁴⁷ His work owes a significant debt to the work of Galen on humoral medicine, and specifically his understanding of love as disease. Constantine's translation, called the *Viaticum peregrinantis*, is a rather free paraphrase that attempts to simplify Arabic medical teachings for an uneducated Western audience.

The *Viaticum's* chapter on 'ishk follows Galen in ascribing the illness to the head rather than the heart, as Aristotle does, and describes this illness as pleasurable, tracing a particular definition of the Greek *eros*. The disease's etiology is not particularly clear; Constantine describes it as something between a need to expel humor and a perception of a beautiful form; in other words, as somatic but also psychological.⁴⁸

The *Viaticum's* symptoms of lovesickness are split between physical ones (sunken eyes, jaundiced color) and behavioral (insomnia, *inedia*, depressed thoughts).⁴⁹ A dynamic interaction between soul and body puts the sufferer in danger of melancholy. While the *Viaticum* considers melancholy to be a worsening of the condition of lovesickness, other medical writers consider love to be a subspecies of melancholy.

Constantine's *Viaticum* was disseminated widely in Western Europe, due in part to the networks of diffusion to which his monastery, Montecassino, had access. The *Viaticum* itself made its way to Chartres, Hildesheim, St. Armand, Durham, as well as the university of Paris, where it was part of the medical curriculum, and likely at Oxford and Cambridge as well.⁵⁰ Because of its popularity, the text is important for understanding medical conceptions of lovesickness in Western Europe at the time Richard wrote his treatise.

Lovesickness was not only a medical condition, but also part of the broader cultural matrix in which Richard resided. Richard would have been familiar with lovesickness through the lyric poetry of northern France. A brief examination of Chrétien de Troyes, a near-contemporary of Richard, will help contextualize his work. In Chrétien's *Cligès*, Fénice's nurse Thessala asks her why she is pale,⁵¹ promising that she is skilled in healing a great number of maladies (such as edema, gout, peritonsillar abscess, and asthma) by examining urine and pulse, and even knows how to use spells and enchantments. Fénice is convinced to reveal to Thessala the source of her pallor, which is her love for Cligès, and describes her illness to Thessala:

[My sickness] differs from all other woes.
Were I to tell the truth again,

it pleases me yet causes pain,
 for I delight in my unease,
 and if a malady can please,
 then my affliction suits my will,
 whereas good health now suits me ill.⁵²

Thus, Chrétien's *Fénice* suffers from both lovesickness's psychological tumult and one of its physical symptoms, pallor. The episode is one of many in Chrétien's oeuvre that depicts characters as sick with love.⁵³

Chrétien's use of love's symptoms reflects the enormous influence of Ovid running through medieval literature in matters concerning love. Lovesickness and its symptomatology were relatively commonplace, and Richard would have certainly been familiar with these tropes through one of many possible avenues. In this sense, Richard is on the leading edge of incorporating elements of lovesickness into his accounts of divine love; this trope would appear more often in the following century. As Barbara Newman has pointed out, a great exchange of ideas about love between religious and literary spheres, and between Latin and European vernaculars, occurred in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The boundaries separating these spheres were permeable ones, facilitated in large part by familial relations: "the monks who anatomized charity and the virgins who swooned in mystical love were often literally brothers and sisters of the great lords who patronized minnesingers and trouvères."⁵⁴ Having examined the various contexts relevant for understanding Richard's text—the major theoreticians of love in Christian theology immediately before Richard, Christian references to violent love, and literary conceptions of lovesickness—I will now turn to Richard's treatise to see how he drew from and innovated upon the ideas he inherited.

IV. THE STRUCTURE OF VIOLENT LOVE

While Richard of St. Victor did not demarcate subdivisions in *The Four Degrees of Violent Love*, Andrew B. Kraebel has discerned four sections to the text, which are reasonable and convenient for reference, which I will refer to as parts I, II, III, and IV.⁵⁵ Richard's winding itinerary consists of multiple articulations of four degrees of violent love. At the outset of part I, Richard calls these degrees "wounding love," "binding love," "languid love," and finally, "fainting love" or "love that leads to weakness."⁵⁶ As the treatise

progresses, Richard alternates between longer expositions of each of these degrees in turn, and rapid-fire rearticulations of them. Part II focuses on the degrees as they relate to a person in love with another human (rather than a person in love with God), and is taken up by slightly longer meditations on each of the degrees of love, and especially the differentiation of one degree to its superior degree by comparison.

The treatise's structure turns on the transition from part II to part III, roughly the midpoint of the work. Part II concludes with a section on the difference between these four degrees when they relate to human versus divine loves. This comparative section transitions into part III, which turns the focus to divine love. It is through this transition (at the end of part II) to the second half of the treatise (parts III and IV) that Richard carries over both the intensity of lovesickness and its symptomatology as he shifts from human to divine lovesickness.

V. LOVESICKNESS AND VIOLENCE IN *THE FOUR DEGREES*

Richard begins *The Four Degrees of Violent Love* by citing the Old Latin version of the Song of Songs:

Confirmate me inter unguenta, constipate me inter mala, quia vulnerata caritatis ego sum. (Canticum Cantorum 2:5, *Vetus Latina Itala*, Cod. Sal. (De Bruyne R.B. 1925)⁵⁷)

[Strengthen me with oils, press me with apples, for I am wounded by love.⁵⁸]

In another work, *On the Twelve Patriarchs*, Richard makes use of the newer translation from the Vulgate:

Fulcite me floribus stipate me malis quia amore langueo. (Canticum Cantorum 2:5, *Vulgate*)⁵⁹

[Prop me up with flowers, press me with apples, for I am sick with love.]

If Patrice Sicard is right in his ordering of the Ricardian corpus, then *On the Twelve Patriarchs* was written before *The Four Degrees*, and in it, Richard

uses the Vulgate version.⁶⁰ Why does Richard refer to an archaic translation of the verse, then, if he is aware of both versions? It is also clear from the treatise itself that Richard is not only aware of the two versions at the two different times in which he composed *On the Twelve Patriarchs* and *The Four Degrees*, he also has both translations in mind, whether consciously or not, when he writes *The Four Degrees*. Note how Richard turns from violence to illness in his description of the first degree of violent love:

But, behold, let us return to that degree of love (*amoris*) that we placed in the first position and called wounding. Do you not think that the heart appears to be pierced when that fiery sting of love (*amoris*) penetrates one's mind to the core of his being and transfixes his affect, so much so that he is completely incapable of containing or concealing the boiling of his desire? He is ablaze with desire; he seethes with feeling. He boils and pants, groaning deeply and drawing long, deep breaths. These may be for you the sure signs of a wounded soul: the groans and the deep breaths, a face growing pale and pining. . . . Such is the habit of those who are tossed about with this type of fever: sometimes they are burned more sharply, while at other times they are revived somewhat by the opportunity of their occupations.⁶¹

This “pale face” of the patient suffering from the fever of love should sound familiar. This is broadly similar to the same lovesickness found in Ovid, Constantine the African, and Chrétien de Troyes. Here, however, Richard describes that illness as arising from being spiritually pierced and wounded in the heart, a kind of Cupid's arrow in Christian guise that causes one to fall ill. Richard turns from violence to illness through the intermediary of desire; once the “pierc[ing]” and “penetrat[tion]” of the mind and the affect take place, that is, the violent wounding, then the desire is set ablaze, and the patient suffers from signs of illness, namely, lovesickness. Furthermore, the illness is what renders violent love visible. That is to say, the wound Richard describes is an invisible condition; as he says, it requires signs: pallor, difficulty breathing, and fever. The wound is a spiritual one, but it manifests itself in a condition that crosses the boundaries between spiritual and physical: namely lovesickness, which is at once an affliction of the soul and the body. Richard moves between the two conceptual models of violent love and lovesickness by pivoting from invisible wound to visible symptoms of lovesickness through the medium of the visibly suffering body.

Throughout his descriptions of the four degrees of love, Richard often makes connections between violence and illness. The second degree, binding love, is likewise explicitly linked to lovesickness, despite the conceptual distance between bondage and illness. Richard describes this degree in a manner similar to the first degree, namely as a “sharp fever.”⁶² This description of binding love as a fever is only Richard’s first characterization of binding love as a form of sickness. He goes on to compare binding love, which he imagines in terms of a prisoner of war bound and unable to escape, to illness in another way:

And so, just as one who is sick in bed or restrained by chains cannot get away from the place where he is bound, so too one who is in the grip of this second degree of violent love cannot cut free from that one, internal, preoccupying concern, no matter what he does or where he turns.⁶³

Both illness and bondage, therefore, subject their sufferers to immobility and therefore danger since “the vehemence of the second degree can neither be overcome by resistance nor avoided by flight.”⁶⁴ By turning the reader’s attention to the immobility imposed on the sufferer of illness and bondage, Richard connects the violence of love, which he imagines to include bondage, to illness. Although the symptoms in this degree, namely fever and being bedridden, are too general to apply only to lovesickness, the context of Richard’s treatise signals to the reader that this is certainly the illness being described.

The third degree of violent love is love that makes one languish, or love that makes one sick. His description of this degree supports this interpretation; he speaks of desire, sighing, and panting, the last term borrowed from the Psalms: “As the deer pants for the water so my soul longs after you” (NRSV Psalm 42:1).⁶⁵ Richard shows that this languishing love, bearing the marks of lovesickness in its very name, also describes violent love by comparing languishing love to the suffering caused by an oppressive tyrant:

But who may worthily describe the tyranny of this emotion: in the way it eschews every desire, shuts out every other pursuit, and violently (*violenter*) suppresses every exercise that it does not foresee as serving its own cravings?⁶⁶

Richard makes a concerted effort to describe lovesickness in terms of violent love and vice versa. Richard's technique of comparing these two concepts grows out of his knowledge of the two translations of Song of Songs 2:5, and constitutes an awareness that the proper object of the lovesickness, about which the troubadours sing, is not the distant lady, but God.

Although Richard is content to borrow the concept of violent love from the model of human love, he draws a clear separation between divine and human love. He writes:

These four degrees of love (*amoris*) exist in one way with regard to godly feelings and in another with regard to human feelings—two altogether different ways with regard to spiritual desires and fleshly desires. With spiritual desires the extent to which the number of the degree is higher is also the extent to which the degree itself is better; in fleshly desires the extent to which it is higher is the extent to which it is worse. In godly feelings the degree that is highest is likewise best. In human feelings the degree that is highest is itself also worst. Truly, in human emotions the first degree can be good, but the second without doubt is bad; the third is worse, while the fourth is the worst.⁶⁷

The highest degree of love finds the patient lying prostrate on a bed, unable to move, and on the brink of death: "Alone he gasps with his breath, and every hour he appears to draw near to his end. . . . It is as if he were near death and does not at all sense those things that are occurring around him."⁶⁸ Richard holds that erotic love between humans must be controlled, lest it render the person physically ill to the point of death. Such an intense passion is obviously detrimental to a person's health and well-being; however, Richard embraces this same degree of love as long as the object of affection is God and not another person because it is the very intensity of Christian lovesickness that binds it to Christ's Passion and renders it salvific.

Richard claims that this lovesickness for God is good by understanding it as an expression of violent love. By thinking of wounding, binding, languishing, and weakening together, Richard ties violent love, which itself is rooted both in the Song of Songs and in the Passion narratives, to lovesickness. The effect of this union is that Richard offers the Christian a path to reflect Christ's Passion by falling in love with God. By cultivating this lovesickness for Christ, the Christian can be both wounded by love and sick

with love. Outward signs of love, such as sighing, pallor, and fever, point to a spiritual wound in the soul of the one who truly loves Christ. Richard uses language of disease and injury to show that loving God is not merely sometimes painful, as other Christian writers have suggested before him. Loving God, even at its apex, is not characterized by blissful union, but by an ecstasy shot through with agony.

VI. THE ENDS OF VIOLENT LOVESICKNESS: SELF-SACRIFICING LOVE

In the second half of the treatise, Richard turns away from his extended descriptions of human violent love to examine divine violent love. Accordingly, it is here that Richard offers some evidence for what the telos of the four degrees of violent love might be. He writes, “In the first degree a betrothal is made, in the second a marriage, in the third sexual union, and in the fourth childbirth.”⁶⁹ This is Richard’s first hint that his itinerary’s goal is not to be identified with a union of wills, which readers of other medieval mystical literature might assume, and which is often portrayed using sexual imagery. Rather, Richard refers to productivity through the figure of childbirth. What sort of offspring result from this union? The answer comes late in the treatise, when Richard refers to Christian kenosis, citing Philippians 2:5–10, but then creatively tying it to John 15:13:

“Have this mind in yourselves which also was in Christ Jesus, who, although he was in the form of God, did not judge equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, made in the likeness of man, and was found in the condition of a man; he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even to a death on the cross” (Phil. 2:5–10). Everyone who wishes to touch the highest degree of consummated love ought to conform himself to this pattern of the humility of Christ, “for greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).⁷⁰

In this way, Richard uses John 15:13 to claim that Christ’s self-sacrificial act was the greatest act of love, and thus to be identified with the highest degree of violent love. His shorthand for the virtue of humble self-sacrificing love in the explication that follows is “humility.” For Richard, such humility mimics Christ’s self-sacrifice as an act of love for one’s neighbor. The great surprise of his treatise is that its esoteric, rarefied language and allusions

to erotic love ultimately render a person ready to embody that most ordinary and most difficult of Christian virtues: love of neighbor so great that it outstrips love of self. This call to love of neighbor might at first seem to contradict Richard's earlier comparison of the fourth degree to a love so great it can engender hatred of the lovers for one another that nonetheless does not temper their desire for one another.⁷¹ However, this mutual hatred is in fact a characterization of love between humans in the fourth degree, which Richard says is to be avoided, and second, it is a characterization of the intensity of this degree of love, and a foreshadowing of its echo in divine love: *insania amoris*.⁷² In *The Four Degrees*, Richard describes love's insanity in terms of limitlessness, particularly as reflected in the madness of completely disregarding one's own salvation in favor of saving someone else, and as standing in the way of God's righteous judgment to beg for mercy for another and offering yourself instead. Such an attitude, such a degree of loving God, is for Richard "almost entirely more than human." It describes the way in which love exceeds reason. Retaining that intensity and applying it to divine love, then, Richard shows that what can be hatred between lovers is in divine love transformed into kenosis and self-sacrificing love of neighbor.

The goal of humbling oneself for the sake of others is consistent with the mixed life of canons regular.⁷³ The practical goals of living in religious community and, in Richard's case, of educating his fellow canons, may well have informed his emphasis at the end of the treatise on love of neighbor. One can also construe the treatise as echoing the Victorine version of the Augustinian Rule, starting as it does with the double commandment to love God and neighbor.⁷⁴ The treatise maps a path for the Christian, who follows the commandment to love God through progressively increasing degrees of violent lovesickness, and ends with fulfilling the commandment to love one's fellow humans in the spirit of self-sacrificing humility. Thus, Richard reveals that the offspring of the betrothal, marriage, and sexual union outlined in the treatise takes the form of a spiritual virtue of loving humility.

How did Richard envision that his creative interpretation of the double commandment to love God and neighbor, as expressed in his treatise on violent love, would be put to use? According to the words of the treatise, he had in mind his fellow canons, whose spiritual care he supervised as their prior: "Cling with your mind, brothers; attend to that love you eagerly desire. Hear about it, and pant for what you strive with such force to attain."⁷⁵ This implies that the canons, instead of needing to be incited to pursue such a love, already feel the pull of this love, but also that Richard

offers his teachings to help them along the way. In this sense, the treatise functions as a practical guide to loving God. Here Richard links *caritas* (referenced in the quotation as “*illam*”) with *vehementer*, indicating that charity is not simply vehement, but that charity also is a status or relation for which Richard’s fellow canons long; in other words, a desire that they vehemently desire. By paying the right kind of attention to Richard’s treatise, by “cling[ing] with your mind,” by listening, and by desiring the right kind of love, Richard’s brethren can achieve the affective disposition they desire to attain, that is, a violent desire for God. If they are successful, they will ultimately be reborn in the image of the self-emptying, self-sacrificing Christ, and give their lives over to perfect humility through the transformation that God performs in them as they progress in the four stages of violent love. This Christo-mimetic affective piety takes the form of lovesickness, the poetic account of a mix of physical and psychological symptoms in which one suffers love. Cultivating the right emotions, however divinely oriented they might be, is not the full expression of this form of devotion. The soul must not simply adore Christ in an exclusive and mutual erotic swoon, but also conform itself to the model of Christ who gave himself for all humankind—the perfection of neighbor love. This is the point at which erotic love for the divine, complete with its physical and psychological components, becomes one with neighbor love. Christian lovesickness therefore transforms body and soul to enable a person to fully love both God and neighbor.

Richard performs a deft translation and transformation of the medical and literary concept of lovesickness, as the divine lover replaces the human one. In Richard’s vivid imagination, the stuff of troubadour song is initiated into the heart of Christian theology by a kind of baptism—not by water, but by the blood of the Passion. Lovesickness emerges from this baptism as a new theological creation that Richard calls “violent love.” The consequence of Richard’s doctrine of love is that the white martyrdom of asceticism takes on a new form in which the stripes on Jesus’s back and the wound on his side are not only answered by the lashes of the whip in a monastic cell, but by the mystic fainting in the fever of love.

The conceptual work Richard accomplishes in theorizing the category of violent love in Christian theology is, firstly, significant because he is the first to connect physical symptoms of lovesickness to the love wound in order to create a Christian theology that encompasses body, mind, and soul as it unites love of God with love of neighbor. The physical symptoms matter principally as a new style of Christian embodiment in which the fever of lovesickness passes from Christ to the soul. In Richard’s theological

imaginary, the Passion of Christ's body appeals to the bodies of the canons regular and of his readers, resulting in a lovesickness that enables them to practice self-sacrificing kenotic love.⁷⁶ While other forms of Christomimetic affect arising from liturgical practices of prayer and repetition similarly form new styles of embodiment in the twelfth century, Richard's mark is in the specificity of his stylization of disease as a transformative and painful process of configuring and (re-)forming the body and soul of the seeker. His theological innovation also opens a new chapter of Christian theology; Beatrice of Nazareth and Hadewijch also use images of injury and illness to describe the heights of divine love, and assert with even more vivid language that the apex of Christian love is a hell created by infinite longing. It is not until the fourteenth century in Angela of Foligno's works that the pain of love becomes grounded not in God's absence but in the bitterness of shame for one's own sin. For this period in the history of Christian thought, however, Richard's notion of divine love characterized by pain and longing redefines what it means to love and be loved by God.

NOTES

1. Richard of Saint Victor, "Les quatre degrés de la violente charité," in *Ives: Épître à Séverin sur la charité*, Richard de Saint-Victor: *Les quatre degrés de la violente charité*, ed. Gervais Dumeige (Paris: J. Vrin, 1955), 127–77. For a recent English translation, see Richard of St. Victor, "On the Four Degrees of Violent Love," trans. Andrew B. Kraebel, in *On Love: Victorine Texts in Translation: Exegesis, Theology and Spirituality from the Abbey of St Victor*, ed. Hugh Feiss, OSB (Hyde Park, NY: Brepols, 2012), 261–300.

2. Dominique Poirel and Patrice Sicard have divided Richard of St. Victor's corpus into three main periods: the first is during his time as *magister*, when he wrote the *Liber Exceptionum*, compiled between 1153 and 1159 (in which Richard wrote the *De consideratione*). The *De duodecim patriarchis* (or *On the Twelve Patriarchs*, sometimes known as the *Benjamin minor*) and the *De gratia contemplationis* (or *Benjamin major* or *De arca mystica*) were written toward the end of Richard's subpriorate, between 1159 and 1162. Sicard dates the *De quatuor gradibus violentae caritatis* to some time after 1162, when Richard became prior. The *De Trinitate* was written after this, during Richard's priorate, and finished in about 1173. Dominique Poirel and Patrice Sicard, "Figure Vittorine: Riccardo, Acardo e Tommaso," in *Figure del pensiero medievale: storia della teologia e della filosofia dalla tarda antichità alle soglie dell'umanesimo 2* (2008): 459–537, at 466.

3. Feiss, *On Love*, 275; "amor ille ardens," "vehementia caritatis," Dumeige, *Ives*, 127, 129.

4. Mary Frances Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The Viaticum and Its Commentaries*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 152–53, and Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 415.

5. The treatise is well represented in the manuscript tradition. See Gervais Dumeige, "Introduction," in "Les quatre degrés de la violente charité," in *Ives: Épître à Séverin sur la charité*. Richard de Saint-Victor: *Les quatre degrés de la violente charité* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1955), 89–99.

6. William of St. Thierry, *Vita Bern* 1.32–34 (CCCM 89B:58–60). Mark Delcogliano, "A Fresh Look at William of Saint-Thierry's *Excerpts from the Books of Blessed Ambrose on the Song of Songs*," in *Unity of Spirit: Studies on William of Saint-Thierry in Honor of E. Rozanne Elder* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 37–59, at 37. William of St. Thierry, *Bernard of*

Clairvaux: Early Biographies, Vol. I by William of St Thierry, trans. Martinus Cawley (Lafayette, OR: Abbey of Our Lady of Guadalupe, 1990), 44.

7. William of St. Thierry, *The Golden Epistle: A Letter to the Brethren at Mont Dieu* (Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1971), 1.12.45, p. 27; CCCM 88, 1.45, p. 237: "Initium boni in conuersatione animalis perfecta obedientia est; profectus subigere corpus suum et in seruitutem redigere; perfectio, usus boni consuetudinem uertisse in delectationem."

8. William of St. Thierry, *The Golden Epistle*, 1.18.71, p. 36; CCCM 88, 1.71, p. 242: "docendus est rationabiliter mortificare membra sua quae sunt super terram."

9. St. Thierry, *The Nature and Dignity of Love* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981), ch. 2, section 8, pp. 60–61; Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, *Nature et dignité de l'amour*, Sources chrétiennes 577 (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 2015), II.8; pp. 110, 112; ll. 7–19.

10. St. Thierry, *The Nature and Dignity of Love*, prologue, section 2, p. 49; Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, *Nature et dignité de l'amour*, prologue 2; pp. 92, 94; ll. 1–30. (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 2015), prologue 2; pp. 92, 94; ll. 1–30. Ovid, *Ars amatoria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

11. St. Thierry, *The Nature and Dignity of Love*, prologue, section 2, pp. 49–51; de Saint-Thierry, *Nature et dignité de l'amour*, prologue 2; pp. 94, 96; ll. 23–50.

12. St. Thierry, *The Golden Epistle*, 1.15.58–59, p. 32; 1.58–59: "et in genere suo pulcherrima, et a bonis et a malis hominibus facta sunt et fiant."

13. Pacifique Delfgaauw and Bernard McGinn both provide excellent summaries of erotic love in Bernard of Clairvaux's works. See McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, 2:193–223, and Pacifique Delfgaauw, "La nature et les degrés de l'amour selon saint Bernard," *Saint Bernard théologien: Actes du congrès de Dijon 15–19 septembre 1953, Analecta sacri ordinis cisterciensis II* (1953): 234–52. Bernard of Clairvaux, *De diligendo deo in L'amour de dieu: La grâce et le libre arbitre*, Sources chrétiennes 393 (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 2010); Bernard of Clairvaux, "On Loving God," in *Selected Works* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987). Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique*, Sources chrétiennes 414, 431, 452, 472, 511, 5 vols (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 1996–2007). Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, trans. Kilian Walsh et al., Cistercian Fathers 4, 7, 31, 40, 4 vols (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1971–80).

14. Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, v. 4, 3.I.1, p. 16. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique I* (1–15), Sources chrétiennes, vol. 414 (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 2006), p. 100, sermon 3, section 1.1, l. 1: "Hodie legimus in libro experientiae." For more on the book of experience, see McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism*, 2:185–86.

15. Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, v. 4, 1.VI.11, p. 6. Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique I* (1–15), p. 76, sermon 1, section VI.11: "Istiusmodi canticum sola unctio docet, sola addiscit experientia. Experti recognoscant, inexperti inardescant desiderio, non tam cognoscendi quam experiendi."

16. Bernard's emphasis on flesh as the starting place of human love and desire is explained in detail in Delfgaauw, "La nature et les degrés de l'amour selon saint Bernard," 234–52, at 237–40.

17. Bernard of Clairvaux, "On Loving God," in *Selected Works* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987) 15.39, p. 204; SBOp 3:152: "Verumtamen, quia carnales sumus et de carnis concupiscentia nascimur, necesse est cupiditas vel amor noster a carne incipiat, quae si recto ordine dirigitur, quibusdam suis gradibus duce gratis proficiens, spiritu tandem consummabitur. . . . In primis ergo diligit seipsum homo propter se: caro quippe est, et nil sapere valet praeter se."

18. Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, v. 4, 20.V.6, p. 152. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique II* (16–32), Sources chrétiennes, vol. 431 (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 1998), p. 138, sermon 20, section V.6, ll. 12–17: "Hanc ego arbitror praecipuum invisibili Deo fuisse causam, quod voluit in carne videri et cum hominibus homo conversari (Bar. 3:38), ut carnalium videlicet, qui nisi carnaliter amare non poterant, cunctas primo ad suae carnis salutarem amorem affectiones retraheret, atque ita gradatim ad amorem perduceret spiritualem."

19. Delfgaauw, "La nature et les degrés de l'amour selon saint Bernard," 240.

20. Clairvaux, "On Loving God," 8.25, p. 193; SBOp 3:139: "Porro [proximum] in Deo diligere non potest, qui Deum non diligit. Oportet ergo Deum diligere prius, ut in Deo diligere possit et proximus."

21. Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, v. 31, 62.IV.6, p. 157. Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique IV* (51–68), Sources chrétiennes, vol. 472 (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 2003), p. 276, section IV.6, ll. 12–15: "Si cui ne hoc quidem possibile sit, huic sane proponet *Iesum*, et hunc *crucifixum*, ut et ipse absque suo labore habitet in foraminibus petrae, in quibus non laboravit."

22. Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, v. 31, 61.I.3, p. 142. Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique IV (51–68)*, vol. 472, section I.3, ll. 1–3, p. 246. Gregory the Great, *In Cantica*, PL 79:499D.

23. Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, v. 31, 61.II.3, p. 143. Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique IV (51–68)*, vol. 472, sermon 61, section II.3, ll. 26–30, p. 248: “Nempe vulneratus est propter iniquitates nostras. Quid tam ad mortem, quod non Christi morte solvatur? Si ergo in mentem venerit tam potens tamque efficax medicamentum, nulla iam possum morbi malignitate terri.”

24. Note that Bernard begins sermon 51 by interpreting this verse in the Vulgate translation, “quia amore languo,” demonstrating that he, like Richard, is aware of both translations. Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique IV (51–68)*, vol. 472, 51.I.1, ll. 1–2, p. 38.

25. Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, v. 7, 29.IV.8, p. 110. Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique IV (51–68)*, vol. 472, 29.IV.8, ll. 15–20, p. 394: “Et [Maria] quidem in tota se grande et suave amoris vulnus accepit; ego vero me felicem putaverim, si summo saltem quasi cuspidis huius gladii pungi interdum me sensero, ut vel modico accepto amoris vulnere, dicat etiam anima mea: *Vulnerata caritate ego sum* (Cant. 2:5).” Bernard’s approach here belongs to the tradition of reading the Song of Songs as between Mary, often a figure of the church, and Christ. See E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved—The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

26. This is not to say that maternal love and erotic love cannot overlap, as they often do in Marian commentaries on the Song of Songs, only that it does not do so in this case. See Karma Lochrie’s critique of Caroline Walker Bynum on this point. Karma Lochrie, “Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies,” in *Constructing Medieval Sexuality*, ed. Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James A. Schultz (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 180–200, at 187–89.

27. The Latin may be found in SBOP 3, section III.7, p. 124, ll. 18–19; Clairvaux, “On Loving God,” 3.7, p. 179.

28. Thomas Bestul, *Texts of the Passion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 27–29. For an overview of the development of the exegesis of the Song of Songs, see Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved*.

29. Wack discusses this in *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, 22. Origen, *The Song of Songs Commentary and Homilies*, trans. and ed. R. P. Lawson (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1957), 199.

30. Jessica Boon, “Wounded by Love: The Agony of God’s Touch in Hadewijch and Ruusbroec,” in *Companion to Hadewijch*, ed. Patricia Dailey and Veerle Fraeters (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). Mark DelCogliano, ed., *Gregory the Great on the Song of Songs* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 197. Paul Verdeyen, ed., *Guilelmi a Sancto Theodorico Expositio super Cantica canticorum, Brevis commentario. Excerpta de libris beati Ambrosii et Gregorii super Cantica canticorum* [Exposition on the Song of Songs from William to St. Gregory, A short commentary, Excerpts from the books of blessed Ambrose and Gregory on the Song of Songs], CCCM 87 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 387–444, at 405, ll 158–61: “Sed [corda nostra] uulneratur ut sanentur, quia amoris sui spiculis mentes Deus insensibiles percutit, moxque has sensibiles per ardorem caritatis reddit. Vnde hic sponsa dicit: *Vulnerata caritate ego sum*.” It is interesting to note that for Gregory the Great, wounding is the first step in a healing process; this will not be the itinerary taken up by Richard.

31. Chapters 12–25, 27–33, and 35–37 of the *Meditations* were written by John of Fécamp, according to Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 149. Matthew J. O’Connell, trans., *Meditations of Saint Augustine* (Villanova, PA: Augustinian Press, 1995), 114–15; *Liber meditationum*, PL 40, col. 935–36:

Rogo te per illa salutifera vulnera tua, quae passus es in cruce pro salute nostra, ex quibus emanavit ille pretiosus sanguis quo susmus redempti, vulnera hanc animam peccatricem, pro qua etiam mori dignatus es; vulnera eam igneo et potentissimo telo tuae nimiae charitatis. Vivus es, sermo Dei, et efficax et penetrabilior omni gladio ancipiti (Heb 4:12). Tu sagitta electa, et gladius acutissimus, qui durum scutum humani cordis penetrare tua potentia vales, confige cor meum jaculo tui amoris: ut dicat tibi anima mea, Charitate tua vulnerata sum; (Song of Songs 2:5) ita ut ex ipso vulnere amoris tui uberrimae fluant lacrymae nocte ac die. Percute, Domine, percute, obsecro, hanc durissimam mentem meam praevalida cuspidis dilectionis tuae, et altius ad intima penetra potenti virtute, et sic da capiti meo aquam immensam, et oculis meis infunde verum fontem lacrymarum jugiter manantem.

The attribution of the Song of Songs quotation is lacking in both the Latin and the English translation; I have added it in both.

32. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*.

33. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 36–37.

34. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 39.

35. Gilbert of Holyand, *Sermons on the Song of Songs II*, trans. Lawrence C. Braceland (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1979), 363. Gilbert of Hoyland, *Sermones in Cantica*, sermon 30, PL 184, col. 155–56: “Ne parcas, Sponsa, talibus Sponsum telis appetere. Aspectibus piis quasi spiculis utere. Noli in hoc negotio remissius agere, noli contena esse dilectum vulnerare semel, sed concide ipsum vulnere super vulnus. . . .” This passage is cited in Pierre Rousselot, *The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages: A Historical Contribution* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001), 174.

36. Baldwin of Canterbury, *Tractatus XIV*, PL 204, col. 539, as cited in Rousselot, *The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages*, 175: “Hei mihi, quod nullis amor est medicabilis herbis.” Compare to Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), book I, p. 38, l. 523: “Ei mihi, quod nullis amor est sanabilis herbis. . . .”

37. Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 149–50.

38. “Amors si dolceman le requiert / que par les ialz el cuer le fierit; / et cist cos a plus grant duree / que cos de lance ne d’espee: / cos d’espee garist et saine / molt tost, des que mires i painne; / et la plaie d’Amors anpire / quant ele est plus pres de son mire.” Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain, ou Le Chevalier au Lion*, vv. 1369–76, ed. Jan Nelson and Carleton W. Carroll (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), 80–81. Ruth Harwood Cline, trans., *Yvain* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 38. Newman notes that *Yvain* was composed just after Richard’s death, but that the theme of Love as archer was already ubiquitous. Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 364n53.

39. For more on Richard’s use of themes present in secular literature, see the following section on lovesickness. For a standard overview of these themes, see Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love-Lyric*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965–66), and Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Lyric*, 3rd ed. (Woodbridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1996). See also Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. William R. Trask, Bollingen Series 36 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953).

40. Richard may have come across lovesickness through reading a medical text. It is entirely possible that the extensive library at the abbey of St. Victor owned a copy of the *Viaticum* or one of its commentaries, though more research is needed to determine if this was the case. For an overview of the library’s collection, see Françoise Gasparri, “Bibliothèque et archives de l’abbaye de Saint-Victor de Paris au XIIe siècle,” *Scriptorium* 55, no. 2 (2001): 275–84.

41. Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*.

42. The library at the abbey of St. Victor included some of Ovid’s works, though more research on the subject is needed. See Gasparri, “Bibliothèque et archives de l’abbaye de Saint-Victor de Paris au XIIe siècle,” 277–78.

43. Medieval readers of Ovid made connections between the *Ars amatoria* and the *Remedia amoris* and the medical literature newly available through Constantine the African’s translations, reinforcing their authority by way of Ovid’s. See Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, 15.

44. Ovid, *The Offense of Love: Ars amatoria, Remedia amoris, and Tristia 2*, trans. Julia Dyson Hejduk (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2014), 90; Ovid, *Ars amatoria*, book 1, p. 28, ll. 729–38:

palleat omnis amans: hic est color aptus amanti;
hoc decet, hoc multi non valuisse putant.
pallidus in Side siluis errabat Orion;
pallidus in lenta Naide Daphnis erat.
arguat et macies animum, nec turpe putaris
palliolum nitidis inposuisse comis.
attenuant iuuenum uigilatae corpora noctes
curaque et in magno qui fit amore dolor.
ut uoto potiare tuo, miserabilis esto,
ut qui te uideat, dicere possit ‘amas.’

45. Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, 34.
 46. Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, 34.
 47. Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, 34–35.
 48. Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, 39.
 49. Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, 40.
 50. Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, 47–48.
 51. Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006), p. 224, ll. 2996–98:

Dex!, fete le, estes vos fesniee,
 Ma dolce dameisele chiere,
 Qui si avez tainte la chiere?

See also Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, 110.

52. Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), pp. 89–90, ll. 3030–36. Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006), p. 226, ll. 3052–55:

De toz max est divers li miens
 car se voir dire vos an vuel,
 molt m'abelist et si m'an duel,
 et me delit an ma meseise.

53. Barbara Newman references certain characters in Chrétien's works, namely Erec, Lancelot, and Tristan and Yseult, as exhibiting aspects of love comparable to Richard's violent love. While that is the case, I would add that several of these qualities correspond to the psychological aspects of lovesickness, in particular to the obsessive quality of love. See Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 150.

54. Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 139.

55. Feiss, *On Love*, 261–300; Dumeige, *Ives*, 89–177.

56. Feiss, *On Love*, 276. Dumeige, "Introduction," p. 129, ll.17–22: "charitate vulnerante," "charitate ligante," "charitate languente," "charitate deficiente."

57. The *Vetus Latina* includes examples like this one, evoking woundedness, as well as others more similar to the Vulgate version that refer to being sick with love. The *Vetus Latina* Database, s.v. "Ct. 2:5" (accessed January 25, 2017), <http://apps.brepolis.net.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/vld/>.

58. Richard's version has a different case ending for *caritas* from the Old Latin; Richard uses the ablative of agent, while the Old Latin uses the more unusual genitive. Dumeige, *Ives*, p. 127, section 1, l. 1: "Vulnerata caritate ego sum" [I am wounded by love].

59. Cited in Richard of St. Victor, *Benjamin minor*, PL 196, Col. 17A.

60. Dominique Poirel and Patrice Sicard have, however, divided the corpus into three main periods: the first is during his time as *magister*, when he wrote the *Liber Exceptionum*, compiled between 1153 and 1159 (in which Richard cites the *De consideratione*). *De duodecim patriarchis* [On the twelve patriarchs] and *De gratio contemplationis* (or *Benjamin major* or *De arca mystica*) were written toward the end of Richard's subpriorate, between 1159 and 1162. Sicard dates the *De IV gradibus* to some time after 1162, when Richard had become prior (the manuscripts refer to him as prior). The *De Trinitate* was written after this, during Richard's priorate, and finished in about 1173. Poirel and Sicard, "Figure Vittorine," 466.

61. Feiss, *On Love*, 276–77 (translation slightly modified). Dumeige, *Ives*, 131, section 6, ll. 10–20: "Sed ecce ad illum amoris gradum redimus quem primo loco posuimus, et vulnerantem jam diximus. Nonne tibi corde percussus videtur, quando igneus ille amoris aculeus mentem hominis medullitis penetrat, affectumque transverberat, in tantum ut desiderii sui estus cohibere vel dissimulare omnino non valeat? Desiderio ardet, fervet affectu, estuat, anhelat, profunde ingemiscens et longa suspiria trahens. Haec tibi anime vulnerate certa sint signa, gemitus atque suspiria, vultus pallens atque tabescens. . . . Febricitantium itaque more qui hoc typo vexantur nunc acrius uruntur, nunc occupationum suarum occasione aliquantulum recreantur."

62. Dumeige, *Ives*, 133, section 8, l. 16: "acute febris."

63. Feiss, *On Love*, 278. Dumeige, *Ives*, 133, section 8, ll. 19–23: "Itaque sicut ille qui lecto decubat, vel quem catena coercet, ab eo loco quo addicti sunt elongari non possunt, sic utique

qui ab hoc secundo violente caritatis gradu absorptus est, quicquid agat, quocumque se vertat, ab illa una et intima sollicitudinis sue cura avelli non potest.”

64. Feiss, *On Love*, 278. Dumeige, *Ives*, 133, section 9, ll. 29–30: “secundi autem gradus vehementia omnino non valet, nec reluctando superari, nec fugiendo declinari.”

65. “Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum ita desiderat anima mea ad te Deus” (Vulgate Ps. 41:2).

66. Feiss, *On Love*, 279. Dumeige, *Ives*, 135, section 10, l. 28–p. 137, section 10, ll. 1–3: “Sed quis hujus affectus tyrannidem digne describat: quomodo omne desiderium expellit, quomodo omne stadium excludit, quomodo omne exercitium violenter opprimit quod sue concupiscentie deservire non prospicit?”

67. Feiss, *On Love*, 282–83. Dumeige, *Ives*, 145, section 18, ll. 12–20:

Hi quatuor amoris gradus aliter se habent in affectibus divinis, atque aliter se habent in affectibus humanis, omnino aliter atque aliter se habent in desideriis spiritalibus et in desideriis carnalibus. In desideriis spiritalibus quanto major tanto et melior; in desideriis carnalibus quanto est major tanto et pejor. In affectibus divinis ipse qui summus idem et precipuus. In affectibus humanis ille qui summus ipse est et pessimus. In humanis sane affectibus primus potest esse bonus, secundus absque dubio est malus, pejor tamen est tertius, quartus autem est pessimus.

68. Feiss, *On Love*, 281. Dumeige, *Ives*, 141, section 15, ll. 20–21, 25–26: “solo adhuc spiritu anhelat et omni hora quasi ad exitum appropinquat . . . quodammodo quasi premortuus que circa se geruntur omnino non sentit.”

69. Feiss, *On Love*, 286. Dumeige, *Ives*, 153, section 26, ll. 20–21: “In primo gradu fit desponsatio, in secundo nuptie, in tertio copula, in quarto puerperium.”

70. Feiss, *On Love*, 293–94. Dumeige, *Ives*, 171, section 43, ll. 22–31:

In hoc itaque statu anime ejusmodi proponitur forma humilitatis Christi, unde et dicitur ei: Hoc sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Ihesu qui cum in forma Dei esset, non rapinam arbitrates est esse se equalem Deo, sed semetipsum exinanivit, formam servi accipiens, in similitudinem hominum factus, et habitu inventus ut homo; humiliavit autem semetipsum, factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis. Haec est forma humilitatis Christi ad quam conformare se debet quisquis supremum consummate caritatis gradum attingere volet. Majorem siquidem caritatem nemo habet quam ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis.

71. Feiss, *On Love*, 281. Dumeige, *Ives*, 143: “In hoc statu amor sepe in odium transit.”

72. See St. Thierry, *De natura et dignitate amoris*, ch. 3.

73. Andrew B. Kraebel, “Introduction,” in “On the Four Degrees of Violent Love,” by Richard of St. Victor, in Feiss, *On Love*, 268n13. Kraebel cites Caroline Walker Bynum, “The Spirituality of Canons Regular in the Twelfth Century,” *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 22–58.

74. Hugh of St. Victor, *Explanation of the Rule of St Augustine*, trans. Aloysius Smith (London: Sands and Company, 1911), 1.

75. Feiss, *On Love*, 276, translation slightly modified; Dumeige, *Ives*, 129, section 4, ll. 15–16: “Herete animo, fratres, attendite ad illam quam multum concupiscitis, audite de illa et anhelate in illam quam vehementer ambitis.”

76. The language of metaphorical bodies appealing to the bodies of monks is taken from an informal conversation with Eleanor Craig.