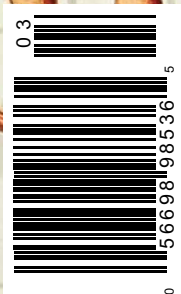
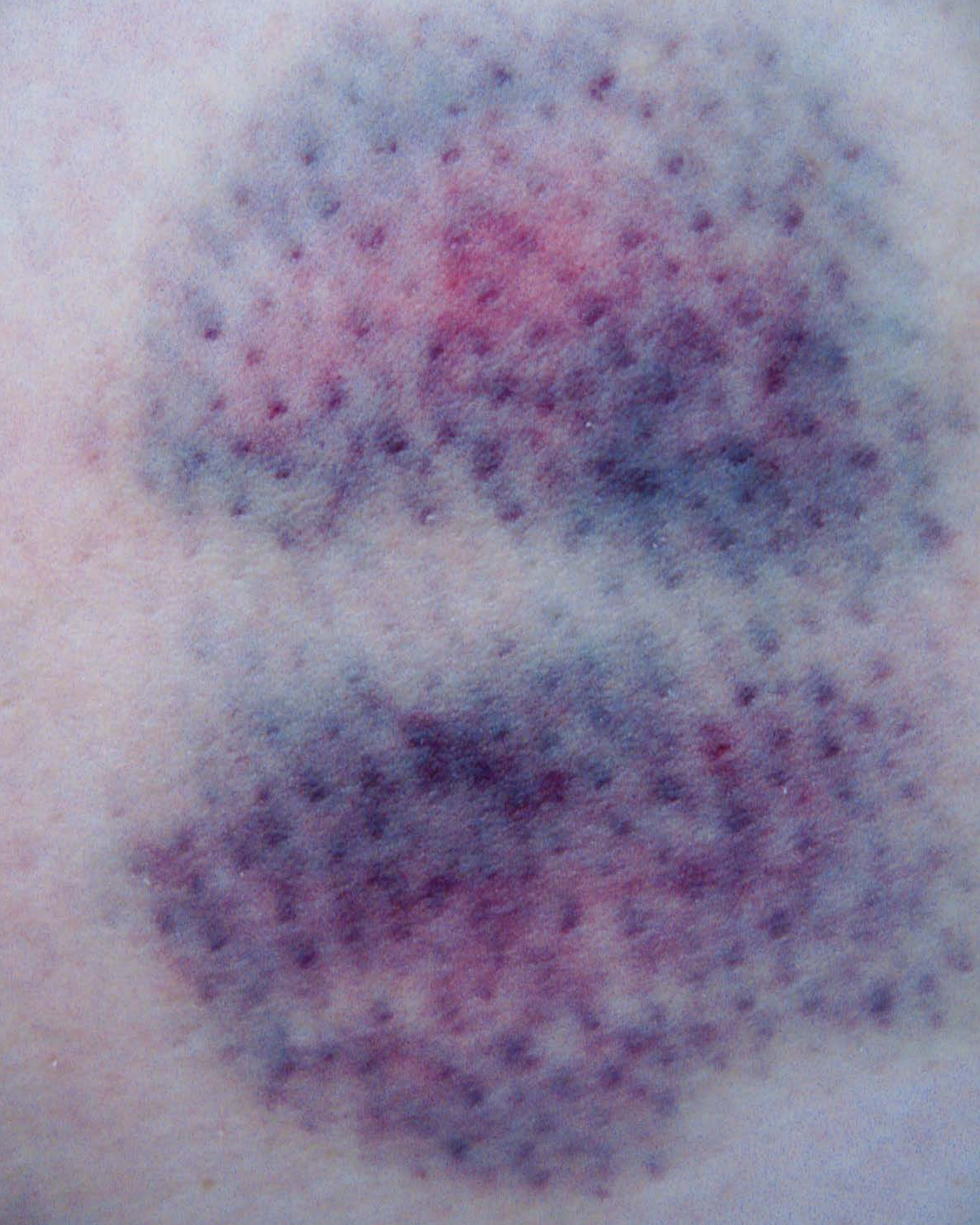


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INVENTORY / A TAXONOMY OF BRUISES

DOMINIC PETTMAN

The short text that follows has intrigued, confused, and provoked scholars since its discovery in the Eastern Arabah archaeological digs, near the ancient city of Petra, in 1844. The dispute continues regarding precisely how to categorize it, an irony lost on no one, given that the text itself is explicitly dedicated to the act of categorization. The Latin script, dating from the twelfth century AD, is based on an original Arabic source text dated approximately two hundred years earlier. The recovered text was inscribed on the finest vellum (suggesting official patronage) and was remarkably well preserved in a garnet-encrusted bronze cylinder apparently designed for just this purpose. Authorship was almost certainly collective, comprised of Persians of the cosmopolitan Sufi persuasion, and possibly including at least one learned soul from the West, who may have provided a subtle strain of neo-Aristotelianism. (Such collaborations were reasonably common, up until the Crusades.) Certain interweavings of monism, occasionalism, and other heterodoxies reinforce this hypothesis, given that no single religious or philosophical orientation can be definitively obtained (much as the experts try). The rather risky—not to mention risqué—topic of the flesh is clearly contextualized within a Christian sensibility, yet threatens to escape at any moment into the more sensual register of the *Song of Solomon* or certain pseudo-Islamic homages to terrestrial pleasure. One aspect of this anomalous work upon which the scholars *do* agree is the remarkable form of the taxonomy itself, which anticipates the system usually attributed to Linnaeus. In any case, the text is a suggestive sketch and should be of interest to the archaeologist and anthropologist, as much as to the physician and philosopher. This scholastic exercise stands alone as a quiet murmur within our species' ongoing obsession with placing kind with kind, and separating goats from sheep, wheat from chaff, night from day, and love from less exalted types of attraction. If nothing else, for the amateur reader, *Partitio Contusionum* ("A Taxonomy of Bruises")—presented overleaf in a translation from the late nineteenth century—can form the basis of spirited discussion for one's next dinner party or tiresome train journey.

opposite: Photo Megan Woodrum.

PREAMBLE

It is said that both man and woman bruise “like a peach.” And it is true that mortals share a kind of flesh with the succulent products of the fruit tree. Perhaps God—praised be His name—has prepared a secret affinity between our own bodies and the sweet texture of apricots, nectarines, peaches, pears, and plums. It is even possible that the apple—symbol and cause of Adam’s exile from Paradise—forms an invisible continuity with the soft tissues of our Earthly bodies. (Strangely, the beasts do not seem to bruise, suggesting a closer kinship with certain botanical entities, at least in terms of the subject under examination.) Folk wisdom tells us that the fair sex bruises more easily than the male, and with this we must concur, with certain exceptions, detailed anon.

Those trained in the arts of Hippocrates will tell you that a bruise is caused neither by a sharp object, nor a light one, but one of a blunt and heavy disposition. The skin must not break or lacerate, but remain in plane, to act as cover for the local injury beneath, swelling and darkening black and purple, like a storm cloud trapped inside the body of young and old alike. (Unlike the peach, the bruises of men heal—or at least the majority do, of those we have so far inventoried.) But here the physicians are indifferent and uncurious, content to treat one such contusion as another. The learned, however, who ever seek wisdom, are not content with such simple appraisals, and offer this taxonomy of bruises as a gift to descendants of a similar spirit, to supplement as they see fit.

BRUISES OF THE FIRST TYPE: DOMESTIC

contusio pedis: a bruise of the foot

contusio cruris: a bruise of the leg (lower)

contusio femoris: a bruise of the leg (upper)

contusio pygae: a bruise of the buttocks

contusio manus: a bruise of the hand

contusio brachii: a bruise of the arm (lower)

contusio lacerti: a bruise of the arm (upper)

contusio alvi: a bruise of the torso (front)

contusio tergi: a bruise of the torso (back)

contusio colli: a bruise of the neck

contusio vultus: a bruise of the face

contusio palma: a bruise caused by an open hand

contusio pugno: a bruise caused by a closed fist

contusio inquisitione obscura: a bruise caused by searching for an object in the dark

contusio supellectile inaspecta: a bruise caused by clumsiness, inflicted by tables, chairs, furniture, or door-frames

contusio grave demisso: a bruise caused by dropping a heavy object

contusio halucinatione: a bruise resulting from daydreaming or slowness of mind

contusio casu: a bruise caused by falling (for instance, from a ladder)

contusio accidente: a bruise caused by accident, inflicted by another (for instance, an overzealous gesture)

contusio bubla: a bruise caused by one’s livestock

contusio equitatione: a bruise caused by the riding of a horse

contusio religiosa: a bruise resulting from religious fervor or penance

contusio conjuge exacerbato: a bruise caused by the hand of one’s husband or wife, for being disagreeable

contusio parente: a bruise caused by the hand of one’s father or mother, for being disobedient

contusio avunculo: a bruise caused by one’s uncle, for being lazy

contusio originis obliterata: a bruise for

which one can no longer remember the cause

contusio inscrutabilis: a bruise for which one never understood the cause

contusio affectu malo: a bruise resulting from ill humor

contusio ludo stulto: a bruise resulting from horseplay

contusio natalis: a bruise which peaks on the day of one’s own birth

contusio coagmentata naevo: a bruise which overlaps with a birthmark

contusio celata: a bruise concealed through the artful application of powders or paste

contusio peregrinationis: a bruise brought back from travels afar

contusio incestus: a bruise which invites the kiss of a cousin

contusio nuptialis: a bruise received on one’s wedding night

contusio amplexu magno: a bruise resulting from an excessive embrace

contusio amatorum: a bruise resulting from passionate love-making (within wedlock)

contusio adulterorum: a bruise resulting from passionate love-making (out of wedlock)

contusio masturbatione: a bruise acquired during onanistic activity, as divine punishment of the same

contusio indicans: a bruise that betrays a secret

contusio invidentia: a bruise stemming from jealousy

contusio cupidine: a bruise stemming from desire

contusio invidentia cupida: a bruise stemming from jealous desire

contusio sellae controversae: a bruise stemming from a dispute over the latrine

BRUISES OF THE SECOND TYPE: CIVIC / PUBLIC

contusio pedibus suis: a bruise formed after tripping over one's own feet

contusio pedibus aliis: a bruise formed after tripping over the feet of another

contusio castigatione: a bruise resulting from birch cane or willow paddle for misbehavior (especially in a convent or seminary)

contusio prolapsione ex arbore: a bruise inflicted by the ground after falling from a tree

contusio prolapsione ex muro: a bruise inflicted by the ground after falling from a wall

contusio objecto ex fenestra: a bruise caused by an object falling from a window

contusio plaustro: a bruise caused by a cart, or other moving vehicle

contusio choralis: a bruise caused by dancing around the maypole

contusio salax: a bruise inflicted by a companion's elbow, deployed to draw attention to the proximity of a comely stranger

contusio abscondita: a bruise received from a kick beneath the dinner table

contusio contumax: a bruise acquired while trying to draw attention to oneself in a vain, foolish manner

contusio ebria: a bruise sustained while intoxicated

contusio ominosa: a bruise suffered as a warning of worse to come, unless certain conditions are met

contusio fati: a bruise suffered as a warning of worse to come, no matter how the sufferer comports him or herself in the future

contusio nobilis: a bruise caused by one of noble birth

contusio plebeia: a bruise caused by one of lower social rank

contusio ultrix: a bruise resulting from (accidentally) bruising someone of higher social rank

contusio tumultu: a bruise resulting from revolutionary or mutinous activity

contusio barbara: a bruise received by another who speaks not one's own tongue

contusio verax: a bruise received for speaking one's mind openly

contusio pusillanimitate: a bruise received for not speaking when one should

contusio vanidici mali: a bruise received for voicing untruths in an unconvincing fashion

contusio despoliatione defecta: a bruise manifesting the legacy of attempted robbery

contusio certamine magnanimo: a bruise received in battle (through bravery)

contusio certamine timido: a bruise received in battle (through cowardice)

contusio honesta: a bruise which enhances one's reputation

contusio pulchritudinis tristitiae: a bruise which exaggerates a melancholy beauty

contusio athletae: a bruise received while participating in athletic activity

contusio cygno irato: a bruise inflicted by an angry swan

contusio experimentale: a bruise received as a direct result of experimentation

contusio proventu experimentalis: a bruise received as an indirect result of experimentation

contusio muginans intra: a bruise received while tarrying inside a public building

contusio muginans extra: a bruise received while tarrying outside a public building

contusio crepusculo: a bruise inflicted at dusk

contusio ghibli: a bruise which blooms during the sirocco

contusio altitudinis: a bruise received at high altitudes

contusio nautae: a bruise received on the high seas

BRUISES OF THE THIRD TYPE: MYSTERIOUS

contusio distractione: a bruise resulting from unthinking activity or distraction (not noticed at time of impact)

contusio somnambulans: a bruise acquired while sleep-walking

contusio numine: a bruise inflicted by the will of God (most commonly by an angel with special tools, as punishment for minor sins)

contusio tricone: a bruise created through the mischief of spirits or jinns

contusio malefica: a bruise which forms a sinister symbol, such as the evil eye

contusio varians: a bruise which waxes and wanes according to an unknown cycle

BRUISES OF THE FOURTH TYPE: INTERNAL / INVISIBLE

contusio luctus: a bruise located beneath the rib-cage stemming from grief

contusio incommodi: a bruise located in the pit of one's viscera from disappointment

contusio metus: a bruise located in the throat from an unnamable fear

contusio amore perditio: a bruise located inside the heart from rejection by a beloved

contusio amore irremunderato: a bruise blossoming ever-black from unrequited love (or requited love at a distance)

contusio existentialis: a bruise created throughout the flesh by the daily pummeling of existence