

TWO POEMS FROM THE CARMINA BURANA

D. W. Robertson, Jr.

1. "DUM DIANE VITREA"

We owe to Peter Dronke an account of "Dum Diane Vitrea" that treats the poem as a whole, and not only provides a newly edited text but a new translation.¹ Dronke's attractive and gracefully written exposition envisions a rare form of "serenely perfect love" as the subject, although he finds that the poem is not a work of what he calls *amour courtois*. The more learned and elaborate poems in the *Carmina Burana* were clearly written for a rather sophisticated audience of clerks (or students) whose background and training involved texts no longer familiar today, so that their interpretation is difficult; and we must be careful not to substitute our own familiar background for theirs when we bring connotations to the language of the poems. Dronke in effect acknowledges this fact by introducing into his discussion a supporting quotation from Hildegard of Bingen. However, his conclusion seems strange at the outset since the poem near its beginning states that the joy of sleep is equal to the sweetness of love and concludes by emphasizing the uneasiness and discomfort of lovers. Perhaps the poem needs a more detailed examination.

It begins with a description of moonrise and its effect on mortal creatures. I have arranged the text here for ease of reference rather than in accordance with its poetic form:

¹ *Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love-lyric*, (Oxford 1965) 1.806-818. The statement (806-7) that "no one since Schmeller in 1847 has even bothered to print the complete poem" neglects the text (Schmeller) and translation in George Whicher, *The Goliard Poets* (New York 1949) pp. 30-35. Whicher's "translation" is an entirely new poem.

- 1.1 Dum Diane vitrea
 sero lampas oritur,
 et a fratris rosea
 luce dum succenditur,
 5 dulcis aura Zephyri
 spirans omnes etheri,
 nubes tollit,
 sic emollit
 vi chordarum pectora.
 10 et inmutat
 cor, quod nutat
 ad amoris pignora.

The MS reading *spirant* is printed by Schmeller (37.6), but Schumann (62.6) and Dronke amend to *spirans*, which seems necessary for coherence. In 9 the MS reading *vi*, echoed in the tavern-song parody (Schmeller 176.2.3), is retained by Schmeller but emended to *vis* by Schumann and Dronke. In 12 the MS reading *pignora* printed by Schmeller is emended to *pondera* by Schumann, but is felicitously restored by Dronke. The text above thus constitutes a compromise. Although everyone should understand that modern translations should be avoided except as very rough guides to twelfth-century texts, a tentative translation might run something like this:

When the glass lamp of Diana rises late, and when it is illumined by the rosy light of her brother, the breeze of sweet Zephyrus fills all the heavens, removes the clouds, softens breasts in this way with the force of its music, and transforms the heart, which falters at the pledges of love.

The "clouds" are, figuratively, the cares that beset the mind, and the "music" of the soft breezes should probably be understood as a product of the natural harmony involved in the cycles of the sun and moon. We shall return to this concept later. Since the word *aura* could be used for gentle wind, light, or even tone, its appearance here is especially felicitous, for all three appear under the aegis of Diana. The soft light, the clear unclouded heavens, and the music of the breeze constitute the "pledges" or tokens of a love before which the heart falters or becomes calm in preparation for the fruit of that love, which is, as we soon learn, natural sleep.

It was said that Diana, in her manifestation as the moon, "rorem de se egerit et emittit,"² but here that function is performed by her assistant, Hesperus, the evening, whose gift removes cares, producing a sleep, the joy of which is equal to the sweetness of love:

- 2.1 Letum iubar Hesperii
gratiorem
dat humorem
roris soporiferi
5 mortalium generi.
3.1 O quam felix est
antidotum soporis,
quod curarum tempestates
sedat et doloris!
5 Dum surrepit clausis
oculorum poris,
ipsum gaudio equiparat
dulcedini amoris.

It is important to notice that this sleep, unlike another kind of sleep soon to be described, removes worldly cares. Moreover, it steals into the channels of the eyes from without. The "medical" terminology some have found objectionable in the latter part of the poem actually appears first in 3.6.

Diana is further assisted by Orpheus, famous for his soothing melodies:

- 4.1 Orpheus in mentem
trahit impellentem
ventum lenem,
segetes maturas,
5 murmura rivorum
per harenas puras,
circulares ambitus molendinorum,
qui furantur somno lumen oculorum.

The MS reading *Orpheus* in 1 was emended by Schumann to read *Morpheus*, but properly restored by Dronke.³ The music

² Remigii Autissiodorensis *Commentum in Martianum Capellam* 2.70.11 (Lutz 1.191). Cf. *MVIII* 7.3-4 (Bode 1.198-199).

³ The arguments adduced are impressive, although Orpheus is not customarily associated specifically with the sounds of evening. Further indications of his appropriateness in this poem appear below.

of twilight sounds helps to darken the eyes in sleep in a stanza that will appeal to all of those once moved by "The Elegy in a Country Churchyard," although there is actually no taint of romantic melancholy in our poem. Here the mind is affected.⁴

Diana, Hesperus and Orpheus thus cooperate to bring relaxation and freedom from care in sleep to all those willing to accept Diana's tokens of love. The poet now turns to another kind of sleep brought on by Venus. This variety has nothing to do with the sleep we have just been discussing. Its inspiration and physiological processes are very different. The elaborate physiological description, which has repelled some readers of the poem, is actually couched in very commonplace terms, but it serves to emphasize the very distinctive qualities of this kind of sleep. Schumann relegated the text from here on to a note, since it did not seem to him to preserve the "wundervolle echt dichterische Stimmung" of the previous stanzas. However, the poet clearly wished to celebrate Diana and to deprecate Venus, so that we should assume that the offensive subject-matter served a deliberate purpose:

- 5.1 Post blanda Veneris commercia
lassatur cerebri substantia;
hinc caligant
mira novitate
5 oculi nantes
in palpebrarum rate.
Hei quam felix transitus
amoris ad soporem,
sed suavior
10 regressus ad amorem!

Here the substance of the brain (or the understanding) is deprived of vigor, and the eyes, swimming in the eyelids, are darkened in a manner to be described in the next stanza. Both Whicher and Dronke translate lines 7-8 so as to indicate a transition from love to sleep, but the alternative possibility is probably better in the context of the poem: "O how happy is the passage to the sleep of love, but sweeter is the return to

⁴ The mill in Dronke's quotation from Hildegard serves a very different purpose from that of the mill in the poem. The connection between them seems to me dubious.

love!"⁵ That is, the lover is torn between two pleasant choices: he enjoys the somnolence of amorous exhaustion, but he enjoys even more a return to amorous activity. In short, his sleep is not restful. Venereal activity begets a restless desire for itself.⁶

In connection with the above stanza, the verb *caligare* (3) and the noun from which it was derived, *caligo*, when associated with the eyes were sometimes medical terms indicating pathological blindness, mental or physical; and *novitas* (4) could mean "strangeness." Connotations such as these are reinforced by the language of the following stanza, which is clearly "physiological":

- 6.1 Ex alvo leta
fumus evaporat,
qui capitis tres
cellulas irrorat;
5 hic infumat oculos
ad soporem pendulos,
et palpebras
sua fumositate
replet, ne visus
10 expacietur late;
unde ligant oculos
virtutes animales,
que sunt magis
vise ministeriales.

All the editors agree in emending the MS reading *me* in 9 to *ne*. From the pleasantly satisfied belly⁷ a fume arises to bedew the three cells of the brain, or the faculties of imagination, reason and memory. In medieval texts the order of these faculties

⁵ The virtues of this translation were suggested to me by Mr. Thomas La Farge during a seminar discussion.

⁶ This is a special case of the Boethian principle (*Cons.* 2.m.2) that any kind of cupidinous desire is insatiable. This one in particular is said to lead to transitory pleasure and to leave a sting (3.pr.7 and m.7). But, as John of Salisbury explains, *Pol.* 8.6.724c, desire returns.

⁷ Dronke translates "joyous reins," but the Terentian proverb "Without Ceres and Bacchus Venus freezes" was well-known in the Middle Ages (e.g. *MVIII* 1.7 Bode 1.155), and it was widely recognized that Venereal inclinations, as well as a certain somnolence, are stimulated by excesses of drinking and eating. The "vapor" here described is thus probably gastric in origin. Cf. *MVIII* 11.2 (Bode 1.229): "ob vini petulantium libido excitari solet," or *Prov* xxiii.31-35.

sometimes varies, but not their nature. The moisture here should be contrasted with the "humorem roris soporiferi" provided by Hesperus (2.3-4), which comes from without as a part of a natural series of ordered events rather than from within as a result of wilful superfluity. Gastric flatulence "smokes" or beclouds the eyes and makes the eyelids heavy with its fumosity so that the sight does not range very far. Thus the animal spirits bind the eyes. Dronke translates the last two lines "which specially in this show themselves our servants." It seems to me that a simpler and better rendition would be, "who are in a higher degree seen administrators," with the implication that the animal spirits, thought of in the twelfth century as administrators of the reigning soul, in their higher function nourish the sight rather than dim it. Sight was thought to be the chief gateway to the understanding, provided that the three cells of the brain function properly and are not, as they are here, beclouded. We should notice in this connection that whereas Diana removes clouds, Venus infuses them, producing what can justly be called in the terms of this poem stupefaction rather than natural drowsiness.

The activities of the animal spirits thus blind the eyes and lead to the usual garden of love, which is not a place but a state of mind conducive to Venereal pursuits and subsequent exhaustion. If we recognize the fact that gardens of this kind in medieval literature are often "inner" gardens, the visionary products of Venereal warmth, we have no difficulty in understanding the logical progression from stanza 6 to this one. Here the garden with its temptations is the product of the befuddled brain:

- 7.1 Fronde sub arboris amena,
dum querens canit Philomena,
suave est quiescere,
suavius ludere
5 in gramine
cum virgine
spetiosa.
Si variarum
odor herbarum
10 spiraverit,
si dederit

thorum rosa,
 dulciter soporis alimonia
 post Veneris defessa commercia
 15 captatur,
 dum lassus installatur.

The reigning spirit of the garden is Philomena, singing her complaint against Tereus, who, as Ovid tells us (*Met.* 6.519-562), raped her, and then, alarmed by her threats of disclosure, pulled out her wrathful tongue with some tongs, cut it off with his sword, and left it to writhe and murmur on the ground.

6.561 Hoc quoque post facinus, vix ausim credere, fertur
 saepe sua lacerum repetisse libidine corpus.

He sought to preserve the "secrecy of love," and to maintain his garden of delights in a hut, in which he imprisoned his beloved; but in due time he was discovered, with very unpleasant consequences for himself. Philomena and her "natural" surroundings represent an inauspicious attitude of mind produced by the Venerian befuddlement just described. The stanza moves from the self-induced stupor of the preceding stanza to a post-Venerian lassitude quite unlike the healthful and pleasant repose offered by Diana. The final stanza should thus come as no surprise:

8.1 O in quantis
 animus amantis
 variatur
 vacillantis!
 5 Ut vaga
 ratis per equora,
 dum caret anchora,
 fluctuat inter spem
 metumque dubia:
 10 sic Veneris milicia.

The figure of the wandering bark is reminiscent of Prov xxiii.33-34, and the hope and fear are precisely of the kind concerning which Boethius says (*Cons.* 1 m.7.25-31),

Gaudia pelle,
 pelle timorem

spemque fugato
 nec dolor adsit.
 Nubila mens est
 vinetaque frenis,
 haec ubi regnant.

The clerical audience who first addressed themselves to this poem would have been no strangers to classical myth. Diana, whose lamp illuminates the first stanza, is, among other things, the goddess of chastity, a huntress who (*Ovid AA* 1.261) "tela Cupidinis odit." She reflects the light of her brother, Apollo, called "omnium creatorem," and the god of wisdom and medicine.⁴ The healthful rest she offers her followers permits the virtuous pursuit of ferocious beasts rather than the Venerian pursuit of small creatures that turn their backs (*Ovid Met.* 10.705-707). As a planet Hesperus, like Lucifer, is Venus in another guise, its double appearance leading to the epithet "Paphiae." But the mythological connotations of Hesperus are obscure and limited in scope, so that his appearance here is probably, as suggested earlier, no more than a reinforcement of the idea of order. The conception is well expressed by Boethius (*Cons.* 1.m.5):

O stelliferi conditor orbis
 qui perpetuo nixus solio
 rapido caelum turbine uersas
 legemque pati sidera cogis,
 5 ut nunc pleno lucida cornu
 totis fratris obuia flammis
 condant stellas luna minores,
 nunc obscuro pallida cornu
 Phoebo propior lumina perdat,
 10 et qui primae tempore noctis
 agit argentes Hesperos ortus,
 solitas iterum mutet habenas
 Phoebi pallens Lucifer ortu.

The appearance of Hesperus driving the cold stars before him is thus a token of that divine order from which, as the meter

⁴ *MVIII* 8.4 (Bode 1.201). Moreover, Apollo was devoted to the laurel, a symbol of chastity. See Alanus de Insulis, "In Natali Sancti Augustini" (d'Alverny 206).

goes on to say, men somehow deviate. Orpheus, who, as the speaker in the tenth Book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, was no friend to Venus, produced a music of wisdom and eloquence, one function of which was to control passion.⁹ Finally, Venus was the goddess of either proper or improper love, although in our poem even her proper function as an assistant to Nature in generation is denied her.¹⁰ The improper "militia Veneris" mentioned in the last line was almost universally ridiculed in both Classical and medieval sources.¹¹

Medieval readers and audiences were quite likely to have seen further more specifically Christian implications in the text. The moon is a well-attested figure for the Church, illumined by the light of Christ,¹² which offers to its lover the "dew" of grace and the "sleep" of contemplation,¹³ often induced by the harmonious wisdom and eloquence of a good preacher, or Orpheus.¹⁴ The passions of worldly concern, typi-

⁹ See the discussions of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice by William of Conches and Arnulf of Orléans in J. B. Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass. 1970) pp 106, 119. Cf. *MVIII* 8.20-21 (Bode 211-213).

¹⁰ For the two Venuses, see *Remigii Autissiodorensis... in Martianum* 1.37.1, 1.8.7-8 (Lutz 135-136, 79); William of Conches, *Glossae super Platonem* 111 (Jeauneau 202); Alexander Neckam, *Super Marciannum* Bodl. MS Digby 221 f. 37; Bernard Silvestris, *Comm. super sex libros Eneidos Virgilii* (Riedel 9); E. H. Alton "The Mediaeval Commentaries on Ovid's *Fasti*" *Hermathena* 44 (1926) 136.

¹¹ See D. W. Robertson, Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton 1962) pp. 408-410.

¹² See J. Sauer, *Symbolik des Kirchengebäudes* (Freiburg im Breisgau 1902) p. 225; Hugo Rahner, *Griechische Mythen in Christlicher Deutung* (Zürich 1945) pp. 203-224. As Rahner points out, the moon was also associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary. For a discussion including both see Alanus de Insulis, *Distinctiones*: PL 210.842D.

¹³ For an extended discussion of "ros coelestis gratia" see Alanus de Insulis, *Sermones Octo*: PL 210.215B-216A. Cf. his comment on Cant. 5.2: PL 210.85D. On sleep, see his sermon "Ad somnolentes" in the influential *Summa de arte praedicatoria*: PL 210.195D: "Est somnus, quando quis rapitur ad contemplationem coelestium." It would be possible to extend these references, but Alanus should suffice for the relevant period.

¹⁴ The discussion of Orpheus in *MVIII* 8.20 (Bode 1.211-212) begins: "Fuit autem Orpheus, ut paucillulum expatiemur, vir maximus tam ingenii claritudine quam eloquentiae suavitate praevalgens. Sacerdos dictus est, quia et theologus fuit, et orgia primus instituit. Ipse etiam homines irrationabiliter viventes rhetorica dulcedine ex feris et immanibus mites reddidit et mansuetos, et ex vagis durisque composuit. Unde et bestias

fied by Venus, lead to a "sleep" from which all Christians are urged to awaken (Rom xiii.11-14). The coherence of these connotations in the poem strongly suggests that they were intended. However, the poem is, even without these connotations, a plea for continence and freedom from the uneasiness of self-indulgence. It is pleasant to think, although rash to conjecture, that the clerk who wrote it may have had lodged somewhere in his memory the little poem by Statius, "Somnus" (*Silv.* 5.4). The speaker cannot sleep, although the morning and evening stars have passed seven times, and the dew wafted from Tithonia's whip (the light of the moon) as she chases the stars before her has moistened him as often. He asks a boon:

at nunc heu! si aliquis longa sub nocte puellae
15 brachia nexa tenens ultro te, Somne, repellit,
inde veni...

He and his audience together undoubtedly did remember the great hymn of St. Ambrose, the memory of which brought peace to St. Augustine after the death of his mother:

deus creator omnium
polique rector, vestiens
diem decoro lumine,
noctem soporis gratia.

artus solutos ut quies
reddet laboris usui,
mentesque fessas allevet,
luctusque solvat anxios.

II. "SI LINGUIS ANGELICIS"

In his *Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love Lyric*, Peter Dronke, who is frequently perceptive, describes "Si linguis angelicis" from the *Carmina Burana* as a poem "grounded in a unity of experience which can affirm divine love and every nuance of human love without setting up

quaslibet, volucres et fluvios, saxa et arbores dicitur movisse." Ideas of this kind led to an easy association between Orpheus and the good preacher. See D.W. Robertson, Jr. "The 'Partitura Amorosa' of Jean de Savoie" *PQ* 33 (1954) 7.

dichotomies." The "liturgical allusions" in the poem are said to be used "not to establish an incongruity but to overcome one."¹⁵ This rather improbable and romantic eventuality has been challenged by James I. Wimsatt, who finds in the poem "a witty tale of how an infatuated lover got his lady despite himself."¹⁶ The perception of wit in the poem seems to me worthy of elaboration, although the lover does not, actually, "get his lady," a fact that adds substantially to the humor. The following brief discussion, which is not exhaustive, adds more detail than Wimsatt was able to supply in an even briefer treatment contributing to the larger purposes of his essay. The humor of medieval literature, like the wit of Ovid, often escapes modern critics, and it is not always easy to describe in print.

"Si linguis" is generally thought of as a poem or song written in a clerical environment, perhaps by a clerk in a cathedral school. Among the poems in the *Carmina Burana* there are a number that reveal unusual learning and subtlety. It is probable that these, some of which used to be attributed to Abelard, were written by masters for the benefit of their students to exemplify points of grammar for them and to test their skill at "exposition," which included the discovery of the doctrinal content of the texts provided.¹⁷ Once mastered, texts such as this one might be sung with appropriate spirit on festive occasions. Material for exposition was ordinarily supplied by the inclusion of figurative language based on the Scriptures, the Latin classics, and on other works frequently studied in schools, like the *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* of Martianus Capella. We can see this technique clearly exemplified in the poems of Bernard Silvestris and Alanus de Insulis, so that we should

¹⁵ 1.818. The text of the poem (CB Schmeller 50, Hilka and Schumann 77) is re-edited by Dronke in a note, 319-322. The "translation" by George Whicher, *The Goliard Poets* (New York 1949) pp. 51-63, is an altogether different poem. Modern languages do not carry the connotations of the Medieval Latin vocabulary, so that translation is virtually impossible.

¹⁶ "Chaucer and the Canticle of Canticles" in *Chaucer the Love Poet* (Athens, Georgia 1973) p. 82. Not all of the Scriptural parallels adduced in this article are repeated here. The poem needs thorough annotation, preferably in an edition.

¹⁷ Hugh of St. Victor, *Didas.* 3.8, 6.8-12.

not be surprised to find it applied in lighter poems as well. If poems composed as texts for students could be made amusing as well as instructive, their effectiveness could be enhanced. The general aim of education was to teach eloquence combined with wisdom,¹⁸ and the wisdom involved was derived from the philosophy of the New Testament, appropriate principles from the Old Testament, especially the sapiential books, the Fathers, and from classical writers whose works could be adapted for Christian use. The *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, which was sufficiently popular to warrant a French translation, illustrates the kind of classical materials that could be used directly, and the commentaries of writers like William of Conches and Arnulf of Orléans together with the works of the mythographers furnished guides to interpretation as well as much useful figurative language derived from exposition. The original readers of "Si linguis" must have been either students or former students, for no one else at the time could have read or understood the poem at all. In either event, those readers would have also had some training in dialectic, or the art of probable argument, as an essential part of their study of eloquence. We should add that gross errors in probable argument provide a fertile source of humor, especially when they emanate from the mouths of vain and pretentious persons. Finally, the popularity of Ovid and the frequency with which language from the Canticle of Canticles appears in the Latin poetry of the time attest to the fact that humorous or even "lascivious" subjects were not considered to be impediments to the pursuit of wisdom. In largely agricultural societies, where the behavior of domestic animals is open to the scrutiny of everyone from childhood, a knowledge of sexual activity in great variety is commonplace. Stallions are often spectacularly instructive in this respect. In addition to this fact, we should also remember that medieval residences afforded little privacy. "Man and Nature," so to speak, coexisted with relative equanimity.

The speaker in our poem, who should be distinguished carefully from the author, since the day when poems were con-

¹⁸ See G. Nuchelmans "Philologie et son mariage avec Mercure jusqu'à la fin de XII^e siècle" *Latomus* 16 (1957) 84ff.

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¹⁸ See G. Nuchelmans "Philologie et son mariage avec Mercure jusqu'à la fin de XII^e siècle" *Latomus* 16 (1957) 84ff.

only in bad taste; they are illogical. For the expression "causas et causatum" would have reminded young students of something. The rare participle *causatus* (from *causo* rather than the usual Classical *causor*) used substantivally occurs prominently in only one familiar work: the translation of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* by Boethius. It appears in 1.7 toward the close in the clause "cum non ex causatis sciat causis,"²⁰ which forms part of an argument to show that demonstrative principles appropriate to one discipline cannot be used for demonstration in another discipline unless the axioms of the two are the same, or unless one discipline can be thought of as being logically subordinate to the other. In this instance, however, our lover does not hesitate to employ principles from Divinity (or the study of the Sacred Page) to the processes and, presumably, the results of seduction. Divinity and seduction do not have the same axioms, since it is an axiom of Divinity that fornication is forbidden. For the same reason Divinity cannot be subordinated to seduction. The two are incompatible, and our lover is speaking foolishly. The word *causatum* also appears in the Boethian version of *PA* 2.17, where it is shown that the same effect may appear in two unrelated subjects and proceed from entirely different causes. That is, the palm

²⁰ *TLL* s.v. *causo*. The word also appears in *PA* 2.17 (Boethius). Boethius 1.7 corresponds with 1.9 in modern texts. For the relevant passages, see *PL* 64.721C and 758BC or *Libri logicorum* (Paris 1520) fols. 171r and 205r. In the first passage Aristotle envisages a universal science whose truths apply everywhere: "Erunt enim illa omnium principia, et scientia eorum domina omnium, et namque scit magis ex superioribus causis sciens, ex prioribus enim scit, cum non ex causatis sciat causis; quare si magis scit, et maxime, et scientia illa erit magis, et maxime." That is, his knowledge would be based on causes not derivative of other causes. The second passage begins, "De causa autem, et cuius causa est dubitabit aliquis, nunquid cum causatum est, et causa est, ut si folia fluunt, aut deficit luna, et causa deficiendi, vel folia cadendi erit, ut si huius est lata habere folia, deficiendi autem terram in medio esse. Si enim non, aliqua alia erit causa ipsorum, si vero causa sit, et causatum simul, ut si in medio est terra, deficit, aut si latum est folium, folia fluunt; si autem sic est, simul utique erunt, et demonstrabuntur per invicem." The expression "causas et causatum" means roughly demonstrative causes together with that which is caused by something else and acts as a cause to account for the palm. Taking this literally, since the palm turns out to be "empty" as a result of a cause deriving from other causes not mentioned, the expression is ironic even without the context I have presented.

claimed by our speaker does not proceed from the same causes as the palm mentioned in the Apocalypse. To continue to suggest demonstrations or "causes" based on Divinity, as the speaker does, is thus foolish in another way. It remains to be seen, however, whether the lover's palm is "inanis." It may not be, in spite of his foolish language, since there is such a thing as a pagan or Classical palm of victory, achieved customarily after strenuous effort.

Our lover finds himself neither in a stadium nor on a playing field, but in a flowery garden (3) doubting what to do, wondering whether he sows seed in sand, and despairing because he loves a "mundi florem." If this garden is like other similar gardens in medieval literature, it represents a state of mind, like that described in "Dum Diane vitrea" (7), rather than an actual place. The flower he desires is denied him (4) by "quandam vetulam" who permits the Rose, as he calls her, neither to love nor to be loved. The hag is worthy to be snatched into Hell, but she persists, so that the lover hopes that she may be struck by lightning (5). He asks his audience to hear what he may have seen ("quid viderim") in this event, while the hag remained stunned. It is important to understand that the thunderbolt never fell from above; it was merely desired. The remainder of the poem contains the recollections of the musings of the lover as he stood in his dreamlike *locus amoenus*. But the lover's speeches and the responses of the girl are imagined only, reflecting the speaker's befuddling warmth and concomitant delusions. As the students or clerks who read this poem were aware from works like the *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, the proper solution to this kind of garden uneasiness is marriage, although the marriage may be figurative, like that between wisdom and eloquence said to be figured in the poem just mentioned. But the subject of marriage is not introduced, for what is desired is a simple Venereal relationship, as we soon discover.

The girl, as Wimsatt points out, is described in flower and star imagery strongly reminiscent of conventional praise for the Blessed Virgin (6), and when the lover rushes to her and kneels before her (7), he addresses her in terms that make this comparison unmistakable:

8.1 Ave, formosissima gemma preciosa!
ave decus virginum virgo gloriosa!
ave lumen luminum, ave mundi rosa...

But this effusive greeting is promptly followed by an anticlimactic line revealing our day-dreamer's actual intentions:

Blanziflor et Helena Venus generosa.

Although it is true that in the twelfth century after it became commonplace to see the bride in the Canticum as Mary, the attractiveness of her physical attributes was sometimes indicated in very frank terms, and love for her was often expressed in what is today startling imagery, no one would seriously have sought to combine the Blessed Virgin, Blanchefleur, Helen and Venus in the same person. To deny that the effect of this line is humorous seems to me to be insensitive. Whatever we may think of Blanchefleur, Helen had an unsavory reputation in the twelfth century; and it would hardly have been possible for a girl to be a "virgo gloriosa," which Helen certainly was not, and a "Venus generosa" at the same time. This is not to suggest that medieval people did not enjoy sexual pleasure, the gift of Venus, or that men (even students) did not employ flattery to obtain it. In this instance, however, the flattery is so self-contradictory and outrageous that it is laughable. We are reminded of similar literary techniques in the *De amore* of Andreas Capellanus.²¹

The speaker's dream-girl does not laugh (9), but demurely expresses the hope that God will save her suitor. Her speech rather suggestively acknowledges God to be the ruler of all things, including violets, tokens of humility, and roses "in spina." The celestial rose suggested earlier in the Marian imagery bears no spines, but this one, like the thorny and transient roses of Venus (*MVIII* 11.1 Bode 1.228-229), evi-

²¹ I have sought elsewhere to describe the humorous effects in the dialogues presented in this work. See *A Preface to Chaucer*, pp. 392-448. Some scholars are still not amused, but in my opinion they have not studied the text carefully, and I have not been impressed by their objections.

dently does. Her speech is, we should recall, imagined by the musing lover, so that any ironies suggested by the violets and roses are inadvertent on his part, like his persistent abuse of logic. But this should not prevent us from enjoying them. Evidently God was not the source of the lover's wounds, for he hastens to assure his friend, in terms reminiscent of Prov vi.24-26, that since she has wounded him, she ought to supply the remedy (10). She promptly denies responsibility for his injuries, very properly, since it has always been clear to thinking persons that the kind of passion the lover endures arises from within. In the twelfth century Andreas Capellanus assured his readers of this truth, and indeed went to some pains to explain it (*De am.* 1.1). However, the girl very courteously asks that the plaintiff reveal his wounds. Then, she assures him, she will cure him with a simple remedy:

11.4 vis, te sanem postmodum gracili medela.

The uncommon word *medela* probably recalled to the minds of twelfth-century students the little passage "De medico" in *Ecclus* xxxviii.1-15, which begins,

Honora medicum propter necessitatem; etenim illud creavit Altissimus. A Deo est enim omnis medela, et a rege accipiet donationem. Disciplina medici exaltabit caput illius, et in conspectu magnatorum collaudabitur. Altissimus creavit de terra medicamenta, et vir prudens non abhorrebit illa.

Although God did not wound the lover, He, as the girl suggested earlier, will supply any real cure that is administered. As we shall see, the lover actually proves to be incurable because he seeks his remedy in the wrong place.

The lover explains (12) that his wounds are obvious. He saw the girl dancing at a feast. Since that time, we are astonished to learn, he has been meditating on her beauty without satisfaction for almost six summers! The number six was associated with the sixth age beginning with the Redemption and hence generally with the coming of Christ,²² so that we

²² The general idea is a commonplace. A convenient recent discussion

may hope that the miseries of the lover may soon be over. But literally speaking, a period of over five years is a very long time to wait for Venereal satisfaction once it has become an object of cultivated desire, and it is extremely doubtful that anyone in the twelfth century who hotly desired it and was not squeamish about gaining it would allow himself to go without it for so long a time. There were those who renounced it and put it from their minds, but our lover was not one among them. His patience under the circumstances is remarkable to say the least, and leads to disconcerting thoughts concerning the ordinarily innocent Ovidian proverb (*Her.* 5.115) echoed earlier in the poem:

3.3 Dubito quod semina in harena sero.

In any event, the girl, our hero says, was when he saw her "cunctis . . . speculum et fenestra." The word *speculum* applied to a *persona* probably echoes Sap vii.26, where the personified Sapientia is described as being "speculum sine macula Dei maiestatis." This image, like other imagery in the surrounding context, was applied to the Blessed Virgin and echoed in the liturgy. It is repeated in Chaucer's description of Blanche, who was (*BD* 974) "A cheff myroure of al the feste." Both poets probably reflect the same liturgical passage. The rather puzzling use of *fenestra* may also be Scriptural in origin, although its connotations are quite different unless we wish to think of Mary as a window through which we may discern God. But this is clearly not what the lover has in mind. Other connotations are summarized by St. Ambrose in his comment on Ps cxviii.37: "Averte oculos meos, ne videant vanitatem," which produced a famous love scene in the St. Alban's Psalter:²³

Si videris mulierem ad concupiscendum eam (Matt. 5.28), intravit

appears in V. A. Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (Stanford 1966) pp. 88-92. For a casual example applied to "hours" rather than "ages," see *Glossa ordinaria* (on Io. 4.6): PL 114.371B.

²³ For a discussion of the illustration, reproduced in Otto Pächt, C. R. Dodwell, and Francis Wormald, *The St. Alban's Psalter* (London 1960), Plate 77, see *A Preface to Chaucer*, pp. 191-192. The quotation is from *Expositio in Ps. CXVIII* 29: PL 15.1328AB. See p. 61 below, for a photo of the illustration.

mors per fenestram (*Ier.* 9.21). . . . Claude ergo hanc fenestram, cum videris alienae mulieris pulchritudinem (*Ecclus.* 9.8,11), ne mors possit intrare. Oculi tui non videant alienam, ne lingua perversum loquatur (*Prov.* 23.33). Tuam ergo fenestram claude, ne morti pateat intranti. Sed etiam alienam fenestram cave (*Ecclus.* 21.26). A fenestra enim domus suae intrat fornicaria.

St. Ambrose goes on to discuss the windows of words and kisses. Our present woman is both a "strange woman" and a "strange window," in Terentian terms (*Htm.* 3.1.481), a window "ad nequitiam." Although the original connotations of the language of the poem cannot be demonstrated with certainty, it seems likely that the expression "speculum . . . et fenestra" repeats the anticlimax we observe in 8, with the same humorous effect.

Stanzas 13-23 in which the lover sets forth his case contain a flattering and stylized description of the girl (13-17), an account of the lover's suffering brought on by his seeing her (18-21), and a plea for remedy (22-23). A few details may be noticed here, although careful study would undoubtedly reveal much that needs comment. Helen and Venus reappear together in 14:

14.3 unde dixi sepius, deus, deus meus,
estne illa Helena, vel est dea Venus?

The pursuit of Helen, whatever Yeats or Camus may have made of it in modern times, was clearly imprudent and ultimately disastrous; and the mention of the two in the same breath strongly brings to mind the foolish judgment of Paris. As Horace put it (*Epist.* 1.2.10-11),

quid Paris? ut salvus regnet vivatque beatus
cogi posse negat.

Our speaker is courting trouble, for Venus as the mythographers tell us, following Fulgentius (*Mit.* 2.1), brings her followers to "shipwreck."

In stanza 17 the line

suggests the plight of various figures like Mars, caught amusingly with Venus in "gracilis ex aere catenas" (Ovid *Met.* 4.176), or Holofernes, concerning whom Judith prayed (Jud xix.13), "capiatur laqueo oculorum in me," as indeed he was captured, losing his head literally as well as figuratively. Our hero has been so enmeshed that he has been unable to drink, eat or sleep (20), presumably for over five years, and has had small solace from imaginary encounters with the girl at night (21). Either he is exaggerating in this his imaginary address to his lady, or he has been very foolish indeed. In the course of his plea, however, he says that a recompense will exalt him like a cedar of Lebanon:

23.1 Quod quidem si feceris, in te gloriabor,
tamquam cedrus Libani florens exaltabor.

Although cedars of this kind (Rehder² 1.4.7.2) are hardly very floriferous, the source of "exalted" members of the species is either Ecclesiastes ii.17 or Ps xxxvi.35-36. The former is a verse spoken by Sapientia, "Quasi cedrus exaltata sum in Libano," a figure transferred in the liturgy to the Blessed Virgin. Needless to say, the remedy our lover desires will not make him either wise or in any way like the Virgin. The verses from the Psalm offer another possibility: "Vidi impium superexaltatum et elevatum sicut cedros Libani: et transivi, et ecce non erat; et quaesivi eum et non est inventus locus eius." Here the humor lies in the contrast between the implied references, and in the comment on the speaker they suggest.

In the dialogue the girl maintains a rather proper surface attitude. After politely assuring her lover that she has suffered more than he has, an assurance that represents nothing more than the lover's hope in this imaginary encounter, she offers silver, precious stones, or any other recompense that she has available (26). When he has made it clear that he has no desire for material wealth, which as was well known usually flows in the other direction in encounters of this kind, she courteously suggests that he take whatever he wants. The

kiss and the delights of "Paradise" follow, at least in imagination, with the conclusion

31.1 Hic amplexus gaudium est centuplicatum,
hic mecum et domine pullulat optatum,
hic amantum braviu est a me portatum,
hic est meum igitur nomen exaltatum.

The hundredfold joy amusingly echoes Matt xix.29, or, since the lover has expressed doubt about where he sows seed, more appropriately Luke viii.8. The latter verse is from the Parable of the Sowers. There seed fallen on good ground produces fruit a hundred fold, representing (15) "qui in corde bono et optimo audientes verbum retinent et fructum adferunt in patientia." Our lover has been deaf to the "verbum" echoed in his own language, although he has, so to speak, brought forth a rather odd kind of fruit in patience. He resembles those who sow seed among thorns, where, we remember, roses to his taste grow. These are those who "audierunt et a sollicitudinibus et divitiis et voluptatibus vitae euntes suffocantur et non referunt fructum." Certainly the imaginary joys here envisaged hardly constitute much "fruit." Nor, for that matter, do the cones on cedars of Lebanon.

But we are assured that these joys do constitute the "braviu" of lovers. The word echoes 1 Cor ix.24-27, where the race is won through the exercise of another kind of patience:

Nescitis quod ii qui in stadio currunt, omnes quidem currunt, sed unus accipit braviu? Sic currite ut comprehendatis. Omnis autem qui in agone contendit, ab omnibus se abstinere, et illi quidem ut corruptibilem coronam accipiant: nos autem incorruptam. Ego igitur sic curro, non quasi in incertum: sic pugno, non quasi aerem verberans: sed castigo corpus meum, et in servitutem redigo: ne forte cum aliis praedicaverim, ipse reprobus efficiar.

If the reward of lovers is mere fantasy as it is here, their discipline before the race is indeed futile, and they do "beat the air" with words, as our poor speaker does. His "exalted name" made him worthy of a glorious palm indeed; and the spectacle of his proud triumph, holding the palm of victory in his hand after years of struggling with nothing but a day-dream to temper his despair constitutes a little comic masterpiece. Actually,

he should say, as does Ovid's lover in *Amores* 3.2.82, who has at least been a spectator at a stadium, "palma petenda mea est."

With these considerations in mind we can fully appreciate the humor of the concluding stanzas. I need do no more than quote them for the reader's delectation (with the MS reading *amara* in 33.1 restored). They do not, of course, offer much encouragement to lovers, at least not to those who idolize their mistresses. A lover's hope is greater the more he is embittered, as anyone remembering this one ought to know.

- 32.1 Quisquis amat itaque mei recordetur:
nec diffidat illico, licet amaretur;
illi nempe aliqua dies ostendetur
qua penarum gloriam post adipiscetur.
33.1 Ex amaris equidem amara generantur;
non sine laboribus maxima parantur.
Dulce mel qui appetunt sepe stimulantur:
sperant ergo melius qui plus amarantur.

The forms of the rare verb *amarare* "to embitter" in 32.2 and 33.4, where the reader or listener might expect forms of *amare* constitute pleasant witticisms. On the whole, in fact, the poem displays a remarkable array of verb forms. Its original purpose may have been to serve as a grammatical exercise for students. If it was, the master who wrote it took care that the students had something else to attract them, and to entertain them as well, once they began their exposition. If the verb forms were not pedagogical, they nevertheless constitute a graceful exhibition of Latin eloquence in a smiling illustration of the vanity of idolatrous passion as it was understood in the Middle Ages, a theme that then constituted a kind of wisdom. Perhaps the author deserves Apollonian palms like those accorded Ovid (*AA* 2.1-3):

Dicite "io Paeon!" et "io" bis dicite "Paeon!"
Decidit in casses praeda petita meos;
Laetus amans donat viridi mea carmina palma. . .

* * * * *

To conclude our examination of these two poems, it seems to me appropriate to say that it is very dangerous to read

medieval Latin love lyrics in the light of artificial conventions of literary history like "courtly love." The secular Latin lyrics of the Middle Ages, if it is at all proper to call them that, are often witty where they have been taken seriously, and often orthodox where they have been assumed to represent some kind of "pagan" or personal revolt. The pagans with whom medieval clerks were familiar were usually very moral in outlook, and this remark applies to Ovid, as well as to writers like Cicero and Seneca, for Ovid customarily wrote with tongue in cheek and a witty gleam in his eye. He was always "alive," alert to the humorous possibilities of ordinary human foolishness. Our medieval poems need very close analysis in terms of their own cultural environment. They have not often received it. But when they do, the vigor and subtlety we find in them amply repay us for our efforts.

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