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and Phenomenology  
of Love



Mark Rothko, *Untitled (Violet, Black, Orange, Yellow on White and Red)*, 1949:  
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# The Theory and Phenomenology of Love

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## Introduction to *Interfaces* 2

This second issue of *Interfaces* addresses the subject of “The Theory and Phenomenology of Love.” It brings together readings of medieval representations and explanations of love as an affection, passion, sentiment, attraction, or tension, with work on the connections between literary discourses of love and the history both of emotions and gender roles. Approaching the subject of the nature of love, and the ways it manifests itself, the authors create links between scientific and poetic discourse and highlight the relationship between the experiences of love, described and treated in literary texts, and the specific historical, cultural, and social environments in which those texts were produced.

Not only do the articles reach original results within their fields; taken as a whole, the dossier, ranging as it does from the Late Antiquity to the fifteenth century, and across a Europe situated within a wider Eurasian space, offers deep insights into social history, the history of emotions, and the study of gender and sexuality.

In the first article of the issue Lorenzo Livorsi shows the key role played by Ovid, in his exile poetry, in the trans-codification of the language of love and courtship, typical of the classical Augustan elegy, into the language of court praise. This metamorphosis is evident in Claudian’s poetical panegyrics (fourth–fifth century CE), which also show the intermingling of the language of love and praise with the vocabulary of friendship and patronage (Latin *amicitia*), and, later, in some occasional poems by Venantius Fortunatus (sixth century CE), whose elegies for Radegund provide a remarkable example of the re-use of this courtly language to express a new form of spiritual and ennobling love for a concrete patron. It is striking to modern sensibilities to find this sincere transfer of the language of love to the relationship between subject and lord or ruler – a phenomenon that will continue into the high medieval period with the both public and private meanings of *amor* and *servitium*.

Fabrizia Baldissera discusses love motifs in preclassical, classical, and medieval Sanskrit literature. Her rich and clear survey encom-

passes a large variety of texts, genres, and themes, from the oldest myths and stories recounted in the Vedas to the medieval period, and pays special attention to the change in the status of women in Indian culture. This powerful piece offers a highly productive comparative perspective on European traditions.

With Cameron Cross' study on the many 'colours' of love – and their symbolism – in Nizāmī Ganjavī's *Haft paykar* (*The Seven Figures*) we move from India to Persia. The article focuses on the Stories of the Black and White Domes. The author analyses the fundamental polarisation between black and white, as it occurs also in several medical, philosophical, and poetic texts in Arabic, and suggests the possibility that *Haft paykar*, a Persian narrative poem written in 1197, can be read not only as a story of progress from one pole to the other, from shadow to light, but also as a journey in which the pilgrim of love, once he has come to the end of his road, should become aware that all colours are mere refractions of one pre-prismatic totality, "beyond the spectrum." Cross also offers an overview on Islamic theories of love and desire, which acts as a useful interlocutor for the other articles in this issue. On the one hand he confronts the Greco-Latin notions of *agapē* and *erōs* with the words for "love" in the Qur'ān *ḥubb* and *hawā*, while on the other he dwells on the intensive elaboration that the non-Qur'ānic word *ʿishq* – which in its simplest definition connotes an excess in love that can be associated with the concept of *erōs* – received in philosophical and speculative circles.

Elisabetta Bartoli's article is about twelfth-century models of love letters, from the earliest Italian examples of Latin *artes dictandi* to later works produced in Europe in the last decades of the century, including Bernard de Meung's *Flores dictaminum*, the *Epistolae duorum amantium*, the Tegernsee Letters, Andreas Capellanus' *De amore*, and Boncompagno da Signa's *Rota Veneris*. Bartoli studies the evolution of the phenomenology of love in love letters both on a linguistic and a thematic level. She highlights the initial overlap of *amor* and *amicitia*, love and friendship, and shows the progressive diversification of the different spheres of affections: filial, fraternal, agnatic, or conjugal affection; friendship; and love passion. In this latter sphere Bartoli observes the parallel elaboration of a specific literature of love letters, rich in models, types, and characters (both masculine and feminine), and a peculiar lexicon of love passion, capable of expressing even the most intense nuances of either sentimental feelings or physical desire.



Giovanna Perrotta's article is a study of the language of emotions and phenomenology of passion in twelfth-century French romances. Perrotta compares and analyses two passages from Thomas d'Angleterre's *Tristan* and Chrétien de Troyes' *Cligés*, where the falling in love of the characters is described as a veritable disease whose symptoms can be mistaken for those associated with seasickness. The relevant bits are linked by the exploiting of the same pun – the paronomasia of lemmata *mer, amer, amor* (“sea, bitter, love”) – but also show remarkable differences both in the description of the affective states and related physical or somatic characterisations of the individual and in the possibility for characters of being healed of love disease. Partly departing from the conventional model of *fin'amor*, Thomas and Chrétien assign to their characters singular and peculiar responses to the emergence of love sentiment. However, they seem to agree on the necessity of preserving a certain degree of rationality confronted with the overwhelming power of the passion: beyond the ephemeral enjoyment of the pleasures of love (*joie*), a tragic epilogue necessarily awaits the lovers who – like Tristan and Iseult – indulge in folly and shame.

In his contribution on troubadour literature, Thomas Hinton deals with the *topos* of the connection between the quality of a song and the authenticity of the love sentiment it expresses. With an eye on the entire tradition of Occitan lyric poetry, Hinton compares the biographies (*vidas*) of Daude de Pradas and Uc de Saint Circ, two of the main thirteenth-century troubadours (they were both born in the second decade of the century). In their *vidas*, both Daude and Uc are said to have shown inauthentic love in their compositions; nonetheless, the opinion expressed on their attitude and poetry is opposite. On the one hand Daude, who was a canon, attracts the biographer's blame for his supposed insincerity, which is connected to the hollow imitation of a cunning hypocrite (*lauzengier*). On the other hand Uc, who rejected the institutional learning curriculum in favour of a vocation centred on vernacular poetry (*trobar*) and courtly values, is praised for his capacity to write excellent love songs through his learning and skill in composition, although he is said to have never been motivated by genuine feelings. This contrasting treatment of the motif of authentic love inspiration, and the way it manifests itself in poetical forms, can be explained on the basis of social, ideological, and political concerns; in particular, it can be viewed in light of the traditional contrast – that became harsher during and after the twenty-year long Albigensian Crusade (1209–29) – between

clerical milieus and lay, courtly circles. But it also tells us much about the value of love, and love literature, as distinctive characters of the vernacular culture, and of the growing importance of the issues of ownership and interpretative control over the poetical artefacts, at a time when the system was moving to a new conception of texts as written objects on the model of Latin.

Focusing both on chivalric romances (the *riddarasögur*, translated and original) and the legendary sagas (the *fornaldarsögur*), Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir explores male emotions and attitudes towards women in Old Norse literature, with an emphasis on texts where women are abused because of their gender or social status. The indigenous *riddarasögur* neither deal with courtly love, nor exploit a language of emotions as rich as the one that is found in the translated sagas of chivalry and their French models. In the original Icelandic *riddarasögur* women of high social standing are sexually violated by men of similar status: in some cases, like the one of the maiden-kings, rape is accepted since it re-establishes the social order; in other cases it is condemned, and men who violate women are considered villains who break the socially accepted rules. In the *fornaldarsögur* – mostly written, as the *riddarasögur*, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries – the women involved in sexual promiscuity or subject to violence are usually of low birth (or even troll-women), while the male protagonists are of a higher social standing. The social environment depicted in those sagas shows clear traits of patriarchy: the behaviour of the male protagonists is generally approved by society (so the act is not considered to be rape) and likely to be accepted by the audience of those texts – especially when a comic register and intention can be noticed. As the author explains, attitudes towards women in Old Norse literature essentially depend on their social rank and on literary genres.

The last article of the issue is a comparative study by Efthymia Priki. The author brings together three milestones of the European literatures of the high and late Middle Ages that belong to three different literary and socio-cultural contexts: the thirteenth-century Byzantine *Tale of Livistros and Rodamne*, written at the Laskarid court of Nicaea by an anonymous poet; the contemporary Old French *Roman de la Rose*, comprising a first part written by Guillaume de Lorris between 1225 and 1240 and a later, longer continuation by Jean de Meung, dating between 1269 and 1278; and the Italian *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, a splendid, enigmatic, anonymous printed book published in Venice by Aldus Manutius in 1499, for which acrostics sup-

port the attribution to Francesco Colonna (a figure whose actual historical identity remains an issue for debate). Priki compares the rhetoric of love the three works employ in instructive speeches that wise and competent instructors address to neophyte lovers in order to initiate them in the mysteries and the art of love. The analysis is conducted both on a narrative level and in light of ritual theory – particularly the ‘rite of passage’ theory.

Finally, a few updates and acknowledgments. After the publication of [Issue No. 1](#) “Histories of Medieval European Literature: New Patterns of Representation and Explanation” we applied to the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). *Interfaces* was investigated and, thanks to its open access policies which comply with the highest international standards, was indexed in the [Directory](#). Furthermore, we have developed a document on Publication Ethics that is informed by the “Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors” published by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). The full version of our document can be read on the [journal’s website](#).

Our warm thanks go to Kristin Bourassa and Réka Forrai for editorial assistance with *Interfaces*, and to the many anonymous reviewers of the submitted contributions, whose fair collaboration, distinguished expertise, and selfless commitment have been essential to assess the quality of the research published in the journal.

The cover illustration for this issue is an oil-on-canvas painting by Mark Rothko: *Untitled (Violet, Black, Orange, Yellow on White and Red)*, painted in 1949. Here we are reading the vertical and horizontal contrasts of Rothko’s painting, executed in colours that are both warm and strong, as signifying the many ‘colours,’ facets, and dynamics which characterise the various conceptions and definitions of love in the medieval literatures. We would like to thank the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, for giving *Interfaces* permission to use Rothko’s work.

*The Editors*

## *Laudantes Elegi*

# Ovid's Exile and the Metamorphoses of Praise, Friendship, and Love in Late Latin Poetry

### Abstract

\* An earlier version of this paper was presented in spring 2014 in the Latin seminar run by Prof. Gianpiero Rosati at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa. The author wishes to warmly thank Dr Chiara Tommasi for reading this paper in draft and giving bibliographical advice, as well as the anonymous reviewers for their valuable criticism.

Taking a cue from the re-use of love themes as praise motives enacted by Ovid in his exile elegies, this paper illustrates the reception of such imagery in late antique Latin poetry. Touchstones for this enquiry are mainly the verse panegyrics by Claudian and the elegiac short poems by Venantius Fortunatus, considered as two different realisations of a common *langue* of praise in two different cultural and socio-historical milieus. More specifically, the aim of this paper is to show the increasing intermingling of languages of love, praise and friendship (meant as the complex set of social relationships involved by the Latin *amicitia*): eventually, this highly stylised language survived until the early Middle Ages in the form of Christian spiritual friendship and ennobling love. Furthermore, when dealing with women patrons, this set of images results in intended literary overlaps, the most remarkable outcomes being perhaps recognisable in Fortunatus' elegies to St. Radegund.

*Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac*  
Henry Kissinger

It may well be more than a coincidence that we say "to court" someone and we speak of "courts" in a concrete and historical sense, for the concepts of courtship, courtly love, and court praise seem strictly linked in different linguistic traditions.<sup>1</sup> As we shall see, this is particularly true for Latin praise poetry from Ovid onwards.

A well-established critical tradition has convincingly shown how Ovid, in his exile poetry, brings about a conversion of his youthful love elegy: in a multifaceted palinody which involves the representation of the suffering poet, language of the elegiac *Werbung* (Stroh) and didactic attitude, the banished poet adapts the imagery of his youthful witty elegies to his miserable state of sorrow (Lechi; Nagle 63–92; Labate; McGowan). At the same time, however, he offers to

1. I am thinking for instance of the Italian expression "fare la corte." But it is also noteworthy that the German *Liebe* and *Lob* share the same etymology (from a common Proto-Germanic root \*leubh-, "to be fond of," "to covet;" see Pfeifer 798–99 and 807).



6. See [Tib.] 3.9.15; [Tib.] 3.18.1; Prop. 2.14.30; Prop. 2.3.14; Ov., *Am.* 2.17.23; Ov., *Am.* 2.16.43–44. Cf. already Cat. 68.132. Interestingly enough, in Trist. 3.3.51–52 (“Parce tamen lacerare genas, nec scinde capillos: / non tibi nunc primum, *lux mea*, raptus ero”) Ovid refers in these terms, as an elegiac *domina*, to his wife. It is noteworthy that Maecenas addressed to Horace as *mea vita* in one of his fragmentary poems (Fr. 2 Blänsdorf), another evidence for the permeability between amatory and friendship language.

7. The cited passages from the *Epistulae ex Ponto* are from the Teubner text by J. Richmond.

8. Translation by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, with minor adjustments.

9. Men. Rh. 378.10: “κᾶν μὲν ἄρχοντα, εὐθὺς ἔρεις· ἀλλ’ ἤκεις μὲν ἐπ’ αἰσίοις συμβόλοις ἐκ βασιλέως λαμπρός, ὥσπερ ἡλίου φαιδρά τις ἄκτις ἄνωθεν ἡμῖν ὀφθεῖσα; 380, 30: οὗτος δὲ ὅτι τῷ γένει πάντων κρείττων ἐστί, καθάπερ καὶ ὁ <ἥλιος> τῶν ἀστέρων δέδεικται.”

10. On the rhetorical structure of Claudian’s panegyrics, the account of Struthers may still be useful. On the mingling of epic imagery and rhetorical framework of Claudian’s *encomia*, as well as for some definitions of the hybrid genre of the epic panegyric, I refer primarily to Fo 15–95; Schindler, “Tradition” and *Per Carmina Laudes* 21–30 and 44–58; Müller 19–60; and Ware 59 ff. It seems important anyway to bear in mind that the epic as genre can contain many eulogistic elements: it is striking, for instance, that according to Tiberius Claudius Donatus the *Aeneis* belongs to the *genus laudativum*, as its purpose is to perpetuate the deeds of Aeneas (*Prooem.* 2: “Primum igitur et ante omnia sciendum est quod materiae genus Maro noster adgressus sit [...] Et certe laudativum est, quod idcirco incognitum est et latens, quia miro artis genere laudationis ipse, dum gesta Aeneae percurreret, incidentia quoque etiam aliarum materiarum genera complexus ostenditur, nec ipsa tamen aliena a partibus laudis; nam idcirco adsumpta sunt, ut Aeneae laudationi proficerent”).

shows the catasterism of the loved person. This theme was widely adopted by the Latin elegists.<sup>6</sup> One of the passages in Ovid’s exile poetry in which the conversion of this amatory motif best appears is in *Pont.* 2.5.47–56; here, Germanicus is praised for his brilliant eloquence:<sup>7</sup>

Cum tu [*viz.* Salanus, Germanicus’ teacher of rhetoric]  
desisti mortaliaque ora quierunt  
tectaue non longa conticuere mora,  
surgit Iuleo iuvenis cognomine dignus,  
*qualis ab Eois Lucifer ortus aquis.*  
Dumque silens astat, status est vultusque deserti,  
spemque decens doctae vocis amictus habet.  
Mox, ubi pulsa mora est atque *os caeleste* solutum,  
hoc superos iures more solere loqui.

(When you have finished and mortal lips have become quiet, closed in silence for a short space, then arises the youth worthy of the Iulean name, as rises Lucifer from the eastern waters, and as he stands in silence, his posture, his countenance are those of an orator, and his graceful robe gives hope of eloquent words. Then after a pause he opens his godlike lips and one might take oath that the gods above speak in this fashion.)

The imagery of light is here associated with the praise of the ruler, or *laudandus*, as a man of letters (Curtius 176–79). But already Statius in his *Silvae* has clearly adopted this astronomic metaphor as a common laudatory element, and it might be that his praises of Domitian (1.1.103–04 “tua sidereas imitantia flammas / lumina contempto mallet Rhodos aspera Phoebos,” “fierce Rhodes would prefer your eyes like starry flames, contemning Phoebus”; 4.1.2–4 “insignemque aperit Germanicus annum, / atque oritur cum sole novo, cum grandibus astris / *Clarius ipse nitens et primo maior Eoo*,” “Germanicus inaugurates a banner year; he rises with the new sun and the stars in their grandeur, himself shining more brilliantly than they, greater than Eous”) are somewhat mindful of the Ovidian passage quoted above.<sup>8</sup> Certainly, this motif was included in the rhetorical handbooks, for which we can rely above all on that of Menander, probably composed around the end of the third century CE.<sup>9</sup> It is hardly a coincidence that in an author such as Claudian, who skilfully grafted epic machinery onto a long-established rhetorical structure,<sup>10</sup> the adjective *side-*

11. Cf. Claud., *Hon.* IV, 570: “sidereum onus;” *Hon. Nupt.* 252: “salve sidereae proles augusta Serenae;” *Carm. Min.* 31.58: “adnue sidereo laeta supercilio.” Cf. also *Fesc.* 1.1 (“Princeps corusco sidere pulchrior”) with Hor., *Carm.* 3.21–22 (“Quamquam sidere pulchrior / ille est”). A passage from *Carm. Min.* 30 (*laus Serenae*) deserves special attention: here Stilico is imagined coming back from his battles to his wife’s arms (217–20): “Gaudia quae rursus, cum post victricia tandem / classica sidereas ferratum pectus in ulnas / exciperes, castae tuto per dulcia noctis / otia pugnarum seriem narrare iuberet!” Among the possible models for this scene, a passage from the Ovidian epistle of Laodamia to Protesilaus (*Her.* 13.115–20) seems particularly striking. Yet, as Consolino, *Elogio di Serena* 23 remarks, the elegiac eros appears here ‘censored.’ It does not seem out of place to believe that such an expression of conjugal love in elegiac terms was prepared by the ‘moralisation’ of elegiac topoi enacted by Ovid in his exile poetry. This passage might have been influenced by one of the epistles that Ovid sent to his wife, addressing her as the elegiac *domina* (*Pont.* 1.4.49–54).

12. See for instance Prop. 2.2.3–4: “Cur haec in terris facies humana moratur? / Iuppiter ignosco pristina furta tua;” Ov., *Her.* 18.167–70: “Ipse meos igitur servo, quibus uror, amores / teque, magis caelo digna puella, sequor. / Digna quidem caelo es, sed nunc tellure morare / aut dic ad superos et mihi qua sit iter.”

13. I am not going deeply into the conjecture *absentia numina* proposed by Hall, “Problems.” Although it would highlight the contrast with *praesentem deum* of the following line, I still find it difficult to gauge clearly the meaning of *absentia numina*. *Tertia numina* transmitted by mss. should be understood as “gods of heaven” or, perhaps more probably, “gods of the Underworld” (two good parallels are provided by *Fasti* 584 and [Tib.] 3.5.21–22). Cf. the commentaries by Owen 131–32, Ciccarelli 65–70 and Ingleheart 91–93.

*reus* has become a standard element of poetic *Kunstsprache* to refer to members of the imperial family.<sup>11</sup>

The similarity between the ruler and a star leads naturally to the broad theme of the deification of the emperor. In imperial Rome, these two concepts are strictly linked through the increasingly common custom of the *consecratio* (or *relatio in numerum divorum*), that is to say the post-mortem apotheosis of the emperor, which was usually associated with his catasterism (Domenicucci, about the early imperial age; Tommasi 6 ff. about religious elements in late panegyrics). Again Claudian provides a gleaming description of Theodosius’ catasterism in the panegyric for the third consulship of Honorius (*Hon.* 3.162 ff.). Such a praxis, which was originally borrowed from the cult of Hellenistic kings, manifests itself in a motif that is usually called *serus in caelum redeas*, the late return of the ruler to the stars (after the famous passage of Hor., *Carm.* 1.2.45: see Nisbet and Hubbard 37). This encomiastic motif, extensively exploited at the end of the *Metamorphoses* (15.446–49, 837–38, and 868–70) and, of course, in the *Tristia* (5.5.61–62; 11.25–26), likewise finds an amatory counterpart: the beauty of the beloved is so high and transcendent that it is easy to imagine her apotheosis.<sup>12</sup> Statius (*Theb.* 1.22–31) and Martial (5.15–16) would soon emulate Ovid in the exploitation of this theme.

For us, however, the sacralisation of the Prince is especially important as it introduces a widespread theme in Ovid’s exilic poetry, which seems crucial to the persuasive discourse woven by the author, that is to say the motif of the *deus praesens*. It is evident, for example, in *Trist.* 2.53–58, where it is associated with the late return of the ruler to heaven:

Per mare, per terras, per tertia numina<sup>13</sup> iuro,  
per te praesentem conspicuumque deum,  
hunc animum favisse tibi, vir maxime, meque,  
qua sola potui, mente fuisse tuum.  
Optavi, peteres caelestia sidera tarde,  
parsque fui turbae parva precantis idem.

(By the gods of sea and earth and by the third gods I swear,  
by thee a present and manifest deity, that this soul of mine  
favoured thee, mightiest of men, and that, wherein alone I  
could, in heart I have been thine. I prayed that thou mightest

make thy way late to the stars of heaven, and I was an humble member of the throng that uttered the same prayer.)

Not only is Augustus a god, but he is a god whose actions are felt much more immediately (and frightfully) than those of the other gods. This celebratory theme was already typical of Hellenistic kingship, as shown by the ithyphallic hymn, which, according to Athenaeus, was composed by Hermocles of Cyzicus<sup>14</sup> and was sung by the Athenians in honour of Demetrius Poliorcetes (6.253e.15–20):<sup>15</sup>

14. Athenaeus here depends on Duris of Samos (cf. FGrHist 76 F13 and Powell 173 ff.); the attribution to Hermocles relies on Ath. 15.697a (where it is actually a plausible conjecture for Ἑρμιππος of the mss.: Ateneo 610–11 nn. 4 and 5 and 1797 n. 9).

ἄλλοι μὲν ἢ μακρὰν γὰρ ἀπέχουσιν θεοὶ  
ἢ οὐκ ἔχουσιν ὠτα  
ἢ οὐκ εἰσὶν ἢ οὐ προσέχουσιν ἡμῖν οὐδὲ ἔν,  
σὲ δὲ παρόνθ' ὀρώμεν,  
οὐ ξύλινον οὐδὲ λίθινον, ἀλλ' ἀληθινόν.  
εὐχόμεσθα δὴ σοι

15. Translation by S. Douglas Olson, with slight modifications.

(The other gods are either far away,  
or have not ears,  
or do not exist, or they pay us no attention;  
but you we see here,  
not made of wood or stone, but real.  
To you, then, we pray.)

Athenaeus says that this hymn was performed when Demetrius arrived in Athens with his troops in 307 BCE: after the cult of the Hellenistic sovereigns, the imagery of the *deus praesens* became part of the manifold ceremony called *adventus*. At first, this ritual welcomed the Emperor into a city during a military campaign; after the Tetrarchy, however, it gradually evolved towards a more and more hieratical ritual, which eventually became detached from the original military meaning (MacCormack 25–89). In the Augustan Age, this theme is touched upon by Horace (to whom we actually owe this label) in *Carm.* 3.5:<sup>16</sup>

16. Translation by N. Rudd.

Caelo tonantem credidimus Iovem  
tonare terris: praesens divus habebitur  
Augustus adiectis Britannis  
Imperio gravibusque Persis.

(Because Jove thunders in heaven we have always believed that he is king. Augustus shall be deemed a god on earth



when the Britons and the deadly Persians have been added to our empire.)

The divine status of Augustus is here stated with the discretion that emerges from the use of the future tense. But this theme becomes a basic constituent of the Ovidian rhetoric of the exile. As such, it is wisely exploited in *Pont.* 2.8.9–18; the circumstance of the poem is provided by the gift of a silver statuette bearing the portraits of Augustus, Livia, and Tiberius:

Est aliquid spectare deos et adesse putare,  
 et quasi *cum vero numine posse loqui*.  
 Quantum ad te, redii, nec me tenet ultima tellus,  
 utque prius, media sospes in urbe moror  
 Caesareos video vultus, velut ante videbam:  
 vix huius voti spes fuit ulla mihi;  
 Utque salutabam numen caeleste, saluto.  
 Quod reduci tribuas, nil, puto, maius habes.  
 Quid nostris oculis nisi sola Palatia desunt?  
*Qui locus ablato Caesare vilis erit.*  
 Hunc ego cum spectem, videor mihi cernere Romam,  
 nam patriae faciem sustinet ille suae.

(It is something to behold gods and think them present, to have the power to speak as it were with a real deity. So far as you effect it, I have returned, I am no more in a remote land; as of old I am safe in the midst of the city. I see the faces of the Caesars as I used before to see them; of this prayer's fulfilment I have scarce had any hope. I salute the deity of heaven as I used to do; even should I return, no greater gift, I think, have you bestow upon me. What do my eyes lack save only the Palatine? And that place, if Caesar is removed, will be worthless.)

In these lines, Ovid glimpses the mirror-like relationship between the man who holds and embodies political power and the place where this power is exerted. Such a relationship, however, implies a mutual interdependence: on the one hand, without the Prince, the Palatine is an empty and mean place; on the other, the Prince has the appearance of Rome, whose values and power he incarnates. Even such a politically marked motif, however, has at a least one counterpart in love poetry, as Ovid himself shows in the epistle of Sappho to Phaon (*Her.* 15.145–46):<sup>17</sup>

17. The scepticism raised about the authenticity of this poem (Tarrant, "The Authenticity" and Knox 12–14) has been plausibly rejected by Rosati, "Ovid, Sabinus and the Poet-Nightingale" and, for metrical reasons, by Ceccarelli, "Note sul distico delle Heroides." Translation by H. Isbell.

At non invenio dominum silvaeque meumque:  
*vile solum locus est; dos erat ille loci.*

(But I do not find him who was lord of both that forest and me. Now it is cheap and has no value, he was the gift that enriched that remote place.)

The analogy stems from by the exceptionality of the addressee of the amatory or encomiastic praise: such exceptionality casts its beauty and its 'aura' on the surrounding environment. It comes as no surprise that Sappho calls Phaon *dominum meum* in a fully elegiac language expressed in a female voice. The analogy of functions between the ruler who holds a political power and the elegiac *domina* who holds a psychosexual power has been convincingly recognised (Rosati, "Dominus/Domina" 61 ff.). In the same way, the representation of the *poeta relegatus* and that of the *exclusus amator* show many similarities (Nagle 48 ff.), as happens in the same epistle quoted above:

Felices illi, qui non simulacra, sed ipsos,  
 quique deum coram corpora vera vident.  
 Quod quoniam nobis invidit inutile fatum,  
 quos dedit ars, vultus effigiemque colo. (*Pont.* 2.8.56–60)

(Happy they who see no likenesses, but the reality, the real persons of gods face to face. But because this had been begrudged me by hostile fate, I cherish the countenances and figures which art has produced.)

If we shift our attention to the fortune of these encomiastic modules in late Latin poetry, it may be worth making a comparison with two passages from Claudian's panegyric for Honorius' sixth consulship. In the elegiac *praefatio*, the poet declares that he has dreamt of singing the Gigantomachy in front of the divine council. But now his dream has come true, for he is singing in front of the imperial court:<sup>18</sup>

Additur ecce fides nec me mea lusit imago,  
 inrita nec falsum somnia misit ebur.  
*En princeps, en orbis apex aequatus Olympo!*  
*En quales memini, turba verenda, deos!*  
 Fingere nil maius potuit sopor, altaque vati  
 conventum caelo praebuit aula parem. (*Praef.* 21–26)

18. Claudian's passages are cited from the Teubner edition by J. B. Hall. On this passage, see Perrelli 129–31, Felgentreu 142–55 and Dewar in Claudian, *Panegyricus* 47–63. The translations from Claudian's *Panegyricus* are by M. Dewar.

(See how confirmation is now granted me, and my vision has not played me false, nor has the deceitful Gate of Ivory sent dreams that come to nothing. Behold our Prince, behold the world's pinnacle made level with Olympus! Behold the gods as I remember them, a venerable host! Sleep could imagine nothing greater, and this lofty hall has shown the bard a gathering that is the peer of heaven.)

The sacralisation of the sovereign, *sidus imperii*, is an accomplished fact in Claudian's poetry. As in Ovid, the point of view is that of the subject towards the ruler (which could make such a statement less controversial in a strictly Christian environment like the court of Milan): "the divinisation of the poet in heaven of which he dreams is made possible by his experience of the presence of the emperor, through which he lives while awake" (MacCormack 189). The Ovidian idea according to which the presence of the emperor confers numinous majesty on the surroundings is here developed: the wish, which in the exiled Ovid was elegiac *reverie*, becomes the proud boast of the official poet at court in Claudian's self-representation. Moreover, it is relevant that the subject of the poem he dreamt of is the Gigantomachy, as this theme typically conveyed a political meaning: in this case, it alludes in perspective to the siege of Milan by Alaric in 402 and his defeat at Pollentia. Another passage of the same work displays a sort of long development of the concept briefly expressed by Ovid in *Pont.* 2.8.16 ("Qui locus ablato Caesare vilis erit," "and that place, if Caesar is removed, will be worthless"). In the first section of the Panegyric, the return of Honorius after many years to the City which was mother of the Empire is compared to the return of Apollo to Delphi, which restores the prophetic numinousness of the sanctuary:

cum pulcher Apollo  
 lustrat Hyperboreas Delphis cessantibus aras,  
 nil tum Castaliae rivis communibus undae  
 dissimiles, vili nec discrepat arbore laurus.  
 antraque maesta silent inconsultique recessus.  
 At si Phoebus adest et frenis grypha iugalem  
 Riphaeo tripodas repetens detorsit ab axe,  
 tunc silvae, tunc antra loqui, tunc vivere fontes,  
 tunc sacer horror aquis adytisque effunditur Echo  
 clarior et doctae spirant praesagia rupes.  
 Ecce Palatino crevit reverentia monti

*exultatque habitante deo potioraque Delphis  
supplicibus late populis oracula pandit  
atque suas ad signa iubet revirescere laurus.* (25–38)

(When fair Apollo, as Delphi lies idle, moves in procession round the altars of the Hyperboreans, in no way then are Castalia's waters different from common streams, nor is the bay to be distinguished from any worthless tree, and the caves are sorrowful and silent, and the inner hallows left unconsulted. But if Phoebus is present and, seeking once more his tripods, with his reins turns back his griffin team from the Riphean pole, then the woods, and then too the caves give utterance, then the springs come alive, then the waters shudder with his holy presence and from the sanctuary the echo pours out louder, and the inspired cliffs breathe out their prophecies. See how the reverence owed to the Palatine mount has grown and how it exults in the god now dwelling there, and to suppliant nations far and wide reveals oracles more powerful than those of Delphi, and commands the bays that are its own to grow green again, for our standards.)

19. Cfr. for instance Ov., *Fasti* 17–18 (“Da mihi te placidum, dederis in carmina vires: / ingenium vultu statque caditque tuo”); Manil. 1.7–10 (“Hunc mihi tu, Caesar, patriae princepsque paterque, / qui regis augustis parentem legibus orbem / concessumque patri mundum deus ipse mereris, / das animum viresque facis ad tanta canenda”) or Mart. 9.18.7–8 (“Quam dederis nostris, Auguste, penatibus undam, / Castalis haec nobis aut Iovis imber erit”), but also, in the Carolingian age, Angilbert’s *Ecloga ad Carolum* 7–8 (“Dulcis amor David inspiret corda canentum, / cordibus in nostris faciat amor ipsius odas”), where, interestingly, the love for the sovereign is explicitly alleged as source of poetic inspiration. See Jaeger 38–41 for further examples.

20. See for instance Gualandri, “Claudian’s Greek World,” and Cameron, *Wandering Poets* 113–33.

Considering the frequent recurrence in Claudian’s poetry of the Apollinean oracle as an allegory of poetic inspiration<sup>19</sup> (such as in *Carm. Min.* 3 or in the roaring *incipit* of *De Raptu Proserpinae*), I would not rule out the possibility that these stilted lines are an original way to express the celebratory theme according to which the ruler is the direct source of inspiration. In general, Claudian’s panegyrics, with their skilful harmony of epic and rhetoric, show a systematisation of praise *topoi*, which would be largely imitated by later writers, such as Merobaudes, Sidonius, Priscian (Panegyric for Anastasius) and Corippus. Obviously, late verse panegyrics and Ovid’s exilic elegies have different diplomatic aims and belong to different literary genres. In particular, epic panegyric turns out to be an especially fluid and inclusive genre, in which influences from different literary traditions can be traced; moreover, in the specific case of Claudian, born in Egypt and a native Greek speaker, Greek influences should not be ruled out.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, on the one hand, I believe that such systematisation of laudatory themes reflects the organic role of the poet within the court; on the other, these panegyrics mirror the crystallisation of the *adventus* ceremony in the Theodosian age.

21. See for instance Tib. 1.5.61–65 and [Tib.] 3.1.7–8; 23–24: “Carmines formosae, pretio capiuntur avarae: / gaudeat, ut digna est, versibus illa tuis. [...] / ‘Haec tibi vir quondam, nunc frater, casta Neaera, / mittit et accipias munera parva rogat.’”

22. Cf. Prop. 3.2.13–18 (in particular the last couplet: “Fortunata, meo si qua est celebrata libello! / Carmina erunt formae tot monumenta tuae”) and Ov., *Am.* 1.10.59–62.

The last theme on which I would like to focus concerns the disproportion between the grand majesty of the addressee of the encomium and the smallness of the author’s poetic offering. The origin of this theme lies again in love elegy. The elegist typically contrasts the precious gifts his rivals bestow upon the *domina* with the *munera parva* which he can offer, along with his fidelity.<sup>21</sup> Yet, out of this opposition arises the proud consciousness of the immortalising power of poetry: in such a negotiation the poet proposes himself as a guarantor of immortality unlike his rich rivals.<sup>22</sup> The theme is thoroughly construed in laudatory terms in an Ovidian epistle (4.8.31–36 and 45–48), which contains programmatic remarks on the new celebratory poetry envisaged by Ovid during his exile (Galasso, “*Pont.* 4,8”):

Nec tibi de Pario statuum, Germanice, templum  
 marmore; carpsit opes illa ruina meas.  
 Templum domus facient vobis urbesque beatae.  
 Naso suis opibus, carmine gratus erit.  
 Parva quidem fateor pro magnis munera reddi,  
 cum pro concessa verba salute damus.  
 [...]
   
 Carmina vestrarum peragunt praeconia laudum,  
 neve sit actorum fama caduca cavent.  
 Carmine fit vivax virtus, expersque sepulcri  
 notitiam serae posteritatis habet.

(I will rear no temple of Parian marble for thee, Germanicus; that disaster tore away my wealth; temples will be built for thee and thine by rich houses and cities; Naso will show gratitude with verse, his only wealth. Poor indeed, I confess, is the gift that is rendered for great service, if I give words in return for the grant of salvation. [...] Verse heralds your praises abroad and sees to it that the glory of your deeds falls not to the ground. By verse virtue lives on and, avoiding the tomb, becomes known to late posterity.)

This motif will enjoy considerable fortune in encomiastic literature. Already the author of the *Panegyricus Messallae* contrasted the *munera parva* represented by his poetic offering with the great deeds of his patron (ll. 5–8) and an ironic allusion to such disproportion can be detected in Domitian’s fictitious address to Martial (1.5). But most of all I believe it is interesting to focus on a passage of a work

23. Translation by M. Platnauer.

by Claudian in which the elegiac models are especially recognisable, that is to say the unfinished *laus Serenae* (*Carm. Min.* 30.1–10):<sup>23</sup>

Dic, mea Calliope, tanto cur tempore differs  
 Pierio *meritam* serto redimire Serenam?  
 Vile putas donum, solitam consurgere gemmis  
 et rubro radiare mari si floribus ornes  
 reginae regina comam? Sed floribus illis,  
 quos neque frigoribus Boreas nec Sirius urit  
 aestibus, aeterno sed veris honore rubentes  
 fons Aganippea Permessius educat unda:  
 unde piae pascuntur apes et prata legentes  
 transmittunt saeclis Heliconia mella futuris.

(Say, my muse, why tarriest thou so long to crown Serena's brows with the Pierian garland they so well deserve? Think-est thou the gift too poor shouldst thou, a queen, deck but with flowers the head of a queen accustomed rather to wear a tiara bright with all the jewels of the Red Sea? Nay, those flowers of thine are such that neither Boreas' cold blast nor Sirius' scorching heat can hurt them; theirs is the bloom of everlasting spring for they have grown by Permessus' fount and been watered by Aganippe's wave. Those flowers have fed the holy bees that skim the meadows and transmit the honey of Helicon to coming generations.)

In an encomium addressed to an extremely powerful lady, Stilico's wife (a *domina* in a proper sense), the affinity between amatory and laudatory language seems even closer. As happened to the classical elegists, the poetical offering brought by the author might seem scant if compared with the luxury in which Serena lives. This offering, however, is more valuable than any luxury, since it guarantees immortality.<sup>24</sup> The encomiastic features which were sometimes implicit in the elegy as a genre are widely exploited by Claudian in his learned art: the echoes from a genre open to eulogy, such as the elegy, can at the same time explain why the *laus Serenae* appears less influenced by genres other than the rhetorical panegyric, unlike other poems by Claudian (Moroni 143 ff.). If we turn our eyes to the literature of the romano-barbarian age, this theme finds a last witness in Venantius Fortunatus.<sup>25</sup> Born in Italy around 535 and educated in Ravenna, Fortunatus found a keen audience in the Merovingian nobles, kings, and clergy and a reliable source of patronage in the episcopal class, end-

24. For other literary parallels for these lines (among which Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, Synesius' *Περὶ βασιλείας* and Julian's *Panegyric of Eusebia*), see also Moroni 138 ff.

25. Who, as it is known, shows a wide re-use of the Augustan elegy and of Ovid in particular. On the links between Fortunatus' *oeuvre* and the ideal world of elegy, see Delbey (9–21, as well as ch. 2). For the intertextual relationship with Ovid, I refer as a starting point to Campanale, "L'Ovidio 'eroico.'"

26. This poem, once regarded as an opportunistic piece of flattery, has, on the contrary, been convincingly interpreted as evidence of loyalty towards Gregory of Tours and the episcopal class, on behalf of whom Fortunatus speaks. In this sense, this panegyric is a good example of the normative power which ties the addressee of each encomium to an ideal image (a *speculum*) he is supposed to respect. On the thorny historical circumstances of this poem (Gregory had been charged with having spread slanderous rumours about Chilperic's wife Fredegund and had needed to prove his innocence before the other bishops of the kingdom), see George, "Poet as Politician" and George, *Personal and Political Poems* 48–57.

27. The Venantian passages will be cited after the Belles Lettres text by M. Reydellet (*Venance Fortunat, Poèmes*); the translations are by J. George.

ing up as bishop of Poitiers in his last years (Brennan; Di Brazzano 15–38; Ehlen 12–36). In his works, he systematically reduced the large-scale panegyric in the style of Claudian to the metre and scope of elegy: while Claudian's epic panegyric may be compared to large mosaics, Fortunatus' elegiac poems have the grace of the miniature. An interesting parallel is provided by the panegyric delivered before king Chilperic at the council of Berny-Rivière in 580 (*Carm.* 9.1).<sup>26</sup> At the very end of this poem, Fortunatus set his humble poetical homage against other more precious gifts:<sup>27</sup>

Regibus aurum alii aut gemmarum munera solvant:  
de Fortunato paupere verba cape. (ll. 147–48)

(Let others bring their rulers gold and gifts of jewels; from Fortunatus, a poor man, accept these words.)

The promise of immortality is lacking here, probably because it would have been out of place in the delicate circumstances in which the poem was read. By contrast, the hint at the paucity of his offer seems to suggest that in such circumstances he had no decision-making power and that he was acting at any rate as a mere representative of the episcopal class, which was in (not always easy) dialogue with the king and aligned with Gregory (Consolino, "Venanzio poeta" 233–34). Not much different is the close of the miniature, verbally virtuosic panegyric addressed to Childebert I (see the thorough analysis by Pisacane, "La regalità merovingia"):

Childebercthe cluens: haec Fortunatus amore  
paupere de sensu pauper et ipse fero. (*App.* 5.11–12)

(Esteemed Childebert: I, Fortunatus, in love, humbly with humble understanding, offer you this.)

It is affection (*amor*) that prompts Fortunatus to offer his short panegyric to the young king. The rhetoric of praise, however, often entails that such declarations of love may influence concrete requests and be part of a sort of negotiation (so Rosati, "Amare il tiranno" 267 ff.: in this poem, the 'business part' is represented by the recommendation of the servant Audulf, which is the linking element with the following *App.* 6 and 7).

Fortunatus, often referred to as the last ancient and the first medieval poet, is also one of the last witnesses of this centuries-old en-

28. The issue has been recently handled in the learned contribution by Levine, “Patronage and Erotic Rhetoric”, who is mainly concerned by the question of Fortunatus’ sincerity. I am inclined to believe that tracing the history of these communicative modules, which have their roots in the sociopoetics of classical Rome, would help to pinpoint the many elements of stylisation (and sometimes mannerism) in a language that turns out to imply necessarily a somehow diplomatic function.

29. In absence of an English version, I provide my own translation. An integral English translation of Fortunatus’ *Carmina* by Michael Roberts is forthcoming.

30. Consolino, “I classici” 86–90 speaks of “metabolizing” the classical models; the insightful remarks of Vinay, *Alto medioevo latino* 163, describe Fortunatus’ influence on early medieval literature as “the transmission of an already cooked classic”: two metaphors the passionate gourmet would have appreciated.

31. He wrote a *Life of Maximus of Riez* (*PL* 80.31 ff.; new edition in *Maxime de Riez* 43–58) and *Marius of Lerins* (*PL* 80.25 ff.). It is uncertain whether the *Laus de Lerine insula* should be attributed to him or to his grandson, who bore the same name (*Anth. Lat.* 786a Riese).

32. Cf. for instance Greg. Naz., *De Vita Sua* 229–30 and Ambr., *De Officiis* 3.22. But cf. already the Ovidian redress of this expression in an exilic elegy for his wife (*Trist.* 1.2.43–44).

33. Cf. *Carm.* 9.9.3–4 (“*quae loca te teneant, venientia flabra requiro / si fugias oculos, non fugis hinc animos*”). This image finds significant parallels in other Venantian poems. In the *De Excidio Thoringiae*, perhaps the most Ovidian in style among Fortunatus’ poems, Rade-gund is depicted longing for his distant cousin Hamalafredus and asking the breeze for a greeting from him (*App.* 1.41–42: “*Specto libens, aliquam si nuntiet aura salutem / nullaque de cunctis umbra parentis adest*”); in the elegy on the death of Galswintha, Goiswintha says farewell to her daughter, who is destined for a tragic wedding (*Carm.* 6.5.165–66: “*Mitte avidae matri vel per vaga flabra salutem: / si venit, ipsa mihi nuntiet*

comiastic language. More specifically, the boundaries between the languages of encomium, friendship and love appear particularly blurred in this author.<sup>28</sup> As I have said above, the vocabularies of *amicitia*, social relationships and patron-client relationships often intertwine in Latin Literature: it is interesting to notice how extensively some of the poems written soon after his arrival in Gaul, around 566, when he was searching for a reliable source of patronage, make use of this affectionate language: I shall take as an example one of the greeting epistles (*Carm.* 6.10.47–50) addressed to Dynamius, *patri-cius* of Marseille (*Prosopography* 3.429–30; Norberg; Berschin und Blume):<sup>29</sup>

Ex illo, celebrande, cliens stat pars mea tecum,  
et venis huc animae pars mediata meae,  
antea corde mihi notus quam lumine visus,  
quem mente astringo, si neque tango manu.

(Therefore, O praiseworthy, part of me is always with you, as a client, while you come to me as half of my soul; recognised by my heart before than seen by my eyes: if I cannot touch with my hand, I caress you with my affection.)

The unmistakable echo from the expression by which Horace addressed Virgil (*Carm.* 1.3.8: *animae dimidium meae*) and Maecenas (*Carm.* 2.17.5: *meae partem animae*), quite unusual in a poet who loved to merge his models quite freely,<sup>30</sup> is particularly striking. It is important to note that Dynamius was a man of letters as well:<sup>31</sup> his cultural excellence is remarked in ll. 57–60. This Horatian *iunctura*, which had some antecedents in Greek culture, enjoyed considerable fortune among Christian writers<sup>32</sup> and is echoed twice in the epistolary of Ruricius, a fundamental document of the family ties and friendships of the Gallo-Roman learned class in post-Roman Gaul (*Ep.* 2.1.1; *Ep.* 2.10.1). In the same manner, Dynamius is called in another poem *noster amor*: not much differently from an Ovidian heroine, the author asks the winds for some news about his highborn friend.<sup>33</sup> This hyper-expressive language of friendly affection is clearly shared by Dynamius himself in one of the so-called *Epistulae Austrasicae* (12), perhaps addressed to Fortunatus (as conjectured by the MGH editor Gundlach: Malaspina 250–52). But even with someone whose social level was not so high as that of Dynamius and with whom he arguably enjoyed a more familiar relationship, the style is

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aura boni”). Even the novice of the *De Virginitate* expresses her yearning for her celestial spouse in the very same way (*Carm.* 8.3.241–42: “*Ecce procellosos suspecta interrogo*

ventos, / quid mihi de domino nuntiet aura meo;” on the spiritualised re-use of Ovidian themes and images, often blended with echoes from the *Song of Songs*, see Schmid and Bisanti 629–35).



34. Translations by J. Pucci, with slight modifications.

nearly the same, as, for instance, a short verse epistle to the deacon Ragnemodus (affectionately nicknamed Rucco) shows:<sup>34</sup>

Nos maris Oceani tumidum circumfluit aequor,  
 te quoque Parisius, care sodalis, habet;  
 Sequana te retinet, nos unda Britannica cingit:  
 divisos terris alligat unus amor.  
 Non furor hic pelagi vultum mihi subtrahit illum  
 nec Boreas aufert nomen, amice, tuum.  
 Pectore sub nostro tam saepe recurris amator,  
 tempore sub hiemis quam solet unda maris.  
 Vt quatitur pelagus quotiens proflaverit Eurus,  
 stat neque sic animus te sine, care, meus. (*Carm.* 3.26.3–12)

(The violent ocean swells around me, while Paris holds you, dear friend. The Seine detains you, the Brittonic waves surround me: yet one love binds our separation. Friend, no sea-borne fury banishes your face, nor Boreas carries off your name. In my heart you're a love who appears as often as the ocean cuffs the wintry shore. As the sea is shaken by Eurus, so is my soul without you, dear.)

35. Cf. *Carm.* 6.8.5–6 (“Tristius erro nimis patriis vagus exul ab oris, / quam sit Apollonius naufragus hospes aquis:” the Apollonius here referred to is in all probability Apollonius king of Tyre: the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyrii* was widely read in the late antique world and was translated into Latin between the 5th and the 6th century) and *Carm.* 7.9.7–8 (“Exul ab Italia nono, puto, volvor in anno / litoris Oceani contiguante salo”). Furthermore, in the general *Praefatio* to his *Carmina*, addressed to Gregory of Tours, Fortunatus famously depicts himself as a *novus Orpheus* in wild woods (*Praef.* 4). On Fortunatus’ self-representation as an exile and his integration into the post-Roman society of Gaul, see Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow* 313–19; Bord; Pietri, “Venance Fortunat” and “Autobiographie.”

From a remote and stormy island off the Breton coast, Fortunatus writes to his friend. Such a situation typically occurs in Ovid’s exile poetry (cf. for instance *Pont.* 1.8.65–68: “Te modo Campus habet, densa modo porticus umbra, / nunc, in quo ponis tempora rara, forum: / Umbria nunc revocat, nec non Albana petentem / Appia ferventi ducit in arva rota,” “You may stroll now in the Campus, now in the dusky shade of some portico, now in the forum, though you spend but little time there; Umbria now calls you home, or as you seek your Alban estate, the Appian road takes you to the country on glowing wheels”). It is worth noting that, in the poems of his first years in Gaul above all, Fortunatus describes himself as *Italus exul* in a barbarous land.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, this kind of affectionate intellectual nearness is aimed at keeping alive the bonds with the episcopal class on which he relies as a source of patronage. The exceptional exploitation of amatory language indicates here a friendship between peers, which implies a shared moral and, above all, religious system. It is ultimately not improbable that this startling hyperextension of love language was influenced by the concept of Christian love (ἀγάπη or *caritas*): “once the language of *caritas* had penetrated the

36. Translation by S. Allott. The same language permeates Alcuin's poetry: cf. his *Carm.* 11 and *Carm.* 55.

37. After the name given by F. Leo in his *MGH* edition to a group of poems only preserved in a single ms. (Par. Lat. 13048, called  $\Sigma$ ) whose textual and content features set it apart from the rest of the manuscript tradition of Fortunatus' *Carmina*, plus another poem known from indirect tradition (*App.* 33; see Leo VIII and xv–xxii). The question of the nature of the *Appendix* poems is one of the most intricate in criticism on Fortunatus. Leo's overall view that this unusual collection had been put together as an anthology of Venantian pieces from a complete, now lost, exemplar appears today untenable. However, his idea that some of the poems of  $\Sigma$  must have originally formed the last part of book 11, accidentally lost in the manuscript transmission (*Carm.* 9.26 appears clearly unfinished in the main tradition and complete in  $\Sigma$  only) may be retained, if applied to only the second half of this Venantian collection (Koeberner 128–43). Fortunatus' last editor, Reydellet, thought that the *Carmina* had been thoroughly revised by their author precisely up to 9.26, when he passed away. Subsequently, a cleric *pieux* collected what he could find of the other Venantian poems to form the  $\Sigma$  collection (Venance Fortunat, *Poèmes* 1: LXXVIII–LVXXX). The evidence of the 16th century editor P. Christoph Brouwer and of Johannes Trithemius' *Liber de Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis* (1494), who had access to some lost manuscripts (both apparently located around Trier) which contained the *Appendix* poems, but in a probably different order than  $\Sigma$ , suggests that the collection of the *Parisinus* is somehow secondary and in no case original.

38. On the relationship between Fortunatus and Radegund, see in general Leclercq, "Relations;" Ehlen 19–24; and Cristiani, "Venanzio Fortunato e Radegonda," who highlights the details of fine sensuousness which emerge from the literary representations of Radegund (and are at any rate to be read in a spiritualised sense). In general, such de-eroticisation of the Roman elegy is one of the outcomes of the complete Christianisation of culture

spheres of relations previously denominated by *amicitia* and its cognates, the boundary between the semantic domains of love and friendship became more porous" (Konstan 173; see also Bisanti 635–36 and Barcellona 42–44). This highly stylised range of expression will surely survive throughout the centuries, like a *langue* in Saussurean terms; it is sufficient to have a look at an epistle by Alcuin to Arn, bishop of Salzburg (*Ep.* 193, dated at 798):<sup>36</sup>

O si mihi translatio Abacuc esset concessa ad te: quam tenacibus tua colla strinxissem, o dulcissime fili, amplexibus; nec me longitudo aestivi diei fessum efficeret, quin minus premerem pectus pectore, os ori adiungerem, donec singulos corporis artus dulcissimis oscularer salutationibus.

(O if I could be spirited to you, like Abacuc! How I would fling my arms round your neck and hug you, sweet son; a whole summer day would not be too long for me to press breast to breast and lips to lips till I kissed each limb of your body in tender greeting.)

Fortunatus appeals to a shared universe of Christian values as a bond of a fruitful friendship: the language of amatory *Werbung* and the semantic domain of social relationships are almost totally fused. Not by chance he has been indicated among the predecessors of the courtly lyric (Bezzola 41–76; see nevertheless the remarks of Dronke 200–17 and Stella 281–85).

If I can take my reasoning a little further, I am inclined to see in this mingling of the languages of love and friendship the preliminary step towards the spiritualised re-use of elegiac themes which is ultimately brought about in the many short elegies for St. Radegund and her spiritual daughter, Agnes. These pieces, mostly located in books 8, 9 and in the so-called *Appendix Carminum*,<sup>37</sup> can be vague and everyday-like in content (and therefore hard to date), but are also extremely graceful and significant as testimony of a relationship of spiritual love and concrete patronage: they largely exploit motifs, themes and imagery of the Roman classical elegy to express a kind of beatific, wholly de-eroticised affection towards the spiritual mother and sister of the poet (Consolino, "Amor spiritualis;" Epp, "Männerfreundschaft und Frauendienst" and "In himmlischer Verbundenheit"; Roberts, "Letters" and *The Humblest Sparrow* 283–313; Barcellona).<sup>38</sup> In this sense, Fortunatus may be seen as a forerunner of the

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in the 6th c. CE (another being Maximianus' elegies, which describe erotic desire as a systematically frustrated urge, as explained by Consolino, "Massimiano" 396–400). On the one hand, the feeling of

spiritual nearness and the literary patronage promoted by Radegund can remind us of the friendship between Jerome and the matrons Marcella, Paula and Eustochium; on the other, it paves the way to a long series of collaborations between

writers and intellectuals and women patrons, either lay or highborn nuns, which runs through medieval culture (Ferrante and McCash). On the spiritualisation of female characters overall in Fortunatus' poetry, see Piredda; on the evolution of spiritual love between men and women, see also Jaeger 82–106 (with special regard to eleventh- and twelfth-century literature).

39. I am thinking for instance of the couple of epistles in the style of the *Heroides* between Baudri de Bourgeuil and the nun Constance (Baldricus Burgulianus, *Carmina* nos. 200 and 201), in which the Ovidian erotic nuances are paradoxically aimed at emphasising a spiritual and quasi-parental love: see Tilliette 152 ff. Indeed, a precedent is given by Fortunatus himself with the *De Excidio Thoringiae* (App. 1), in which the female voice of Radegund, in the manner of a deserted Ovidian heroine, reproaches her cousin Hamalafredus for his distance; the kind of love here described is of course a familial one (on the stylistic imitation and otherness in content compared with Ovid's *Heroides*, see Consolino, "Lelegia amorosa;" Campanale 133–37; Wasyl, "An Aggrieved Heroine;" and Fielding, "The Ovidian Heroine"). An overview of Ovid's fortune in the late Middle Ages has recently been provided by Desmond, "Venus' Clerk," with further bibliography.

40. Similarly, the poet expresses his longing for the secluded Radegund in terms of an elegiac παρακλαυσίθυρον: cf. *Carm.* 8.9; *Carm.* 9.2. Translation by J. Pucci, with slight modifications.

41. Cf. for instance Ov., *Am.* 2.16.51–52: "At vos, qua veniet, tumidi subsidite montes, / et faciles curvis vallibus este viae."

42. Cf. Plin., *Pan.* 16.5: "omnia haec tam prona, tamque cedentia virtutibus tuis sentiet, ut subdisse montes, flumina exaruisse, interceptum mare, illatasque non classes nostras, sed terras ipsas arbitretur;" Men. Rh. 399.1. For further examples in Flavian literature, see Rosati, "Luxury and Love" 42 ff. In this Venantian poem, moreover, cf. 1.3 ("revocas mea gaudia tecum") with Claud., *Mall.* 30 ("tantaque commissae revocasti gaudia genti").

moralisation of Ovid's love poetry that took place in the late Middle Ages and in the twelfth century in particular.<sup>39</sup> Of course, many of the elegiac themes mentioned above survive in these poems. Let us take, for instance, *Carm.* 8.10; although spring has just begun, Radegund's return from the seclusion of her Easter retreat is compared, in the view of the poet, to the flowering of the summer:<sup>40</sup>

Quamvis incipiant modo surgere semina sulcis,  
hic egomet hodie te revidendo meto.  
Colligo iam fruges, placidos compono maniplos:  
quod solet Augustus mensis, Aprilis agit;  
[...]  
Quamvis nudus ager nullis ornetur aristis,  
omnia plena tamen te redeunte nitent. (ll. 5–8; 14–15)

(Although shoots just now poke through the furrows, I gather their harvest in your sight again, today. I collect fruits, laying aside quiet handfuls: April acts as if it were August. [...] Although no harvest dressed the barren field, everything thrives and shines at your return.)

These lines are a neat variation on the elegiac theme of the divine nature of the beloved, which exerts its power on the elements of nature<sup>41</sup> and has several encomiastic counterparts.<sup>42</sup> It is noteworthy that Radegund herself was a former queen: as is known, she deserted her husband, king Lothar I, when he killed her younger brother, her last surviving relative after the destruction of Thuringia, took her vows and founded the Cloister of the Holy Cross near Poitiers.<sup>43</sup> Her queenly status is, however, often remembered by Fortunatus: the former queen who scorned the secular world has already obtained another, greater kingdom in Heaven:<sup>44</sup>

Regali de stirpe potens Radegundis in orbe,  
altera cui caelis regna tenenda manent,  
Despiciens mundum meruisti adquirere Christum,  
et dum clausa lates, hinc super astra vides. (*Carm.* 8.5.1–4)

(Royally born, powerful in the world, Radegund, who will reign over a new kingdom in Heaven. Despising the world, you deserved to earn Christ, and while you are secluded in your retreat, from there you see above the stars.)

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43. Radegund's earliest years are nostalgically remembered in the *De Excidio Thoringiae* (App. 1); the main sources on Radegund's life are constituted by Gregory of Tours (*LDH* 3.4 and 7; 9.2) and by the two *Vitae*

*Radegundis* by Fortunatus and Baudonivia (Consolino, "Due agiografi;" Huber-Rebenich). Another life of Radegund was composed around 1100 by Hildebert of Lavardin (*PL* 171.967–88).

44. Translation by J. Pucci, with modifications.

45. Nisard, n. 1 *ad loc.* has seen in *Carm.* 9.4.3–4 (“Fortunatus agens, Agnes quoque versibus orant / ut lassata nimis vina benigna bibas”) an allusion to the official employment of Fortunatus as *agens in rebus*, that is to say the official spokesman and administrator of the external lands of the nunnery. The Rule of Caesarius mentions a *provisor monasterii* (see for instance *Regula ad Virgines* 36.2), but it is not clear if and how such a figure derived from the late antique *agentes in rebus* (about which see Jones 578–82 and *Late Antiquity. A Guide* 278–79). I would find it more reasonable to believe that Fortunatus simply lent his voice and his art to represent the interests of his patrons (Radegund and Gregory above all) by praising their ecclesiastical politics, according to typically late-antique dynamics of socio-political communication. See in this regard Fels 25–26 and Ehlen 33–34.

46. This word originally designated the blessed bread that was distributed among the worshippers after the service; later, it was used to mean in general the dish freely given by the ecclesiastics to the poor. Cf. *Carm.* 11.9, 10 and 12.

This kind of encomium (which notably has some parallels in the contemporary encomia of the Merovingian bishops: cf. *Carmina latina epigraphica* 01371.7–8 and 00688; Heinzelmann 84 ff.) poses an intriguing question. I have briefly touched upon the elegiac memory in many of the poems for Radegund: here it is curious that we have an elegiac *domina* (in a double sense, since she was a former queen and now the founder of her cloister) who, thanks to her sanctity, is truly worthy of ascending to Heaven and is a model of holiness (cf. Ov., *Her.* 18.170: “*Digna quidem caelo es, sed nunc tellure morare / aut dic ad superos et mihi qua sit iter*”). Moreover, I believe it is important to bear in mind that Fortunatus relied on Radegund’s patronage for most of his stay in Poitiers: he lived near the Holy Cross and, as far as we can deduce from his poems, he acted as the mouthpiece of the monastery,<sup>45</sup> not least because the rule of Caesarius of Arles adopted by Radegund imposed a very strict enclosure on the nuns. Graceful testimony to this concrete dependence are the short elegies in which he thanks the nuns for sending him many tasty dishes (the so-called *eulogia*),<sup>46</sup> and we can detect a theory of Christian charity as *pium commercium* not much different from what emerges from other poems written for secular personages (Pisacane).

To sum up, the set of words, images and expressions which once belonged to the love courtship of classical Augustan elegy, after the conscious ‘trans-codification’ (or, as I would find more evocative to say, metamorphosis) brought about by Ovid in his exile poetry, enjoyed great fortune as language of court praise. An interesting touchstone is provided by Claudian’s poetical panegyrics. This same language shows many common traits with the vocabulary of *amicitia*, perhaps determined by the often-informal nature of the Roman patronage system. These elements are wisely exploited by Fortunatus in the occasional poems for some secular addressees, whom he viewed as potential patrons or privileged poetical interlocutors. But in the elegies for Radegund, a powerful nun and both a spiritual and a concrete patron, we may observe an interesting literary short circuit within a centuries-old Latin poetical diction: this same courtly language is, in turn, bent to express a new form of de-eroticised and spiritual love. In future research on the evolution of concept and forms of patronage between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, I believe that Fortunatus should be regarded as an important witness and interpreter of an age in which the ancient communication system began to mirror new social structures and new mentalities. I am also inclined to think that, in such research, a survey of the presence

of Ovid's exile poetry in this author, which is currently lacking, will turn out to be fruitful.

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# Ways of Presenting Love in Ancient Sanskrit Literature

## Abstract

This study traces the appearance and relevance of love motifs in Sanskrit texts. It deals with preclassical, classical and medieval literature, with excerpts from the Vedic scriptures, the epics, the normative texts and the courtly formalized Kāvya. Attention is paid to the change in the status of women, whose position becomes gradually more subordinate over time. Several conventional *topoi* of Sanskrit erotic literature are examined, such as love enjoyed in the union of the lovers, or suffered in their separation; divine love; the traditional belief that women are more passionate than men; the different religious/philosophical schools' outlook towards love; love in the dramatic theory of aesthetic experience; the importance of marriage, and marital love as opposed or complementary to illicit love. Finally there is a brief survey of a few scientific disciplines that have something to say about the experience of love, like Āyurveda, astronomy/astrology, and the treatises on Dharma and those on the science of government.

1. For examples of divine loves, see for instance Dehejia, *Slaves of the Lord*; Dehejia, *Antal*; and Lynch.

2. All translations, if not otherwise specified, are my own.

Most Sanskrit literary genres feature love stories, set in all sorts of social contexts. The earliest examples are found in the first known texts, the Vedas, where both gods and humans are often portrayed falling in love.<sup>1</sup> These early images of a loving relationship, like that between the human king Purūravas and the heavenly nymph Urvaśī, for instance, address sexual issues in a very direct manner. The expressions of love become far more guarded in the subsequent literature, where people's attitudes seem to become more and more conventional and prudish. This gradual change takes place first in parts of the Epics, and then in Kāvya, the conventional court literature, with the notable exception of satirical writings.

The oldest myths, from the Vedas on, recount in poetry the love of gods and humans. Remarkably, one of the oldest mentions of Kāma as Desire, found in a puzzling cosmogonic poem of the *Ṛgveda*, speaks of it as “the first seed of mind” (10.129).<sup>2</sup> That nothing could ever be started nor accomplished without the initial impulse of desire is already taken here as a matter of fact. In many vedic verses, moreover, love is seen to cast a powerful spell, capable of impris-

3. It is the lament of sage Agastya who blames his wife Lopāmudrā. For a modern study, see Thieme.

4. Story of Purūravas and Urvaśī: *Ṛgveda* 10.95.

5. “Verses on Kāma (‘Desire’)” of the third century CE, which alludes to earlier texts now lost.

oning the beloved’s soul, and amorous stanzas are songs of both longing and regret. There is for instance the dirge of an ascetic husband, uniquely devoted to sacrifice, when his wife of many years, exhausted from constant renunciation of love, finally manages to seduce him and “lead him astray” (*Ṛgveda* 1.179),<sup>3</sup> and the even more poignant lament of the kingly hero Purūravas, who is absolutely distraught when his heavenly companion leaves him through no fault of his own.<sup>4</sup>

Vedic love poetry on the whole shows a rather sanguine state of affairs, where erotic scenes are shown openly, and women often take the initiative. The later *Atharvaveda* collection, for instance, teaches magic formulas to enrapture the mind of one’s beloved; these incantations are employed sometimes by men, sometimes by women, with spells to ward off rivals. As in the medical texts, belonging to a later period, *Atharvaveda* also gives recipes for enhancing men’s virility. Love and sexuality here are strongly bound together, so that they seem almost synonymous.

Looking at later texts, it seems that no singular theory on love as a complex set of feelings was proposed by ancient Indian thinkers. There were many different points of view, expressed in a multiplicity of stories, and each revealed a different ethical approach. This made for an extreme variety of themes as well as of attitudes towards the love experience. India possesses rather early love manuals – the best known of which is the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana<sup>5</sup> – that deal in an exemplary manner with sexuality, and, though with minor emphasis, with the psychology of lovers. These texts proposed a view of relative equality between the genders, as love was meant to be fulfilled in mutual embrace. A singular trait of ancient Indian literature that is continued in later writings, particularly of religious people, is the belief that women as lovers are more passionate than men. The *Mahābhārata* in 12.34.33 states: “The race of womankind is the seat of lust.” This sounds like a disparaging comment, while on the contrary in Kāvya enamoured women are depicted as very courageous and daring heroines. Several poems in fact revolve around the trope of the *abhisārikā*, the woman in love who, braving her fear of darkness and the dangers of the unknown, on a moonless night sets out alone for a furtive rendez-vous with her beloved. Love in marriage is often contrasted with illicit love; the latter in Kāvya is often looked upon favourably because of its spontaneous nature.

The *Kāmasūtra*, not a normative text on social *mores*, though an important influence on all subsequent Indian writers of love stories,

is very open in speaking of mutual sexual fulfillment, and strongly promotes marriage. *Kāmasūtra* does not concentrate exclusively on the sexual aspects of the love experience, but rather gives a measure of consideration to the psychological states of mind of the two people in the couple. It subtly describes, for instance, the anxious feelings of a newly wedded virgin, whom most types of Indian literature usually presented as a complete *ingénue*, and suggests the gentle means by which her husband should try to first reassure, and then win over and seduce her.

In the normative texts on *dharma*, and in society, in fact, a woman was taken seriously only as a wife and a mother.<sup>6</sup> Marriage was the only *saṁskāra*, “perfecting rite,” or rite of passage, performed for a living woman. The different stages of this ritual and even its symbolic movements within the nuptial pavilion highlighted the greater importance given to the bridegroom. In families of high social classes, whatever their religious propensities, marriages arranged from infancy were the norm. These did not presuppose any initial feelings of love between the two young people involved, who usually had never even set eyes on each other before marriage. This type of social contract, while giving greater importance to the family of the bridegroom, could turn the young bride into a commodity almost ‘owned’ by the husband’s family, even though she had not actually been bought by bride price, but rather brought to the receiving family a usually conspicuous dowry. Worse still, such an early marriage<sup>7</sup> could also result in child widows, or very young widows. Such widows’ position was different in different times: in some cases, for instance in the Epics, widows could (or were obliged to) remarry<sup>8</sup> for the sake of begetting children, but in later times, on the contrary, they were supposed to lead a life of restraint and privation, and could not obtain another husband.<sup>9</sup> The epic situation was particular, because in aristocratic families, for a dynasty’s sake, it was of the utmost importance that couples produce heirs.<sup>10</sup> One could think that to be accepted in these extremely affluent families might have represented a great fortune for a woman; often, however, in kingly retinues a particular wife or concubine was briefly chosen as the favourite, and equally quickly forgotten, by a lord to whom everything was allowed and due, until he eventually died on the battlefield. At that time his women might have had to follow him on the funeral pyre, or become the slaves of the winner. While much honour was attributed to the former ‘choice’<sup>11</sup> of following the husband even in death, a practice called *samanāgamana*, or *samaragamana*, the royal women who did

6. Barring of course the rare exceptions of female ascetics and recluses belonging to different religious groups.

7. *Mahābhārata* reports different ages for a bride: 13.44.13 maintains that a thirty-year-old man should marry a girl of ten, and a man of twenty-one a girl of seven. *Mahābhārata* 13.44.15 however says that a girl should marry in the fourth year after puberty.

8. This is what happened to Ambikā and Ambālikā early in *Mahābhārata*. They were however the property of their husband’s family, and in fact were obliged, by their mother-in-law, to remarry a terrifyingly looking, smelly ascetic (1.7.99.40).

9. Often widows were considered responsible for their husbands’ death, or just deemed inauspicious.

10. And a male heir at that.

11. The courageous, proud declarations of epic Śakuntalā about the wife as a real *pativrata*, “a woman whose vow is her husband,” in *Śakuntalopākhyāna* is the first allusion in *Mahābhārata* to this extreme case of wifely fidelity (1.74).

12. Compare the recent study of Pisano, who speaks of it as a pre-Rgvedic custom (233 and note 22). Pisano mentions that this usage is also found among “many ancient Indo-European-speaking [sic] peoples, such as the Greeks, Thracians, Scythians, Germans and Slavs,” where co-wives contended with each other for the right to die with their husband “and the selected one was slain by her closest relatives.”

13. The female present participle of the verbal base *as*, “to be;” its first meaning is “true woman,” *i.e.* “virtuous and devoted woman.” Then, in memory of mythical Satī, it came to refer to the faithful widow who ascended her husband’s pyre on his death.

14. Lord Bentick imposed the ban on the practice in that year on all the territories controlled by the British, and it was reiterated, for the whole of India, by the independent Indian Republic in 1947 (see Moneta 112).

15. About the self-sacrifice of widows in Kalhāṇa’s *Rājataranṅī*, see Baldissera, “Traditions of protest.” For a late Sanskrit text on the rules to be followed by devoted wives in Hindu society, see Tryambakayajvan’s *Stridharma-paddhati* (Leslie).

16. Sītā remained unscathed and was found and proclaimed unrepachable by Agni (*Rāmāyaṇa* 6.106.4).

17. This is especially true of the *Mānavadharmasāstra* (“Manu’s Code of Law”), whereas the *Arthasāstra* attributed to Kauṭilya, of earlier composition, had a more open approach. In the *Arthasāstra* women were entitled to their own properties, even as wives, and their own rights appear well established; for instance (3.4.24, 3.4.31–36) the wife of a man who had gone abroad for over a year without sending her news of his whereabouts was allowed to remarry – she would have to wait for another year if she had already given birth to his children.

not chose to burn themselves, or who managed to avoid this prestigious end, were blamed for their lack of courage and faithfulness (on this custom see also Datta; Fisch; and Moneta). The practice of first burying, and later burning, together with a hero’s body, all the possessions belonging to the dead warrior, including his horses, dogs, wives, favourites and retainers, seems to have come to India from ancient Central Asia. It seems to have already been considered the remnant of an ancient custom in Vedic literature,<sup>12</sup> but later, starting with the Epics, it was resumed in warrior families. In some places, especially in North India, it continued for a very long time. The most recent best-known (but by no means isolated) example of a so-called *satī*<sup>13</sup> is that of Roop Kanwar, a Rajasthani wife, who allegedly burnt herself on her husband’s body in 1987 (Oldenburg; Nandy), when the practice had already been banned in the whole of British India since 1829.<sup>14</sup>

Some male contrary voices were heard quite early, like that of the great writer Bāṇa, who flourished in Kanauj at the court of king Harṣa (reigned 606–47). In his novel *Kādambarī*, Bāṇa wrote that the custom of widow burning was both inhuman and stupid. *Kādambarī* is extremely original also in having two young men die for love, whereas its female heroines, though saddened by their lovers’ demise, managed to survive.

On the other hand, even comparatively late historians such as Kalhāṇa, in twelfth century Kashmir, and several other writers up to the nineteenth century, upheld the view that a *satī* was the true example of a supremely devoted wife.<sup>15</sup> Burning by fire was considered the ultimate purification, and Agni, the fire god, might be called upon also to witness a woman’s purity, as in the voluntary ordeal of princess Sītā<sup>16</sup> in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

At about the same period of the *Kāmasūtra*, the rules of most normative texts that tried to regulate ancient Indian social intercourse, in fact, were very strict, especially as regarded the position of women.<sup>17</sup> There was a vast gap between the *Kāmasūtra*’s equally shared view of pleasure, which was then followed in the amorous idylls portrayed in the literary texts of Kāvya or in the masterpieces of the visual arts, and the actual reality that one could perceive, as in filigree, under these ideal embellishments (see Kakar, *Intimate relations*).

This state of affairs induces one to think that ancient love literature in poetry and prose, such as Kāvya, which showed other possible adventures of body and soul, where women acted as bold lovers, and were equally loved in return, mirrored a desire of evasion in the

18. On erotic art in Indian temples see Desai, *Erotic Sculpture*; and Desai, *The Religious Imagery*.

19. Those of later love manuals, such as the fifteenth century *Ratimāñjarī* (in Bhaṭṭācāryya), were even more daring than the *Kāmasūtra*'s ones.

20. See for instance the considerations of Doniger O'Flaherty in her Introduction.

romantic or religious myth, and spoke to a public willing to believe in the ideal world created by the artists' imagination. This is also what appears to happen in the erotic scenes<sup>18</sup> preserved in many temple sculptures: they show a parallel reality, a singular canon, where male and female complete each other. This was mythically and sculpturally represented by the composite image of the Ardhhanārīśvara, "The Lord whose half is a woman." At the same time erotic temple art has usually been interpreted as an invitation to, and representation of, fertility, both for the land and for the king, whose first and foremost wife was always the earth, which he had to both protect and render fecund.

Writings about love in India have often constituted the two poles of a pendulum that swings between the extremes of a strong sensuality, and the strictest asceticism. There were the erotic stanzas<sup>19</sup> or sculptures on the one hand, and on the other the strictures of ascetic life, that condemned any loving engagement. Paradoxically, a similar ardour was seen at work in both paths, because the fire of Eros and that of ascetic tension were similarly all-consuming. They were deemed equally excessive,<sup>20</sup> and therefore dangerous for both the predominance of gods over humans, and a harmonious development of social life on earth. It is also interesting to consider that one of the highest forms of penance for ascetics consisted of controlling their seed, in feats of ever more complex concentration, that however were also more subject to distraction.

Marriage performed according to *dharma* could represent a middle way between extreme eroticism and renunciation, by channeling the erotic (or the ascetic) energy into an acceptable form, and embodying a sort of ascetic rule, followed through continence and the mutual devotion of the spouses. But marriage unfortunately in many cases does not seem to have solved the problem in a satisfactory manner for either party. Women of all social walks are still disappointed in their romantic expectations (Kakar and Ross), triggered once upon a time by poems and love ballads, and today by commercial movies in Bollywood style, while several men, from the ancient seers to Gandhi, thought that love, even in marriage, was a hindrance in their spiritual paths.

Marriage however was and is the central pivot of Indian society, and the teachings of the *Kāmasūtra*, aimed to reach the well-to-do young city dwellers, were mostly concerned with creating harmony within the married couple. The fact that many of its chapters are devoted to the sexual act or to foreplay, however, makes for a sustained

21. A comparable situation occurs for instance in the ancient Greek poem *Hero and Leander* (v. 162): see below.

22. This because everything in his territory belonged to the king who ruled it, starting from the land where people established their businesses.

sexual imagery. Starting from the more ancient works, in fact, love in Sanskrit, and generally in Indian texts, is presented through its outward physical manifestations. Even in theatrical practice and in *alamkāraśāstra* (“the science of poetics”), it is the spontaneous, physical reactions to a given emotion that are particularly appreciated, as they cannot be feigned.<sup>21</sup> And the emotion induced by desire/love is recognised as one of the most powerful.

In ancient India love was seen as an important part of life not only in myth and fiction, but also in scientific (astronomical, juridico-political, medical) and religious texts. Astronomy (*jyotiśāstra*) studied and indicated the auspicious times for the nuptials, and determined whether the prospective spouses were reciprocally compatible by interpreting their birth charts as well as the auspicious or inauspicious marks present on their bodies. The most ancient treatise on the science of government, the *Arthaśāstra*, expounded patrimonial and family law, and prescribed also what interest a king should put into the high courtesans’ establishments, and the proportion of the monthly taxes he should then exact from them.<sup>22</sup>

Medical science (*Āyurveda*, “The science about the [length of the] span of life”), when dealing with the means and regimens to increase and preserve health, explained also at what time in the year and how frequently people should engage in physical activities, including love-making. Like the ancient *Atharvaveda*, it offered several medical prescriptions to increase or recover virility. The authors of the first āyurvedic medical texts thought that vigorous sexual activity was one of the practices to be taught and promoted as conducive to a healthy life. Physicians were concerned primarily with the maintenance and/or restoration of health, and considered an intense and ideally satisfactory love life as extremely good for people living in society. According to the medical view, in fact, people had first to be healthy, and only then they could eventually opt to follow a religious calling. These works, starting with the *Cārakasamhitā*, did not only sing the praise of the purely physical side of this subject. Their psychological insight, in fact, made the medical authors write that the best stimulant or aphrodisiac for a man was an exciting young woman, who would be happy to encourage his advances and respond to his desire in an equally enamoured way. A few verses below, one discovers that such a woman would be in fact the best wife one could wish for, and that her qualities would go well beyond a mere sexual entente with her man:

She who, with her excellent qualities, captures all the sense organs of her husband, [so that], when he is without her, he sees the whole world as empty of women, a depressing thing. (*Cāraṅgamaṅhitā* 2.11b–12a)

she without whom [her] man feels his body as heavy, as if it were deprived of its sense organs; she looking at whom he is no longer overcome by suffering, anguish, dejection nor fear. (*Cāraṅgamaṅhitā* 2.12b–13a)

she who, when approached by him, gives him back his self confidence; she at whose sight he is maddened by joy; she who, though he sees her often, evokes in him an extreme agitation and excitement, as if he were seeing her for the first time... (*Cāraṅgamaṅhitā* 2.13b–14a)<sup>23</sup>

23. Agniveśa, in both cited editions.

These verses, though proceeding from physical desire, describe much more than the mere sexual act, and offer a very favourable picture of women as life companions, like in the marvellous defence of the wife as the best friend of man in the speech of spurned Śakuntalā at the court of king Duṣyanta in *Mahābhārata* (1.74).

At the same time, women were considered to be more passionate than men, starting in the Vedic hymns and continuing in the medieval devotional poems revolving around the figures of Śiva or Kṛṣṇa.<sup>24</sup> In these devotional poems, as in the profane ones of Kāvya, it could seem that the only ‘real’ love could be the love freely offered of an adulterous woman, or of a young woman who, refusing the unknown bridegroom proposed by her family, ran instead towards a *gāndharva* marriage with the man of her choice. In the epics, like in *kathā* (“stories”), there are also different possibilities, in that many episodes and stories revolve around very happy marriages. These include that of Sāvitrī in *Mahābhārata*, as well as that of Rāma and Sitā in *Rāmāyaṇa* (that was happy at least until political considerations interrupted abruptly the harmony of their mutual love), or the one of the learned young Brahmin Vararuci and of his extremely intelligent and resourceful wife Upakośā in *Kathāsaritsāgara* (Baldissera, “The Alluring Ladylove”).

24. For female devotion towards a male god, see Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva*; Ramanujan, *Hymns*; Hardy.

For most ascetic currents, on the other hand, that aspired to reach liberation from both social constraints in this life and rebirth after it, love and sex were the ultimate bane (Baldissera, “Sinister Fluids”). Their adepts did not want to risk procreating and being subjected to renewed cycles of births and deaths. Not all religious think-



ers agreed on this point, in part because most ascetic communities were dependent on a harmoniously married lay society for their livelihood. The writers of an early Upaniṣat and those of several tantric texts, for instance, used either metaphors about love or actual love practices to indicate, or to reach, specific states of heightened awareness. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣat* 4.3.21 reads: “Now as a man, when embraced by a beloved wife, knows nothing that is without, nothing that is within, thus this person, when embraced by the intelligent Self, knows nothing that is without, nothing that is within”.

This recalls closely the already mentioned image of the Ardhanārīśvara, “The Lord whose half is a woman,” where god and goddess are so closely bound together to become almost indistinguishable from each other.

As for tantric ideas, they could be exemplified by a minor tantric text, the *Svabhodayamañjarī* of Vāmanadatta. In the words of Sanderson (277–78), it “teaches a series of mental practices to bring about liberation-in-life through the dissolution of contracted awareness (*manah, cittam*) by means of insight (*niścayaḥ*) into the emptiness of mental and objective phenomena and reversion into the uncontracted inner ground by observing the process of the arising and dying away of cognition, especially where the latter is very intense, as in the perception of the beautiful and meditation on the sensation of orgasm: [...] one should direct one’s attention at the climax of love-making on the point between the penis and the navel. As the bliss of orgasm fades one will suddenly be freed of all perturbation.”<sup>25</sup>

The followers of Tantra were often blamed for their ‘licentious’ conduct by the self-appointed guardians of public morals. These were always careful to preserve not only appearances, but also caste distinctions, that were often blurred in the supposed tantric orgies.

Many (non-tantric) Brahmanical, Jain, and Buddhist religious texts, moreover, promoted an ascetic view that repeatedly warned people of the adverse effects of desire.<sup>26</sup> This was depicted as a yearning almost impossible to quench, dangerous because it would immediately lead to an interruption of the correct execution of one’s religious duties. Even worse, it could also result in violence or in a continuous chain of rebirths, the exact opposite of the ascetic ideal of liberation. In a reverse mirror image to the āyurvedic doctors, some of these authors regarded women as the most repulsive and dangerous species on earth. A stanza from the *Bodhicittavivarāṇa* attributed to the Buddhist sage Nāgārjuna reads: “A mendicant, a lover, and a dog have three different opinions about the same female body: – a

25. *Svabhodayamañjarī* B, f. 5r6–7 (lacking in A), v. 38; in Sanderson 277–78 and note 153.

26. On the Buddhist approach to love, see Faure.

27. *Bodhicittavivaraṇa* attributed to Nāgārjuna, v. 20 (Lindtner 90). It also appears in Vallabhadeva's *Subhāṣitāvali* as nr. 3391 and in Böhlingk as nr. 3976, attributed to Madhava's *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*.

28. For the extreme reactions of young monks, who sometimes committed suicide or necrophilia in the burning ground because of this practice, see Wilson, *passim*. To avoid this problem, the spiritual exercise called *aśubhabhāvanā* ("visualisation on the repugnant") was later forbidden to young monks unaccompanied by a teacher.

29. See "Mettasutta" with the commentary *Paramatthajotikā* by Buddhaghosa in *Suttanipāta-Aṭṭhakathā* 1.193.

corpse, [my] beloved, food."<sup>27</sup> An even worse description is in some later Buddhist scriptures that taught adepts to meditate on the impurities hidden in bodies, and especially in the female body, in order to counteract its allurements.<sup>28</sup> In the words of Candragomin's *Śiṣyalekha* ("Letter to a Disciple") of the fourth century CE, "the bodies of women, far from looking like the *aravinda* lotus, the moon, or the *indīvara* lotus, [like in poets' comparisons] are deformed and emanate a putrid smell" (v. 90: translation by Hahn).

The Buddhist doctrine in fact had specific, medical/psychological ways of dealing with enamoured people as if they were intoxicated or sick patients who needed to be cured (even by a shock). According to their scientific method, using appropriate examples and practices, this 'intoxication' could be turned first into indifference towards the desired object, and later into a diffused *maitrī* ("loving kindness," "benevolence") towards every creature.<sup>29</sup>

What we 'know' about love in ancient and medieval India comes from these different types of written sources, as well as from the songs that have been preserved in some oral traditions. There were some culturally shared beliefs, such as the belief that women were much more passionate than men, or that love occurred in two main situations, one where the lovers were united, the other where for some reason they were separated.

Whereas the songs were often the product of popular circles, the written texts were usually concerned with the higher levels of society, where strict social conventions and family ties governed the rhythm of life. The behaviour of young people, in particular, was regulated by family and clan traditions. But even in those circumstances, some women and men would defy convention, and risk everything in the pursuit of 'real love.'

As for male sentimental education, in the three upper social layers, and especially among Brahmins, young men usually studied religious lore in the house of a teacher for several years, during which they had to serve their teacher's family and observe complete chastity (these activities were subsumed under the heading of *brahmācārya* "walking in the path of *brahman*"). At the completion of his studies the young man would return home, and marry the woman his parents had chosen for him. Marriage was a delicate affair, very important for establishing alliances between different clans. An arranged marriage was the usual, approved custom for the upper social groups, and it was actually understood and accepted that love might eventually come at a later stage, when the two spouses had learned

30. The custom was so entrenched that a traditional saying maintained that a daughter was 'bred for another,' meaning that she would soon become part of her husband's family and clan. This consideration, together with ritual requirements for death rites to the ancestors, that had to be performed by the family males, as well as the need for strong arms to do either farm work or warfare, is supposed to be the main reason why Indian families favoured the birth of male children...

31. The ones alluded to are the *Veda* recensions for those who followed brahmanical lore and kept the rules of *brahmacārya*, portions of the Buddhist Canon for the Buddhists, and of the Jain Canon for the members of the Jain communities.

32. Translation by Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law* 105–06.

33. For this and other examples, see Kṣemendra, *The Narmamālā* 83 note 195; and Stein.

34. They usually only saw each other on the rare occasion of a marriage or a temple festival.

each other's ways. The most prestigious type of nuptials, especially among Brahmins, was the one in which the father of the bride would confer on the bridegroom and his family the "gift of a virgin," *kanyā-dāna*. So, to ensure that the daughter a family would give in marriage was truly a virgin, Indian parents of good standing used to arrange marriages between very young children; such brides and bridegrooms, however, would remain in their own houses up to puberty. The daughters, in particular, would be guarded very closely by their relatives.<sup>30</sup> Young men were supposed to be mainly devoted to studying the scriptures,<sup>31</sup> so they were equally unprepared for the strong emotions that love would induce. Instructions on how they should behave with the opposite sex were equally spread in the *Mahābhārata* and in the normative treatises. The *Mānavadharmasāstra*, for instance, prescribes the behaviour that a *brahmacārin*, the young student vowed to (temporary) chastity, should follow as regards his contacts with the dangerous tribe of women:

It is the very nature of women here to corrupt men. On that account, prudent men are never off guard in the presence of alluring young women. (2.213)

For an alluring young woman is capable of leading astray not only the ignorant but even learned men under the sway of anger or lust. (2.214)

He must not sit alone with his mother, sister or daughter; the array of sensory organs is powerful and overpowers even a learned man. (2.215)<sup>32</sup>

The last stanza may sound rather far fetched, but some later texts such as Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* ("The River of Kings"), a historical work of the twelfth century, report examples of a similar extreme behaviour, here seen as a peculiar case of *nirvikalpavrata*, "the [śaiva] vow (or 'practice') of non-duality," or "freedom from scruples." This, in particular, is an attack on a Tantric guru called Pramadakaṇṭha, at *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 7.278: "What more needs be said of this guru's freedom from scruples than this, that transcending inhibitions he made love even with his own daughter?"<sup>33</sup>

Barring these aberrations, in such a closed type of society, where meetings between young males and young females were extremely rare,<sup>34</sup> and wives, at least in the north of India, were not supposed to learn any particular art or science, their counterpoint, and one of the

few outlets for exuberant young men of spirit, were prostitutes. With the exception of some learned female ascetics, and a few queens from southern India, the high profile courtesans were the sole cultivated women of their times. They certainly were very accomplished, the highlight of the literary, musical and dramatic meetings of the city's intellectuals. The most sought after were proficient in several arts and sciences, including writing poetry, painting, music, dance, drama, and could converse in several Indian languages. Some were temple servants, prostitutes and dancers, the *devadāsīs*, "slaves of God."<sup>35</sup>

Prostitutes were a special category of labourers, and in the first treatise of government, the *Arthaśāstra*, completed around the third century CE, the king is supposed to regulate their trade, through the "superintendent of courtesans."<sup>36</sup> At least in the fifteenth century, at the time of Baradācārya's *Vasantatilaka*, a monologue-play (*bhāṇa*), there appears a particular document, called *kalatrapattrikā*, "document of the [temporary] wife" (*Vasantatilaka*, v. 131), that also occurs twice in a Śaṅkara's *Śāradātilakabhāṇa*, composed between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries.<sup>37</sup> It is usually a document written in the presence of two witnesses, that sanctions a temporary liaison between a courtesan who has just reached puberty and one of the city's gallants. In exchange for the girl's exclusive favours, the gentleman undertakes to provide her with a number of golden coins, clothes, flower garlands, cosmetics and jewels for a set period, usually up to one year.<sup>38</sup> If the woman, during the stipulated time, should prove unfaithful to her temporary husband, she would have to act as his wife for life without any further payment.

Young men could actually face problems with their families and allowances when they fell prey to the courtesans' wiles, or believed that their show of mercenary love was a true proof of amorous engagement. There were also of course stories of courtesans who had truly fallen in love with their beaux,<sup>39</sup> but the majority attested to the contrary. Courtesans' establishments were run by their so-called 'mothers' who had to make sure that their charges would not fall in love. Examples are found in different genres of Sanskrit literature, such as the eighth-century satire *Kuṭṭanīmata* ("The Bawd's Counsel") of Damodaragupta or the much later comic monologue play *Śāradātilakabhāṇa* of a Śaṅkara where a madam tells a gallant:

35. See Marglin; Baldissera, "Das sudindische Bharata Natyam;" Ramanujan, Rao, and Shulman; Meduri; Kersenboom; Vishwanathan; Fratagnoli.

36. See Kangle; *Arthaśāstra* 158–60.

37. See Baldissera, *The Bhāṇa Śāradātilaka* 71, v. 81, and 153, v. 193. In the *Śāradātilakabhāṇa*, the first document (v. 81) is stipulated for a period of three months by the older sister of the pubescent prostitute who is the object of the transaction; the second one (v. 193), equally stipulated by an older prostitute for her younger sister, mentions a period of one month and has two gallants as witnesses.

38. In some Arabic countries this was a pre-Islamic custom, later accepted by Shiites and rejected by Sunnites. There the temporary wife was called *Nikah Mut'ah*, and in Iran, *Sigheh*. For a contemporary discussion of the practice in Iran, see Hawramy.

39. Like Vasantasenā in Bhāsa's *Cārudatta*, Haralatā in Damodaragupta's *Kuṭṭanīmata*, Madanasenā in Somadevabhāṭṭa's *Kathāsaritsāgara*, for instance.

Don't you know the courtesans' way of instructing their daughters? In the beginning the courtesans lure wealthy young men as if they were in love [with them], and, having completely deceived them with the enjoyment of love and various other pleasures, and having subdued their minds with the help of love potions, they rob them of everything, and, look! giving them a begging bowl, they immediately chase them away.<sup>40</sup>

40. Baldissera, *The Bhāṇa Śāradātilaka*, v. 162 and preceding prose passage.

Mercenary love in fact often revealed that the delusion of the senses hid duplicity, trickery and eventual loss of dignity. Man, differently to the usual panegyrics that described him as a fascinating hero or a god on earth, became the object of betrayal and of pitiless satire.

Several Indian love stories, however, seemed to imply that even in circumstances where young people of the opposite gender could very seldom come into contact with each other, instances of the *coup de foudre* did occur. In stories of this kind, that entailed great courage, forbearance and resourcefulness from the lovers, the power of love was deemed supreme, and was seen to overcome both human and superhuman beings.

In such a state of affairs, passionate women who defied conventions could find themselves to have been seduced and abandoned, like in the case of Śakuntalā, and it was quite possible that a less-than-ingenious adulteress would be discovered, and ignominiously killed. A special figure was that of the *sakhī*, the female friend of the heroine, often used as a secret go-between. But whereas in south India, especially in the Caṅkam literature in Tamil, these female friends were always loyal,<sup>41</sup> in the northern stories they sometimes fell in love with the coveted young man (or divine figure), and betrayed the friend they were supposed to help.<sup>42</sup>

That desire could be seen in a negative light, in fact, is not only recounted in the writings of some religious people, but also in many secular love stories. Some of these might be seen as an exploration into the dark night of desire, where the redness of *rāga* ("passion," but also "the colour red") could easily turn into black *tamas* ("the darkness"), the obscurity and opaqueness of ignorance and delusion. Poetry, drama, music and the visual arts often portray the yearning for an elusive other, the lover of whom experiences anxiety,<sup>43</sup> absence, betrayal, abandonment and feeling of loss, if he/she is not altogether ridiculed.

41. See Ramanujan, *The Interior Landscape*; and Ramanujan, *Poems of Love*. See also Panattoni 468.

42. An entire section of Vidyākara's *Subhāṣitaratnakośa* is dedicated to these deceitful female friends.

43. This happens also in the love experience of women who fall in love with a male god, usually with Kṛṣṇa, or the Mallikārjuna form of Śiva. See for instance the already mentioned works of Ramanuja (*Speaking of Śiva* and *Hymns for the Drowning*) and Hardy.

44. Like in the episode of the old prostitute of *Pādatāḍitaka*, who lost a tooth in the mouth of her lover in the course of a kiss (see Śyāmilaka, *The Pādatāḍitaka*; Śyāmilaka, “Pādatāḍitaka,” Baldissera, “Pādatāḍitaka” 114).

45. Indian examples are found especially in *kathā* (“story”) literature.

46. See for instance Kṣemendra, *The Narmamālā* 3.64–67, where an old husband tries in vain to mount his young wife, or a similar instance at *Deśopadeśa* 7.18, quoted *ibidem*.

A love story is sometimes presented as a fight conducted in a battlefield, with bold advances and strategic retreats full of conflicting emotions, and often the sexual act itself is conceived in terms of a battle. This is seen as even more charming if the winner is the woman, but she must be an attractive young woman; old beauties are often ridiculed or just pitied,<sup>44</sup> when not altogether despised as in the Biblical story of Joseph and the wife of Potiphar.<sup>45</sup> This, however, was a comparatively rare occurrence, as it is much more frequent to encounter stories of very young women married by their family to drooling old men. In satirical texts, at least, it is these men who are ridiculed,<sup>46</sup> while their wives are pitied, unless they manage to successfully betray their despicable husbands.

The standard image of Kāma as the god of love, called by innumerable epithets that show his absolute sway over everyone’s minds, is that of a very handsome youth armed with a sugarcane bow and with five arrows made of flowers, that never fail to hit their target. In the epics one of Kāma’s arrows wounds even the great god Śiva, the staunch ascetic, who in return burns Kāma to ashes with the flame from his third eye, but cannot avoid falling prey to desire, and ultimately ends up married. Kāma on the other hand, though disembodied, becomes even more powerful, as he can now insinuate himself undetected in anyone’s mind.

Indian literature usually showed the devious workings of Kāma in the binary way of presenting the evolution of a love story. The terms in which this is couched come from dramatic practice, which then passed into other types of literature. Thus love is usually seen either as “love enjoyed in the union [of the lovers]” (*sambhogaśṛṅgāra*), when the two lovers are seen together, and are usually locked in a fond embrace, or as “love [suffered] in separation” (*vipralambhaśṛṅgāra* or *virāhaśṛṅgāra*). The latter occurs in a plurality of ways; it can happen either when the lovers have not yet been introduced to each other, but each (or one of them) longs for the other person because they have fallen in love on seeing her/him from afar, or on hearing their praise or their description by somebody, or on seeing their painted or sculpted likeness. It could also occur because, after a period of their being together, they had to separate, however briefly; or, a still sadder occurrence, in the case of unrequited love. The first instance, that of the union of the lovers, is more frequently seen in the masterpieces of the visual arts, but is usually deemed uninteresting or inappropriate in writings, where often it verges on ridicule. Unhappy love, on the other hand, is a favourite theme of fiction.

47. *bhāva* comes from the root *bhū* (“to become,” “to be”), as explained in one of the oldest Indian philosophical schools or “opinions,” Sāṅkhya.

A detailed phenomenology of love is best found in texts on dramatic theory and on poetics. The former show the best manner in which to represent amorous feelings on stage, the latter explain how to do so in poetic language, and though they use for artistic effect very conventional images, both obviously derive their material from actual love experiences. Their psychological approach to different love situations, in fact, is often remarkably ingenious, as Indian drama and fiction had a particular manner of representing *bhāvas* (“[stable] emotions”).<sup>47</sup> According to some scholars, the oldest dramatic treatise, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (“Treatise on acting”), attributed to the mythical sage Bharata, which has now been dated between the first century BCE and the second CE, is not too distant in time from a lost philosophical work, the *Ṣaṣṭitantra* attributed to Vārṣaganya. This is the text on which might have been based the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* (“Explanation on Sāṅkhya”) of Īśvarakṛṣṇa, that dates from the fourth or fifth century CE and explains the term *bhāva* as “disposition.” Sāṅkhya philosophy counts eight *bhāvas* intended as “[fundamental] dispositions” of the human mind, different from the *bhāvas* of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, that considers them as “[stable] emotions” (see Torella, *Il pensiero dell’India*). The *Sāṅkhyakārikā* divides its *bhāvas* into two groups of four opposites: moral virtue, knowledge, detachment, suzerainty, and their opposite, *i.e.* immorality, absence of knowledge, attachment, dependence. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* presents in a list its own sequence of eight *bhāvas*, called *sthayībhāvas*, the “basic,” or rather “stable emotions,” each giving rise to its own particular aesthetic rapture, *rasa*:

1. Love, *rati*; its *rasa* is *śṛṅgāra*, the amorous, sensitive
2. Humour, *hāsa*; its *rasa* is *hāsyā*, the comic
3. Grief, *śoka*; its *rasa* is *karuṇa*, the compassionate
4. Anger, *krodha*; its *rasa* is *raudra*, the furious
5. Surge of energy, *utsāha*; its *rasa* is *vīra*, the heroic
6. Fear, *bhaya*; its *rasa* is *bhayānaka*, the apprehensive
7. Disgust, *jugupsā*; its *rasa* is *bībhatsa*, the horrific, repulsive
8. Astonishment, *vismaya*; its *rasa* is *adbhūta*, the marvellous

A ninth *bhāva*, added at a later stage, is *śānti*, tranquillity; its *rasa* is *śānta*, the quietened, appeased.<sup>48</sup>

48. It is the *bhāva* appropriate to the ascetics and the contemplative life, and is found as the main emotion in several Buddhist plays.

These, from initially being spontaneous reactions to certain situations, expressed through involuntary physical manifestations, like

49. Similar to what happens to Hero in the Greek poem of Mouseon (Musaios) *Hero and Leander*, at v. 162, when, hit by a *coup de foudre* at the sight of handsome Leander, she is unable to control her confusion, and cannot speak, but draws circles in the sand with her toe, and keeps needlessly adjusting her veil.

50. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* employs a culinary simile that plays also on the two principal meanings of the term *rasa*, “juice,” and “taste.”

pallor, sudden redness, trembling, sweating, uncontrolled movements...<sup>49</sup> were then all systematically listed first in the dramatic manuals, and later in the *alaṅkāraśāstras* (“treatises on poetics”), in order to create the occurrence of a particular *rasa* (an “aesthetic experience,” literally “a taste,” “a savouring”) capable of giving pleasure akin to relish<sup>50</sup> to the minds of the listeners, or spectators.

In dramas actors train in order to portray emotions through their *sattvikābhinaya* (“interiorised,” “suggestive acting”), and in non dramatic literary forms there is a similar effort towards the portrayal of emotions through the mere suggestion of them. Instead of stating, for instance, that a particular woman was sad because her lover or husband was absent, or late for the tryst, the writer would describe her unpremeditated actions, glances and movements, that would translate, for the reader or listener, as symptoms of her longing. Dramatic texts are a consistent part of Kāvya, the refined artistic literature of ancient India, showing, through conventionally accepted, shared *topoi*, its peculiar taste for the implicit, suggested meaning of poetic connotation. Kāvya, like drama, takes its themes from actual situations, but, again like drama, has a ‘conventional’ manner of representing love, whatever its circumstances. These conventions were part of a shared knowledge or cultural milieu between writers, actors and a learned public, but at the same time were also not very distant from real-life occurrences and gestures, so that most people could easily recognise them as part of their own experience.

In the Indian poetical fancy, Kāma’s arrows bring on love’s fever, a serious disease which knows ten stages of gravity and can even prove fatal. People tried to counteract it with the same traditional items used to lower body temperature in extreme heat or sickness, but usually in the case of love fever these customary remedies would not work, or would actually be harmful. The rays of the moon, for instance, used to cool a feverish patient, would seem to scorch a body ravaged by the fever of love.

Even in myth, the power of love was stronger than the waters of peace and appeasement.



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CAMERON CROSS

# The Many Colors of Love in Nizāmī's *Haft Paykar* Beyond the Spectrum

## Abstract

This article is a study of the many 'colors' of love in Nizāmī Ganjavī's *Haft paykar* (*The Seven Figures*), with special attention paid to the (evidently) dichotomous poles of white (purity) and black (concupiscence). The argument is divided into four sections: after introducing the *Haft paykar* and summarizing some of the scholarship that has been done to crack the code of its color symbolism, I survey these thematic poles as they occur in several landmark medical, philosophical, and poetic texts of Islamic tradition. This provides the basis for an in-depth discussion of the Stories of the Black and White Domes in the *Haft paykar*, where I observe how the two episodes, when read from this context, seem to support a linear progression from 'black' love to 'white,' with the latter presumably marking the point of apotheosis. In the final section, however, I consider how the stories resist such a straightforward reading, and indeed recursively feed into each other in such a way to suggest that neither color of love can fully exist or function without the other. I propose that the contrast of white and black in the *Haft paykar* is not sufficiently read as a static dichotomy of symbols; it rather evokes a dynamic interplay of light and shadow that hints at a reality beyond the sum of its parts, a pre-prismatic totality of which *all* colors of love are merely those refractions visible to the naked eye.

1. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. The Persian is taken from the edition of the *Haft paykar* by Ritter and Rypka (1934); note that this edition preserves many of the orthographic features of older Persian, such as the postvocalic *ḏ* instead of *ḏ* as it appears today (e.g., *بود* instead of *بود*). For cross-reference, the numeration of this edition (chapter.line) corresponds exactly with the newer edition of *Sarvatiyān* and the English translation by Julie Scott Meisami. My transliteration system is a slightly modified version of the one used by the *International Journal for Middle East Studies*; the biggest changes are that I represent the postvocalic *ḏ* with *ḏ* and maintain the older Persian vowels *ē* and *ō*, as in the words *pēsh* (پیش) and *gōr* (گور).

## Introduction

Our story begins with a king of boundless munificence who housed and fed any guest at his court, asking only for a strange tale or some news from abroad in return. One day, however, a man dressed in black from head to toe appeared at the gate; intrigued, the king demanded to know the story of this unusual garb. "No one knows the story of this blackness, save for those who wear it" ("z-īn siyāhī khabar nadāraḏ kas • magar ān k-īn siyāh dāraḏ u bas," 32.60), replied the stranger, an answer that did little to satisfy the king's curiosity.<sup>1</sup> After much cajoling, the traveler finally gave in and revealed that the answer to this question would be found in far-off China. Without de-

lay, the king packed his bags and set off for the east. Eventually, he arrived at a town whose inhabitants, like the stranger, wore nothing but black, but they were as tight-lipped about their attire as his guest had been. With no other recourse, the king managed to secure the aid of a local butcher, showering him with gifts and gold until the man felt morally obliged to divulge the secret, loath as he was to do so. He led the king out of the city to a desolate ruin, where a basket lay on the ground, a bit of rope tied uselessly to its handle. There, the king was bade to sit; and as he did, the basket turned into a massive bird that bore him away into the sky! The terrified king clung on for dear life until he found himself suspended above a pleasant green meadow, where he said a prayer, let go, and tumbled down to the grass.

The following night, an amazing thing happened: a court of regal women assembled in the glade and began to feast, presided over by the beautiful fairy-born queen, Turktāz. She welcomed the king into the gathering and sat him on her throne, where he was served the finest of life's pleasures: delectable food, ambrosian wine, and a night with his pick of the lovely ladies in the queen's entourage. Though he had all his heart could desire, there was one thing still beyond the king's reach – Turktāz herself – and his love for her increased by the day. Though he begged the queen to accept his tryst, her response was always the same: be patient, and soon you'll get your wish. After thirty days of this exquisite torment, the king could no longer contain himself, and attempted to seize the queen by force. At this, she told the king to close his eyes, and he would attain what he so ardently desired. Delirious with anticipation, the king did as he was told – only to open his eyes and find himself once again in the ruined landscape, his regal throne replaced by the humble basket. He had indeed gained what he sought – the answer to the riddle of the robes of black – but this was small comfort, knowing now the price he had paid for it. Consumed by grief at his misfortune, the king too donned the black robes of mourning and wore them to the end of his days.

Our second story begins not with Paradise lost, but Paradise found: there was once a young man of exemplary beauty, wisdom, and (above all) chastity, who lived in a splendid garden surrounded by high walls that kept it (and him) safe from thieves and the evil eye. One day, however, returning home from his Friday prayers, the youth found the gate to his garden locked from the inside! Knocking on the door brought no answer, so the man made a breach in the wall and

crept inside, where he was immediately apprehended by two women standing watch. When they found that he was not a burglar, but indeed the owner of the garden, they quickly apologized and explained that all the maidens of the town had gathered in this spot for a feast; if he wished, they would be happy to make some introductions on his behalf. The youth was brought to a place where he could survey the festivities in secret, and as his gaze fell upon the beautiful women below, any vows of chastity he had made disappeared like smoke – the narrator interjects, “Behold unbelief! Long live the faith!” (“kāfirī bīn zahī musalmānī,” 38.136). One girl in particular, an enchanting harp-player, especially caught his eye, and with the help of his newfound allies, they made arrangements for a secret rendezvous.

Alas, it was not to be, for everywhere the couple met, something inevitably went wrong. The foundation of their first chamber was faulty and collapsed over their heads; later, they met in a secluded spot in the garden, only to be surprised by a savage cat as it pounced at a bird and landed on the lovers instead. The couple then sought refuge in a thicket, where an even stranger event took place: a field-mouse nibbled at the string that held a bunch of gourds, which fell to the ground with such clamor that the youth, certain the chief inspector had come to arrest him, scattered off without even putting on his shoes.<sup>2</sup> The harried lovers finally went to a cave, as their comrades kept guard outside; but no sooner did they embrace than a pack of foxes rushed over them, pursued by a hungry wolf. As the couple came shrieking out of the cave, the exasperated go-betweens began to beat the poor woman in their fury, convinced that she had been devising these tricks on purpose. The youth intervened (38.284, 287–89):

2. The word in Persian is ‘muḥtasib’ (38.232), the famous (and feared) head inspector who would patrol the city markets, ensuring that prices were fair, measures were accurate, and public propriety was maintained.

گفت ز نهار دست ازو دارید \* یار آزرده را میازارید  
گوهر او ز هر گنه پاکست \* هر گناهی که هست ازین خاکست  
چابکان جهان و چالاکان \* همه هستند بنده پاکان  
کار ما را عنایتِ ازلی \* از خطا داده بود بی خلی

(Keep your hands off her! Don’t abuse your poor friend! [...]  
Her essence is pure of every sin; any sin here is of this earth.  
The quick and crafty of the world are all servants of the pure.  
Divine grace [*ināyat-i azalī*] has delivered our affairs out of  
sin into flawlessness.)

The youth had realized the error of his ways: if he and the girl were to be together, it could only happen within the lawful bonds of marriage. The couple quit the garden and went to the city, where they were promptly married, found a proper room, and finally, after so many setbacks, enjoyed a night of love together undisturbed by falling gourds, wild animals, or collapsing buildings.

Even from these short summaries, it should be evident that these stories speak to each other in significant ways. Both stories, featuring male protagonists, begin with the hero's desire for knowledge (the secret to some mystery), and end with his desire for a woman. Both feature gardens as their primary setting, and both the king and the handsome youth find themselves in an identical position in which they intrude upon an exclusively female space and attempt to take the forbidden fruit for themselves. The binary of wilderness and civilization is another prominent theme, wherein the garden is a place for love, but evidently not for its consummation; if that is to happen, it must take place within the perimeters of human society. A stark contrast, of course, resides in the stories' conclusion: one ends tragically, with the king experiencing such a profound loss that he must mourn it as he would a death, while the other ends happily, even comically, given both the content of the story and the wedding that concludes it.<sup>3</sup> We might therefore conclude that these are two stories about love and desire, in which temptation, self-control, and legitimacy are the crucial matters at stake.

These same themes are pervasive throughout the narrative structure that houses our two stories. The tales of the unfortunate king and the fortunate youth are the first and last in a series of seven that appears midway through the *Haft paykar* (*The Seven Figures*), a narrative poem written in 1197 by the Persian poet Nizāmī Ganjavī. Other tales in this sequence include the story of the patient, upright man Bishr, who clothed his houri-like wife in green; of the Princess of the Fortress, better known in European circles as Turandot (*Tūrāndukht*, “daughter of Turan”), whose florid beauty so inflamed the hearts of men that many came to a bloody end for it; and of the unfortunate merchant Māhān, who nearly lost his life in a greedy venture and consequently vested himself in blue to commemorate his deliverance.<sup>4</sup> Although each story is quite independent from its neighbors in terms of plot and character, the topic of desire – be it for sex, money, knowledge, or power – is a constant presence throughout the series. The protagonist of each tale must confront that desire, and depending on the quality of his character, he will ar-

3. For more comparisons between the two stories, see Gelpke 290–91.

4. For more on the legend of Turandot in Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and Turkish sources, and finally its 1762 debut in Europe as a *commedia dell'arte*, see Meier; Rossi; and Piemontese.

rive at a destiny that is symbolically marked by a particular color, be it the black of loss and melancholy, the red of passion and courage, or the white of salvation and purity. The seven tales are further couched within a broader tale, the life and deeds of King Bahrām Gōr (the legendary counterpart of the Sasanian king Wahrām V, r. 420–38), as he is raised in exile, comes to claim the Iranian crown, twice repels a Chinese invasion, and finally disappears into a cave during a hunt.

The distinctive structure of the *Haft paykar*, with its fabulous stories nested within an allegorically suggestive frame-tale, has played a major role in shaping the study of the poem. Guided by explicit cues from the author, scholars by and large tend to approach it as a kind of treatise, encoded like a puzzle box, on desire in all its nuance and variety – a literary exposition of the many ‘colors’ of love, so to speak. According to this approach, once the secret meanings of this work are unlocked and decoded, the reader’s journey – like that of Bahrām – will come to an end, at least on this material plane. The merits of such a reading cannot be denied, as it illuminates myriad and fascinating links between the disciplines of philosophy, theology, natural science, and political theory of the medieval Islamic world, united through the conceptual framework of love. Nonetheless, there seems to me something lacking in this symbolic-analogical approach, or at least something that remains hidden when we read the text through this lens. It may well be the kaleidoscopic structure of the text, offering as it does such a dazzling array of allusions, analogies, and interconnections to explore, that might obscure the fine details, or what I might call the *poetic* qualities, of the stories within its borders.<sup>5</sup> The *Haft paykar*, and Nizāmī’s work in general, has long been admired for its dense and often oblique language, whose very multivalence allows it to simultaneously engage multiple layers of meaning without being constrained to any single reading. To push the envelope further, I am curious to see to what extent the poem *resists* its own systemization, and if this unruliness itself might have something to offer its readers.

In the spirit of self-resistance, then, I aim to provide a double-reading of the stories summarized above: first, I will build on the work of previous scholars to forge my own set of interpretive spectacles, establishing a genealogy of love theory in which the distinction between *erōs* and *agapē* plays the leading role; this will, I hope, complement and enrich the ongoing study of the *Haft paykar*’s conceptual vocabulary and act as a useful interlocutor for the other arti-

5. By ‘poetic,’ I am drawing from Longenbach’s wonderful monograph *The Resistance of Poetry*, which posits poetic language as “the language of self-questioning – metaphors that turn against themselves, syntax that moves one way because it threatens to move another, voices that speak because they are shattered” (xi); or as he puts it elsewhere, “A poem’s power inheres less in its conclusions than in its propensity to resist them” (10).



cles in this special issue. Then, I will discuss how the stories resist and even negate the conclusions imposed upon them from such structuralist and symbolic approaches. If such resistance is accepted, the hermeneutic horizons of the *Haft paykar* stand to grow ever more expansive and capacious, raising new possibilities for interpretation and comparison with other medieval literary traditions.

## 1 “A treasure-house, no fable”

For readers unfamiliar with Nizāmī and his work, a few introductory words are in order.<sup>6</sup> Nizām al-dīn Abū-Muḥammad Eliyās b. Yūsuf, known by his pen-name Nizāmī, was born in about the year 1140 and lived in the town of Ganja (whence his sobriquet *Ganjavi*), modern-day Azerbaijan. His life coincided with the sunset of the Seljuk empire, which had been the dominant political power of southwest Asia since its establishment a century prior; Bausani describes him as one of the most important fruits of the urban bourgeoisie that emerged under the aegis of this polity (9). The last capable ruler of the Seljuks’ eastern territories in Khorasan, Aḥmad Sanjar, lost his realm (and his life) in a struggle against the Oghuz Turks in 1157, while the western half of the empire became fragmented among various Seljukid princes and their regents (*atabegs*);<sup>7</sup> most of these petty kingdoms would be extinguished by the Khwarazmshahs in the last decade of the twelfth century, who were wiped out in turn by the Mongols in their 1220 conquest of Transoxania. It was during this turbulent thirty-five year period between 1165 and 1200 that Nizāmī composed a quintet (*khamisa*) of long-form poems, which he dedicated to these various *atabegs*. The poems were called, in order of composition, the *Treasury of Mysteries*, *Khusraw & Shirīn*, *Laylī & Majnūn*, the *Book of Alexander*, and finally the *Haft paykar* (see Table 1); the first of these is an ethical treatise, using anecdotes and short narratives to illustrate various kingly virtues, while the remaining four are narrative romances that treat the adventures of famous kings and lovers.<sup>8</sup> Taken together, these five poems became one of the most successful works in the Persian literary canon, with many major poets of subsequent eras producing their own quintets in both a recognition of and claim to this distinguished legacy.<sup>9</sup>

6. A full biography or bibliography is beyond the scope of the present work, but Blois, *Poetry* 363–70 and Meisami, “Introduction” are two good places to start. Two valuable collections of essays that engage with various aspects of Nizāmī’s work are found in Talattof and Clinton; and Bürgel and Ruymbeke; the former ends with an extensive list of books and articles published on Nizāmī up to the end of the twentieth century (Talattof).

7. The verse form Nizāmī employed, called *masnavī*, consists of a regular succession of rhymed half-lines (*miṣrāʿ* ʿ) held together by a uniform meter; the overall effect is something akin to rhyming couplets.

8. The ‘romance’ in the context of Persian poetry is a term that requires further elaboration (something I hope to attend to in a later article); for the purposes of this essay, we can simply consider the romance in the same broad generic strokes as used in medieval European literature: love and adventure, *amor et militia*.

9. For a full list of these works, which number in the hundreds, see Rādfar 205–36.

Table 1: Nizāmī's Quintet

This chronology is slightly different from the standard account, which has the *Book of Alexander* written after the *Haft paykar*. However, I find de Blois's revised sequence persuasive, and this is what is reflected in the table; see Blois, "Haft paykar;" and Blois, *Poetry* 363–70 and 483–88. The cities' names are rendered in standard English orthography; they fall within the borders of today's Azerbaijan, eastern Turkey, and northwestern Iran.

Title	Year	Patron (City)
<i>Makhzan al-asrār</i>	1161	Fakhr al-dīn Bahrāmshāh (Erzincan)
<i>Khusraw &amp; Shirīn</i>	ca. 1180	Jahān-Pahlavān b. Ēldügüz (Hamadan)
<i>Laylī &amp; Majnūn</i>	1188	Akhsatān of Sharvān (Baku)
<i>Iskandar-nāma</i>	1194	Nuṣrat al-dīn Bēshkīn (Ahar)
<i>Haft paykar</i>	1197	Körp-Arslān b. Āq-Sunqur (Maragheh)

As has already been noted, the *Haft paykar* is singularly complex in its structure: while Nizāmī's other narratives follow the relatively linear path of a love affair or a hero's life, the *Haft paykar* can be seen as a composite weave of horizontal (temporal) and vertical (transcendental) elements. Its temporal frame is firmly grounded in the tradition of 'heroic biographies,' stories that narrate the life, deeds, and death of a central (male) protagonist, such as the *Garshāsp-nāma* (w. 1066), the *Bahman-nāma* (w. ca. 1100), or Nizāmī's own *Iskandar-nāma*; in such a framework, when the hero dies or disappears, the story too will come to an end (perhaps to be followed by another heroic biography). Nizāmī confirms this foundation in his introduction to the *Haft paykar*, where he explicitly identifies his poem as a continuation of Firdawsī's "royal chronicle" ("tārīkh-i shahryārān," 4.19), the *Shahnāma* (*Book of Kings*, w. 1010): "There remained a little dust from that ruby-powder, and everyone made something from those fragments; like a jeweler, I carved this treasure out of those shards" ("mānda z-ān la 'l-rīza lakht-ī gard • har yak-ī z-ān qurāza chīz-ī kard / man az ān khurda chūn guharsanj-ī • bar tarāshīdam īn chunīn ganj-ī," 4.21–22). And indeed, the first half of Bahrām's life as recounted in the *Haft paykar* does adhere to the model set by Firdawsī, in its broad strokes if not specific details.<sup>10</sup>

However, Nizāmī deviates from this heroic-epic trajectory when he arrives at the center-point of Bahrām's career: the king has now secured his rule, subdued his enemies, and married the princess of each of the seven climes – a veritable epitome of masculine prowess. At this moment, Nizāmī introduces a 'narrative pause' (to borrow a term from Green) through which the horizontal-linear movement of the story stalls and shifts into a vertical-transcendental arc.<sup>11</sup> This pause, effectively bisecting the heroic biography into two halves, occurs when the king builds a separate palace for each of his seven brides, topped with a specially-colored dome: black, yellow, green, red, turquoise, sandal, and white. Over the course of the week, Bahrām visits each princess on her respective day to be regaled with

10. Comparisons of Firdawsī's and Nizāmī's respective versions of Bahrām's life have proved to be a fruitful area of study; in particular, the ethical implications of Nizāmī's transformation of the *Shāhnāma*'s ill-fated harpist Āzāda into the (hyper-)strong and resourceful Fitna have been commented on by Meisami, "Fitnah or Azadah?"; Talattof; and Gabbay.

11. On this 'pause,' see Green, *The Beginnings* 177; and Green, "The Rise of Medieval Fiction" 58–59; for further discussion of this narrative strategy in the *Haft paykar*, see Agapitos 265–67.

12. Because of this context, the stories to which I refer as the Stories of the Black and White Domes are introduced in the manuscript tradition under much longer headings, with a good deal of variation. For example, the full title of the Black Dome in the Ritter and Rypka edition of Nizāmī's *Heft Peiker* reads: "Bahrām's stay on Saturday in the musk-colored dome and the tale told by the daughter of the king of the first clime" ("nishastan-i bahrām rōz-i shanba dar gunbad-i mushkīn va hikāyat kardan-i dukhtar-i malik-i iqlīm-i avval," 120), but other manuscripts have variations on the title like "Bahram's pleasure" ("ishrat-i bahrām") or identifying the princess as the daughter of the raja of India ("dukhtar-i rāy-i hindustān"); see the Zanjānī edition of Nizāmī's *Haft Paykar* 605–06. The full heading for the White Dome in the Ritter and Rypka edition is "Bahrām's stay on Friday in the white dome and the tale told by the daughter of the king of the seventh clime" ("nishastan-i bahrām rōz-i āzīna dar gunbad-i sapēd va hikāyat kardan-i dukhtar-i malik-i iqlīm-i haftum," 243); see other versions in the Zanjānī edition (663).

13. Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* 205; Meisami, "The Theme of the Journey" 163–64; Meisami, "Introduction" xxix.

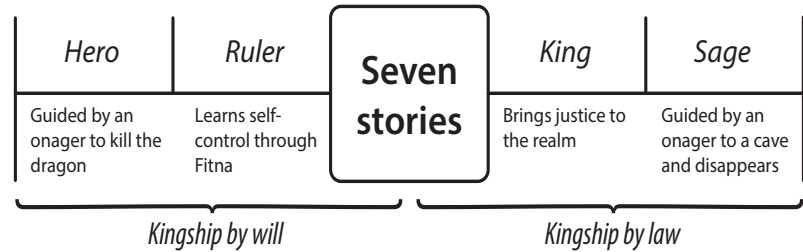
14. The 'seven climes' schema can be traced as far back as the Avesta, e.g., *Zamyād Yasht* 31 and *Ābān Yasht* 5 (Darmesteter 55 and 293); for a visualization of this sacred geography, see Boyce 17; Shahbazi; and Foltz 14.

15. Pantke 172. For similar maps drawn on the basis of Bīrūnī's (d. 1048) geography, see Zadeh 85; and Pinto 89. Piemontese 130 adds that the sequence of the tales also produces a textual map of the political reality of the Sasanian world, with the four major empires of India, Rome, China, and Persia bookending the series on either side and the entrepôt region of Siqlāb smack in the middle.

16. Thus, Tuesday is an auspicious day for the valiant and passionate, while Wednesday is best spent in thought and reflection (al-Awadhi

a story, then repeats the cycle; in this wise, seven years go by.<sup>12</sup> This moment of stasis, in which time both stands still and flies by in an instant, sits in the middle of a structural chiasmus brilliantly discussed by Meisami, who sees the seven stories as the cocoon or incubator that allows Bahrām to transform from a king of will (personal force) into a king of law (enlightened justice), attaining first temporal and then spiritual mastery (Figure 1).<sup>13</sup>

Figure 1: The linear trajectory of Bahrām's life



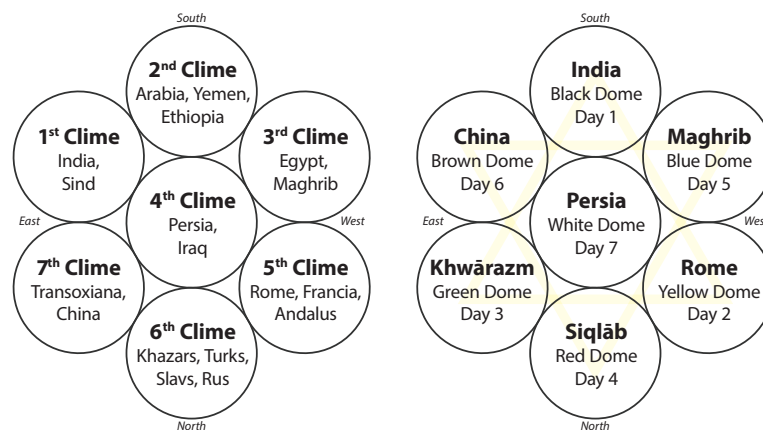
In addition to providing a 'before' and 'after' transition in Bahrām's life, the sequence and arrangement of the seven domes (and the stories told inside them) are loaded with symbolic referents. The domes recreate the classic Indo-Iranian arrangement of the world into seven climes (*haft kishwar*), which Nizāmī identifies here as India, China, Khwārazm (Central Asia), Siqlāb (the Slavic North), the Maghrib (Egypt and North Africa), Rūm (Greece and by extension Europe), and Persia in the center.<sup>14</sup> This spatial arrangement, as Pantke notes, reproduces the hexagrammic Seal of Solomon, investing Bahrām with both royal and prophetic authority (Figure 2).<sup>15</sup> The seven colors of the domes correspond to these climes, as well as the seven days of the week and the seven heavenly bodies, with all their astrological import: "Within that fortress, he made seven domes according to the nature of the seven orbs" ("haft gunbad darūn-i ān bāra • karda bar tab ' -i haft sayyāra," 31.5).<sup>16</sup> Finally, as Gelpke observes, the seven domes correspond to the sum parts of the body (head, chest, belly, arms, and legs), producing an equivalence between the macro- and microcosms of world and man (289). The perfection of the individual thus resides in the same principles that ensure the perfect harmony of the universe, which the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, a fraternity of philosophers based in tenth-century Basra, described as "The Great Man" (*al-insān al-kabīr*) guided by the wisdom of a single Soul (Nasr, *An Introduction* 67).

If seven represents the totality of being – the full spectrum of color, the entirety of the globe, the hierarchy of the heavens, and the

106–8). The white color of Venus represents devotion and fealty; the fact that her day is also the holy day of Islam strengthens this connection

between pure, selfless love and the generous intercession of revelation.

Figure 2: The Seven Climes



On the left is a typical al-Birūnī schematic map of the seven climes. The same map is adjusted on the right to reflect the world of the *Haft paykar*. Note how Bahrām’s journey traces the Seal of Solomon.

17. Cf. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* 50; Chelkowski 113; and Meisami, “Introduction” xxix. A similar version of the four-caste system is found in Firdawsī, *The Shahnameh* 1: Jamshīd, vv. 19–31; cf. English translation by Davis in Firdawsī, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings* 6.

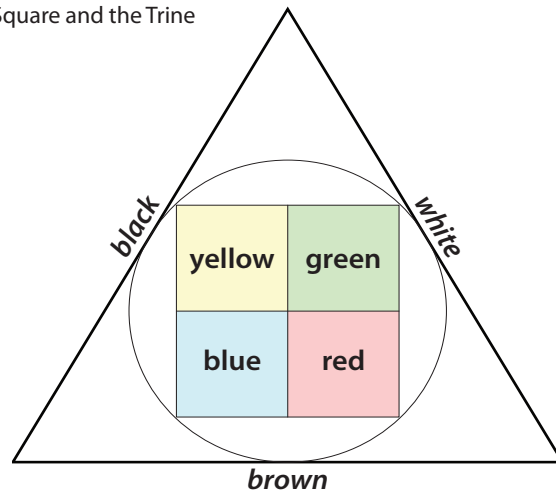
18. Ibn Qutayba (d. 889) writes: “No king without men – no men without money – no money without prosperity – no prosperity without justice and fair guidance” (“lā sultāna illā bi-rijālin wa-lā rijāla illā bi-mālin wa-lā māla illā bi-‘imāratin wa-lā ‘imārata illā bi-‘adlin wa-ḥusni siyāsah”), pointing to the interdependence of the sovereign, military, administrative, and peasant classes that is necessary for a prosperous kingdom (1.9). Though not so pithy, the eleventh-century Ziyarid prince Kaykāvūs ibn Iskandar also stresses the equilibrium the king must maintain between the viziers, soldiery, and commoners in his *Qābūs-nāma* (223–29).

19. See Krotkoff 110; Meisami, “The Theme of the Journey” 163; Meisami, “Introduction” xxv-xxvi; and Seyed-Gohrab 6.

body of man – the summand values of four and three depict its material and spiritual characteristics. Red, green, blue, and yellow represent the physical aspects of the universe: the humors, the elements, the seasons, the cardinal directions, the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music), and the four castes (craftsmen, chieftains, rulers, prophets).<sup>17</sup> Because these are the components of material reality, they must be kept in equilibrium: a body with unbalanced humors will fall ill; a climate with extreme seasons will deform its inhabitants; a kingdom in which the four castes are pitted against each other is doomed to fall.<sup>18</sup> Conversely, the three neutral colors of black, white, and brown are associated with the ethereal properties of the spirit, corresponding with the vegetable, animal, and rational faculties, or the ennobling arts of grammar, rhetoric, and poetry. Unlike the material realm, whose balance and harmony encourages a circular, cyclical movement between its constituent poles, the spiritual trine indicates change, ‘pointing’ towards a *telos* that is reached by ascending a specific hierarchy, a motion of ascent, descent, and return (Figure 3). A turn of the kaleidoscope reveals further patterns at work: Krotkoff observes a thematic repetition of loss, love, and marriage in the sequence of stories, while Meisami discerns an oscillation between concupiscence (Stories 1, 3, 5, 7) and irascibility (Stories 2, 4, 6), corresponding with Seyed-Gohrab’s observation that Saturn, the Moon, Mars, and Venus were typically seen as the instigators of love in Islamic astrology.<sup>19</sup>

Given the numerous maps, patterns, and symbols embedded within the sequence of the seven domes, it is clear that however we interpret the stories, interpret we must. The simple act of engaging with the text marks the beginning of the mental and spiritual train-

Figure 3: The Square and the Trine



The four elements hold the temporal world in balance, while the spiritual trine orients it towards the Godhead; this schema essentially replicates the alchemic sign of the Philosopher's Stone.

ing of its readers; thus it is that Nizāmī, in his concluding chapter, can say to his patron, Körp-Arslān (53.23–29):

میوهٔ داذمت ز باغ ضمیر \* چرب و شیرین چو انگبین در شیر  
 ذوق انجیر داده دانئه او \* مغز باذام در میانهٔ او  
 پیش بیرونیان برونش نغز \* وز درونش درونیان را مغز  
 حقهٔ بسته پر ز دُر دارد \* در عبارت کلید پر دارد  
 دُر دران رشته سرگرای بُود \* که کلیدش گره‌گشای بُود  
 هرچ در نظم او ز نیک و بد است \* همه رمز و اشارت و خرد است  
 هر یک افسانه‌ای جداگانه \* خانهٔ گنج شدن افسانه

(I've given you a fruit from the garden of my thoughts, sweet and juicy like honeyed milk. The flavor of figs infuses its seed, stuffed with almond pith in the center. The superficial will find its exterior sweet; the perceptive will find substance within. It is a sealed box of pearls, full of keys in [its] locations; once the key has opened the knot, the pearls on that string will be stunning indeed. Everything within its verses, good or ill, is all sign, symbol, and wisdom; each one, a fable on its own, has [together] become a treasure-house, and no fable.)

What is interesting to observe in the scholarship up to now is that, in spite of the text's structural and numerological complexity, which might suggest a plethora of divergent interpretations, the underlying message has been agreed on by near-universal consensus: the sequence of stories, starting in Black and ending in White, represent – and perform – a transcendental journey of some kind, a rite of pas-

20. See Bausani 10–11; Krotkoff 110; Chelkowski 113; Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*; Meisami, “The Theme of the Journey;” Meisami, “Introduction;” and al-Awadhi 80–89.

21. See Nasr, *An Introduction* 68; Corbin 13–25; Chittick 49–51; Ṭūsī 52.

22. Cf. Aṭṭār, *Mantiq al-tayr*, vv. 3252–55. English translation by Davis: Aṭṭār, *The Conference of the Birds* 166.

23. Cf. Corbin 107–08; and Schimmel 256.

24. It is rather refreshing, in fact, to see de Blois push against such hyper-allegorical readings of the *Haft paykar* and suggest a more down-to-earth account: “The point of the story is clearly that Bahrām’s attempt to find happiness by living in accordance with the stars is a failure. The seven domes are built in perfect accord with the properties of the stars, but they are very nearly the cause of his downfall. In the end it is only justice that matters” (Blois, “Haft peykar”).

25. This dichotomy overlaps somewhat with the common distinction made between ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ love (cf. Dols 313) in Islamic thought, or that of “metaphorical” (*majāzī*) and “real” (*ḥaqīqī*, cf. Seyed-Gohrab 19); but it is not exactly the same thing. I am thinking more about the dynamic of intent (Need versus Gift) between lover and beloved. Bausani notes a similar dynamic between “drunken lust” and “the matrimonial ethos” in the *Haft paykar*, but only in passing (12).

sage through the four material elements into the three aspects of the spiritual realm.<sup>20</sup> There is, of course, much evidence to support this reading: the stories are positioned at the center of Bahrām’s journey through life (recalling Dante’s famous “nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita,” *Inferno* 1.1), and the widespread interest in man’s capacity for perfection, whether as the “universal man” (*al-insān al-kullī*) of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, the “perfect nature” (*al-ṭibā‘ al-tāmm*) theorized by the mystical philosopher Shihāb al-dīn Suhrawardī (d. 1191), or the “perfect man” (*al-insān al-kāmil*) of Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240) and Naṣīr al-dīn Ṭūsī (d. 1274), suggests that Nizāmī is not alone in this endeavor.<sup>21</sup> The sequence of seven is evocative of similar seven-staged journeys found in other medieval Islamic texts; to name just a few examples, al-Awadhi (73) connects the *Haft paykar* to the seven “valleys” outlined by Farīd al-dīn ‘Aṭṭār (d. 1221) in his *Mantiq al-tayr* (*Conference of the Birds*),<sup>22</sup> while Meisami (“Introduction” xxx–xxxii) notes that Suhrawardī and Najm al-dīn Kubrā (d. 1220) both produced their own versions of a seven-stage path, each stage marked by a distinctive color (Table 2).<sup>23</sup>

Thus, regardless of the framework used – Neoplatonic, Hermetic, Sufi, Manichean, or any combination thereof – the resulting trajectory is one and the same: a story of *progress* from one pole to another, from dark to light, material to spiritual, ignorance to gnosis, caprice to wisdom, initiated when Bahrām grasps the underlying truths of the world that are reflected by and embedded within the stories of the Seven Domes.<sup>24</sup> The argument that follows may both complement and complicate such an account, as I will move away from the systematic frameworks outlined above and focus instead on a *dynamic* that had received extensive attention in the love-theory of Nizāmī’s day. The dynamic lies between two ‘modes’ of loving which have been theorized using a variety of terms: for the former, we have words like *agapē*, *caritas*, or “Gift-love” as it was articulated by C. S. Lewis; for the latter, *erōs*, *amor*, or Lewis’s “Need-love” (11). There are a number of terms found in medieval Arabic and Persian texts that also point towards these two modes; in the Gift-love category, *ḥubb*/*maḥabba* and *widād*/*mawadda* are important players, while in the area of Need-love, *hawā* and ‘*ishq* are significant terms.<sup>25</sup> We will pursue this dynamic in the following sections, first with the literary-philosophical tradition that Nizāmī had inherited, and then on to its function in the stories themselves.

Table 2: Love, Color, and the Universe

A visual summary of the relationships and connections that link the Seven Domes with the universal schemata discussed in the preceding pages; the “trajectories” section demonstrates a few of the various progressive ‘journeys’ these stories can be said to enact.

<b>Sequence</b>										
<i>Day of week</i>	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday			
<i>Celestial body</i>	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus			
<i>Sign</i>	Capricorn and Aquarius	Sagittarius and Pisces	Aries and Cancer	Leo	Taurus and Libra	Gemini and Virgo	Cancer			
<i>Clime</i>	India	Rome	Khwarazm	Sijlab	Maghrib	China	Persia			
<i>Cycles</i>	Concupiscent	Irascible	Concupiscent	Irascible	Concupiscent	Irascible	Concupiscent			
<i>Color</i>	Black	Yellow	Green	Red	Blue	Brown	White			
<b>Trajectory</b>										
<i>Najm al-din</i>	Ecstatic love	Faith	Tranquility	Gnosis	Certitude	Beneficence	Islam			
<i>‘Attār</i>	Desire	Love	Insight	Detachment	Unity	Awe	Self-gloss			
<i>Krotkoff</i>	Earth	Fire	Water	Air	Body	Spirit	Soul			
<i>Chelkowski</i>	Spirit	Primary (material) colors								Soul

## 2 Islamic theories of love and desire

As one might expect, the Qurʾān played a fundamental role in the development of Islamic love-theory, and it is with this text that we shall begin. By far the most common word for love in the Qurʾān (with about 80 occurrences) is *ḥubb*, with the meaning of holding something dear: “Those who believe, love God more ardently” (2.165); “He has smitten her with love” (12.30); “They give food, for love of Him” (76.8); “And you love wealth with an ardent love” (89.20); and so on.<sup>26</sup> As we see from these examples, the moral value of *ḥubb* depends very much on the value of its object, whether material, human, or divine, and indeed God’s *ḥubb* for humanity is also contingent on these choices: “God loves the pious” (3.76, 9.4) and “God loves the just” (49.9), but “God loves not the evildoers” (3.57, 3.140).<sup>27</sup> In addition to and alongside *ḥubb* and its cognates, we find *wadd* (with some 30 instances), which more or less carries the same connotation of affection and fondness – “I do not ask you for any reward, save that you love your kin” (42.23) – although at times we see it carry an additional valence of yearning, longing, and desire: “They long for you to suffer” (3.118); “Would any of you like to have a garden of palms and vines” (2.266).<sup>28</sup> *Wadd* also appears in the root of one of the ninety-nine beautiful names of God, *al-Wadūd* (11.90, 85.14).

The converse of *ḥubb* in the Qurʾān is *hawā*, which indicates, as does its cognate *hawāʾ* (“air,” “wind”), the mercurial and capricious aspects of desire: to imagine this concept, one need only recall Dante’s famous *contrapasso* for the lascivious, cast into “the infernal whirlwind, which never rests, driv[ing] the spirits before its violence; turning and striking, it tortures them” (*Inferno* 5.31–33). *Hawā* is an overwhelmingly negative term in the Qurʾān, consistently linked to the deeds of the wicked (*al-zālimūn*) and those who have gone astray (*al-dāllūn*), in contrast to those who walk the straight path (*al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*): “Do not follow caprice and deviate” (4.135); “Many are led astray by their witless fancies” (6.119); “Have you seen one who has taken caprice as his god, and God turned him away from reason?” (45.23).<sup>29</sup> These negative connotations endured across the centuries. For example, Nizāmī’s contemporary, the famous theologian Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200), composed a treatise entitled *Dhamm al-hawā* (*The Condemnation of Lust*) that begins with the following statement: “You should know that for your sake, to bring about your safe recovery and health, I came down off the hill of dignity in this

26. “Wa-l-ladhīna ʾāmanū ashaddu ḥubban lil-lāh;” “qad saghafahā ḥubbā;” “wa-yuṭʾimūna al-ṭaʾama ʾalā ḥubbiḥ;” “wa-tuḥibbūna al-māla ḥubban jammā.” All translations are mine, and are based on the standard Cairo edition of the Qurʾān.

27. “Inna allāha yuḥibbu al-muttaqīn;” “inna allāha yuḥibbu al-muqsiṭīn;” “wa-l-lāhu lā yuḥibbu al-zālimīn.”

28. “Lā asʾalukum ʾalayhi ajran illā al-mawaddata fī al-qurbā;” “waddū mā ʾanittum;” “a-yawaddu aḥadukum an takūna lahu jannatun min nakhīlin wa-aʾnāb.”

29. “Fa-lā tattabiʾū al-hawā an taʾdilū;” “wa-inna kathīran la-yuḍillūna bi-ahwāʾihim bi-ghayri ʾilm;” “a-fa-raʾayta man ittakhadha ilāhahu hawāhu wa-aḍallahu allāhu ʾalā ʾilm.”



book to the low point of cheapening myself by speaking of [some of] those things” (Giffen 28). In any form, *hawā* never approaches the realm of erotic or mystical transcendence; it is pure animal passion that, if left unchecked, will enervate the moral fortitude of its victims and drive them off the path of righteousness.

In terms of its conceptual vocabulary, the Qur’ānic treatment of love and caprice aligns very well with the image of God as the loving and proactive father-figure found in Jewish and Christian scripture and exegesis; the *ḥubb* of the Qur’ān corresponds to and is cognate with the Hebrew *ahābāh*, one of the many words translated as *agapē* in the Septuagint.<sup>30</sup> In this cosmology, God is an entity capable of feeling both pleasure and anger: it is promised in the scriptures that he will *move* and *react* to the deeds of his children, be they good or ill (Hall 102). Like the Bible, the Qur’ān repeatedly warns its readers of the dangers of following their short-sighted whims and fancies (the *hawā* we saw above) in lieu of maintaining an affectionate *ḥubb* for the Creator; but the rewards for those who do, borne out of God’s *ḥubb* for those who revere him, are great. This scriptural love is best understood, then, as a reciprocal bond of giving and affection – what Augustine defined as *caritas* – in which personal needs and desires are entirely abandoned for the sake of the other; it is the *caritas* of God’s worldly incarnation that gives humanity its unique opportunity for salvation, and humanity may reciprocate that *caritas* by acknowledging said sacrifice.<sup>31</sup> Thus, for all his fascination with the inward spiritual ascent of the Neoplatonists, Augustine sees their erotic journey as ultimately contingent on the fundamental gift-love of *caritas*, a *proactive force* that produces *movement* in both parties: “You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you” (*Confessions* 1.1).

Moving beyond these concepts of *ḥubb* and *hawā*, there is another very common term for love in Arabic that, interestingly, does not appear in the Qur’ān at all: *‘ishq*, which in its simplest definition, connotes an *excess* in love (*al-ifrāt fī al-ḥubb*: Bell, *Love Theory* 162). The idea of ‘too much’ love in and of itself implies a kind of fault, giving *‘ishq* a far more dubious moral value than the affectionate and familial relationship envisioned by *ḥubb*. The obvious analogue for *‘ishq* in the Greco-Latin tradition is *erōs*: just as Hesiod described *erōs* as a “limb-melter” who “overpowers the mind and the thoughtful counsel of all the gods and of all human beings” (13.120–22), the Arabs of late antiquity believed *‘ishq* to be a form of madness that unhinged

30. It should be noted that Anders Nygren’s (and subsequently C. S. Lewis’s) presentations of *agapē*/Gift-Love in the Bible are exercises in theology, not philology, and thus have been criticized for their ahistorical flattening of a complex term. See Hall for a discussion of the many valences of *agapē* in the Septuagint.

31. See Augustine’s definition of *caritas* in Sherwin 184: “The soul’s motion toward enjoying God for his own sake, and enjoying one’s self and one’s neighbor for the sake of God.”

32. Cf. Giffen 64; Bell, *Love Theory* 34–37, 162–64; Dols 313–48; Seyed-Gohrab 20–23; El-Rouayheb 85–89.

the emotions and impeded rational thought.<sup>32</sup> The famous essayist Jāhīz (d. 868) put his finger on the distinction between *‘ishq* and other kinds of love in his *Kitāb al-qiyān* (*Book of the Singing-girls*), where he writes (Jāhīz 2.168; cf. Pellat 263):

ثمَّ قد يجتمع الحبُّ والهوى ولا يسمَّيان عشقاً ، فيكون ذلك في  
الولد والصديق والبلد والصَّنْف من اللباس والفُرْش والدوابِّ . فلم نرَ  
أحداً منهم يسقُمُ بدنه ولا تتلفُ روحه من حبِّ بلده ولا ولده ، وإن  
كان قد يُصيبُه عند الفراقِ لوعةٌ والاحتراق . وقد رأينا وبلغنا عن كثير  
ممنَّ قد تليفَ وطال جُهدُه وضنَّاه بداء العشق

(Affectionate love [*ḥubb*] and fanciful desire [*hawā*] may be combined and not be the same as passionate love [*‘ishq*], for such a thing happens for a child, a friend, a country, or some kind of clothing, bedding, or pack-animal. But we’ve never seen anyone’s body grow enervated or his soul expire out of “love” [*ḥubb*] for his country or his child, even if he is struck by longing [*law‘a*] and yearning [*iḥtirāq*] when separated [from them]. But we *have* seen and heard about many who have gone to pieces and suffered long strain and weakness at the onset of *‘ishq*.)

*‘Ishq* was thus a debilitating sickness, chiefly understood in Galenic terms as a humoral imbalance such as described in the works of the Greek physicians Oribasius (4th c.) and Paulus of Aegina (7th c.); some centuries later, the treatises of Majūsī (10th c.), Avicenna, and Ibn al-Jazzār (both 11th c.) repeat this diagnosis (Biesterfeldt and Gutas 21–23). Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (d. 873), who translated Paulus’s work into Arabic, also transmits a late Alexandrian text ascribed to Hippocrates in his *Nawādir al-falāsifa* (*The Rarities of Philosophy*), enumerating the many unfortunate ends that await the lover whose malady goes untreated (Biesterfeldt and Gutas 43):

Sometimes he moans heavily, causing his spirit to remain concealed for twenty-four hours. He continues [in this state] until he is taken for dead, and then he is buried while still alive. Sometimes he heaves a deep sigh and his soul is stifled in his pericardium. The heart then closes in on the soul and does not release it until he dies. Sometimes during moments of relaxation he raises his eyes to look around and he suddenly sees the person he loves – and his soul departs in one stroke.

There is more to the story, however. Infused with such associations with madness, sickness, and death, *'ishq* became a powerful conceptual tool in the development of transcendentalist thought in Islamic literature, particularly in the arenas of Sufi theory, Neoplatonism, and erotic love stories. The underlying motive in all three cases is probably the (quasi-)insurmountable pressure that love places upon the lover, offering an opportunity to demonstrate courage, fortitude, and steadfastness of the highest caliber; as Giffen puts it, “the dark depths of passion are essentially tragic rather than evil; as long as one conducts oneself honorably such love appears to be a noble adventure of the spirit or at least a noble form of suffering” (118). The super-human acts of strength, endurance, and virtue; the mad self-destruction of the lover for the sake of the beloved; the upheaval of body and soul, pitted against one another; and the amazing highs and lows experienced by the love-stricken gave the experience of *'ishq* an enormous appeal as a literary and discursive space, both a challenge and an opportunity to test the mettle of those who dared to swim in its perilous waters.

Such themes are evident in a remarkable genre of lyric poetry that emerged during the early years of the Umayyad caliphate, near the end of the seventh century. Called the *Udhri* style, after the name of the tribe from which many of the genre’s pioneers are said to have hailed, this genre assumed an all-consuming but unconsummated passion on the part of the poet as its central motif. Although the formal features of *Udhri* poetry are quite different from that of the Greek novel of late antiquity, the two genres construct a strikingly similar moral universe, in which constancy, chastity, steadfastness, and loyalty are of paramount importance in asserting and demonstrating the protagonists’ virtue.<sup>33</sup> Like the Greek novel, the *Udhri ghazals* (short lyrical poems on the theme of love) tend to be populated with stock characters and conventional scenarios, allowing the focus to rest not on the story itself but the intensity of the lovers’ emotions, producing a psychologically charged world of isolation, estrangement, and masochism, with fleeting moments of ecstasy punctuating the lovers’ otherwise sad and melancholy existence. The poems often refer to ostracism and exile, devotional ascetic practices, and the renunciation of the material world; the commentaries on these poems often claim that the *Udhri* lover dies a martyr to love, and his grave becomes a site of pilgrimage (Seyed-Gohrab 64–66). Probably the most famous representative of this genre is Qays b. al-

33. This is a connection that few literary historians (to my knowledge) have pursued in detail. Von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam* introduces some fascinating points of comparison between Hellenistic conventions of love (310–14) and the *Udhri Liebestod* (315–18) that seem well worth further exploration; more recently, Davis discusses some of the themes and topoi common to both Greek and Persian romances, many of which feature prominently in Arabic literature as well.

34. Majnūn Laylā 207. Many thanks to Samer Ali for his feedback and suggestions for my translation.

Mulawwah, popularly known as Majnūn Laylā (“Crazy for/by Laylā”), who recites lyrical poems like the following:<sup>34</sup>

أَحِبُّكَ يَا لَيْلَى مَحَبَّةَ عَاشِقٍ \* عَلَيْهِ جَمِيعُ الْمُصْعَبَاتِ تَهْوُنُ  
 أَحِبُّكَ حُبًّا لَوْ تُحِبِّينَ مِثْلَهُ \* أَصَابَكَ مِنْ وَجَدِ عَلِيٍّ جُنُونُ  
 أَلَا فَرَحَمِي صَبًّا كَثِيبًا مُعَذَّبًا \* حَرِيقُ الْحَشَا مُضْنِي الْفَوَادِ حَزِينُ  
 قَتِيلٌ مِنَ الْأَشْوَاقِ أَمَّا نَهَارُهُ \* فَبَاكَ وَأَمَّا لَيْلُهُ فَأَنْزِينُ  
 لَهُ عِبْرَةٌ تَهْمِي وَنِيرَانٌ قَلْبِهِ \* وَأَفْجَانُهُ تُذْرِي الدَّمُوعَ عَيْونُ  
 فَيَا لَيْتَ أَنَّ الْمَوْتَ يَأْتِي مُعْجَلًا \* عَلَى أَنْ عَشِقَ الْغَانِيَاتِ فُتُونُ

(I love you, Layla, with the love of the love-struck  
 [mahabbata ‘ashiqin]  
 Against which all other difficulties are as nothing  
 I love you with a love that if you loved likewise  
 A madness would strike you in your longing for me  
 Have mercy on a miserable, tortured boy  
 Burning inside, a wretch with an exhausted heart  
 Laid low by desires during his day  
 Then weeping and sighing during his night  
 His tears are flowing, a fire’s in his heart  
 The lids of his eyes are scattering tears  
 I hope that death may come to me swiftly  
 For the love [‘ishq] of worthy women is madness, shattering)

There is a remarkable amount of self-diagnosis in this poem: it no ordinary love that ails Majnūn, but the “love of the love-struck,” the maddening, destabilizing, and potentially fatal disease of *‘ishq*; indeed, most of the poem would sound like the description of a crippling fever if not for its opening line. Like any chronic illness, the only sure remedy is death, whether in its literal form or in the ‘little death’ of union with the beloved (a highly unlikely scenario in this genre); hence the poet comes to desire death with the same ardor with which he desires Laylā. As the chief symbol of the Udhri movement, the man literally driven out of his senses by love, it was clear to later readers that Majnūn served as a valuable archetype, a mouthpiece through whom the experience of *‘ishq* could be articulated; the anthologist Abū al-Faraj Iṣbahānī (d. 967) notes that while none of his sources agreed on the full name or origins of this Qays b. al-Mulawwah, he had heard of many disgruntled lovers who used the name ‘Majnūn’ as their poetic persona, hoping to keep their true identities secret (Iṣbahānī 2: 5–7). The experience of internal displacement and exile generated by this self-orientation, and the dec-

laration of one's willingness to sacrifice oneself in the struggle for death-union, is the most salient aspect of the *'ishq* claimed by the Udhri poets that I would like to identify in this paper; long after the heyday of this movement, it remained the driving force behind other transcendental quests.

The topoi of the Udhri literary landscape are easily recognized in what is perhaps the most famous strain of Islamic (particularly Persian) literature in the West, the poetry of Sufi mysticism.<sup>35</sup> In this genre, the Udhri motifs of asceticism, isolation, and a relentless fixation upon the beloved were easily mapped onto the physical and mental practices of the early Sufi orders of the ninth and tenth centuries; the lover's experience of self-loss (*fanā'*) – an utter unawareness or surrender of the self in the presence of the B/beloved, reminiscent of Augustine's precondition for *caritas* – was particularly apt for describing the transcendental promises of the Sufi path. The shared valences of these two traditions meant that the erotic intensity of love-poetry could be powerfully integrated into a religious paradigm, with the result that *'ishq*, the divine madness, amplified and extended the relationship of filial devotion between God and man envisioned by the Qur'ānic *ḥubb*. An interesting example of this can be found in a poem attributed to the early mystic (d. 801) Rābi' a al-'Adawīya (81):

35. The popularity of this genre, at least in contemporary North America, is largely due to the many translations and adaptations of the poetry of Mawlānā Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) that have emerged in the last half-century.

أُحِبُّكَ حُبِّينِ حُبُّ الهوى \* وَحُبُّ لِأَنَّكَ أَهْلٌ لَذَاكَ  
فَأَمَّا الَّذِي هُوَ حُبُّ الهوى \* فَشُغِّلِي بِذِكْرِكَ عَمَّنْ سِوَاكَ  
وَأَمَّا الَّذِي أَنْتَ أَهْلٌ لَهُ \* فَكَشِّفْكَ لِي الْحُجْبَ حَتَّى أَرَكَ  
فَلَا الْحَمْدُ فِي ذَا وَلَا ذَاكَ لِي \* وَلَكِنَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ فِي ذَا وَذَاكَ

(I love You with two loves: one capricious [*ḥubb al-hawā*]  
And one of which You are worthy  
As for the capricious love  
I am occupied by thoughts of You, excluding all others  
And as for that love which You deserve  
You raise the veil so that I may see You  
No praise is due me for that one or this  
But praise be to You for this one and that)

Love is an ambivalent force in this poem; in its claim to self-abnegation and unreasonable devotion, it represents the ideal way of approaching God, yet it runs the constant risk of being sublimated to the self. Thus Rābi' a uses the Qur'ānic concept of *hawā*, capricious love, as a point of comparison with this *other* love, not explicitly named, that is worthy of God. The fundamental problem with the

36. A famous anecdote related about Rābi‘a is that she would roam the streets, Diogenes-like, with a torch in one hand and a bucket of water in the other; when asked what she was doing, she replied that she intended to burn the gardens of Paradise and extinguish the fires of Hell, so that all who worshipped God henceforth would do so only out of self-less love for him, rather than the selfish desire for reward or fear of torment. See Smith 98–99.

37. See Bell, “Avicenna’s *Treatise*” 79; Fakhry 243; Seyyed-Gohrab 19. The Iranian Ash‘ari scholar Juwaynī (d. 1085), for example, argued that because love is borne out of will, and because will can only be exerted on objects that exist in time and space, God, being outside of time and insusceptible to nonexistence, cannot be ‘loved’ in that sense (Bell, *Love Theory* 59). The Damascene preacher Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350) encouraged his readers to avoid falling prey to ‘*ishq* at all costs and instead nurture “friendship” (*khulla*) for the Creator, which he considered the most pure expression of selfless devotion, exemplified “in the love of Abraham and Muḥammad for God” (Bell, *Love Theory* 35–36).

38. See Knysh 52–56, 60–66; and Tūsi 196. The Sufi poet ‘Irāqī (d. ca. 1289) puts it eloquently in his *Lama ‘āt* (*Flashes*): “Love courses through all; it must be everything. [Arabic] *How can you deny love when there is nothing in the world save it, when all that is manifest would not be so if not for love? For love manifests itself in love and moves through it; or rather, all of it is love*” (“‘*Ishq dar hama sārī-st nā-guzīr jumla-yi ashyā’ ast. Wa-kayfa tankaru al-‘ishqa wa-mā fi al-wujūdi illā huwa wa-law lā al-ḥubbu mā ḡahara mā ḡahara, fa-bi-l-ḥubbi ḡahara al-ḥubbu sara fihī bal huwa al-ḥubbu kulluh*,” Irāqī, *Lama ‘āt* 68; cf. the English trans. in Irāqī, *Divine Flashes* 84). Many thanks to Matthew T. Miller for drawing my attention to this passage.

39. For more on the affinity between Avicenna’s metaphysics and Sufi thought, see Anwar 340–43.

former mode of loving is that it cannot be separated from selfish desire: even if trained upon God, it pleases the self, thus ironically re-orienting Rābi‘a back onto herself and distracting her from her Beloved. The only hope for her, and the only love that will win God’s approval, is the love that annihilates the lover, leaving nothing left but the Beloved to adore.<sup>36</sup> While the total extirpation of the self is Rābi‘a’s goal, it can never occur without the proactive intercession of God, the moment when he raises the veil and makes self-loss (*fanā’*) possible. The reciprocal tension between Rābi‘a’s “two loves” – one rooted in the self (Need), one external to it (Gift) – is emblematic of the gradual maturation of love into a complex force without any clear boundaries between these two ideal categories.

As we have seen in these early examples of Udhri and Sufi poetry, the concept of ‘*ishq* was gradually integrated into diverse modes of thought and practices of self-fashioning, pregnant with possibilities for spiritual transcendence. Its relationship with the ‘safer’ *ḥubb* remained contested, and scholars continued to debate whether ‘*ishq* was to be cultivated or repressed – if the way of Majnūn was the proper way to orient oneself towards the Creator.<sup>37</sup> Some advocated a more ‘sober’ approach to life, whether that entailed sticking to the letter of the law or keeping one’s ecstatic passion away from the public eye, but those interested in the hidden and esoteric aspects of their world came to see love as *the* vital energy that bound all creation with its Creator; when properly harnessed, it could break down the petty boundaries of the self, exposing it to the awesome and bewildering horizons of unlimited being.<sup>38</sup>

The underlying metaphysics that upheld this comprehensive understanding of love and affirmed its transcendental power was provided by Islamic philosophy, a tradition grounded in the Neoplatonic thought of the Alexandrian school and elaborated by giants in the field such as Kindī (d. 873), Fārābī (d. 950), and Avicenna (Abū ‘Alī ibn Sīnā, d. 1037); the latter, in addition to his major encyclopedic works *The Canon* (*al-Qānūn*) and *The Healing* (*al-Shifā’*), wrote a short treatise entitled *Risāla fī al-‘ishq* (*Epistle on Love*) that explains how it is that love can either hinder or enable the individual’s journey toward the Truth.<sup>39</sup> Avicenna describes love as a universal force, borne out of God’s emanation, that pervades all extant being; it is the very state of existing that causes being to be filled with love – or conversely, it is the state of being filled with love that causes existence (Fackenheim 212):

Every being which is determined by a design strives by nature toward its perfection, i.e., that goodness of reality which ultimately flows from the reality of the Pure Good (“al-khayr al-mahd”), and by nature it shies away from its specific defect which is the evil in it, i.e., materiality and non-being. Therefore, it is obvious that all beings determined by a design possess a natural desire and an inborn love, and it follows of necessity that in such beings love is the cause of their existence.

Thus, even inanimate objects like dust or immaterial forces like light and gravity are all manifestations of love, in that what gives them their existence and movement is their longing to be reunited with the Pure Good from which they came; this is what Avicenna calls the “presence of love in simple incorporeal essences” (“wujūdu al-‘ishqi fī al-jawāhiri al-basīṭati al-ghayri al-jismīyah”).<sup>40</sup> From that baseline, however, further degrees of kind and quality may be established: “Whenever the goodness of a thing increases, the merit of its love increases also, and so does the love for the good” (Fackenheim 214). The first category (*qism*) of love in this account is what Avicenna calls “natural love” (*‘ishq ṭabī‘ī*), namely the love of simple and vegetative souls. These souls have no choice but to move in the directions love prescribes for them: a rock cannot but fall when dropped; a tree cannot refuse to grow. After this comes “voluntary love” (*‘ishq ikhtiyārī*), that which is displayed by animals and humans who *choose* of their own free will (though not necessarily by reason) to pursue or not pursue a desired object. Thus a donkey, to quote Avicenna’s example, will forsake the pasture if a wolf appears on the horizon; it is capable, thanks to its faculties of sense and emotion, of choosing the better of two goods, *i.e.*, continued life over a tasty meal.<sup>41</sup> Each new kind of love overlays the previous one in a cumulative manner, and in an ideal state, they support and harmonize one another, enabling every created being to strive towards its Creator to the furthest extent its mental and spiritual faculties may allow.

Therein lies the rub: turning to humanity, Avicenna notes with disapproval that most members of his species live out their lives driven by desire for food and sexual reproduction – an existence not much different from that of a weed. Even a brave man has only risen to the spiritual level of a lion; a step in the right direction, but still not enough. Just as animals have an emotional faculty that allows them to make decisions that vegetables cannot, so too do humans have a rational faculty that both enables and obliges them to bring

40. My translation from Avicenna 55; another reading, followed by Fackenheim, is “al-ghayri al-ḥissīyah,” which he renders as “inanimate.”

41. Cf. Avicenna 62; trans. Fackenheim 217.

their love to a level of nobility that animals cannot perceive or attain. This cumulative hierarchy, based on the dynamic of gift and counter-gift, produces a theory in which love (*'ishq*) cannot be evaluated independent of context; depending on who is loving what in what manner, the same love that is praiseworthy in one scenario may become blameworthy in another (Fackenheim 221):

We can now make the statement that it is part of the nature of beings endowed with reason to covet a beautiful sight; and that this is sometimes – certain conditions granted – to be considered as refinement and nobility. [...] If a man loves a beautiful form with animal desire, he deserves reproof, even condemnation and the charge of sin, as, for instance, those who commit unnatural adultery and in general people who go astray. But whenever he loves a pleasing form with an intellectual consideration, in the manner we have explained, then this is to be considered as an approximation to nobility and an increase in goodness.

This contextual grounding allows for love to exist in a highly nuanced and flexible conceptual space where the sinful and sublime may blend and intermix, as Avicenna demonstrates in a number of examples. The animal desire for pleasure in sex may be co-opted by the rational soul as a means towards the “most excellent” act of preserving the species through procreation; the love of beauty and the desire to embrace beautiful bodies “are not in themselves blameworthy,” so long as they are fortified with moral rectitude (222). In other words, an appreciation of the physical form can be a very positive thing, if it inspires the soul to the Neoplatonic turning-inwards that will cause it to be aware of the Absolute Good; as von Grunebaum explains, “The moral duty for Avicenna is no longer the suppression of the lower parts but rather their integration in the soul’s struggle toward perfection” (233). Thus, the road to perfection is fundamentally a matter of *capacity* and *harmony*: every entity in existence has its own way to God depending on what it is capable of striving for, and the measure of its success will be determined by whether or not its actions are in line with that nature.

To conclude this section – which really only provides the tiniest of samples from the enormous corpus of classical/medieval Islamic love-literature – I would like to revisit the basic themes and points I hope to establish out of this survey and then bring to our reading of the Stories of the Black and White Domes. As we have seen, Islamic



42. One such schema is found in the second chapter of Ibn Dāwūd al-Isfahānī's (d. 910) *Kitāb al-zahra* ("Book of the flower/Venus"), which divides love into eight stages: inclination (*istiḥsān*), fondness (*mawadda*), affection (*maḥabbā*), intimacy (*khulla*), desire (*hawā*), passion (*'ishq*), obsession (*tatayyum*), and rapture (*walah*). See Ibn Dāwūd al-Isfahānī 19–21; for similar lists, Bell, *Love Theory* 157–60.

43. An excellent illustration of this understanding is found in Ṭūsī's *Ethics*, where the philosopher writes, "Passion is of two kinds: one reprehensible, arising from an excessive quest for Pleasure, the other praiseworthy arising from an excessive quest for Good. The difficulty of distinguishing clearly between these two causes results in the diversity of men's attitudes towards praising or blaming Passion itself" (198).

societies, drawing from both peninsular Arabian and Hellenistic traditions, conceived of many different kinds of love with an abundance of names and classifications, to the point that it would be futile work to formulate universal categories that could apply to large corpora of texts, even within a limited time frame.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, we *can* identify certain thematic bundles that seem to have acted as conceptual anchors for writers across time and genre, allowing us to trace some amount of development and elaboration across the *longue durée*. The thematic anchor I have focused on in this survey is the general distinction between sober, law-abiding, and charitable love (*agapē*), often conceived of as *ḥubb* and set in contrast with love as chronic disease and divine madness (*erōs*), for which *'ishq* eventually became the descriptive term *par excellence*. As we saw in our earlier texts, these phenomena were originally treated as quite separate things: the Qur'ān makes a clear distinction between the two, Majnūn is explicit that he is afflicted by *'ishq* for Laylā and not by *ḥubb*; Rābi'a speaks of the "capricious" and "worthy" aspects of her affection for God. Yet even in these latter two examples, a curious kind of blending begins to take place, in which the "worthier" of the two loves is best understood as the all-consuming and at times transgressive form of *'ishq*. This blending was in part made possible by the intensive elaboration that *'ishq* received in philosophical and speculative circles; as a term that does not appear in the Qur'ān at all but that strongly resonates with the idea of *erōs*, it was probably the most malleable word at their disposal. Thus *'ishq* came to hold both the negative aspects of unbridled concupiscence as well as the ennobling nature of total devotion and self-sacrifice.<sup>43</sup> It was a capacious and ambivalent term, which is precisely why doctors of law emptied so many bottles of ink in their efforts to separate the good and bad aspects of *'ishq* from each other. But in the fields of mystical, philosophical, and poetic enterprise, *'ishq* had become an enormously productive concept for contemplating the human condition.

How can these conclusions be brought to the *Haft paykar*? On one hand, it is quite possible to read the stories as allegorical treatments along the lines of concupiscent versus generous, material versus sublime, *erōs* versus *agapē*, *hawā* versus *ḥubb*; these two conceptual poles construct two very different cosmological worlds around them, governed by two different Gods who respond to and interact with man in different ways, with interesting implications for the kinds of conclusions we can draw from the poem as a whole. But on the other hand, the fact that all of these distinctions *can* be subsumed

under the broader concept of *'ishq*, that ambiguous and unfathomable force that binds all creation with its Creator, makes for a very different reading experience. The dense and multivalent language of the *Haft paykar* not only permits such a double-reading, but, I suspect, may encourage one.

### 3 From Black to White

The Story of the Black Dome is a story about desire: the desire to know, the desire to learn, the desire to possess. Such desire, on the surface of it, would not seem to be a negative thing; after all, the Prophet is famous for urging his followers to “seek knowledge, even unto China” (“uṭlubū al-‘ilma wa-law bi-l-ṣīn”) – the destination of our royal protagonist.<sup>44</sup> But what about those things beyond the pale of the human capacity to know? What happens, the story seems to ask, when mortal curiosity is pitted against the unknowable, the unintelligible, and the unobtainable? A hush falls over the audience; a sense of foreboding pervades the opening lines (32.15–22):

که شنیدم بخردی از خویشان \* خرده کاران و چابک اندیشان  
 که ز کذبانوان قصر بهشت \* بود زاهد زنی لطیف سرشت  
 آمدی در سرای ما هر ماه \* یک بیک کسوتش حریر سیاه  
 باز جستند کز چه ترس و چه بیم \* در سوادى تویی سبیکه سیم  
 به که ما را بقصه یار شوی \* وین سیه را سپیدکار شوی  
 باز گویی ز نیک خواهی خویش \* معنی آیت سیاهی خویش  
 زن که از راستی ندید گزیر \* گفت کاحوال این سیاه حریر  
 چونک ناگفته باز نگذارید \* گویم ار زان که باورم دارید

(I heard from one of my wise relatives – attentive to detail and clever in thought – that among the leading ladies of the heavenly castle, there was a woman ascetic of sweet temperament who came to our palace every month, wearing clothes entirely of black silk. Everyone asked her: “O silver sun, from what fear or terror are you in black? You should acquaint us with the story, and make this black white. By your good will, tell us what the sign of your blackness means!” When the woman saw no escape from the truth, she said, “Since you won’t leave the unspoken alone, I will tell you about this black silk – if you will believe me.”)

44. Like many famous hadiths, this particular one may be spurious (Albānī 1: 600–09), but it was extremely popular and circulated by medieval writers who might have been less concerned with the precise authenticity of the words and more with the spirit of their message; see, for example, Aṭṭār, *Manṭiq Al-tayr*, v. 740 (trans. by Davis in Aṭṭār, *The Conference of the Birds* 35). For a discussion of this ideal in medieval Muslim societies, see Gellens.

Notice how the woman's appearance on the scene kindles an immediate feeling of desire within everyone who sees her. Although this motif is common in many Persian literary genres, from romantic epics to the epigrammatic catalogues of beautiful "city-disturbing" (*shahr-āshūb*) youths, this woman is no young belle, but an ascetic; the desire she inspires is not derived from her appearance, but rather from what her appearance *hides*. The woman is obviously reluctant to speak, but as she sees no "escape" (another conspicuous word) from her situation, nor any sign that her companions' desire to hear the unspoken (and perhaps unspeakable) might abate, she surrenders to their will. Thus the story begins with an act of coercion, the uninformed demanding answers to questions best left unasked.

The narrative now shifts to the ascetic, who tells us of a king she once served. As we learned in the introduction, the king seems to be a kind and hospitable man, welcoming all and sundry to stay with him at court. But this generous treatment, she adds, did not come without a price: "That traveller would tell the king of all the wonders he had seen, and the king would listen" ("ān musāfir har ān shigift ki dīd • shāh rā qiṣṣa kard u shāh shanīd," 32.34). This little detail is important: it suggests that the king nurtures within himself the same desire to know the unknown that we saw from the princess's relatives. One day, without warning, he disappears from his court: "He turned his head away from us, as though he were a *sīmurgh*" ("sar chu sīmurgh dar kashīd az mā," 32.36), the ascetic says. Again, the wording is significant; the *sīmurgh* is the mythical bird that lives on Mount Qāf at the end of the world, and often stands, as it does in 'Attār's *Conference of the Birds*, as a symbol for the divine essence. Some time later, and just as abruptly, the king returns from his travels, clad in black from head to toe. In contrast to the ascetic, no one dares to ask the king what had befallen him on his journey, despite the dramatic change in his appearance; but it seems he is looking for a confidante, as he readily responds when questioned (32.48–50):

گفتم ای دستگیر غم خواران \* بهترین همه جهانداران  
بر زمین بارگی کرا باشد \* کاسمان را بتیشه بتراشد  
باز پرسیدن حدیث نهفت \* هم تو دانی و هم توانی گفت

(I said, "O best of all kings, who takes the hand of those who grieve: who possesses such a mount by which to scrape the heavens with an axe?<sup>45</sup> You know what it means to seek out a hidden tale, and [only] you can tell it.")

45. The editors of Nizāmī's *Haft Paykar* disagree whether the word is *bārigī* (Ritter and Rypka), *yārigī* (Ṣarvatīyān), *yāri 'ī* (Dastgirdi), or *bāzu 'ī* (Zanjānī), meaning respectively "Who would have the horse/ability/courage/arm to...?" One interesting connection that comes with the *bārigī* ("mount") reading is that it might invoke the Prophet's journey to heaven (*mi'rāj*) upon the winged back of Burāq; thus the question would suggest, "Who (besides the Prophet) possesses such a steed as to attempt the journey?"

It is worth noticing at this juncture just how many degrees of separation now lie between us and the narrative. Along with Bahrām Gōr, we are apprised of a secret story by the Indian princess of the Black Dome, who heard it from a wise relative of hers, who heard it from the woman ascetic, who heard it from the king. The enabling agent behind each moment of exchange along this line of transmission is *curiosity* – the desire to know something manifestly hidden – and as we have seen, every person who is made privy to this knowledge will don the robes of black, a gesture that simultaneously expresses their initiation into this secret world and attracts the interest of those still in the dark, so to speak. The cycle repeats itself as the king recalls that fateful day when a man dressed in black entered his court (32.56–60):

گفتم ای من نخوانده نامه تو \* سیه از بهر چیست جامه تو  
گفت بگذار ازین سخن بگذر \* که ز سیمرخ کس نداد خبر  
گفتمش باز گو بهانه مگیر \* خیرم ده ز قیروان وز قیر  
گفت باید که داریم معذور \* کارزویست این ز گفتن دور  
زین سیاهی خبر ندارد کس \* مگر آن کین سیاه دارد و بس

(I said, “Hey you, I haven’t heard your story – why are your clothes black?” He replied, “Never mind, let this matter go; no one speaks about the *simurgh*.” I said to him, “No excuses – spill the beans! Tell me about Qayrawan and *qīr*.”<sup>46</sup> He said, “You’ll have to excuse me; my wish is that this matter remains far from telling. No one knows the reason for this blackness save for those who wear it; that is all.”)

46. The king uses Qayrawan (Kairouan, in modern Tunisia) to mean a distant land, while *qīr* means “pitch,” the color of his clothing.

The *simurgh* again makes an appearance in this passage, tantalizing all with the lure of secret but powerful knowledge. It comes as no surprise that the king’s desire is only further inflamed by such allusions; casting off all decorum, he throws himself into a fit of begging and supplication that even he admits, in retrospect, was beyond the pale: “When my pleas went beyond all measure, the man grew embarrassed at my discomposure” (“*chūn zi ḥadd raft khwāstārī-yi man • sharm-ash āmaḍ zi bīqarārī-yi man*,” 32.63). The stranger finally relents and tells the king that far away in China is a town known as the “city of the bewildered, the mourning-house of those who wear black” (“*nām-i ān shahr shahr-i madhūshān • ta` ziyat-khāna-yi siyah-pūshān*,” 32.65); there he will find what he seeks. And with that, the guest departs, leaving behind more questions than answers. It is a strange paradox: the riddle of the black has completely possessed the king – “I feared I would go mad” (“*bīm-i ān shud ki man shavam*

shaydā,” 32.72), he confesses – but the answer to this riddle lies in a city at the end of the world, inhabited by people who have lost their wits: the cure is eerily akin to the disease. But the king cannot rest; he abdicates his throne and sets off in search of the mysterious village.

The political advice manuals of medieval Persian literature are replete with admonitions that a king must never become a slave of his own passions; given what we have encountered so far, the story functions well as an example of the consequences of such a condition.<sup>47</sup> Although the king’s desire is not of a sexual nature (yet), it has the same negative impact on his ability to control himself and maintain his dignity. We have already seen him embarrass the secret out of his guest, and upon arriving at the “city of the bewildered,” he must again resort to tricks and manipulation, singling out a poor butcher to do his bidding: “By showering him with gold, that butcher became my prey, like a sacrificial bull” (“mard-i qaṣṣāb az ān zar-afshānī • ṣayd-i man shud chu gāv-i qurbānī,” 32.91). His single-minded obsession with the riddle of the black has thrown him into a state, as he puts it himself, of instability and agitation (“bīqarārī”), beautifully illustrated in his account of his ascent to heaven in the magical basket (32.138–39, 142–48):

شمع وارم رسن بگردن چُست \* رسنم سخت بوذ و گردن سُست  
چون اسیری ز بختِ بَد رنجور \* رسن از گردنم نمی شد دور  
بوذ میلی بر آوریده بماه \* که زبر دیدنش فتاذ کلاه  
چون رسید آن سبذ بمیلِ بلند \* رسنم را گره رسید به بند  
کارسازم شد و مرا بگذاشت \* کردم افغان بسی و سوذ نداشت  
زیر و بالا چو در جهان دیدم \* خویشتن را بر آسمان دیدم  
آسمان بر سرم فسون خوانده \* من معلق چو آسمان مانده  
زان سیاست که جان رسید بناف \* دیده در کار مانده زهره شکاف  
سوی بالا دلم ندید دلیر \* زهره آن کرا که بیند زیر

(The rope quickly wrapped around my neck, candle-like  
– the rope was hard, my neck was soft – and never let go, as  
though I were a prisoner burdened by an evil fate. [...] There  
was a pillar, stretching up to the moon; if someone tried to  
see the top, his hat would fall off. When the basket came to  
the top of that pillar, my knotted rope came to its fastening-  
point. It loosed its knots and let me go, and I screamed for  
help, to no avail. Looking high and low, I saw myself above  
the sky! The heavens had laid a curse upon my head: like the

47. See, for example, Kaykāvūs ibn Iskandar ibn Qābūs 70–76; and Ṭūsī 142–44.

48. This is a slightly idiomatic rendering; a more literal version would be: “From that [the heavens’] policy/judgment, my life came to my navel; in the affair, my eyes remained leaking bile [*zahra-shikāf*, i.e., staring and terrified].”

heavens, I remained suspended. Thus condemned, my heart fell to my stomach; my eyes were blinded by fear.<sup>48</sup> My heart lacked the courage for me to look up – and who could have dared to look down?)

In addition to the king’s loss of direction, his suspension in midair, and his utter helplessness – all powerful metaphors for the experience of love – the image of the rope twisting around his neck situates the heavenly voyage in a liminal space between two worlds, between death and life: “Though that rope had strung up my body, it was the only thread between me and my life” (“gar-chi būd ān rasan ṭanāb-i tan-am • rishta-yi jān nashud juz ān rasan-am,” 32.141). These two elements – the ecstatic, bewildering, and terrifying onset of love, initiating the journey to a world beyond and between life and death – suggest the onset of a transformative encounter from which there is no going back.

When the King is finally transported from the pillar by an enormous bird (perhaps the *sīmurgh* hinted at by the traveller?) and dropped in the middle of a verdant garden, it indeed seems like he has died and gone to heaven. We need not dwell on the description of the feast the fairy-maidens lay out for him, but readers may be assured that Nizāmī spares no effort to convince us of the sumptuousness and finery of the occasion. But alas, the king’s ascent to Paradise does not bring him any joy, for his now-sated (or diverted) desire to know the riddle has morphed into desire for sexual union with the fairy queen, Turktāz: “I washed the page [of my fortune] free of joyful words, for in my surfeit I sought ever more” (“varaḡ az ḥarf-e khurramī shustam • k-az ziyādat ziyādatī justam,” 32.394), he tells us ruefully. The queen, for her part, seems well aware of the king’s plight, and takes it upon herself to guide him back onto the path of reason.<sup>49</sup> This is suggested even in her opening speech to him: “The whole place is yours, and you have command; but you must sit and rise with me, so that *you become aware of my secret*, and gain a share of my love” (“hama jāy ān-i tu-st u ḥukm turā-st • lēk bā man nishasht bāyaḡ u khāst / tā shavī āgah az nihānī-yi man • bahra yābī zi mihrbānī-yi man,” 32.244–45). We are made privy to some of these lessons, which the queen delivers each time she rebuffs the king’s advances on her. They have the cadence of the pithy maxims of advice literature, as if she were quoting out of Sa’dī’s *Gulistān* (32.283–84; 32.345–46; 32.362–64):

49. Meisami has noted that many of the women in the *Haft paykar* and other works by Nizāmī act as guides for the male protagonists; see Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* 129, 220–21; Meisami, “The Theme of the Journey” 160–61.

گفت امشب بیوسه قانع باش \* بیش ازین رنگ آسمان متراش  
هرچ زین بگذرد روا نبوذ \* دوست آن به که بیوفا نبوذ

(She said, “Tonight, be contented with kisses; do not scrape the heavens’ brilliance more than this. Anything more than this is not proper; the lover is he who is not faithless.”)

بقناعت کسی که شاذ بوذ \* تا بوذ محتشم نهاد بوذ  
وانک با آرزو کند خویشی \* اوفتد عاقبت بدرویشی

(As long as one is happy with his lot, he will remain noble; but he who serves himself out of desire will in the end fall into poverty.)

گر شبی زین خیال گردی دور \* یابی از شمع جاودانی نور  
چشمه را بقطره مفروش \* کین همه نیش دارد آن همه نوش  
در خود بر یک آرزو در بند \* همه ساله بخرمی می خند

(If you can stay away from this fancy for a night, you’ll obtain light from an everlasting candle. Don’t sell a spring for a drop of water, for that will only sting you, while this is entirely wholesome. If your door is closed on one desire, you’ll laugh in joy forever.)

These admonishments drive home a concrete ethical message, grounded in the principles of contentment, control, and fidelity. The king must know his place, maintain his vows to the queen, and keep his desire in check; should he manage these things, the queen promises, he will eventually be rewarded with all he desires and then some. This would constitute what we might call the ‘common sense’ logic of Nizāmī’s social and textual world, and it is interesting that even the king seems quite aware of his transgressions, even if he is powerless to correct his wayward path (32.456–59):

چون فریب زبان او دیدم \* گوش کردم ولیک نشنیدم  
چند کوشیدم از سکونت و شرم \* آهنم تیز بوذ و آتش گرم  
بختم از دور گفت کای نادان \* لیس قریه و رای عبّادان  
من خام از زیاده اندیشی \* بکمی اوفتادم از بیشی

(As I perceived her beguiling speech, I heard, but did not listen. How much I struggled in steadfastness and shame! My

50. A proverb that basically means that this is the last outpost of civilization; one must not give up the blessings he has in pursuit of something greater. See Nizāmī Ganjavī, *Haft Paykar* 514 (ed. Sarvatīyān).

iron was sharp, and my fire hot. From far away, my fortune said: “You fool! ‘Beyond this Abadan there is no town.’”<sup>50</sup> But I, immature and obsessed with gain, fell out of surplus into lack.)

The king, it seems, is doomed to fail, and indeed it is only a few lines later that he finds himself returned to the basket, with nothing but the wasteland and the butcher there to console him. If he had died and gone to heaven, he must now mourn his restoration to life and the deprivation of the eternal joy that was so nearly his. The themes of concupiscence and unchecked desire exhibited by the king (and presumably all members of the order of the black robes), laid in counterpoint to the unheeded admonitions of the fairy queen in the celestial garden, bring the story to a close on a firm moral message: those who cannot control their desire, sooner or later, must don black robes of regret and mourning.

When we turn to the Story of the White Dome out of this reading, it appears to provide the perfect corrective to the king’s personal shortcomings of unchecked desire and concupiscence. It is worth noting that many of the structural and thematic features of the Black Dome are inverted in the White: where the Black Dome begins with the king’s desire to bring the wider world in, by receiving travelers and hearing their stories, the White begins with the youth’s desire to shut the wider world out, with walls, gates, and a self-imposed quarantine. Where loss and lack, even at the feast, dominate the thematic tone of the Black Dome, the setting of the White Dome – an earthly garden whose sumptuous beauty rivals the one in the sky – paints a scene of abundance and plenty. If the king is an outsider who intrudes upon the fairy garden, the youth will find, to his surprise, that it is the fairies who intrude on him! Why travel to the ends of the earth to find happiness and joy, the story seems to say, when all you could ever need is right here?<sup>51</sup>

As before, many of these themes are seeded in the story’s prelude. The *mise-en-scène* of Bahrām’s stay inside the White Dome is saturated with metaphors for the cycle of day and night, inviting us to appreciate the phenomenon for its aesthetic beauty, while Venus, the planet of love, looks on from above (38.3). When night arrives and the Persian princess, “dawn-born and night-awake” (“shab-nishīn-i sapēda-dam-zāda,” 38.6), is asked to speak, she introduces her story

51. One might compare this intratextual dialogue with, for example, the interaction of the stories in works like Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*; the juxtaposition of the idealistic quest for love in *The Knight’s Tale* with the ‘naturalistic’ view of desire in *The Miller’s Tale* (see Miller 40–43) seems especially apropos in this instance.



as one told to her during a marvelous feast, the very description of which would stir up the appetite. This elysian imagery of beauty, abundance, and pleasure overflows into the beginning of the story proper (38.24–28, 34–35):

گفت شیرین سخن جوانی بود \* کز ظریفی شکرستانی بود  
عیسی گاه دانش آموزی \* یوسفی وقت مجلس افروزی  
آگه از علم واز کفایت نیز \* پارسایش بهتر از همه چیز  
داشت باغی بشکل باغ اِرم \* باغها گرد باغ او چو حرم  
خاکش از بوی خوش عبیر سرشت \* میوههایش چو میوههای بهشت  
بر کشیده ز خط پرگارش \* چار مهره بچار دیوارش  
از بناهای بر کشیده بماه \* چشم بد را نبود در وی راه

(She said, “There was once a youth of sweet speech, a sugar-cane-field in grace and eloquence. He was a Jesus at the time of teaching, a Joseph in the way he lit up a gathering. He knew [the value of] both knowledge and sufficiency, and his chastity was nonpareil. He had a garden like that of Iram: gardens round his garden, like an inviolate sanctuary [*ḥaram*]. The sweet scent of its soil had the nature of ambergris, and its fruits were like the fruits of Paradise. [...] By the line of his compass, he had erected four walls with four seals; the evil eye has no way to reach buildings drawn up to the moon.”)

In addition to the paradisiacal imagery of delicious fruits and sweet soil, there is an element of the holy and the sacrosanct here that deserves further attention. It cannot be an accident that this youth is likened to two biblical and Qur’anic prophets, and the sacredness of his abode is underscored by the term *ḥaram*, a common name for the sanctuary of Mecca.<sup>52</sup> Balance and order reign supreme in this space; the youth’s awareness of knowledge (*ilm*) and sufficiency (*kifāyat*) suggests that he knows both when to ask and when to stay silent – qualities sorely lacking in the case of the king – and it is perhaps due to this inviolate purity that our hero’s chastity (*parsā’ī*) is of paramount importance, hence the four walls to guard him from the evil eye. With all these clues in the air, it is not far-fetched to suppose that we are standing in a garden of Eden (Iram), enjoying the fruits of God’s bounty as long as we resist the temptation to question it.

But who can resist temptation in the face of love? Having completed his Friday prayers (another gesture towards the sacred), the youth returns to his garden and is surprised to find the gates are

52. Meisami, “Introduction” 297 n. 38:27 notes that the image of the other gardens clustered around his own are a visual reminder of pilgrims circumambulating the Ka’ba.

locked, while beautiful music, so sweet to even set the trees a-dancing (38.44), wafts over the walls. The reaction of the youth – whose remarkable wisdom and modesty has only just been lionized – shows just how naive these earlier assertions were. With “no patience to turn his head away, and no key to open the door” (“na shakib-i ki bar garāyad sar • na kalid-i ki bar gushāyad dar,” 38.46), he begins to rend his garments and pound at the door, begging to be granted access and join in the fun. When no one responds, he has no option but the rather ironic move of breaking into his own house, whereupon he is immediately apprehended by the two maidens guarding the other side of the walls, who take him for a thief and start to beat him. Upon learning that he is the owner of the garden, however, they apologize to him and offer their services, as they patch up the breach with thorns to deter any further encroachments (38.75). This sequence of actions creates an interesting ambiguity around the question of ownership and legitimacy: having violated the walls that were meant to keep others out, the youth is now a guest in his own house. His bastion of chastity is now a garden of pleasure, and as the youth makes his way in, he stumbles into a scene that has been the time-honored *locus classicus* for the onslaught of love (38.107–10):

سوی حوض آمدند ناز کنان \* گِره از بندِ قُرطه باز کنان  
 صُدره کنند و بی نقاب شدند \* وز لطافت چو در آب شدند  
 می‌زدند آب را بسیمِ مراد \* می‌نفهتند سیم را بسواد  
 ماه و ماهی روانه هر دو در آب \* ماه تا ماهی اوفتاده بتاب

([The women] went towards the pool, coy and flirtatious, loosening the knots of their shirts; they doffed their vests and removed their veils, and gracefully slid into the water like pearls. They splashed water upon their silver necks, hiding silver in black.<sup>53</sup> Moon and fish glided in the water, and fish to moon fell ablaze.<sup>54</sup>)

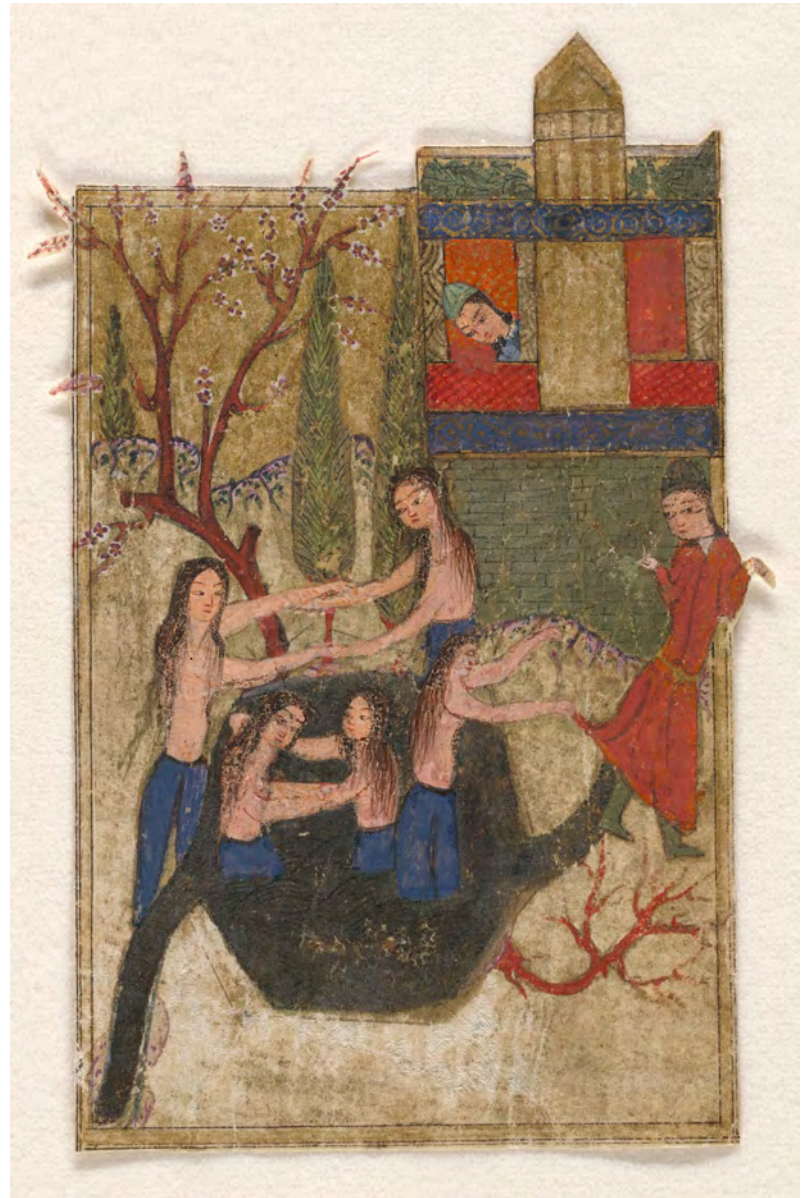
A bathing scene – the ultimate trump card Eros may wield against the chaste (Figure 4). Our poor “Joseph” is left helpless in the grip of love-sickness: “With his blood boiling throughout his veins, every limb let out a cry” (“rag bi rag khūn-ash az giriftan-i jūsh • az har andām bar kashīd khurūsh,” 38.122). The physical pain he feels upon beholding this scene is a sure sign that *‘ishq* has penetrated his body; just think of Palamon’s famous “A!” when he catches sight of Emily (Chaucer, v. 1078), or Khosrow’s heart bursting with grief like a split

53. This passage is an excellent example of Nizāmī’s mastery of polysemous language, whose ambiguity produces a far more vivid mental image than a more explicit style would allow. The word مراد, which most editors read as *marād*, would mean ‘neck,’ possibly a synecdoche for the whole body; but it could also be *murād*, ‘desired,’ alluding to their intoxicating beauty: see Nizāmī Ganjavī, *Haft Paykar* 300 (ed. Dastgirdī and Hamīdiyān). Likewise, the ‘black’ in which the women hide their ‘silver’ could be their musky locks or the dark water. My translation seeks to reproduce this multivalence.

54. Here, the language gets even denser. The ‘moon’ refers to the moon-faced beauties swimming with the fish in the pool (producing again an interplay of dark and light imagery, as in the previous line), and the phrase ‘from fish to moon’ is an expression for “from earth to heaven;” see Nizāmī Ganjavī, *The Haft Paykar: A Medieval Persian Romance* 288 n. 27:1. “Fell ablaze” is my take on “uftādan bi tāb;” *tāb* is a great word for this action, because it carries valences of twisting and rolling, burning and shining – thus the world is illuminated by the beautiful women even as it falls into passionate love with them.

Figure 4: Bathing Maidens Observed by the Master of the Garden

The bewildered youth looks torn between running away and diving in, while one of the women seizes the hem of his garment. Illustrated folio from a manuscript of the *Haft paykar* of Niẓāmī (c. 1410); opaque watercolor and gold on paper; 8.5 x 5.2 cm (3 3/8 x 2 1/16 in). Image courtesy of Harvard Art Museums / Arthur M. Sackler Museum, The Stuart Cary Welch Collection, Gift of Edith I. Welch in memory of Stuart Cary Welch and Adrienne Minassian; object number 2011.539.



pomegranate (“zi ḥisrat gashta chūn nār-i kafīda”) when he sees Shirin bathing in the spring (Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *Khusraw va Shirīn* 24-55).

Thus we find ourselves, once again, in a situation almost exactly parallel to the Story of the Black Dome: our protagonist has been utterly possessed by love and will stop at nothing to obtain his desire. The major difference is not in the hero, but his partner; where the queen of the fairies was firm in rejecting the king’s advances, our harp-player here is more than willing to play along. The transgression must therefore be stopped by other means, and as we recall, it is the *garden itself* that thwarts the lovers’ many attempts to steal away and have a little fun. This strikes me as extremely important, as it im-

plies a world in which chastity and licit behavior are not a matter of human custom, but belong to the laws of nature. In this world, love and success are immediately and effortlessly attainable, as long as we play by the rules that God has set; the only way that *ishq* can bring the lover to a happy end is if it is contained within the ‘proper ways’ of loving that Avicenna and other moral philosophers prescribed. If we go back to our earlier dichotomy of concupiscent love (*hawā* or *ishq*) and affectionate love (*ḥubb*), we might say that these two stories, juxtaposed, offer a concrete argument that the former love must end in disaster and ‘death’ unless it is regulated and brought into the service of divine *ḥubb*, that is, the laws of religion that God *lovingly* bestowed upon humanity (thinking back to the Qur’ānic passages discussed above). In this light, the sequence suggests a clear linear trajectory from black, the color of concupiscence, loss, and mourning, to white, the color of purity, chastity, and salvation.

The role of the Deity is further underscored in the speech that the youth delivers at the end of the story, in which he describes the series of strange events that befell him and the harp-player as an act of “divine grace” (*ināyat-i azalī*) that “delivered our affairs out of sin into flawlessness” (“*kār-i mā rā [...] az khaṭā dāda būd bī-khalalī,*” 38.289). The youth continues (38.291–302):

بخت ما را چو پارسایی داد \* از چنان کارِ بَدِ رهایی داد  
 آنک دیوش بکامِ خود نکند \* نیک شد هیچ نیک بَد نکند  
 بر حرام آنک دل نهاده بُوَد \* دور ازین جا حرامزاده بُوَد  
 با عروسی بدان پری چهری \* نکند هیچ مرد بدمهری  
 خاصه آنکو جوانیی دارد \* مردی و مهربانیی دارد  
 لیک چون عصمتی بُوَد در راه \* نتوان رفت باز پیش گناه  
 کس ازان میوه‌دار بر نخورد \* که یکی چشم بَد درو نگرَد  
 چشم صد گونه دام و دذ بر ما \* حال ازین جا شدست بَد بر ما  
 آنچه شد شد حدیث آن نکنیم \* وانچ داریم ازان زیان نکنیم  
 توبه کردم باشکار و نهان \* در پذیرفتم از خدای جهان  
 که اگر در اجل بُوَد تأخیر \* وین شکاری بُوَد شکار پذیر  
 به حلالش عروسِ خویش کنم \* خدمتش زانچ بُوَد بیش کنم

(When Fate granted us forbearance, it delivered us from this wicked deed. He whom the demon cannot move to his pleasure is good, and cannot do evil, [while] he who has set his heart on the forbidden – far from here!<sup>55</sup> – is a bastard. No man could despise a bride with such a fairy face, especially if he is young, honorable, and loving; but when chastity is on

55. Or perhaps better, “present company excluded.”

the road, one cannot turn back to sin. No one will eat the fruit of a tree that has been gazed on by an evil eye. The eyes of a hundred kinds of beasts and animals were upon us; because of this, evil befell us. What happened, happened; let's not talk about it, lest we harm that which we have. I've repented both in private and in public, and I've accepted [the decree of] the Lord of the World: if my time of reckoning is delayed, and this huntress [of hearts] agrees to be hunted, I shall make her my lawful bride and serve her more than ever before.)

This speech confirms the promises that the queen of the fairies made in the Story of the Black Dome of a happy ending for those who wait: by curbing his desire, accepting what God has given him, and taking the road of chastity and marriage, the youth gains both the bride and the paradise that eluded the king in black. Moreover, we learn that it was the eyes of the *animals*, rather than the gathering of women, that jinxed the lovers' previous efforts; in a sense, it was the natural world that drove the lovers out of the wild and secluded places in the garden and back into society, where they could fulfill their responsibilities and potential as rational humans. One is reminded of the story *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* by the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 1184), where the animals act as mute teachers to a marooned child, who deduces from their example the proper hierarchy of creation and the necessary existence of God (Ibn Ṭufayl 127–35).<sup>56</sup> Most important of all, however, is the opening line of this passage, where the youth realizes that it was nothing less than *divine grace* (*'ināyat-i azalī*, literally something like the “favorable attention of the Eternal” or “[God's] everlasting attention”) that moved the world to save them.

The intervention of divine grace – especially as it is framed in opposition to the ultimately unsuccessful quest for union in the Story of the Black Dome – is a key element in unpacking Nizāmī's cosmology of love, taking us back to the fundamental interplay between Need and Gift that we noted at the beginning of this essay. Unlike the first story, where the protagonist was so consumed by need that “he heard, but did not listen,” the lovers here realize that their frustrated efforts are a sign of God's *'ināyat* – his attention, care, and mercy. Thus it is that God, in this final story, exhibits the same concerned, proactive, and compassionate love for humanity that distinguishes his nature in scripture. In Nizāmī's notion of *'ināyat*, we may have fallen back into the orbit of *agapē*, *caritas*, and *ḥubb*: a gift-love in which God *moves* towards his creatures and steers them towards the

56. As suggested above, both the Story of the White Dome and *The Miller's Tale* seem to offer a vision of the world in which God's bounty is immediately accessible and naturally plentiful, without any need for human struggle: consider Mark Miller's description of the latter in the context of our discussion: “For the Miller's project to get off the ground, then, he must suggest not only that nature determines our ends and provides for their motivational transparency, but also that nature determines and provides the means to our ends. Then the connection between desire and its objects will look completely seamless, and there will be no gaps left for practical reason to fill and speculative reason to reflect on” (43).

straight and narrow. If the king of the Black Dome is doomed to failure, no matter how hard he struggles for his paradise, in the White Dome it is almost as if the lovers simply let God come to them in the earthly paradise they already inhabit.

Union, both earthly and divine, is thus made possible through the restoration and implementation of sacred law, an act of submission and commitment (*islām*) to divine love after the failure of *‘ishq* to reach its goals. This ending to the stories – taking place on Friday, the day of communal prayer – is a fascinating example of a motival turn-around similar to those found in other works of love-literature. The writers Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) and Andreas Capellanus (fl. late 1100s) are both famous for writing treatises on love that first extol its ability to take us beyond the bounds of normal human habitation and experience, then bring us back into the fold of religion at the end of their work. One would be hard-pressed to believe that the saucy *Decameron* would conclude with the grim, almost horrifying tale of Griselda, or the *Canterbury Tales* with the Parson’s sobering homily. The carnival of love has come to an end; it is time for law to reassert itself (38.317–22):

گر ببینی ز مرغ تا ماهی \* همه را باشد این هواخواهی  
دولتی بین که یافت آب زلال \* وانگهی خورد ازو که بود حلال  
چشمه یافت پاک چون خورشید \* چون سمن صافی و چو سیم سپید  
در سپیدیست روشنایی روز \* وز سپیدیست مه جهان افروز  
همه رنگی تکلف اندوخت \* جز سپیدی که او نیالودست  
در پرستش بوقت کوشیدن \* سنت آمد سپید پوشیدن

(Everything you see, from birds to fish, are driven to seek their desire [*havā-khwāhī*, lit., “desire-seeking”]. Behold a [man of] good fortune, when he found a sweet water and, at that time it became licit, drank of it. He obtained a spring, clear like the sun, pure like jasmine, white like silver. In white resides the splendor of day; from white the moon achieves its brilliance. Save white, which is pure, every color is overlaid with artifice.<sup>57</sup> At the time for striving in worship, it is the custom to wear white.<sup>58</sup>)

57. This word “artifice” (*takalluf*) is quite interesting here; it literally means “taking trouble” and is used to describe aesthetic artifice and ornament that looks or feels rather forced, rather than the “inimitable ease” (*al-sahl al-mumtani*) that is more regularly prized as the ideal. This might support my suggestion that the world of the White Dome is an ‘easy’ world, where good things come to you if you just let the natural order run its course – in contradistinction to other colors, which require more ‘work’ on the part of the hero and with less chance that his efforts will be rewarded (e.g., the Red and Turquoise Domes). This is especially true in the case of the Black Dome, which involves an arduous journey to the ends of the earth, a year of living in disguise, cultivating a false friendship, an ascent to heaven, and thirty days of sweet torture and supplication, with little material gain to show for it in the end.

58. Another important term, “custom” (*sunnat*) must certainly invoke here the Prophetic custom (*sunna*) of wearing white, unstitched (i.e., without *takalluf*) cloth when making the Hajj pilgrimage. This word choice further integrates the description of white with the rites of Islam.

## 4 Pre-prismatic love

This reading of the *Haft paykar* certainly supports the trajectory ‘from ignorance to wisdom’ presented by other scholars of the poem, but I would like to end this paper, as promised, with a few thoughts about how the text in fact complicates this interpretation and forces us to consider ways of reading that are not strictly linear and teleological. This is not to deny the power and importance of teleology in Nizāmī or in his sources: the description of Bahrām’s encounter with the angelic onager and his mysterious disappearance (perhaps occultation?) in the cave at the end of the *Haft paykar* (chapter 52) strongly supports Meisami’s suggested transition from a ‘kingship of will’ to ‘kingship of law,’ a trajectory that recurs on a much larger scale in Nizāmī’s biography of Alexander (*Iskandar-nāma*), the two-part *Sharaf-nama* (*The Book of [Martial] Honor*) and *Iqbāl-nāma* (*The Book of [Divine] Fortune*). More broadly speaking, the Neoplatonic cosmology that informs the warp and weft of the *Haft paykar* is certainly committed to a hierarchy of spiritual states, ascending ever higher towards the absolute Truth. Nonetheless, Nizāmī’s framework allows for more nuance than a simple best-to-worst, highest-to-lowest ranking of the colors of love; that is to say, it resists an overly facile allegorical mapping of its components where black is *merely* bad and white *merely* good. It rather seems to suggest the capacious and contextual approach of Avicenna, in which love is a both/and phenomenon, simultaneously pure and concupiscent, self-fulfilling and self-annihilating, allowing for a multiplicity of objects without losing sight of its eternal ultimate goal.<sup>59</sup>

59. Cf. Bausani 12–13, where he likewise argues for a “deistic” reading of the “two loves.”

60. Meisami points out this cyclical recursivity a number of times in *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (207 n. 37 and 235 n. 67), so what I am discussing here is not entirely new; it is an aspect that I feel will open the text up to further horizons of exploration and interpretation.

Correspondingly, the stories of the *Haft paykar* may not only point towards the ‘purification’ of love in the linear journey from dark to light, but may also recursively spiral into themselves, complementing and complicating their neighbors to the extent that a one-to-one equivalence is no longer *sufficient* to explain their meaning; though articulated in a language of color, the stories ultimately point towards something beyond color itself.<sup>60</sup> In other words, this would suggest that white, albeit the color of purity, religion, and salvation, is not in fact the goal; it is only a color, one among seven, that constitutes something far greater than it itself has the capacity to express. What if black was an aspect of love just as valid – and indeed indispensable – as any other?

Indeed, the Story of the White Dome is not even possible without the ‘darker’ side of love motivating its characters. The youth is

every bit as much a prisoner of his obsessive desire for the harp-player as the king was for the queen of the fairies, and it was only through his experience of this condition and eventual surmounting of it (through the grace of God) that the rather sterile garden he inhabited before transforms into a paradise where sexual pleasure and spiritual security can peacefully coexist and even complement each other. In this regard, the most interesting character in the story is not the youth but rather the harp-player, whose beauty acts as the catalyst that makes heaven accessible. Her playful and elusive answers to the youth's questions show that she has much more to teach him than the importance of waiting for marriage (38.152–56):

خواجه کز مهر ناشکیب آمد \* با سهی سرو در عتیب آمد  
گفت نام تو چیست گفتا نور \* گفت چشم بد از تو گفتا دور  
گفت پردت چه پرده گفتا ساز \* گفت شیوت چه شیوه گفتا ناز  
گفت بوسه دهیم گفتا شست \* گفت هان وقت هست گفتا هست  
گفت آبی بدست گفتا زود \* گفت باذ این مراد گفتا بود

(The master, who had grown impatient from love, began to reproach the straight cypress. He said, "What's your name?" She said, "Light." "The evil eye...?" "Is far away." "What is your veil?" "Music." "What is your mode?" "Coquetry." "Gimme a kiss?" "How about sixty!" "Is now the time?" "Indeed it is." "Will you come to me?" "Soon!" "Will this desire come true?" "Let it be so.")

These lines, deliciously riddled with puns and sexual innuendo, offer much food for thought. The harpist's name, Light (*Nūr*), is suggestive of the Illuminationist philosophy that was being developed by Nizāmī's contemporary in nearby Aleppo, Shihāb al-dīn Suhrawardī (d. 1191), for whom light served as the constitutive center of existence and the manifestation of God: "Everything in the world is derived from the Light of His essence and all beauty and perfection are the gift of His bounty, and to attain fully to this illumination is salvation" (Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* 69). If such is the case, "Light" still has her secrets, which she veils from the hero in music and song – a brilliant play on the word *parda*, which means both "veil" and the fret of a stringed instrument. Simultaneously, she claims her *parda* to be *sāz*, which is both the verbal noun of "playing" and the literal word for instrument; read another way, the youth could be asking her what kind of garment is covering her, to which she replies, "A lute... and nothing else."<sup>61</sup> Even her "style," "method,"

61. See Dastgirdi's commentary in Nizāmī Ganjavī, *Haft Paykar* 304.



or “mode” (as in a musical mode, continuing the pun) is coquetry (*nāz*). Despite its apparent elevation of marriage and holy law at its conclusion, the Story of the White Dome does not seem to write out the importance – and possibly even the necessity – of music, games, and play in the pursuit of love. These are the things that make the harpist’s beauty all the more enticing, giving the young man the determination and strength of will he needs to overcome all the obstacles that waylay him and arrive at the truth that will finally be revealed.

The same ambiguity is found within the Story of the Black Dome, which on the one hand is a story about unregulated concupiscence and the inevitable failure that stems from it, yet on the other hand may be the key that allows the transformative quest for knowledge and understanding to take place. As Annemarie Schimmel notes, black lay not at the bottom, but at the top of the color-coded cosmology of the Kubrāwīya Sufi order: “Black is the light of the essence, the ‘Divine Ipseity as revealing light that cannot be seen but makes see;’ it is the color of *jalāl*, the unfathomable divine majesty, whereas God’s *jamāl*, His beauty, reveals itself in other colors” (Schimmel 256; cf. Corbin 107). This “black light” (*nūr-i siyāh*), Corbin adds, is only perceptible to those who have made “the most perilous initiatic step” into the veiled presence of the *Deus absconditus*; hence it can only be found in darkness (Corbin 100, 114).<sup>62</sup> And indeed, the king, upon his return, is said to dwell in a darkness akin to the Water of Life (“*dar siyāhī cho āb-i ḥayvān zīst*,” 32.41) – a man who has tasted the everlasting beyond, and must now mourn his separation from it.

The king’s journey to heaven and back thus works as a powerful metaphor for the transcendental quest for the knowledge of worlds beyond normal human experience, a journey that may affect radical transformations on the level of both individual and society, though often at a tremendous personal cost. The answer to the King’s question can only be answered by going through the same experience as those who have trod the path before; as Abū-Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) writes, “What a difference between being acquainted with the definition of drunkenness [...] and being drunk!” (Watt 55). Yet wine, while it can elevate the spirit to realms inaccessible to the ordinary mind, can also confuse the mystic into losing sight of his ultimate destination; hence the necessity for strict discipline and obedience to the guide (*shaykh* or *pīr*) if one hopes to stay oriented on the right path. The king, who grew so intoxicated that he could no longer hear the queen’s guidance, must sober up before he can realize where he

62. Many thanks to Austin O’Malley for alerting me to this notion of ‘black light’ in Sufi thought.

63. In many ways, the king's tale is a reminiscent of the Orpheus myth: although the bard's overwhelming love for Eurydice allowed him to descend into the underworld and transgress the bounds of mortality, he cannot, in the end, keep himself from looking back to satisfy his desire for certainty, and thus fails to save her and himself.

went wrong.<sup>63</sup> Even when they end in failure, however, a certain fellowship is formed through these transformative experiences. When the king returns to earth, he is met by the butcher whom he had so callously treated before (32.500–03):

آنک از من کناره کرد و گریخت \* در کنارم گرفت و عذر انگیخت  
گفت اگر گفتمی بتو صد سال \* باورت نامذی حقیقتِ حال  
رفتی و دیدی آنچه بود نهفت \* این چنین قصه با که شاید گفت  
من درین جوشِ گرم جوشیدم \* کز تظلم سیاه پوشیدم

(He who had left me behind and fled [now] embraced me, apologizing: “If I had told you for a hundred years, you never would have believed the truth of this matter. You’ve gone and seen that which was hidden; to whom should one tell such a tale? I [too] boiled in that hot passion, and donned the black from [this] oppression.”)

Through their shared experience and secret knowledge, the king and the butcher become brothers, their mutual embrace eradicating the social hierarchy that formerly stood between them. Divisions of class and gender between the king and his female slave are similarly dissolved when she hears his story and joins the fellowship of those who wear black: a slave (*kanīz*, 32.23) no more, but a respected ascetic (“*zi kaḏbānuvān [...] zāhid zan-ī*,” 32.16), the woman transmits this knowledge of the truth to the princess, to Bahrām, and finally in turn to us. Thus the king's efforts were not all in vain; indeed, the bitterness of his loss taught him wisdom no amount of prosperity and opulence could have provided. Upon his return to his kingdom – which is again described as a kind of divine providence (“*az ‘ināyat-i bakht*,” 32.38) – he rules his kingdom well and without incident: “As long as he held the world, he practiced wisdom; he dressed in black with nothing to mourn” (“*tā jahān dāsht tīz-hūshī kard • bī-musibat siyāh-pūshī kard*,” 32.40). Although he remains trapped in bereavement and separation, his eyes have been opened to a truth few ever get to witness. The king has become a member of the elite, the *ahl al-khawāṣ*, those who have probed the secrets of the world and experienced proximity to the Beloved. We can only properly mourn, it seems, after realizing what we stand to lose; only in blackness do we truly see (32.514–19):

در سیاهی شکوه دارد ماه \* همچو سلطان بزیر چتر سیاه  
هیچ حرفی به از سیاهی نیست \* داس ماهی چو پشت ماهی نیست

از جوانی بود سیه‌مویی \* وز سیاهی بود جوان‌رویی  
 بسیاهی بصر جهان را بیند \* چرکنی بر سیاه ننشیند  
 گر نه سیف‌ور شب سیاه شدی \* کی سزاوار مهد ماه شدی  
 هفت رنگست زیر هفت اورنگ \* نیست بالاتر از سیاهی رنگ

(The moon gains brilliance enfolded in black, just like a sultan beneath a black parasol. No letter is better than the black; the fish's bones are not like its back! Black hair comes from youth; a young face is known by this black. The eye sees the world through darkness, and no stain can sit upon black. If night's brocade was not black, what would be worthy of cradling the moon? There are seven colors below seven thrones; none is higher than the color black.)

This discussion may help us put to rest a nagging question that emerges if we read the Stories of Black and White as simple allegories of failure in concupiscence and salvation in piety. As argued above, the only thing that led to success in one case and failure in the other is God's *direct intervention*, not the superior wisdom or morality of the youth – why then, it begs to be asked, did God not show such kindness to the king? One could hunt for extenuating circumstances, arguing perhaps that the king was innately less worthy of deliverance and needed to learn his lesson, but I am more inclined to suggest that the king's voyage to heaven is in its own way part of the same gift, the discovery of truth through love; truth comes through in many guises and aspects, and one form need not negate the other.

I would like to conclude by turning to another narrative poem about love that was written at more or less the same time as the *Haft paykar*. In his version of the story of Tristan and Iseult (w. ca. 1200), Gottfried von Straßburg at one moment brings his heroes to a love-grotto (*Minnegrotte*) where they seek refuge from Mark's persecution. Every feature of this edifice protects the virtues of love – discretion, purity, kindness, humility, and so on – and locks the vices out. In this passage, Gottfried creates an elaborate architectural metaphor, reminiscent of Nizāmi's seven domes, through which his readers can imagine the component parts of love and see them work together in its ideal and perfect state. In this structure too, color plays an important symbolic role (Gottfried, *Tristan* 264 ed. Hatto; vv. 16967–88 ed. Marold):

The wall was white, smooth, and even: such is Integrity's nature. Her brilliant and uniform whiteness must never be mottled with colour, nor should Suspicion find any pit or ridge in her. In its greenness and firmness the marble floor is like Constancy; this meaning is the best for it in respect of colour and smoothness. Constancy should be of the same fresh green as grass, and smooth and gleaming as glass. At the centre, the bed of crystalline Love was dedicated to her name most fittingly. The man who had cut the crystal for her couch and her observance had divined her nature unerringly: Love *should* be of crystal – transparent and translucent!

This final image of love as transparent and translucent bears important implications for Gottfried's theory of eros. We might have expected Love to be white, the color associated with purity; yet this turns out to be merely the attribute of Integrity, an important component of the edifice but categorically distinct from Love itself. Love, we learn, is color-less; in combining the perceptible colors together within its form, it somehow moves beyond color itself, shedding the material or visible attributes that allowed it to be seen in the first place. Indeed, if we imagine this couch to be utterly translucent, we may not be mistaken to assume that it is in fact *invisible*, bringing us to the question of whether Love can even be 'seen' in its pristine, pre-prismatic state? It may be, in fact, that the only way to perceive Love in the first place is through the use of a prism: only by refracting its pure light back into its visible component parts can we even begin to contemplate Love's nature, all the while aware that what we are seeing is not Love itself but the shards of its fragmentation.

This same metaphor could apply to the structural organization of the stories in the *Haft paykar*: unlike Gottfried, love is not portrayed as a single building, but as a series of seven, each one marked by a distinctive color; yet, just as the colors of the rainbow indicate the refraction of an original ray of light, Nizāmi's buildings are intended to be read as constitutive parts of the whole, the polychromatic elements of an overarching totality. Although the stories of the Black and White Domes are placed at opposite ends of the *Haft Paykar* sequence and in seeming opposition to each other, it seems likely that, when taken together, they encompass an understanding of love that allows for ambiguity and intermingling, in which black and white, external desire and inherent goodness, *erōs* and *agapē*, *'ishq* and *ḥubb*, all have a part to play in bringing about inner contentment, justice in the world, and union with the Beloved. If the pilgrim

on Love's road has only managed the journey from black love to white, he may have to double back if he hopes to find the road beyond color itself.

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## *Maria natare, montes transire*

### L'amore nei modelli epistolari latini del XII secolo

#### Abstract

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This paper focuses on the phenomenology of love in twelfth-century letter construction of a lexicon of love, and the initial development of the distinction between love letters and letters of friendship and of family ties. The love letters affect several areas: real love, physically more and more explicit, marriage, and literary (or courtly) love, akin to romance themes. On the other hand, the models convey the ecclesiastical law on sexual norms, showing the daily needs, the aspirations, and the conventions of a changing society, in all its rich complexity.

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Il XII è un secolo ricchissimo di testi letterari dedicati all'amore; in ambito epistolare è il secolo di Abelardo e Eloisa, gli innamorati che con il loro carteggio hanno ispirato più di una pagina agli autori romantici del secolo XIX, contribuendo alla ricezione moderna di quello che Stendhal definì l'amore-passione. L'analisi proposta in questo contributo è dedicata a testi forse meno famosi, ma non meno importanti per comprendere la concezione dell'amore di questo periodo: le lettere modello a carattere amoroso composte nel corso del XII secolo.

Alcuni di questi materiali avevano attratto l'attenzione di E. Ruhe che, nel 1975, pubblicò *De amasio ad amasiam* in cui intraprese un vasto esame delle lettere d'amore medievali, redatte tanto in latino che nelle lingue romanze, includendo anche qualche escerto a carattere sentimentale proveniente dalle *artes dictandi*. Questo testo, benché ancora di innegabile valore scientifico, sconta ormai una bibliografia non aggiornata e manca delle edizioni pubblicate negli ultimi anni, fatto che altera l'analisi complessiva del fenomeno; in altri contributi più recenti l'attenzione degli studiosi si è invece concentrata

1. Si veda la sezione IV dedicata a *Women and Love Letters* in Høgel and Bartoli.

o su singoli testi, o su aspetti particolari della sfera sentimentale, senza proporre una disamina generale dei modelli di lettera d'amore.<sup>1</sup>

I modelli epistolari di ambito ufficiale e politico, specialmente quelli prodotti dalle grandi cancellerie nel secolo XIII, sono da vari anni oggetto di studio filologico e storico e la loro importanza sul piano storiografico viene confermata anche in numerosi e recenti contributi, tra cui, per citarne solo alcuni, quelli di Enrico Artifoni ("I podestà professionali;" "Una politica del dittare"), Paolo Cammarosano, Benoît Grévin (*Rhétorique du pouvoir*; "La retorica del diritto"), Ronald Witt (*The Two Latin Cultures*; "The Ars of Letter-Writing"), Florian Hartmann (che si sofferma in particolare sul XII secolo: "Decet ergo cives;" *Ars dictaminis*). Lo studio delle lettere modello a carattere privato offre la possibilità di ottenere in maniera diretta e non mediata numerose informazioni sulla vita quotidiana, sui rapporti interpersonali e sulla gestione degli affetti. Sappiamo infatti che i dettatori non inventavano le lettere esemplificative, ma le redigevano a partire da epistole reali (M. Hartmann, *Das Briefbuch* 1.102–03). Come hanno giustamente sottolineato Martha Carlin e David Crouch, intitolando una recente edizione di sillogi epistolari del XIII secolo *Lost Letters of Medieval Life*, questi materiali, proprio perché trāditi all'interno di raccolte usate come modelli, ci conserverebbero le lettere quotidiane – ormai smarrite – che venivano scambiate nel medioevo: se gli originali sono andati perduti, queste copie rappresentano una possibilità importante per il mondo scientifico sotto il profilo linguistico, sociologico e storico. L'ambito privato ritratto dai modelli epistolari spazia dalle relazioni tra genitori e figli a quelle tra amici fino a quelle tra coniugi o innamorati, prospettando materiali ricchi di dettagli e sfumature difficilmente reperibili altrove. Il contenuto sentimentale delle epistole modello ha indotto qualche studioso (in particolare Schaller) a ritenere questi testi meri esercizi inventati dai dettatori, ma ormai l'atteggiamento predominante è quello di accogliere, pur con le dovute cautele, simili materiali all'interno delle fonti documentarie<sup>2</sup> guadagnando all'indagine storico-antropologica informazioni preziose sulla vita quotidiana e sulle relazioni interpersonali. Il tasso di veridicità implicito nell'opera dei dettatori offre la possibilità non comune di indagare i rapporti amorosi nella vita privata e quotidiana, osservando da vicino la loro gestione ma anche la concezione dell'amore sottesa alla composizione epistolare. D'altra parte l'epistola è un genere letterario ben definito, con regole e strutture retoriche che non possono essere eluse e che riflette il patrimonio culturale della società che la produce.

2. Una sintesi del problema con proposta metodologica per il trattamento dei testi dittaminali come fonti storiche in Stella, "Recuperare una fonte storica."

L'epistolografia d'amore merita uno studio complessivo e aggiornato con i dati delle nuove edizioni, un'accurata interpretazione del fenomeno che ne consideri gli aspetti linguistici e sociologici e muova da quanto, in sede teorica, è stato prodotto dagli stessi dettatori su questo argomento.

Questo contributo si propone quindi di esplorare, sul piano linguistico e tematico, la fenomenologia dell'amore così come emerge dalla corrispondenza sentimentale nel XII secolo attraverso i modelli di lettera, in particolare dimostrando la progressiva selezione di un lessico sempre più connotato come amore-passione, l'analisi dei vari aspetti dell'amore reale, con la duplice tendenza verso la letterarizzazione e verso una maggiore esplicitazione della sfera fisica, gli aspetti sociali e normativi entrati nella produzione epistolografica, che sa riflettere in modo estremamente fedele anche la realtà quotidiana.

Partendo dal forte legame che sussiste nei primi modelli di lettera tra amicizia e amore, con successiva diversificazione dei due ambiti affettivi, si mostra la creazione di un lessico che, prima condiviso con gli affetti in genere (affetto filiale, affetto agnazio, affetto fraterno, amicizia), diventa sempre più legato all'amore propriamente inteso. Un altro dato che emerge con evidenza nel corso del XII secolo e che l'epistolografia condivide con altre esperienze letterarie, sia latine che volgari, è la progressiva letterarizzazione dell'amore, sia sotto il profilo linguistico che concettuale, secondo un percorso che conduce alla rarefazione del corpo nell'epistolografia *cortese*. Convive con questo atteggiamento una tendenza, di segno opposto, ad incrementare la fisicità delle allusioni, grazie all'estensione del linguaggio e della casistica amorosa esplorata, dal corteggiamento all'abbandono, dalla lettera alla fanciulla fino a quella inviata alla donna esperita.

Si propone inoltre l'analisi di vari aspetti dell'amore reale rappresentati in questi modelli, da cui emerge una particolare attenzione alla dimensione sociale dei sentimenti. Peculiare dell'epistolografia amorosa fin dalle prime testimonianze, così fortemente calate nel tessuto sociale e nella realtà quotidiana, è la centralità che il ruolo coniugale riveste, analogamente alla diffusione dei precetti religiosi in ambito di matrimonio e celibato promossi dalla Riforma, aspetti che dimostrano una volta di più l'adesione al reale dei materiali analizzati, ma anche il dibattito che accompagnò questi contenuti durante un secolo in cui l'amore rappresenta un tema centrale in molti aspetti della vita (etica, cultura, società).

Gli argomenti enunciati, che corrispondono ai paragrafi in cui il contributo è stato suddiviso, illustrano aspetti che investono sia l'ambito letterario sia quello storico-sociologico, evidenziando la peculiarità dei materiali dittaminali, in cui trovano spazio le norme, i desideri e aspettative espresse dalla società. Un dato importante per l'analisi della fenomenologia dell'amore è inoltre la presenza costante di interlocutori maschili e femminili, elemento che rappresenta un'occasione fondamentale anche per i *gender studies*. Come accennato, ma lo vedremo meglio nelle conclusioni, non c'è un solo tipo di amore raccontato nei nostri modelli: c'è quello più sensuale delle lettere tra innamorati e quello pragmatico e socialmente riconosciuto delle lettere tra coniugi; ci sono epistole di contenuto misogino, altre che danno spazio in maniera più equa al mondo femminile, altre ancora in cui le donne esibiscono una libertà sentimentale sorprendente, in un caleidoscopio di situazioni varie, alcune delle quali al margine tra realtà e finzione letteraria.

## Prolegomena: i testi discussi nel contributo

Per rendere più agevole la comprensione di quanto affrontato nelle pagine seguenti, si elencano le opere di epistolografia da cui provengono le citazioni analizzate, dopo averle brevemente contestualizzate. Molti di questi testi sono composti da una parte teorica e da una parte esemplificativa. Nella sezione teorica vengono dispensate nozioni di grammatica, vengono analizzate le *partes epistolae* (*salutatio, exordium o captatio benivolentiae, narratio, petitio e conclusio*) desunte dalla scansione ciceroniana dell'orazione e talvolta vengono aggiunte anche informazioni retoriche sui *colores* o sulla struttura della frase. La parte esemplificativa è costituita da lettere-modello, che potevano essere intercalate alla materia teorica oppure, più spesso, essere raccolte tutte insieme in calce al testo. I dettatori esemplavano questi modelli, copiando o rielaborando, su lettere reali, da qui la loro rilevanza anche come fonti storiche. Talvolta testi teorici e sillogi di modelli venivano copiati separatamente, dando vita ad una circolazione indipendente delle due parti del testo originario. Altre volte ancora si potevano associare al testo teorico raccolte più lunghe o più brevi di modelli, relativi ad argomenti selezionati sulla base dei fruitori del testo (ambiente clericale o laico, scuola o cancellerie, ecc.). Questi modelli di lettera sono fondamentali anche per datare gli stessi manuali e collocarli geograficamente nello spazio, sulla base

di riferimenti a luoghi o personaggi storici noti. I dettatori, infatti, quasi mai nel XII secolo dispensano notizie autobiografiche. *L'ars dictandi* nasce con il *Breviarium* di Alberico di Montecassino intorno al 1080; la disciplina registra poi un notevole impulso in Bologna, con i *Praecepta dictaminis* di Adalberto Samaritano, composti da un trattato teorico e da alcune lettere esemplificative; sono stati scritti intorno agli anni '30 del XII secolo e sono un testo importantissimo nella storia del *dictamen* perché, secondo gli studiosi, il loro autore avrebbe impresso all'epistolografia una connotazione più agevole mirata a velocizzare l'apprendimento, in linea con le esigenze del nuovo assetto politico comunale che si andava sviluppando nell'Italia centro-settentrionale. Prodotte nello stesso *milieu* culturale e politico, sempre intorno al 1130, sono le *Rationes dictandi* di Ugo Bolognese, un testo strutturato come il precedente con una parte teorica e alcuni modelli esemplificativi. Una datazione analoga è assegnata all'*Aurea Gemma* del Francigena, un maestro di cui non sappiamo nulla tranne il nome, ma la cui opera ebbe un'influenza notevole. Nel prologo del testo dice di averlo composto a Pavia. Sempre in Italia centro-settentrionale (diocesi di Cremona) sono state composte le lettere della *Lombardische Briefsammlung*, una raccolta anonima datata tra 1132 e il 1137. Intorno agli anni '50 del XII secolo, nelle zone toscano-emiliane (Bologna, Faenza, Imola, il Casentino, Arezzo, Pisa), sono attivi Maestro Bernardo e il suo allievo, Maestro Guido. Nel contributo si trattano citazioni dalle *Introductiones prosaici dictaminis* di Maestro Bernardo (un trattato completo di silloge), dai *Modi dictaminum* di Maestro Guido, un trattato in cui gli esempi sono intercalati alle nozioni teoriche, e da due sillogi attribuite a Maestro Guido, le *Mirae commoditatis epistolae* e le *Epistolae a Guidone compositae*. Proveniente sempre dal medesimo ambiente toscano (Firenze, Prato, Casentino) e coeva alle opere di Bernardo e Guido è anche l'anonima raccolta epistolare conservata in un manoscritto barberiniano della Biblioteca Vaticana. Da collegarsi probabilmente alla scuola di Guido e Bernardo è la *Silloge Veronese*, una raccolta anonima conservata nel codice della Capitolare di Verona che ci restituisce anche molto materiale dei due maestri. Di datazione incerta, ma probabilmente da collocarsi intorno alla metà del XII, è l'anonimo carteggio denominato *Epistolae duorum amantium*, al centro di un dibattito ancora in corso tra studiosi che lo attribuiscono ad Abelardo e Eloisa e studiosi che, con argomentazioni anche molto diverse, non accettano questa assegnazione. Sono pochi gli elementi che permettono di contestualizzare geograficamente il testo, che sembra com-

posto in area francese (nel presente contributo si discutono alcuni *loci similes* rintracciati in opere dittaminali che potrebbero indicare l'uso di materiali epistolografici nella redazione del testo). Passando alla seconda metà del secolo XII vengono citati testi di Bernard de Meung, un noto dettatore attivo in area francese intorno al 1180 e autore dei *Flores dictaminum*, un testo teorico tradito a volte con la silloge epistolare, di cui abbiamo due redazioni (*maior e minor compilatio*). Alcuni dei suoi modelli d'amore sono noti per la casistica di situazioni rappresentate, a volte giudicate al limite del credibile, ma che nel presente contributo si cerca di contestualizzare nell'ambito dell'ideologia riformista in tema di matrimonio e celibato dei chierici. Di area francese è anche il *De amore* di Andrea Cappellano, un testo importantissimo nella codificazione teorica sentimentale del medioevo, dietro il cui esempio Boncompagno da Signa, noto dettatore a lungo *magister* nello *Studium* di Bologna, compose la sua *Rota Veneris* (ante 1215). Attivo nella seconda metà del secolo XII fu Paolo di Camaldoli, autore del *Registrum* legato alla cogregazione religiosa camaldolese la cui formazione *sui generis* sembra dovuta, almeno in parte, all'ambiente casentino del 1100. Con la raccolta di Tegernsee, di cui si citano qui le lettere d'amore, scritte in latino con inserti in mediotedesco, l'asse geografico si sposta verso la Baviera. La raccolta si colloca intorno agli anni '80 del secolo XII.

## 1 Il dominio della *filia*

1.1 *Introduzione*. In questo paragrafo si mostrano le prime testimonianze sentimentali reperite nelle *artes dictandi*. Alcuni esempi non riguardano propriamente l'amore ma l'amicizia, un sentimento centrale nell'affettività medievale, che permette a molti autori di esprimere con accenti di forte partecipazione il proprio attaccamento a qualcuno. Il lessico dell'amore è ancora condiviso con il lessico degli affetti: gli esempi scelti (*ante 1150*) mostrano un linguaggio ancora non connotato in modo esclusivo per l'amore-passione. Per questo motivo sono stati selezionati modelli di lettera che mostrano le situazioni tipiche della retorica epistolare a carattere sentimentale in senso lato, cioè lettere scambiate tra innamorati, tra amici, tra coniugi (retorica della lontananza) e tra cognati (quasi una situazione cortese *ante litteram*).

Vengono anche indagate alcune abitudini sentimentali come il *pignus amoris*, poiché in questi modelli ricorrono le prime attestazio-

ni epistolografiche del *munusculum*, cioè di un piccolo dono promesso o inviato insieme alla lettera: questa galanteria è inizialmente testimoniata in alcune epistole tra cognati come distinzione sociale, ma in fretta verrà connotata in senso amoroso, come segno esclusivo di affetto e appartenenza reciproca.

1.2 *Eros e filia*. Gli albori della disciplina dittaminale coincidono cronologicamente con i primi modelli di lettera d'amore che ci sono stati conservati. Si crede che anche prima del XII secolo fosse diffusa l'abitudine, testimoniata da numerosi epistolari d'autore, della corrispondenza privata sentimentale, ma certo è solo con l'avvento dell'epistolografia che le lettere comuni vengono inserite nelle raccolte o nei manuali, sottratte così all'oblio che inevitabilmente le avrebbe disperse. Come anticipato, i modelli epistolari sono testi ibridi, dalla duplice natura letteraria e documentaria: il *magister*, quando inseriva una lettera esemplificativa in una silloge, si atteneva a concezioni sentimentali e formule socialmente diffuse. L'orizzonte culturale condiviso dagli autori a cavallo tra XI e XII secolo – relativamente a tematiche amorose e amicali – ha i suoi poli in Ovidio e Cicerone, in particolare nelle *Heroides*, nell'*Ars amatoria* e nel *Lelius*,<sup>3</sup> uno dei dialoghi più citati nelle *summe dictaminis* di questo periodo:

A. precordiali amico – vel: unico necessario – G. quicquid et ipse sibi. [...] Est enim, ut ait Tullius, verus amicus tamquam alter idem. Unde qui intuetur amicum, tamquam se ipsum contemplatur; vere namque fides amicitie e duobus quasi unum efficit animum. (*Lombardische Briefsammlung*, ep. 45)

(Ad A., carissimo amico – oppure: all'unico importante –, G. augura qualunque cosa [desideri], anche sé stesso. [...] Infatti, come dice Tullio, il vero amico è un altro sé stesso. Per cui chi guarda un amico, è come se guardasse a fondo sé stesso; infatti la fedeltà della vera amicizia fa sì che due intendimenti diventino uno.)

Quando è necessario trasmettere un senso di affetto profondo, nelle lettere modello si ricorre spesso all'elogio che Cicerone fece dell'amicizia, un sentimento tanto forte che si manifesta con la stessa intensità dell'amore. Ziolkowski, in un contributo dedicato alla poesia d'amore, aveva sottolineato la tendenza medievale alla contaminazione semantica di *eros* e *filia*, fenomeno esemplificato egregiamente da un modello epistolare contenuto nei *Praecepta* di Adalberto Samaritano (71), inviato da un chierico di Lucca ad un amico lontano:

3. Il testo è molto frequentato non solo in ambito dittaminale, basti pensare al *De amicitia* di Marbodo di Rennes. Si veda la "Silloge Veronese" (2 e 6): "ut ait Tullius doctor eloquentissimus: est omnis usus amicitie voluntatum, studiorum et sententiarum summa consentio;" "Age itaque fili, ipsa vita canonum bonorum te inmitor exhibe, lasciviorum collegia fuge, bonorum societates appete ut Tullius;" Hugo Bononiensis 59: "Ut Tullius in amicitia de Scipione; [...] nam iuxta Tullium sic tue quandoque amicitie recordatione fruor, ut bene me uixisse propter tuam familiaritatem credam." L'argomento è stato molto studiato; in relazione al tema epistolare si vedano Jackson; Mews, "Cicero;" e Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*.

Ac per hoc, licet corporali presentia montium, vallium [...] paludum sinistra sequestratione seiunctus, indissolubili tamen vobis ardore coniunctus vos dies et noctes amoris ulnis indesinenter amplector, vobis adhereo, vobis anhele, fecunditate vestra gaudeo. [...] litterarum officio visito; [...] Hac ergo vos visito, vos imploro, vehementer exoro [...] Sed ne miretur magistralis pietas, si mihi non adest polita locutio [...]. Misimus quoque cum his, que credimus vobis grata munuscula [...]. Expeto et a vobis quedam vestri amoris signa, non tam necessaria quam mutue dilectionis representaria.

(Proprio per questo, sebbene lontano fisicamente – perché separato da avversi monti e valli e paludi – tuttavia attaccato a te con affetto indissolubile giorno e notte ti abbraccio senza sosta con le braccia dell'amore, mi stringo vicino a te, desidero la tua presenza, sono lieto della tua prosperità, ti vengo a trovare con le mie lettere. Per questo ti vengo a trovare, ti imploro, ti chiedo di cuore [...]. Ma la tua grande generosità non si stupisca se non ho uno stile raffinato [...] ti ho comunque mandato, insieme a queste righe, qualche piccolo dono che spero gradirai. Chiedo anche a te un segno del tuo amore, non tanto perché necessario, quanto perché simbolico del reciproco affetto.)

4. Cfr. Hugo Bononiensis 91: "ualde confidere atque sinceritatis brachiis infra sinum mentis fauendo complecti."

5. Si pensi alla nota epistola di Alcuino al vescovo Arnone: "Satis suavi commemoratione vestram recolo, sanctissime Pater, dilectionem, et familiaritatem, optans, ut quandoque eveniat mihi tempus amabile, quo collum charitatis vestrae desideriorum meorum digitulis amplecter. O si mihi translatio Habacuc esset subito concessa, quam citatis manibus ruerem in amplexus paternitatis vestrae, et quam compressis labiis non solum oculos, aures et os, sed etiam manuum vel pedum singulos digitorum articulos non semel, sed multoties oscularer" (PL 100.141a).

Il passo mostra come siano già presenti alcuni elementi che caratterizzeranno la retorica d'amore: una lingua che, in crescendo, diventerà sempre più fisica (*amoris ulnis* "braccia dell'amore,"<sup>4</sup> *vobis coniunctus* "a te attaccato"), passando dall'*amor* "amore" all'*ardor* "desiderio" all'*amplector* "abbraccio" all'*adhereo* "mi stringo vicino." Espressioni di simile intensità non sono inedite nella retorica epistolare, quando i due interlocutori vogliono sottolineare la propria affinità,<sup>5</sup> ma qui il fenomeno esula dall'ambito autoriale e assume una dimensione socialmente più vasta. Il linguaggio dei sentimenti, benché intenso ed efficace, è però ancora condiviso con tutti gli ambiti affettivi: *devotio*, *sustentamen*, *solamen*, *presidium*, *affectum* ("devozione, sostegno, ristoro, difesa, affetto") sono termini utilizzati nelle lettere ai figli, ai genitori, agli amici, al coniuge, alla persona amata. La lingua dei sentimenti è varia ma non esclusiva e la concezione dell'amore trasmessa dai modelli epistolari appare in questa fase genericamente legata alla sfera degli affetti intimi. Questo è dovuto in parte anche



6. Su questo *topos* e sulle sue matrici ciceroniane e bibliche cfr. Krautter.

7. Si legge anche in Bernardus Magister 98v: “si tanta locorum quantam amicorum adesse vicinitas;” in “Silloge Veronese,” rispettivamente epp. 4, 17 e 30: “locorum longa spatia illos non separat quos individua mentis karitas copulat, ac per hoc licet a te sim corpore separatus intimo tamen cordis ardore tibi sum copulatus; die noctuque te videre desidero, tua salute sum anxius, prosperitate gaudeo, vel, quod absit, infortunio tamquam proprio doleo;” in Henricus Francigena 90: “licet nostra terrarum spatia nostra sequestrent corpora [...]; licet et terrarum longa intervalla, amice carissime, nostra corpora non mentes sequestrare videantur;” e nell’*Aurea Gemma Willhelmi* (in “Aurea Gemma Gruppe”).

al genere epistolare, che prevede la lontananza degli interlocutori; non a caso motivo ricorrente delle epistole tra amici è proprio quello che sostiene, sulla base della grande affinità intellettuale (si osservino i riferimenti alla *mens* “mente”), la vicinanza degli interlocutori a dispetto della distanza fisica che li separa,<sup>6</sup> come mostra la fortuna di un *topos* di Ambrogio (ep. 1.47) ripreso da Adalberto Samaritano e usato poi da molti dettatori: “Locorum longa intervalla non separat, quos individua mentis caritas copulat; [...] longa terrarum intercapedo non omnino sequestrat, quos corpore divisos nectit” (“Luoghi molto distanti non separano chi è unito dalla particolare affinità della mente; la grande distanza fisica non allontana affatto coloro divisi nel corpo ma uniti (nell’animo):” Adalbertus Samaritanus 18).<sup>7</sup>

Proprio per la predominante componente amicale, i dettatori di questo primo periodo, per esprimere l’affetto, si rivolgono con maggiore frequenza a Cicerone; da Ovidio traggono i personaggi innamorati per antonomasia (la coppia Paride-Elena, come sopra, torna con assidua insistenza), più tardi i rimedi per il sentimento non ricambiato e le angustie dovute alla separazione dall’oggetto dei propri desideri.

1.2 *Il munus tra signum amoris e connotazione sociale.* Nella lettera di Adalberto Samaritano che abbiamo citato in apertura del paragrafo il mittente allude ad un dono (*grata munuscula* “un gradito pensiero,” *amoris signa* “un segno d’amore”), abituale tra amici (si vedano le epistole della raccolta “*Mirae commoditatis*” attribuita a Maestro Guido 9: “munuscula de suburbano mittimus horto,” “ti ho mandato qualche dono dall’orticello che ho fuori città;” e 14: “munuscula quedam intimi amoris nostri signa,” “un qualche pensiero segno del mio profondo amore”) ma che ben presto diverrà un *topos* delle lettere sentimentali.

In questo periodo l’abitudine del dono è attestata anche in alcune epistole tra cognati, situazione epistolare interessante sotto il profilo sentimentale, ma proposta in un numero esiguo di modelli (nelle *Rationes* di Hugo Bononiensis e nelle *Epistolae a Guidone compositae*). La relazione affettiva, come si vede nell’esempio di seguito, è gestita in maniera gentile ma misurata, la cognata è paragonata ad una *soror karissima* (“carissima sorella”) che il mittente vuole *amare, onorare et servire* (“amare, onorare, servire”); il dono a cui si accenna nella *conclusio* rappresenta una consuetudine sociale, un segno di distinzione imposto dai *mores* delle rispettive famiglie più che un pegno d’amore o un oggetto che colmi la distanza fisica tra due inna-

morati: “deprecor ut tue habitudinis statum, quem quidem ut meum exopto, mihi mittas cum aliquo munusculo, tue dilectionis indicium” (“ti prego, secondo il tuo costume, che mi auguro simile al mio, di mandarmi un segno del tuo affetto insieme ad un piccolo dono:” “Silloge Veronese” 27) o “aliquid tui amoris signum, anulum vel friseum, mandare non hesites” (“non esitare ad inviarmi un segno del tuo amore, un anello o un drappo di tessuto frigio:” Maestro Guido, “Epistolae” 5).

Nella categoria epistolare agnatzia, il caso più interessante ai fini di questa ricerca è quello della risposta della donna che leggiamo in una silloge di Maestro Guido (1159 ca.), di pochi anni più tarda rispetto al testo di Adalberto. La missiva del cognato, fatta eccezione per la *salutatio*, che accenna qualche lode formale alla bellezza della destinataria, si mantiene su un piano di neutra cordialità: “Imildae cognate dulcissime oculis et facie omnique pulchritudine splendide, G. seipsum totum et plures quam possit mandare salutes” (“A Imilda, dolcissima cognata, fulgida bellezza degli occhi, del volto e di tutto l’aspetto, G. manda tutto sé stesso e tutti i saluti possibili:” Maestro Guido, “Epistolae” 5); la responsiva invece sfrutta locuzioni più *borderline*, come dimostra l’uso di termini che ben presto saranno molto connotati in senso amoroso come *servire* (si pensi al *servitium amoris*): “nihil facere cupivi quam tuam personam videre, ac ei multum servire; [...] te maxime deprecor quatinus quam citius potes domum, ut te videre valeam, redire non differas” (“nulla desidero fare più che vederti e servirti, in ogni cosa; ti prego tanto di tornare a casa prima che puoi, dove potrò rivederti:” Maestro Guido, “Epistolae” 6).

Espressioni simili erano state usate solo pochi anni prima da Bernardo (1140–53 ca.), maestro di Guido, per esemplificare una delle prime *salutationes ad amicam* della storia dell’*ars dictandi*. Questa sovrapposizione tra i due registri, quello cioè della lettera alla cognata e quello della lettera all’innamorata, dimostra che il lessico amoroso non è ancora percepito come esclusivo dei rapporti sentimentali propriamente intesi:

Nobili domine vel amice karissime, indissolubili dilectionis  
sibi dulcedine coniuncte vel inextricabili sibi amore copulate  
B. seipsum totum et quidquid habere videtur, quod Paris  
Elene, quod Thisbe Pirus, omnium delectabilium statum  
incomparabilem summe dulcedinis unionem, intimam

8. Di seguito la *salutatio ad amicum*: “B. suo domino et amico carissimo vel dulcissimo totius probitatis viro sui cordis anime vel animi vel pectoris dimidio N. sue dilectionis flagrantiam sue voluntatis affectum, sui amoris dimidium sui amoris dulcedinem et plenitudinem sue voluntatis complexionem seipsam totam et quidquid esse videtur de se quidquid ei placet;” l’edizione critica delle *Introductiones* di Bernardus Magister è in preparazione a cura di chi scrive. Sulle *salutationes* si veda anche Ruhe 299.

dilectionem vel amorem, intimi amoris copulam. (Bernardus Magister 81r)<sup>8</sup>

(Alla nobile signora, o all’amica carissima, unita a me dall’indissolubile dolcezza dell’affetto, o legata a me da un amore indissolubile, B. manda tutto sé stesso e quello che ha, l’amore di Paride per Elena, quello di Piramo per Tisbe, tutte le cose più gradite, l’impareggiabile unione di una grande dolcezza, l’intimo affetto [o l’intimo amore], l’unione di un intimo amore.)

1.3 *L’amore coniugale*. Le epistole tra marito e moglie sono tra i primi modelli di lettera sentimentale confluiti nei manuali. Poiché la lettera si scrive solo se uno dei due interlocutori è altrove, una delle situazioni più frequenti nelle lettere coniugali della prima metà del secolo è quella in cui il marito si trova lontano per motivi di lavoro (solitamente commercio) o di prigionia e la moglie, rimasta sola a casa, si lamenta della sua assenza. I modelli epistolari sono ricchi di spunti per descrivere i problemi affettivi di un ménage quotidiano: né l’amore ovidiano né l’affetto ciceroniano offrono esempi di amore coniugale come quello di cui a volte i dettatori devono trattare. In questi casi, si crede, emerge il dato non letterario, quello più giornaliero e banale, ma non meno interessante. La metà stilistica delle soluzioni adottate, le incombenze materiali enunciate nelle lettere sembrano ritrarre il fenomeno nella sua più reale ed effettiva espressione, come in questo modello epistolare inviato dal marito alla moglie: “te, uxor karissima, deprecor ut nostre domus negotia diligenter pertractes et tuis filis providere ac vindemias recolligere taliter studies ut quod de te absente credo, te presente cognoscere valeam” (“moglie carissima ti prego affinché tu segua con attenzione le incombenze della nostra casa, tu provveda ai figli e alla vendemmia e ti impegni affinché ciò che io credo di te lontana corrisponda effettivamente a quello che vedrò una volta tornato da te:” *Modi dictaminum* 7.16).<sup>9</sup>

Analogamente alle lettere tra cognati, anche in questo caso l’approccio, più che di natura sentimentale, è di tipo sociale: la donna che appare abbandonata dal marito per la lunga assenza del coniuge non ha più un ruolo definito nella famiglia, è mal tollerata, insieme ai figli, dai parenti del marito che sono chiamati ad occuparsi del suo sostentamento, come nella lettera della *Lombardische Briefsammlung*, datata circa al 1130, che si legge di seguito:

9. La lettera potrebbe essere copiata da una missiva, risalente al sec. XI, contenuta nell’archivio dei conti Guidi. Per la discussione sul testo cfr. anche Stella, “Chi scrive le mie lettere?” e Bartoli, *I conti Guidi*.

C. dulcissimo viro vite sue desiderio A. sua uxor fidelissima, quam sine eo non potest habere, salutem. Dicit nec opinari potest, dulcissime coniunx, vita mihi carior, tota spes vite mee, post Deum amor et desiderium meum, sustentamen, solamen, auxilium et iuvamen laborum et dolorum meorum levamen; [...] ergo, marite karissime, quam primum potes, me de hac mesticia releva, tanta calamitate libera, veni, redi, ne morare, me miseram consolare [...] memor esto nostrorum filiorum, quos te diligere super omnia profitebaris, et, si sum tibi vilis, quod tamen non reor, communes respice natos, qui mollibus annis enutriendi et in patrias artes erudiendi fuerant. (*Lombardische Briefsammlung* 48)

(A C., dolcissimo marito, desiderio della sua vita, A. sua fedelissima moglie invia la salute che senza di lui non può avere. Non si può esprimere a parole né concepire [che tu sei], dolcissimo marito, a me più caro della vita, unica speranza della vita mia, dopo Dio mio amore e desiderio, sostegno, rifugio, aiuto e rimedio dei mali, conforto dei miei dolori; [...] perciò marito carissimo, prima possibile sollevami da questa tristezza, liberami da una così grande sventura, vieni, torna a consolarmi, non tardare; [...] ricordati dei nostri figli, che avevi promesso di amare più di ogni altra cosa e, se a me non tieni, cosa che non credo possibile, guarda almeno i nostri fanciulli, che ancora in tenera età lasciasti da nutrire e da educare secondo i costumi paterni.)

Un caso simile, anche questo completo della responsiva, si legge sempre nelle *Introductiones* di Bernardo, in cui il marito è prigioniero ad Ascalona (lo apprendiamo dalla risposta). Si osservi la già rilevata centralità dell'esperienza coniugale nei modelli epistolari d'amore, un dato importante sul piano sociologico, che depone ulteriormente a favore del portato documentario di questi materiali:

Dulcissimum et karissimum virorum R., domum redire nolente, M. cum suis filiis propriis viribus destituta duritiam cordi relinquere [...]. Mendicare erubesco, fodere non valeo, et unde mihi et tuis filiis possim alimenta parare me non habere cognoscis. Enquiro profecto ut mihi presidium conferant consanguineitatis tibi linea copulati, sed quod dicam proprio derelicta marito? [...] Nam malo viva ad te

veniendo deficere quam tam turpiter et tanto corporis  
opprobrio vitam finire. (Bernardus Magister 120v–121r)

(A R., il più dolce e caro tra gli uomini che non vuole tornare a casa, M. con i suoi figli, ormai senza più forze, chiede di mettere da parte la durezza del suo cuore. [...] Ho vergogna di mendicare, non so questuare e tu sai bene che non ho chi può procurare il cibo a me e ai tuoi figli. Potrei certo chiedere un aiuto ai tuoi parenti, ma cosa posso dire, abbandonata dal mio stesso marito? Preferisco a questo punto morire cercando di raggiungerti, piuttosto che morire qui in modo così vergognoso e con grande disdoro del mio corpo.)

1.4 *Conclusioni*. In apertura del paragrafo ci siamo soffermati sulle categorie di interlocutori coinvolti in questi primi esempi analizzati: amici, cognati, innamorati e coniugi. Nelle citazioni proposte si osserva l'uso di un lessico degli affetti che non è ancora esclusivo per l'amore, ma che contiene ugualmente accenti di fisicità (rappresentata quasi sempre come distanza). Il legame più approfondito psicologicamente in questa prima fase del *dictamen* è quello dell'amicizia, negli altri casi non si trova ancora rappresentato un affetto che esista solo per sé stesso, emancipato dalla necessità contingente, sia essa sociale o economica. L'eroticismo è impiegato con misura, principalmente per trasmettere la mancanza e non l'appagamento, il desiderio suscitato dalla lontananza e non dalla frequentazione. Le lettere coniugali, tra le prime categorie ad essere rappresentate nei modelli epistolari sentimentali, colpiscono per la loro pragmaticità e l'assenza di qualsiasi forma di erotismo: l'amore è in questo caso condivisione di impegni anche pratici, il matrimonio rappresenta una collocazione nella società, specialmente per la donna, che nelle lettere si lamenta dell'assenza del marito che la priva dell'affetto ma anche del suo ruolo riconosciuto di moglie, con serie ricadute in ambito economico. Il tema della dimensione sociale dell'amore emerge con continuità in questi primi modelli, come dimostrano anche le lettere tra cognati sullo scambio di doni: queste sfumature psicologiche ci mostrano quanto le lettere siano radicate nella realtà quotidiana.

## 2 La teorizzazione della lettera d'amore

2.1 *Introduzione*. Il paragrafo è dedicato all'evoluzione dell'amore nei modelli epistolari intorno alla metà del secolo XII. La cosa più rile-

vante è la teorizzazione della lettera d'amore discussa nei manuali, che implicitamente significa diffusione secolare dell'*ars dictandi*, con conseguente diversificazione delle situazioni sentimentali. Si osserva come cambia la lode della donna in questa fase, che tende alla codifica di espressioni formulari ma contribuisce a elaborare il lessico della passione. Accanto a modelli più standardizzati troviamo alcune lettere che, pur legate a precetti dittaminali, trattano il contenuto sentimentale in modo personale.

2.2 *La composizione della lettera d'amore nei manuali.* Quando un dettatore affronta in sede teorica un argomento è perché questo corrisponde ad una esigenza collettiva; in tal senso va interpretata l'emersione teorica dell'epistolografia amorosa, di qualche anno più tarda rispetto ai primi modelli di lettera sentimentale, discussi nel paragrafo precedente, che si leggono in testi datati tra gli anni '30 e i primi anni '50 del XII secolo.<sup>10</sup> Il fenomeno si intensifica nel decennio '50-'60: l'accresciuta presenza di lettere d'amore nelle sillogi ratifica una abitudine che probabilmente andava sempre più diffondendosi. I modelli epistolari di questi anni, inoltre, mostrano segni di evoluzione anche tematica, perché incontriamo le prime lettere di corteggiamento amoroso, scambiate tra innamorati e non tra coniugi. L'uscita dalla prevalente dimensione coniugale, che continua comunque ad essere rappresentata, incrementa la componente ovidiana, rende il linguaggio più vario e audace e impone nuove formule per l'*exordium* e la *petitio*, due parti molto delicate della lettera. Gli stralci riprodotti di seguito, provenienti da lettere della raccolta barberiniana edita da Helene Wieruszoski, permettono di percepire un cambiamento nella sensibilità comune, mostrando la ricerca di uno spazio semantico per i rapporti epistolari tra uomini e donne:

M. virginali flosculo, G. eius utinam amicus, quidquid facendum censuerat, cum petitionis effectu [...] Iuxta illud Ovidii: fit mihi longa dies, noctes vigilantur amore [...] non modicum terremur et mirando conturbamur, quod nedum meis labella vestra coniungatis, verum etiam eloquia nostra dedignemini audire. Vobis ita prostrati facie supplicamus quatinus vestris eloquiis nos primo dignemini beare ac vestre virginitatis dulcedinem in aliquo saltem prelibare. (*Silloge barberiniana* 14)

(A M. virginale bocciolo G., magari suo amico, invia qualunque cosa lo ritenga degno di fare, [sperando] nel [buon] esito

10. Esistono alcune salutationes sentimentali in un testo conservato nel ms. Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 2507, 122r-123v: *Pulcrae positiones magistri Heremanni*. Il codice è molto sciupato e rende ardua la lettura ma, secondo Turcan-Verkerk, "La *Ratio in dictamina*" 933-34, si potrebbe assegnare alla prima metà del XII secolo; si veda anche Bartoli, "Da Maestro Guido" 125.

della richiesta. [...] In proposito il verso di Ovidio: lungo il giorno, le notti veglio per amore; [...] sono molto impaurito e – cosa che mi stupisce – scosso per il fatto che tu non solo non hai ancora avvicinato le tue labbra alle mie, ma nemmeno ti degni di ascoltare le mie parole. Per questo col viso prostrato ti supplico affinché per prima cosa tu mi onori di bearmi con le tue parole, e poi tu mi faccia in qualche modo almeno assaggiare la dolcezza del tuo candore.)

V. sermocinalis facetie gemula decorato, M. quod poterat salva virginitate rapi [...]. Sed quoniam vestri pectoris ardores erga nos contulere ac ita iure fore nequaquam dubitamus, idcirco vobis latenter verba, quam cicius, faciemus vestreque voluntati, si forte volueris, satisfacere modicum differemus. (*Silloge barberiniana* 15)

(A V., decorato con la gemma di una suadente retorica, M. invia ciò che può essere preso, tranne la verginità. [...] Ma poiché mi hai donato gli ardori del tuo petto e così con ragione non dubito che continuerai, con qualche parolina di nascosto ti accontenterò quanto prima, se invece vorrai soddisfare [in pieno i tuoi desideri], aspetteremo un altro po' di tempo.)

I brevi accenni passionali, le richieste di incontri clandestini e di contatti fisici indicano che il desiderio comincia ad essere manifestato, per questo è necessario attenersi a formule e norme codificate: i tempi sono maturi perché i dettatori si occupino del problema anche in sede teorica, e non solo esemplificativa. Sarà Maestro Guido, attivo tra la fine degli '50 e i primi anni '60 il primo dettatore a dedicare un capitolo (il *quarto modo*) del suo trattato (*Modi dictaminum*) alla redazione delle lettere d'amore, analizzando le due varianti diffuse fino a questo momento, quella coniugale e quella di corteggiamento tra innamorati, come chiarisce sintetizzando così l'argomento: "de uxore ad virum et viri ad uxorem, amice ad amicum et amici ad amicam consequenter videamus" ("adesso vediamo le lettere della moglie al marito e del marito alla moglie, dell'amica all'amico e dell'amico all'amica:" *Modi dictaminum* 145). Le indicazioni contenute nel testo guidino sono abbastanza semplici, ma bastano per evidenziare una progressiva definizione della sfera fisica.<sup>11</sup> Il vocabolario dell'amore comincia a distinguersi, e insieme alle formule affettive che già conosciamo (*mee vite solacium, pectoris gaudium, tutela et refugium*, "sol-

11. "Mandare se ipsum totum vel quicquid habere videtur quod Paris Elene, quod Tisbe Piramus, omnium dilectabilium statum in corporabilem dulcedinis unionem, intimam dilectionem vel amorem, tot salutes quot estas fert flores vel quot mare fert pisces vel quot habent dialectica lites et similia his sic." Una *salutatio* di questo tipo verrà definita tra qualche anno *rusticam et ridiculosam* da Boncompagno da Signa 34. Si veda anche la M66 delle *Epistolae duorum amantium*: "Gaudia tot retine quot habent guttas maris unde / Quotque virent herbe quot pisces sunt maris amne" (cfr. Ov. *Pont.* 2.7.28).

lievo della mia vita, gioia del mio petto, salvezza e rifugio”) i nuovi tratti connotativi saranno affidati all’adunaton, all’iperbole (“ex odore tui amoris montes transire, maria natare et ipsum mortis articulum subire non recusarem,” “per il desiderio del tuo amore non rifiuterei di espormi alla morte né di uccidere qualcuno; non rifiuterei di varcare i monti e nuotare per tutti mari:” *Modi dictaminum* 7.16) e al *topos* dell’impossibilità di esprimersi a parole (“si Tulliana facundia mihi adesset [...] id exprimere nulla ratione valerem,” “anche se avessi l’eloquenza di Cicerone, non potrei esprimere in nessun modo ciò che provo:” *ibidem*): si esce dalla sfera del sentimento generico pagando un tributo al formulare e all’insincerità. Questo non significa che le situazioni ritratte non siano reali, implica soltanto un progressivo irrigidirsi delle espressioni usate per descriverle. Si veda la rubrica e il testo della lettera 48 contenuta in una silloge di Maestro Guido datata alla fine degli anni ’50:

*Diligentis alicuius ad eam quam habere cupit*

Dulcissime amanti amantis amator sui pectoris gaudium seipsum totum et plures quam possit mandare salutes. [...] Ex ardore tui amoris [...] nec mortem subire nec alicui poterim vim inferre, neque montes transire neque maria natare ullo modo recusarem. Es nimirum dominarum inclita inter alias splendida, iliis et cuncto corporis statu pre ceteris formosa, omni venustate curialiter docta, capillis et oculis et dulci eloquio decenter conspicua; [...] si amplius vivere velis per latorem presentium aliquid tui amoris signum dirigere et qualiter valeam ad te nocte venire mihi sine mora significare procures. (Maestro Guido, “Epistolae” 48)

*(Lettera di un innamorato ad una donna che desidera avere*

L’innamorato alla sua dolcissima amata [invia] la gioia del suo petto, tutto sé stesso e tutti i saluti che si possono mandare. [...] Per il desiderio del tuo amore non rifiuterei di espormi alla morte né di uccidere qualcuno, né di varcare i monti o nuotare per tutti mari. Emergi infatti tra le altre donne, sei la più bella di tutte, per i fianchi e per tutta la tua figura sei la più aggraziata, edotta nei modi cortesi, gli occhi, i capelli e la dolcezza del tuo eloquio sono proprio come si conveniene; [...] se vuoi che io sopravviva mandami per il latore di questa lettera un segno del tuo amore e indicami senza indugio in quale modo potrò venire da te di notte.)



2.3 *Lodi della donna e dell'uomo*. La lode fisica è del tutto spersonalizzata, si esalta la bellezza del corpo, l'eleganza dei modi, il contegno, cominciando a tracciare un percorso che già in nuce è quello cortese. Il *signum amoris* è ormai consuetudine galante – non più indotto dallo *status* sociale come nelle lettere tra cognati, ma meno spontaneo che in quelle tra amici – così come la richiesta dell'appuntamento.<sup>12</sup> Stesso tono anima l'iperbolica responsiva, in cui la fanciulla dice di avere rifiutato partiti socialmente più elevati (il *miles* è di solito inserito nel *medius situs* o nell'*infimus situs*, se mercenario) e fissa luogo e ora dell'incontro, di cui accenna interessanti anticipazioni:

12. Nelle raccolte esistono varie lettere tra amici in cui si fissa un appuntamento per conoscersi di persona: si vedano Adalbertus Samaritanus 1 e 2; "Silloge Veronese" 11 e 27; Maestro Guido, "Epistole a Guidone composite" 32–33 e 37–38; cfr. anche Haskins.

Iuvenum pulcherrimo et pre ceteris conspicuo eius dilectionis languida sui amoris amplexum et de se quod cupit habere. Mi militum pulcherrime, sincerum mei cordis amorem tibi aliquatenus ut peropto nocte vel die ostendere valerem, illud esset cordis mei gaudium, ingens solacium et immensum refugium totius meae vitae cum pro tui amore [...] duces quoque, marchiones, comites et nobilissimos proceres in amicos penitus recusem. [...] Prudentiam tuam admodum deprecor [...] in nocte diei Iovis ante domum mei patris transire peroptans, hostium posterioris camerae tibi caute propulses. Nam vigilans te sine mora, nudis brachiis, sub variis pellibus suscipiam; et que tibi erunt dulcia, dummodo mihi fidem velis conservare, tuae dilectioni per omnia studebo exhibere. (Maestro Guido, "Epistolae" 284–85)

(Al più bello tra i giovani e tra gli altri il più notevole, [lei] senza forze per il suo affetto, invia l'abbraccio del suo amore e di sé stessa ciò che lui desidera avere. Mio soldato bellissimo, almeno un po', come mi auguro notte e giorno, potrò mostrarti l'amore sincero del mio cuore, e che questo è la gioia del mio petto, il grande sollievo e l'immenso rifugio di tutta la mia vita, dal momento che per l'amore che ti porto rifiuterei come amici perfino duchi, marchesi, conti e altri uomini di nobile stirpe. Per questo prego che, prudente, decidendo di passare giovedì notte davanti alla casa di mio padre, tu bussi cautamente alla porta della camera di dietro. Io infatti, aspettandoti sveglia in trepida attesa, ti accoglierò a braccia nude sotto coperte di pelli e cercherò in ogni modo di darti

tutte le cose per te più dolci, finché ti vorrai mantenere a me fedele.)

Ad una scrittura più scaltra e disinvolta nell'affrontare tematiche sensuali fa riscontro un sentimento amoroso meno contingente e più stereotipato: tra le caratteristiche socialmente riconosciute come attraenti in un uomo si fa strada la facondia (“sermocinalis facietie gemula decorato,” “decorato con la gemma di una suadente retorica” dell'ep. 15 della *Silloge barberiniana*) che rende abili alla seduzione e la *prudentia*, il riserbo che permette di gestire al meglio le situazioni galanti, che in ambito cortese saranno rigorosamente esclusive della dimensione extra-coniugale. Come è naturale, la lode della bellezza fisica conduce ad una maggiore concretezza dei desideri: gli interlocutori parlano di abbracci, fissano appuntamenti, si promettono soddisfazione delle reciproche fantasie.

2.4 *Le Epistolae duorum amantium: analogie lessicali con i testi dittaminali*. Qualcosa di ancora più esplicito, sia sul piano situazionale, che emotivo e linguistico, si legge in un epistolario – probabilmente reale o esemplato su un carteggio reale – che è divenuto molto celebre perché al centro di una dibattuta questione attributiva, le *Epistolae duorum amantium* [= *EdA*], composto da 113 brani, di cui alcuni poetici. Gli interlocutori sono anonimi, distinti solo dall'iniziale M (*Mulier* “Donna”) e V (*Vir* “Uomo”). Non ci addentreremo nel problema dell'attribuzione,<sup>13</sup> per quanto affascinante, limitando le osservazioni alle affinità che si rilevano con altri modelli di lettera d'amore che si trovano nelle altre raccolte e con l'evoluzione della epistolografia amorosa nel corso del XII secolo, rinviando per una sintesi aggiornata del dibattito al recentissimo volume di Barbara Newman, *Making Love in the Twelfth Century*, che ho potuto visionare soltanto in maniera desultoria quando l'articolo era già in bozze. Anche la studiosa americana osserva un “intellectual or stylistic environment” con altre collezioni epistolari del XII secolo – incluso quelle composte in zone lontane –, distinguendo però in modo netto le “authentic love letters” (tra cui le *Epistolae duorum amantium* e quelle di Tegernsee) dai “fictives models” dittaminali in cui la relazione erotico-sentimentale sarebbe gestita in maniera del tutto diversa (XIII, 11, 14 e *passim* e il paragrafo “How can we tell if the letters were real love letters or rhetorical models?” in cui si sofferma sui legami tra le due categorie).

Quello che viene proposto di seguito è l'analisi di una serie di analogie lessicali e di locuzioni formulari impiegate nei testi dittaminali che si incontrano anche nel noto carteggio. Il fatto che *loci simi-*

13. La bibliografia è molto vasta; si veda almeno Mews; Ziolkowski, “Lost and Not Yet Found;” Moos; Jaeger, “*Epistolae duorum amantium*,” e il recente vol. della Newman.

14. Turcan-Verkerk, "L'introductions." Si ricordino anche i soggiorni italiani di Pietro di Blois e la presenza nella penisola dell'anonimo dettatore francese, attivo intorno al 1140, a cui dobbiamo la cosiddetta "Aurea Gemma Gallica;" si veda anche Maestro Guido, *Trattati e raccolte* 56–62.

15. I sostenitori dell'attribuzione ad Abelardo e Eloisa come Piron o Jaeger, "Epistolae duorum amantium" collocano il testo ante 1116 per coerenza con le vicende biografiche di Abelardo e Eloisa; analisi condotte sulla lingua e lo stile consigliano però di posticipare la data almeno intorno alla metà del XII: cfr. Stella, "Epistole duorum amantium" e "Analisi informatiche."

16. Si veda anche l'epistola *EdA* 75: "Si ipse Tullius de se tale aliquid iactasset, vere copiosa eius facundia in solvendo deficeret, quia nichil tanta promissione dignum afferet. Si ad metrum totas Ovidius vires suas intenderet, in hoc incepto planissime deficeret." L'uso costante del *De Amicitia* e di Ovidio nell'epistolografia amorosa del secolo XII indeboliscono leggermente i paralleli tra le *Epistolae duorum amantium* e Abelardo di cui tratta anche Piron.

17. Queste le allusioni esplicite all'atto del dictare reperite nel testo: 33 *dictandi fervor*; 69 *dictaminis dulcedine*; 75 *litteris dictare*; 75 *in ipso doloris cursu dictavi et utinam non dictassem*; 113 *dictat amor que scribere cogor*. Il termine è usato fin dall'antichità, ma il suo impiego in un carteggio potrebbe essere sintomo di aggiornamento da parte degli autori. Un certo sfoggio culturale è stato rilevato anche da Fumagalli Beonio Brocchieri, *passim*. Più interessante è osservare alcune analogie con testi dittaminali: la similitudine biblica della *EdA* 9 (*Sicut lassus...*, cfr. *Ps.* 41.2) è molto diffusa nelle *artes dictandi* (si vedano i *loci similes* in Maestro Guido, "Epistolae" 27; Id., "Modi dictaminum" 7.23; e nell'"Aurea Gemma Gruppe:" AGO 75; AGO 79; AGW 117).

les si rilevino con testi di *ars dictandi* prodotti in area italiana non inficia la collocazione francese della silloge (si veda ora la sintesi in Newman 47–48, par. "Where were the letters written?"), dal momento che studi recenti<sup>14</sup> dimostrano precoci contatti tra dettatori di area italiana e francese anche prima della metà del XII secolo. Per quanto molto studiato, il testo non possiede una datazione accolta in modo unanime;<sup>15</sup> analogie stilistiche rilevate con alcuni testi letterari invitano a collocare l'epistolario intorno alla metà del secolo XII. Pur prescindendo dalla suggestione di trovarsi davanti il carteggio dell'amore felice di Abelardo e Eloisa, il testo appare al lettore esemplarmente sentimentale, poiché le *Epistolae duorum amantium*, rispetto agli esempi fin qui analizzati, possiedono uno sviluppo narrativo, raccontano una vicenda d'amore verosimile e articolata, amplificando il senso di spontaneità del contenuto, una caratteristica imprescindibile – secondo la sensibilità moderna – del rapporto amoroso (si veda ancora Newman 101–02: secondo la studiosa il carteggio appartiene al "rare middle ground" tra la corrispondenza privata e i modelli retorici).

Ma qui non si tratta della natura del sentimento provato, bensì dei modi elaborati per comunicarlo. E in questo senso, le *Epistolae duorum amantium* sono un testo perfettamente coerente col contesto storico e letterario a cui appartengono, come mostrano il debito contratto dai suoi autori verso le opere di Cicerone e Ovidio (Mews),<sup>16</sup> le affinità con importanti testi poetici classici, cristiani e dei secoli XI e XII, che confermano la loro buona formazione e contatti col mondo accademico (Stella, "Analisi informatiche" 568) e, infine, i numerosi punti di tangenza con l'*ars dictandi*, il cui ingresso in area francese (nella 89 la donna è definita "Gemma totius Gallie," "Gemma di tutta la Gallia") è stato recentemente anticipato intorno agli anni 1140 rendendo plausibile, intorno alla metà del secolo, una sua precoce diffusione anche nelle strutture formative.

I punti di tangenza tra *Epistolae duorum amantium* e *dictamen*<sup>17</sup> sono stati solo parzialmente discussi (si veda il già citato volume di Newman) in passato soprattutto da studiosi che hanno giudicato l'epistolario un semplice esercizio fittizio elaborato da un dettatore (Moos); al contrario, valorizzerei proprio il tasso di veridicità che la vicinanza con l'*ars dictandi* comporta, dal momento che epistole con locuzioni simili a queste sono state inserite dai dettatori nelle raccolte di modelli.

Le analogie illustrate di seguito, forse, ridimensionano parzialmente il livello di innovazione tematico e formale di questo carteggio

18. Analogie si rilevano anche con le *salutationes* bibliche della *EdA* 27: “Oculos suo: Bezelielis spiritum, trium crinium fortitudinem, patris pacis formam, Idide profunditatem;” e della *EdA* 86: “Inepotabili fonti dulcedinis, pars anime eius individua: post sollicitudinem Marthe et fecunditatem Lie, possidere optimam partem Marie” (cfr. Bognini; Hugo Bononiensis; Maestro Guido, “Epistolae” 47). Diffusa ma non meno indicativa la locuzione della *EdA* 112: “Magistro suo nobilissimo atque doctissimo.” Si veda in proposito il recentissimo contributo di Turcan-Verkerk (“Troyes MB 1452”) che promette, in prossime pubblicazioni, importanti novità sulla collocazione geografica delle *EdA* e valorizza il rapporto del carteggio con i testi dittaminali.

19. Sulla questione si veda anche Turcan-Verkerk, “Histoire de l’ars dictandi” 41–42. Una locuzione simile a quelle analizzate si legge anche in una *salutatio* di Bernard de Meung edita in Ruhe (doc. 9): “se quidquid est.” Le traduzioni dei passi citati delle *EdA* sono di Claudio Fiocchi (dall’ed. *Lettere di due amanti*).

gio, ma la sua contestualizzazione storica ci permette confronti e considerazioni interessanti su quanto andiamo discutendo. Le analogie più significative si rilevano nelle *salutationes*:<sup>18</sup> nella *EdA* 55 “Viventium carissimo, et super vitam diligendo” (“Al più caro degli esseri viventi che va amato più della vita stessa”) è molto simile alla *salutatio* delle *Introductiones* di Bernardus Magister 80r “Viventium carissimo, vel domine, vel matri dulcissime” (“Al più caro degli esseri viventi, o alla signora, o alla madre dolcissima”), la *salutatio* della *EdA* 21 “dilecto suo speciali: et ex ipsius experimento rei: esse quod est” (“Al suo amato che è speciale per esperienza della cosa stessa: l’essere che è”) è molto vicina a Maestro Guido, “Mirae commoditatis” 8 “esse quod est, fuit, eritque” (“l’essere che è che fu e che sarà”), insieme ad altre locuzioni che si leggono in epistole della stessa raccolta di Guido, rispettivamente la “Mirae commoditatis” 25 “Guilelmus id quod est” (“Guglielmo per quello che è”), la “Mirae commoditatis” 26 “G. id quod est” (“G. per quello che è”), la “Mirae commoditatis” 30 “id ipsum quod est, licet nihil esse noscatur” (“ciò che è, sebbene sia nulla”).<sup>19</sup> Le famiglie lessicali a cui gli autori delle *EdA* ricorrono più frequentemente nelle *salutationes* per descrivere il loro stato sentimentale sono quelle della *dilectio*, della *fidelitas* del *sustentamen*, dell’*amor*, del *presidium*, della *benivolentia*: tutti ambiti semantici che l’amore condivide con l’affetto coniugale (cfr. la lettera della moglie al marito lontano: “post Deum amor et desiderium meum, sustentamen, solamen, auxilium et iuvamen laborum et dolorum meorum levamen,” “dopo Dio mio amore e desiderio, sostegno, rifugio, aiuto e rimedio dei mali, conforto dei miei dolori:” *Lombardische Briefsammlung* 48), con quello filiale (cfr. Maestro Guido, “Epistolae” 41, dove il padre definisce il figlio “gaudium, spem, solacium, refugiumque meum,” “gioia, speranza, sollievo, mio rifugio”), con l’amicizia (cfr. escerti di lettere tra amici e studenti come “dulcissimo domino et patri carissimo,” “al dolcissimo signore e padre carissimo:” Bernardus Magister 111; “dulcissimo domino et amico,” “al dolcissimo signore e amico:” Maestro Guido, “Mirae commoditatis” 29; “N. amicorum dulcissimo C. se, sua, secum. Ut favus mellis est dulcis gustantibus [...] sic meus animus tua dulcia verba [...] in corde tenere desiderat,” “A N. il più caro degli amici C. tutta sé stessa, le sue cose, l’essere con lui. Come il favo di miele è dolce per chi lo assaggia, così il mio animo desidera tenere nel cuore le tue dolci parole:” “Silloge Veronese” 15) e con quel misto di devozione e deferenza che caratterizza il rapporto col proprio superiore, sia religioso che laico (Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*; cfr. le *salutationes* come “Carissimo patri et domino

20. Non si trovano nei testi epistolografici di questo periodo altre occorrenze della locuzione *servus eius*; il *servitium* è invece prescritto in molte circostanze dai dettatori: cfr. Maestro Guido, "Modi dictaminum" 4.1, tanto nelle lettere tra familiari ("Mater vero dulcissima semper dici debet et eis mitti oportet fidele servitium, filialem reverentiam, subiectionem et consimilia") che ai superiori, sia laici che ecclesiastici, come in Bernardus Magister 78r-v, Hugo Bononiensis 64-65; "Aurea gemma Oxoniensis" 91-93 ("fidelissime servitutis et devotionis augmentum et similia").

21. Isidorus Hispalensis, *Etymologiarum sive Originum libri XX* 9.3.36: "Tirones dicuntur fortes pueri, qui ad militiam delegantur atque armis gerendis habiles existunt" (PL 82.345c).

[...] intime fidelitatis et subiectionis constantiam," "Al carissimo padre e signore [...] la costanza di un'intima fedeltà e subordinazione:" Maestro Guido, "Epistolae" 43; Hugo Bononiensis 65; e "Aurea Gemma Gruppe" AGO 83), proprio come il *servitium* dell'epistola *EdA* 36 ("Reverende domine sue, humilis servus eius: devotum servitium," "Alla sua reverenda signora il suo umile servo invia un devoto servizio"), che rimane ambiguo tra il *servitium amoris* e il *famulamen*.<sup>20</sup>

Da un certo punto in poi comincia il tema della malattia d'amore (*EdA* 31 *omni egritudine unico remedio* "al suo solo rimedio di ogni malattia," *EdA* 32 *convalescis* "che tu ti ristabilisca," *EdA* 48 *unica salus* "mia unica salvezza;" *EdA* 60 *vinculo aegri amoris* "con il legame di un amore malato"), di ascendenza ovidiana e destinato a una grossa fortuna nella successiva letteratura amorosa, ma che già si trova nelle sillogi di Maestro Guido ("pro desiderio cepi languescere," "per il desiderio cominciai a languire:" *Modi Dictaminum* 7.26; "si me amplius vivere velis," "se vuoi che sopravviva:" Maestro Guido, "Epistolae" 49). Molto interessanti sono le allusioni all'amore fisico, alcune abbastanza esplicite: nella *EdA* 26 "dilecte sue nondum cognite, sed adhuc interius cogoscende," "alla sua amata, ancora sconosciuta, e da conoscere ancora più in profondità;" nella *EdA* 70 "expectato desiderio," "a colei che è tanto desiderata;" nella *EdA* 81 "dilectissimo meo, et ut verum fatear in amore peritissimo," "al mio amantissimo e, a dire la verità, espertissimo in amore;" nella *EdA* 93 la citazione ovidiana "quos amor simul et pudor in diversa rapiunt," "noi che siamo al contempo trascinati in direzioni contrarie dall'amore e dal pudore" (*Met.* 1.618-19; *Her.* 15.121); nella *EdA* 98 "Tyroni<sup>21</sup> et amantium dulcissimo: [...] frigidum neque tepidum fieri in dulcifero nostri amoris ardore," "ad un principiante e al più dolce degli amanti: [...] possa tu non diventare né freddo né tiepido nel dolce ardore del nostro amore," in cui l'antonomastico paragone col soldato (*miles amoris?*, "soldato d'amore?") ricorda il *mi militum pulcherrime* della ep. 49 di Maestro Guido precedentemente analizzata.

2.5 *La donna nei modelli epistolari: misoginia e emancipazione.* Questa libertà che si rileva nella gestione della materia amorosa, tanto nelle lettere maschili che in quelle femminili, esemplifica bene due delle tendenze dell'epistolografia d'amore enunciate nelle premesse: quella che, nei suoi tratti più formulari, si sta evolvendo in senso meno reale e più letterario e quella che procede verso una dimensione più esplicita del linguaggio e dei temi trattati. Molta letteratura, anche di intrattenimento, è viceversa legata a stereotipi misogini e spesso le donne vengono descritte infedeli e fedifraghe: si pensi alla

*Disciplina Clericalis* o alla *Dissuasio Valerii*. Anche nel *De amore* si trovano molti accenni alla astuzia femminile (“cave Gualtieri, ne inanis te decipiat mulierum forma, quia tanta solet esse mulieris astutia,” “stai attento Gualtieri, che non ti inganni l’inutile bellezza delle donne, poiché di solito è tanta quanta è la loro astuzia:” Andreas Capellanus 410–11): questo implicitamente contraddice la libertà sessuale esibita dalle donne negli scambi epistolari che abbiamo analizzato, probabilmente più fittizia e formulare che reale.

Su un piano diverso va considerato il sostrato reale della vicenda amorosa, un elemento che non accomuna tutti i modelli epistolari ma che a volte, come accade nelle *Epistolae duorum amantium* o nello scambio di lettere della raccolta di Tegernsee, rende complesso distinguere la materia personale da quella più convenzionale.

2.6 *Le lettere di Tegernsee, tra epistolografia e soggettività poetica.* Le lettere esemplificative mostrano elementi di formularità, perciò quando l’amore viene descritto fuori dagli schemi, in toni sinceri e personali, la lettera non corrisponde più alla classificazione di semplice modello epistolare. Come l’analisi delle *Epistolae duorum amantium*, anche le lettere di Tegernsee dimostrano che l’emersione di tratti personali non elude del tutto i modelli dittaminali ma, partendo da un sostrato linguistico e tematico condiviso, innesta su quello la propria originalità. Della particolare natura di alcune lettere sentimentali della raccolta di Tegernsee avverte anche Peter Dronke quando, in un contributo recente,<sup>22</sup> colloca queste epistole (in particolare la 6 e la 7) in uno spazio a sé, situato tra la corrispondenza privata – dispersa – e i modelli di lettera delle *artes dictandi*. Il noto studioso non nega che queste epistole abbiano una forte impronta letteraria (rima, ritmo, citazioni da fonti bibliche e classiche), ma certo non le ritiene modelli fittizi, perché sostanziate di motivi intimi e privati e, soprattutto, poco standardizzate. Queste epistole mostrano una costruzione competente e accurata sul piano retorico, per cui non stupisce ritrovare qui i topoi dell’amicizia ciceroniana e della inadeguatezza della penna rispetto alla grandezza del sentimento, le espressioni bibliche o letterarie ormai entrate nel lessico dittaminale: *dulciora super mel, flos floris, ut Phebi radius, fides, familiaritas, sua sua sibi se*, ecc. (“più dolci del miele, fiore dei fiori, come i raggi del sole, fede, familiarità, al suo amore le sue cose e sé stesso”). Quando il testo si addentra nella vicenda personale, invece, si leggono espressioni di grande allusività fisica (“*Tuum expectem reditum, que nocte et die non cesso dolere, velut qui caret manu et pede [...] dum recordo que dedisti ocula et quam iocundis verbis refrigerasti pectuscu-*

22. Dronke, “Women’s Love Letters.” Il contributo è dedicato all’analisi dettagliata di due gruppi di epistole: le epistole 1–3 di cui nell’Appendice si legge l’edizione con traduzione inglese curata dallo studioso, e le sette lettere già edite dallo studioso nel 1968 (Dronke, *Medieval Latin* 2.478–82). I due gruppi di lettere sono ora consultabili anche nella edizione di Plechl in un’appendice all’edizione dei MGH: *Tegernseer Briefsammlung* 357–66 e 353–56. La datazione delle epistole è nella seconda metà del XII secolo.

la,” “aspetterei il tuo ritorno, poiché notte e giorno non smetto di soffrire, come colui al quale manca una mano o un piede; [...] quando mi tornano in mente i baci che mi hai dato e quanto hai alleviato il mio piccolo petto con dolci parole:” *Tegernseer Briefsammlung* 356), in cui il lessico è più innovativo e, procedendo per brevi escursioni linguistiche, palesa l'urgenza del sentimento reale permettendoci l'accesso, come lettori, ad una zona di solito poco esplorabile tra la lettera-modello e la corrispondenza privata delle persone colte nel XII secolo (“Are the two letters authentic? [...] They show a remarkable degree of poetic individuality:” Dronke, “Women’s Love Letters” 226).

2.7 *Conclusioni*. La teorizzazione della lettera d'amore nei manuali di *ars dictandi* conferma la diffusione della redazione di epistole sentimentali, una pratica che durerà fino alla metà del secolo scorso. Affrontando l'argomento in sede teorica i dettatori devono codificare gli aspetti linguistici, così la lettera tra coniugi viene distinta da quella tra innamorati, in cui la lingua è più esplicita nel descrivere emozioni amorose e desideri. Il corteggiamento è affidato all'adunton e all'iperbole, *colores* che amplificano il tasso di formularità della comunicazione. Insieme a questi modelli più convenzionali vengono però composti carteggi come le *Epistolae duorum amantium* e, soprattutto, le lettere Tegernsee, in cui si osserva l'emersione di tratti più connotati in senso *personale*.

### 3 L'amore canonico

3.1 *Introduzione*. Questo paragrafo è dedicato all'analisi delle tematiche normative in ambito coniugale rintracciabili nei modelli epistolari. I testi discussi di seguito mostrano, nella loro partecipazione a questo dibattito, una forte adesione alla realtà quotidiana e rappresentano esemplarmente il riflesso dell'etica socialmente condivisa.<sup>23</sup>

3.2 *Precepti coniugali e retorica epistolare*. Ciascuna società elabora sistemi normativi che includono anche la sfera sentimentale; anche nel medioevo l'amore a livello istituzionale è regolamentato da norme e divieti, è tutelato sia sul piano civile che etico. Proprio nell'età della Riforma il problema assume maggiore pregnanza, e ciò si riflette nei modelli di lettera sentimentali. Molti dei modelli epistolari analizzati sono redatti da chierici (l'insegnamento è ancora loro appannaggio prevalente), per cui si osserva una certa insistenza su alcuni punti chiave, che si riflettono sulla concezione sociale dell'amo-

23. Si vedano anche gli Atti delle Settimane di studi del CISAM *Il matrimonio e Comportamenti e immaginario*.

re: il celibato dei chierici, sopra un certo ordine, e le norme che regolano i matrimoni e i divorzi.

La discussione canonistica sul matrimonio per buona parte del XII secolo finisce anche tra le pagine dei dettatori, che copiano escerpi dal *Decretum* e/o inseriscono modelli epistolari che affrontano i problemi particolarmente dibattuti in tema di rapporti interpersonali: quali categorie di chierici possono sposarsi, come contenersi in caso di malattia del coniuge, quando si può sciogliere un matrimonio, cosa fare in caso di prigionia o presunta morte del marito, ecc. Non sembra casuale che spesso le epistole di questo argomento siano scambiate tra personaggi del clero, che indagano su casi di sospetta bigamia o finta morte del coniuge, né può essere frutto di una coincidenza l'insistenza che vi leggiamo sul divieto del matrimonio per certe categorie di chierici, sull'obbligo della continenza clericale, sull'indissolubilità del vincolo coniugale anche in presenza di menomazioni fisiche o infermità invalidanti. Una delle prime attestazioni in tal senso è la coppia di lettere (50 e 51) della *Lombardische Briefsammlung* in cui si tratta di una presunta bigamia (la missiva è della sorella al fratello: dice di essersi sposata con il consenso dei familiari sapendo che il marito aveva ripudiato la prima moglie; la responsiva del fratello ci fa capire che la questione non è del tutto lineare); Maestro Bernardo copia, nella parte finale della collezione di *exordia* delle *Introductiones*, alcuni passi dal testo graziano<sup>24</sup> relativi proprio a questi argomenti, a cui dedica anche le epistole 21 e 22 della silloge trasmessa in calce all'opera, in cui il vescovo di Arezzo e quello di Bologna indagano su un caso sospetto di concubinaggio; Maestro Guido affronta in termini simili il problema dell'adulterio nei *Modi dictaminum*, come si vede nell'epistola 6.35 inviata dal vescovo di Ravenna a quello di Bologna, purtroppo senza responsiva. Paolo di Camaldoli, attivo intorno al 1180, inserisce nel *Registrum* alcuni modelli incentrati su questo tema: "Liber III, 8 *Ad prelatos pro vinculo coniugii [...] notificatoria*; III, 9: *De coniugiis propter consanguinitatem [...] interdicens*; III, 10: *De coniugiis iterum propter votum castitatis [...] contradicens*" ("Libro III, 8: Lettera di notifica ai prelati sul vincolo matrimoniale; III, 9: Sul divieto dei matrimoni tra consanguinei; III, 10 Sulla interdizione dei matrimoni nuovamente contratti grazie al voto di castità").<sup>25</sup> Anche Bernard de Meung, coevo di Paolo, dedica alcuni dei suoi modelli epistolari al vincolo coniugale e alla continenza clericale: per esempio l'epistola 23 tratta di un bigamo che torna dalla prima moglie; la 26 del tentativo di pacificazione tra un soldato e una fanciulla che ha subito da lui una violenza sessuale, la 46 di un

24. Si vedano gli *exordia* delle *Introductiones* di Bernardus Magister, di cui si riproducono gli *incipit*: "Consensus non commixtio coniugium facit" (167); "Hii qui matrimonium sani contraxerunt" (168); "Clericos, ostiarios, lectores, exorcistas, [...] verginem ducere" (169); "Eos qui rapiunt puellas" (170); "Quod debeant femine que captis viris vel in captivitate ductis" (171); "Qui uxorem suam velare permisit aliam non accipiat" (172); "Si vir et uxor divertere pro religiosa vita inter se consenserunt" (173).

25. Paolo di Camaldoli è attivo, probabilmente in zona casentinese, intorno al 1180; si veda Sivo, "La poesia nel dictamen" 126-27, da cui sono tratte le rubriche inserite a testo.



26. Schaller 63–67; Ruhe 70: “Der Liebesbrief tritt immer im Zusammenhang mit den besprochenen fiktionalen Texten auf. [...] Produktionsästhetisch gelten die Liebesbriefe als Fremdkörper unter der Geschäftstexten und werden als literarisches Beiwerk empfunden.”

27. Alcune epistole di Bernard de Meung sono chiaramente fittizie come 62 *Penelope Ulixi* e la 65 *Ver Iemi*, altre epistole d'amore non impegnate ideologicamente, come le 124–25 (*Rogat amasiam suam ut sit constans in amore suo; Quod volebat reperire, si inveniret consimilem sibi*), il che non implica la falsità di tutte le lettere della collezione; cfr. anche Vulliez. Ormai in pieno XIII secolo sul tema della bigamia/divorzio si veda l'interessante coppia di lettere dei *Dictamina rhetorica* di Guido Faba (Gaudenzi 101–02), on line sul sito di ALIM – *Archivio della Latinità Italiana del Medioevo*.

invito alle suore perché si mantengano caste, la 49 di un laico che vorrebbe separarsi dalla moglie perché non è in grado di avere con lui rapporti fisici, a cui segue la *responsio* in cui si nega il consenso (situazione molto simile all'*exordium* 168 delle *Introductiones* di Bernardus Magister), ecc. La casistica declinata da Bernard de Meung è varia (sodomia, violenze fisiche inflitte a donne da membri del clero, impotenza, bigamia, ecc.) e prende in esame, sotto forma di lettere-modello, eventualità che nei precedenti dettatori erano soltanto alluse attraverso la citazione delle leggi canoniche. Estrapolati dal contesto, a causa della loro spregiudicatezza e degli argomenti talvolta audaci, molti modelli epistolari di questo autore sono stati giudicati fittizi,<sup>26</sup> ma una loro maggior contestualizzazione nel panorama dittaminale del secolo XII mi sembra mostrare, invece, che alcuni di loro sono in continuità tematica con testi di altri dettatori, con cui condividono l'intento di diffondere i contenuti della Riforma.<sup>27</sup>

3.3 *Conclusioni*. Questo breve paragrafo era dedicato ad un aspetto dell'amore concreto e di grosso impatto sociale, i modelli di lettere che veicolano contenuti della Riforma in materia di comportamento sessuale. I modelli epistolari, come stiamo mostrando, si muovono sempre tra momenti di rappresentazione più letteraria dell'amore e momenti in cui, come in questo caso, prevale la dimensione normativa del rapporto affettivo.

## 4 L'epistolografia d'amore verso la letterarizzazione

4.1 *Introduzione*. Si è fatto spesso ricorso, in questo contributo, al concetto di letterarizzazione dell'amore nei modelli epistolari. L'ultimo paragrafo è dedicato alle analogie e alle reciproche influenze che si rintracciano tra il *dictamen* e testi come il *De amore* e la *Rota Veneris*, centrali per la definizione letteraria dell'amore nel XII secolo.

4.2 *Le categorie di amanti*. Ciò che nella passata produzione epistolografica non era stato ancora compiutamente sviluppato era la casistica dei rapporti amorosi. I dettatori della parte finale del secolo, come dimostra il caso di Bernard de Meung, mettono in scena numerose situazioni inedite, sia sul piano esemplificativo che teorico. Gli autori si fanno garanti dell'attenta esplorazione della casistica, sia nelle raccolte che in sede teorica, si pensi alla *Rota Veneris* o al *De amore*. Questo non significa che i testi ci restituiscano una interpretazione univoca dei fenomeni amorosi, né che esista una sola mora-

le a governare il mondo letterario e epistolare dei sentimenti, anzi, l'estensione della situazioni rappresentate comporta la plurivocità delle manifestazioni affettive. Riguardo alle epistole di Tegernsee precedentemente ricordate, Dronke ("Women's Love Letters" 226–28) ha mostrato su base filologica che le lettere d'amore 6 e 7 di Tegernsee sono state scritte da una donna per un'altra donna. Il fatto interessante non è la presenza di tematiche omoerotiche, non certo inedite nella storia della letteratura, ma il confronto con quanto prescritto di seguito:

amor nisi inter diversorum sexuum personas [est]. Nam inter duos mares vel inter duas feminas amor sibi locum vindicare non valet; due namque sexus eiusdem personae nullatenus apte videntur ad mutuas [...] reddendas amoris. (Andreas Capellanus 34)

(Non può esserci amore se non tra persone di sesso diverso. Tra due maschi o tra due femmine l'amore non ha luogo perché due persone dello stesso sesso non sembrano in nessun modo adatte a reciproco scambio d'amore.)

4.3 *Il De amore*. Il precetto appena citato è dispensato all'inizio di un ponderoso trattato sull'amore, scritto probabilmente da Andrea Capellano alla corte di Champagne intorno al 1180 (ma la questione è ancora dibattuta; per un orientamento generale si veda Walsh in Andreas Capellanus), di poco posteriore alle lettere di Tegernsee. Anche nella definizione di amore l'autore si era espresso in maniera simile all'escerto precedente: "l'amore è passione innata che procede per visione e per incessante pensiero di persona d'altro sesso." Il problema dell'omosessualità nel *De Amore* – che potrebbe essere legato alla Riforma – assume un ruolo esegetico centrale in alcuni studi sul testo, come quello di Anderson-Wyman; in questa sede non ci soffermiamo sull'argomento perché questa categoria di amanti non è l'unica a cui sarebbero preclusi i piaceri del vero amore; un'altra a cui vengono negati in maniera altrettanto decisa è quella dei coniugi, che pure abbiamo visto rappresentata – et *pour cause* – fin dagli esordi della epistolografia d'amore. Data la centralità ideologica del precetto, esso sarà espresso in forma epistolare proprio da Maria di Champagne (si veda Bourgain) chiamata ad arbitrare la questione, la quale chiarisce che amore, poiché gratuito e disinteressato, può esistere solo fuori dagli obblighi del matrimonio e a questa legge soggiace perfino la moglie del re. Filosoficamente legato al neoplatonismo

28. Il testo è stato molto studiato. Pone numerosi problemi anche di natura ermeneutica, poiché nel libro terzo sembra teorizzare precetti contrari rispetto a quelli esposti nei primi due. Al centro del dibattito si trova proprio il concetto d'amore veicolato dall'autore; Battista vi legge un dualismo insanabile tra amore profano e amore sacro, altri studiosi si concentrano sul rapporto con la letteratura romanza, che viene parzialmente ridimensionato in alcuni studi più recenti, come in Cherchi e Anderson-Wyman. Sui rapporti con la letteratura romanza molto equilibrata e convincente, pur nella sua brevità, è l'analisi di Walsh in Andreas Capellanus 8–11. Si veda anche il saggio di Avalle.

29. Gli aspetti precedenti sono stati indagati con maggior insistenza. La scansione della società su tre livelli, i corteggiamenti inscenati, che somigliano più a scambi epistolari che a lunghi e poco realistici dialoghi, l'assenza di mimesi, il modo stesso di presentare la materia, con la definizione etimologica di amore, l'uso delle *sententiae*, il pubblico potenziale, probabilmente composto da uomini e donne (Walsh in Andreas Capellanus 4–5 propende invece per “a dominantly clerical audience”), il fatto che vengano citati all'interno del testo modelli di lettera come quella a e di Maria di Champagne sembrano mostrare una tangenza anche con questo tipo di esperienza culturale, del tutto normale per uno scrittore attivo alla fine del secolo XII. Si veda la frase “Nuntius sum quidem vobis ab amoris aula transmissus, qui vestre prudentie mandat dissolvere nodum,” dove il termine *nuntius*, il dativo *vestre prudentie* e il verbo *mandare* sono tipici del registro epistolare (Andreas Capellanus 86, linea 169).

30. Canonicamente sono tre i livelli in cui viene divisa la società (ceto basso, medio, alto). Nel Cappellano gli uomini hanno una categoria in più rispetto alle donne, perché oltre al plebeo, al nobile, al più nobile esiste il nobilissimo, per esempio il chierico. Il problema dei chierici, che dovrebbero astenersi dall'amore carnale e dedicarsi solo all'amore verso Dio, è ripreso nel paragrafo 1.7 (*De amore clericorum*): Andreas Capellanus 208–10.

chartriano, sul piano letterario affine al patrimonio cortese<sup>28</sup> ma anche alla tradizione misogina, per altri versi il *De amore* è debitore della tradizione classica (Ovidio e Cicerone) e di quella dittaminale:<sup>29</sup> questo trattato rappresenta una certa idea dell'amore maturata alla fine del XII secolo, che animerà buona parte della produzione letteraria fino al XIV secolo e che eserciterà una certa influenza anche sulla produzione epistolografica. L'amore teorizzato dal Cappellano è un sentimento complesso e raffinato, che si nutre più di schermaglie verbali che di atti, come si vede nel libro primo in cui l'autore inscena varie tipologie di seduzione basate sull'*ordo personarum*.<sup>30</sup> L'adeguamento dello stile al livello sociale degli interlocutori è un precetto centrale dei testi dittaminali, ma nel *De amore* non si registra nessuna modulazione stilistica e i dialoghi immaginati, siano tra nobili o plebei, sono tutti retoricamente complessi. Con difficoltà si potrebbe sostenere che il *De amore* non sia un testo intessuto di sentimenti aristocratici e nobiliari, poiché alla postulata democratizzazione sentimentale (la gentilezza prescinde dalla nascita) corrispondono ambienti e atteggiamenti della nobiltà *courtoise*. L'amore descritto dal Cappellano non è un sentimento che scatena gli impulsi più bassi dell'uomo, tanto che i contadini, che secondo l'autore concepiscono solo piacere fisico, non sono ammessi all'amore; è un sentimento che eleva e nobilita, e quando sembra sovvertire i cardini etici vigenti, postulando la necessità dell'adulterio, in effetti se ne fa a suo modo garante, sublimando l'amore, togliendogli fisicità.<sup>31</sup> Quantificare le influenze esercitate da testi teorici come il *De amore* sui modelli di lettera a carattere sentimentale è complesso: entrambi fissano sulla carta una certa idea dell'amore corrispondente a questo momento storico, ma hanno finalità diverse. Possiamo intuire la competenza dittaminale del Cappellano nella struttura argomentata delle scene di seduzione, ed è innegabile che questa particolare concezione dell'amore che chiamiamo *cortese*, concezione più letteraria che reale (Walsh in Andreas Capellanus 5), venga in qualche modo interiorizzata in tutti gli strati della società, per cui, insieme ai temi che

31. Sono numerosi i passi in cui si percepisce la rarefazione del corpo; si veda l'incipit del corteggiamento tra uomo e donna nobili: Andreas Capellanus 132, riga 323. Il problema morale dell'amore vs matrimonio è ripreso in termini molto diversi all'inizio del libro terzo (*De reprobatione amoris*), dove l'autore si pronuncia contrario all'amore in genere, il peggiore dei peccati perché sporcherebbe anima e corpo contemporaneamente. Questa ambiguità del testo, che prima suggerisce un'idea dell'amore che poi sembra completamente rigettare, è stata già ampiamente rilevata.

32. “Nobili et sapient domine, morum elegantia decorate, [...] quidquid fidelitatis et servitii potest. [...] Lingua deficit proferre tante domine venustatem. [...] Quid faciam? Numquid moriar?:” Guido Faba, *Dictamina rhetorica*, in Ruhe 313, no. 13. Nella generazione di Guido Faba le formule cortesi sono usate con assiduità; si vedano anche gli aggettivi di lode e di vituperio relativi alle donne contenuti nella *Gemma Purpurea*: Ruhe 315, no. 14.

33. L'opera si data ante 1215, infatti è l'ultima citata nel proemio del *Boncompagnus*; cfr. Boncompagno 34; Pini, “Boncompagnus de Signa;” Garbini, “Boncompagnus de Signa;” Giovini 83 n. 38; e Garbini, “Il pubblico.” Il titolo è spiegato dall'autore: tutti gli esseri viventi sono “collegati dal mutuo vincolo dell'amore, girano in tondo come una ruota e sono sempre in ansia, dato che l'amore perfetto genera un timore incessante” (Boncompagno 31). Sul tema amore/timore cfr. Ov. *Her.* 1.12; *De amore* 2.20 “amorusus semper est timorosus” (Andreas Capellanus 282). Sulla metafora della ruota d'amore Garbini (11) ricorda i precedenti di Pl. *Cist.* 205–08 e Prop. 28.8. Tutte le traduzioni dei passi citati della *Rota Veneris* di Boncompagno sono di Garbini.

34. La relazione tra i due testi è stata discussa da vari studiosi, tra cui Pini, “Scheda” 58–59, e Goldin-Folena. Interessanti rilievi di Garbini (Boncompagno 14–15) accennano all'influenza del *Facetus* e del *Pamphilus* sulla *Rota Veneris*; tali affinità potrebbero essere state percepite anche in fase di tradizione dell'opera, conservata in nove codici e un incunabolo. In otto codici il testo è associato a materiale dittaminale, nel nono codice con testi di tipo satirico e moraleggiante, come Giovenale, i *Remedia* di Ovidio, il *Pamphilus*, lo *Speculum stultorum*, ecc. Nell'incunabolo è insieme al *De amore* (cfr. Garbini, “Il pubblico” 211).

già conosciamo, i dettatori<sup>32</sup> cominciano a sfruttare l'analogia di amore e gentilezza, la *morum probitas*, il *servitium*, la malattia d'amore, e la *descriptio puellae* assume toni sempre più angelicati, specialmente nel pieno XIII secolo. Questo aspetto culturalmente condiviso in questo periodo ha una forte tradizione e codificazione anche nella lirica goliardica del secolo XI e XII e nelle commedie elegiache dei secoli XII e XIII, in sede artigiana viene affrontato da Matteo di Vendôme nell'*Ars versificatoria* per cui è normale osservarne dei riverberi anche nei *dictamina*. Ma la lettera modello soggiace sempre ai suoi canoni e alle sue finalità anche concrete e normative, per cui l'amore cortese come quello del Cappellano è limitato all'*exordium*, in cui si loda l'interlocutore per guadagnarsene i favori, è riservato alle sfumature linguistiche, a dettagli lessicali di superficie: la forte adesione al reale, la vocazione al quotidiano delle epistole, che abbiamo sempre sottolineato, ne circoscrive in qualche modo la letterarizzazione.

4.4 *La Rota Veneris*. Oltre all'esplorazione psicologica della casistica amorosa in senso diastratico, come quella esperita nel *De amore*, vi è quella, più vicina all'ambito epistolografico, affrontata nella *Rota Veneris*, un'opera giovanile di Boncompagno da Signa.<sup>33</sup> Questo famoso manuale epistolare dedicato alla scrittura delle lettere d'amore sembra contraddire quanto appena esposto circa la vocazione realistica dei modelli epistolari, ma il lettore coglierà immediatamente la differenza tra i modelli di lettera quotidiani e questo mirabile esempio di letteratura di intrattenimento. L'autore immagina che sia Venere in persona a chiedergli di comporre “salutationes et delectabilia dictamina [...] ad usum amantium” (“saluti e piacevoli lettere ad uso degli amanti:” Boncompagno 30–31); poco oltre dichiara di volere esemplificare alcune situazioni amorose “ut dictatores quilibet preparatoria inveniant in dicendo” (“perché i dettatori trovino già pronto qualche spunto per la redazione delle loro lettere:” Boncompagno 38–39), confermando una volta di più quanto fosse diffusa l'abitudine di commissionare e scrivere lettere sentimentali. Un progetto autoriale diverso sembra quindi sotteso alla genesi dei due trattati,<sup>34</sup> questo e quello di Andrea Cappellano, e la relazione tra i due testi, più che diretta, sembra basata sul retroterra culturale comune e sull'interesse che l'argomento amoroso riscuote nella cultura del secolo XII. Limitandoci come sempre all'evoluzione epistolografica, anche Boncompagno muove dall'*ordo personarum*, dichiarando che gli amanti possono essere laici o chierici di vario grado, non prestando attenzione, pare, alle indicazioni decretali che imponevano agli

alti ranghi ecclesiastici l'esercizio della castità: i laici si suddividono in cavalieri (re, duchi, conti, signori, ecc.) e fanti (cittadini, contadini, mercanti, liberi e servi); i chierici si dividono in prelati e sottoposti. Essendo troppo complesso esemplificare una lettera per ciascuna categoria, il dettatore propone esempi comuni che possano essere usati da tutti i mittenti, venendo meno ad uno dei principi cardine dell'*ars dictandi*, di cui è invece attento cultore. Analoga considerazione vige in ambito femminile, in cui le categorie elencate si distinguono di preferenza non su base sociale (anche se talvolta l'autore avverte che il modello epistolare proposto va spedito solo a "donne di condizione elevata e sapientissime," Boncompagno 42–43), ma in relazione al contesto (vergine, maritata, vedova, monaca, non illibata) e alla situazione (quando si ama una donna che non si è avuta, quando in un rapporto qualcosa è cambiato,<sup>35</sup> quando si ama una donna mai vista). Tutto ciò non implica, come nel *De amore*, nessuna particolare democratizzazione: i potenziali fruitori della *Rota Veneris* sono comunque persone colte, in grado di partecipare – scrivendo o leggendo le missive – al gioco galante inscenato, fatto di ipocrite ritrosie femminili e di *avances* maschili. Così le stesse *salutationes* affettuose, che nei *Modi dictaminum* vengono elencate in maniera assolutamente neutra, qui si caricano di inedita malizia: "nobilissime et sapientissime domine [...] salutem et servitium" ("alla nobilissima e saggissima signora, salute e il mio servizio") e "salutem et quidquid fidelitatis et servitii potest" ("salute e quanto di fedele e servizievole può esserci") verranno usate *ante factum*, mentre *dopo* l'uomo potrà salutare la donna con "indissolubili vinculo amoris; [...] anime sue dimidio; [...] quidquid habere videtur" ("con il vincolo di un amore indissolubile, alla metà della sua anima, tutto ciò che possiede:" Boncompagno 31–33). Grande spazio retorico viene assegnato alla metafora, al sogno e al gesto, perché permettono una comunicazione in codice tra gli amanti. I modelli di lettera sentimentale proposti da Boncompagno si differenziano per lunghezza (semplici biglietti o vere e proprie epistole) e per contenuto, da quelli adatti a sedurre le religiose, a quelli inviati dall'amante *post factum*, a quelli usati per gli appuntamenti, a quelli per i rimproveri dell'amante trascurato. Dalle situazioni inscenate, varie e esaustive, si ricava l'impressione di un amore epistolare che si è fatto più vario e fisico (Boncompagno 62), quindi più concreto di quello che leggevamo nei modelli della prima metà del secolo; su un piano diverso, però, questo amore vissuto sempre sopra le righe – perché spesso in condizioni socialmente proibite o non palesabili – risulta più artefatto rispetto

35. Il discrimine tra amore *ante factum* e *post factum*, come scrive Guido Faba nelle rubriche di alcuni dei suoi *Dictamina*, è molto sentito nei modelli di lettera sentimentale del secolo XIII; cfr. *Dictamina rhetorica* 73 e 74 (Gaudenzi 113).

a quello coniugale, rappresentato in modo così quotidiano e banale, ma proprio per questo reale, nelle opere di Guido e Bernardo.

4.5 *Lettere d'amore e letteratura*. Il *De amore* e la *Rota Veneris* offrono una rappresentazione dell'amore di secondo grado, letteraria; tuttavia, mentre il *De amore* è un trattato che sfrutta alcuni espedienti retorici dell'*ars dictandi* rimanendone estraneo, la *Rota Veneris* è scritta da un dettatore che la definisce un manuale epistolografico di materia sentimentale, in cui la redazione della lettera, però, sembra un pretesto per scatenare l'inventiva. Più forte è quindi nel lettore della *Rota Veneris* la sensazione di trovarsi davanti ad un testo di intrattenimento, in cui molti degli stralci esemplificativi somigliano agli aneddoti sull'astuzia degli amanti che ravvivano le pagine di tanta letteratura coeva, in latino e nelle lingue volgari: dialogiche scenette vivaci, più che modelli epistolari da sfruttare in situazioni di vita reale, descritte dalla penna arguta e scaltra del loro impagabile autore.

4.6 *Conclusioni*. Le affinità rilevate tra *ars dictandi* e i testi del Cappellano e di Boncompagno hanno come ricaduta generale l'ampliarci delle situazioni amorose rappresentate anche in ambito epistolografico e l'uso di un lessico più connotato sulla base di ruoli maschili e femminili definiti: si diffondono il *servitium* ("servizio" in senso generale), il *famulamen* ("servizio" di solito in accezione feudale, come quello del vassallo), la *prudencia* ("discrezione"), ecc. L'amore cortese lambisce i modelli di lettera, permeando nel linguaggio soprattutto degli *exordia*, ma non intacca la sostanziale pragmaticità sottesa allo scambio epistolare. Se pure il Cappellano dimostra di avere pratica di epistolografia e di sfruttarne alcune strutture nel suo trattato, se pure Boncompagno è un grande dettatore, il *De Amore* e la *Rota Veneris* sono due testi articolati e concepiti al di fuori della pura fruizione dittaminale, perciò vanno anche letterariamente al di là dell'approccio sentimentale quotidiano dei modelli epistolari.

## 5 Conclusioni generali

La presenza di modelli di lettera d'amore nelle *artes dictandi* rappresenta una piccola ma importante rivoluzione. Con la diffusione dei modelli di lettera sentimentale l'epistolografia palesa di essersi aperta alla dimensione secolare dei rapporti interpersonali e di essere destinata ad una fruizione non esclusivamente clericale né maschile. Dai primi esempi, un po' asciutti e scolastici, in cui la maggior libertà lessicale riguarda gli amici e non gli amanti, col passare del tempo

l'amore epistolare sviluppa un suo vocabolario e una sua *imagerie*, di cui fa parte anche il rito della composizione e dell'invio stesso della lettera (cfr. le *EdA* M60, V61, M69, ecc.), in un gioco di seduzione che la lontananza sembra accentuare (Maestro Guido, "Epistolae" 49). Su un piano diverso, i modelli di ambito coniugale e quelli di argomento decretale dimostrano che la lettera ha anche un grosso impatto sociale nel comunicare una certa idea dell'amore, quello sancito dalla legge e tutelato dalla chiesa. In linea generale, dai modelli di lettera sentimentale del XII secolo emerge una secolarizzazione dell'idea di amore che, per quanto declinata in numerose situazioni e combinazioni e per quanto non aliena dalle suggestioni letterarie dell'epoca, rimane tuttavia ancorata alla dimensione reale e quotidiana. Proprio per questo motivo le tematiche cortesi, più fantasiose e letterarie, permeano soprattutto nel linguaggio delle *captationes benivolentiae* (cioè la parte della lettera in cui si blandisce l'interlocutore) e nella descrizione convenzionale delle bellezze muliebri, ma non alterano le situazioni rappresentate nei modelli, che presuppongono un risvolto concreto (la *petitio*) e non si esauriscono nel momento galante e intellettuale del rapporto tra *domina* e *famulus*.

Grazie anche a queste compromissioni con l'ambito letterario le situazioni rappresentate, che inizialmente erano solo due (innamorati o coniugi), adesso si sono moltiplicate, come dimostra la casistica rappresentata da Boncompagno o da Bernard de Meung.

Sul piano linguistico, da cui siamo mossi, si osserva un vocabolario ormai connotato per l'amore-passione, perfettamente adeguato a tradurre anche le sfumature sentimentali più intense (Tegernsee) e fisiche (*Epistolae duorum amantium*): l'epistolografia amorosa, sviluppatasi nel corso del secolo, giunge intorno agli anni '80 matura e variegata, in grado di veicolare le esigenze quotidiane, le aspirazioni, gli slanci letterari e insieme le convenzioni normative di una società in evoluzione anche sul piano affettivo, di cui le epistole riflettono la ricca complessità.

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# Troubadour Biographies and the Value of Authentic Love

Daude de Pradas and Uc de Saint Circ

## Abstract

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The idea of an essential connection between the quality of a song and the sincerity of the emotion it expresses (“I sing because I love”) is a *topos* used in various ways by troubadours, one which lent itself naturally to discussion of their relationship to audiences and to other poets. The *topos* transferred across to the thirteenth-century biographies (*vidas*) found alongside the songs in numerous manuscripts, as in the arresting claim, made in the *vida* about Daude de Pradas, that his songs “did not spring from love and therefore did not find favour with audiences.” Elsewhere, however, the biographies give a different account of inauthenticity, as the edge which allows troubadours to exercise control over their social environment; significantly, this version of the *topos* appears in the *vida* for Uc de Saint Circ, who is believed to be the main author of the corpus. In these contrasting accounts of poetic inauthenticity, we can see the biographies wrestling with questions of control and definition of the cultural capital of troubadour lyric: patron and poet, cleric and lay. The thirteenth century saw authors and their audiences increasingly asserting the lasting cultural value of vernacular literature in general, and (through its association with troubadour production) Occitan in particular. Accordingly, these texts reflect the poets’ engagement with the court audiences for whom they were writing, at the same time as they look ahead to the enduring record of posterity.

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Giles Fletcher’s sonnet collection *Licia* (published in 1593) opens with a dedicatory letter addressed to his patron Lady Mollineux. In this preface, Fletcher addresses the conceptual distinction between poet and lover which, as he acknowledges, his poems aim to blur: “Now in that I have written Love sonnets, if any man measure my affection by my style, let him say, I am in Love” (Fletcher 75). The idea is pursued further in the letter addressed *To the Reader* which immediately follows that to Lady Mollineux:

and for the matter of love, it may bee I am so devoted to some one, into whose hands these may light by chance, that she may say, which thou now saiest (that surelie he is in love) which if she doe, then have I the full recompence of my labour, and the Poems have dealt sufficientlie, for the discharge of their owne duetie. (78)

The success of Fletcher's love poetry, both passages suggest, depends on the extent to which it convinces the reader that authentic love underlies it. Yet the poet stops short of validating the truth-effect thereby created; his statements are couched in hypothetical language ("it may be that...") or attributed to others ("let him say..."). Evoking the curiosity of its inscribed reader about the identity of the lady to whom the sonnets are addressed, the first preface deliberately flags up the alternative possibility that no real-world experience corresponds to the rhetoric marshaled in the poems: "a man may write of love, and not bee in love, as well as of husbandrie, and not go to the plough: or of witches and be none: or of holiness and be flat prophane." (76) In having his cake and eating it, Fletcher brings to light the vexed relationship between the value a work is perceived to have and its audience's investment in its verisimilitude; now as much as then, love stands out as a literary topic which invites audiences to identify the experience described with their own real-world emotional responses, and consequently to attribute analogous emotional states to the author of the work.<sup>1</sup>

1. The phenomenological assumption is often identified as a particularly significant part of the functioning of lyric: "The principle of intelligibility, in lyric poetry, depends on the phenomenization of the poetic voice" (De Man 55).

The game playing at work here goes to the heart of a tension inherent in the genre of love poetry, one tied up with that poetry's use of a first-person speaking position. On one hand, the force of such poetry relies on how believable the loving subject is about his or her emotional state, and the audience's recognition of that emotional state as one of *being-in-love*; on the other hand, this is a genre which relies to an unusual extent on conventional forms, themes and images, one in which each new intervention constitutes an attempt to re-work material inherited from predecessors into something novel. Indeed, the very assertion of authenticity is itself frequently found as a conventional feature of the game of love poetry.

What is true for Giles Fletcher at the tail end of the sixteenth century is of equal import in medieval vernacular lyric, where the speaking subject's claim to authentic love becomes an essential part of the generic conventions from an early stage (Bruckner, "Jaufré Rudel;" Dragonetti 21–30; Kay, *Subjectivity* 139–41, 161–67; Meneghetti, *Il pubblico* 121–75; Weiss). As has frequently been noted, the conven-

2. See e.g. Kay, *Subjectivity* 170: “the troubadours’ use of irony and evasion always leaves in doubt what degree of belief their texts can command. In particular, the ‘love’ plot seems to float uneasily between historical anchorage points and literary play.” On naming in medieval lyric more generally, see Jeay.

3. This *vida* is found in chansonniers ABIK. The sentence “Savis hom fo...” is in IK only. Manuscript B ends: “non foron cantadas ni grazidas” (“nor were they sung or appreciated”).

4. For ease of cross-referencing, the *Bibliographie der Troubadours* [BdT] reference for every troubadour song quoted here will be given in brackets. All translations are my own unless stated otherwise.

tion of sincerity raises some awkward, but fascinating, questions about how to evaluate the insistent claims to authentic love in the songs, a hesitation exacerbated by the allusive and veiled use they make of reference to people and places.<sup>2</sup> That this problem was of equal interest to the troubadours’ contemporaries is evident from the following assertion found in the *vida* (a short prose biography) for the thirteenth-century troubadour Daude de Pradas:

Deude de Pradas si fo de Rosergue, d’un borc que a nom Pradas, pres de la ciutat de Rodes quatre legas, e fo canorgues de Magalona. Savis hom fo molt de letras e de sen natural e de trobar. E saup molt la natura dels ausels prendedors; e fez cansos per sen de trobar, mas no movian d’amor, per que non avian sabor entre la gen, ni non foron cantadas. (Boutière et Schutz 91)<sup>3</sup>

(Daude de Pradas was from the Rouergue, from a town called Pradas, four leagues from the city of Rodez, and he was a canon at Maguelone. He was a wise man, skilled in learning, natural wit and poetry. And he knew much about the nature of birds of prey; and he wrote *cansos* [love songs] thanks to his poetic talent, but they did not spring from love and so they did not find favour with people, nor were they sung.)

As Daude’s editor Alexander Schutz notes, the *vida* author’s claim about the impopularity of his songs is contradicted by the surviving evidence: songs by Daude are found in twenty of the extant troubadour *chansonniers* (anthological manuscripts), and two songs (Daude de Pradas, nos. 7–8) are found in thirteen manuscripts apiece. Daude is also cited in Matfre Ermengaud’s *Breviari d’amor* (begun in 1288) as being among the most popular troubadours.

What might have prompted the biographer to make this claim about Daude’s inauthenticity and its effect on his success with audiences? Schutz suggests that the *vida* may reflect a misreading of the following lines from a Daude *canso* (BdT 124.11):<sup>4</sup>

No cugiey mais ses comjat far chanso;  
mas ar m’ave, mal grat mieu, far parer  
lo pensamen q’el cor no-m pot caber,  
tan m’en a dat silh a cui ieu me do.  
Per q’ieu comens, a ley de cossiros;

*e si mos chans non es molt amoros,  
ia non rept' om mas amor e merce,  
quar si-m volguesson portar bona fe  
ia no si-m feira midons tan estranha.* (12.1–9; italics mine)

(I thought I would never again make a song without permission; but now, in spite of myself, I must reveal the thought that I cannot keep hidden in my heart, so much has she given me to whom I give myself. Therefore I begin, in the manner of one who is upset, *and if my song is not very full of love, let no one be accused but Love and Mercy*, for if they had acted towards me in good faith, my lady would not keep her distance as she does.)

Such a suggestion, however, raises further questions, since it supposes a reading that goes against the overall thrust of this stanza, where the sense of “non es molt amoros” is clearly intended to convey unhappiness, rather than indifference. All available evidence suggests that the authors of the biographies were practicing troubadours themselves (as will be discussed further below); therefore, if *No cugiey mais ses comjat far chanso* is the direct source of the *vida*'s comment, we must be dealing with a deliberate traducing of his words, rather than a misunderstanding of a very common troubadour *topos*. Indeed, the opening lines of Daude's song present the authentic feelings of the troubled heart as the trigger that forces the poet, “in spite of [him]self,” to make songs. Thus these lines actually reinforce the *topos* linking authentic love to poetic inspiration, and the only bad faith on display is that of the allegorical figures Love and Mercy, who have failed to reward the speaker's integrity.

The discrepancy between the *vida* author's account and the available evidence raises questions of wider significance for understanding the cultural value of the troubadour tradition in the thirteenth century, at a time when authors from Catalonia to Italy were beginning to discuss it as cultural capital, a reflection of courtly values to be documented and passed on to posterity. The biographies are part of this process of commemoration, as are the poetic anthologies (ordered by author and/or genre) which began to appear in the same period. Commemoration does not necessarily entail idolization, and several troubadours come in for criticism or mockery in the biographies. But why is Daude in particular taxed with inauthenticity, and why is this seen as a problem? What value is being attached to authenticity in these biographical texts, and what are they telling us

about the status and function of vernacular poetry in the thirteenth century?

Short Occitan prose biographies such as these *vidas* are collected in a number of troubadour manuscripts, purporting to give information about a poet's life, or to explain a song's coming into being; the former type is known by critics as a *vida*, the latter as a *razo*, though the distinction is not always watertight and some texts appear to do both simultaneously. These texts mix genuine historical truth with fiction, the latter often being culled directly from the relevant troubadour's *oeuvre*. Importantly for my purpose, the *vidas* and *razos* famously do what troubadour poets (pre-empting their distant descendant Fletcher) do not deign to do: they name names, they place the songs within the context of particular love affairs, they purport to tell us how these affairs began and sometimes how they ended.

Early scholarship focused on the accuracy of the biographies, and found them deficient on this score; viewed as literary criticism, they have been judged equally disappointing, since they appear to show strikingly little concern for the ambiguity and non-referentiality of lyric language; quotation from individual songs is used primarily to confirm pragmatic details of the story being told.<sup>5</sup> The past thirty years have seen a welcome renewal of critical interest. Sympathetic readers have highlighted the important role these biographies played both in consolidating the prestige of troubadour lyric, and in guiding interpretation of the texts (see in particular Burgwinkle; Meneghetti, *Il pubblico*; Poe, *From Poetry to Prose*; Zink, *Les troubadours*). Probably the most famous example of this process is the *vida* for the early troubadour Jaufrè Rudel, which has achieved wider and more lasting fame than Jaufrè's lyric productions themselves. The biography's account of Jaufrè taking the cross in order to meet the Countess of Tripoli, only to die in her arms, enacts a literalization of various motifs found insistently in Jaufrè's songs, such as his evocation of *amor de lonh* (distant love) and pilgrimage imagery in *Lanquan li jorn son lonc en may* (Monson). The narrative's representation of self-sacrifice in service of absolute commitment to an idealized love (on which see Gaunt, *Love and Death*) struck a chord with both medieval and modern audiences.<sup>6</sup> Authors and audiences alike accepted with gusto the invitation to displace their interest in Jaufrè from his poetic skill (given rather short shrift by the biographer) to his lived life and emotional experiences. The *vida* thus works to support and enrich the authenticity convention deployed by Jaufrè and

5. Michel Zink ("Les Razos et l'idée de la poésie" 85) nicely phrases this apparent lack of fit: "Pourquoi une lecture aussi anecdotique de poèmes qui le sont si peu?" ("Why such anecdotal readings of poems that are so little anecdotal?").

6. The thirteenth-century anthological *chansonnier I* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 854) chooses to illustrate the portion of the manuscript devoted to Jaufrè's songs with an image of him dying in the arms of the Countess; the last two centuries have seen numerous poems, a play and an opera inspired of the story.



other troubadours; it imagines the poet as literary hero to the extent that his songs can be read as evidence for his commitment to the behavioural standards of *fin'amor*.

If the literal renderings of allusive language in this *vida* are a good example of how the biographies work, we should nevertheless beware of treating it as typical of the genre. As with the songs themselves, the *vidas* and *razos* come in many different forms; some, like the Jaufre *vida* or the 'eaten heart' *razo* associated with Guilhem de Cabestanh, are written in the idealizing mode, while others tend more towards demystification and satire, or reflect on political realities (Poe, "Toward a Balanced View"). Unlike the lyric corpus, however, the biographies in their extant form are believed to be in large part the work of a single figure, the thirteenth-century troubadour Uc de Saint Circ (Poe, "*L'autr'escrit*").<sup>7</sup> It is likely that they were anthologized some time in the 1220s after he had settled in the Veneto, and that the songs and biographical material brought together by Uc were the starting point for the earliest known *chansonniers*. Even those texts (mostly *vidas*) which postdate Uc's activity follow the linguistic and formal parameters he appears to have put in place. Despite the diversity of attitudes displayed towards troubadours and their patrons, these texts can therefore be read as offering a partial and partisan interpretive lens born of a particular historical moment, a time of fundamental economic and political change. The aristocracy that championed troubadour activity was under potential threat both from the new mercantile economy that had taken hold across Europe, and from rising monarchical and Papal desires to wield temporal power – the French monarch in Occitania itself, and the Emperor in Italy. William Burgwinkle's persuasive reading of the *razos* reveals how they reflect a new ethos of negotiation between poet and patron, with troubadours such as Uc increasingly conscious of themselves as poetic guns-for-hire, whose rhetorical skills could be deployed to enhance the cultural capital of patrons in exchange for material reward.

Just as significantly for an understanding of the biographies, the thirteenth century saw a sharp rise in the production of manuscripts for lay readers, and consequently an increasing willingness to treat the vernacular as a language of written record. Occitan lyric was at the forefront of this process, with grammatical-compositional treatises appearing in Catalonia from the early 1200s, and the earliest known vernacular poetic anthologies being produced in northern Italy. As noted above, Uc's role in assembling and shaping the materi-

7. See, however, Meneghetti, "Uc e gli altri," who argues that the number of biographies attributable to Uc may have been overstated.

8. As Burgwinkle (20) astutely notes, the two concerns were to a partial extent interlinked: “It must have been tempting to see the self and court generalized beyond their contingent position in the present and figured as part of a glorious past of poetic tradition. The past thus becomes an ornament, a contingent badge of transferable and textual recognition that could be used as a bargaining tool in dealing with patrons.”

9. Perhaps most surprising in this regard is the *vida* for Folquet de Marselha, which omits any mention of his time as Bishop of Toulouse, in which capacity he was a notoriously zealous supporter of the Albigensian Crusade.

als into written form was crucial to the latter development of the tradition. The particular historical context for the elaboration of the biographies thus requires us to read them as answering not only to contemporary social and political concerns, but also to a desire to create Occitan as a language of written authority, and to pin down a canon of vernacular knowledge documenting for posterity the activities of southern European courts (Davis; Hinton; Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales*).<sup>8</sup> In fact, there is strikingly little explicit reference to current affairs in the *vidas*. This is all the more noteworthy given that the Italian patronal courts, nourished by political rivalries between the patrons themselves, produced a particularly lively, vituperative and personalized *sirventes* tradition: fifty percent of extant Occitan compositions from these courts deal with politics and history (Burgwinkle 52). The biographers seem to have consciously attempted to transcend contemporary preoccupations in order to speak to future users of the *chansonniers*.<sup>9</sup>

Both of these orientations – towards the here-and-now of court life, and the durable record of posterity – will be in play in the remainder of this article, as I assess the ideological work performed by the (in)authenticity theme as refracted in the troubadour biographies. Accordingly, the following section will set out briefly how anxiety over inauthenticity plays out as a theme in troubadour songs: specifically, how it allows poets to address the relationship between author, text and audience, and pose questions about who controls the meaning and value of the song. I will then consider the extent to which Daude maintains the integrity of the *topos* in his poetic corpus, and what elements in his songs might have disturbed the biographer. A third section will discuss other *vidas* which contrast with Daude’s, including that of Uc de Saint Circ himself; Uc is also described as an inauthentic composer, writing love songs that are not motivated by a corresponding sentiment, yet he attracts praise rather than the blame apportioned to Daude de Pradas. Finally, I will return to the details of Daude’s life (as documented both in literary form and in archival documents) in order to ascertain how his *vida* fits into the system of values defended by the biographies.

## Authenticity and audience in troubadour love lyric

In her landmark study *Il pubblico dei trovatori* (121–23), Maria Luisa Meneghetti argues that the assertion (and valorization) of a connection between the poetic product and the psychological-sentimental disposition of its author became a central pillar of troubadour song from the second generation of poets onwards, with the Périgourdain Bernart de Ventadorn (*circa* 1147–70) playing the most important role in crystallizing the *topos*. In a typical moment from the opening lines of his *canso* *Non es meravelha s'eu chan* (BdT 70.31), Bernart asserts that the quality of his song is guaranteed by that of his love:

Non es meravelha s'eu chan  
melhs de nul autre chantador,  
que plus me tra-l cors vas amor  
e melhs sui faihz a so coman. (1.1–4)

(It is no marvel if I sing better than any other singer, for my heart draws me more towards love and I am better made to carry out its commands.)

However, the apparent bullshiness of this declaration is undercut in the *canso*'s fifth stanza:

Ai Deus! car se fosson trian  
d'entrels faus li fin amador,  
e-lh lauzenger e-lh trichador  
portesson corns el fron denan!  
Tot l'aur del mon e tot l'argen  
i volgr'aver dat, s'eu l'agues,  
sol que ma domna conogues  
aissi cum eu l'am finamen. (1.33–40)

(Oh God! If only the false lovers could be sorted from the true, and the hypocrites and cheats had horns on their foreheads. I would happily have given all the gold and silver in the world, if I had it, if only my lady could know how truly I love her.)

*Lauzengiers* are the bogeymen of the troubadour lover-singer, malicious slanderers and hypocrites whose behaviour threatens the lovers' harmony. In Sarah Kay's apposite formulation, the *lauzengiers* are

10. Several scholars have recognized these figures as critical to the textual logic of lyric – see notably Köhler; Kay, “Contradictions;” Gaunt, *Gender and Genre* (Chapter 3).

“the scapegoats of the genre, the objects of its opprobrium, [thrust] into the role of ‘bad’ in opposition to the ‘good’ of the lyric poet-lover” (“Contradictions” 216).<sup>10</sup> Yet, as Bernart’s words make clear, while these rivals may be represented as embodying an opposed ethical pole, their behaviour and speech are frequently indistinguishable from that of true lovers. The inauthentic discourse of the *lauzengier* therefore threatens the troubadour persona’s success, both with his lady (who may struggle to discriminate between true and false lovers) and with his audience (because the very criterion that Bernart had established for discerning between good and bad song – the quality of one’s love – cannot be assessed with confidence from outward signs). The linking of sincere love with the quality of the song invites us to read this nervousness about the lover’s relationship with the loved lady – will my love language be accepted as genuine? – simultaneously as an anxiety about the poet’s relationship with his audience: will my love song be accepted as legitimate?

Bernart’s opening guarantee of his song’s quality is underwritten by a claim to an internal emotional disposition towards the right kind of love. Elsewhere he attempts to reconcile the claim to self-knowledge that distinguishes him from the crowd with the possibility of communicating this private disposition to others, as in the *tornada* to *Chantars no pot gaire valer* (*BdT* 70.15), another song built around the authenticity theme:

Lo vers es fis e naturaus  
e bos celui qui be l’enten;  
e melher es, qui-l joi aten.

Bernartz de Ventadorn l’enten,  
e-l di e-l fai, e-l joi n’aten! (2.50–54)

(The verse is true and natural and good for one who understands it well, and it is even better for one who hopes for joy. Bernart de Ventadorn understands it, performs it, composes it, and hopes for joy from it.)

This offers a way out of the impasse created by the *lauzengier*’s inauthentic performance. Audience members who take up the implicit invitation to identify as one of those “who understand [the verse] well” by that token become witnesses to the quality of Bernart’s sentiment, and guarantors of the song’s quality. Indeed, Bernart’s act of self-naming here asks his audience to recognise that not only this

11. On Bernart's self-naming, see Bourgeois; Galvez 75–79; Jeay 39–41.

12. Kay interprets the *lauzengier* theme as a mechanism to resolve or efface the contradictions of love in lyric poetry, which she reads as mediations of social tensions at court: “by being offered as a scapegoat among whom all can unite, because they embody the real and ineradicable threat to courtly society: other courtiers” (“Contradictions” 225).

13. The translation of this song is taken from Sharman's edition (394–98).

piece, but the entire body of songs associated with his name, fulfils the criterion he has established.<sup>11</sup>

The anxieties here relate to literary reception as well as to status and preferment at court. In both cases, the threat posed by the *lauzengier* is that of inauthentic speech which mimics that of the true lover / sincere courtier.<sup>12</sup> Whether these two concerns dovetailed or not depended on the extent to which individual poets relied on literary success for their rank at court; this could vary significantly, as demonstrated by the well-known *tenso* between Raimbaut d'Aurenga and Giraut de Bornelh, *Era-m platz, Giraut de Bornelh* (*BdT* 242.14). This song, in which the two troubadours debate the extent to which a poet should concern himself with being understood by a wide public, hinges on the question of who controls the value of a song – its creator or its audience. Raimbaut begins by equating accessibility with the abolition of a hierarchy of value:

aiso-m digatz:  
si tan preztatz  
so que vas totz es cominal?  
car adonx tug seraun egal. (ll. 3–6)<sup>13</sup>

(Tell me this: do you have such a high regard for what is available to everyone? For then everyone will be equal.)

Giraut's defence, placed at the equivalent point in his answering stanza, is that “es mais amatz / Chans e preztatz / Qui-l fa levet e venansal” (“song is better loved and esteemed when it is made easy and lowly,” ll. 9–11). His argument here is based not on what *he* values, but on what he claims his audience wants. Moreover, the use of “venansal,” which corresponds at the rhyme with Raimbaut's “cominal” in line 6, indicates that despite the oppositional format of the song, the two poets share a common value system, aligning the “common” with the “ordinary” or “lowly” against what is “plus quar” (“most precious,” l. 21). Similarly, where Raimbaut frets about his compositions being mangled (ll. 15–16), Giraut claims to be relaxed, even enthusiastic, about just such an outcome:

mos sos levatz,  
c'uns enraumatatz  
lo-m deissazec e-l digua mal,  
a cui non deia hom sesal. (ll. 39–42)

(I'd rather any old gravelly-voiced singer sing my noble song badly, for I don't deem it worthy of anyone of greater standing.)

14. Both Sharman (397) and Kay ("Rhetoric" 122–29) have argued that Giraut's position in this song is disingenuous, while Gaunt (*Troubadours and Irony* 145–82) has demonstrated the presence of irony in many of Giraut's comments supposedly defending accessible poetry across the corpus of his songs. As Gaunt states (178), "Whenever he did compose in the *trobar leu*, he managed to convey his disdain for the style and for its public through irony, thus on one level giving a part of his audience what it wanted, and on another laughing at it with another section of his audience."

15. "Amor blasmen per no-saber / fola gens, mas leis no-n'es dans, / c'amors no-n pot ges dechazer / si non es amors comunaus. / Aisso non es amors; aitaus / no-n a mas lo nom e-l parven / que re non ama si no pren:" 2.15–21 ("Foolish people blame love out of ignorance, but no harm is done to love, for love cannot deteriorate unless it is common love. This is not love at all; it has nothing but the name and outward appearance of it, and is not interested in anything it cannot profit from").

The argument Giraut offers here (quite possibly disingenuously) is that compromise with audience taste is a necessary evil if one is to gain a good reputation as a poet.<sup>14</sup> What Giraut does not challenge is Raimbaut's assertion that abandoning the distinction between good and bad audiences is likely to compromise the song's quality. The positions taken up here no doubt reflect the relative social standing of each of the participants. Raimbaut, a powerful lord, could afford to approach *trobar* on terms of his own choosing, whereas Giraut apparently came from a more modest background, and may have relied on his rhetorical skill for advancement at court. Whatever the social stakes, the *tenso* shows both poets (however playfully) reflecting on problems of ownership and textual authority provoked by the dissemination of *trobar*, as its popularity expanded to a wider number of courts in the second half of the twelfth century (Meneghetti, *Il pubblico* 37–45; Paterson 91–100).

Raimbaut's solution, like Bernart, is to set a criterion by which the value of discourse can be measured, based on a principle of discrimination. His use of the term "cominal" to refer to a song that belongs to all, regardless of their powers of discernment, answers Bernart's condemnation in *Chantars no pot gaire valer* of "amor comunaus" ("common love," l. 18), which he contrasts with "fin'amors coraus" ("heartfelt, noble love," l. 4). Here again, Bernart laments the inability of "foolish people" (l. 15) to distinguish between true love and its debased imitation, which "has nothing but the name and outward appearance of it" (ll. 19–20).<sup>15</sup> Both poets attempt to resolve the limitations and risks of public, conventional language by filtering it through a carefully constructed amorous and poetic subjectivity. Unlike Bernart, however, Raimbaut represents this measure of value as underwritten less by common agreement with those around him than by his own conviction of the objective quality of his sentiments. Rather than offering an invitation to the audience to join his community of praise and mutual validation ('this is a worthy song if you are a worthy audience,' and vice versa), Raimbaut challenges his audience to take him or leave him.

The question of how, whether and why to police access to the love lyric continued to preoccupy troubadours into the thirteenth century, as the tradition underwent further modifications. The appearance of compositional aids – of which Raimon Vidal's *Razos de*

16. “voill eu far aqest libre per far conoisser et saber qals dels trobadors an mielz trobat et mielz ensenhat” (“I want to make this book to let it be known which troubadours have composed best and offered the best teaching”). Line references are to the manuscript *B* text.

*trobar* was the first, composed probably between 1190 and 1213 – offered the opportunity to educate audiences in how to assess the value of individual songs. The opening lines of the *Razos de trobar* explain that its purpose is to show “which troubadours have composed best” (2–4).<sup>16</sup> Like Bernart de Ventadorn affecting anxiety about his lady’s inability to distinguish the *fin* from the *fals* in love, Raimon worries about the audience’s capacity to identify quality in *trobar*. Indeed, the problem here is compounded, since the lack of audience discernment threatens to create a vicious circle; if troubadours cannot tell between genuine and feigned praise, they themselves may fall into bad habits:

li auzidor qe ren non intendon, qant auzon un bon chantar,  
faran senblant qe for[t] ben l’entendon, et ges no l’entendran... et en aisi son enganat li trobador, et li auzidor n’an lo blasme. Car una de las maiors valors del mont es qui sap lauzar so qe fa a lauzar et blasmar so qe fai a blasmar. (33–35; 41–42)

(listeners who understand nothing, when they hear a good song, will pretend to understand it well, and yet they will understand nothing... and in this way troubadours are deceived, and the blame lies with their listeners. For one of the greatest virtues in the world is knowing how to praise what should be praised, and to blame what should be blamed.)

17. The very term *lauzengier* encapsulates the confusion between praise and blame which they threaten to impose; its root, *lauzar*, has the sense of “to praise,” yet the term’s deployment repeatedly stresses the damage that they do through their *blasmar* or criticism.

Against this threat, Raimon underscores the ethical importance of knowing when to offer praise and blame appropriately.<sup>17</sup> As in Bernart’s *tornada* to *Chantars*, this passage invites its readers to agree with a general moral principle as the signal for entering into a mutually beneficial textual relationship: the reader identifies as a member of the knowledgeable elite, and in doing so validates Raimon’s assertions, his didactic project, and his criteria for assessing the quality of *trobar*. The *Razos de trobar* explicitly conceives of its target audience of *aficionados* as a sub-culture within the wider public of troubadour lyric:

Ieu non dic ges qe toz los homes del mon puesca far prims ni entendenz ni qe fassa tornar de lor enueitz per la mia paraula... mas tan dirai segon mon sen en aqest libre, qe toz homs

18. See Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales* 42–57 and 59, who views Raimon Vidal’s poetic project in the *Razos* and his two *novas* (short narratives) as framed by the desire to identify and educate an audience of connoisseurs.

19. Poe, *From Poetry to Prose* 67, notes that “the Catalan grammarian shares with the composers of *vidas* and *razos* a unique preoccupation with the troubadours and a compelling desire to keep that poetic heritage alive.” One might nuance this slightly: it is less a case of keeping the heritage alive (since troubadour activity continued to flourish) than a desire to preserve it in writing for present and future readers.

20. “Per qu’ieu vos dig qe en neguna ren, pos basta ni ben ista, no-n deu om ren ostar ni mais metre:” 18–19 (“Therefore I tell you that in no detail, since it suffices and is good as it stands, should anything be removed from or added to it”). Cf. Poe, *From Poetry to Prose* 69: “Vidal’s concern over the corruptibility of his own work when entrusted to the public parallels another, for was it not a recognition of the corruptibility of Lemosi when employed by ignorant people which motivated him to write *Las Razos de trobar* in the first place?” The new, explicitly literate frame for the reception of Occitan literature thus affects Raimon’s thinking about both his own work and the wider troubadour tradition. The permanent record of writing offers an escape from the appropriation and adulteration inherent in performance by others (of course, the request to readers not to tamper with his words is an acknowledgment by Raimon that he could not, ultimately, control the integrity of his text; we are dealing with an *ideal* of fixity rather than its reality).

21. The term “authorization” is a translation of Laura Kendrick’s “auteurisation,” used to describe the methods (largely derived from centuries of Latin book culture) by which the creators and compilers of lyric chansonniers aimed to “élever les troubadours à la dignité d’auteurs” (Kendrick, “L’image du troubadour” 513).

qe l’entendra ni aia bon cor de trobar poira far sos chantars  
ses tota vergoigna. (44–46; 56–58)

(I am not saying that I can make everyone in the world wise and receptive, nor that I can make them turn away from their errors by my words... but I will say as much as my understanding allows in this book, so that any man who understands it and has a good heart for *trobar* can compose his songs without any shame.)<sup>18</sup>

Bernart, Raimbaut, Giraut and Raimon all express concern over the risks of misinterpretation posed by the bad faith or poor understanding of an audience. And just as Bernart invites his audience to validate his claim to amorous authenticity by associating themselves with his assertion that “singing can have little value if the song does not spring from the heart” (*Chantars no pot gaire valer*, ll. 1–2), so Raimon claims to write for those who have “bon cor de trobar” (“a good heart for composition”). Yet Raimon’s solution speaks of Occitan’s developing status as a language of writing (as indeed does the very form of his prose reference work) – in Catalonia, where Raimon was based, and simultaneously in Italy, where Uc’s poetic and biographical anthologies were circulating.<sup>19</sup> Raimon’s *libre* is intended for the discerning composer or consumer of lyric, who might want it on hand to consult at opportune moments. Where Giraut affects fatalism about the corruption of his songs by untalented singers performing before complacent audiences, Raimon entreats his readers not to alter his words – his book is to be afforded the permanence of written record.<sup>20</sup>

The “authorization” of Occitan – that is, the treatment of it as a respectable written language on the model of Latin, capable of transmitting authoritative knowledge<sup>21</sup> – reframed, and in some ways sharpened, these questions of ownership and interpretive control. The nature of the poetic artifact was in flux; its identity as a voiced object delivered in performance was now doubled by a developing conception of the poetic text as a document to be preserved in parchment, and therefore as an object to be owned. As we have seen from Raimon Vidal’s prologue, the architects of this process were developing a conception of troubadour lyric as a vehicle of written record, capturing the world of the courts in all its moral diversity. In probing the motivations underlying the love claims of troubadour song, then, the treatment of (in)authenticity in the biographies brings the twelfth-century poets’ concerns about defining and refining their au-



diences into contact with new questions about what a vernacular poetic canon might look like, and what ends it might serve.

### The *cansos* of Daude de Pradas: authenticity, convention, cynicism

Reluctance in love is one of the most insistent themes across the body of Daude's *cansos*. The first stanza of *Trop ben m'estera si-s tolgues* (*BdT* 124.18) is fairly typical in this respect:

Trop ben m'estera si-s tolgues  
Amors de mi et ieu d'Amor;  
q'ieu no-n ai re mas la dolor,  
et ill vol de mi totz sos ses:  
q'ieu chant e-m deport e-m solatz,  
non per mi, mas car a lieis platz;  
e ill non faria per me  
neis mal, si-m cujava far be. (9.1–8)

(It would be better for me if Love took his distance from me and me from Love; for I have nothing from him but suffering, and he demands his tribute from me in full: for me to sing and desport and show joy, not for my own good but for his pleasure; and he would even avoid doing me harm, if he thought that harm would do me some good.)

The point being made here is the conventional one about the singer's inability to escape the wounding power of love's arrow; but where other poets may place stress on a paradoxical *desire* for Love's punishment, Daude's singer claims to long for a separation that is enacted formally in the chiasmic structure of line 2: "Amors de mi et ieu d'Amor." The stanza works to underscore the asymmetry between Love's pleasure at the act of singing, and the lover's own dissatisfaction with the situation; consequently, the song, sport and manifested joy of the lover are keyed as decidedly *inauthentic*. Meanwhile, in line 7 Amor is denoted by the masculine pronoun "ill," when the common noun *amor* is feminine in Occitan. If, as Bruckner argues, the troubadour *canço* frequently exploits the grammatical femininity of *amor* "to represent and conflate his own feeling, love personified, and most important, his beloved" ("The Trobairitz" 225), here the opposite process is at work. Daude's stanza creates a world where

the joy of love is a relationship between two masculine figures, and female figures disappear from view entirely; the male personification of Amor heightens the potential for allegorical reading that may move the song's interpreter away from the usual *canso* domain of heterosexual erotic love.

A similar device is employed in the opening of another *canso*, *Pois Merces no-m val ni m'ajuda* (*BdT* 124.13):

Pois Merces no-m val ni m'ajuda,  
 ges de chantar non ai razo;  
 mas qui pot, de razon perduda,  
 far mot plazen ab leugier so  
 assatz deu esser plus grazit,  
 car mot ses razon son faidit;  
 e qui no-ls capte ab dir gen,  
 son perdut, e-l sos eissamen. (5.1–8)

(Since Mercy does not deign to help me, I have no reason to sing about anything; but he who can, having lost his reason, make pleasant words with light melodies should be all the more appreciated; for words without reason are ignored.)

In both songs, as in the previously-discussed *No cugiey mais ses comjat far chanso*, the love object disappears behind a personified value – Love, Mercy, or both – which is lambasted for failing to reward the speaker's devotion. In this case, though, Daude goes further than simply reversing the joyous-love theme; the poet-persona appears to take seriously the possibility that the value of one's song ought to reside at least as much in its technical realization (the quality of the words and music) as in any emotional reality that underlies it. The word "grazit" in line 5 recalls the variant in the *B* version of Daude's *vida*, which stated that his songs were not "grazidas;" this coincidence, along with the implication at the end of the stanza that audiences do not offer "mot ses razon" (including Daude's own *cansos*?) their proper due, might make this stanza a more likely candidate as the *vida*'s source.

The conditions Daude appears to be creating here for the appreciation of inauthentic love lyric can be read as a challenge to the authenticity *topos*. This notion finds support in ironic form from one of Daude's satirical songs, *Amors m'envida e-m somo* (*BdT* 124.2). It opens with a stanza where Daude announces that, for once, he is "comforted and appeased by a joy that has come into my heart from

a hope that has overcome me” (ll. 7–10). This sounds like a conventional authentic-love opening, but quickly degenerates in the second stanza as Daude introduces a tripartite definition of love that will structure the rest of the song:

De totz los bens qu'en amor so,  
 ai ieu ara calque plazer,  
 car ieu ai mes tot mon esper,  
 mon pensar e m'entencio  
 en amar dompna coind'e bella,  
 e soi amatz d'una piucella,  
 e quan trob soudadeira gaira,  
 deporte mi cossi qe-m plaia;  
 e per tant non son meins cortes  
 ad a amor si la part en tres. (14.11–20)

(I now have some pleasure from all the benefits that are found in Love, for I have put all my hope, my thoughts and my understanding in loving a gracious and beautiful lady; and I am loved by a maiden; and when I find a merry prostitute, I conduct myself as I desire; and I am not thereby less courtly towards love, for splitting it thus into three.)

We now realise that this is a satirical song, and to hammer the point home Daude goes on to describe his occasional dalliances with prostitutes as a way of fulfilling his commitments to love:

Amors vol ben que per razo  
 [...]
 m'aizine tant que ab lieis jaia  
 un ser o dos de mes en mes  
 per pagar ad Amor lo ces. (14.21, 28–30)

(Love is happy for me to [...] amuse myself by lying with her [the *soudadeira*] one night or two from time to time, in order to pay Love's tribute.)

The formulation “to pay Love's tribute” (*ces*) is strikingly similar to line 4 from *Trop ben m'estera si-s tolgues*, where Daude complained that “Love demands from me all his tribute” (*ces*). Love's tribute, there, referred to the singer's act of joyful singing, which was undertaken with a reluctance that threatened to render it insincere. The sordid *détournement* of the idea in the satirical song, where meta-

phorical abstraction gives way to the hard economics of prostitution, underlines Daude's act of wilful demystification. The point is made again in the final stanza, where the constraining will of 'Amor' (usually brought to bear on the poet-persona in Daude's *cansos*) is invoked to entreat the prostitute to "give me, with a minimum of fuss, everything that Love demands in bed" (ll. 52–53).

Yet one element of the courtly lyric paradigm remains untouched: the first kind of love, that of the lady, is conceived as quite different in nature to the other two kinds, and Daude explicitly rejects any idea that this more courtly love should lead to consummation:

Non sap de dompnei pauc ni pro  
qui del tot vol si donz aver.  
Non es dompneis, pois torn'a ver,  
ni cors s'i ren per guizerdo. (14.31–34)

(He who wishes to have everything from his lady knows nothing at all about love-service. It is not love-service if it is made real, or if the lady gives her body as a reward.)

The expression "torn'a ver" in line 33 is arresting, and can be glossed in complementary ways. Firstly, love-service ("dompneis") is defined in terms of chaste decorum and renunciation; it is not courtly, when dealing with one's lady, to even wish to turn the rhetoric of desire into genuine copulation. Yet this has a further implication: the use of "ver" equates 'truth' with concrete, physical love, and by implication, colours the abstract, courtly desire of the lyric lover as an elegant fiction.

Daude is hardly the only troubadour to attack the rhetoric from which the tradition is built, though it is certainly striking how insistently he hints at uncoupling the connection between poetic expression and sincere love. In *Amors m'envida e-m somo*, he appears to attack the immorality of carnal love by voicing the hypocrisy of promiscuous suitors who believe they can "part [l'amor] en tres" and still remain "cortes." If this may have been received as unwelcome intervention by a cleric into the *mores* of the laity, one obvious response was that Daude himself had no business with either lady, maiden or prostitute; and that the celibacy required of his professional calling rendered his own love language inauthentic. Where Daude's songs aim at recognition within the community of *trobar*, the *vida* attempts to situate him on the outside, looking in.<sup>22</sup> His clerical status under-

22. The religious and political context may also be significant here. Lateran IV (1215), as well as bolstering the Albigensian Crusade which had such disastrous effects on Southern France, made provision for the Church to enhance its control over the love lives of both clergy and laity: for the former, by ensuring through strict penalties that they had none (canon 14); for the latter, by instigating confession as a means for the clergy to police the moral health of their parishioners (canon 21, *Omnis utriusque sexus*). These developments may help to explain why the biographies, whose principal aim appears to be to establish the cultural authority of *trobar* and the lay courts where it flourished, might be hostile to clerical participation in the game of love song.

mines the legitimacy of his rhetoric; his play with the conventions of the *canso* comes to seem like an act of appropriation on the part of a phenomenological outsider (one who replicates the surface of appropriate language but lacks the emotional substance shared by the true lover-poet and those who can understand him). In the terms defined by the conventions of the *canso*, this effectively assimilates him to the *lauzengier*, the Other against whom any respectable troubadour defines himself.

## Literacy, education and advancement: Uc and Daude

Uc de Saint-Circ's *vida* may or may not be autobiographical; certainly, nothing differentiates it internally from the *vidas* of other troubadours. Like the *vida* for Daude de Pradas, it broaches the topic of poetic insincerity, but offers a very different account of its literary and social consequences:

N'Ucs de Saint Circ si fo de Caersi, d'un borc que a nom Tegra, fils d'un paubre vauvasor que ac nom N'arman de Saint Circ [...] Aquest N'Ucs si ac gran ren de fraires majors de se. E volgron lo far clerc, e manderon lo a la scola a Monpeslier. E quant ill cuideront qe'el ampares lettras, el amparet cansos e vers e sirventes e tensos e coblas, e-ls facih e-ls dich dels valens homes e de la valens domnas que eron al mon, ni eron estat ; et ab aquel saber el s'ajoglarai. [...] Cansos fetz de fort bonas e de bons sons et de bonas coblas; e anc no fo gaires enamoratz. Mas se saup feigner enamoratz ad ellas ab son bel parlar; e ben saup levar las soas dompnas e ben decazer, quant el lo volia far, ab los sieus vers e ab los sieus digz. (Boutière et Schutz 239–43)<sup>23</sup>

(Sir Uc de Saint Circ was from the Quercy, from a town called Tegra, son of a poor *vavassor* called Sir Arman de Saint Circ [...] This Uc had many brothers older than him. And they wanted to make him a cleric, and they sent him to school in Montpellier. And when they thought he was learning his letters [Latin], he was learning *cansos* and *sirventes*, and *tensos* and *coblas*, and the deeds and words of the worthy men and ladies who were in the world, and ever

23. *Vida* found in manuscripts ABIKN<sub>2</sub>P. The editors' base manuscripts IK differ in some passages from the version given above, which is taken from B (and followed closely in AP). Notably, IK offer the detail that "non fez gaires de las cansos [he did not write many love songs], quar anc non fo fort enamoratz de neguna," and later that "pois qu'el ac moiller non fetz cansos." This version appears to want to stress and justify a low production of *cansos* (although Uc's haul of fifteen *cansos* out of about forty songs is hardly insignificant!), but it accords with the other manuscripts in describing Uc's ability to feign love through his skill with words.

had been; and with this knowledge he became a *joglar*. [...] He wrote excellent love songs, with good melodies and good stanzas; and he was never in love. But he knew how to feign love to ladies with his smooth speech; and he knew well how to praise his ladies and how to shame them, when he wanted to do so, with his songs and his words.)

This statement puzzles for its lack of fit with the biography of Daude. Uc, the biographer claims, was never in love, but this is no barrier either to composing excellent songs or to establishing appropriate relationships with “his ladies;” the ability to talk the talk provides ample compensation for an absence of genuine sentiment. Similarly, the short *vida* for the earliest known troubadour, the Count of Poitiers Guilhem de Peitieu, describes him as “one of the most courtly men in the world and one of the greatest deceivers of women. He was a fine knight at arms, liberal in his womanizing, and a fine composer and singer of songs. He travelled much through the world, seducing women.”<sup>24</sup> Guilhem’s status as a great lord makes the quality of his compositions marginal to the biographer’s assessment of his life, but the inclusion of his powers of deception in the list of otherwise positive qualities suggests at the very least that the biographer does not wish to flag this attribute up as a character flaw. Nor is it viewed as a stumbling block to literary success, as it was in the case of Daude de Pradas. The convention of authenticity, observed more-or-less across the board in troubadour *cansos*, is often undermined in biographies that portray the self-interest guiding social and poetic transactions at court; why it should be upheld with regard to Daude, and used as a stick to beat him with, requires further explanation.

Scholars have often situated Daude’s known period of activity as 1214–82, based on archival documentation in the Rodez area (which would have made him remarkably old to be still employed within the clerical establishment in 1282). Recently, however, Gerardo Larghi has established the existence of two separate figures named Daude de Pradas employed within the cathedral chapter at Rodez; one, the uncle of the other, was a canon of the cathedral and must be our troubadour. Larghi is therefore able to suggest new dates for Daude’s professional career, spanning the period 1190s–1244 – in this latter year, prayers were said in memory of Daude *uncle*. Intriguingly for our purposes, this would make him a (slightly senior) near-contemporary of Uc, whose dates of known activity are 1217–53.

As noted above, it is conceivable but by no means certain that Uc wrote his own *vida*; I consider it quite likely that he was responsible

24. “Lo coms de Peitieu si fo uns dels majors cortes del mon e dels majors trichadors de dompnas, e bons cavalliers d’armas e larcs de dompnejar; e saup ben trobar e cantar. Et anet lonc temps per lo mon per enganar las domnas” (Boutière et Schutz 7–8).

for Daude's. Whether we are dealing with one author (Uc or someone else) for both biographies, or separate authors, we can make two general observations: first, that both texts observe a strong generic unity in terms of style and choice of content, and second, that the value of authenticity is not stable, but fluctuates across the corpus of biographies. The explanation for this fluctuation must be sought in the interplay between the information detailed in the biographies on the one hand, and each poet's literary and historical trajectory (such as it can be traced independently of the *vidas* and *razos*) on the other. Close attention to this interplay can aid in understanding how the theme of authentic love is marshalled to underwrite the ideological aims of the biographies.

A comparison between the *vidas* of Uc and Daude reveals details which speak of the spread and growing importance of literacy and education in the thirteenth century. In both cases the troubadour's learning and skill at composition are flagged up. The first thing we learn about Daude, after the location of his birthplace, is that he was a canon:<sup>25</sup> a clerical education had evidently taken him into a secure institutional position, and this education is explicitly harnessed in manuscripts *IK* to his skill as a troubadour: "He was a learned man in letters and in natural wisdom and in composition [*trobar*]." Yet the "sen de trobar" ("skill in composition") noted in a passage common to all manuscripts, associated here with a Latin education and innate intelligence, is not sufficient to impart into his songs that ineffable quality that would give them either flavour or favour in the eyes of audiences.

The educational trajectory of Uc de Saint Circ displays both similarities and differences. We are told that he was pushed into education in Montpellier by his older brothers, who wanted to make him a churchman. However, instead of learning his letters like the good student that Daude evidently was, Uc devised his own syllabus based on troubadour song and the values of the courts in which those songs circulated: "And when they thought he was learning letters, he was learning *cansos* and *vers* and *sirventes* and *tensos* and *coblas*, and the deeds and words of the worthy men and the worthy ladies who were in the world and had ever been; and with this knowledge, he became a minstrel."<sup>26</sup> The insincerity which the biographer identifies in the songs of both poets can be connected to their rhetorical skill (explicitly, in Uc's case, his "bel parlar"), honed by a clerical education; yet their relationship to this education is strikingly different in each case. Uc's trajectory constitutes an explicit rejection of institutional learn-

25. Archival documents support this claim, though they place him in the cathedral chapter at Rodez rather than Maguelone as specified in the *vida* (see discussion further down).

26. On this *vida* as evidence for a developing conception of Occitan as a language of study, see further Hinton 84.

27. Davis (74–77) notes intriguing parallels between the portrayal of Uc in this *vida* and that of Ovid in the *accessus ad auctores* tradition which may have bolstered the troubadour's literary authority: "Like Ovid, Uc de Saint Circ abandoned a conventional career to pursue a poetic vocation against the wishes of his family. Both biographies characterize the poets as educated men of letters, who are overcome by a natural and irresistible desire to compose verse." On the *accessus* tradition more generally as a model for the *vidas*, see in particular Meneghetti, *Il pubblico* 209–44, and Egan.

ing in favour of a new vernacular curriculum centred on the poetic and moral value of *trobar*. Armed with this secular learning, Uc gambles on giving up advancement within the Church for life as an itinerant performer, and finds that the faith he has placed in the educational qualities of troubadour song have prepared him for successful passage through the world of the southern courts.<sup>27</sup>

Uc's decision to become a professional performer ("s'ajoglarai") is echoed in *vidas* for other troubadours. Indeed, his route from clerical training to court performance is presented as a well-trodden one, with numerous poets said to have abandoned "letras" and become *joglars*. There has long been debate about the extent to which such accounts should be taken seriously as evidence for how the professional lives of Occitan poets were structured. Analysing evidence concerning the early troubadours, Ruth Harvey judges it very unlikely that literary activity could have constituted the primary professional activity for any of them ("A figure described [in the *vidas*] as a *joglar* need not be a professional performer who made his living by his art," 226). Rather, men like Marcabru and Cercamon are likely to have progressed from clerical training to employment at some level in the administration of courts, with *trobar* an ancillary activity. Socio-economic change, coupled with the sudden expansion in the diffusion of troubadour lyric from the last quarter of the twelfth century, no doubt made thirteenth-century courts more conscious of the reputational opportunities offered by association with troubadour activity; at around the same time, the quantity of men emerging from clerical training began to exceed the number of available institutional positions (Harvey 229), and it was natural that many of these would seek to use their skills in the secular world instead. In such conditions of supply and demand, it is more likely that a rhetorically gifted individual might have been able to carve out a literary living under the wing of a wealthy patron. However, we should beware of accepting too readily the *vidas*' claim that many troubadours like Uc de Saint Circ were first and foremost professional performers; available evidence suggests that most of the authors of secular Latin go-liardic poetry were in secure professional employ, yet in the songs they presented themselves as wandering vagabonds (Kendrick, *Game of Love* 59–60). Uc himself appears to have sought non-literary income streams, since (as Zufferey has demonstrated) he confessed to a charge of usury in 1257; the number of poets who combined their literary work with other occupations (clerical, mercantile, and so on) makes it more rather than less likely that court poets



28. It is also worth considering that, in the major *chansonniers* which contain author portraits, only a handful of poets are unambiguously depicted as performers with instruments: 2 in A, 4 in I, and 1 in K. Comparing the marginal instructions to the illustrator of A with the finished portraits suggests that the stock image of a man declaiming used across all these manuscripts may, at times, represent a *joglar*; but this does not appear to affect the overall pattern greatly, since only five out of A's forty-four images are labelled as "jogolar." See Lemaitre et Vielliard LXIX–LXXI.

or performers might also have had other responsibilities alongside the literary support they offered their patrons.<sup>28</sup>

When faced with this repeated insistence on the abandonment of one career for life as *joglar* or *trobador*, it is then legitimate to speak of a fantasy, where the troubadour's commitment to the performance and composition of songs for courtly audiences is presented as a change of professional status, a sacrifice demonstrating the poets' faith in the opportunities for social advancement that *trobar* may bring them. There is a rhetoric of social mobility here which Eliza Ghil has argued has an ideological function in promoting the unity and harmony of lay Occitan courts, a defensive move against the rising influence of the clerical establishment and the French monarchy in Occitania after the Albigensian Crusade. In imagining troubadour activity as an autonomous, self-willed career, these depictions also reflect the more mercantile economic context of the thirteenth century. As Burgwinkle (191–257) has shown, the songs of this period tend to stage poet/patron interactions as a transactional negotiation, with Uc an archetypal figure in this regard. His songs are characterised by "a tone of defiance in the face of demands placed on him by the patronage system, a rhetorically proactive posture, and a highly developed strategy for furthering his own reputation as image-maker and caustic critic" (Burgwinkle 85). In similar fashion, the way inauthenticity is handled in Uc's *vida* places emphasis on his hermeneutic superiority over his audiences; a man may write of love and not be in love, but (when done well) his audiences will be none the wiser. The *canso*'s anxiety over the poet-lover's need to differentiate *fin'amor* from the *lauzengier*'s hollow imitation has been rewritten here to underscore the poet's autonomy. The canny poet can exploit undiscerning audiences for social and economic gain. In its representation of Uc manipulating his education for secular advantage, the *vida* thus celebrates the poet's authority over the literary text against the insistent (and conflicting) claims of both court audiences and institutional clericalism.

### Daude's inauthenticity, clericalism and crusade

Daude's editor characterizes his general approach to the love *canso* as "un exercice de scolastique amoureuse" (Daude de Pradas XXIV). This formulation draws an implicit connection between the *vida*'s claim that Daude's love songs lacked authenticity and his profession-

29. In the fourteenth century, the *vida* for Ferrari da Ferrara (the latest-known to be written) portrays him as a new kind of vernacular “maistre,” so well versed in the language of Occitan poetry that other poets and performers would seek him out at court for advice (Boutière et Schutz 581–82; see further Hinton 84–85).

al status as a canon. Of course, a number of troubadours were clerics or had clerical training according to the *vidas*, and most of these seem to have taken their studies more seriously than Uc. Giraut de Bornelh’s *vida* (Boutière et Schutz 39) claims that he was called “maestre dels trobadors” (“master of the troubadours”) for the quality of his songs. The clerical overtones of “maestre” are given no negative weighting here; but nor do they pull troubadour song towards the clerical sphere.<sup>29</sup> Instead, Giraut observes a seasonal separation: in the winter he fulfills his institutional teaching duties, while in the summer he travels between the courts with two singers who perform his songs. Here the *vida* cleverly uses the *reverdrie topos* so common in the exordia of Occitan *cansos* as a device for emphasizing the distance between the world of “escola” – represented by winter, the season associated with absence of loving – and that of court life, which takes place under the summer sun of love’s rebirth.

The *vida* for Monge de Montaudon displays a similar desire to keep the lay and clerical worlds separate, even as it promotes the individual’s ability to move between them. The *vida* tells us that Monge’s poetic name derives from his professional life as a monk, an identification followed by the author portraits found in manuscripts *ACIK*. Yet Monge’s loyalty to the clerical environment is not uncomplicated: in his famous satirical revue of fellow troubadours, *Pos Peire d’Alvernh’a cantat*, he calls himself “lo fals Monge de Montaudon,” suggesting that his monastic identity might not be entirely orthodox; another of his songs stages a debate with God in which Monge affects to challenge the Church’s authority over amorous matters. No doubt seizing on such clues, the biographer imagines Monge being freed from his incarceration in monastic orders in order to take part in the life of the courts (Boutière et Schutz 307). The divine impetus for this lay vocation in Monge’s *tenso* is here given a purely secular rationale. The poet secures his abbot’s agreement to release him from holy vows through the influence of king Alfonso of Aragon, who subsequently takes on the imperative role performed by God in the *tenso*: “E-il reis li comandet qu’el manjes carn e domnejes e cantes e trobes; et el si fez” (“And the king ordered him to eat meat and court ladies and sing and compose; and so he did”).

This *vida* invites us to recognize Monge’s ‘secularisation’ as an improvement in his social position underwritten by Aragonese royal power, and several other *vidas* feature troubadours abandoning the clerical world under the impetus of sexual desire and attraction to the courtly environment. Peire Rogier is identified as a canon whose

30. “E laisset la canorga e fetz se joglars, et anet per cortz, e foron grasit li sieu cantar” (“And he left the canonry and made himself a joglar, and travelled around the courts, and his songs were well received”).

31. Two other manuscripts contain portraits of Daude. That of *K* closely resembles the tonsured figure of *I*, as is often the case with this pair of manuscripts; *A* also underlines Daude’s clerical status, this time by portraying him seated reading from a book. A marginal instruction to the painter makes clear that this is intended to be “.i. calonego ka leça” (“a canon reading”).

32. One is reminded of the questions playfully explored by Jorge Luis Borges’s “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote” (in Borges, *Labyrinths*): the biographical context threatens to reorient in radical fashion the reader’s engagement with the text’s meaning and value.

decision to abandon his livelihood and become a wandering *joglar* is rewarded by audience appreciation for his songs (Boutière et Schutz 267) – the contrast with Daude in both professional trajectory and poetic success is instructive.<sup>30</sup> Peire Cardenal and Gausbert de Poicibot are both (like Uc) placed into a clerical institution at a young age, from which they ultimately escape into the secular world. In Peire’s case this move is presented as a sign of maturity “quant fo vengutz en etat d’ome” (“when he became a man:” Boutière et Schutz 335), while Gausbert is motivated by sexual desire: “per voluntat de femna issi del mostier” (“he left the church out of desire for women:” Boutière et Schutz 229). By contrast with all these figures, nothing in Daude’s *vida* suggests any derogation from clerical rule, and what we know of his actual career suggests a life spent successfully building relationships within the Church hierarchy and with the local aristocracy in order to curry influence and advancement (Larghi).

The *vida*’s comment about the lack of love in Daude’s *cansos* undermines the phenomenological, and therefore poetic, force of the songs which the biography serves to introduce in the *chansonniers*. The first piece following the *vida* in manuscript *I* (fol. 111v), for instance, is the *canso* *Ben ay’amors, quar anc me fes chauzir* (BdT 124.6); primed by the biographer, the reader may be less disposed to invest emotionally in a line such as the following, from the third stanza: “Gaugz e plazers m’en ven on plus mi duelh, / e suy pagatz, tan m’esn bon a suffrir” (“I derive joy and pleasure from what hurts me most, and I am well-paid, so pleasing is the suffering to me,” 3.17–18). The *vida* encourages us instead to view this statement as devoid of amorous sentiment – a formal exercise in paradox and oxymoron – and, subtly, invites us to align ourselves with the inscribed reception community in rejecting its language as inauthentic. Meanwhile, the portrait of Daude incorporated into the capital “B” of the first line reminds us, through his tonsure, of the poet’s clerical status.<sup>31</sup>

The *vidas* for figures such as Daude or Uc are playing with the biographical assumption that, according to de Man, inheres in the reader’s engagement with lyric poetry, telling us that it matters who is speaking and from what vantage point.<sup>32</sup> The *vida* encourages us to read Daude’s love songs for traces of cynicism which, when we read other poets’ songs, we might be more inclined to understand as reflecting the bitterness of the spurned lover – and therefore as a further declaration of the lover’s emotional commitment. For instance, Bernart de Ventadorn’s famous *Can vei la lauzeta mover* (BdT 70.43) builds up to the following assertion of defeated idealism:

Aissi-m part de leis e-m recre;  
 mort m'a, e per mort li respon,  
 e vau m'en, pus ilh no-m rete,  
 chaitius, en issilh, no sai on.  
 [...]  
 De chantar me gic e-m recre  
 e de joi e d'amor m'escon. (31.53–56, 59–60)

(So I leave her and give up; she has killed me, and I answer her as one who is dead, and I go away, since she will not keep me – miserable, in exile, I know not where [...] I renounce and give up singing, and I hide from joy and love.)

We are not, after all, very far from the line in Daude's song 12 proposed by Schutz as the basis for the *vida's* comment: "if my song does not contain much love, then no one but Love and Mercy are to blame" (ll. 6–7). In both cases, the intention is to underscore rather than undermine the speaker's commitment to an ethos of love service.

It appears that Daude de Pradas is being singled out by the biographer for reasons that are only partially explained by the content of his songs. Larghi's recent investigation into Daude's life throws up some intriguing details that may shed further light on the matter, raising the possibility that Uc and Daude may be linked more closely than has been realised. For Uc's early professional activity seems to have been in some aspects a less successful counterpart to Daude's. In the early part of his career, Daude appears to have been connected to two powerful noble families, the Anduza and Roquefoilh lineages. Perhaps through these networks (the Roquefoilhs had a history of donations to the cathedral chapter), he seems to have integrated the entourage of the Rodez episcopal court around the turn of the thirteenth century. The first Albigensian Crusade was something of a turning point in local politics, overturning the balance of power between the ecclesiastical and secular worlds; Daude's presence as witness to a number of key negotiations between Simon de Montfort (leader of the Crusade) and local dignitaries suggests that he was well-placed to profit from the pro-French alignment of the Rodez ecclesiastical establishment. In 1214 the number of canons in the cathedral chapters was increased, a move Larghi (38–40) interprets as designed to bring the canons more firmly under episcopal control and make the chapter more supportive of the crusade. Shortly after this,

during a further restructuring of the chapter, Daude was appointed as a secular canon.

Uc is known to have frequented the Anduza family in 1212, and to have stayed at the court of Henry I of Rodez, whose brother Uc had been deposed as Bishop of Rodez the previous year by Pope Innocent III, with the pro-French archdeacon Peire de la Treille taking his place. It is therefore quite possible that he and Daude crossed paths during this period, and that Uc's ties with Henry placed the two troubadours on opposite sides of a local power struggle initiated by the controversial Crusade; Larghi also believes it almost certain that while in the Rouergue Uc gathered at least a part of the materials he later used to write the *vidas*.

The possibility that allegiances arising from the Albigensian Crusade might be lurking in the background of the *vida's* attack on Daude is strengthened by its incorrect assertion that he was a canon at Maguelone. This cathedral and bishopric were notable for their strong support for the anti-Cathar agenda; Peire de Castelnau, the papal legate whose assassination sparked the Crusade into life, was archdeacon there when he was appointed legate for the suppression of Catharism in 1199, and Maguelone was staunch in its pro-Papal position through the subsequent events. Whether deliberate or not, the misattribution of Daude to Maguelone thus serves to further tie him to the world of the pro-Crusade establishment. Larghi suggests that the mention of Maguelone may also reflect a later stage in Daude's career progression. He appears to have been involved with the foundation of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Montpellier (he appears as a signatory to its statutes, approved by Jean II de Montlaur, Bishop of Maguelone), and he may also have taught there. Montpellier, of course, is where Uc had been sent to study (according to his possibly autobiographical *vida*) and where he had staged his secret rejection of the clerical curriculum. All these details thus contribute towards the impression that Daude and the pre-Italian Uc were two troubadours separated by the same life experiences: the one had thrown his lot in with the pro-French, pro-Papal religious establishment, while the other rejected (or was rejected by?) that world in favour of the courts of lay – and often anti-Papal – protectors.<sup>33</sup>

The curious comment in Daude's *vida* may be explicable as a response to the rhetoric of his songs in the context of tensions surrounding clerical involvement in troubadour production and the political ramifications of the Papal Crusade in the first decades of the thirteenth century; specifically, I have suggested that it may have

33. It should be noted, however, that Uc's main patron in the Veneto, Alberico da Romano, was alternately Guelph and Ghibelline, a reflection of (and reaction to) the shifting alliances and unstable political conditions in Italy at this time.

been Daude's implantation within the very structures through which Uc passed briefly and not entirely successfully early in his career that led to his characterization as deficient on the love side of the 'singing for love' *topos* – a hypothesis that is obviously much strengthened if we assume that Uc was the author of Daude's biography. More broadly, the disparaging of Daude's *cansos* also feeds into the trend we observed at work in the *vida* for Uc, with its insistence on distinguishing clerical learning from the documentation and study of troubadour song, considered to be a new kind of lay, vernacular curriculum. The marginalization of the clerical element in Uc's education goes hand in hand with the representation of Daude as failing to strike a chord with the reception community of the *canso*. In both cases, we see the biographies working to assert ownership of the emerging written tradition on behalf of increasingly literate lay patrons and the poets they favoured.

As argued above, the biographies represent only one intervention in the thirteenth-century debate over the value and ownership of troubadour song. Their judgment is necessarily partial and, at times, in contradiction with the historical evidence. When it comes to Daude de Pradas, the high number of surviving songs suggests that the *vidas'* claim to speak for the textual community of *trobar* was unsuccessful. It is possible to identify competing narratives about the troubadour textual record. One such is offered by Matfre Ermenegaud's late thirteenth-century *Breviari d'amor*, which sets out to demonstrate that all love, including the carnal love celebrated by the troubadours, has the divine love of God at its essential root.

In the final 7,000 lines of this 35,000-line work, the author weaves 267 quotations drawn from the songs of sixty-five named Occitan poets and a good number of anonymous ones. Matfre, a cleric expounding a doctrine of salvation, clearly stands in a different relation to the troubadour tradition from Uc de Saint Circ and the other biographers. As with the biographies, the *Breviari's* engagement with quotations drawn from songs works to invest Occitan poetry with cultural and moral authority.<sup>34</sup> However, Matfre's selection of troubadours for quotation speaks eloquently of the gulf separating his conception of the troubadour from that of the *vidas* and *razos*. Daude is cited six times from five different songs, and described as "lo fis aimans" ("the courtly lover:" 32367) "quez ac mout bon cor de sufrir" ("who had a good heart for suffering:" 28548); by contrast, Uc's name is entirely absent – the only song of his to be cited (twice) is attributed by Matfre to the earlier troubadour Uc Brunenc.

34. See Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales* (Chapter 3 for the biographies and Chapter 7 for the *Breviari*).

## Conclusion

Sarah Kay has argued convincingly that the twelfth-century emergence of a vernacular ‘literature of entertainment’ with love as its principal topic, and its conflicting tendencies towards irony, idealization and debate, reflects the role of clerics in the elaboration of lay courtly culture (*Courtly Contradictions*; “Courts, Clerks, and Courtly Love”).<sup>35</sup> She views the *lauzengier* theme in particular as a means of both acknowledging and defusing the tensions caused in the mediation between lay and clerical concerns and power structures (“Contradictions”). I have suggested above that the closely related authenticity *topos* allowed poets to mediate in similar fashion between the demands of court audiences and their own claims over the meaning and value of the texts they were creating. By invoking a private domain of sentiment and self-knowledge which underwrites the value of both amorous and poetic discourse, troubadours are able either to invite assent and validation from their public, or alternatively to assert independence from the limitations imposed by audience expectations.

Responding to these dynamics in the material they were commenting and supplementing, the biographies reflect the growing importance of literacy in lay *milieus* in the thirteenth century. These developments raised questions about the preservation and documentation of troubadour song: how to define the relationship (and not least the hierarchy) between vernacular written practices and their Latinate models, and where textual authority should reside – in the established textual communities of institutional literacy or the emergent literate practices of the courts. The biographies, through their treatment of the theme of emotional authenticity, reflect the claims of the courts, but also the poets’ own stake in the cultural material they were producing. Individual *vidas* frequently conclude with a formula along the lines: “and here some of his songs are written.”<sup>36</sup> The possessive pronoun signals the troubadour’s ownership of his corpus, while the *chansonniers* themselves embody the material and textual investment in troubadour production of those who commissioned them at great expense. In similar fashion, the biographies promote the fantasy of a world where poets create their own educations and careers away from institutional structures, and through their poetic art hold the power to make or break reputations; yet at the same

35. See also Jaeger; Gaunt, *Love and Death* 42.

36. For instance, at the end of Uc’s *vida* in manuscript A, we read: “Et aqui son escriutas gran ren de las soas chanssos.”

time, those poets' own fortunes depend on establishing and maintaining good relations with their patrons. One *vida* for the early troubadour Marcabru (Boutière et Schutz 12–13) describes how his scathing attacks on court immorality eventually led the castellans of Guyenne to put him to death, offering a stark reminder of the limits of poetic autonomy when turned against the community.

The *vida* for Daude de Pradas depicts him as a canon, ensconced within an institutional structure that insulates him from this need for negotiation between poet and court. Implicitly, his lack of appreciation for authentic love is attributed to his status as a successful man of the Church, at a time when religious institutions were viewed with suspicion at many southern courts for their involvement in the traumatic disruptions of the Albigensian Crusade. Viewed in this context, the cynicism found in certain of his songs is read as a lack of investment in a game to which, the biographer insists, he remains an outsider. The charge of inauthenticity, then, serves to delegitimize Daude's voice from participation in troubadour lyric. Uc's inauthenticity, by contrast, is portrayed as the edge that allows him to work the system to his advantage, taking the upper hand in his negotiations with audiences; as Meneghetti puts it (*Il pubblico* 203), "simulation becomes synonymous with professionalism." Springing from the rhetorical skills developed independently and in place of the educational curriculum offered him at school in Montpellier, Uc's ability to fake amorous emotion stands as one more sign of the independence of this self-made poet who turns the resources of Latinate culture to his own ends in order to exploit his patrons. Given the importance now attached to Uc's role in the anthologising of Occitan literary materials, the *vida* narrative can be read as the tale not only of a poet, but also of an emerging literary tradition appropriating the forms of learning on behalf of lay, vernacular concerns. Both repository and interpretive act – document/monument, to borrow Le Goff's influential formulation<sup>37</sup> – the biographies look forward to a posterity in which the rival ownership claims of different stakeholders over the cultural capital of the songs will be weighed and sifted by future generations of readers.

37. See also Ricoeur 116–19.



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# “C’est costume d’amour de joie avoir après doloir”

## La fenomenologia amorosa in alcuni passi del *Tristan* e del *Cligés*

### Abstract

The love described by Thomas d’Angleterre in *Tristan* and by Chrétien de Troyes in *Cligés* is conceived in different terms than the conventional model of *fin’amor* put forward by the troubadours; both authors treat the phase of their protagonists’ falling in love as a true and proper disease whose symptoms can easily be mistaken for those of any medical condition such as sea-sickness. The two romances differ, however, in their rendering of the affective states and the somatic reactions that correspond to each of those states of the individual. A comparison of the relevant passages shows how the pathology of love brings about individual emotive characteristics and physical manifestations. This understanding of love as a disease is rooted in the literary tradition going back to Ovid, but the two authors reinterpret it in distinctive ways and leave it to their protagonists’ own choice to seek healing.

L’amore descritto nei romanzi del XII secolo offre una prospettiva del sentimento che risponde a regole prestabilite, a partire dal modello imposto dalla *fin’amor* trobadorica; le storie d’amore tra valorosi cavalieri e nobili dame ambiscono all’equilibrio sociale del perfetto bilanciamento tra *amor* e *onor*. Dal 1150 in poi, Maria di Francia, Thomas d’Angleterre, Bérout e Chrétien de Troyes diventano i portavoce di una *fin’amor* che, poggiando le basi su leggende e miti bretoni, ingloba il sentimento d’amore in un drammatico ventaglio di realtà diverse.<sup>1</sup>

L’amore cortese, però, pur rientrando in schemi preimpostati – fortemente influenzati dal modello ovidiano – acquisisce una certa soggettività nella descrizione della sua fenomenologia, nella maniera in cui i singoli personaggi ne manifestano i sintomi. Dalle opere di due degli autori sopra citati emerge un concetto di ‘amore’ inteso come vera e propria patologia, che diviene il fulcro di due noti ro-

1. Cf. Reddy, *The Making of Romantic Love* 176. Si veda anche Maddox 339: “la présence d’un discours amoureux, malgré son ambiguïté, semble s’imposer d’emblée comme l’élément principal d’un effet de sens global, comme le suggère une copieuse critique moderne souvent polarisée par la question, tellement discutée depuis Gaston Paris, de l’‘amour courtois.’”

manzi, il *Cligés* e il *Tristan*, attraverso i quali Chrétien e Thomas raccontano vicende amorose più o meno tragiche in cui i protagonisti scelgono, a seconda dei casi, di guarire o soccombere alla dolce malattia. In quest'ottica, lo studio del lessico delle emozioni rappresenta un passo fondamentale per inquadrare la fenomenologia amorosa al di fuori degli stereotipi cortesi, in quanto stati affettivi e caratterizzazioni somatiche rispondono a percezioni individuali scaturite dal sentimento.

In questo studio mi soffermerò sulla comparazione di alcuni versi tratti dal *Cligés* e dal Frammento di Carlisle (attribuito a Thomas)<sup>2</sup> in cui gli autori si dilungano sulla descrizione del malessere amoroso. I versi in questione, accomunati dallo stesso *jeu de mots*, descrivono un analogo contesto: la fase dell'innamoramento durante il viaggio per mare. La reiterazione dei lemmi *mer*, *amer*, *amor* diviene emblematica per la descrizione della sofferenza amorosa: il nascente sentimento innesca stati affettivi veicolati da reazioni somatiche specifiche, percepibili ai sensi e accomunabili agli effetti causati dalla navigazione. Nonostante ciò, Chrétien e Thomas scelgono di descrivere la sintomatologia amorosa in maniera differente, puntando sulla soggettività delle emozioni attribuite ai personaggi coinvolti.

Lo studio è diviso in due sezioni, incentrate sull'analisi degli stati affettivi presenti nei passi in questione e sulla definizione di 'amore' inteso come malattia relativamente alla fase dell'innamoramento. La prima parte prevede l'isolamento dei lemmi riconducibili alla sfera affettiva dei singoli personaggi: non soltanto i termini che descrivono le emozioni ma anche i correlati somatici, ossia quelle parole che in qualche modo rivelano la manifestazione fisica o espressiva dello stato affettivo in questione.<sup>3</sup> La seconda sezione prevede una comparazione tra i due passi e mostra come gli stati affettivi precedentemente analizzati vengano inglobati in una descrizione più generica della patologia amorosa – meglio descritta in altri versi del *Cligés* – su cui, inoltre, aleggia il tema della morte.

## 1 La 'navigazione' degli affetti: amore o mare?

Il Frammento di Carlisle contiene 154 versi, di cui i primi 30 e gli ultimi 40 sono di difficile lettura a causa delle pessime condizioni del manoscritto; l'inizio dell'opera di Thomas è andato perduto e questa lacuna corrisponde alla parte del romanzo in cui l'autore probabilmente racconta dell'infanzia di Tristano e dell'arrivo in Irlanda

2. Si vedano soprattutto Benskin, Hunt and Short 289; e Short.

3. La metodologia applicata è stata proposta da Fuksas nel suo studio sul *Chevalier de la Charrette*, in cui suggerisce di identificare le *emotion words* a partire dalle co-occorrenze ("*Ire*, *Peor* and their Somatic Correlates"); per approfondimenti si vedano anche Larrington; Rosenwein, "Problems and Methods;" e Fuksas, "Embodied Abstractions." Per la traduzione e la lemmatizzazione si faccia riferimento a Tobler-Lommatzsch, unitamente al *DECT*.

dopo la vittoria sul gigante Morholt. Incaricato da re Marco di condurre da lui Isotta, la futura sposa, Tristano compie il viaggio con la donna e la sua serva Brangania; per errore, Tristano e Isotta bevono la pozione magica che, secondo la madre di lei, avrebbe dovuto garantire il matrimonio della figlia con il re. Il Frammento di Carlisle narra del viaggio di ritorno, durante il quale i due giovani confessano reciprocamente i propri sentimenti. I primi versi leggibili fanno riferimento al malessere che affligge i protagonisti attraverso un gioco di parole che enfatizza l'effetto paronomastico dei termini *mer* (mare), *amer* (amarezza/amaro/amare), *amor* (amore):

“Si vus ne fussez, ja ne fusse,  
 Ne de l'amer rien ne seüsse.  
 Merveille est k'om la mer ne het  
 Que si amer mal en mer set,  
 Et que l'anguisse est si amere!  
 Si je une foiz fors en ere,  
 Ja n'enteroie, ce quit.”  
 Tristan ad noté chescun dit,  
 Mes ele l'ad issi forseveé  
 Par 'l'amer' que ele ad tant changee  
 Que ne set si cele dolur  
 Ad de la mer ou de l'amur,  
 Ou s'ele dit 'amer' de 'la mer'  
 Ou pur 'l'amur' diet 'amer.'  
 Pur la dotance qu'il sent,  
 Demande si la..l. prent  
 Ou si ja grante ou s'el s.st ...  
 .....  
 Par tant ql voir le..te,  
 Car deus mal i put l'en sentir,  
 L'un d'amer, l'autre de puür. (vv. 39–58)<sup>4</sup>

4. Tutti i passi de *Le Roman de Tristan* di Thomas sono estratti dall'edizione a cura di Baumgartner e Short.

(“Se non ci fossi stato tu, non ci sarei stata neanche io e non avrei saputo de l'amer. È strano che l'uomo non odi il mare, se in mare si prova un male così amaro e l'angoscia è tanto amara! Se mai riuscissi a uscirne, certo non vi ritornerei più.” Tristano ha prestato attenzione ad ognuna delle sue parole, ma è stato fuorviato dall'amer' per il quale è cambiata che non sa se abbia quel dolore per via del mare o dell'amore, o se abbia detto 'amer' de 'la mer' o 'amer' al posto di 'amur'. In

5. Per mantenere l'ambivalenza del passo alcuni termini non sono stati tradotti.

6. In merito al passo, la Gambino ritiene che il termine *anguisse* (dal latino *ANGUSTĪA*, dunque "spazio stretto," da cui deriva l'accezione di "difficoltà, situazione critica") del v. 44 evochi a pieno il disagio del personaggio che non è solo morale ma anche fisico, dovuto allo spazio limitato della nave. La studiosa, inoltre, traduce il termine *amer* del v. 58 con "bile, fiele," alludendo all'amarezza del liquido prodotto dal fegato (432–33). La scelta di tradurre il termine alludendo ad uno degli umori dell'organismo rimanda al 'modello idraulico,' ovvero uno degli approcci allo studio delle emozioni derivato dalla teoria medievale che le concepisce come liquidi (umori) fluttuanti nel corpo umano in attesa di essere espulsi; per approfondimenti si veda Siraisi.

7. Sulla reiterazione delle rime *amur* : *dolur e mort* : *confort* nel *Tristan*, si veda Gaunt 111.

8. Va notato che la Gambino traduce il verso in cui ricorre il verbo facendo allusione al gioco di parole su 'l'amer' (v. 432, "giocando con quel 'lamer'"). Damasio ritiene che le emozioni possano essere rivelate attraverso espressioni del viso, intonazione della voce o atteggiamenti fisici; pertanto, a differenza dei sentimenti, esse svolgono un ruolo nel 'teatro del corpo' (*Looking for Spinoza* 3–8, 28). Per ulteriori approfondimenti si veda il precedente studio di Damasio, "The Somatic Marker Hypothesis" 1413–20 e il già citato lavoro di Fuksas ("*Ire, Peor and their Somatic Correlates*" 67–69), in cui analizza i marcatori somatici presenti nel *Chevalier de la Charrette di Chrétien*.

preda al dubbio, si chiede se sia in balia di [...]. [...] Così bene che [...] la verità [...], perché è possibile avvertire due tipi di malessere: amare o essere nauseato.)<sup>5</sup>

I versi iniziali alludono all'interpretazione delle parole di Isotta da parte di Tristan; la frammentarietà del passo non permette di ricostruire a pieno il significato del discorso della donna, incentrato sul senso di angoscia avvertito durante la navigazione. Tristan, fuorviato da queste parole, prova timore (*dotance*): consapevole che uno stesso malessere possa scaturire da due fattori diversi, *amer* e *puür*, si chiede se Isotta stia soffrendo per via del mare o dell'amore.<sup>6</sup>

L'identificazione dello stato affettivo del personaggio femminile viene inglobata nella descrizione di un processo percettivo; il malessere di Isotta è reso con il lemma *dolur*<sup>7</sup> ma viene raccontato attraverso le parole di Tristan, che lo percepisce grazie ad un evento specificamente sensoriale: il cambiamento fisico. Al verso 48 Tristan dice: "Par 'l'amer' que ele ad tant changee;" il verbo *changier* potrebbe essere inteso come correlato somatico,<sup>8</sup> ossia come fenomeno indicativo di una manifestazione fisica relativa ad uno stato affettivo preciso che Tristan identifica con il *dolur*. Il termine dona corporeità all'emozione e la rende percepibile attraverso la somatizzazione: scorgendo il cambiamento di Isotta, Tristan ne comprende il dolore.

Nei versi immediatamente successivi, l'autore descrive la confessione amorosa di Tristan a seguito della spiegazione di Isotta:

Ysolt dit: "Ce mal que je sent  
Est amer, mes ne put nient:  
Mon quer angoisse e pris se tient.  
E tel amer de la mer vient:  
Pris puis que ... z entray."  
Tristran respont: "Autretel ay:  
Ly miens mals est del vostre estrait.  
L'anguisse mon quer amer fait,  
Si ne sent pas le mal amer;  
Ne il ne revient pas de la mer,  
Mes d'amer ay ceste dolur,  
E en la mer m'est pris l'amur.  
Assez en ay ore dit a sage." (vv. 59–71)

(Isotta dice: "Il male che sento ha un gusto amaro ma non mi dà nausea: mi stringe il cuore nella morsa dell'angoscia. Una tale amarezza proviene dal mare: l'ho avvertita dopo esservi

entrata [...]. Tristano risponde: “È lo stesso per me: il mio male è nato dal vostro. L’angoscia immerge il mio cuore nell’amarezza così che questo male non è amaro e non viene dal mare; ma questo dolore proviene dell’amore ed è in mare che mi ha colto l’amore. Ho detto abbastanza per chi vuol capire.”)

Isotta rivela a Tristano che il malessere avvertito è amaro ma non le dà nausea – escludendo, quindi, il *puir* dalle possibili cause –, piuttosto le stringe il cuore nella morsa dell’angoscia: una tale amarezza proviene dal mare, o meglio, è coincisa con l’inizio del viaggio. Il discorso di Isotta continua a muoversi sul piano dell’ambiguità; al contrario, Tristano è più diretto ed ammette di provare un analogo malessere, stando attento a chiarirne le cause. Il personaggio maschile, pur continuando a ‘giocare’ con il carattere polisemico delle parole, ne riconosce il potere e ne fa un uso accorto, finendo per confessare i propri sentimenti alla donna.<sup>9</sup> Viste le differenze riguardo la tipologia del malessere avvertito, l’unico punto in comune tra le emozioni dei due innamorati diventa l’angoscia: classificabile come uno dei sintomi della malattia amorosa, è uno stato affettivo che caratterizza entrambi e, per entrambi, viene spiegata come un’emozione direttamente connessa al cuore umano.

Il passo continua con la descrizione della reazione di Isotta a seguito della confessione di Tristano; entrambi i personaggi provano stati euforici, seguiti dalla rivelazione dei loro sentimenti a Brangania:

Quant Ysolt entent son corage,  
 Molt est liee de l’a..ure.  
 ..ls i ad ... s ...,  
 Car ambedus sunt en esseir:  
 Dient lur bon e lur voleir,  
 Biasent et enveisent e acolent.  
 A Branguain de l’amur parolent:  
 Tant ly promettent, tant li dient  
 Que par fiance s’entrelieent,  
 E ele lur voleir consent.  
 Tuz lor bons font privéement  
 E lur joie et lur deduit,  
 Quant il poënt jur et nuit.  
 Delitable est le deport  
 Qui de sa dolur ad confort,

9. Avvalendosi dalla rilevanza del discorso diretto presente nei versi, la Marchello-Nizia ritiene che sia stato Thomas ad inventare quello che definisce *dialogue amoureux*, assente nei precedenti romanzi e destinato ad avere successo proprio grazie al *Tristan* (“Une nouvelle poétique” 170).



Car c'est costume d'amur  
 De joie avoir après dolur.  
 Pus qu'il se sunt discovert,  
 Que plus s'astient e plus i pert.  
 Vont s'en a joie li amant  
 La haute mer a plein siglant  
 Vers Engleterre a plein tref. (vv. 72–93)<sup>10</sup>

10. Per la ricostruzione dell'intero passo cf. Thomas, *Le Roman de Tristan* (ed. Bédier) 55.

(Quando Isotta comprende i suoi sentimenti, ne è molto lieta [...] perché tutti e due vivono nella speranza: dichiarano il loro piacere e il loro desiderio; si baciano, si stringono e si uniscono. Parlano del loro amore a Brangania: le fanno delle promesse tali che finiscono per concludere un accordo con lei, che acconsente alla loro volontà. Appena possono, giorno e notte, si abbandonano intimamente a tutto ciò di cui hanno voglia, che dona loro gioia e godimento. Il piacere è più gradevole per chi trae conforto dal dolore: è costume d'amore provare gioia dopo il dolore. Dopo essersi dichiarati, più se ne astengono e più si privano. Gli amanti continuano il loro viaggio nella gioia navigando in mare aperto, a vele spiegate, verso l'Inghilterra.)

Dopo essere venuta a conoscenza dei sentimenti di Tristano, il *dolur* di Isotta è rimpiazzato dalla *lëece*. Un evento puramente sensoriale – l'ascolto e la relativa comprensione delle parole del giovane – innescava una transizione affettiva – rivelata dall'antinomia dei termini appena menzionati – che da una condizione disforica del sentimento di Isotta conduce ad una prospettiva euforica. Tale cambiamento viene rimarcato dalle parole dell'autore che, nel definire “la costume d'amur” pone enfasi sull'intensità delle emozioni attribuite ai due protagonisti e riconducibili al campo semantico della gioia (*liee, joie e deduit*). In aggiunta, i lemmi *dolur, confort, delit, deport e joie* (vv. 85–88) non sono assegnati direttamente ad un personaggio specifico, ma rappresentano un percorso emotivo stereotipico – già ampiamente cantato da trovatori e trovieri – comune a chiunque si imbatta nel sentimento d'amore.<sup>11</sup>

11. Per contro, si veda Ferroul, il quale non riteneva che la fase dell'innamoramento dei due amanti fosse caratterizzata a pieno dalla sintomatologia amorosa (175).

Al carattere astratto delle emozioni viene associato quello più propriamente fisico, scaturito dal riferimento all'unione carnale dei due amanti, enfatizzata, anche in questo caso, dall'intervento dell'autore: l'astenersi dai rapporti sessuali può determinare delle privazioni, ovvero minare la solidità del sentimento d'amore. Questo concet-

12. I versi del Frammento Sneyd sono stati analizzati dalla Kay nel suo studio sulle contraddizioni emergenti dai paradossi cortesi (51–55); in questo senso, anche l'opposizione *astient/pert* del v. 90 sembrerebbe rispondere alla teoria della studiosa. Sui termini indicanti l'atto sessuale nel romanzo di Tristano (*naturel fait, faire, ovre, faisance*) si veda anche Vatteroni: "È notevole che Tristano faccia risalire l'origine dell'amore al *faire*: la condizione necessaria perché nasca *amor* sono i rapporti fisici, se questi mancano subentra l'odio" (1573).

13. La Marchello-Nizia ritiene addirittura che i due avessero consumato l'amore in Irlanda, prima di bere il filtro ("L'invention" 227–28).

14. I rapporti tra il *Tristan* e il *Cligés* sono stati oggetto di numerose investigazioni nel corso degli anni. Nell'introduzione alla sua edizione del *Cligés*, Foerster definì il romanzo di Chrétien un "Anti-Tristan" (39–57); Paris (293), Van Hamel (486) e Micha (7) lo hanno considerato, invece, un "Neo-Tristan." A tal proposito, si vedano anche i contributi di Nitze; Marani; e Maddox, "Critical Trends" 731–33. Più recentemente, alcuni studiosi hanno ritenuto che il *Cligés* costituisca una sorta di parodia della vicenda tristaniana; tra i contributi, si vedano Lonigan; e Delage 211–17. Va tenuto conto dello studio della Freeman, che si sofferma su episodi specifici del *Cligés*, tra i quali quello relativo al *jeu de mots*.

to viene espresso in maniera più diretta nel Frammento Sneyd, in riferimento al legame con la seconda Isotta; in quel caso Tristano si astiene volontariamente dal consumare il matrimonio, consapevole del fatto che, mentre l'atto sessuale genera amore, l'astinenza innesca il sentimento opposto.<sup>12</sup>

La gioia annunciata, però, pare costituire una condizione di euforia transitoria: l'unità del romanzo, stando allo studio di Larmat, sembrerebbe provenire dal senso di dolore che pervade l'intera vicenda. E, paradossalmente, il lessico riconducibile al campo etimologico della gioia presente nei diversi frammenti non riesce a neutralizzare quello impiegato per descrivere la sofferenza ma, al contrario, lo rinforza poiché indica stati affettivi ascrivibili ad un tempo passato e, dunque, non effettivamente imputabili ai protagonisti al momento della narrazione (369–72). L'analisi di Larmat, che per questioni cronologiche non poteva tener conto del Frammento di Carlisle, lascerebbe pensare che i versi relativi alla navigazione siano gli unici a descrivere una condizione di 'vera gioia' in grado di annientare il dolore e corrispondente ad una fase iniziale dell'innamoramento in cui il sentimento era ancora relativamente 'puro'.<sup>13</sup>

Come è noto, un passo analogo ricorre nella prima parte del *Cligés*, nei versi in cui l'autore racconta del viaggio di Artù verso la Bretagna, accompagnato da Alexandre, la regina e la sua damigella Soredamors.<sup>14</sup> Alexandre e Soredamors, futuri genitori di Cligés, cadono vittima dello stesso malessere e, pur percependolo, la regina non riesce ad individuarne il fattore scatenante:

La reine garde s'an prant  
 Et voit l'un et l'autre sovant  
 Descoler et anpalir  
 Et sopirer et tressaillir  
 Mes ne set por coi il le font  
 Fors que por la mer ou il sont.  
 Espoir bien s'an aparceüst  
 Se la mers ne la deceüst.  
 Mes la mers l'angingne et deçoit  
 Si qu'an la mer l'amor ne voit,  
 Qu'an la mer sont, et d'amer vient,  
 Et s'est amers li max ques tient.  
 Et de ces trois ne set blasmer  
 La reine fors que la mer,

Car li dui le tierz li ancusent,  
 Et par le tierz li dui s'escusent,  
 Qui del forfez sont antechié.  
 Sovant conpère autrui pechié  
 Tex qui n'i a corpes ne tort.  
 Einsi la reïne molt fort  
 La mer ancorpe et si la blasme;  
 Mes a tort li met sus le blasme ,  
 Car la mers n'i a rien forfez. (vv. 541–63)<sup>15</sup>

15. I passi estratti dal *Cligés* fanno riferimento all'edizione a cura di Gregory e Luttrell. Questi versi sono caratterizzati da una notevole quantità di varianti che riguardano, in particolare, i lemmi isolati: 546: |l' amour| T; l'amour corretto in la mer C; 550: l'amer ne v. R; 551: Qant lamer font B; d'enmer C; de lamer R (+1); Que en la mer sunt tant v. S (-1); 552: en mer N; amors SBC (T); amors C; 561: missing in CT; 562: amet lo b. N; t. a la mer le TR.

(La regina se ne fa accorta e vede l'un l'altro, ripetutamente, perdere colorito e impallidire, sospirare e trasalire ma non sa perché lo facciano, forse per via del mare; lo indovinerebbe se il mare non la traesse in inganno. Ma il mare la fuorvia a tal punto che non riesce a vedere l'amore per mare, poiché sono in mare e provano amore ed è amaro il male che li attanaglia. E di questi tre [concetti], la regina biasima solo il mare, perché anche gli altri due accusano il terzo e si scagionano grazie ad esso, pur essendo colpevoli. Spesso chi non ha difetti né colpe paga per i peccati altrui. Così la regina muove forti accuse al mare, biasimandolo, ma a torto, perché non ha alcuna colpa.)

La descrizione degli stati d'animo dei due protagonisti è affidata all'uso esclusivo dei marcatori somatici; *descolorer*, *anpalir*, *sopirer*, *tressaillir* sono verbi che identificano precise reazioni fisiologiche scaturite dal *max* che rappresenta l'unico termine impiegato per descrivere uno stato emotivo piuttosto generico. All'equivocità del *jeu de mots*, dunque, si aggiunge l'ambiguità del lessico delle emozioni: Chrétien non rivela apertamente quanto 'provato' dai due protagonisti, ma si sofferma su quanto accade al loro corpo, lasciando, inoltre, ad un soggetto non emotivamente coinvolto il compito di identificarne le emozioni e trasmetterle al pubblico. L'intera scena – e la conseguente resa affettiva dei protagonisti – è descritta dalla prospettiva di Ginevra che, dalla continua alternanza tra cambiamenti di colorito, sospiri e turbamenti, deduce che Alexandre e Soredamors siano affetti da una sorta di malessere sia interiore che esteriore.

In questo senso, il personaggio della regina svolge un ruolo significativo nella narrazione, che Frank Brandsma ha definito *mirror character*: “in narratological terms: the reaction of the intradiegetic audience, the spectators, mirrors the intended reaction of the extradiegetic audience” (“Mirror characters” 275).<sup>16</sup> Con l'interpretazione della

16. Per approfondimenti, dello stesso Brandsma si veda anche “Arthurian Emotions.”

vicenda da parte della regina, l'autore propone una delle tre prospettive possibili, in linea con gli ipotetici fattori scatenanti descritti nel *jeu de mots*: tra *mer*, *amer* e *amor*, ingannata dal mare, Ginevra riconduce il malessere dei protagonisti alla navigazione. Il personaggio della regina, del resto, viene posto di fronte alla stessa situazione riscontrata nel Frammento di Carlisle in merito al termine *changee* – sommaria reazione somatica identificativa del malessere di Isotta che innesca la dichiarazione amorosa di Tristano – ad eccezione del fatto che nel *Cligés* la descrizione dei correlati somatici è minuziosa ed enfatizzata attraverso la disposizione assegnatagli nel verso: due co-occorrenze in posizione di rima.<sup>17</sup>

17. La Larrington dimostra come il medievista possa trarre maggiori risultati dallo studio del lessico delle emozioni tenendo conto delle co-occorrenze piuttosto che dei singoli lemmi (254).

I riferimenti alla fisicità delle emozioni non vanno ricercati nell'uso esclusivo di correlati somatici, ma, ugualmente in locuzioni, verbi o sostantivi presenti nella descrizione. In questo caso, parlando della regina, l'autore dice: “Si qu'an la mer l'amor ne voit;” il verbo *vëoir*, che ricorre anche ai versi iniziali del passo, allude alla percezione visiva delle manifestazioni descritte e permette di ricondurre direttamente al loro fattore scatenante, ossia l'*amor* – pur facendo parte di un'esposizione controfattuale in cui l'azione è negata attraverso l'uso della particella *ne*.<sup>18</sup> Chrétien, quindi, spiega al pubblico che è possibile ‘vedere l'amore’ grazie alla serie di correlati somatici forniti ai versi 543–44 ma, ingannata dal mare, la regina non riesce a comprendere il sentimento che rende amaro quel malessere. All'amore, così come al dolore, viene data una certa corporeità, essendo concepito come tangibile, percepibile ai sensi e non giudicabile come un mero fenomeno astratto.

18. Le descrizioni controfattuali implicano azioni o stati emotivi che al momento della narrazione non sono effettivamente imputabili al personaggio. Tali ragionamenti sono concetti espressi in psicologia e in filosofia e, come ha notato Pizzi: “la presenza dei controfattuali nel linguaggio è poco apparente perché a volte usiamo costrutti linguistici in cui essi non compaiono in modo esplicito” (86). Per approfondimenti sulla negazione in linguistica e le implicazioni neurali si vedano Virno; Santamaria, Espino and Byrne; e Fuksas, “Embodied Semantics.”

Per quanto riguarda il gioco di parole utilizzato nei due romanzi, la Gambino riteneva che “l'equivocatio su *la mer* (‘il mare’), *l'amer* (‘l'amaro’) e *l'amer* (‘l'amore,’ ‘il fatto di amare’), esibita in rima e rifratta all'interno del verso grazie a legami fonico-semantici di grande effetto, riprende quella latina *mare / amare / amarum*, la cui tradizione letteraria e scolastica risale fino a Plauto” (433; cf. Brault). Ad oggi, non è possibile stabilire con esattezza quale sia la fonte a cui i due autori hanno attinto; l'ipotesi di Kelly, il quale riteneva che si trattasse di una descrizione stereotipata ripresa nel tempo da vari autori, pare essere la più plausibile (224). Gaston Paris considerava il *jeu de mots* come un espediente per spingere i due a confessare reciprocamente i loro sentimenti, suggerito all'autore dal contesto per mare: è, pertanto, parte stessa dell'azione e le permette di avanzare fino ad uno dei suoi momenti più critici. Nel *Cligés*, invece, esso diviene semplicemente un *jeu d'esprit*, poiché si tratta di un'imitazio-

19. Cf. Thomas, *Le Roman de Tristan* (ed. Baumgartner et Short) 45 e Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligés* (ed. Bianchini) 241. Alle differenti ipotesi sull'origine del *jeu de mots* va affiancata la lettura di Huchet che vuole tener conto del ruolo cruciale svolto dalla madre di Isotta; nelle tre parole utilizzate dall'autore, egli legge anche *mère*, ossia colei che fornisce il filtro per garantire la durata dell'amore tra la figlia e re Marco ma che accidentalmente viene bevuto dalla donna e da Tristan. Nel frammento di Carlisle, però, non vi è alcun riferimento all'assunzione del filtro a bordo della nave, sebbene la madre di Isotta abbia un ruolo critico nell'evoluzione della vicenda: tacendo la verità alla figlia, innesca i meccanismi che condurranno al tragico epilogo (Huchet 6).

20. Il viaggio viene indetto da Artù a seguito della notizia giunta in Bretagna: per aver indugiato troppo, l'uomo a cui aveva affidato il regno durante la sua assenza è determinato a contenderglielo.

ne dei versi di Thomas (Paris 280–83). A seguito della teoria di Paris, tutta la critica risulta concorde nell'affermare che, nella tradizione tristaniana, Thomas sia stato il primo ad utilizzare il gioco di parole; proprio il suo romanzo ne avrebbe garantito la diffusione in epoca medievale, testimoniata a partire dal *Cligés*, fino ad arrivare alla stesura dell'anonimo poemetto italiano *Il mare amoroso*.<sup>19</sup>

Altro aspetto significativo è il tema del viaggio che, in entrambi i romanzi, riguarda due contesti relativamente importanti per lo snodo delle vicende: analogamente al *Tristan*, anche nel *Cligés* la navigazione è indetta dal re in un momento cruciale per la vita politica del regno arturiano.<sup>20</sup> Il viaggio, poi, acquisisce valenza simbolica per le modalità dello spostamento; in letteratura il mare è uno dei *topoi* più utilizzati da sempre: da rappresentazione agiografica (*Navigatio sancti Brendani*) a strumento di punizione divina (come per Ulisse nell'*Inferno* di Dante) ad ostacolo che prova la valenza dell'eroe (i poemi epici). Il potere metaforico della traversata, dunque, risiede proprio nelle difficoltà che essa stessa implica, come accade anche nel *Tristan* e nel *Cligés*, in cui diventa vera e propria 'navigazione degli affetti,' ovvero epifania del sentimento d'amore; l'alternanza lessicale sembra riflettere il moto delle onde e i segnali del corpo rivelano che l'amore, così come il mare, comporta un velato senso del pericolo che troverà conferma nel tragico epilogo del *Tristan*.

Durante il viaggio, inoltre, a bordo delle due navi è presente un terzo personaggio femminile: Ginevra nel *Cligés* e Brangania nel *Tristan*. Per quanto riguarda Ginevra, la funzione di *mirror character* preannuncia quello che sarà il successivo (e fondamentale) ruolo nell'evoluzione della vicenda sentimentale di Alexandre e Soredamors: comprendendo le reali intenzioni dei giovani, li spingerà a confessare l'un l'altro i propri sentimenti. Nel frammento, invece, Brangania non ha alcun ruolo attivo al momento della confessione: è la compagna di viaggio che resta al margine della vicenda fino a quando i due giovani, dopo essersi dichiarati, decidono di condividere con lei il loro segreto. Ginevra e Brangania sono due personaggi di rango sociale differente: la prima è la regina nonché moglie di Artù, mentre la seconda è una serva. È un caso che Chrétien scelga un personaggio di rango elevato per permettere ed approvare l'amore dei due giovani? La regina è colei che, ai versi successivi, autorizzerà il matrimonio; è possibile che la sua presenza durante la navigazione non sia casuale ma dettata dalla necessità dell'autore di porre l'accento sulla legittimità dell'unione tra Alexandre e Soredamors attraver-

so l'intervento di una figura autorevole, a differenza di quanto accade nel *Tristan*.

Nel *Cligés*, inoltre, il lettore è in grado di risalire agli stati affettivi dei protagonisti e ai relativi fattori scatenanti. I versi che raccontano del viaggio per mare fanno parte di un passo più ampio e sono preceduti dal monologo di Soredamors nel quale la donna si dimostra in balia delle proprie emozioni:<sup>21</sup>

21. Nei romanzi di Chrétien (e soprattutto nel *Cligés*) il monologo ha un ruolo fondamentale in quanto, oltre a costituire una forma narrativa riservata ai personaggi più importanti, riflette uno stato psicologico 'straordinario' che, nel caso in questione, è accompagnato da una complessa situazione sentimentale (Dembowski 108).

Or me grieve ce que je voi.  
Grieve? Nel fet, ençois me siet,  
Et se ge voi rien qui me griet,  
Don n'ai ge mes ialz an baillie?  
Bien me seroit force faillie  
Et po me devroie prisier,  
Se mes ialz ne puis justisier  
Et feire autre part esgarder.  
Einsi me porrai bien garder  
D'Amor, qui justisier me vialt. (vv. 478–87)

(Ciò che vedo mi pesa. Mi pesa? Al contrario, mi piace, e se vedo qualcosa che mi fa male devo forse pensare di non avere potere sui miei occhi? Avrei perduto la mia forza e dovrei stimarmi ben poco se non potessi governarli o volgerli altrove. Allora potrò difendermi da Amore, che vuole governarmi.)

Soredamors non sa se ciò che vede le causi sofferenza: il lemma di riferimento è *grieve*, la cui reiterazione (*grieve, griet*) amplifica lo stato disforico del personaggio. *Grieve* – dal latino GRĀVĀRE – descrive la sofferenza come un peso materiale da sopportare: una condizione, quindi, che trascende il piano sensoriale e sconfina nel fisico. Dagli interrogativi che il personaggio pone a se stesso emerge la supremazia di Amore, che esercita il suo potere sull'essere umano per il tramite degli occhi.

Il monologo di Soredamors continua ai versi successivi, in cui lo stato confusionale del personaggio viene incorporato in un crescendo di emozioni, imputabili, questa volta, a due organi diversi:

Mi oel a nule rien n'esgarde  
S'au cuer ne plest et atalante.  
Chose qui me feïst dolante  
Ne deüst pas mes cuers vouloir.

Sa volentez me fet doloir.  
 Doloir? Par foi, donc sui je fole,  
 Quant par lui voel ce qui m'afole. (vv. 506–12)

(I miei occhi non guardano ciò che al cuore non piace. Il mio cuore non dovrebbe desiderare ciò che mi fa male. Ciò che vuole mi causa dolore. Dolore? In fede mia, sono dunque folle se per lui desidero ciò che mi affligge.)

Il breve passo è ricco di termini ascrivibili al lessico delle emozioni; la densità affettiva acquista rilevanza attraverso la presenza di scrupolosi artifici stilistici: la personificazione degli occhi e del cuore, intese come entità capaci di provare stati affettivi propri, viene meglio completata dalla co-occorrenza in descrizione controfattuale *plest et atalante* in rima con l'antonimo *dolante*. La reiterazione del lemma *dolor* rimpiazza *grieve* dei versi precedenti nella rappresentazione della sofferenza che, attraverso la rima *fole : afole*, è associata ad un'ipotetica mancanza di lucidità.

Le continue domande che il personaggio pone a se stesso inquadrano il monologo nell'ottica della *demande d'amour*, divenuta quasi una costante nei romanzi di Chrétien a partire proprio dal *Cligés*, dove viene impreziosita dai riferimenti ai topoi antichi.<sup>22</sup> L'amore (o la ferita d'amore) che colpisce gli occhi e il cuore è un motivo di ascendenza ovidiana ma, come notato dalla Dybel in relazione al romanzo successivo dello *champenois*, Ovidio tratta i due organi in maniera differente e in opere diverse. Nell'*Yvain* occhi e cuore sono associati dalla ferita: “[Amors] si douchement le requiert / que par les iex el cuer le fiert” (vv. 1371-72: “[Amore] lo attacca con così tanta dolcezza che, attraverso gli occhi, lo colpisce al cuore;” cf. Dybel 282–83); analoga situazione si riscontra nel *Roman de la Rose*: “Parmi l'ouel m'a ou cors mise / La saiete par grant roidor” (vv. 1694–95: “Attraverso gli occhi, con gran precisione, la freccia mi ha colpito al cuore;” cf. Noacco 151). Nel monologo di Soredamors non si parla di ferite o frecce ma occhi e cuore sono due organi comunicanti.<sup>23</sup> Stando alle regole della *fin'amor*, la bellezza della donna, catturata attraverso lo sguardo che la proietta nel cuore, innesca la nascita del sentimento;<sup>24</sup> in questo caso, pur conferendo un'analoga preminenza agli occhi, si riscontra un'inversione di generi: l'oggetto del desiderio non risiede nel fascino angelico della donna ma nell'avvenenza del cavaliere (Alexandre) e lo sguardo peccaminoso è dunque da attribuirsi ad una damigella (Soredamors), piuttosto che a una nobile donna.

22. Si tratta del monologo in cui il personaggio, in balia dell'amore, discute la possibilità di essere ricambiato. Cf. Guyer, *Chrétien de Troyes* 34–35; e Michener 353–54; si veda anche Ilvonen, che ipotizza che la *demande d'amour* abbia avuto origine dal *juec d'amor* provenzale (in Guglielmo IX) e costituisca una sorta di fase intermedia tra *partimen* e *jeu parti*.

23. Il riferimento al dardo compare ai versi 456–61 del *Cligés*, in cui l'autore anticipa quanto accadrà: “Or la fera Amors dolante, / Et molt se cuide bien vangier / Del grant orguel et del dangier / Qu'ele li a toz jorz mené / Bien a Amors droit assené, / Qu'el cuer l'a de son dart ferue.” Guyer ha riscontrato delle analogie tra i versi in questione ed alcuni passi tratti dalle *Metamorfosi* di Ovidio; in particolar modo ha ritenuto che il monologo di Soredamors richiami quello di Medea sia per la caratterizzazione affettiva dei due personaggi che per il rimando ad analoghi motivi (“The Influence of Ovid” 101–04).

24. Per approfondimenti si veda André le Chapelain 47.

25. Analoga situazione si riscontra nel Frammento di Carlisle, dove i termini *delit*, *deduit*, *deport* fanno riferimento all'atto sessuale al quale i due amanti non cessano di abbandonarsi e di cui non vogliono privarsi. Si veda, a tal proposito, ancora Vatteroni (1568): *delit* come piacere puramente fisico si oppone ad *amor* come amore insieme del corpo e del cuore.

26. La Spetia (140) ritiene che, proprio nel momento in cui racconta della notte tra Erec e Enide, la scrittura di Chrétien si carichi di intensità sensuale. Nel primo romanzo, l'*Erec*, l'amore non è ancora il fulcro dell'opera di Chrétien; è a partire dal *Cligés* che lo *chamenois* si mostrerà attento a bilanciare i due principi dell'amore cortese, rivelando poi la totale sottomissione dell'amante (e dell'autore stesso, nei confronti della committente Marie de Champagne) nel *Lancelot*; per approfondimenti si veda Michener 355–56.

27. Bec si è occupato della lirica trobadorica ed è approdato a tali conclusioni a seguito della perpetua tensione riscontrata in merito alle due nozioni; l'antitesi è parte di un registro formale e impersonale da cui si origina una zona d'ombra in cui la gioia diventa dolore e il dolore diventa gioia. Tale opposizione ne implica altre, come morte/vita, giungendo a quella che lo studioso ha definito "elasticità semantica" (Bec 107–19; sulla contraddittorietà dei termini, si veda ancora Kay 3–4 e 46–49).

Chrétien termina la resa affettiva del personaggio femminile con tre couplet in cui sembra riecheggiare il noto distico catulliano: "Une ore ainmë et autre het. / Tant se dote qu'ele ne set / Le quex li vaille mialz a prandre" (vv. 525–27: "Un'ora ama e l'altra odia. È in preda al dubbio al punto che non sa cosa sia meglio fare"). I versi del *Cligés* sembrerebbero rivelare la stessa alternanza sentimentale descritta dal poeta latino, da cui emergono l'incertezza e la mancanza di controllo che costituiscono il fulcro del tormento amoroso. La *dotance* di Soredamors, scaturita dalla natura ossimorica dei sentimenti, affievolisce l'*excrucior* latino – meglio espresso nei versi precedenti attraverso i termini *grieve*, *dolor* e *afolement* – e motiva quelle che sono le emozioni e le reazioni somatiche già descritte e quelle che seguiranno durante la navigazione.

A seguito del lungo monologo della donna, l'autore rivela i sentimenti che accomunano entrambi, precisando che "li uns l'autre aime et covoite. / Ceste amors est leax et droite" (vv. 535–36: "l'un l'altro ama e desidera. Questo amore è leale e giusto") e introducendo un nuovo termine che co-occorre con *amor* (*aime*), attribuibile ad entrambi: il *covoit* (*covoite*), come ulteriore indice della fenomenologia amorosa che sposta il sentimento dal piano platonico a quello più prettamente carnale del desiderio.<sup>25</sup> In realtà nel *Cligés* l'amore – almeno quello della generazione dei padri – non viene mai consumato, né c'è allusione a un qualche tipo di contatto fisico (unico, ironico riferimento: la descrizione della notte in cui Alexandre abbraccia la camicia in cui è intessuto un capello dell'amata). Nel precedente romanzo, invece, nel racconto della notte di Erec e Enide, Chrétien lascia intendere molto di più nella descrizione dell'atteggiamento istintivo e quasi animalesco dei protagonisti. Ma l'*Erec* non si muove ancora sul piano cortese del *Cligés*.<sup>26</sup>

## 2 L'amore-malattia e le possibilità di 'guarigione'

Pierre Bec riteneva che le nozioni di 'gioia' e 'dolore' appartenessero ad una tradizione retorica ormai standardizzata, riguardante la contraddittorietà del sentimento che trascende la soggettività dell'opera.<sup>27</sup> I due concetti, chiaramente, rientrano nella più vasta definizione del sentimento ascrivibile al contesto ideologico della *fin'amor* ma, come appena visto, *joie* e *dolor* costituiscono parte di un percorso in cui vanno a collocarsi affetti e risposte somatiche ben più dettagliate. Le 'intermittenze del cuore' rappresentano esperienze sog-



28. Nell'introduzione alla sua bibliografia sulle emozioni medievali, la Atturo cerca brevemente di dare una definizione del termine "emozione," annunciando le relative difficoltà (*Emozioni medievali* 13–15).

29. Un ulteriore caso letterario di 'rifugio emozionale' riguarda il passo del *Chevalier au lion* di Chrétien de Troyes noto come *la folie d'Yvain* (vv. 2778–3032, ed. Hult) in cui il protagonista, dopo aver ricevuto la 'dichiarazione d'odio' della moglie, scappa nella foresta perché solo in una *sauvage terre*, e lontano da tutti, potrà dare sfogo alla propria *rage*.

30. La Noacco ha notato come anche i mistici del XII secolo utilizzassero lo stesso vocabolario della malattia e della sofferenza appartenente ai codici della *fin'amor* per esprimere il desiderio di Dio; non c'è da stupirsi, giacché seppur gli obiettivi fossero diversi (accettazione del servizio amoroso vs amore di Dio), la *fin'amor* riproduceva, sul piano sociale e psicologico, la stessa supremazia dell'amore che la teologia mistica rivelava su quello ontologico. Inoltre, da alcune delle descrizioni delle eroine di Chrétien, come anche della stessa Isotta, sembrano emergere dei tratti che anticipano la figura della donna-angelo stilnovista, in cui le caratteristiche dell'amore terreno e divino si fondono nell'*intellectus amoris* (Noacco 158–65).

gettive e sfuggenti, in cui ciò che varia non sono soltanto le cause ma anche le reazioni che si manifestano nel corpo.<sup>28</sup>

L'amore tra le due coppie innesca stati affettivi differenti che determinano la soggettività della fenomenologia amorosa, provvedendo in entrambi i casi a quello che Reddy definisce *emotional refuge*, ossia:

A relationship, ritual, or organization (whether informal or formal) that provides safe release from prevailing emotional norms and allows relaxation of emotional effort, with or without an ideological justification, which may shore up or threaten the existing emotional regime. (*The Navigation of Feeling* 129)<sup>29</sup>

Nonostante i passi estratti dai due romanzi riguardino un'analogia circostanza creatasi in un identico contesto, ci sono delle differenze significative sia da un punto di vista lessicale che tematico. Nel Frammento, il sentimento d'amore innesca stati d'animo riconducibili a male, angoscia e dolore (*mal, angoisse, dolor*) in entrambi gli amanti, unitamente alla paura (*dotance*) che è esclusiva di Tristano. Nel *Cligés l'amor/covoit* di Soredamors è associato al male, al dolore, alla follia e al tormento (*mal, grieve, dolor, folie, afolement*) ma in nessun caso all'angoscia; Alexandre *se dialt*, così come la sua amata, nel vortice di amore e desiderio che segretamente attanaglia entrambi.<sup>30</sup>

Per quanto riguarda le modalità dell'evoluzione sentimentale, nel *Tristan* sono limitate ad un passo specifico: nel giro di pochi versi l'autore riassume la fase dell'innamoramento dei due protagonisti, giungendo direttamente al momento della confessione amorosa attraverso una climax di emozioni che culmina con la gioia e non coincide ancora con il tragico epilogo del romanzo. *Dolor, dotance, mal, angoisse* cedono il passo a *lëece, joie, deduit*, annunciando la transizione affettiva in direzione di una prospettiva euforica e sintetizzando il percorso amoroso descritto dallo stesso Thomas. Nel *Cligés* gli stati affettivi sono connotati esclusivamente in maniera disforica, incluso la co-occorrenza *plest et atalante* imputata al cuore che, rientrando in una descrizione controfattuale, definisce la negazione del piacere. Non è possibile, dunque, ricostruire lo stesso percorso emotivo presente nel Frammento: nel romanzo di Chrétien, i versi analizzati costituiscono soltanto una tappa nell'evoluzione sentimentale tra Alexandre e Soredamors. Il *Cligés* tenta di celebrare l'amore cortese attraverso il bilanciamento di *amor* e *onor* (cf. Heyworth): l'idea

di *joie après dolur* va ricercata alla fine della prima parte del romanzo, che termina con il matrimonio tra i due e la nascita di Cligés.

Analogamente a quanto già visto per le emozioni, anche la resa delle risposte fisiche connesse a questi stati differisce nei due romanzi. È probabile che il Frammento includesse dei versi, oggi perduti, in cui la descrizione inglobava una resa più dettagliata sia degli stati affettivi che delle caratterizzazioni somatiche di entrambi i personaggi. Tenendo conto di quanto ci è pervenuto – e limitatamente al passo in questione – bisogna constatare che, nella rappresentazione della fenomenologia amorosa relativa alla fase dell’innamoramento tra Tristano e Isotta, l’unico riferimento ad una qualche forma di reazione somatica è espresso mediante il termine *changee*, attribuito ad Isotta.

Chrétien, invece, descrive i sintomi che attanagliando entrambi gli innamorati e che sembrerebbero coincidere con ciò che Reddy definisce “segnali emotivi,” collegati ad un’azione presente ed aventi lo stesso potere di un discorso esplicito, come le lacrime indicanti la tristezza (*The Navigation* 106). Avendo preventivamente provveduto alla descrizione degli stati affettivi dei due protagonisti, nel passo relativo alla navigazione, Chrétien si affida all’impiego esclusivo dei marcatori somatici, lasciando al suo pubblico il compito di risalire ai relativi fattori emotivi. La presenza di una terminologia specifica rende a pieno la sintomatologia amorosa e consente anche ad un lettore appartenente ad periodo storico diverso di riuscire ad identificarne il fattore scatenante. Per quanto le emozioni siano fortemente legate al contesto socioculturale di appartenenza,<sup>31</sup> hanno comunque dei tratti facciali pan-culturali e possono trasmettere informazioni in maniera del tutto involontaria. Esse rappresentano delle risposte naturali costituite da un insieme delle componenti fisiologiche, comportamentali, facciali/espressive e soggettive/esperienziali; pertanto, i marcatori espressivi diventano facilmente riconoscibili in quanto indicatori dell’emozione di cui rappresentano la risposta somatica (Green).

Avvalendosi del *jeu de mots*, entrambi gli autori interpretano l’amore come una malattia, i cui sintomi sono riconducibili ad un qualunque malessere quale la *naupatia*; lo stesso Thomas lo rende esplicito ai versi 57–58 giocando sull’ambiguità della sintomatologia descritta: “Car deus mal i put l’en sentir, / L’un d’amer, l’autre de puir.” Questi versi sembrano rispondere al codice elegiaco che Rossi sintetizza in “malum, id est morbus, dicitur Amore;” il riferimento è appena accennato e la descrizione risulta piuttosto scarna se paragona-

31. Sul legame tra emozioni e contesto sociale di appartenenza si vedano i contributi della Rosenwein, “Writing without fear” e “Problems and Methods” 11–12.

ta a quella di Chrétien, ma il distico in questione sembrerebbe costituire una plausibile ‘isotopia poetica’ che va a collocarsi accanto a quelle identificate dallo studioso nella lirica trobadorica (Rossi, “I trovatori” 132). I versi dello *champenois*, dunque, vantano profondità, introspezione e risultano maggiormente pertinenti al gioco dell’equivocità sintomatologica: pallore, perdita di colorito, sospiri, trasalire sono facilmente confondibili con il pallore, la nausea e la spossatezza scaturiti dal mal di mare rispetto al più vago cambiamento descritto da Thomas.

I riferimenti all’amore come malattia sono presenti in altri luoghi testuali del *Cligés*; il primo caso riguarda Alexandre e segue i versi del passo esaminato in precedenza; il secondo, curiosamente, ricorre nel discorso in cui Fenice – protagonista, con Cligés, della seconda parte del romanzo – rinnega un amore ingannevole come quello degli amanti di Cornovaglia. I versi attribuiti ad Alexandre sono caratterizzati da una singolare scelta lessicale in cui la terminologia impiegata è riconducibile al campo semantico della medicina:

Je sant le mien mal si grevain  
 Que ja n’an avrai garison  
 Par mecine ne par poison  
 Ne par herbe ne par racine.  
 A chascun mal n’a pas mecine.  
 Li miens est si anracinez  
 Qu’il ne puet estre mecinez. (vv. 647–53)

(Sento il mio male così intenso che non potrò guarirne, né con medicine o filtri, né con erbe o radici. Non esiste una medicina per tutti i mali e il mio è così radicato che non può essere curato.)

Dopo aver creduto di impazzire, Alexandre riflette sul male che lo affligge, giungendo ad una conclusione che implica una strana consapevolezza: da questo malessere è impossibile guarire. Alexandre spiega che ciò che lo tormenta è un *mal grevain* e parla di *garison*, *mecine*, *poison*, *racine*, *herbe*, *anracinez*: i lemmi impiegati lascerebbero pensare ad una questione medica, se non fosse che ciò che la medicina può fornire per favorire la guarigione non sia valido per questa patologia.<sup>32</sup> Nel *Roman de la Rose*, il protagonista lamenta la stessa inefficacia dei rimedi medici conosciuti nella cura della propria ferita, utilizzando un’analoga terminologia: “Ne de ma plaie ou trouver mire, / Que par herbe ne par racine / N’en atendoie medecine” (ed.

32. Si veda Guyer, il quale riscontra un ulteriore riferimento ad Ovidio (*Remedia Amoris*) nell’impiego della metafora riguardante le radici dell’amore (“The Influence of Ovid” 128–29). In realtà Chrétien sembra alludere al radicamento amoroso soltanto per motivare l’impossibilità della guarigione, confermata dalla rima *anracinez* : *mecinez*.

33. Si veda ancora Noacco 154.

Strubel, vv. 1721–23: “Non troverò un medico per la mia ferita, non aspettò cure attraverso erbe o radici”).<sup>33</sup>

Nel *Cligés* il secondo caso ricorre nei versi attribuiti a Fenice:

Amors por vos si me navra  
 Que ja mes ne cuidai garir  
 Ne plus que la mers puet tarir,  
 Se je vos aim et vos m’amez,  
 Ja n’an seroiz Tristanz clamez  
 Ne je n’an seroit Yseuz,  
 Car puis ne seroit l’amors preuz,  
 Qu’il i avroit blasme ne vice. (vv. 5236–43)

(L’amore che ho per voi mi ferì così tanto che sperai di non guarire, non più che il mare possa prosciugarsi. Se io vi amo e voi mi amate, mai sarete chiamato Tristano e io non sarò Isotta: il nostro amore non sarebbe leale ma avrebbe biasimo e vizio.)

Rivolgendosi a Cligés, Fenice spiega l’amore che sente attraverso la metafora della ferita da cui non vuole guarire; ancora una volta – ed ancora tramite il paragone con la *mer* – l’amore viene inteso come un malessere: *navra* e *garir* contrappongono nuovamente i concetti di ‘malattia’ e ‘cura,’ a cui la fanciulla si oppone con tutta se stessa. L’essere sposata allo zio dell’uomo amato non è l’unica allusione alla vicenda di Isotta. Eppure, Fenice rifiuta esplicitamente l’amore adultero degli amanti di Cornovaglia, optando per un sentimento puro, privo di biasimo o dissolutezza.<sup>34</sup>

La definizione di amore come patologia con annesse probabilità e modalità di guarigione si fa più esplicita quando Fenice, nel confessare alla sua nutrice ciò che sente, si definisce *dolcemant malade* (v. 3057); seppur in maniera dolce, si dichiara affetta da una qualche malattia da cui ribadisce di non aver intenzione di guarire perché il dolore le è caro: “Mes sachiez bien que je n’ai cure / De garir an nule meniere, / Car je ai molt la dolor chiere” (vv. 3072–74: “Ma sappiate che non mi curo affatto di guarire ché quest’affanno mi è ben caro”). I versi in questione rientrano in un passo più ampio in cui la protagonista della seconda parte del romanzo rivela le contraddizioni emotive scaturite dal ‘mal d’amore.’ In questo caso è importante considerare come le contrapposizioni lessicali *dolcement/malade* e *dolor/chiere* – costruite sull’ossimoro ovidiano del *dulce malum* – rive-

34. Chrétien rigetta apertamente le modalità del sentimento degli amanti di Cornovaglia in un ulteriore passo (vv. 3125–31) e, ancora una volta, attraverso le parole di Fenice. In questo caso il discorso verte sul binomio *folie-honte* che diviene il fulcro attorno al quale ruota l’ideale di un amore onorevole e razionale. Alcuni contributi in merito ai passi citati sono quelli di Curtis e Grimbart.

35. Per i riferimenti ovidiani si veda Rossi, "I trovatori" 132; sulla contraddittorietà dei termini cf. Kay 246–47.

36. L'ipotesi della fuga per evitare il martirio amoroso è ben espressa in *Quand vei la lausetta mover* di Bernart de Ventador e verrà poi ripresa nella *Vita Nuova* di Dante (cf. Noacco 153–55). Inoltre, il componimento occitanico si inserisce nel noto *débat* con Chrétien (*D'Amors, qui m'a tolu a moi*) e Raimbaut d'Aurenga (*Non chant per auzel ni per flor*) in cui Bernart afferma di voler abbandonare la poesia e il sentimento a causa delle frustrazioni amorose. Chrétien contesta una simile decisione spiegando che, a differenza di Tristan, ha scelto di amare liberamente: accetta il suo destino di amante inappagato e annuncia di essere paziente perché l'attesa renderà più dolce la ricompensa. La fermezza dello *champanois*, dunque, avvalorava la decisione del suo personaggio nel *Cligés*, sebbene in questo caso "Tristan" sia solo uno pseudonimo attribuito a Raimbaut il quale esorta l'amata a comportarsi come Isotta. Per approfondimenti, cf. Roncaglia; Di Girolamo; Rossi, "Chrétien de Troyes;" Borghi Cedrini; e Antonelli.

37. Cf. Gallais 56–74 e Zaganelli 46, secondo i quali il problema di Chrétien nei confronti del *Tristan* è legato al tema della morte (Zaganelli) che l'autore *champanois* elimina definitivamente dalle sue opere, schierandosi contro le tendenze pericolose esaltate nella vicenda tristaniana piuttosto che contro la sua immoralità (Gallais). Per ulteriori approfondimenti sulla concezione sentimentale di Chrétien e la sua critica al tipo di amore proposto nel *Tristan* si vedano Robertson, "The Doctrine" 40; Lazar; Topsfield 64, 91; e Noble 41.

lino le peculiarità della sua 'malattia' in un'alternanza di dolcezza e sofferenza, che consentono alla sua nutrice di riconoscerne l'origine.<sup>35</sup> Il contrasto lessicale mostra come, nel caso di Fenice – a differenza del *mal grevain* di Alexandre, connotato esclusivamente in maniera disforica – il malessere sia piacevole da sopportare: in preda al dolore, Alexandre non riesce a vedere alcuna cura possibile laddove Fenice, per almeno due volte, dichiara consapevolmente di non voler guarire. La decisione risoluta della donna contrasta con le varie possibilità di azione tramandate dalla tradizione letteraria classica e coeva: mentre Ovidio cerca una soluzione nei *Remedia Amoris*, la lirica trobadorica opta per il rifiuto del sentimento e la conseguente fuga.<sup>36</sup>

Guyer, sostenendo che Chrétien trattasse l'amore come una vera e propria scienza, prospettava un'unica, eventuale cura ("The Influence" 125):

The love-sickness is distinguished from all other diseases by the peculiarity of being both pleasant and painful at the same time. The effects or symptoms of love are paleness, trembling, fear, loss of appetite, sighing, sleeplessness, weeping, crying out, fainting, mental absorption often leading to insane action and causing loss of the senses, insanity, and even death. The disease can be cured by the lover; that is, by a return of affection.

La tipologia d'amore descritta nel *Cligés* e nel *Tristan* sembra essere accomunata esclusivamente dal topos amore-malattia che, nei passi in cui ricorre il *jeu de mots*, viene assorbito dalla più specifica metafora marina. In questo senso, la guarigione intesa come compimento del sentimento è riservata a coloro i quali vivono l'amore in maniera onorevole: l'adulterio di Tristano e Isotta non può essere risanato dalla *honte* di cui si è ricoperto e l'unica soluzione possibile diventa la morte.<sup>37</sup>

Sebbene entrambi i romanzi si distacchino dall'idea dell' 'amore sublime' che si alimenta nella distanza, nell'attesa e nella rinuncia (Jaeger 109–54), per Tristano e Isotta non esistono rimedi che possano curare l'immoralità di un sentimento che non è concepibile nel mondo cortese. Come spiega Ferrante, assimilare un episodio di adulterio nella realtà arturiana porta alla distruzione della stessa: anche Chrétien se ne accorgerà, alcuni anni dopo, nella stesura del *Graal*. La vicenda tristaniana esemplifica gli stessi conflitti della società arturiana: un uomo diviso tra due ideali – amore e onore; ri-

38. La Adams riteneva che l'intento di Thomas sia semplicemente quello di drammatizzare la condizione degli amanti e individuava il vero conflitto del romanzo nel binomio *voeir/poeir* (mente/corpo, espresso nel fram. Sneyd) che Tristano, incapace di risolvere, attenua nel matrimonio con l'altra Isotta (278–81).

39. Nel *Cligés* l'autore fa ricorso a tre filtri: uno per ingannare Alis, uno per inscenare la morte di Fenice e uno per risvegliarla. I filtri magici sono opera della nutrice di Fenice, Thessala; si veda il secondo capitolo del lavoro della Dogget sulle allusioni ai rimedi 'magici' e 'medici' nei testi medievali (39–84) e il contributo di Ferrante ("Public Postures" 213–18), che individua nella 'magia' un espediente tipicamente femminile atto ad esercitare il potere di una categoria molto limitata in epoca medievale. Sposando Fenice, Alis per primo commette un atto ignobile, rompendo la promessa fatta al fratello Alexandre di non contrarre matrimonio, così da garantire il trono a Cligés (sulla legittimità del vincolo tra Alis e Fenice cf. Lazzerini 853 ss.: Chrétien seguirebbe la scuola dei giuristi bolognesi, per i quali la validità del matrimonio si fondava sull'effettiva consumazione di esso).

40. L'ipotetica 'simpatia' da parte del lettore è una delle emozioni scaturite dall'esperienza letteraria, identificate da Mar, Oatley, Djikic, and Mullin 822–26. Per approfondimenti sulle 'risposte empatiche' del lettore cfr. Caruana e Gallese 223–33.

41. Cercare di afferrare l'intento dello *champanois* non è semplice; Robertson prova ad offrire degli indizi utili per la comprensione delle sue opere a partire dalla reinterpretazione del modello ovidiano in cui già legge una concezione ambigua dell'amore ("*Cligés* and the Ovidian spirit;" cf. Gallien; Cohen; e Hanning). La Lazzerini, avvalendosi dell'incipit del romanzo riferito alla *translatio*, ritiene che l'obiettivo di Chrétien – novello Virgilio di Francia – sia quello di trasferire le conoscenze acquisite dai classici nella poesia profana che in questo modo si trasforma in 'verità' (862–64).

42. Incapacità concretizzatasi, probabilmente, nell'incompiutezza del *Lancelot*. I versi in questione

spettro dello zio/imperatore e desiderio della donna amata – per avere l'uno, deve negare l'altro. Come può l'eroe conquistare il lieto fine, se per essere un buon amante deve essere un buon cavaliere e per essere un buon cavaliere ha bisogno di essere un buon amante? Da ciò dipende la scelta della morte nel *Tristan* e il rifiuto del mondo nel *Graal* (Ferrante, *The Conflict* 12).<sup>38</sup>

Thomas non aderisce alle regole della *fin'amor* né cerca di opporvisi: semplicemente ne mette in evidenza i limiti rivelando l'esistenza di un amore passionale all'interno di uno specifico contesto sociale, quello cortese, che predilige altre forme di sentimento, pur sempre appassionato ma rigorosamente casto e, dunque, nobile. Per contro, Chrétien sceglie di raccontare vicende amorose più o meno onorevoli, che siano prive di inganni o biasimo: la storia tra Alexandre e Soredamors è pura, nasce in maniera spontanea e non è un caso che venga legittimata dalla regina. Anche l'amore tra Cligés e Fenice è adultero e ingannevole ma Chrétien crea degli espedienti (i filtri) e delle premesse (il tradimento di Alis) atti a risanare il sentimento,<sup>39</sup> in modo che la loro relazione possa essere riconosciuta e accettata a livello sociale, indirizzando anche la simpatia del pubblico/lettore nei confronti dei due amanti.<sup>40</sup>

Nonostante questo, Chrétien sembra minimizzare gli sforzi compiuti ironizzando nell'epilogo del romanzo, dove spiega che, a seguito della vicenda dei due amanti, i successivi imperatori tennero segregate le rispettive mogli, assicurandosi che la loro unica compagnia maschile fosse da parte di giovani castrati (come spiegato ai vv. 6738–61).<sup>41</sup> Sembrerebbe che, tramite il suo consueto uso dell'ironia, Chrétien si riservi di esporre il proprio pensiero sull'intera vicenda – e, dunque, sull'amore – proprio nel passo finale, mostrando la propria incapacità di districarsi nella complessa rete dei dettami cortesi e, di conseguenza, conformarvisi.<sup>42</sup>

Nel *Tristan*, invece, non c'è ironia che possa attenuare la drammaticità della vicenda, costruita sulla complementarità di amore e morte che camminano di pari passo per tutto il romanzo, nato all'insegna dell'amore e conclusosi con la morte. Avendo inteso l'amore come una patologia, contrariamente a Fenice che non vuole guarire, Tristano e Isotta non vi riescono, finendo per soccombervi. Simon

con Laudine, lo esorta a non abbandonarsi alle gioie dell'amore, giacché un simile comportamento potrebbe spegnere il sentimento da parte della moglie. Alla fine del suo discorso, però, Galvano ammette che, al posto di Yvain, probabilmente non seguirebbe i suoi stessi consigli. Di fatti, dopo aver indugiato troppo nella vita cavalleresca, Yvain perde l'amore della moglie e impazzisce, fuggendo nella foresta.

42. A differenza del *Lancelot* che diviene strumento per comprendere la natura simbolica del discorso della morte nella letteratura cortese, volto in realtà a preservare la vita (Gaunt 107–11). Anche nel *Cligés* la “fausse morte” inscenata da Fenice funge da espediente per permettere ai due amanti di vivere il loro amore nel mausoleo costruito dal falegname Giovanni (cf. vv. 5665 ss.). Sfortunatamente, l’ingegnoso piano ordito da Thessala non avrà il successo sperato perché, dopo essere stati scoperti da un cacciatore, Cligés e Fenice saranno costretti a fuggire, per poter ritornare solo a seguito della morte di Alis, di cui Cligés diviene successore. Per approfondimenti, cf. Lyons 167–77.

Gaunt ritiene che, sin dal momento in cui assume il filtro, Tristano sia consapevole di essere entrato in “uno spazio tra due morti” e concepisce la dipartita dei due amanti come un desiderio, inteso sia come passione che li ha spinti fino a quel punto che attesa della morte come l’unico spazio/tempo in cui poter essere finalmente insieme.<sup>42</sup>

### 3. Conclusioni

Thomas e Chrétien decidono di raccontare l’amore per mare attribuendo ai personaggi coinvolti degli stati affettivi più o meno espliciti. Entrambi gli autori non si soffermano sulla descrizione del mare, del paesaggio o del viaggio; allo stesso modo i personaggi coinvolti non contemplan il mare, che rappresenta solo un percorso ed ha alcune implicazioni politiche, perché entrambi gli spostamenti riguardano affari reali. Per contro, ciò che il mare causa è estremamente significativo: emozioni e sentimenti sono soggettivi, relativi a coloro che lo attraversano. In entrambi i romanzi il viaggio funge da collante tra due importanti sezioni e implica un velato senso del pericolo; il mare è inizialmente accusato per il malessere fisico, di conseguenza la traversata non deve essere facile e, nel caso di Thomas, si potrebbe pensare ad un’anticipazione di quello che sarà l’ultimo, fatale viaggio per mare.

La navigazione diviene poi metaforica di un altro percorso, quello del sentimento d’amore, intrapreso dai protagonisti e l’implacabilità del mare si riflette nell’incontrollabilità delle emozioni vissute: l’amore diventa forza indomabile che sfugge ai vincoli cortesi e spinge i personaggi ad agire in maniera individuale e verosimile agli occhi del pubblico/lettore, a prescindere dalla *costume* annunciata. Entrambi i romanzi rispondono ad alcuni dei *topoi* più diffusi sull’amore, dalla letteratura classica a quella coeva; entrambi gli autori, però, li reinterpretano in maniera distinta. L’amore-malattia descritto nelle due opere è una realtà contraddittoria che, pur sintetizzando un cammino di gioia e dolore, va oltre il concetto della *fin’amor* – e, prima ancora, il modello classico – e si differenzia dal quadro convenzionale proprio grazie all’individualità delle emozioni. Il decorso della patologia è soggettivo e implica una varietà di stati affettivi e caratterizzazioni somatiche che conferiscono corporeità al sentimento, determinando l’evoluzione emotiva che caratterizza le due coppie.

Il percorso di Tristano e Isotta va delineandosi in una transizione affettiva in cui dal dolore si passa alla gioia attraverso la descrizio-

ne di una sintomatologia equivoca ma comunque soggettiva – in cui le allusioni ai *topoi* classici si attenuano nella rima *dolur : amur* – e, pur annunciando i “costumi dell’amore,” alla fine Thomas rivela come quel tipo di sentimento in realtà non trovi una ‘cura’ possibile all’interno della società cortese. Nel caso di Alexandre e Soredamors la navigazione è solo una delle tappe dell’amore, coincidente con la fase dell’innamoramento, che condurrà al lieto fine, corrispondente alla conclusione della prima parte del romanzo. In questo secondo caso – ampliato con la citazione di altri passi estratti dal *Cligés* – la malattia d’amore è un fenomeno meglio illustrato attraverso lunghi monologhi da cui traspare la netta definizione di una vera e propria patologia che implica dei sintomi ben definiti, espressi per mezzo di una vasta gamma di lemmi.

Il tipo di amore descritto nei due romanzi pare avere due sole conclusioni possibili: la morte o il matrimonio, inteso come legittimazione sociale che garantisce alla coppia di vivere il sentimento all’interno della società. Il lieto fine implica, dunque, un *marriage plot* in assenza del quale l’amore è senza speranza, o meglio, non trova una sua dimensione gestibile all’interno del piano tematico romanzesco che non si risolve nell’unico modo possibile: la morte che sancisce la sopravvivenza di ‘amore’ agli amanti.<sup>43</sup>

Se l’amore è una ‘malattia,’ il lieto fine inteso come ‘guarigione’ diventa prerogativa di coloro i quali mantengono una certa razionalità di fronte al sentimento e non si abbandonano all’esclusività del piacere, sconfinando nella follia e nell’onta. L’amore di Alexandre e Soredamors è esente da colpe, pertanto Chrétien assicura la positività dell’esito; la relazione tra Cligés e Fenice resta in bilico per tutta la seconda parte del romanzo e, alla fine, pur eludendo la morte e la sofferenza, l’autore si riserva di chiudere il romanzo mantenendo un certo riserbo sull’ipotetica onorevolezza e rispettabilità del sentimento. Per Tristano e Isotta, invece, non c’è rimedio (né ironia): la minaccia velata che accompagna il primo viaggio è emblematica e “la gioia che segue il dolore” durante la navigazione diventa soltanto dolore nel tragico epilogo del romanzo.

43. Come è chiaro nell’epilogo del romanzo di Thomas riportato dal Frammento Douce. Un’interessante analisi condotta sui passi finali del *Tristan* è quella di Arianna Punzi in merito alle occorrenze del lemma *tendrur* e alle sue possibili interpretazioni, tra le quali non è da escludersi il senso più prettamente emotivo.

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# “How Do You Know if it is Love or Lust?”

## On Gender, Status, and Violence in Old Norse Literature

### Abstract

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This article examines attitudes towards behaviour relating to women within Old Norse literature, focusing both on chivalric romances (translated and original, the *riddarasögur*) and the legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*), texts that were mostly written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The written chivalric romances arrived in Iceland from Norway and southern Europe, and thus they often exhibit different values from those found in the *fornaldarsögur*, which tend to reflect indigenous Nordic and heroic storytelling traditions. The article explores differences between the two traditions regarding male emotions and attitudes towards women, with an emphasis on texts in which women are abused. In particular, the article seeks to investigate the relationship between social status and gender roles in these texts, and whether a woman's rank affects her role and status according to gender. It focuses particularly on romances (especially those featuring courtly love) and *fornaldarsögur* in which women are either idealised as goddesses, or mistreated and even sexually abused because of their gender. The article concludes by asking how far the contrasts within the texts reflect a Norse 'emotional community,' as compared with continental European values, and whether these textual differences reflect actual difference in the social expressions of emotional behaviour.

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*Ketils saga hængs* is an Icelandic legendary saga which is usually dated to the fourteenth century. In one episode the protagonist, Ketill, comes to a farm and asks for hospitality for the night from the master of the house, Brúni. Brúni grants this request and asks Ketill immediately whether he would prefer to sleep with his daughter or alone. Ketill accepts the offer and says he would like to have the daughter with him; the saga then says that he enjoyed himself with her during the night. Judging from the saga, and related ones, one might sometimes think it used to be regarded as good manners for the host – the father of the unmarried girl – to invite a visitor not only

1. The tradition of the troubadours flourished between the end of the 11th century and 1323, a period which is usually divided into four generations. In the last generation, the emphasis shifted from the love of noble ladies to the love of the Virgin (Topsfield 244–52). Courtly love came into being, and was primarily practised, within royal courts, and it became a subject commonly treated by poets. It was above all very much idealised, involving for the most part secret infatuation and, in particular, the love of a young, unmarried knight for the wife of a nobleman. Love was therefore essentially both one-sided and unrequited, resulting in a mixture of happiness and frustration. The French historian Georges Duby maintains that courtly love was primarily an educational game, teaching young men to love and respect their master (56–63). On courtly love, see further Bornstein 667–74; Kelly 301–27; and Erich Köhler's writing on the 'sociology' of *fin'amor*.

2. E.g. Aelred of Rievaulx, who served at the court of Scotland and wrote the important work *De spirituali amicitia* in the early twelfth century (Jaeger 110–14). Ovid wrote his *Ars amatoria* (the *Art of Love*) at about the time of the birth of Christ, or shortly afterwards (Jaeger 28–30, 79–81; Reeve). Andreas Capellanus worked at the court of Troyes in France in the late twelfth century (on his discussion of courtly love, see Andreas Capellanus 28–36; 184–86).

3. The *fabliaux* can be distinguished from courtly romances as being more humorous, down to earth and not confined to the nobility. Only one *fabliau* was translated into Old Norse, and therefore, this particular genre will not be treated in this article.

4. In some of the texts, King Hákon and his descendants are mentioned as the instigators (Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion* 218). As Sverrir Tómasson has pointed out, this might, however, be a literary topos, and in some cases it is found only in late Icelandic paper manuscripts ("Hvenær var Tristrams sögu snúið?" 55, 69, 75). For some English translations of the Old Norse romances, see Kalinke, *Norse Romance*.

to stay for the night, but to do so in his daughter's bed, with the daughter in it as well.

In this article I intend to examine this and other similar incidents in further detail, and throw light on male attitudes towards women in medieval Icelandic literature, focusing primarily on legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*) and romances (the *riddarasögur*) composed in Iceland, on the one hand, and on the translated Sagas of Chivalry (*riddarasögur*) on the other. I will begin by examining the differences between texts originating in continental Europe and those of Nordic origin and then consider the way they depict a consciousness of social status, and whether social status or rank plays a part in women's roles, the status assigned to them in the text, and the way men conduct themselves towards them. I will then ask how far this difference can be attributed to the difference between Nordic and continental European societies – that is, whether it reflects a difference in general attitudes towards women in these two cultural regions, or whether literary texts, which are generally composed as part of a certain tradition, perhaps fail to tell the whole story and therefore cannot be considered as a mirror of their society.

## 1 Medieval Icelandic literature

French chivalric literature is usually divided into three traditional categories: the *matière de France*, the *matière de Bretagne*, and the *matière de Rome*, all influenced by the tradition of *trobadors* and *trouvères*, and ideas about 'courtly love' (in French *amour courtois*),<sup>1</sup> itself having been influenced by authors such as Ovid (43 BCE–17/18 CE), Andreas Capellanus (André le Chapelain, c. 1150–1229) and others.<sup>2</sup> In addition, more 'realistic' tales, known as *fabliaux* (sing. *fabliau*), enjoyed popularity to some extent during the Middle Ages, and were written and told by *jongleurs*.<sup>3</sup>

Chivalric material became well known in Scandinavia through various translations, most of them made in the thirteenth century. It is usually believed that the majority of these translations were commissioned by Hákon Hákonarson (1204–63), King of Norway, though they became particularly popular in Iceland, where they circulated in manuscripts for centuries.<sup>4</sup> In Iceland, chivalric literature was known not only in the form of the translated works, but also in original Icelandic works, *riddarasögur*, that were mostly written in the fourteenth century. Furthermore, the chivalric romances influ-

5. A popular example from this genre is that of Gunnlaugr ormsunga, the protagonist of *Gunnlaugs saga ormsungu*, expressing his feelings for his lost love in unusually emotional poetry (Einarsson 260–65). In a similar vein, we might mention *Friðþjófs saga frækna*, from the corpus of the legendary sagas, which is in many respects a love story, greatly influenced by chivalric literature, or the courtly romances.

6. In order to study depictions of emotions in the Old Norse translations, scholars have increasingly focused on single texts, as the material may differ from one translation to another (see e.g. Larrington 79–94). Recently, a whole issue of *Scandinavian Studies* – 87.1 (2015) – was dedicated to the depiction of emotions in Old Norse Arthurian literature.

7. It should be kept in mind that the protagonist, Grettir, is not necessarily the role model for male heroes in this particular saga genre, or even Icelandic sagas in general. He is, in other words, not a typical representative of ‘real’ men in the sagas, who certainly do not all behave in a similar fashion.

enced other genres of Icelandic literature, e.g. the Sagas of Icelanders (*Íslendingasögur*), such as *Kormáks saga*, *Víglundar saga* and *Laxdæla saga* (Karlsson 67–82; Einarsson 6, 40 *et passim*).<sup>5</sup>

French chivalric literature, like that of other Western European countries, tends to present love in thwarted relationships, depicting the obstacles that are placed in the way of the lovers. The heroines, who are more often than not kept captive by their fathers or their (usually older) husbands, are beautiful, pure and refined. With few exceptions they are of high birth and above all they are worshipped and sought after by desperate admirers and/or suitors. These basic characteristics can be identified in many of the Old Norse translations, for example in *Elís saga ok Rósamundu*, *Ívens saga*, *Strengleikar* and *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*, even if the Norse translators tended to shorten or even omit scenes involving love and emotion (see e.g. Barnes 532). Nevertheless, emotions can be quite complex in texts such as *Ívens saga* and *Erex saga*, and it is probable that the Nordic audience learned about different varieties of love while listening to the translated romances.<sup>6</sup> One of the chivalric tales that was translated into Old Norse is *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr* (from the French poem *Floire et Blancheflor*, thirteenth century: see e.g. Degnbol 71 ff.), in which the young lovers are the son of a pagan king and the daughter of a Christian serving-maid. Naturally, the king is opposed to their relationship and does everything he can to keep them apart. The hero, Flóres, is handsome, sensitive, emotional and very dramatic in all his reactions. Not only is he constantly weeping, but he also faints again and again when he is informed that the girl has been sent away (Kölbing 22).

Reading this, one can only wonder how a contemporary Icelandic audience, and particularly the male part of it, responded when this saga was read. According to the Icelandic sagas, men – or at least those who were regarded as ‘real’ men – were of a completely different nature, and they most certainly did not weep. Also, it was not the custom to waste many words on their relations with the opposite sex but rather to get straight down to brass tacks. For example, we could mention two incidents from one of the *Íslendingasögur*, *Grettis saga* (*The Saga of Grettir the Strong*, c. fourteenth century), where the protagonist’s interactions with women are, to say the least, interesting.<sup>7</sup> First, we have the incident on the ship to Norway, when he shirks participating in the work of the men on board, and they upbraid him for being more interested in “klappa um kviðinn á konu Bárðar stýrimanns” (“stroking the belly of Bárðr’s wife” [Bárðr being the ship’s

8. My own translation, cf. Scudder 24. The incident is reminiscent of strophes in other *Íslendingasögur*, where the stamina, labour or courage of men who work on board ship or fight a battle is contrasted with the pleasure-oriented activities of landlubbers, often depicted as enjoying comfort and sexual relations with women (Perkins 192–95 *et passim*). It is, however, unique, in that Grettir is said to be enjoying a relationship with the captain's wife.

9. The saga relates how the serving girl laughs at Grettir for having a small penis. When Grettir grabs her and pulls her up to the bench, she screams loudly, but when they part afterwards, she cannot complain about anything. The episode has been interpreted as a rape, as the girl falls silent after having first screamed (Kress 201; Ljungqvist 436; Friðriksdóttir, "Ideology and Identity" 115); this is debatable.

mate]: Jónsson 51–52);<sup>8</sup> later in the same saga, when Grettir grabs a serving girl, he simply "svipti hann henni upp í pallinn" ("snatched her up onto the bench": Jónsson 240; Scudder 118).<sup>9</sup> These are not extensive accounts, but according to the traditional Icelandic saga style, they simply relate the necessary outlines. Like much of Icelandic saga literature, *Grettis saga* was turned into *rímur*, the typical Icelandic form of epic verse that remained popular for many centuries from the fourteenth century onwards. In the *mansöngur* (the introductory stanzas to the *rímur*), the fifteenth-century poet simply states that it is not his intention to waste words babbling about matters of love ("Venris lat", lit. "Venus making a fuss") when entertaining; the story must go on (Jónsson 1.55 [3.4]). This is a common attitude in medieval Icelandic literature, and is frequently encountered. In his study of the *Íslendingasögur*, the Russian scholar M. I. Steblín-Kamenskij states that it was not only that descriptions of romantic feelings were unfit for saga literature; there were no appropriate words to describe them (70–71). Accordingly, emotions were something that the audience had to read between the lines.

But how similar or different were the heroes of the chivalric romances from those of the Icelandic narrative tradition, or the Norse world? In fact, when we read medieval Icelandic literature we notice that the Icelandic language did not only have limited vocabulary when it came to emotions and love, but also when it came to sexual relations in a broader sense, including violence. For example, despite some clear instances of rape in the Icelandic sagas (e.g. Ljungqvist 434), the texts seem to lack a specific term for the act (the rape), which makes it in some cases difficult to pin down sexual violence against women in Old Norse texts. Many of the texts, particularly the *Íslendingasögur*, reveal that while rape "was socially unacceptable," it "was considered primarily an offense against the woman's male relatives," as "the Old Norse code of honor included demands of male control over female sexuality" (Ljungqvist 431–32). Thus, when rape is addressed, it is not the women's will that is of primary interest (Ljungqvist 433 *et passim*). This may be seen, e.g., in the cruel treatment of Yngvildr *fagrkinn*, as described in *Svarfdæla saga* (c. 1300 or later), which reveals an extremely gross and elaborate kind of misogyny, where the woman can be said to be the subject of men's attention in their constant conflicts (Kristjánsson, "Eyfirðinga sögur" 200–04; Waugh 151 ff.).

But in what ways did characters like Flóres from *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr* resemble, or differ from, the heroes of the Norse saga tra-



10. Many scholars have studied these sagas in recent years, and not all of them agree on the definition of the 'genre,' or how many texts should be considered as 'actual' *fornaldarsögur*, see e.g. Quinn *et al.* On the origins of this category as literature, see Tulinius 44–69. For a general introduction to the *fornaldarsögur*, see Mitchell 8–90.

11. We must, however, also assume that these works appealed to their contemporary audience as otherwise they would not have proved so popular as attested by their survival in numerous copies.

12. The descriptions of the troll-women in the *fornaldarsögur* are usually extremely grotesque, and have been interpreted as showing misogynistic attitudes (e.g. Kress 119–28; Bagerius, *Mandom och mödom* 145–47; Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature* 59–77). However, the role of troll-women in saga literature might be considerably more complicated, and much has been written on relations between male human heroes and giantesses, e.g. Lozzi Gallo 2–12. Cf. Arnold 116–24; Lavender 158–64.

13. As already mentioned, the Old Norse translators tended to shorten the passages about love and sentiments (Barnes 532; see also discussion in Sävborg 49–50).

dition? Let us consider some interactions between men and women in medieval Icelandic literature, beginning with the legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*), which were written at the same time as the Sagas of Chivalry (the translated and the original *riddarasögur*) mostly in the thirteenth, fourteenth and even the fifteenth centuries,<sup>10</sup> some of them contemporaneous with the work of famous medieval authors like Boccaccio in Italy and Chaucer in England, who both reworked material from the earlier *fabliaux*. In some of the *fornaldarsögur*, their authors made use of stylistic features from texts that entertained the lower ranks of society, as Chaucer did on occasion (Lindahl 144), when entertainment value was their primary aim. These sagas admittedly reflect the culture of the Norse world. However, one must always bear in mind that they are set in the distant past, and therefore it may be they are at times coloured more by notions about that past age, literary *topoi* and narrative motifs, and that they reflect attitudes that were generally current at the time they were written rather than the actual situation in the distant past.<sup>11</sup>

Examples of male attitudes towards women in the *fornaldarsögur* vary considerably, and, needless to say, the female characters themselves may also play different roles within the texts. Many of the sagas include notably strong female characters, or even women engaged in warfare. Strong women are, indeed, traditional in Old Icelandic literature, and characteristic for the *Íslendingasögur*, where they frequently influence the course of events. Apart from this, we have the troll-women/giantesses, who are specifically prominent in sagas that were composed in the fourteenth century.<sup>12</sup> However, by comparing the *fornaldarsögur* in general with the translated *riddarasögur*, we immediately find a different tone. The Swedish scholar Daniel Sävborg, who has studied the portrayal of love in medieval Icelandic literature, points out that the treatment of love and attraction between men and women takes a different form in these two groups of sagas (61–63, 67). In itself this is hardly surprising, since the *riddarasögur* came to the Norse world from more southerly parts of Europe and can be expected to embody values that differ from those of the home-grown products of Norse tradition.<sup>13</sup> But as stated above, the *fornaldarsögur* are far from being a unified group. It is not possible to say that the depictions of love or the general attitudes towards women found in them are all of one type. Certainly, though, it can be said that the Norse heroes conduct themselves in a very different way from the heroes described in the *riddarasögur*, and the *fornaldarsögur* – as well as in other genres of Old Norse literature and

14. This is to some extent traditional, and can also be found in earlier Icelandic literature, especially in skaldic poetry and Kings' Sagas (*konungasögur*), where there are various examples of violence towards women. These examples indicate that it was customary for Norwegian warriors in the eleventh century to rape the wives of defeated opponents in foreign countries, and even abduct them, as a kind of booty. This seems to have been an accepted behaviour at this time, in order for the conquerors to show their authority. The same men would, however, not treat the women of their own country in such a way (see e.g. Bandlien, *Å finne den rete* 46–47 *et passim*; Ljungqvist 441). For various kinds of disrespect towards women in the *Íslendingasögur* (*Kjalnesinga saga*, *Króka-Refs saga* and *Grettis saga*) and the Kings' sagas (*Haralds saga gráfeldar* and *Knýtlinga saga*), see Ljungqvist 434 ff. For examples of actual happenings in Icelandic history that are reminiscent of the literature, see e.g. Bandlien, "Arthurian Knights" 16. It should be kept in mind, however, that women being mistreated or raped by soldiers is not a phenomenon confined to Scandinavian warriors of medieval times, but has been practised throughout the centuries in most parts of the world.

15. The role of trolls in the saga literature is disputed, but troll-women are usually shown in a grotesque manner, as sexually demanding, and yet also sometimes as comic. Therefore, the grotesque image of the troll-women may simply represent exaggerated images of women.

16. Vilhjálmr claims the daughter of an earl for his wife, under false pretences. When she voices her opinion on the matter, and wants her father to postpone taking his decision, Vilhjálmr reacts by decrying the opinion of women, and stresses that men should not let women influence their decisions. As Vilhjálmr is a villain, it is doubtful that his words are meant to be understood in general terms, *i.e.* as the opinion of the saga writer.

17. This particular narrative motif, where male heroes fight trolls in the far north (H945.2 in Boberg 155), belongs to a more general theme in folklore and literature, where heroes

actual historical sources<sup>14</sup> – contain examples of what would be regarded today as gross disrespect towards women, and even violence. This is not to say that the authors of the sagas would necessarily have agreed with this view, whether the tales were taken seriously or what effect they had on their contemporary Icelandic audiences. While some of the sagas were probably meant to address societal affairs, they were also meant to entertain, or, as the American scholar William Ian Miller claims: "Violence is the stuff of good stories [...]. It has been felt to be the proper stuff of narrative since the first written records" (87). So, what can we learn about the violence *per se*?

## 2 Gender and violence in the *fornaldarsögur*

'Negative' attitudes, or attitudes based on gender roles and the inferior position of women (including troll-women) are frequently found in the *fornaldarsögur*. A typical example of this would be, for example, where men verbally abuse troll-women when they first meet, for example by remarks on their ugliness. In many cases, the role of troll-women, who "could be seen as representing the lower and/or slave classes" in saga literature (Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature* 66, 68–69, 73), belongs to the entertainment value of the sagas, as does their appearance.<sup>15</sup>

In other instances, some of the male heroes may say derogatory things about women in general, remarks that can hardly be considered to have been funny, while they clearly display a certain attitude. One such is when Vilhjálmr, a figure in *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* (fourteenth century), says that "kvenna skaplyndi er ómerkiligt" ("No notice should ever be taken of women's whims": Rafn 3.306; Pálsson and Edwards, *Göngu-Hrolf's saga* 81).<sup>16</sup> Other saga heroes do not stop at comments, however. Examples of male protagonists who fight or abuse women physically include the ones who go on long journeys to Finnmark in the high north to fight troll-women.<sup>17</sup> In *Örvar-Odds saga* (fourteenth century), we are introduced to a certain Guðmundr, who boasts about his adventures up north in Finnmörk, and says: "ok hefi ek þat svá gørt, at mér þykkir mest gaman at groeta Finnurnar" ("and I've had the time of my life, making the Lapp women cry": Boer 26).<sup>18</sup> Apart from Lapp women, Norse women are also harassed; in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* (thirteenth century) we are told of a certain Grímr, who dishonours the daughter of a poor woman every single day, even though the mother constantly complains

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test their bravery by fighting against the world of chaos and/or supernatural enemies, who may be a threat to their own ego, their male authority or

to the human community they belong to (Guðmundsdóttir 21–26; Kress 119–27).

18. My own translation; cf. Pálsson and Edwards, *Seven Viking Romances* 34.

about it (Detter 54–55). On top of this, some of the *fornaldarsögur* mention men of high social standing who set out on heroic escapades and find hospitality for the night – and rather more – at farms along the way.

Bósi, hero of *Bósa saga ok Herraud̄s* (c. fourteenth century), is the son of a great Viking and a shield-maiden, and the companion of the king's son Herraud̄ur. He has the reputation, rightly or wrongly, of being the greatest playboy in Icelandic literature. During his journey to the north, he stops at three farms where he receives hospitality from farmers and sleeps with their daughters. The descriptions are explicit, and in fact unique in Old Icelandic literature, and one thing they have in common is that no force is used on the girls. Even if they do not take the initiative themselves, they are curious about the handsome guest, and share a bed with him of their own free will. All of them have learnt something more about the pleasures of this world by the time he leaves in the morning. Of particular interest is the fact that two of the girls accept a gold ring for their affectionate hospitality (Tómasson, *Bósa saga* 17–19, 29–30 and 37–38). *Örvar-Odds saga* contains another example of a hero who takes the initiative, as Bósi does, with the result that the girl enjoys the experience. This incident takes place when Örvar-Oddr stays for some time with a giant, Hildir, who looks on Oddr as being so small that he gives him to his daughter to look after. The daughter, who thinks that Oddr is just a baby, puts him in her bed. The saga says: “Oddr lék alt þat er lysti; gørðiz þá harðla vel með þeim” (“Eventually Odd played all the games he felt like, and after that they got on very well together”: Boer 122; Pálsson and Edwards, *Seven Viking Romances* 76).<sup>19</sup> The giant's daughter is left pregnant as a result. When Oddr leaves, he tells her to send him the child, if it is a boy; otherwise he does not intend to trouble himself about it (Boer 122–23).

Two other sagas contain very similar accounts of such encounters, except that they do not mention that the daughter accepts the proposal or enjoys the experience. In *Áns saga bogsveigis* (c. fifteenth century), Ketill, while travelling with King Ingjaldr and his fellow companions to Firðafylki in the north, leaves his company for a while, and arrives at a farm where he accepts shelter for the night from the farmer. The guest comes straight to the point and says he intends to share the daughter's bed and adds: “ok mun yðr eigi betr boðit” (“and this is the best offer you are likely to get”: Rafn 2.340).<sup>20</sup> The girl's reaction is not mentioned, but her father does not seem to be pleased, and the saga says: “karli kveðst ekki mikit um þat” (“the

19. Tómasson believes that the sexual descriptions, both in *Bósa saga ok Herraud̄s* and *Örvar-Odds saga*, were influenced by the literary *fabliaux* genre (“*Bósa saga og Herraud̄s*” 60 ff.; “Í tröllahöndum” 74). While the descriptions may have been influenced by such stories, the basic structure itself, i.e. of a hero travelling to the north and lying with a woman of lower social standing, as discussed below, fits well within the Norse tradition.

20. My own translation; cf. Hughes 318.

21. My own translation; cf. Hughes 318, “the old man did not say much to that.” In the *rímur* version of the saga, *Áns rímur bogsveigis*, it seems to be the girl’s mother who replies to Ketill, and says: “Það er mior seggurenn silt j ged / at selia hana so illa” (“It is, man, the least I would do / to give her away that poorly”): Halldórsson, *Áns rímur bogsveigis* 119; my own translation.

22. *Gautreks saga* tells of the father and son Starkaðr *jötunn* and Stórvirkir. Starkaðr abducts Álfhildr, the daughter of King Álfir, and makes her pregnant. Álfhildr gives birth to Stórvirkir, who later abducts Unnr, the daughter of an earl, and fathers a son, Starkaðr, on her. Unnr’s brothers attack their farm during the night, and burn them both to death, while young Starkaðr survives (Ranisch 12–13).

old man said he did not like the idea”: Rafn 2.340).<sup>21</sup> Later in the saga, we have the same incident as in *Örvar-Odds saga*, where the female protagonist, Drífa, falls pregnant, and the father of her child, who wishes to leave her, asks her father to send the child to him if it is a boy, but otherwise to keep it (Rafn 2.344); this is, however, not the same man who insisted on sharing her bed earlier. The other example, from *Ketils saga hængs*, is described above, where that Ketill accepts the farmer’s offer to sleep with his daughter (Rafn 2.117–18).

*Örvar-Odds saga* and three other *fornaldarsögur* contain some more related incidents, except that the male protagonist is not only of a higher social standing than the woman in question, but a king. The first example is to be found in the text *Frá Fornjóti og hans ættmönnum* (c. fourteenth century), relating with very few words how King Raumr, drinking in honour of the Yule festival (*jól*) together with Bergfinnr, the son of Þrymr *jötunn*, went into Bergfinnr’s sister’s bed, and fathered three sons on her (Vigfússon and Unger 23). Further circumstances of the incident are not described, but we notice that Bergfinnr’s sister belongs to the *jötnar*, and is therefore comparable to troll-women. Another incident, where a troll-woman (*gýgur*) is taken in order to deliver a baby to a king, is in *Örvar-Odds saga* (the longer version): “Var þat þá tiltekja þeira, at þeir fengu eina gýgi undan fossi stórum galdra fulla ok gjörninga, ok lögðu í sæng hjá Háreki konungi, ok við henni átti hann son” (“They took an ogress living under this great waterfall, loaded her with magic and sorcery and put her in bed beside King Harek, so he had a son by her”: Rafn 2.241; Pálsson and Edwards, *Seven Viking Romances* 81).

Two similarly short accounts, including abduction of the girls, are to be found in *Gautreks saga* (thirteenth century),<sup>22</sup> which tells of King Gauti, who loses his way while hunting in the woods and ends up in a cottage with a farmer and his family, where he accepts food and a place to sleep. After some words with the farmer’s daughter, he says: “þikjumzt ek sjá, at þú munt mæra vera, ok skalltu sofa í hjá mér í nótt. Hun bað konung því ráða” (“I take it you’re still a virgin, so you’d better sleep with me tonight. She said it was entirely up to him”); as a result, the girl falls pregnant, and King Gauti, who knows that she will give a birth to a boy, asks her to go with him (Ranisch 6; Pálsson and Edwards, *Seven Viking Romances* 141). The fourth king, Helgi in *Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappá hans* (fourteenth century), takes the maiden-king Ólöf by force to his ships and lies with her for several nights, leaving her pregnant. This is in fact an act of revenge, as the maiden-king had previously humiliated Helgi – as

maiden-kings usually do in Old Norse literature (Slay 22). The author of the saga makes it very clear that Queen Ólöf oversteps the limits of normal and accepted behaviour with her arrogance and greed, and so deserves what she gets (Jakobsson 179). Later in the saga, King Helgi rapes another woman, an elf-woman who seeks his hospitality on Christmas Eve (Slay 32).

From the above examples it is clear that the four kings do not need anyone's approval for sleeping with the woman. In *Örvar-Odds saga* and *Ketils saga hængs*, however, the sexual encounter takes place with the approval of the girl's father, or at his suggestion, rather like the situation in *Bósa saga ok Herraud̄s*, where all three fathers seem not to be put out at all by Bósi's conduct or that of their daughters; a similar attitude is to be found in *Gautreks saga*, where the father does not interfere at all in what is happening under his roof. In only one case, that of *Áns saga bogsveigis*, is the behaviour of the male hero – Ketill – seen as being inappropriate.<sup>23</sup>

In the incident in *Ketils saga hængs*, the hero, Ketill, who accepts the farmer's offer, falls in love with the girl, Hrafnhildr; something similar happens in *Örvar-Odds saga*, where the male hero and the giant's daughter get on well together, and even in *Gautreks saga*, where the king asks the girl to join him with their son. As a result, the three heroes may hold the audience's sympathy, but otherwise it is impossible to say whether the medieval audience accepted the fathers' approval, or the heroes' behaviour.<sup>24</sup> That the fate of the women as depicted in the above-mentioned sagas could have raised questions among the medieval audience is indicated not only by *Áns saga bogsveigis*, but also by the late medieval *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra*, where a similar scene, that of a young woman being offered to a travelling champion, has been turned into a parody.

In *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra* (c. fourteenth–fifteenth century), a troll-woman offers a visiting hero access to her daughter's bed, but when he has accepted her offer, taken off his clothes and lain down beside the girl, Gríðr, the troll-woman, threatens to kill him, and asks him if he really thought that she would let him dishonour her daughter (Lavender 274–75). What is interesting in this case is that the parent mocking the hero is female: the daughter's mother, and not her father, as in the older sagas. In this respect, the incident might be interpreted as a parody, criticising the earlier and more traditional texts and the prevailing male sovereignty presented there (cf. Lavender 163). Another twist on the same motif is to be found in *Sturlaug's saga starfsama* (fourteenth century), when Véfreyja, an elderly woman,

23. Ketill is, in fact, severely punished by Ánn, one of his fellow travellers, who puts out one of his eyes and gelds him as well. As a result, his plans with the farmer's daughter come to nothing, and King Ingjaldr drives him away from his troop (Hughes 319).

24. On the love story, see e.g. Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature* 69–70.

25. Also akin to the same theme is an episode in *Grettir saga*, where Grettir tricks a gang of *berserks*, who were used to abusing farmers' daughters without consequence. The parody is to be found in an episode in which Grettir dwells at a certain farm in the absence of the farmer. One day, when *berserks* make an unexpected visit to the farm, Grettir greets them well, offers them drink and promises that they will have the women of the house all to themselves. They accept his offer, and tell him that they want to have the housewife, her daughter, and all the other women too. The women are frightened and start to weep. Þórir, the leader of the gang, considers the reaction of the women irrelevant: he simply states that he doesn't care about the moaning of women. Grettir's purpose is simply to lure the *berserks* to a certain place, where he can lock them in, in order to kill them (Jónsson 64–69). It is obvious that the author of the saga plays with the standardised image of the *berserks*, referred to above.

26. Some of the traditional ballads, which were chanted as an accompaniment to dances in Iceland from late medieval times until the 18th century, deal with important and delicate social matters, such as incest and rape (Vésteinn Ólason 79–80, 229–55); similar ballads were sung in the Scandinavian countries (Jonsson, Solheim and Danielson). Icelandic folktales dealing with themes as incest or rape usually belong to international tale types (Sveinsson, *Verzeichnis Isländischer Märchenvarianten*, e.g. type 706).

27. This act is, in fact, reminiscent of a fixed literary motif in which unfaithful women are punished. The punishment itself is believed to reflect actual punishments according to law (Budal 216–23).

28. See also the violence against Queen Hvít and Queen Skuld, who are tormented (Slay 67, 124). On violence against women in *Hrólfs saga kraka*, see Jakobsson 177–84.

29. Some scholars have rejected the status of *Yngvars saga víðförla* among the *fornaldarsögur*, as it has some fundamental elements that differ from most of them (see e.g. the discussion in Phepstead, "Adventure-Time"). The saga is, as Lönnroth claims, "a strange mixture of history

who is almost blind because of her age, asks her guest, the young protagonist Sturlaugr, if he wants to sleep alone during the night, or with her. When Sturlaugr replies that he would rather be close to her, she places a block in her bed to separate them (Rafn 3.605); the comic aspect of the incident is obvious. Perhaps related to the theme of mockery so explicit in these late *fornaldarsögur*,<sup>25</sup> are episodes in traditional ballads and folk tales, recorded from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, where the heroines have to play tricks on the men who have planned to rape them (e.g. *Kvæði af herra Pána og Gunnvöru* in Ólason 253–55; *Sagan af Birni bragðastakk* [Björn Shifty-Cloak] in Eiríksson 296–99).<sup>26</sup>

While it is open to question how closely the examples in the above-mentioned texts (especially *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, *Örvar-Odds saga*, *Ketils saga hængs*, *Frá Fornjóti og hans ættmönnum* and *Gautreks saga*) would come to what we would now define as sexual compulsion, violence or even rape, it is clear that in no case do the girls initiate the sexual activity; on the contrary, it is the result of a decision taken either by the guest or by their fathers. That this was not, however, regarded by all as an acceptable behaviour on the part of saga heroes is indicated by *Áns saga bogsveigis* and *Illuga saga Gríðarfóstra*.

Apart from cases of forced sexual intercourse and/or oppression of women, there are various examples in the sagas of women being treated savagely or with violence in a way that directly reflects their gender or their role in sexual relations. In *Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappá hans*, around the time of Yule, when Hjalti hinn hugprúði is with his concubine, he asks her, in fun, whether she would prefer two men aged twenty-two or one man aged eighty (cf. "huortt þiki þier betre tueir tuýelleftir eda einn attrædur": Slay 113). When she answers promptly that she would prefer two twenty-two-year-old men, this seems to cause the hero serious disappointment. His reaction is to call her a whore and attack her, biting her nose off so she is disfigured for life.<sup>27</sup> After that he goes out to where the king and his companions are drinking in honour of the Yule festival, rouses them from their stupor and tells them that there is more virtue in fighting than in sleeping with women. We might ask whether this was the spirit in which nobles generally celebrated Yule.<sup>28</sup>

More misogyny of the same intensity is shown by Yngvarr, the hero of *Yngvars saga víðförla*.<sup>29</sup> When a band of women approach him and his men, he warns his men to be on their guard against them as they would against poisonous snakes. The most noble of the women

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and myth, Latin clerical learning and Old Norse folklore," probably mostly from the eleventh and the twelfth century (101 and 111). *Yngvars saga víðförla* was, however, originally

written in the late twelfth century, in Latin, while the preserved version is from the thirteenth or fourteenth century. It is partly based on the *fornaldarsögur* tradition, and should be examined in close connection with other *fornaldarsögur*.

then seeks closer acquaintance with Yngvarr, which proves to be an unwise move. His response is to draw a dagger and stab her in her private parts (Olson 26), resulting in physical disfigurement, like that inflicted by Hjalti on his concubine in *Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappahans*. The role of the female characters, as shown in these two sagas, is different from the women in the above examples, the one being a concubine and the other one a seductress. In the case of *Yngvars saga víðförla*, the role of the seductress is obviously meant to shed light on the steadfastness of the male hero and his power over his own sexual desires (Bagerius, “Romance and Violence” 87). As the role of the seductress was already long known in continental literature (e.g. Jaeger 83), *Yngvars saga víðförla* does not represent a Norse attitude towards women *per se*.

Finally, two instances of fatal violence against women should be considered. The first example, in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, tells of an old woman (*kerling*) and her dealings with a certain Ásmundr, who is in the company of a king. First, she asks the king whether he can cure her from old age. When the king replies that he can not, Ásmundr tells the woman that he will cure her. She then asks him if he will do so in her bed. He reacts to her question by telling her to approach him and kneel, and she thinks that he is going to speak with her in privacy; Ásmundur then decapitates her with his axe. The king himself does not approve of one of his men simply killing an innocent and poor old woman, but “Ásmundr kvað undarligt at verða illa við slíkt” (“Ásmund said he couldn’t see what all the fuss was about”), and claims that he had never seen the king become so angry over such an insignificant matter (Detter 55; Pálsson and Edwards, *Hrolf Gautreksson* 116); the life of a ridiculous old woman was surely not worth a lot. Finally, we have an interesting incident from *Örvar-Odds saga*, where King Herraudr offers to hand over to Oddr his shield-maiden, who has previously been at his side in many a battle. Though he accepts the gift, which was presumably the proper thing to do, Oddr is highly sarcastic about his new ‘possession’ and treats the shield-maiden disgracefully: at the first opportunity, he throws her into a marsh and leaves her there to drown (Boer 173–74). The killing of the shield-maiden might have had some comic value, and indeed, the example reminds us that while discussing violence in the sagas, we might want to consider what role it has, remembering that episodes such as this one could have had an entertainment value, and might be interpreted accordingly. Other incidents in which violence has a comical touch are certainly present in the sagas, in which cas-

es we might even suggest that it is hidden within male humor and hence without narrative depth.

Even if the incidents found in the above listed *fornaldarsögur* are descriptive and shed light on the variety of examples where women are treated badly, it is worth noting that the list is not exhaustive and comparable episodes are to be found in other texts as well. However, it is obvious that they provide us with examples of women being subjugated by male heroes, both because of their gender and their ‘inferior’ social status. They include farmers’ daughters, daughters of poor old women or troll-women, and troll-women in general; their newborn baby girls are also of small significance. An exception is the social status of the seductress in *Yngvars saga víðförla* and the maiden-king in *Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappá hans*, who must be considered as an equal to the king, while, at the same time, the rape can be seen as an act that is supposed to put the maiden-king in her rightful place, *i.e.*, beneath the male king. But even if the sexual encounter in *Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappá hans* is an obvious example of a rape, the texts in general do not define the given incidents as such, and neither do they describe the women’s point of view, except for the three cases in *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*; in addition, in the case of *Örvar-Odds saga* and *Ketils saga hængs*, we are told that the incident resulted in a relationship.

Of special interest are episodes in which farmers, peasants, giants, or troll-women offer a visiting hero – in most cases travelling to the north – access to their daughter’s bed (or, in some cases, do not seem to be bothered when the hero helps himself to their daughter’s bed). These are, in general, standardised and must have been regarded as an apt literary motif that the saga authors used when their heroes sought for hospitality in the north. The travelling heroes are in all cases of higher social rank than the farmers, being kings or king’s sons (Raumr, Hárekr and Gautr), companions/warriors of kings (Bósi, Illugi and Ketill of *Áns saga bogsveigis*) or sons of chieftains/wealthy farmers (Ketill of *Ketils saga hængs*, Sturlaugr and Örvar-Oddr). But do such narratives merely demonstrate the imagination of storytellers? It has been pointed out that the literary motif itself may reflect an actual custom among certain peoples, such as the Sami living in various parts in Norway, mostly in the north; it may have been traditional for the men to offer sexual relations with their wives to distinguished Scandinavian guests (Mundal 353–54).<sup>30</sup> This could then possibly be the basis of the literary motif, where the visitors seem to expect this kind of hospitality, or take it for granted.

30. This is also believed to have been a tradition among Eskimos (/ Inuit) (Kjellström 167–72).



In general, the above examples from the *fornaldarsögur* cannot be interpreted in the same way; while some of them deal with rape or violence, others may merely reveal a non-prudent attitude to sex; yet other episodes may above all be comic. All of them, however, highlight the subjugation of women, which reflects, in a broader sense, the patriarchal world-view of the sagas.

### 3 The Icelandic *riddarasögur*

The indigenous Icelandic *riddarasögur* are not a unified group of sagas, any more than are the *fornaldarsögur*. With much simplification, we might describe them as being medieval romances, modelled on the translated Sagas of Chivalry, while also forming part of the Norse saga tradition – and therefore closely related to the *fornaldarsögur*. Because of how strongly connected they are to the translations, however, it might be interesting to see if we come across different values here than in the *fornaldarsögur*.

Unlike the translated sagas, the Icelandic romances usually do not deal with matters of love, even if the ideas of courtly love are discernable in some of them (Sävborg 51); rather, they are tales of adventure and chivalry, cf. “riddara sögurnar rísa af því, / at rekkar kómu þrautir í” (“the *riddarasögur* originate / where men face difficulties”).<sup>31</sup> Therefore, we do not expect knights to lose their reason because of unrequited love; nor do we expect male attitudes towards women to be homogeneous. What we immediately notice, however, when examining violence in particular, is that while we do not have any cases similar to the ones in the *fornaldarsögur*, where a travelling hero is offered to sleep with the daughter of a host, or takes it for granted, we have even clearer cases of rape than in the sagas described above, for example in *Gibbons saga* (fourteenth century), *Sigurðar saga þögla* (fourteenth century), *Ölvis rímur sterka* (cf. *Bragða-Ölvis saga*, sixteenth century or earlier), *Mágus saga jarls* (longer version, c. 1350) and *Samsons saga fagra* (fourteenth century).<sup>32</sup>

In *Gibbons saga*, the hero of the saga, Gibbon, rapes a maiden-king, after having himself being humiliated; this is not unlike the aforementioned incident in *Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappá hans*. What is different here, however, is that while Gibbon has intercourse with the maiden-king – who is temporarily paralysed – his companions rape her attendant maidens, all of whom are kings’ daughters, who

31. The quotation is from *Skikkjurímur*, a fifteenth century recreation of the thirteenth century *Möttuls saga* (Jónsson 2:352 [3:78]); my own translation.

32. *Mágus saga jarls*, *Gibbons saga*, *Sigurðar saga þögla*, *Samsons saga fagra* and *Ölvis rímur sterka* (or *Bragða-Ölvis saga*) have been categorised among the indigenous *riddarasögur*, but even though the literary genre in question is more or less modelled on the translated *riddarasögur*, they adhere in some respects to the Icelandic literary tradition and usually do not deal with love in the fashion of the translated *riddarasögur* (Sävborg 51); some of them therefore closely resemble the *fornaldarsögur* in this respect. This is the case with *Samsons saga fagra* and *Ölvis rímur sterka*, which are characterised by a mixed style, depending on the location of the scene, whether it is in the South or the North.

33. See also *Dínus saga drambláta* where the rape is in revenge for humiliation (Kristjánsson, *Dínus saga drambláta* 64). See also *Klári saga* (Cederschiöld 47–51).

34. Another incident where a woman (a king's daughter) is taken by force, yet enjoys the experience, is to be found in *Adonias saga* (Loth 3.86).

35. In this saga, the woman, the victim of the rape, is only a subject of minor interest. The saga relates how a man is put under a spell, making him unable to have sex with his wife. Another man, Ölvir the Strong, comes along, and sleeps with the man's wife (see also st. 4.8 ff. in ms. AM 616 d 4to).

36. The story told in *Haralds rímur hringsbana* may well be categorised as a *fornaldarsaga*, as has in fact been done (Sveinsson, "Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda" 501), even though the *rímur* have not been included in any collection of *fornaldarsögur*.

37. Two similar incidents, where men threaten to rape women, can be found in *Saulus saga ok Nikanors* and *Sigrgarðs saga ok Valbrands* (Loth 2.62 and 5.165; Bagerius, "Romance and Violence" 85–86). Rape is also a common theme in late medieval Icelandic ballads, many of which reflect divisions between different social ranks, sexism and the authority of men over women (Ólason 79–80, 229–55). These are, however, most often translated from Danish, and are therefore not relevant in this context.

38. An exception might be the story of Goðmundr in *Samsons saga fagra*, where the social standing of the woman is not mentioned. That the location is, however, in Jötunheimar, may be a reference to the *fornaldarsögur*, where the women of the far north are usually of low social standing, and even represented as troll-women.

are all asleep in the same room (Page 75–76; Bandlien, "Arthurian Knights" 88–90).<sup>33</sup> Yet another incident of a maiden-king being raped is to be found in *Sigurðar saga þögla*, where the woman is forced to lie with three different creatures three nights in a row; the experience is, however, not all together bad for the victim, Sedentiana, who partly enjoys it (Loth 2.203, 206 and 209). What is the same here as in some of the aforementioned *fornaldarsögur*, is the underlying concept that forced sexual intercourse is supposed to evoke the women's love or passion (Vitz 10; cf. Friðriksdóttir, "Ideology and Identity" 113–14).<sup>34</sup>

*Ölvis rímur sterka* relates how the protagonist lies with Randiborg, the wife of a chief, "hvört ath henne er liúft edur leitt" ("whether she likes it or not:" *Ölvis rímur sterka* 4.11–19); later, we learn that the act was not only punishable, but merited the death penalty (5.22).<sup>35</sup> In *Mágus saga jarls*, a mighty king keeps the wives and daughters of other kings captive for some time so that he can enjoy himself with them. He then sends them home, some of them pregnant (Vilhjálmsson 2.404). A similar incident is to be found in *Samsons saga fagra*, where a certain musician enchants women into the woods with his harp playing and keeps them there as long as he pleases; when they become pregnant, he returns them to their fathers or husbands. Later in the same saga, King Goðmundr of Glæsisvellir makes war on Jötunheimar. One day when his cooks are preparing meal, they spot three women, and take the fairest one and bring her to the king, who is pleased and takes her into his bed. When she gives birth to his child and dies, the king abandons the child in the mountains (Wilson 7 and 32–33). In a few more cases, men threaten to rape the women in order to subdue them. For example, in *Haralds rímur hringsbana* (c. fifteenth–sixteenth century),<sup>36</sup> Haraldr threatens to rape a queen if she will not heal him (Halldórsson, *Haralds rímur Hringsbana* 57–58).<sup>37</sup>

In the above examples women are taken by force, and they are obviously being raped. By comparing these to the *fornaldarsögur*, we notice that the sexual violence is not restricted to the lower orders of society, and that it does not happen with the consent of the girls' fathers or the women's husbands. The women here are maiden-kings, not farmers' daughters: strong women that must be subdued, or else high-born ladies, and the male heroes are of high social standing too.<sup>38</sup> The circumstances are thus generally different from the incidents described in the *fornaldarsögur*, even if there are considerable similarities between the rape of the maiden-king Ólöf in *Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappá hans*, and the maiden-kings from the *riddarasögur*,

39. On maiden-king narratives in Old Norse literature, see Ríkharðsdóttir, “Meykóngahefðin í riddarasögum;” Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature* 108 ff. On bridal-quest romances, see Kalinke, *Bridal-Quest Romance*.

which is not surprising, since maiden-king romances are usually of a rather standardised nature.<sup>39</sup> The higher social standing of the female victims, as described in the *riddarasögur*, can probably best be explained by the direct influence from the Old Norse translations. It has, in fact, been pointed out that because of such influence, it is more difficult to draw any particular conclusions about medieval Icelandic society from the *riddarasögur*, than e.g. from the *fornaldarsögur* and the *Íslendingasögur* (Ljungqvist 433).

## 4 Gender and social status

The above examples from medieval Icelandic literature show that the two groups of sagas, the *fornaldarsögur* and the Icelandic *riddarasögur*, include various incidents of sexual exploitation and/or violence. Despite their differences, they shed light on male attitudes towards women in saga literature, which seem to be very much at odds with the behaviour of the knights as described in the translated literature. Indeed, the interaction between the sexes, and the immanent male authority described in these sagas, could hardly be farther away from the love relationships of the translated Sagas of Chivalry.<sup>40</sup>

40. As previously mentioned, we might want to keep in mind that the comparison is made with chosen examples, and that examples of male attitudes towards women in the *fornaldarsögur* and the Icelandic *riddarasögur* vary considerably. But even though there may be some examples of attitudes directly influenced by the translated Sagas of Chivalry when it comes to the interaction between the sexes, it is certain that the chosen examples reflect the main characteristics of the texts when it comes to sexual exploitation and/violence.

In the *fornaldarsögur*, where we find female sexual promiscuity or violence against women, the majority of those involved are of low birth or common social status, while the indigenous *riddarasögur* usually tell of high-born women in the spirit of the translated romances. But even though both categories describe gender-based violence and/or exploitation, and therefore share some common features, there is a certain difference between the two. Firstly, in some of the *fornaldarsögur*, women of low social standing are ‘handed over’ to the male protagonists, who are of a higher social standing. In most cases, this is approved by the society (the girls’ fathers), and the act is not considered to be a rape. The sagas show clear cases of patriarchy. Secondly, in the indigenous *riddarasögur*, women of high social standing are sexually violated by men of similar social standing. In the case of the maiden-kings the rape is accepted, as it re-establishes the accepted social order. In other cases, the rape is not accepted, and the men are seen as villains who do not act according to socially accepted rules.

This comparison indicates that the main difference between the two categories lies within the social context, and it is obvious that social standing plays a part in the women’s roles. We therefore have to

41. Comparable examples of preoccupation with social standing can be found in the Nordic ballads referred to above. In some cases, these texts reflect the tensions between social strata and show how the upper ranks were able to disparage the common people. Some of the texts include striking examples of gender discrimination and men's authority over women.

42. Georges Duby believes that we can use medieval literature in order to gain an insight into the society of the past, as it related to the real situations of the audience. He further points out how literary works could also influence the behavior of the people who listened to them (Duby 56). On the Templars' attitudes towards women, according to historical writings and documents, see Nicholson 74–80.

43. Icelandic sagas, such as *Íslendingasögur* and *konungasögur*, have been used by historians, and are generally believed to reflect social values (Ljungqvist 441). Only a few historians have, however, made use of the Icelandic *riddarasögur* as historical sources. See, e.g. Bagerius, *Mandom och mödom* 18, 73, 85 ff. *et passim*.

remember, when using literary texts as evidence about social structure, that status was important. Very different attitudes to women could exist side by side according to the rank to which the women belonged.<sup>41</sup> But apart from this, to what extent do the sagas reflect general attitudes towards women in Old Norse-Icelandic society, and are those attitudes then different from attitudes found in more southern regions?

The French romances are believed to reflect societal attitudes, since they were popular and were accepted by their audience,<sup>42</sup> and the same can be said about medieval Icelandic literature.<sup>43</sup> It is then natural to ask what sort of social context they would fit into. Did men in the Norse world see women so differently from the way their counterparts did further south in Europe? At first glance there would seem to be a huge gulf between these tales and the translated ones that reached Iceland from the continent, with their accounts of love-lorn knights and courteous maidens, and this proves to be the case on further examination too. Heroes like Flóres of *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr*, Tristram of *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar* and others of similar nature, have virtually nothing in common with the worst-behaved louts of the Norse world. But this need not necessarily mean that people in the Nordic countries were so different from those living further south. Indeed, there are examples from Old French romances of men from lower levels of society behaving brutally towards women (Bagerius, "Romance and Violence" 90), and apart from that, continental European literature spans a greater variety than is found in the courtly romances alone, including for example the aforementioned *fabliaux*. There were also contemporary poets who appear not to have been influenced by courtly love when it came to their attitudes towards women, even in their love poems (Jaeger 84–86, 91–94 *et passim*).

And it must be remembered that the ideas behind courtly love, which so noticeably influenced chivalric literature, applied only to the upper ranks. Consequently, it had no place among ordinary people, and the language of emotion was an expressive mode that was restricted to the higher ranks (e.g. Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion* 196–99). In fact, common people were so far removed from the scope of courtly love that Capellanus, the author of the important treatise *De amore libri tres*, felt it necessary to state that his doctrines did not apply to the peasantry, who simply answered the calls of nature like animals, their conduct having nothing to do with the sublime sentiments of love that found expression amongst the gentle ranks in their

palaces. The message he gave to young nobles was that if they happened to be taken with a peasant's daughter, they should simply flatter her a bit and then take her to a secluded place where they could have their way with her (Andreas Capellanus 150), or, as the Norwegian literary scholar Toril Moi puts it: "peasants are natural creatures and must be treated as such. Intercourse with peasant women can neither refine nor ennoble the courtly lover" (18). Thus, it seems that the nobles and gentry could treat the daughters of serfs, and serving-maids, with a complete lack of respect, while venerating married women in the court as if they were divine beings. This indicates that literary texts fail to tell the whole story and therefore cannot be considered a mirror of society, even if they can, obviously, reflect values of certain social groups.

## 5 Concluding remarks

Icelanders were fond of French chivalric literature – so much so that they wrote *riddarasögur* of their own for a long time after first encountering it. Although it is likely that new cultural currents, as exemplified by courtly literature, gradually changed people's attitudes towards love and marriage, the popularity of these texts need not mean that people in Iceland took them literally.<sup>44</sup> This comparison between individual groups of sagas has revealed that the Icelandic *riddarasögur* differ from the translated *riddarasögur* – even when dealing with women from the higher levels of society – and also from the Icelandic *fornaldarsögur* when it comes to sexual attitudes. From this we can conclude that the popular literature that we have examined (the *fornaldarsögur*, the indigenous *riddarasögur* and the translated *riddarasögur*) need not reflect general societal values. It is coloured by a strong sense of social standing, and therefore reflects a narrower set of values. While we might conclude from Icelandic medieval literature that Norse and continental European saga heroes are of totally different types, Andreas Capellanus's treatise shows that this was not necessarily the case, since attitudes towards women depended – first and foremost – on their rank. The conclusion is that in literature, as in life, women are not just women, and from the perspective of gender studies, this might be a good starting point for a similar treatment of the attitudes towards men in Saga literature, for example regarding brutal behaviour against men of lower social status.

44. As Bandlien has pointed out, there are some Norwegian runic inscriptions from Bergen that indicate that some of the inhabitants of the town knew the ideology behind courtly love, and it is therefore likely that the literature had some social effect, especially in Bergen, where the translations were made. Gradually, it was no longer regarded as a weakness for a man to show his love, but rather seen as a sign that he was of good nature (*Å finne den rette* 188–89, 174–75 and 207; *Strategies of Passion* 217, 238). Bandlien also believes that Icelandic men began to behave differently in the fourteenth century, when they were able to "explore modes of behaviour that would previously have been taken for weaknesses" ("Arthurian Knights" 94).

45. I would like to thank Jeffrey Cosser for his assistance with the final English translation.

The title of this article dealing with male attitudes towards women in medieval Icelandic literature asks the simple question: “How do you know if it is love or lust?” According to the above discussion, the conclusion must be that, when dealing with medieval literature, we might find the answer by recognising the literary tradition behind the text, and above all, its social context.<sup>45</sup>

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# Teaching Eros

## The Rhetoric of Love in the *Tale of Livistros and Rodamne*, the *Roman de la Rose*, and the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*

### Abstract

The paper brings together three rather unlikely texts, the thirteenth-century Byzantine romance *The Tale of Livistros and Rodamne*, the thirteenth-century Old French *Roman de la Rose* and the fifteenth-century Italian prose romance *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, which are characterized by their lengthy dream narratives in which a first-person narrator is initiated in the art and the mysteries of love. Focusing on a group of instructive speeches contained within or indirectly connected with these dream narratives, this paper examines instruction as an integral component of the initiation process and as a powerful rhetorical tool moving the narrative – and the love story of the protagonist couple – forward. In doing so, the paper also highlights the ideas about love expressed in each of the three romances, the ways that they interconnect and the ways that they differ.

\* This article is based on material from my unpublished thesis (Priki, “Dream Narratives”).

In the Byzantine romance *The Tale of Livistros and Rodamne* (*Ἀφήγησις Λιβίστρου καὶ Ροδάμνης*), when the main protagonist, Livistros, encounters the three-faced figure of Emperor Eros in his dream, he exclaims (*L&R* 494-97):<sup>1</sup>

[...] Τίς ὁ πλάστης  
<καὶ> τί τὸ ξενοχάραγον τὸ βλέπω, τί ἔναι ἐτοῦτο;  
Τίς νὰ μὲ εἶπη τὸ θεωρῶ, τίς νὰ μὲ τὸ ἐρμηνεύση,  
τίς ἄνθρωπος φιλόκαλος νὰ μὲ τὸ ἀναδιδάξῃ;

([...] Who is the creator  
and what is this strangely drawn creation I see,

1. The text is quoted from the critical edition of the redaction ‘alpha’ by Panagiotis Agapitos (hereafter abbreviated as *L&R*); numbers refer to lines, not pages. The English translations are by Agapitos’ forthcoming verse translation of *Livistros and Rodamne* (*L&R* trans.). I would like to thank Prof. Agapitos for providing me with a copy of his unpublished translation.

what is it really?  
 Who shall tell me what is it I behold,  
 who shall interpret it for me,  
 what friend of beauty shall instruct me about it?)

This passage not only encapsulates the paradoxical and mysterious nature of love as manifested in the figure of Eros, but it also points to a lover's need for interpretation and instruction in matters of love, a theme that is prominent throughout the first part of this romance, in which Livistros and Rodamne, the protagonist couple, are gradually initiated in the mysteries and the art of love before their eventual marital union. The instruction of lovers is, of course, not a peculiar theme of this romance; it is often found in romances and in treatises on the art of love throughout Europe and beyond. This paper aims to explore the rhetoric of love employed in the instructive speeches addressed to neophyte lovers in three texts from three different literary and socio-cultural contexts, namely, the thirteenth-century Byzantine *Tale of Livistros and Rodamne* mentioned above, the thirteenth-century Old French *Roman de la Rose* and the fifteenth-century Italian prose romance *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. These texts explore how the male protagonists, Livistros, Amant and Poliphilo respectively, undergo initiation processes preparing them for their union with their objects of desire, while in the *Livistros and Rodamne* and in the *Hypnerotomachia*, there are analogous processes for the female protagonists, Rodamne and Polia.

The *Tale of Livistros and Rodamne* was probably written in the second half of the thirteenth century, a product of the Laskarid court at Nicaea.<sup>2</sup> Through a masterfully constructed narrative, the anonymous poet tells the story of love between the Latin king Livistros and the Latin princess Rodamne: their falling in love, union, separation and their eventual reunion. The first half of the romance contains four encased dream narratives, in which Eros mediates to create a first bond between the couple. These dreams, combined with Livistros' instruction by his Relative and his subsequent quest to find Rodamne and win her heart, constitute the couple's initiation in the art of love and their mutual falling in love. The romance survives in five manuscripts dating to the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, which transmit three different redactions (α, E, V).<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this paper, I will be using the text of redaction 'alpha' – transmitted in three manuscripts (Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Scaligeranus 55; Napoli, Biblioteca Nazionale, Graecus III.AA.9; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Graecus 2910) – which constitutes the

2. For the dating issue, see Agapitos, "Η χρονολογική ακολουθία." For different views, see Cupane 440; *L&R Lendari* 65–71.

3. There are also fragments in other manuscripts covering a period from the early fifteenth to the late seventeenth century. For the manuscript tradition, see: *L&R* 67–93; *L&R Lendari* 56–64.

4. The *Rose* survives in about 320 manuscripts and manuscript fragments with dates ranging from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, as well as in many printed editions from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The *Rose* manuscripts are now listed in the [joint digitization project](#) of the Sheridan Libraries of Johns Hopkins University and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.
5. For the purposes of this paper, only the first Aldine edition (1499) will be taken into consideration; this edition was republished in 1545 by the sons of Aldus as *La Hypnerotomachia di Poliphilo*. The work became very popular in France with five editions translated in French published in Paris: the first in 1546 edited by Jean Martin (reissued in 1553–54 and 1561), an ‘alchemical’ version from 1600 by Béroalde de Verville (reissued in 1657), an abridged version in 1772 published by Antoine Pallandre, as well as two nineteenth-century versions, one from 1804 edited by Jacques G. Legrand and a second from 1880–83 by Claudius Popelin. There was also an English translation of the major part of Book I in 1592 edited by an R. D. (generally assumed to be Richard Dallington), which was re-edited in 1890 by Andrew Lang.
6. The decorated initials at the beginning of each chapter form the phrase: POLIAM FRATEM FRANCESCUS COLVMNA PERAMAVIT (“Brother Francesco Colonna loved Polia exceedingly”). There is also a phrase encrypted in the first letters of the first three lines of Polia’s epitaph at the end of the book: F[rancescus] C[olumna] I[nvenit] or I[nscripsit], meaning “Francesco Colonna invented it” or “wrote it” (Kretzulesco-Quaranta 44; Kent Hiatt and Prescott 295).
7. Other candidates that have been proposed for the authorship of the work are a Roman Francesco Colonna from Praeneste (1453–1517?), Felice Feliciano (1433–79), Ciriaco d’Ancona (1391–1453/55), Niccolò Lelio Cosmico (c. 1420–1500), Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72) and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–94). For an overview of the authorship debate, see Ariani e Gabriele LXIII–XC; Godwin 69–104.

oldest of the surviving three redactions and the closest to the lost original.

The *Roman de la Rose* is an allegorical love poem which takes the form of a dream narrative. A first-person narrator recounts a past dream in which he comes upon an enclosed garden, enters it and therein meets a great assemblage of allegorical characters, falls in love with a rose, receives instruction in the art of love and strives to conquer his object of desire. Written in thirteenth-century France, it is the work of two poets: Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Guillaume de Lorris’ part comprises the first 4056 lines of the poem and it was written between 1225 and 1240, while Jean de Meun’s continuation, dating between 1269 and 1278, is considerably longer consisting of about 17620 lines. The double authorship of the poem and the relationship between its two parts is a much debated issue in *Rose* scholarship, but its investigation is beyond the scope of this study, which will focus only on Guillaume de Lorris’ part, where the dreamer’s main initiation ritual takes place.<sup>4</sup>

The two aforementioned works are contemporary, both being initially composed in the thirteenth century, whereas *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, as a work of the Italian renaissance, belongs to an entirely different context in terms of form, format and transmission. It is an early printed book (*incunabulum*) – for which there are no extant authorial manuscripts – published in 1499 by Aldus Manutius in Venice.<sup>5</sup> It is considered one of the most accomplished illustrated printed books of the Italian Renaissance, often characterized as proto-emblematic as it is one of the earliest examples in which “images play an intrinsic role in the creation of meaning” (Grove 9), traditionally being considered as one of Andrea Alciato’s sources for developing the idea of the *emblem* (Russell 113). *Hypnerotomachia*’s anonymous author has intentionally decided to puzzle his readers concealing his identity with acrostic devices;<sup>6</sup> the name revealed by these acrostics is Francesco Colonna, whose actual historical identity remains an issue for debate.<sup>7</sup> The most widely accepted theory credits the work to Francesco Colonna, a friar from the Veneto area belonging to the Dominican monastery of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, who lived between 1433 and 1527 (Casella e Pozzi; Pozzi e Ciapponi). His case is supported by certain historical documents concerning his life, which fit the dates associated with the composition and publication of the book and with its provenance (Fortini Brown 287–90; Menegazzo, “Per la biografia” e “Francesco Colonna baccelliere”), as well as by the annotations related to Venetian Dominican circles in two

copies of the 1499 edition, which suggest a close proximity between these circles and the author of the *Hypnerotomachia* (J. C. Russell 204–28).

*Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* is a prose romance, which, as the title suggests, concerns the love-quest of Poliphilo which takes place in the dream realm. Poliphilo embarks on an oneiric journey, traversing several natural and artificial landscapes containing gardens, ancient ruins, extraordinary buildings, imaginary creatures and allegorical characters in order to be reunited with his beloved Polia, who in his waking life is dead, as revealed by the epitaph at the end of the book. The story is divided into two parts (*Libri*): Book I concerns Poliphilo's dream journey until his union with Polia at the Cytherean Island, while Book II contains Polia's story as an encased narrative within Poliphilo's dream narrative, in which Polia undergoes her own initiation – where dreams, as shorter encased narratives, play a crucial role.

The choice of these three texts was guided by the following considerations: a) their lengthy dream narratives in which a first-person narrator is initiated in the art of love, b) their common internal characteristics that indicate an initiation process, and c) their distinctly different historical and socio-cultural contexts, which makes their comparative study all the more intriguing. In order to conduct this comparative study, I will follow an interdisciplinary approach that is based on three basic parameters: ritual theory, narrative analysis and contextual analysis. Specifically, initiation and instruction will be considered in terms of the 'rite of passage' theory as developed by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner. Moreover, my methodological approach will be a close reading of the texts focusing on their internal narrative features – structure, language, reception of earlier works – while taking into consideration their respective literary and socio-cultural contexts, in an attempt to trace both their common traditions and their cultural differences.

## 1 Instruction in Rite of Passage Theory

In 1909, Arnold van Gennep published a study in French, in which, assembling material from a number of cultures and historical periods, he discussed “ceremonial patterns which accompany a passage from one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another” (van Gennep 10). To define these processes van Gennep

used the term *rites de passage*. His rite of passage theory became particularly influential in the 1960s, when studies on initiation rituals were also becoming a popular topic, especially for anthropologists, psychoanalysts and historians of religion. Van Gennep's theory was later re-evaluated and extended under the term *transformation ritual* by the English anthropologist Victor Turner. Van Gennep's main observation is that the pattern for the rites of passage follows a tripartite processual scheme with three successive but separate stages (van Gennep 10–11): rites of separation (*séparation*), rites of transition (*marge*), and rites of incorporation (*agrégation*). These three stages correspond respectively to the detachment of an individual or group from a previous social setting or cultural condition, an intervening transitional period, and the consummation of the passage. A significant aspect of the rites of passage that should be highlighted here is the role of intermediaries who, acting as facilitators, enable the ritual passage “without violent social disruptions or an abrupt cessation of individual and collective life” (van Gennep 48). Thus, in the case of an initiation process, the role of the intermediary would be taken up by an instructor, who would facilitate the neophyte's gradual advancement through the stages of his initiation.

Recognizing the importance of the transitional phase of the tripartite pattern, that is, the rites of transition, and having associated them with “the territorial passage” through doors, portals, thresholds and frontiers, van Gennep proposed three other terms referring to the aforementioned stages, namely *preliminal*, *liminal* (or threshold), and *postliminal* rites (van Gennep 20–21). The word *liminal* derives from the Latin word *LĪMEN*, meaning ‘threshold, lintel;’ to be *in limine* is to be betwixt and between. It points to that moment when an individual is in the process of crossing a boundary, imaginary or actual, and uniting oneself with a new world or obtaining a new state. *Liminality*, that experience of the liminal stage when the individual is in transition from one state to another, and its processual component became the focal point of Victor Turner's redevelopment of the rite of passage theory.

Liminality, for Turner, is an “interstructural situation,” a medium between states; *state* is the term he uses to describe “a relatively fixed or stable condition” and it can refer to social status, ecological conditions, or to the physical, mental or emotional condition of an individual or group. Liminality is also essentially “a process, a becoming, and in the case of *rites de passage* even a transformation” (Turner, “Betwixt” 94). In defining liminality, Turner also investigated the at-

tributes of the liminal realm and of the liminal persona, the communication of *sacra*, as well as the relationships between liminal personae. Liminality has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming states and it is frequently likened to death, to invisibility or to being in the womb. Accordingly, the liminal persona is “structurally invisible” as it is “no longer classified and not yet classified,” it is “neither this nor that, and yet is both” – it is contingent and paradoxical; a *tabula rasa* “on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group, in those respects that pertain to the new status” (Turner, “Betwixt” 96 and *Ritual Process* 103). This ambiguity is also expressed in the set of symbols that represent the liminal persona, externalizing its internal attributes: for example, “logically antithetical processes of death and growth may be represented by the same tokens” (Turner, “Betwixt” 99).

The concept of liminality along with its inherent qualities is not only useful for understanding the ritual processes in the three texts, but also provides a framework for contextualizing the paradoxes expressed therein relating to the experience of love, the ambiguous identity of the characters, and the design of the dream narratives.

Love, or rather erotic desire, is intrinsically liminal, as it occupies the in-between distance between lovers, serving as a bridge connecting and, at the same time, separating individuals. Anne Carson, in her exploration of *eros* in classical literature, views desire as a “three-point circuit:” the desirer (who is present / actual / known) lacks the desired (what is lacking / possible / unknown) and this lack urges the desirer to pursue the desired (Carson 16, 169); therefore, erotic desire is lack.<sup>8</sup> In the three texts under discussion, erotic desire is the focal point of the initiation process, since the in-between distance between desirer and desired coincides with the liminal stage of the process, especially in the cases of the male protagonists; as long as the lover lacks the erotic Other, he remains *in limine* – for example, Livistros lingers outside Silvercastle, Rodamne’s space, until their marriage, Amant is left lingering outside the rose-garden unable to access his heart’s desire, and Poliphilo in Book II is supposedly dead, lingering in the heavenly realm until the conversion of Polia to the religion of love. Poliphilo’s example demonstrates a further level of the liminality of love, namely, its close association with death. It is no coincidence that, traditionally, the god of love shoots his victims with his arrows, delivering fatal wounds that metaphorically express the process of falling in love, as in the cases of Amant, Rodamne and Polia. Moreover, the intense emotional experience of love and, espe-

8. Carson refers to this process as ‘triangulation’ and describes it as follows (Carson 16–17): “There are three points of transformation on a circuit of possible relationship, electrified by desire so that they touch not touching. Conjoined they are held apart. The third component plays a paradoxical role for it both connects and separates, marking that two are not one, irradiating the absence whose presence is demanded by eros. When the circuit-points connect, perception leaps. And something becomes visible, on the triangular path where volts are moving, that would not be visible without the three-part structure. The difference between what is and what could be is visible.”

9. Arnold van Gennep draws a connection between the stages of separation and incorporation with the notions of death and resurrection in this way, placing the transitional phase between life and death. He asserts that: "Death, the transition, and resurrection also constitute an element in ceremonies of pregnancy, childbirth, initiation into associations with no agricultural purpose, betrothal, marriage, funerals." Margaret Alexiou in her seminal work has also shown parallels between death and marriage imagery in the Greek ritual laments (*Ritual Lament* 120).

10. Even though the term liminality is relatively recent, the perception of the dream as a threshold and a middle realm or middle state goes as far back as Homer. For an overview of the literary tradition on dreams from the point of view of liminality, see Priki, "Dream Narratives" 25–56.

11. Kathryn L. Lynch (*High Medieval Dream Vision* 46–52) has also suggested that dreams and visions in medieval literature can be examined as liminal phenomena, but discusses the connection not so much as a narrative strategy, but mainly in terms of meaning, where in a visionary's initiatory experience the vision itself is the liminal state, separating the individual from his social context and constitutes a type of spiritual pilgrimage that aims to redefine and transform the visionary.

12. The text/image interaction is particularly relevant in the *Hypnerotomachia*, whose 172 woodcuts have a close relationship with the text and are integral to the meaning-making processes that are at work in the book. For the text/image interaction in the 1499 edition of the book as opposed to its French editions, see Priki, "Crossing." For the implications of this interaction for the dream narrative, as well as for analogous strategies in the miniatures associated with the *Roman de la Rose*, see Priki, "Dream narratives" 70–71, 77, 93–94.

13. For a full-length analysis of the spatial aesthetics of the three texts and related bibliography, see Priki, "Dream Narratives" 115–228.

cially, of unrequited desire is often represented as destructive with devastating psychological or pathological effects. The interconnections between love, liminality and death are also evident in ritual theory and, especially, in marital and funeral rites.<sup>9</sup>

Dreams could also be defined as liminal states or liminal experiences, as they are generated in between wakefulness and sleep, consciousness and unconsciousness, transcending the boundaries of reality and constantly mutating. The association of liminality and death is also relevant here, in the sense that sleep may be considered as a form of 'little death,' a common notion in many cultures, while dreams can be seen as an indirect route for communication with the divine or the souls of the dead – an idea evident in medieval perceptions of dreaming as well.<sup>10</sup> By considering dreams as liminal, we can endow them with the qualities of that middle state, while the entire process of sleeping – dreaming – waking can be parallelized with the tripartite structure of the rites of passage, that is, the stages of separation – transition – reincorporation. In the cases of literary dreams, such as the ones found in the three texts, this parallelism may be extended to considerations of the narrative structure of a text, in which the dream, almost invariably, is introduced as an encased narrative.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, liminality may be a characteristic not only pertaining to the structure but also to the content and language of a dream narrative, as well as to the relationship between text and image, wherever this is applicable.<sup>12</sup>

Considering a dream narrative in light of rite of passage theory and of the concept of liminality can also provide us with new insights on its meaning and purpose in a story. Specifically, such an approach allows us to explore the extent to which a dream narrative is used as a vehicle through which a character, the dreamer, undergoes a rite of passage in the form of an inner transformative experience. Due to their liminality, in the three texts, dreams constitute the medium for communication with the god(s) of love and with the inaccessible erotic other, while providing the setting for the initiation rituals. Space constitutes an integral component of these dream narratives with its various transformations signaling the stages of the initiation process toward spiritual and erotic fulfillment. Effectively, dream spaces are designed to be fluid and mutable, their *ekphrastic* descriptions expressing the subjective experience of an ever-changing and ever-expanding liminal space, which is ambiguous and paradoxical.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, instruction in love is closely connected with the dream narratives, since it either precedes them, preparing the



14. Turner uses a great variety of terms to refer to individuals participating in a rite of passage, e.g. 'liminal persona,' 'passenger,' 'liminary,' 'neophyte,' 'initiate,' 'initiand' (the last three are used in relation to initiation rites). For the characterization of those characters who undergo an initiation process in the three texts under examination, I will be using the term 'neophyte.'

neophytes<sup>14</sup> for this transformative dream experience, or it is enclosed by them, serving as a guiding force moving the initiation ritual, and the narrative, forward.

In initiation rites, as discussed by Turner, the liminal persona or neophyte may have an instructor as well as fellow neophytes. The relationship between these individuals is of particular importance to this paper, since in the texts under consideration, the instruction of lovers is based on the relationship dynamics between a neophyte and his or her instructor(s). In discussing instruction in initiation rites, Victor Turner points out that there exists a specific and simple "social structure" between its participants: the relationship between instructors and neophytes is authoritarian, characterized by the complete authority of the instructor and the complete submission of the neophyte, while between neophytes the relationship is often egalitarian ("Betwixt" 99). The latter condition points to Turner's concept of *communitas*, a sense of "intense comradeship and egalitarianism" that is often experienced among neophytes, and that occurs spontaneously, concretely and affectively as the result of a shared condition, e.g. humiliation or suffering, which takes place during the liminal stage (*Ritual Process* 95–97, 226–27).

In the texts examined in this paper, instruction constitutes a necessary component of the initiation process and it may take many forms. It can be conveyed via speeches, spatial exploration, spectacles (e.g. triumphs), or via participation in communal events (e.g. dance, feast, games). It can be achieved through the agency of an intermediary, taking up the role of the instructor, as well as through the neophyte's own initiative to observe and contemplate on the visual and verbal stimuli presented to him during his or her initiation. Taking into consideration Turner's "social structures" in initiation rites, it is worthwhile to examine whether such structures can be discerned in the relationship between neophytes and their instructors in the cases discussed here. All of the characters taking up the role of the instructor in the three texts are authorities in the sense that they are knowledgeable in the subject matter that they are teaching, although they are not necessarily socially superior to the neophytes. In addition, they exert considerable influence on the neophyte's decisions, with two exceptions: Raison in the *Roman de la Rose* and Logistica in the *Hypnerotomachia*, both of whom present the neophytes with an alternative path of life, away from the influence of the god of love. Based on these ascertainties, the texts present us with three variations on the relationship between instructor and neophyte: a) au-

thoritarian, where the neophyte is either socially inferior to the instructor or deprived of his or her freedom by the instructor (Cupid Guard and Livistros, Amour and Amant, Cupid and Polia); b) authoritarian by convention, where the neophyte is socially superior or equal to the instructor and where the instruction is the result of a mutual agreement or of circumstance (Relative and Livistros, Vetanos and Rodamne, Ami and Amant, Five Senses and Poliphilo, Logistica, Thelemia and Poliphilo, Polia and Poliphilo, Polia and Nurse); c) subverted authoritarian, where the instructor unsuccessfully attempts to impose his or her authority on the neophyte (Raison and Amant).

Below, I will examine examples from the first two variations, where the instruction is markedly influential in determining the outcome of the story, contributing to the neophyte's conversion into a lover. In particular, I will discuss the following instructive speeches: Relative to Livistros (*L&R* 147–98), Cupid Guard to Livistros (*L&R* 232–84) and Vetanos to Rodamne (*L&R* 1537–55, 1606–16, 1784–93) in the *Tale of Livistros and Rodamne*; Amour to Amant (*RR* 2041–762) in the *Roman de la Rose*;<sup>15</sup> and Nurse to Polia (402–12 [B6v–C3v]) in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*.<sup>16</sup> The reason for excluding Poliphilo's instruction from this study is simply the fact that it does not entail an instructive speech by a particular instructor, but rather stems from his personal observations and interpretation of his spatial surroundings and of the events that he witnesses. Poliphilo's instructors, such as the Five Senses, Thelemia, and Polia, function mainly as guides, providing practical instructions for his participation in particular rituals and directing him to the places and objects that he is called to understand for himself.

15. The text will be quoted from Strubel's edition, hereafter abbreviated *RR*; numbers refer to lines of the poem, not pages.

16. Though the text of the *Hypnerotomachia* will be quoted from the critical edition (Pozzi e Ciapponi), I will also include pagination references in accordance with the 1499 edition in square brackets. As the Aldine edition was not paginated, these pages are referred to by signature (A–Y) and folio number (1r–8v); thus, A1r, A2r, A3r, A4r correspond to pages 1, 3, 5, 7 and so on.

## 2 The Role of the Instructor

According to van Gennepe, intermediaries in a rite of passage act as facilitators: “they are intended not only to neutralize an impurity or to attract sorcery to themselves but to serve as actual bridges, chains, or links – in short, to facilitate the changing of condition without violent social disruptions or an abrupt cessation of individual and collective life” (48). In the three texts, it is the secondary characters that function, on the ritual level, as the intermediaries of the initiation and courting processes. Their capacity to facilitate the neophytes'

progress and the couples' relationships determines the protagonists' character development and, to an extent, the progression of the narrative.

The instructors discussed in this paper are secondary characters who, as advocates of love, offer instruction to the neophytes in the form of speeches, ritual performances or even in the form of threats. In the cases of Livistros, Rodamne and Polia, whose initiations partly take place outside their dreams, the role of the instructor in the actual world is taken up by a familiar person in their close social or familial environment: the Relative, Vetanos and the Nurse respectively. These three secondary characters become counsellors and supporters of love, offering instructive speeches to the neophytes, which include practical advice for the advancement of the couples' relationships.

Livistros' Relative and Polia's Nurse are anonymous and are defined solely by their relationship with the neophyte. Based on his knowledge in matters of love, we could infer that the Relative is older than Livistros. We could also infer by his association with the young Latin king who eventually appoints him as the substitute ruler of Livandros that the Relative has a high social and political status. However, this is the extent of information about this character that can be extracted from the romance. The same vagueness characterizes many secondary characters, including the Nurse and Vetanos, whose defining characteristic is their gender identity – an old woman and a eunuch – which is a deliberate choice to justify these characters' proximity to the two female protagonists, devoid of any sexual tension.

The presence of a eunuch in Silvercastle along with a variety of other elements, e.g. the title of Emperor Chrysos (βασιλεύς) and Livistros' acclamation as co-emperor, enhances the Byzantine character of Rodamne's Latin kingdom.<sup>17</sup> In Byzantine society, eunuchs were important figures of the court, usually acting as liaisons between the imperial court and outsiders and being charged with high profile bureaucratic duties. Due to their particular condition, they were considered to be loyal and competent servants, while they were often perceived as guardians of women and children, serving as advisors, tutors and companions (Ringrose, "Eunuchs" 264–66). In *Livistros and Rodamne*, Vetanos' presentation adheres to this perception of eunuchs: "the young eunuch was the maiden's confidant | in counsels, in secrets and in her private conversations" (*L&R* 1263–64

17. On 'foreign' and 'native' ideological markers in Livistros and Rodamne, especially in regards to the presence of the eunuch, see Agapitos, "Poetics of Exoticism." I would like to thank Prof. Agapitos for providing me with a copy of his paper prior to publication. Whereas there are several studies on eunuchs in Byzantine society (e.g. Tougher, *The Eunuch* and "Cherchez l'Homme;" Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant*), there are only a few studies discussing the presence and function of eunuchs in Byzantine literature. An important contribution to the study of the literary representation of eunuchs is a recent monograph by Charis Messis, wherein he also briefly discusses the portrayal of eunuchs in Byzantine romances, including the *Tale of Livistros and Rodamne* (Messis 229–34). Though Messis also points out the mediatorial function of Vetanos in the relationship of the couple, I remain unconvinced as to his suggestion that the positive representation of this eunuch in Livistros, as opposed to negative representations of eunuchs in other novels and romances (for example, Constantine Manasses' *Aristander and Kallithea*, and *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*) should be attributed to Western influences on this particular romance.

καὶ ἐκεῖνον τὸ εὐνουχόπουλον ἦτον οἰκεῖον τῆς κόρης | εἰς λόγους, εἰς μυστήρια καὶ εἰς κρυφιοσυμβουλὰς τῆς).

Apart from being an instructor to Rodamne, Vetanos assumes two further roles in his relationship with Livistros: he is a mediator facilitating the relationship of the couple and also an informer, providing helpful information to Livistros about Rodamne's reactions to his love letters. We could say that Vetanos is a liminal character, able to break away from the boundaries of the castle through his communication with Livistros and the latter's friend, functioning as a liaison in the relationship of the couple. Livistros' remark about Vetanos, which he addresses to his audience, that is, Klitovon and, in extent, us, relating to his meeting with the eunuch to arrange a secret meeting with Rodamne, demonstrates the inclination and competence of eunuchs in dealing with amorous affairs: "for all the race of eunuchs loves flattery, especially if involved in an amorous affair" (*L&R* 2233–34 γένος γὰρ πᾶν εὐνουχικὸν φιλεῖ τὴν κολακείαν | καὶ μᾶλλον ἂν εἰς ἔρωτος ὑπόθεσιν ἐμπλέξῃ).

Regarding the Nurse (*la sagace nutrice*), she is the only family that Polia has left after the plague, when everyone else deserted her due to her sickness. Because of her loyalty, Polia has a high opinion of her nurse and values her advice (382 [A4v] "si non dalla mia pietosa et optima Altrice,"<sup>18</sup> "except by my kindest and best Nurse"), considering her as a parent (399 [B5r] "la cara et reverita (in loco di parente) la Nutrice mia, nella quale deposita riposava, et collocato havea ogni mia fiducia et sperancia," "a dear and venerated person, taking the place of parent, my nurse, in whom I laid deposited and had placed my every confidence and trust"). The Nurse also proves to be insightful, knowledgeable in matters of love (403 [B7r] "la sagace et versuta Nutrice," "my wise and well-versed Nurse") and, thus, able to counsel Polia.<sup>19</sup>

Livistros and Polia also receive instruction within their dreams. Apart from the instructive qualities of the Court of Amorous Dominion as a space, Livistros benefits from the instructive speech of one of the Cupid Guards, who functions both as an instructor and as a guide. The cupid admonishes Livistros to abandon his defiant ways and to submit to Eros, repeating some of the arguments and examples that the Relative uses earlier and providing practical advice for his initiation and his conduct in the court. His instruction is more effective than that of the Relative due to the particular circumstances of the encounter: the cupid happens to be one of Livistros' captors threatening the dreamer's physical integrity should he decide

18. *Altrice* is an archaic word meaning nurse, deriving from the Latin verb *ĀLĒRE* (= to nourish) from which the noun *ALTRIX*, -ICIS. It is used interchangeably with the word *Nutrice*.

19. The English translations of the *Hypnerotomachia* are by Ian White. I would like to thank Mr. Ian White for providing me with a copy of his unpublished translation.

not to obey them. Therefore, instruction (*L&R* 243 *νουθετήματα*) is mixed with threats (*L&R* 242 *ἀπειλάς, φοβερισμούς*).

A similar strategy of instruction through coercion is employed by Cupid in the case of Polia. Appearing as an executioner in her first vision, Cupid is perceived negatively, intimidating Polia with his actions towards two other rebellious women, while, in her ensuing nightmare, she is terrorized by two executioners, who threaten to harm her. These terrifying dream experiences alert Polia to the overwhelming power of love, indirectly instructing her to change her rebellious behavior. Even though these characters, Cupid and the executioners, like the Cupid Guard in Livistros' dream, are promoters of love, having an instructive function, their appearance and behavior cause the neophytes to view them as adversaries. In other words, appearances can be deceiving. To reconcile this contradiction between what seems and what is, I would argue that these characters constitute a kind of inverted instructors, appearing as adversaries when in reality their interventions are beneficial to the neophytes.

In the case of Amant in Guillaume's *Roman de la Rose*, there are three different characters that offer him advice and instruction: two of them are promoters of love (Amour and Ami), while the other, Raison, offers him an alternative life path and, in doing so, she could be considered as an adversary to Amour and an obstructor to Amant's initiation. Since Ami's instruction in Guillaume's *Rose* is solely focused on ways to deal with Dangiers, one of Amant's adversaries, his intervention will not be considered in this paper.

Amour, the god of love, is initially introduced as one of the courtly inhabitants of the garden of Deduit (Pleasure), participating in the latter's carol. Being clothed in an indescribable robe decorated with every imaginable flower of every possible colour, as well as with patterns of birds and beasts, Amour seems to be enclosing the garden in his person while, at the same time, being enclosed by it. In a way, he is equated with the garden providing a concentrated version of it (Huot 17). From this point of view, the narrator's proclamation in his prologue, regarding his poetic work, creates a parallel between the relationship of the poem with its readers and the relationship of the dreamer with the garden (*RR* 37–38):

Ce est li romanz de la rose,  
Ou l'art d'amours est toute enclose.

(It is the romance of the rose,  
In which the whole art of love is enclosed.)

The entire romance as a work of fiction containing the art of love is presented as an enclosure that the readers are penetrating by the act of reading in the same way that the dreamer is penetrating the enclosed garden that contains – and is also equal to – the god of love, who will instruct the dreamer in the art of love. Therefore, the garden appears as a symbol of fiction and the readers are put into the dreamer's position, as fellow neophytes, becoming the indirect recipients of Amour's instruction.

Amour's instructive speech takes place after the dreamer's submission to him. It mainly aims to teach Amant the art of courting. Amour provides him with a set of commandments, a penance, as well as with practical advice for the pursuit of the erotic other. Moreover, he prepares Amant for the sorrow that he is to endure because of his newfound feelings by describing the various stages of being in love. Performing his role as an initiator and an instructor, Amour then vanishes, never to appear again in Guillaume's *Rose*, leaving Amant to pursue his object of desire alone.

A crucial point to be made regarding these secondary characters concerns their liminality, not only their functional liminality in their role as intermediaries in the initiation processes, but also their intrinsic liminality stemming from their physical attributes, their social status or the spaces that they inhabit. The Relative and the Nurse are characterized by a fluid identity, being without a name or a background story. Moreover, the Nurse, given her old age, is closer to the threshold of death than life, an element that, interestingly, lends her greater wisdom. Vetanos, Rodamne's eunuch advisor, is characterized by an ambiguous gender identity, being on the threshold between the masculine and the feminine, an attribute that fits well with his role as a 'bridge' between Livistros and Rodamne. Finally, the winged Cupid Guard in Livistros' dream, the winged Cupid in Polia's dream and Amour in the *Roman de la Rose* embody liminality by their paradoxical appearance and by existing solely within the confines of the imagination, inhabiting the liminal realms of the dreams. The Cupid Guard and Amour, in addition, can be seen as agents of spatial liminality, since they are responsible for facilitating Livistros' and Amant's passage through important thresholds – the Gate of Love and the Fountain of Narcissus respectively.<sup>20</sup>

20. For the liminality of the Fountain of Narcissus and its function as a threshold, see Priki, "Dream Narratives" 166–75.

### 3 Amorous Instruction

Having introduced the texts, the theme of initiation and instruction, and the main characters involved in this process – the neophytes and their instructors – let us now turn to the instructive speeches that constitute the focus of this paper. In the *Tale of Livistros and Rodamne*, Livistros benefits from two instructive speeches, one requested and one imposed, while the completion of his initiation is signalled by the instruction that he himself offers to his companion Klitovon, when he explains the mystery of the Threefaced Eros (*L&R* 915–41).

Prior to his initiation, Livistros spends his days as a carefree loveless young king. During a hunt, he shoots and kills a turtledove. Consequently, its mate, not bearing this loss, falls to its death. Having witnessed this puzzling incident, this “terrible mystery” (*L&R* 142 μυστήριον φοβερόν), Livistros is compelled by curiosity to learn more about the cause of the bird’s suicide and, thus, asks his Relative to elucidate him on the matter (*L&R* 149 ἔναν μου ἐρώτουν συγγενήν “I asked a relative of mine”). Consequently, he places himself in the authority of his willing instructor, who “always looked for the occasion to talk to me about the sorrows of love” (*L&R* 150–51 ἐψηλάφα | πάντα ἀφορμὴ τοῦ νὰ μὲ εἰπῆ τοῦ ἔρωτος τὰς ὁδύνας). The Relative’s first word of response to the young king is μάθε (know), revealing the instructive intent of his subsequent speech.

The Relative’s instruction is preceded by three actions: a) a disclaimer, that is, a statement made by the instructor to prevent any future misunderstanding by clarifying the expected outcome of his instruction, which is Livistros’ relinquishment of his former carefree state and his enslavement by Eros; b) an act of proximity – Livistros taking his relative to his side (*L&R* 158 Καὶ παρευθὺς εἰς τὸ πλευρὸν τὸν συγγενή μου ἐπῆρα “Immediately I took my Relative to my side”); and c) an inquiry – Livistros asks about the turtledove and about the Amorous Tyranny. The Relative’s speech is introduced in the rubrics that ascribe to this character his role as an instructor and to Livistros the role of a student. Apart from μανθάνω (“to know, to learn”), the other verbs used to denote the act of instruction are διδάσκω (“to teach, to instruct”) and ἀναδιδάσκω (“to instruct carefully”). Moreover, in his speech, the Relative appeals to Livistros’ sense of sight, asking him to observe the world around him: βλέπεις (“see”), ἰδὲς (“look”), θαύμασε (“wonder”), ξένισε (“marvel”).<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, the same verbs are also used to describe Livistros’ interaction with the

21. These verbs appear in the following lines: μανθάνω – μάθη (152), μάθε (154), μανθάνει (164); διδάσκω – διδάξω (155), ἐδιδάξεν (192); ἀναδιδάσκω – ἀναδιδάξει (161), ἀναδιδάξω (186); βλέπεις (166); ἰδὲς (174); θαύμασε (174, 177, 179); ξένισε (182).

wondrous spaces in his first dream, a mainly visual experience with instructive value.

The beginning of the Relative's instructive speech (*L&R* 166 “Βλέπεις το τοῦτο τὸ πουλὶν,” λέγει με, “τὸ τρυγόνιν;” “he told me: ‘Do you see this bird called turtledove?’”) along with the act of proximity mentioned above indicate that the instruction is taking place during the hunt, at the place where the turtledove incident happened, in a natural landscape. It is perhaps not irrelevant that all of the examples mentioned in the speech concern the laws of amorous attraction in nature. Specifically, the Relative uses five examples to describe the feeling of love as experienced by natural objects and animals. The first two describe the sadness of losing a loved one: turtledoves cannot endure the pain of losing their mate and male palm-trees cannot bear fruit without their female counterparts. The other three exemplify the power of erotic desire: the magnet-stone is attracted to iron, the moray is willing to rise from the depths of the sea in order to mate with the snake, and the river Alpheius is willing to cross a vast sea in order to unite with a lake in Sicily. The use of these particular examples – four concerning paradoxes in nature and one derived from mythology – link this passage to analogous catalogues of *exempla* in the novels of the twelfth century, such as Niketas Eugenianos' *Drosilla and Charikles* and Constantine Manasses' *Aristander and Kallithea* and, by extension, to the ancient novel of Achilleas Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* (Agapitos, “Ἡ χρονολογικὴ ἀκολουθία” 107; *L&R* Lendari 276–78).

Through these examples, the Relative wants to demonstrate that such is the power of love that it affects everyone, even those who are “more senseless than a rock” (*L&R* 198 ἀναισθητότερος [...] παρὰ λίθον). Interestingly, the analogy of Livistros with a rock resembles that of Rodamne with a stone in one of Livistros' love letters to her, while the attraction between the magnet-stone and iron used here as an example of love in nature is repeated again in Rodamne's response to Livistros, after receiving his ring, in analogy to her attraction to him (*L&R* 177–78 [Relative's example] and 1992–93 [Rodamne's letter]):

Ἄφες αὐτὸ καὶ θαύμασε τὸν λίθον τὸν μαγνήτην,  
πῶς ἔλκει ἀπὸ τοῦ πόθου τοῦ τὴν φύσιν τοῦ σιδήρου.



(Put the tree aside and wonder at the magnet-stone,  
how by its desire it draws near the very nature of iron.)

Εἴλκυσε τὴν καρδίαν μου τοῦ πόθου σου ὁ μαγνήτης  
ὡς ἔλκει ἀπὸ τὴν φύσιν του τὴν φύσιν τοῦ σιδήρου.

(The magnet of your desire drew my heart,  
as by its very nature it draws the nature of iron.)

The Relative's instruction produces the anticipated result: Livistros has opened himself to thoughts of love against his better judgment and is now in a position to receive further and more intensive instruction, which is what the dream achieves. In this first dream, Livistros initially finds himself riding in a beautiful and pleasant meadow, enjoying the natural landscape. While admiring nature, Livistros is interrupted by an incoming threat: a group of armed and winged cupid guards attack him as a rebel against the imperial authority of Eros, the sovereign ruler of the whole of nature. His instructor and guide within the dream is one of these Cupid Guards. Since their encounter results in Livistros' captivity, the instructive session that follows is imposed on him (*L&R* 235–37):

ἤλθεν ἐκεῖνος ἡμερα, κρατεῖ με ἀπὸ τὸ χέριν,  
δένει με ἀπὸ τὸν τράχηλον καὶ λέγει με: “Ἀκολούθει,  
καὶ ἄφες τὸ θράσος τὸ πολὺν, τίποτε οὐκ ὠφελεῖ σε.”

(approached me calmly, holds me by the hand,  
binds me around the neck and says: “Follow me  
and put aside all insolence for it will help you not.”)

Livistros' literal binding anticipates his metaphorical binding to the power of Eros through his oath at the end of the dream. Moreover, it places his instructor in a position of authority over him, something that is absent from the previous instructive session. Interestingly, whereas the Relative uses the appellation “Livistros, lord of my country and my land” (*L&R* 154 *τοπάρχα Λίβιστρε χώρας ἐμῆς καὶ τόπου*), establishing Livistros' higher social status, the Cupid Guard simply refers to him as ἄνθρωπε (“fellow”).

The Cupid Guard's instructive speech is given to the dreamer during their movement from the meadow towards the Court of Amorous Dominion and amid the threats uttered by the other Cupid Guards. The speech is again introduced with a rubric ascribing to the

cupid the role of the instructor. Apart from this particular speech, the Cupid Guard also offers advice, commands and explanations throughout Livistros' first dream (*L&R* 357–58, 391–95, 465–66, 502, 543–60). The act of instruction is designated with the noun *νουθετήματα* (“admonition”) and the verbs *νουθετῶ* (“to admonish”), *ποθοπαραγγέλω* (“to give amorous counsel”), *νὰ σὲ εἰπῶ* (“to tell you”), *παραγγέλω* (“to counsel, to order”), *ἐρμηνεύω* (“to interpret, to explain”), as well as with a series of commands using imperatives: *ἀκολούθει* (“follow”), *ἄφες* (“leave”), *συγκλίθησε* (“yield”), *ρίξε* (“cast away”), *κλίνε* (“bow”), *ἔμπα* (“enter”), *δέθησε* (“bind”), *πρόσπεσε* (“fall at the feet”), *ιδέ* (“look up”), *ἄκουσέ μου* (“listen to me”), *πρόσεξε* (“look carefully”), *πρόσεχε* (“take heed”), *ἀνάγνωσε* (“read”), *ἔλα* (“come”).<sup>22</sup>

22. These verbs appear in the following lines: *νουθετήματα* (243); *νουθετεῖ*, *ποθοπαραγγέλει* (245); *νὰ σὲ εἰπῶ* (246), *ἂν σὲ εἰπῶ* (263); *παραγγέλω* (273); *ἐρμηνεύσαν* (543); *ἀκολούθει* (236); *ἄφες* (237); *συγκλίθησε* (256); *ρίξε*, *κλίνε* (256); *ἔμπα*, *δέθησε* (258); *πρόσπεσε* (259); *ιδέ* (259, 266); *ἄκουσέ μου* (273); *πρόσεξε* (279); *ἀνάγνωσε* (281); *πρόσεχε* (357); *ἔλα* (470).

Regarding the content of the cupid's instructive speech, he begins by repeating essentially the Relative's main argument, namely, the impossibility of escaping love given the absolute power of Eros that dominates “all nature animate and all inanimate” (*L&R* 252 *πᾶσα φύσις ἄψυχος καὶ ἐμψυχωμένη πᾶσα*). A crucial difference, however, between the two arguments is that the Relative presents Livistros' acceptance of love as an eventuality using subjunctives (*L&R* 188–90 *πιστεύω [...] νὰ ἔλθῃς [...] νὰ νοήσης τὴν ἀγάπην, νὰ φοβηθῆς*), whereas the Cupid Guard presents it as an inevitable choice using imperatives (*L&R* 256–62):

Ἄρτι ἂν μὲ ἀκούης, *συγκλίθησε*, *ρίξε* τὸ ἀγέρωχόν σου,  
 τράχηλον *κλίνε* εἰς τὸν ζυγὸν τῆς ἐρωτοδουλείας,  
 ἔμπα εἰς τοῦ Πόθου τὸν δεσμόν, *δέθησε* εἰς τὴν Ἀγάπην,  
*πρόσπεσε* εἰς τὴν Ἀσχόλησιν, τὸν Κρεμασμόν *ιδέ* τον,  
 καὶ αὐτοὶ κἂν νὰ εἰποῦν τὸν Ἔρωτα, νὰ τὸν παρακαλέσουν,  
 καὶ ἀπὲ τὸ τόσον μανικὸν τὸ κατ' ἔσοῦ ἐκακώθην,  
 νὰ μεταπέση, νὰ ἀλλαγῇ καὶ νὰ σὲ συμπαθήσῃ.

(Even as you listen, yield now, cast away your haughtiness,  
 bow your neck to the yoke of Amorous Servitude,  
 step into the bond of Desire, bind yourself to Love,  
 fall at the feet of Concern, look up at Longing,  
 and they might say something to Eros, they might entreat him,  
 so that he might desist from all the wrath he has against you,  
 change his mind and show compassion towards you.)

Another difference is that, here, the abstract notions of desire, love, concern, and longing are treated as personifications, since the dreamer is admonished to form bonds with them, fall at their feet and look up to them, so that they intervene in his favor. The allegorical aspect of this passage takes on a more literal meaning, when Desire (Πόθος) and Love (Αγάπη) actually appear in the dream, at which point the Cupid Guard reminds Livistros to ask them to act as his guarantors, referring back to the above-quoted advice.

In his next argument, the Cupid Guard tries to persuade Livistros by praising his virtues, while questioning them at the same time, claiming that love is integral to one's sense of identity and that without the experience of love, Livistros will be reduced to nothing (*L&R* 269–72):

ὄσον καὶ ἂν εἶσαι ἐξαίρετος εἰς σύνθεσιν καὶ πλάσιν,  
 ἂν οὐκ ἐμπῆς εἰς τὸν ζυγὸν τοῦ πόθου νὰ πονέσης,  
 νὰ παιδευθῆς τὰ ἐρωτικά καὶ μάθῃς τα ὡς ἀρμόζει,  
 εἶσαι οὐδετίποτε, ἀπὸ ἐμὲν πληροφοροῦθήσέ το.

(As much as you are exceptional as to your bodily beauty and features,  
 if you do not step under the yoke of desire in order to feel  
 pain,  
 to be educated in the matter of love and learn it as befits you,  
 you are just a nothing – know it from me!)

Finally, the Cupid Guard concludes his instructive speech with technical instructions relating to Livistros' proper ritual conduct in his audience with Eros and to his impending crossing of the Gate of Love, emphasizing the importance of that threshold. The instructions concerning the encounter with Eros, a set of gestures and utterances that Livistros has to perform, point to a later moment in the same dream, to the ritual that takes place at the Amorous Tribunal. According to the Cupid Guard, Livistros must demonstrate his humility and prostrate himself in front of the Emperor Eros asking for mercy (*L&R* 274–78):

ἄρτι ἂν ὑπάγῃς εἰς Ἔρωταν καὶ θέλῃς προσκυνῆσαι,  
 ἔμπα κλιτὸς τὸν τράχηλον καὶ χαμηλὸς τὸ σχῆμα,  
 ποῖσε δεινὸν τὸ βλέφαρον ὡσαν φοβερισμένος,  
 δέσε τὰ χέρια σου σφικτὰ καὶ πέσε εἰς γῆν ὀμπρὸς του  
 καὶ ἀπὸ καρδίας σου στρίγγισε καὶ παρεκάλεσέ τον.

(if you go now to Eros wishing to pay obeisance to him,  
enter with a bowed neck and a humble composure,  
make your gaze look frightened as if intimidated,  
clasp your hands tightly and fall on the ground before him,  
cry out from the depths of your heart and beg for mercy.)

23. For an overview of the ritual of petition in Byzantium with all relevant bibliography, see Panagiotides.

24. Interestingly, this is the only scene from this romance which has been visualized in an illustration found in an early sixteenth-century manuscript transmitting the text (Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Scaligeranus 55, f. 62r).

25. For a detailed narrative analysis of the letter-exchange sequence, see Agapitos, “Η αφηγηματική σημασία.”

As Ruth Macrides has suggested, this kind of conduct is related to the ritual of petition in front of the Byzantine emperor and, in particular, it is a supplication for pardon, a type of petition that required more dramatic gestures (365).<sup>23</sup>

Turning now to Rodamne’s instruction in matters of love, it is combined with the attempts to persuade her to submit to Livistros. Her initiation begins with Eros’ visitation – concluded with him shooting an arrow into Rodamne’s heart (*L&R* 1424)<sup>24</sup> – and develops through the process of the letter exchange with Livistros, on the one hand, and with the help of Vetanos’ instruction and advice, on the other hand.<sup>25</sup> Eros’ command in her dream resembles the Cupid Guard’s instruction to Livistros (*L&R* 256–59), but instead of asking her to submit to him as the sovereign ruler of the Amorous Dominion, Eros asks her to submit to Livistros (*L&R* 1418–21):

καὶ ἀποτουνῶν παράλαβε τὸν πόθον τοῦ εἰς τὸν νοῦ σου,  
ἔπαρον τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ, δουλώθησε εἰς ἐκεῖνον  
καὶ σὸν τράχηλον ἄκλιτον κλίνε εἰς τὸν ἐρωτᾶν τοῦ,  
ρίψε το τὸ κενόδοξον, ἄφες τὸ ἠπηρμένον.

(as of now receive desire for him in your mind,  
accept his love, enslave yourself to him  
and bow your unbending neck to his passion.  
Cast away your haughtiness, leave aside your arrogance.)

The use of imperatives and the admonition to cast aside her arrogance and pride are characteristics not only of Eros’ speech, but also of Vetanos’ instruction and, at times, of Livistros’ letters. Having already communicated with Livistros via the Friend, one of Livistros’ companions, and being a member of Rodamne’s most intimate social circle, Vetanos is in a position to influence her in favor of Livistros. His first instructive speech is given in response to Rodamne’s angry reaction to Livistros’ first letters, though it is not designated as an act of instruction. Characterized by the rubric as courageous (*L&R* 1539 *μετὰ θάρρους*), the speech almost takes the form of a warning rather

than a counsel, as it is evident from the use of imperatives at the beginning of the first eight lines (*L&R* 1540–47):

Ἄφες τὸ νὰ θυμώνεσαι, φουδούλα οὐδὲν ἀρμόζει,  
 ἄφες τὸ νὰ εἶσαι μανικὴ κατὰ τοῦ πόθου τόσα,  
 ἄφες τὸ νὰ κακώνεσαι τοὺς ἐρωτοποθοῦντας·  
 φοβοῦ μὴ ἐμπλέξης εἰς δεσμὸν πολλακίς τῆς ἀγάπης,  
 βλέπε μὴ ἔμπης εἰς τὸν βυθὸν ἀπέσω τῆς ἀγάπης,  
 μὴ σὲ φλογίση πρόσεχε τοῦ πόθου τὸ καμίνιν,  
 βλέπε καλὰ μὴ ποντισθῆς εἰς θάλασσαν τοῦ πόθου,  
 πρόσεχε τὴν καρδίαν σου νὰ μὴ τὴν παραδείρη  
 κύμα τῆς ἀσχολήσεως καὶ ἡ βία του νὰ σὲ πνίξη.

(Avoid getting angry, it does not befit a noble lady;  
 avoid being so wrathful against desire,  
 avoid being resentful against those who fall in love.  
 Take heed not to entangle yourself completely in love’s knot,  
 watch out not to fall into the depths of love,  
 pay attention not to be scorched by desire’s furnace,  
 watch out well not to sink into the sea of desire,  
 pay attention that your heart will not be beaten  
 by the waves of concern because their force will drown you.)

Vetanos cautions Rodamne not to spurn those who fall in love, not only because it is not proper behavior for a lady, but also because she might also end up in their position. While he generally seems to promote love, Vetanos also advises moderation lest love overwhelm her. After this instructive speech, Rodamne is left alone to reflect upon Vetanos’ advice (*L&R* 1554–55 *Καὶ ἀφότου τὴν ἐσυνέτυχεν, ἀφήνει τὴν καὶ ἐβγαίνει, | τοὺς λόγους τοὺς ἐλάλησεν ὁ εὐνοῦχος νὰ φροντίζη* “Once the eunuch had spoken, he stepped out and departed, | leaving her to consider the words he had said”).

The second instructive speech comes after Rodamne has received another love letter to which she reacts with more empathy. Vetanos takes advantage of her positive disposition (*L&R* 1606 *ἤρπεν ἀφορμὴν* “seized the occasion”) and courageously (*L&R* 1607 *θαρρετά*) offers her instruction designated in the rubric with the noun *ἐρωτονουθητήματα* (“amorous counsel”). This composite noun connects Vetanos’ speech to the Cupid Guard’s instructive speech to Livistros in the oneiric Amorous Dominion. Regarding the reference to the eunuch’s courage in confronting Rodamne with counsels, I find that it creates a peculiar dynamic between instructor and neo-

phyte, where the latter is in a privileged position causing the former to have difficulty asserting his authority as an instructor. Vetanos' social position is very low in respect to Rodamne, who is a princess – Vetanos refers to her as “my sovereign mistress” (*L&R* 1613 δεσποτεία μου). The term θαρρετά (*L&R* 1607) and the phrase μετὰ θάρρους (*L&R* 1539) suggest, however, that Vetanos has the freedom to speak openly – it is the right of παρρησία towards a ruler.

Vetanos' second speech, though brief, has three main points. First, he advises Rodamne to have compassion for those who suffer from love, referring to some of the abstract concepts that the Cupid Guard used in his own speech (Κρεμασμός, Πόθος, Ἀγάπη). Second, he urges her to examine the letters more carefully, revealing that they are not intended for one of her servants, but for her. Third, he reminds Rodamne of her dream, asking her to examine it closely. In pointing out these things, Vetanos alerts her to the direct connection between the sender of the letters and her assigned lover.

The effectiveness of Vetanos' instruction is made clear when Rodamne complains to him that she has fallen in love and, consequently, suffers, because of his counsel (*L&R* 1780–84):

Πάντως τὴν βίαν σου βλέπεις τὴν τὸ τί μὲ κατασταίνει,  
καὶ εἰς ποῖον βυθὸν μὲ ἐσέβασαν οἱ λόγοι σου τοῦ πόθου,  
πόσον κρημνὸν μὲ ἐγκρέμισαν τὰ νοθετήματά σου,  
καὶ εἰς πόντον ποῖον μὲ ἔσυρες ἀπέσω τῆς ἀγάπης;

(You do indeed see your coercion to what state it leads me to,  
to what depth your discourses about love have pushed me,  
into what a precipice your admonitions hurled me,  
and into what a sea of love you have dragged me?)

In response, Vetanos offers her a short instructive speech, with which he urges her to reply to Livistros' letters, by an appeal to emotion (*L&R* 1789–90 γράψε καὶ σὺ ἀντιπίττακον καὶ παρηγορήθησέ τον, | πόνεσε τὰς κακώσεις του τὰς ἔπαθεν δι' ἐσένα “you also write a letter of response and comfort him, take pity of the toils he suffered for you”). Influenced by the eunuch's persuasive words, Rodamne contemplates on what to do. In the short monologue that follows, she seems to be persuading herself by repeating Vetanos' advice and Eros' command: “Bend down, my unbending soul, my haughty neck; bow to the bond of desire, for you are already distressed” (*L&R* 1796–97 Συγκλίθησε, ἄκλιτε ψυχὴ, τράχηλε ἀγέρωχέ μου, | κύψε εἰς τοῦ πόθου τὸν δεσμὸν, ἤδη στενοχωρεῖσαι). Shortly afterwards, she writes

her first letter to Livistros. From then on, Vetanos functions mostly as a mediating agent helping in the exchange of love letters, encouraging Rodamne to reciprocate Livistros' advances and to grant his requests, and finally arranging the couple's secret meeting, which concludes the courting process and anticipates their eventual union.

Moving on to the *Roman de la Rose*, instruction in the art of love ("l'art d'amours") is at the core of the romance, as the narrator proclaims in his prologue. The dreamer's instruction, however, does not really take place until after he is forced into submission by Amour, the god of love. Prior to their encounter at the fountain of Narcissus, the dreamer mostly learns about the qualities of courtly life by observing the carolers at the Garden of Dedit (Pleasure) and the garden's amenities. Though most of the allegorical personifications in Dedit's entourage are also associated with the experience of love, the dreamer is not subjected to a clearly designated instructive session intended for his own personal development as a lover, before the defining incident at the fountain.

Following his attack against the unsuspecting dreamer at the fountain of Narcissus, Amour assumes the role of an instructor, when Amant, proclaiming his ignorance, requests that the god teach him how to better serve him – in other words, he wants to learn how to be a lover (*RR* 2041–48):

Sire, fis je, por dieu merci,  
 Avant que voz movez de ci,  
 Voz commandementz m'enchargier:  
 Je sui dou faire encoragez,  
 Mes, espoir, se je nes savoie,  
 Tost porroie issir de la voie.  
 Por ce sui engrant de l'apprendre  
 Car je n'i veil de rien mesprendre

("Sir," I said, "by God's grace, give me your commandments before you depart from here. I am encouraged to perform them, but I would perhaps soon go astray if I did not know them. I am longing to learn them, for I have no wish to commit any kind of fault.") (*Horgan* 31–32)

In his response, Amour praises the dreamer's willingness and makes a general comment about the relationship between master and disciple and how the latter needs to be attentive in order for the instruction to be effective (*RR* 2051–54):

Li *mestres* pert sa poine toute  
 Quant li *disciples* qui escoute  
 Ne met son cuer au retenir,  
 Si qu'il en puisse sovenir.

(A master wastes his time completely when his disciple does not make an effort to retain what he hears, so that he can remember it.) (Horgan 32)

Following this response, the dream narrator briefly interrupts the flow of the dream narrative to address his readers/listeners, asking them to be attentive to the god's commandment (RR 2059 "Qui amer velt or i entende," "anyone who aspires to love should pay attention" [Horgan 32]), thus, placing them in the same position as Amant, while promising them an interpretation of the dream at the end of his narrative, a promise which is never fulfilled.<sup>26</sup> If indeed the ending of Guillaume's *Rose* is deliberately incomplete, then the unfulfilled promises that the dream narrator makes at this particular point might either be seen as an ironic subversion of Amour's commandments or, alternatively, as an indication that these commandments hold the key to the hidden truth ("verite covert") of the dream that only an attentive audience would be able to understand.

The ritual of submission – in the form of vassal homage – that precedes Amour's instructive speech establishes the authoritarian relationship between the god and the dreamer. Consequently, the instruction is given in a series of ten commandments ("commandementz") that the dreamer must obey to remain loyal to the god of love. In order to help him to do so, Amour also gives him a penance ("penitence"), practical advice and four allegorical gifts.<sup>27</sup>

The commandments are basically a list of practical advice on social behavior and of lifestyle guidelines, enriched with explanations and examples, and could be summarized as follows: 1) abandon Baseness ("Vilenie") as it is morally wrong; 2) avoid slander ("mesdire") – example provided: comparison between two Arthurian knights, the slanderous Kay and the courteous Gawain; 3) be courteous ("entres") and approachable ("acointables") – example provided: greeting habits; 4) do not use rude words ("orz moz") or coarse expressions ("vilenies"); 5) serve ("sers") and honor ("honore") all women; 6) avoid pride ("orgueil") as it is unbecoming of a true lover, but be elegant ("cointerie," "elegance") – explanation provided: advice on how to dress elegantly; 7) do now allow any dirt

26. On the unfulfilled desire for knowledge in the *Rose* in relation to this instructive session, see also Huot 13–15.

27. On the structure of Amour's instructive speech, see also Lejeune 334–37.



(“ordure”) upon your person – explanation provided: advice on bodily cleanliness; 8) always be blithe (“d’anvoisseüre maintenir”) and know how to entertain (“bel deduit faire”) in order to ease the pain of love; 9) be agile (“haitiez”) and athletic (“legiers”) – example provided: courtly activities; and 10) be generous and avoid avarice and a reputation for meanness (“por aver”). After listing his commandments, Amour uses summary as a method of more effective instruction (RR 2223–26):

Or te vueil briement recorder  
 Ce que t’ai dit por remenbrer,  
 Car la parole mains engreve  
 De retenir quant ele est brieve.

(Now, I would like to remind you briefly of what I have said so that you will remember it, for words are less difficult to recall when they are brief.) (Horgan 34)

In the second part of the speech, Amour gives Amant a penance. The penance is a voluntary act of repentance that is performed in order to achieve the absolution of sins. In the *Rose*, it is presented as a repetitive act (RR 2232–33 “Que nuit et jor sanz repentance | An amors metes ton panser,” “day and night, without backsliding, you should fix your thoughts on love” [Horgan 34]) whose aim is Amant’s improvement as a lover and the guarantee of his loyalty (RR 2237–42):

Et por ce que fins amanz soies,  
 Veil je et commant que tu aies  
 En .i. seul leu tout ton sue mis,  
 Si qu’il n’i soit mie demis,  
 Mes touz entiers sanz tricherie,  
 Que je n’ain pas la moquerie.

(In order that you might be a true lover, it is my wish and my command that your whole heart may be set in a single place, and that it should not be divided, but whole and entire, without trickery, for I do not love mockery.)<sup>28</sup>

28. I have made some minor alterations in Horgan’s translation, which renders the last line of the passage as “for I do not like sharing” (34–35).

That “seul leu” to which Amant must focus his thoughts on is, of course, the *Rose* that he espied on the fountain’s reflective surface when Amour first attacked him. By setting his heart on the *Rose*, Amant opens up to the bittersweetness of love and all the suffering that this entails. Amour prepares him for these conflicting feelings in

the next part of his speech by describing the experience of falling in love (RR 2263–574): the need to be close to one’s beloved or to be able to see her even from afar, the agony of being separated from her, the lover’s lamentations, the deceptive erotic dreams, the burning wish to get a single kiss, the attempts to approach one’s beloved, the loss of weight. At the same time, Amour provides Amant with some practical advice as regards to his conduct during the courting process, for example: “kiss the door as you leave” (RR 2536 “Au revenir, la porte bese”), “ensure that the serving-maid of the house thinks you are generous” (Horgan 39; RR 2556–57 “Que tenir te faces por large | A la pucele de l’ostel”). Finally, Amour concludes his instruction with the following (RR 2575–78):

Or t’ai dit coment n’en quel guise  
 Amanz doit fere mon service.  
 Or le fai donques, se tu viaus  
 De la belle avoir tes aviaus.

(Now I have told you how and in what way a lover must do my service: do it, then, if you wish to have joy of your fair one.) (Horgan 40)

However, Amant has another question: how does a lover endure love’s suffering? In response, Amour gives him a supplemental instructive speech, pointing out that the suffering is the necessary ‘payment’ that ensures the value of the ‘purchase,’ that is, the desired object (RR 2595–600). A similar idea is present in the *Livistros and Rodamne*, where the difficulty of conquering Rodamne’s heart makes the reward all the more precious; her resistance is a test for Livistros’ perseverance, making his quest worthwhile, while also demonstrating Rodamne’s prudent character. The necessity of suffering for love is also expressed by Poliphilo in the *Hypnerotomachia* who embraces his emotional suffering for Polia since “what is acquired with hardship is more precious, and is held so, than that which is obtained conveniently” (431 [D5r] “Et per questo cosa più pretiosa è [et cusì si tene] la quale erumnosamente aquistassi, che la adepta acconciamente”). This idea is in accordance to the rules of courtly love, as shown, for example, in Book II of the twelfth-century treatise *De Arte Honestae Amandi*, otherwise known as *De Amore*, by Andreas Capellanus (no. 14, “Facilis perceptio contemptibilem reddit amorem, difficilis eum carum facit haberi”). Following this comment on the value of a lover’s suffering, Amour then bestows on the lover four alle-

gorical gifts – Hope (“Esperance”), Pleasant Looks (“Doux Regard”), Pleasant Conversation (“Doux Parler”), and Pleasant Thought (“Doux Penser”) – explaining how they will help ease his pain. As soon as he answers Amant’s question, Amour vanishes before the dreamer can even speak, thus preventing him from asking any further questions regarding the conquest of the Rose.

Amour’s speech is a codification of a courtly lover’s behavior, an art of love, and it belongs to a long tradition of classical and medieval love poetry, the most important examples of which are Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* and the Capellanus’ *De Amore* (Arden 21–26). Moreover, as Silvia Huot aptly argues, the use of second-person singular and of imperative and future-tense verbs in Amour’s speech – both characteristics of the instructive treatises on love mentioned above – places the reader in the receiving end of the instruction (Huot 15). Reader and dreamer merge in the role of the neophyte, both being instructed by the author / Amour.

The last instructive speech to be examined in this paper is that of the Nurse to Polia in Book II of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. Even though Poliphilo’s initiation is concluded at the Cytherean Island, the dream narrative is prolonged by Polia’s narration to the nymphs accompanying the couple in the garden of Adonis, where Poliphilo and Polia conclude their journey. This encased narrative is introduced at the end of Book I of the *Hypnerotomachia* and comprises the content of Book II. The reader leaves Poliphilo’s architectural wonderland and enters into a pseudo-historical Treviso, in which an alternate love story of the couple takes place. The main part of Polia’s story presents her initiation to love as instigated by the shocking death of Poliphilo at her feet and caused by her indifference. Her initiation is accomplished through a sequence of three oneiric experiences, two visions and a nightmare, and an instructive speech by her nurse who advises her to seek guidance at the temple of Venus.

The Nurse resides in Polia’s *palazzo*, where the latter escapes to after Poliphilo’s supposed death and after her first terrifying vision, in which she saw Cupid as an executioner, torturing and dismembering two women, because of their defiance towards love. The Nurse consoles Polia and sleeps beside her to keep her safe, so that as soon as she sees Polia struggling and turning in her bed, she wakes her up and rescues her from a second nightmare, in which two executioners were threatening her with bodily harm if she persisted in her disobedience towards the gods of love. When Polia confides in her all that has befallen her the previous day – Poliphilo’s death, Cupid’s vi-

sion and the nightmare – the nurse not only comforts her but, understanding the cause of Polia’s torment, also takes the initiative to offer her instruction and counsel (402 [B6v-B7r]):

Non più presto dunque ricontato questo hebbi, che ella pensiculatamente, et *cum senicula peritia*, la cagione suspicava, piamente refocilante, cum molte suasivole blanditie, la mente mia alquantulo sedata et pusillo tranquillata refece. Proferendose di tuti mei gravi et molesti langori, *essere vera remediatrix, si io ad gli sui trutinati et salutiferi moniti arendevola, me prestarò osservabile*. Et quivi sublata di omni altro pensiero, et extraneo cogitato soluta, precipua et solamente, *ad gli sui fidi et dolati consiglii sequissima imitatrice et cum miro effecto mansuetissima disciplinabonda, me offerisco*. Si essa solamente fora di tanto angustioso, afflicto, et prodigioso periculo traherae la mente mia, et la succiviva vita di tanto merore et lucto.

(No sooner then had I recounted this, than with old-womanly thinking wise and wareful, she had an inkling of the whys and wherefores: tenderly reviving me with warmth, with many persuasive encouragements, my mind somewhat stilled and slightly calmed she restored, offering herself as the true provider of a remedy for all my grave and troubling weaknesses if I, yielding to her well-weighed and salutary advice, should prove myself to notably take note. And now, lifted away from any other thought and released from considerations from elsewhere, especially and solely to her faithful and well-framed counsels, as a follower copying just so, and with admirable completeness putting into effect, I begin by offering myself as a docile instructed pupil and disciple, if only she will pull my mind out of such a straitening, afflicted, and portentous peril, and what is left of life from so much grief and sorrow.)

From this passage that concludes one chapter in Polia’s story while introducing the next that contains the Nurse’s instruction, two main observations can be made. Firstly, through the exchange between Polia and the Nurse described in the passage above, the authoritarian relationship between instructor and neophyte is established, but pertains only to this particular instant – Polia’s instruction. Secondly, love is treated as a sickness, an affliction that can be cured through

instruction; similarly, *Amour* in the *Rose* describes the experience of love as an agonizing sickness – “mal d’amer” – also providing advice on how to treat it, while Poliphilo in Book I of the *Hypnerotomachia* encounters the anatomical location of this sickness (the heart) inside the body of a male colossus. Moreover, the idea of unrequited love as a painful state of being, an affliction, a *pathos*, is also evident in the *Livistros and Rodamne*, for example in the use of the following words and phrases: τυραννισθεῖς ἐξ ἔρωτομανίας (*L&R* 5a “oppressed by the madness of love”), πάσχω διὰ τὸν πόθον (78 “I suffer for amorous desire”), τοῦ ἔρωτος τὰς ὀδύνας (*L&R* 151 “the sorrows of love”). Lovesickness is a recurring motif in literature with a rich tradition from Sappho to today, while the pathology of love has troubled philosophers and physicians alike, especially during the medieval and Renaissance periods.<sup>29</sup>

29. For an overview of the motif, see Peri 1–46. For a modern psychological (Jungian) approach to the issue of the pathology of love, see Carotenuto.

The Nurse’s instructive speech is formally introduced in the chapter title, which describes the content of her speech, while emphasizing the instructor’s wisdom (403 [B7r]):

POLIA RACONTA PER QUAL MODO LA SAGACE NUTRICE PER VARI EXEMPLI ET PARADIGMI L’AMONISSE VITARE L’IRA, ET EVADERE LE MINE DELI DEI. ET COMO UNA DONNA DISPERRATA PER INTEMPERATO AMORE SEME UCCISE. CONSULTANDO SENZA PIGRITARE IRE ALLA ANTISTA DEL SANCTO TEMPIO DELLA DOMINA VENERE, CHE QUELLO ESSA SOPRA DI CIÒ DEBI FARE. QUELLA BENIGNAMENTE GLI PRESTARAE CONVENEVOL E EFFICACE DOCUMENTO.

(Polia recounts the way in which her sagacious nurse by various examples and paradigms warned her to avoid the wrath, and escape the threats of the gods; and [told her] how a lady in despair through intemperate love killed her own self; [and advised her] to go without delay to the high priestess of the holy temple of the Lady Venus seeking counsel as to what she ought to do about this. The latter would kindly offer her a suitable and efficacious lesson.)<sup>30</sup>

30. After White’s translation.

Following the title, Polia addresses a long remark to the nymphs listening to her narrative on the difficulty of changing her mind, in other words, of converting from the chills of chaste Diana to the flame of ardent Amor, and then reintroduces the Nurse’s instructive speech pointing out the Nurse’s willingness to remove the “hardened mass of ice” (403 [B7r] “duro et immassato gelo”) from her heart.

31. The Propoetides were the daughters of Propoetus from the city of Amathus in Cyprus, who defied Venus and, in effect, were punished by becoming the first to prostitute their bodies in public. The myth appears in Ovid *Met.* 10.220–42.

The Nurse begins her speech by inquiring into the gods' wrath, judging that since Polia is willing to take her advice, she is not entirely to blame for what has befallen her. Therefore, she asks Polia to think whether she has ever exhibited any rebellious behavior and then goes on to provide a list of examples from classical mythology, citing the stories of Ajax, of Ulysses' companions, of Hippolytus, of Propoetides,<sup>31</sup> of Arachne, and of Psyche, all of whom perished or were punished in some way, because they insulted or scorned a god out of "negligence and insufficient fear of the threat of divine punishment" (404 [B7v] "per negligentia et poco timore delle divine ultione minitante"). The Nurse mentions these examples for avoidance in order to warn Polia not to commit any more crimes against love lest she also provoke the wrath of the gods, and especially of the tyrant and mysterious Cupid (404 [B7v]):

Quanto crudele, quanto immite, quanto impio, quanto  
violente, quanto potente nella Tyrannica sua il figlio della  
Divina Madre sia, tanto veramente, che per vera et indubitata  
experientia, nui liquidamente comperto habiamo (quantun-  
che celata sia) che non solo gli mortali homini, ma ancora gli  
pectin divini vigorosamente ello havere senza alcuno respec-  
to et miseritudine acerbamente infiammando vulnerato.

(How cruel, how untamed, how pitiless, how violent, how  
powerful in his Tyranny the son of the Divine Mother is, and  
how truly by true and undoubted experience we have found  
it crystal-clear – however much it may be hidden – that not  
only mortal men, but also the breasts of gods he has lustily  
without any respect or compassionateness sharply wounded  
by inflaming.)

The Nurse solidifies her argument on the omnipotence of Cupid by citing the examples of Jupiter's amorous conquests, of Mars' inability to protect himself against the archer god and even of Cupid who could not prevent himself from falling in love with Psyche. Through these examples, the Nurse cross-references the triumphal imagery that Poliphilo witnesses in his dream in Book I: the four triumphs at the realm of Materamoris celebrating the power of love over gods, most notably Jupiter, Mars' appearance at the amphitheatre of Venus and the appearance of Psyche at the triumphal procession of Cupid at the Cytherean Island. Establishing, thus, the omnipotence of Cupid, the Nurse turns the discussion back to Polia: "And if he could

32. See, for example, Sappho on the inescapability of love (Voigt, fragments 1 and 130).

33. This is not to say, of course, that the two texts were necessarily influenced by the exact same sources. *Livistros and Rodamne*, for example, owes a lot to the ancient Greek novels and the Komnenian novels, particularly Eumathios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*, whereas the *Hypnerotomachia* makes explicit references to Latin authors, such as Ovid and Apuleius, among others, while it also builds upon the tradition of the courtly romance, including the *Roman de la Rose*, and on the works of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio.

34. Eros and Anteros as a pair is a motif that we often encounter in Italian Renaissance literature and art, as well as in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century emblems, where Anteros does not represent reciprocated love, but is interpreted as virtuous love (*Amor Virtutis*), rejecting and chastising physical love favoring divine love instead (see also Merrill; Comboni; Stephenson).

not prevent himself from falling in love with the fair Psyche, how could he be harmless to others?" (405 [B8r] "Et si ello di se medesimo, non perdonoe, a 'namorarse della bella Psyche, como ad altri innocuo sarae?"). It is essentially the same logical argument used by the Relative, the Cupid Guard and Vetanos in the *Livistros and Rodamne*. This similarity is owed to the fact that both the *Hypnerotomachia* and the *Livistros and Rodamne* draw on the Greco-Roman culture and literary tradition. The discourse of persuasion that these characters employ is a powerful rhetorical *topos* that goes back to Greek Archaic Lyric<sup>32</sup> and is further developed in late antique and medieval literature.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, in the case of the *Hypnerotomachia* ("non perdonoe, a 'namorarse"), it is clearly a reference to Dante's well known verse in the *Inferno* (5.103–05 "Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona, | mi prese del costui piacer sì forte, | che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona"), which recalls a famous rule of the medieval treatises on the art of love that found its way into the Provençal lyric and the Stilnovo.

Next, the Nurse attempts to interpret the causes of Polia's dream experiences. She begins by explaining the power of Cupid's two arrows, which do not appear in the dreams: the gold one causes love, while the grey one made of lead causes hatred. This duality could be a reference to the two types of love: unrequited (Eros) and requited (Anteros). Interestingly, Anteros, who is traditionally armed with arrows of lead, is the punisher of those who scorn love and the advances of others, like Polia. This interpretation of Anteros was still current in the mid- and late-sixteenth century, as is evident in the work of Vincenzo Cartari, *Le immagini dei dei degli antichi*, published in 1556, as well as in the paintings of Paolo Fiammingo on the *Four Ages of Love* (1585–89).<sup>34</sup> As an example of the effects of these arrows, the Nurse tells the story of Phoebus, whom Cupid shot with his golden arrow for having revealed the "sacred amours of Venus" (405 [B8r] "gli sancti amori della divina Venere"), while shooting Phoebus' loved ones with his leaden arrow, so that the more Phoebus loved them, the more they hated him. While the Nurse mentions this myth as an example of Cupid's vengeance parallel to Polia's first vision, it can also be seen as a parallel to Poliphilo and Polia's relationship up to that point in Polia's story: the more Poliphilo expressed his love for Polia, the more she spurned him, leading to his apparent death.

The Nurse's next argument is based on flattery. After thoroughly praising Polia's beauty, the Nurse claims that: "your winsome look indicates rather being worthy of her [Venus] warm service, than that

of icy and unfruitful Diana” (406 [B8v] “Il perché il tuo ligiadro aspecto più presto indica per gli sui caldi servitii, essere digno che della gelida et infructifica Diana”). Beauty is linked to love in a way that makes them interdependent. Therefore, by renouncing love, Polia goes against her own nature and disregards her ‘duty,’ whereby her nightmare is interpreted as a warning of what could happen if she persists in neglecting that duty. As was shown above, a very similar argument is employed by the Cupid Guard in the *Livistros and Rodamne*, who after praising Livistros’ merits, points out that beauty without love is nothing special, underlining the appropriateness of him becoming a lover and warning him that the opposite choice would be an act of self-negation (*L&R* 267–72).

Following these arguments, the Nurse continues with a parable, already announced in the chapter title (see above), of a girl like Polia, from the same town as she, who provoked the god of love with her indifference and, as a punishment, he shot her with his golden arrow, inflaming her desires to such a degree that she became lascivious and insatiable, unable to control her lust. The pathological effects of her condition were diagnosed by a physician as an excess of love in her heart. Consequently, as a remedy, her parents decided to marry her to an old, rich and, most importantly, impotent man, who is described in great detail to emphasize the unsuitability of the match. Regardless of her husband’s impotency and old age, this lady tried every means possible to seduce him, but with no success. Realizing her unhappy fate, she finally committed suicide. This story-within-a-story is used to intimidate Polia and to convince her to change her ways in order to prevent her own story from having the same outcome – which is somewhat ironic given that Polia is actually dead, as the epitaph at the end of the book reveals. Therefore, the remainder of the Nurse’s instruction is filled with lamentations and warnings appealing to Polia’s emotions, for example (409, 410 [C2r, C2v]):

O misera et afflicta me si in questa mia aetatula (che gli superi me liberano) tale infortunio, como di te acadere potrebbe, per qualche simigliante offensa, io me morirei avanti il tempo da dolore, et da tristecia accellerando il supremo claustro della vita mia.

(Oh how wretched and shattered I should be if in my little remaining lifetime, – from which may the powers above release



me! – a misfortune like that could happen to you on account of some similar offence – I should be dead before my time from pain and sadness, hastening the final closure of my life.)

Dunque Polia thesorulo mio caro, per quanto la praesente vita et aetate florula gratiosa appetii, o me guardate che per tale cagione in te Cupidine non praedimonstrasse, et per tale visione et ostentamento non praesagisse le tumefacte, et già concepte ire forse contra te.

(Therefore, Polia, my dear little treasure, as much as you value the present life and flower of your age, ah me, watch out lest for this reason Cupid should have been demonstrating beforehand, in you, and by such a vision and putting on show should have been foreboding, the wrath perhaps already swelling up, conceived against you.)

Finally, the Nurse urges Polia to go to the temple of Venus of her “own free will” (411 [C3r] “di arbitrii solitaria”) in order to confess her error and to seek the advice and help of the High Priestess of Venus. After the nurse’s speech, Polia is left alone to reflect and review the valuable instruction she has been offered and, persuaded, she “started being disposed to fall in love” (411 [C3r] “DISPOSITAMENTE INCOMINCIOE A INAMORARSE”). Her conversion to the gods of love is later confirmed when she has her last vision, in which Cupid and Venus chase away Diana, an experience that is preceded by an inner transformative experience, resembling a daydream, described by Polia as a welcome attack by “a shower of arrows combatively penetrating my soul, originating from my dearest Poliphilo” (419 [C7r] “una congerie di sagittule certatamente penetra bonde l’alma cum maxima voluptate susteniva oriunda dall’amatissimo Poliphilo”).

Similarly to the Cupid Guard in *Livistros and Rodamne*, the Nurse offers Polia practical advice as to her ritual conduct in the presence of the High Priestess. In both cases, this ritual conduct indicates that Livistros and Polia are called to perform the ritual of petition. Despite the similarities in the performance of the ritual – mediation of a third party, prostration of the rebellious neophyte, repentance, forgiveness, oath – there are two basic differences between Livistros’ and Polia’s petition. First, Livistros’ petition is made directly to the god of love in the imaginary space of the dream, while Polia’s petition is made indirectly through the gods’ representative, the High

Priestess, in a supposedly actual space, the temple of Venus in a quasi-historical Treviso. Second, Livistros' petition is entirely regulated by the other participants of the ritual – the cupid guards, Desire, Love and, of course, Emperor Eros – who direct his every movement, while Polia's petition results from her own initiative, after deliberate consideration of the Nurse's advice. These variations reflect the socio-cultural differences between the two works. Specifically, in the case of Livistros, the text reflects the practice of royal petitions of rebellion in a clearly medieval context, while, in the case of Polia, the text presents a private and urban act of 'piety' in early Renaissance Italy.

#### 4 Concluding remarks

Overall, the interpretative analysis of the instructive speeches within the framework of rite of passage theory has brought out, to an extent, both structural and thematic similarities between the three texts. Instruction takes place right before or during the neophyte's submission to the gods of love. It is a type of preparatory ritual in the initiation process instigated by a crucial event in the neophyte's progress: in the cases discussed here, these events are Livistros' disruptive act of killing a turtledove, Rodamne's oneiric attack by Eros, Amant's act of looking into the Fountain of Narcissus, and Polia's defiance towards Poliphilo's advances even after his apparent death at her feet. The main narrative and ritual function of the instructive speeches discussed in this paper is to promote and to facilitate the initiation and courting processes, containing statements affirming the omnipotence of love, examples of lovers and non-lovers to imitate or to avoid, practical advice, consolatory words and dream interpretations. The instructors, as promoters of love, exert considerable influence on the neophyte's personal development and life choices.

In the examples examined, love is described as a complex feeling, a paradoxical feeling, both bitter and sweet, that can inflict great pain, almost like a disease, but also great pleasure. Due to the complexity of the experience of love, the lovers-to-be need to go through an initiation process that, on one hand, enables them to receive instruction and, on the other, offers them access to the liminal space of dreams, the realm of erotic desire, where love's paradoxes can be accommodated and where lovers can deal with their incomprehensible feelings.

In *Livistros and Rodamne* and in the *Hypnerotomachia*, love is also characterized by its warmth, being capable to ‘melt’ even the hardest of hearts; the dichotomy between ice and fire, cold and hot is particularly intense in Polia’s initiation. In the *Roman de la Rose*, the overwhelming power of love is expressed through Amour’s attack, wounding the dreamer with his five metaphorical arrows. Analogous imagery is employed in Rodamne’s oneiric encounter with Eros and in Polia’s daydreaming, when she perceives the awakening of her desire for Poliphilo as a host of arrows penetrating her soul. Because of its catalytic power, love is able to effect transformation and, specifically, the transformation of the neophytes into lovers.

By bringing together the *Tale of Livistros and Rodamne*, the *Roman de la Rose* and the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, my aim was to demonstrate the insights that such a comparative study might offer. The similarities that can be observed between the texts can be attributed to their common literary and cultural background, *i.e.* Greco-Roman, as well as to their similar subject-matter. At the same time, the texts present several divergences from each other, which, of course, relate to the distinct historical and socio-cultural environments associated with their production: the Byzantine imperial court at Nicaea, the courtly culture of late medieval France, the humanist movement of early Renaissance Italy. Both the similarities and the differences are important to the comparative study of the three texts, since both raise questions regarding the network of shared influences that unite them and the particular socio-cultural and historical conditions that separate them. Finally, the juxtaposition of the initiation processes and of the dreams associated with them helps elucidate aspects of each text that may have been overlooked and provides us with a fresh perspective.

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