

FROM BALDASSARE CASTIGLIONE *THE BOOK OF THE COURTIER*
(ENGLISH TRANS. CHARLES S. SINGLETON, FRENCH TRANS. JACQUES COLIN)

I)

'I say that beauty springs from God and is like a circle, the center of which is goodness. And hence, as there can be no circle without a center, there can be no beauty without goodness. Thus, a wicked soul rarely inhabits a beautiful body, and for that reason outward beauty is a true sign of inner goodness. And this grace is impressed upon the body in varying degree as an index of the soul, by which it is outwardly known, as with trees in which the beauty of the blossoms is a token of the excellence of the fruit.'

'Je dis que la beaulté vient & prent naissance de dieu & est comme ung cerne d'ont beaulté est centre: & pourtant comme ung cerne ne poeut[sic] estre sans centre, beaulté ne poeut[sic] estre sans bonte, a ceste cause peu souvent advient que une mauvaise ame habite en ung beau corps, parquoy la beaulte exterieure est vray signe de la bonte interieure, & est ceste grace imprimée au corps plus ou moins quasi pour ung caractere de lame, par ce quelle exterieurement congneue, comme les arbres ou la beaulte des fleurs fait tesmoignage de la bonte des fruitz'

-IV.57

II)

'The Courtier ... must resolve to avoid all ugliness of vulgar love, and must first enter into the divine path of love, with reason as his guide. And first he must consider that the body wherein this beauty shines is not the source from which it springs, but, rather, that beauty (being an incorporeal thing and, as we have said, a heavenly ray) loses much of its dignity when it chances to be conjoined with base and corruptible matter... And he must consider that, just as one cannot heat with his palate or smell with his ears, so also *beauty can in no way be enjoyed, nor can the desire it excites in our minds be satisfied through the sense of touch, but only by way of that sense whereof this beauty is the true object, namely, the faculty of sight. Therefore let him keep aloof from the blind judgment of sense, and with his eyes enjoy the radiance of his Lady, her grace, her amorous sparkle, the smiles, the manners and all other other pleasant ornaments of her beauty.*

'le Courtisan doibt ... se délibérer totalement de fuyr toute lardeur d'amour vulgaire, & ainsi entrer en la divine voye amoureuse suyvant la guide de raison, & au premier lieu considerer que le corps ou celle beaulte reluit, nest pas la fontaine où elle sourt, aincoys que la beaulte qui est chose incorporelle, & comme nous avons dit, ung rays divin pert beaucoup de sa dignite pour se trouver conjoint a ung si vile & corruptible subject ... & que sicomme lon ne poeut[sic] ouyr avecques le Palais, ne sentir avecques les oreilles, aussi lon ne poeut[sic] en aucune maniere avec latouchement avoir fruition de la beaulte ne satisfaire au desir quelle suscite en noz couraiges, ains avec ledit sentiment dont icelle beaulte est vray object, qui est la vertu visive. Il fault doncques qu'il se retire de laveugle jugement du sentiment, & quil jouysse avec les yeulx de la splendeur, grace, estincelles amoureuses, rys, contenances & de tous les autres plaisans adornemens de la beaulte'

-IV.62

III)

'The lover who considers beauty only in the body loses this good and this happiness as soon as his beloved lady, by her absence, leaves his eyes deprived of their splendor, and consequently leaves his soul widowed of its good. For when her beauty is thus far away, that amorous influence does not warm his heart as when she was present; wherefore his pores become dry, yet the memory of her beauty still stirs those powers of his soul a little, so that they seek to scatter the spirits abroad; and these, finding the ways shut, have no exit, and yet seek to go forth ... And from this come the tears, the sighs, the anguish, and the torments of lovers, because the soul is always in travail and affliction, and enters into a furor until such time as the cherished beauty appears to it again... Hence, to escape the torment of this absence and to enjoy beauty without suffering, the Courtier, aided by reason, must turn his desire entirely away from the body and to beauty alone, contemplate it in its simple and pure self, insofar as he is able'

‘Lamant donc qui considere la beaulte seulement du corps pert ce bien & ceste felicité incontinent que la dame qui layme en s’abstenant laisse les yeulx d’icelluy sans splendeur, & consequemment lame aurifiée de son bien, car estant la beaulte eslongnee, linfluence amoureuse ne reschauffe plus le cueur comme elle faisoit quant elle estoit presente, au moyen dequoy les conduitz deviennent cordez & secz, & neantmoins la souvenance de la beaulte meut ung peu les vertus de lame, tellement quelles taschent de dilater les esperitz, lesquelz trouvant les voyes bouchées n’ont point dissue: & neantmoins taschent de sortir ... Or pour se exempter du tourment de ceste absence, & jouyr de la beaulte sans passion, il est besoing que le Courtisan avec layde de raison rappelle du tout le desir du corps a la beaulte seule, & qu’il la contemple le plus quil poeut[sic] en elle mesme simple & pure’

-IV.66

IV) - The kiss of death/ The death of the kiss [mors osculi]



‘Since a kiss is the union of body and soul, there is danger that the sensual lover may incline more in the direction of the body than in that of the soul; whereas the rational lover sees that, although the mouth is part of the body, nevertheless it emits words, which are the interpreters of the soul, and that inward breath which itself is even called soul ... Hence, a man delights in joining his mouth to that of his beloved in a kiss, not in order to bring himself to any unseemly desire, but because he feels that that bond is the opening of mutual access to their souls, which, being each drawn by desire for the other, pour themselves each into the other’s body by turn, and mingle so together that each of them has two souls; and a single soul, composed thus of these two, rules as it were over two bodies. Hence a kiss may be said to be a joining of souls rather than of bodies, because it has such power over the soul that it withdraws it to itself and separates it from the body For this reason all chaste lovers desire the kiss as a union of souls; and thus the divinely enamoured Plato says that, in kissing, the soul came to his lips in order to escape from his body’

‘Car pour estre le baiser ung assemblément du corps & de lame y auroit dangier que lamour sensuel ne s’inclina plus a la partie du corps, que a celle de lame ... Et pourtant il prent plaisir de unir sa bouche par le baiser avecques celle de la femme quil ayme, non pour s’esmouvoir a desir aucun deshonneste, mais pource quil sent que ce lien est une maniere d’ouvrir l’entree aux ames lesquelles attirées par le desir l’une de lautre se transfondent aussi mutuellement lune au corps de lautre, & se meslent tellement ensemble quil semble que chascun deulx ayt deux ames, & que une seule ainsi composée des deux guide & regisse quasi deux corps, au moyen dequoy le baiser se poeut[sic] dire plus tost assemblément d’ame, que de corps, car il a en elle tant de force qu’il l’attire a soy & quasi la separe du corps. A ceste cause tous chastes amoureux desirent le baiser comme assemblément d’ame dont le divinément amoureux Platon dit que en baisant lame luy vint aux levres pour sortir du corps’

-IV.64