

# VIII *Ordo Virtutum* *The Play of the Virtues,* by Hildegard of Bingen

## Style, meaning and structure

The *Ordo Virtutum* is in essential ways unlike any of the other plays in this volume; it is also the only play in the volume that is not anonymous. We have come to know much about the composer of its words and music, Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), prolific as mystic, lyrical poet, and scientist, and as the impassioned epistolary adviser of the luminaries of Church and State in her time.<sup>1</sup> We can, moreover, make well-grounded conjectures about the circumstances and date of this play's composition and first public performance (see pp. 152–5 below).

The *Ordo Virtutum* stands apart, above all, by the range of its characters and its language. The characters are personifications: there is the heroine, Anima, and her companion Souls, there is the villain, Diabolus, and sixteen *Virtutes* – Virtues conceived not only as qualities within the human being but as creative forces in the cosmos, forces that fight on Anima's behalf. Such deploying of an almost wholly allegorical cast is familiar, from the fourteenth century onwards, in the 'morality-plays', that reach a high point with *Everyman*; it is unique in Hildegard's own age. Her language draws subtly upon the imagery of the Song of Songs, Isaiah, and the Apocalypse, but achieves a poetic density and originality, and at times a soaring lyricism, that is unique not only among twelfth-century plays but in the whole of medieval drama.

The division of the play into a Prologue, four scenes and a Finale is editorial – there are no corresponding indications in the two extant manuscripts. It is intended purely as an aid to perceiving the dramatic articulation of the whole.

The Prologue (1–8), whose concentrated language establishes the

<sup>1</sup> For an account of Hildegard's career and writings see esp. my *Women Writers* ch. 6 (pp. 144–201, texts pp. 231–64, notes pp. 306–15); there is a more detailed study of her achievements as poet and dramatist, together with an edn of the *Ordo Virtutum* and of some of her melodies, in Dronke 1986, pp. xxxiii–xlii, 150–92, 209–31 (melodies ed. I. Bent).

co-ordinates for the play that follows, opens with a choir of Patriarchs and Prophets singing a phrase – ‘Who are these, who are like clouds?’ – from Isaiah 60, a chapter that evokes the building of the heavenly Jerusalem. The imagery of this chapter (including Isaiah’s images of sailing and growth) is vividly present in later scenes.

The choir of Virtues, who ‘dwell in the heights’ (67) – in the staging probably on a raised dais within the sanctuary – answer, developing and varying Isaiah’s image. They, like clouds, are irradiated by the sunlight of the Logos (3–4) – through them that light is mediated to the world; but they are also the boughs and fruits of a tree whose roots are formed by those same Patriarchs and Prophets (6–7). Where in Isaiah’s heavenly city God calls the just ‘the shoot of my planting’ (*germen plantationis meae*, 60, 21), here the Virtues, ‘building the limbs of the beautiful body’ of the Logos, are seen as ‘fruits of the living eye’ (*fructus viventis oculi*). *Oculus*, which means both ‘eye’ and ‘bud’, unifies the imagery of light and growth: the divine sunlight ripens these fruits, that are the culmination of the tree of the Word, whose divine buds burgeon on earth. The Patriarchs and Prophets, from the world of the Old Testament, are the shadow (*umbra*, 8), or foreshadowing, of this process of light-giving and growth, which was made possible, in the world of the New, by the incarnation.

The scene changes (9 ff.). We are shown a different *umbra* (12), a dark shadow of sins existing in the present. A group of Souls lament their flawed, embodied condition: they have fallen from their paradisaic state as ‘daughters of the King’ (11) into a shadow from which they beg the ‘living Sun’ to deliver them – though they also know that deliverance implies a battle. Hildegard here combines the tradition of a ‘play of the Prophets’ (*Ordo Prophetarum*), in which Old Testament figures are summoned to reveal the *umbra* of the New, with that of the battle of virtues and vices in and for the human soul, in the fifth-century poetic allegory, the *Psychomachia*, of Prudentius.<sup>2</sup>

Among the lamenting Souls, only one – the play’s heroine, Anima – is happy (16–19). To her the restoration to heavenly life is already so real that she longs for the ‘radiant robe’ of her glorified body. The Virtues (20–2) commend her for ‘loving much’ (echoing Christ’s words of the woman who anointed his feet); but when they remind Anima of the battle against sin, against Diabolus, that must precede the paradisaic bliss, she grows depressed (*gravata*, 25/6, *infelix*, 35/6), and laments too,

<sup>2</sup> For versions of the *Ordo Prophetarum*, see v 11 125–71; for Prudentius’ *Psychomachia*, see Prudentius, ed. and tr. H. J. Thomson (Loeb Classics, 1949), 1274–343.

more fiercely than the other Souls. What she is wearing is not yet her shining heavenly robe, but an earthly dress, a destiny that has to be 'completed' in this world (38). Despairing, Anima casts this dress off (40); like the guilty Adam and Eve, she hides from the Creator (43); defiantly she declares that she'll enjoy the world – after all, God created it for use (45–7).

This outburst of Anima's prompts the first intervention of Diabolus (48–9), who encourages her desire to 'look to the world'. Diabolus, who 'hath no music in himself . . . Is fit for treasons, stratagemes, and spoils': he is differentiated from the rest of the cast in an original way – he never sings, only speaks, and his speech is *strepitus*, a violent shouting. After his words, Anima leaves the Virtues' fellowship: she makes her way out of their playing-space in the sanctuary, perhaps also, through the audience, out of the chapel itself.

The Virtues grieve over Anima's loss, and summon Innocentia, one of their number, to mourn. Diabolus intervenes once more, asserting his own power, pretending (as in his temptation of Christ in the desert) that he can give everything to one who follows him. Addressing Humilitas, who is the 'glorious queen' of the Virtues (cf. 72), he mocks her powerlessness to give anything to *her* followers, and mocks all the Virtues for their ignorance of their own natures (59–62) – this is how Diabolus construes their total conformity with the divine will. Humilitas retorts that she knows *his* nature: he was Lucifer, the dragon who was flung into the abyss (63–6). The scene concludes in the stark contrast of depth and height.

Then follows a long episode of the Virtues alone (68–158). It is predominantly lyrical, and hardly carries the plot forward, but unfolds and celebrates the natures of the Virtues in richly textured imagery, and in a choreography that is implied by the text itself. In the course of the scene five Virtues – Humilitas, Karitas, Obedientia, Fides, and Contemptus Mundi – invite the others, 'Come to me!', and each of these invitations must be followed by the chorus's moving swiftly towards the summoner (cf. 79). The scene consists entirely of alternations between the individual Virtues as soloists and the assembled company – except for one sardonic interjection by Diabolus. (This, and some of the detailed aspects of the language, are elucidated in the explanatory notes below.)

At the opening (70), an image drawn from the parables of repentance (the lost sheep and the lost drachma) in Luke 15 offers a glimmer of hope that the errant Anima may be found again. Then the images turn especially to those of the love-union in the Song of Songs, to growth, flowering and light, but also at times to combat. To the Canticle's range

belong the royal wedding-chamber (75, 104), the kiss of the King (90), burning in the King's embraces (105), the flower in the meadow (109), the embraces of the princess (125, 129), the royal nuptials (131), and the rocky cavern (*caverna petre*, 154) – though the bride who hides there is not called 'dove', as in the Song, but 'glorious warrior'.

Hildegard has a special gift for fusing and compressing images. Thus *Karitas* promises to lead the other Virtues *in candidam lucem floris virge* – 'into the radiant light of the flower of the rod' (78). Aaron's rod (*virga*) that bursts into flower (cf. Numbers 17) is the traditional figura of Mary (*virgo*) bringing forth the flower that is Christ – thus the complex metaphor, with its double genitive, is a promise to lead the Virtues into the luminous realm of the incarnation. With similarly penetrating connotations, *Fides* (93–7) is a mirror (*speculum*) who, by her mirroring (*speculata*), can lead the other Virtues to the leaping fountain (cf. John 4, 14); the never-failing flower praised by *Castitas*, the flower through which the Sun blazes without parching it, dwells in the symphonies of heavenly habitants (106–11). Again, there is a compelling fusion of images to characterise the Virtue *Victoria* (143–5). It begins with Old Testament figurae: she fights *in lapide* (like David), she treads the serpent underfoot (like Mary, fulfilling the prophecy of Genesis 3, 15); she enters 'the scorching fountain that swallowed up the voracious wolf': *Victoria's* combat, that is, takes place in a river of fire (the antithesis of the 'leaping fountain'), in which the Satanic wolf has been engulfed in his own burning greed, so that she can, by enduring that blaze, fight and win as the 'gentlest of warriors'. In the final image of the scene, *Humilitas* reminds the Virtues of the world-tree, the body of the Logos on which they were raised, in images that bring together the Song of Songs (8, 5) – 'I raised you from beneath the apple-tree' – and Isaiah (60, 21) – 'the shoot of my planting'.

Yet *Humilitas's* call to joy, which closes this scene (158), is at once contradicted by the Virtues' mourning for *Anima*, which opens the next. *Anima* returns, grief-stricken, ailing and battered on account of her sojourn outside the Virtues' realm. The Virtues, seeing her as the lost sheep of the parable (160, 169), repeatedly call her back to themselves, unaware that she is still too weak to approach unaided. The pervasive imagery of *Anima's* wounds and sickness (171, 177, 187, 190) is suffused by that of Christ's sacrificial wounds (182, 190), and of healing: *Humilitas* is a 'true medicine' (185), Christ is 'the great surgeon', who 'has suffered harsh and bitter wounds' for *Anima's* sake (196–7). *Humilitas* bids the Virtues lift *Anima* and carry her back to

irrupts:  
cortège:

their dwelling – but as they do so, singing an exultant thanksgiving (198–208), Diabolus irrupts on their cortège and claims Anima for himself (209 f.).

She is now strong enough to defy Diabolus: 'now, you trickster, I'll fight you face to face' (213). The imagery of combat, while not absent from the previous scene (cf. 178–9, 184), emerges with full force in these climactic moments in which, at Humilitas' command, the Virtues, led by Victoria, attack Diabolus and succeed in chaining him (227: cf. Apocalypse 20, 2). Then comes an unexpected dramatic twist: as Castitas, echoing Victoria's phrase in the second scene (143), boasts that she too trod on the serpent's head, in Mary's miraculous virgin birth, Diabolus rejoins savagely: the virgin birth is merely a transgression of the 'sweet act of love' that God enjoined upon mankind, the 'debt that the husband shall pay the wife, and the wife the husband' (1 Corinthians 7, 3): virginity is an emblem of human ignorance, not of divine privilege (235–7). Castitas answers by defending the incarnation not as a human birth, but as the start of the reintegration in God of the human race (*genus humanum ad se congregat*, 240–1).

The play concludes with two resplendent choruses. The first, in which the Virtues give praise and thanks for the 'great counsel', the schema of salvation, takes up the image of the 'scorching fountain' in which the wolf was swallowed (144–5, and again 220–1), transforming it into a fountain that flows from the Father in fiery love (*ex te fluit fons in igneo amore*, 248); then the fountain-image changes into that of Isaiah's sea, on which the ships of souls sail towards the heavenly Jerusalem.

In the second, final chorus (252 ff.), the Virtues are (I believe) joined by the chorus of Souls who had lamented at the opening of the first scene. They recollect how, with the Fall, creation had lost its 'greenness' (*viriditas*, 254), its paradisal fertility and beauty. Within this recollection, they evoke Christ, the 'champion' of humanity, recalling his redemptive suffering to the Father. His wounded body is *plenum gemmarum* (264): the phrase means at once 'full of gems' and 'full of buds'. As in the Prologue the 'living eye' was also the bud on a twig of the world-tree, so here at the close the body *plenum gemmarum* is that same tree blossoming; yet it is equally the heavenly Jerusalem, the city 'full of gems', and Jerusalem the bride, the heavenly ideal to which Anima aspires. Here poetic concentration and suggestiveness together are stretched to the limit.

### Date of composition and performance

In a study, 'Problemata Hildegardiana', first published in 1981, I set out evidence indicating that the *Ordo Virtutum* must have been completed latest in 1151. This is the year when Hildegard, on her own testimony, finished her first visionary prose work, *Scivias*, in the final vision of which she includes some passages that are closely similar to ones in the *Ordo Virtutum*. Textual comparisons showed that the play-version of these passages was the earlier: they were adapted to *Scivias*, not the other way round.<sup>1</sup>

With this early dating in mind, I suggested, in 1986, first that Hildegard's music for the *Ordo* 'itself indicates that hers was no "closet drama", but was planned for an audience from the start'; then, that the major festive event for her and her community which took place soon after 1151, the solemn consecration of her Rupertsberg convent on 1 May 1152, would also have been the perfect occasion for the presentation of the *Ordo*.<sup>2</sup> That day the Archbishop of Mainz and other prelates from Mainz cathedral must have been at the convent, as well as members of the aristocratic families from whom Hildegard had assembled her sisterhood – in particular the illustrious von Stade family, to which Richardis, Hildegard's best loved disciple, belonged, the family that had helped Hildegard to obtain her independent foundation on the Rupertsberg.

In 1991, however, without cognisance of my discussion, Eckehard Simon introduced a volume, *The Theatre of Medieval Europe. New Research in Early Drama*, with the surprising assertion that Hildegard's play had *not* been performed:

By the thirteenth century, to be sure, liturgical plays were sung by nuns in some convents, and fifteenth-century civic records occasionally mention women in minor parts. But from the Winchester Easter play of c. 975 to Shakespeare and beyond, theatre was the province of men ... [Hildegard's] so-called *Ordo Virtutum* – involving vices, virtues and the devil – may in fact be the first morality. But it is poor sociology to claim, as music performance groups like *Sequentia* do, that Hildegard and the nuns of Bingen would have staged the *Ordo* in the convent cloister.<sup>3</sup>

It is true that evidence for the performance of the *Ordo Virtutum* is circumstantial and not direct – that is, we do not have an eye-witness account, nor is there a medieval equivalent of the Elizabethan

<sup>1</sup> 'Problemata Hildegardiana', *Mittelaltinisches Jahrbuch* xvi 97–131, repr. (with some revisions) in Dronke 1992, pp. 143–91, esp. pp. 148–56.

<sup>2</sup> Dronke 1986, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.

<sup>3</sup> Simon 1991, p. xliii.

Stationer's Register. Yet a number of considerations are relevant to this question. It may be as well to set these out here and to remove certain historical misconceptions.

If it was unusual for medieval religious women to perform plays, Hildegard was far-reachingly unusual.<sup>4</sup> She did many things that were otherwise held to be 'the province of men': she undertook preaching journeys, addressing sermons to bishops, clergy and monks as well as laity; she was asked to exorcise, and on one notable occasion (1167) composed a mimetic scenario for this purpose that was close to drama in form;<sup>5</sup> because Pope Eugene in 1147 had publicly accredited her work, the greatest temporal rulers, as well as high-ranking clergy, asked her advice, and she instructed, at times even commanded, them in their decisions and actions.

At the Rupertsberg, under Hildegard's guidance, there was an intense cultivation of vocal and instrumental music, which she recalls in her long letter (1178) to the prelates of Mainz.<sup>6</sup> She also instituted in her convent a custom that aroused both amazement and criticism among her contemporaries: she and her nuns celebrated major Church feasts by dressing up in white veils, rings, and elaborately designed tiaras, enacting – as Hildegard makes clear in her defence of this innovation – the rôles of the brides of Christ.<sup>7</sup> In the light of such a practice, as well as of the musical life in Hildegard's foundation, is it at all plausible to claim that in Hildegard's day the *Ordo Virtutum* was not performed?

By his phrase 'so-called *Ordo Virtutum*', Simon presumably wishes to suggest that this was not Hildegard's own choice of name: that these words – which, applied to a work in dialogue, can only mean 'The Play of the Virtues' – must be a misnomer due to someone who wrongly took this to be genuine drama. However, the play is headed *Incipit Ordo Virtutum* by the scribe of the text itself in the main manuscript (the 'Riesenkodex'), which was copied on the Rupertsberg in the last years of Hildegard's life – that is, still under her supervision (see pp. 156–7 below). There can be no doubt: the title *Ordo Virtutum* is Hildegard's own, and she conceived her composition as a play.

The play-text is preserved not only with complete, carefully written music, but with some guiding phrases that would seem to have been

<sup>4</sup> For documentation of the details that follow, see esp. *Women Writers* ch. 6.

<sup>5</sup> First published in 'Problemata' (= Dronke 1992, text pp. 185–8, tr. and discussion pp. 173–8). We have a testimony that this piece had at least one performance (see p. 178).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Women Writers* pp. 196–9, 313–15; there is now a complete edn of the letter in *Hildegardis Bingensis Epistolarium* 1, ed. L. Van Acker (CC CM 91, 1991), no. xxiii.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Women Writers*, pp. 165–9.

intended for performers rather than simply for readers. Such expressions in the rubrics as *felix* (15/16, 22/3), *gravata* (25/6), *infelix* (35/6), *Querela penitentis* (161/2), and *penitens* (175/6, 211/12), are hardly needed by the readers, for whom the mood and tone emerge in the words immediately following: are they not rather directions to the singer of the rôle of Anima to convey these emotions by her voice and bearing? Similarly, *strepitus* (47/8) is best seen as an indication to the performing Diabolus how to speak his lines.

With a number of points, inevitably, we cannot pass beyond informed conjecture about what is historically most probable. Is it a pure coincidence, for example, that the number of rôles in the play accords so well with the 'twenty noble girls of wealthy parentage'<sup>8</sup> that Hildegard brought with her to found the Rupertsberg convent? The play has seventeen solo parts for women – for Anima and sixteen Virtues – as well as requiring a group of lamenting Anime (for which three further nuns would have been to hand). It seems likely, that is, that Hildegard composed expressly with her twenty available women performers in mind. There is only one male solo part, that of Diabolus. As I suggested in 1986, there was just one man who was constantly present in the convent – Hildegard's loved secretary and provost, Volmar; as only he could have rehearsed regularly with the nuns, it may well be he who took the Diabolus part. (The brief use of a chorus of Patriarchs and Prophets in the Prologue would not have required any lengthy presence of other clergy, e.g. from Mainz cathedral, at the convent for rehearsing.)

Was the *Ordo* first performed somewhat in the manner of an oratorio, or more in that of a drama? There are certain indications (apart from the choreography implied by the words in scene 2) in favour of the second alternative. Why, for instance, does Hildegard in *Scivias* describe the *costumes* of the Virtues with a richness of detail unique in the tradition of such allegorical descriptions? Why did the illuminated *Scivias* manuscript, prepared under Hildegard's direction c. 1170, render the often outlandish costumes of these Virtues in meticulous detail in its miniatures? The 'shadowy' dress of Timor Dei, on which many closed eyes are painted in silver (she is irradiated by the divine light, but afraid of being dazzled if she looks at it), affords a striking example. Can there really have been no connection between the keenly visualised and depicted Virtues in the prose work and the mode of their presentation in the play?

I do not know of any other medieval play which survives with its

<sup>8</sup> The phrase (*cum viginti puellis nobillibus et de divitibus parentibus natis*) occurs in Hildegard's autobiographic notes, ed. *Women Writers*, p. 233.



complete music where scholars have doubted that the play was performed. Such a singular prejudice in the case of Hildegard's *Ordo* can only be a lingering remnant of the older prejudice, the notion that medieval women were themselves incapable of writing or composing – that such things were always done for them by men. The range of evidence suggesting that the *Ordo Virtutum* was performed is probably the strongest we have for any of the plays in this volume. The 'sociology' of leading performers today, such as *Sequentia*, cannot be faulted; it is the scholars, not the performers, who at times tend to imitate the action of the . . . ostrich.

### Versification

Hildegard composed words and music together. Her poetry consists for the most part of what today would be called 'free verse': its movements and rhythms are adjusted to the melody, but are otherwise autonomous. While in the *Ordo* there are many instances of syllabic and syntactic parallelism, and some of rhyme, neither device is used systematically or in order to determine verse structure. Only in some of the lyrical pieces in the *Symphonia* are there traces of more elaborate symmetries, though they do not include fully regular strophic forms.

In the *Ordo* there is a clear differentiation between the five speeches of Diabolus, which move in a jagged staccato fashion, and the flowing cadences, lyrical and even incantatory in rhythm, which the Virtues deploy. Anima, when she is in harmony with the Virtues, does likewise, but at the moment she defies them, her words take on something of Diabolus' jaggedness:

Deus creavit mundum:  
non facio illi iniuriam,  
sed volo uti illol (45–7)

The decision to introduce line-divisions for all speeches except those of Diabolus is, of course, editorial. They are intended to help to show some of the rhythmic movement and to correspond as far as possible to the articulation of the melodies.

### The manuscript

The main source for the *Ordo Virtutum*<sup>1</sup> is the 'giant codex' (*Riesenkodex*, = R), or 'codex with the chain', that today is MS 2 in the Hessische Landesbibliothek, Wiesbaden. It is a 'collected edition' of Hildegard's works, with the principal exception of her medical and scientific writings (known today as *Causae et curae*, *Physica*, and the 'Berlin fragment'). In a fundamental study of 1956,<sup>2</sup> Marianna Schrader and Adelgundis Führkötter demonstrated that the *Riesenkodex* was copied in Hildegard's own scriptorium, in her convent on the Rupertsberg, and that it was preserved there from the outset. While they believed that the codex was compiled in 1180–90, the decade following Hildegard's death, two recent scholars and editors of Hildegard, Albert Derolez and Lieven Van Acker, have been able to show that this dating is too late. To cite Derolez: 'as the two texts [in R] composed after Hildegard's death have clearly been interpolated into the *Riesenkodex*, it is reasonable to assume that the codex was in fact composed during Hildegard's lifetime'.<sup>3</sup> Derolez and Van Acker both suggest that the compilation of the codex will have been done under the direction of Guibert of Gembloux, Hildegard's last secretary, who stayed at the Rupertsberg from 1177 till 1180.

The codex, consisting of 481 vellum leaves, written in double columns, begins with Hildegard's visionary trilogy (fols. 1v–308r) – *Scivias* ('Know the Ways'), *Liber vite meritorum* ('The Book of Life's Merits'), and *Liber divinorum operum* ('The Book of Divine Handiworks') – and also includes a large group of her letters (fols. 328r–434r). It contains her lyrical compositions (*Symphonia*) and her play in the two final gatherings (fols. 466r–481v).<sup>4</sup> The lyrics and play are carefully

<sup>1</sup> On the text of the *Ordo Virtutum* in London BL Add. 15102, fols. 207r–221r, which was written in 1487 for Johannes Trithemius, and which may be based wholly on the copy in the *Riesenkodex*, see Dronke 1986, pp. 180, 192. It is likely that there was a further text of the *Ordo* in the MS Dendermonde 9, in a gathering that is missing today: see my discussion, 'The Composition of Hildegard of Bingen's *Symphonia*', *Sacris Erudiri* xix (1969–70) 381–93.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Echtheit des Schrifttums der heiligen Hildegard von Bingen* (Cologne–Graz 1956), esp. pp. 154–79.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Guiberti Gemblacensis Epistolae* 1 ed. A. Derolez (cc cm 66, 1988), pp. xxx–xxxI; *Hildegardis Bingensis Epistolarium* 1, ed. L. Van Acker (cc cm 91, 1991), pp. xxvii–xxix.

<sup>4</sup> For a succinct bibliographic guide to Hildegard's writings, see *Women Writers*, ch. 6 and pp. 326–7. The text printed below is essentially that of my critical edition in *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages* (Oxford 1970, 2nd edn London 1986), pp. 180–92, though with some changes of punctuation. The translation, first published in extracts *ibid.* pp. 170–8, and then complete in the libretto of the recording of *Ordo Virtutum* by *Sequentia*

written by 'hand 2', who likewise wrote a brief section of *Scivias* earlier in R. The words *Incipit Ordo Virtutum* occur at the foot of fol. 478va; the play itself extends from the next column, 478vb, to fol. 481vb, concluding the vast codex.

(*Harmonia Mundi* 1982), has been revised in many points of detail. The Introduction and notes have been written expressly for this volume.

In adhibendis legibus & subsecutus est de laudis

Subitit preterea puerum in laudis

**O**pus in omni & omni sapienter gerit

ambrosius in laudis pueri & omni nobis

magis esse cupit in nobis laudis esse illi

omni in laudis esse nobis laudis esse nobis

In laudis esse nobis esse nobis esse nobis

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**Q**uod in laudis esse nobis esse nobis

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**O**mnis in laudis esse nobis esse nobis

omni in laudis esse nobis esse nobis

**E**go in laudis esse nobis esse nobis

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478va **Incipit Ordo Virtutum**

478vb *Patriarche et Prophete:*  
Qui sunt hi, qui ut nubes?

*Virtutes:*

O antiqui sancti, quid admiramini in nobis?  
Verbum dei clarescit in forma hominis,  
et ideo fulgemus cum illo,  
5 edificantes membra sui pulcri corporis.

*Patriarche et Prophete:*

Nos sumus radices et vos rami,  
fructus viventis oculi,  
et nos umbra in illo fuimus.

*Querela Animarum in carne positarum:*

O nos peregrine sumus.  
10 Quid fecimus, ad peccata deviantes?  
Filie regis esse debuimus,  
sed in umbram peccatorum cecidimus.  
O vivens sol, porta nos in humeris tuis  
in iustissimam hereditatem quam in Adam perdidimus!  
15 O rex regum, in tuo prelio pugnamus.

*Felix Anima:*

O dulcis divinitas, et o suavis vita,  
in qua perferam vestem preclaram,  
illud accipiens quod perdidit in prima apparitione,  
ad te suspiro, et omnes Virtutes invoco.

*Virtutes:*

20 O felix Anima, et o dulcis creatura dei,  
479ra que edificata es in pro/funda altitudine sapientie dei,  
multum amas.

R: 'Riesenkodex', Wiesbaden, Hessische Landesbibliothek 2 (1177-80), fols. 478va-481vb  
(For the readings in London BL Add. 15102, and a discussion of their significance, see  
Dronke 1986, pp. 180-92)

## Here begins the Play of the Virtues

### Prologue

*Patriarchs and Prophets:*

Who are these, who are like clouds?

*Virtues:*

You holy ones of old, why do you marvel at us?

The Word of God grows bright in the shape of man,  
and thus we shine with him,

5 building up the limbs of his beautiful body.

*Patriarchs and Prophets:*

We are the roots, and you, the boughs,

fruits of the living eye,

and in that eye we were the shadow.

### Scene 1

*The lament of (a chorus of) embodied Souls:*

Oh, we are strangers here!

10 What have we done, straying to realms of sin?

We should have been daughters of the King,  
but we have fallen into the shadow of sins.

Oh living Sun, carry us on your shoulders  
back to that most just heritage we lost in Adam!

15 King of kings, we are fighting in your battle.

*Anima (happily):*

Oh sweet divinity, oh gentle life,

in which I shall wear a radiant robe,

receiving that which I lost in my first manifestation –

I sigh for you, and invoke all the Virtues.

*Virtues:*

20 You happy Soul, sweet and divine creation,

fashioned in the deep height of the wisdom of God,

you show great love.

*Felix Anima:*

O libenter veniam ad vos,  
ut prebeatis michi osculum cordis.

*Virtutes:*

25 Nos debemus militare tecum, o filia regis.

*Sed, gravata, Anima conqueritur:*

O gravis labor, et o durum pondus  
quod habeo in veste huius vite,  
quia nimis grave michi est contra carnem pugnare.

*Virtutes ad Animam illam:*

O Anima, voluntate dei constituta,  
30 et o felix instrumentum, quare tam flebilis es  
contra hoc quod deus contrivit in virginea natura?  
Tu debes in nobis superare diabolium.

*Anima illa:*

Succurrite michi, adiuvando, ut possim stare!

*Scientia Dei ad Animam illam:*

Vide quid illud sit quo es induta, filia salvationis,  
35 et esto stabilis, et numquam cades.

*Infelix, Anima:*

O nescio quid faciam,  
aut ubi fugiam!  
O ve michi, non possum perficere  
hoc quod sum induta.

40 Certe illud volo abicere!

*Virtutes:*

O infelix conscientia,  
o misera Anima,  
479rb quare abscondis faciem tuam / coram creatore tuo?

*Scientia Dei:*

Tu nescis, nec vides, nec sapis illum qui te constituit.

*Anima illa:*

45 Deus creavit mundum:  
non facio illi iniuriam,  
sed volo uti illo!



*Anima (happily):*

Oh let me come to you joyfully,  
that you may give me the kiss of your heart!

*Virtues:*

25 We must fight together with you, royal daughter.

*Anima, depressed, laments:*

Oh grievous toil, oh harsh weight  
that I bear in the dress of this life:  
it is too grievous for me to fight against my body.

*Virtues (to Anima):*

30 Anima, you that were given your place by the will of God,  
you instrument of bliss, why are you so tearful  
in the face of the evil God crushed in a maidenly being?  
You must overcome the devil in our midst.

*Anima:*

Support me, help me to stay firm!

*Knowledge of God (to Anima):*

35 Look at the dress you are wearing, daughter of salvation:  
be steadfast, and you'll never fall.

*Anima (unhappily)*

I don't know what to do  
or where to flee.  
Woe is me, I cannot complete  
this dress I have put on.

40 Indeed I want to cast it off!

*Virtues:*

Unhappy state of mind,  
oh poor Anima,  
why do you hide your face in the presence of your Creator?

*Knowledge of God:*

You do not know or see or taste the One who has set you here.

*Anima:*

45 God created the world:  
I'm doing him no injury –  
I only want to enjoy it!

*Strepitus Diaboli ad Animam illam:*

Fatue, fatue quid prodest tibi laborare? Respice mundum, et amplectetur te magno honore.

*Virtutes:*

- 50 O plangens vox est hec maximi doloris!  
 Ach, ach, quedam mirabilis victoria  
 in mirabili desiderio dei surrexit,  
 in qua delectatio carnis se latenter abscondit,  
 heu, heu, ubi voluntas crimina nescivit  
 55 et ubi desiderium hominis lasciviam fugit.  
 Luge, luge ergo in his, Innocentia,  
 que in pudore bono integritatem non amisisti,  
 et que avariciam gutturis antiqui serpentis ibi non devorasti.

*Diabolus:*

- Que est hec potestas, quod nullus sit preter deum? Ego autem dico, qui  
 60 voluerit me et voluntatem meam sequi, dabo illi omnia. Tu vero, tuis  
 sequacibus nichil habes quod dare possis, quia etiam vos omnes nescitis  
 quid sitis.

*Humilitas:*

- Ego cum meis sodalibus bene scio  
 quod tu es ille antiquus dracho  
 65 qui super summum volare voluisti –  
 sed ipse deus in abyssum proiecit te./

479va *Virtutes:*

Nos autem omnes in excelsis habitamus.

*Humilitas:*

- Ego, Humilitas, regina Virtutum, dico:  
 venite ad me, Virtutes, et enutriam vos  
 70 ad requirendam perditam dragmam  
 et ad coronandum in perseverantia felicem.

*Virtutes:*

O gloriosa regina, et o suavissima mediatrix,  
 libenter venimus.

<sup>59</sup> preter deum] corr. from preter me by the same hand in R

plangent:

*Devil (shouting to Anima):*

What use to you is toiling foolishly, foolishly? Look to the world: it will embrace you with great honour.

*Virtues:*

50 Is this not a plangent voice, of utmost sorrow?

Ah, a certain wondrous victory already  
rose in that Soul, in her wondrous longing for God,  
in which a sensual delight was secretly hidden,  
alas, where previously the will had known no guilt

55 and the desire fled man's wantonness.

Mourn for this, mourn, Innocence,  
you who lost no perfection in your fair modesty,  
who did not devour greedily, with the gullet of the serpent of old.

*Devil:*

60 What is this power – as if there were no one but God? I say, whoever  
wants to follow me and do my will, I'll give him everything. As for you,  
Humility, you have nothing that you can give your followers: none of  
you even know what you are!

*Humility:*

My comrades and I know very well  
that you are the dragon of old  
65 who craved to fly higher than the highest one:  
but God himself hurled you in the abyss.

*Virtues:*

As for us, we dwell in the heights.

## Scene 2

*Humility:*

I, Humility, queen of the Virtues, say:  
come to me, you Virtues, and I'll give you the skill  
70 to seek and find the drachma that is lost  
and to crown her who perseveres blissfully.

\* lost coin (ll. 70)

*Virtues:*

Oh glorious queen, gentlest mediatrix,  
gladly we come.

*Humilitas:*

Ideo, dilectissime filie,

75 teneo vos in regali talamo.

*Karitas:*

Ego Karitas, flos amabilis –

venite ad me, Virtutes, et perducam vos

in candidam lucem floris virge.

*Virtutes:*

O dilectissime flos, ardenti desiderio currimus ad te.

*Timor Dei:*

80 Ego, Timor Dei, vos felicissimas filias preparo

ut inspiciatis in deum vivum et non pereatis.

*Virtutes:*

O Timor, valde utilis es nobis:

habemus enim perfectum studium numquam a te separari.

*Diabolus:*

Eugel eugel quis est tantus timor? et quis est tantus amor? Ubi est

85 pugnator, et ubi est remunerator? Vos nescitis quid colitis.

*Virtutes:*

Tu autem exterritus es per summum iudicem,

479vb quia, inflatus superbia, mer/sus es in gehennam.

*Obedientia:*

Ego lucida Obedientia –

venite ad me, pulcherrime filie, et reducam vos

90 ad patriam et ad osculum regis.

*Virtutes:*

O dulcissima vocatrix,

nos decet in magno studio pervenire ad te.

*Fides:*

Ego Fides, speculum vite:

venerabiles filie, venite ad me

95 et ostendo vobis fontem salientem.

*Virtutes:*

O serena, speculata, habemus fiduciam

pervenire ad verum fontem per te.

*Humility:*

Because of this, beloved daughters,  
75 I'll keep your place in the royal wedding-chamber.

*Charity:*

I am Charity, the flower of love –  
come to me, Virtues, and I'll lead you  
into the radiant light of the flower of the rod.

*Virtues:*

Dearest flower, with ardent longing we run to you.

*Fear of God:*

80 I, Fear of God, can prepare you, blissful daughters,  
to gaze upon the living God and not die of it.

*Virtues:*

Fear, you can help us greatly:  
we are filled with the longing never to part from you.

*Devil:*

Bravo! Bravo! What is this great fear, and this great love? Where is the  
champion? Where the prize-giver? You don't even know what you are  
85 worshipping!

*Virtues:*

But you, you were terrified at the supreme Judge,  
for, swollen with pride, you were plunged into Gehenna.

*Obedience:*

I am Obedience, the shining one –  
come to me, lovely daughters, and I'll lead you  
90 to your homeland and to the kiss of the King.

*Virtues:*

Sweetest summoner,  
it is right for us to come, most eagerly, to you.

*Faith:*

I am Faith, the mirror of life:  
precious daughters, come to me  
95 and I shall show you the leaping fountain.

*Virtues:*

Serene one, mirror-like, we trust in you:  
we shall arrive at that fountain through you.

*Spes:*

Ego sum dulcis conspectrix viventis oculi,  
 quam fallax torpor non decipit –  
 100 unde vos, o tenebre, non potestis me obnubilare.

*Virtutes:*

O vivens vita, et o suavis consolatrix,  
 tu mortifera mortis vincis  
 et vidente oculo clausuram celi aperis.

*Castitas:*

O Virginitas, in regali thalamo stas.  
 105 O quam dulciter ardes in amplexibus regis,  
 cum te sol perfulget  
 ita quod nobilis flos tuus numquam cadet./  
 48ora O virgo nobilis, te numquam inveniet umbra in cadente flore!

*Virtutes:*

Flos campi cadit vento, pluvia spargit eum.  
 110 O Virginitas, tu permanes in symphoniis supernorum civium:  
 unde es suavis flos qui numquam aresces.

*Innocentia:*

Fugite, oves, spurcias Diabolil

*Virtutes:*

Has te succurrente fugiemus.

*Contemptus Mundi:*

Ego, Contemptus Mundi, sum candor vite.  
 115 O misera terre peregrinatio  
 in multis laboribus – te dimitto.  
 O Virtutes, venite ad me  
 et ascendamus ad fontem vite!

*Virtutes:*

O gloriosa domina, tu semper habes certamina Christi,  
 120 o magna virtus, que mundum conculcas,  
 unde etiam victorose in celo habitas.

*Amor Celestis:*

Ego aurea porta in celo fixa sum:  
 qui per me transit  
 numquam amaram petulantiam in mente sua gustabit.

*Hope:*

I am the sweet beholder of the living eye,  
I whom no dissembling torpor can deceive.

100 Darkness, you cannot cloud my gaze!

*Virtues:*

Living life, gentle, consoling one,  
you overcome the deadly shafts of death  
and with your seeing eye lay heaven's gate open.

*Chastity:*

Maidenhood, you remain within the royal chamber.

105 How sweetly you burn in the King's embraces,  
when the Sun blazes through you,  
never letting your noble flower fall.

Gentle maiden, you will never know the shadow over the falling flower!

*Virtues:*

The flower in the meadow falls in the wind, the rain splashes it,

110 But you, Maidenhood, remain in the symphonies of heavenly habitants:  
you are the tender flower that will never grow dry.

*Innocence:*

My flock, flee from the Devil's taints!

*Virtues:*

We shall flee them, if you give us aid.

*World-rejection:*

I, World-rejection, am the blaze of life.

115 Oh wretched, exiled state on earth,  
with all your toils – I let you go.

Come to me, you Virtues,  
and we'll climb up to the fountain of life!

*Virtues:*

Glorious lady, you that always fight Christ's battles,

120 great power that tread the world under your feet,  
you thereby dwell in heaven, victoriously.

*Heavenly Love:*

I am the golden gate that's fixed in heaven:  
whoever passes through me  
will never taste bitter rebelliousness in her mind.

*Virtutes:*

- 125 O filia regis, tu semper es in amplexi/bus quos mundus fugit,  
48orb O quam suavis est tua dilectio in summo deo!

<Disciplina>:

Ego sum amatrix simplicium morum qui turpia opera nesciunt;  
sed semper in regum regem aspicio  
et amplector eum in honore altissimo.

*Virtutes:*

- 130 O tu angelica socia, tu es valde ornata  
in regalibus nuptiis.

*Verecundia:*

Ego obtenebro et fugo atque conculco  
omnes spurcias Diaboli.

*Virtutes:*

- 135 Tu es in edificatione celestis Ierusalem,  
florens in candidis liliis.

*Misericordia:*

O quam amara est illa duricia que non cedit in mentibus,  
misericorditer dolori succurrens!  
Ego autem omnibus dolentibus manum porrigere volo.

*Virtutes:*

- 140 O laudabilis mater peregrinorum,  
tu semper erigis illos,  
atque ungis pauperes et debiles.

*Victoria:*

Ego Victoria velox et fortis pugnatrix sum –  
in lapide pugno, serpentem antiquum conculco.

*Virtutes:*

- 48ova O dulcissima / bellatrix, in torrente fonte  
145 qui absorbit lupum rapacem –  
o gloriosa coronata, nos libenter  
militamus tecum contra illusorem hunc.

*Discretio:*

Ego Discretio sum lux et dispensatrix omnium creaturarum,  
indifferentia dei, quam Adam a se fugavit per lasciviam morum.

<sup>127</sup> <Disciplina>] *speaker's name erased in R*

<sup>143</sup> pugna R

<sup>149</sup> in differentia (*probably as two words*) R



*Virtues:*

125 Royal daughter, you are held fast in the embraces the world shuns:  
how tender is your love in the highest God!

*Discipline:*

I am one who loves innocent ways that know nothing ignoble;  
I always gaze upon the King of kings  
and, as my highest honour, I embrace him.

*Virtues:*

130 Angelic comrade, how comely you are  
in the royal nuptials!

*Shamefastness:*

I cover over, drive away or tread down  
all the filths of the Devil.

*Virtues:*

135 Yours is a part in the building of heavenly Jerusalem,  
flowering among shining lilies.

*Mercy:*

How bitter in human minds is the harshness that does not soften  
and mercifully ease pain!  
I want to reach out my hand to all who suffer.

*Virtues:*

140 Matchless mother of exiles,  
you are always raising them up  
and anointing the poor and the weak.

*Victory:*

I am Victory, the swift, brave champion:  
I fight with a stone, I tread the age-old serpent down.

*Virtues:*

145 Oh gentlest warrior, in the scorching fountain  
that swallowed up the voracious wolf –  
glorious, crowned one, how gladly  
we'll fight against that trickster, at your side!

*Discretion:*

I am Discretion, light and moderator of all creatures –  
the impartiality of God, that Adam drove away by acting wantonly.

*Virtutes:*

150 O pulcherrima mater, quam dulcis et quam suavis es,  
quia nemo confunditur in te.

*Pacientia:*

Ego sum columpna que molliri non potest,  
quia fundamentum meum in deo est.

*Virtutes:*

O firma que stas in caverna petre,  
155 et o gloriosa bellatrix que suffers omnia

*Humilitas:*

O filie Israhel, sub arbore suscitavit vos deus,  
unde in hoc tempore recordamini plantationis sue.  
Gaudete ergo, filie Syon!

*Virtutes:*

Heu, heu, nos Virtutes plangamus et lugeamus,  
160 quia ovis domini fugit vitam!

*Querela Anime penitentis et Virtutes invocantis:*

O vos regales Virtutes, quam speciose  
et quam fulgentes estis in summo sole,  
et quam dulcis est vestra mansio –  
480vb et ideo, o ve / michi, quia a vobis fugi!

*Virtutes:*

165 O fugitive, veni, veni ad nos, et deus suscipiet te.

*Anima illa:*

Ach! ach! fervens dulcedo absorbit me in peccatis,  
et ideo non ausa sum intrare.

*Virtutes:*

Noli timere nec fugere,  
quia pastor bonus querit in te perditam ovem suam.

*Anima illa:*

170 Nunc est michi necesse ut suscipiatis me,  
quoniam in vulneribus feteo  
quibus antiquus serpens me contaminavit.

171 quō (i.e. quomodo) R

*Virtues:*

150 Falrest mother, how sweet you are, how gentle –  
in you no one can be confounded.

*Patience:*

I am the pillar that can never be made to yield,  
as my foundation is in God.

*Virtues:*

155 You that stay firm in the rocky cavern,  
you are the glorious warrior who endures all.

*Humility:*

Daughters of Israel, God raised you from beneath the tree,  
so now remember how it was planted.  
Therefore rejoice, daughters of Jerusalem.

### Scene 3

*Virtues:*

160 Alas, alas, let us lament and mourn,  
because our master's sheep has fled from life!

*Anima (laments, penitent and calling upon the Virtues):*

You royal Virtues, how graceful,  
how flashing-bright you look in the highest Sun,  
and how delectable is your home,  
and so, what woe is mine that I fled from you!

*Virtues:*

165 You who escaped, come, come to us, and God will take you back.

*Anima:*

Ah, but a burning sweetness swallowed me up in sins,  
so I did not dare come in.

*Virtues:*

Don't be afraid or run away:  
the good Shepherd is searching for his lost sheep – it is you.

*Anima:*

170 Now I need your help to gather me up –  
I stink of the wounds  
that the age-old serpent has made gangrenous.

*Virtutes:*

Curre ad nos, et sequere vestigia illa  
 in quibus numquam cades in societate nostra,  
 175 et deus curabit te.

*Penitens Anima ad Virtutes:*

Ego peccator qui fugi vitam:  
 plenus ulceribus veniam ad vos,  
 ut prebeatis michi scutum redemptionis.  
 O tu omnis militia regine,  
 180 et o vos, candida lilia ipsius, cum rosea purpura,  
 inclinate vos ad me, quia peregrina a vobis exulavi,  
 et adiuvate me, ut in sanguine filii dei possim surgere.

*Virtutes:*

481ra O Anima fugitiva, esto robusta,  
 et indue te arma lucis.

*Anima illa:*

185 Et o vera medicina, Humilitas, prebe michi auxilium,  
 quia superbia in multis viciis fregit me,  
 multas cicatrices michi imponens.  
 Nunc fugio ad te, et ideo suscipe me.

*Humilitas:*

O omnes Virtutes, suscipite lugentem peccatorem,  
 190 in suis cicatricibus, propter vulnera Christi,  
 et perducite eum ad me.

*Virtutes:*

Volumus te reducere et nolumus te deserere,  
 et omnis celestis militia gaudet super te –  
 ergo decet nos in symphonia sonare.

*Humilitas:*

195 O misera filia, volo te amplecti,  
 quia magnus medicus dura et amara vulnera  
 propter te passus est.

*Virtutes:*

O vivens fons, quam magna est suavitas tua,  
 qui faciem istorum in te non amisisti,

*Virtues:*

Run back to us, retrace those steps  
where you'll never falter, in our company:

175 God will heal you.

*Anima (penitently, to the Virtues):*

I am the sinner who fled from life:  
riddled with sores I'll come to you –  
you can offer me redemption's shield.  
All of you, warriors of Queen Humility,

180 her white lilies and her crimson roses,

stoop to me, who exiled myself from you like a stranger,  
and help me, that in the blood of the Son of God I may arise.

*Virtues:*

Fugitive Anima, now be strong:  
put on the armour of light.

*Anima:*

185 And you, true medicine, Humility, grant me your help,  
for pride has broken me in many vices,  
inflicting many scars on me.  
Now I'm escaping to you – so take me up!

*Humility:*

All you Virtues, lift up this mournful sinner,  
190 with all her scars, for the sake of Christ's wounds,  
and bring her to me.

*Virtues:*

We want to bring you back – we shan't desert you,  
the whole of heaven's host will have joy in you:  
thus it is right for us now to play our symphony.

*Humility:*

195 Oh unhappy daughter, I want to embrace you:  
the great surgeon has suffered harsh and bitter wounds  
for your sake.

*Virtues:*

Living fountain, how great is your sweetness:  
you did not reject the gaze of these upon you –

200 sed acute previdisti  
 quomodo eos de angelico casu abstraheres  
 qui se estimabant illud habere  
 481rb quod non licet sic / stare;  
 unde gaude, filia Syon,  
 205 quia deus tibi multos reddit  
 quos serpens de te abscidere voluit,  
 qui nunc in maiori luce fulgent  
 quam prius illorum causa fuisset.

*Diabolus:*

Que es, aut unde venis? Tu amplexata es me, et ego foras eduxi te. Sed  
 210 nunc in reversione tua confundis me – ego autem pugna mea deiciam  
 tel

*Penitens Anima:*

Ego omnes vias meas malas esse cognovi, et ideo fugi a te.  
 Modo autem, o illusor, pugno contra te.  
 Inde tu, o regina Humilitas, tuo medicamine adiuva me!

*Humilitas ad Victoriam:*

215 O Victoria, que istum in celo superasti,  
 curre cum militibus tuis  
 et omnes ligate Diabolum hunc!

*Victoria ad Virtutes:*

O fortissimi et gloriosissimi milites, venite,  
 et adiuuate me istum fallacem vincere.

*Virtutes:*

220 O dulcissima bellatrix, in torrente fonte  
 qui absorbit lupum rapacem –  
 o gloriosa coronata, nos libenter  
 militamus tecum contra illusorem hunc.

*Humilitas:*

Ligate ergo istum, o Virtutes preclare!

no, acutely you foresaw  
how you could avert them from the fall the angels fell,  
they who thought they possessed a power  
which no law allows to be like that.  
Rejoice then, daughter Jerusalem,  
for God is giving you back many  
whom the serpent wanted to sunder from you,  
who now gleam in a greater brightness  
than would have been their state before.

#### Scene 4

*Devil:*

Who are you? Where are you coming from? You were in my embrace, I  
led you out. Yet now you are going back, defying me – but I shall fight  
you and bring you down!

*Anima (penitently):*

I recognised that all my ways were wicked, so I fled you.  
But now, you trickster, I'll fight you face to face.  
Queen Humility, come with your medicine, give me aid!

*Humility:*

Victory, you who once conquered this creature in the heavens,  
run now, with all your soldiery,  
and all of you bind this Fiend!

*Victory:*

Bravest and most glorious warriors, come,  
help me to vanquish this deceitful one!

*Virtues:*

Oh sweetest warrior, in the scorching fountain  
that swallowed up the voracious wolf –  
glorious, crowned one, how gladly  
we'll fight against that trickster, at your side!

*Humility:*

Bind him then, you shining Virtues!

*Virtutes:*

225 O regina nostra, tibi parebimus,  
et precepta tua in omnibus adimplebimus.

*Victoria:*

481va Gaudete, o socii, quia antiquus serpens / ligatus est!

*Virtutes:*

Laus tibi, Christe, rex angelorum!

*Castitas:*

In mente altissimi, o Satana, caput tuum conculcavi,  
230 et in virginea forma dulce miraculum colui,  
ubi filius dei venit in mundum;  
unde deiectus es in omnibus spoliis tuis,  
et nunc gaudeant omnes qui habitant in celis,  
quia venter tuus confusus est.

*Diabolus:*

235 Tu nescis quid colis, quia venter tuus vacuus est pulcra forma de viro  
sumpta – ubi transis preceptum quod deus in suavi copula precepit;  
unde nescis quid sis!

*Castitas:*

Quomodo posset me hoc tangere  
quod tua suggestio polluit per immundiciam incestus?  
240 Unum virum protuli, qui genus humanum  
ad se congregat, contra te, per nativitatem suam.

*Virtutes:*

O deus, quis es tu, qui in temetipso  
hoc magnum consilium habuisti,  
quod destruxit infernalem haustum  
245 in publicanis et peccatoribus,  
qui nunc lucent in superna bonitate!  
Unde, o rex, laus sit tibi.  
O pater omnipotens, ex te fluit fons in igneo amore:  
481vb perduc / filios tuos in rectum ventum velorum aquarum,  
250 ita ut et nos eos hoc modo perducamus  
in celestem Ierusalem.



*Virtues:*

225 Queen of us all, we obey –  
we'll carry out your orders totally.

*Victory:*

Comrades, rejoice: the age-old snake is bound!

*Virtues:*

Praise be to you, Christ, King of the angels!

*Chastity:*

130 In the mind of the Highest, Satan, I trod on your head,  
and in a virgin form I nurtured a sweet miracle  
when the Son of God came into the world;  
therefore you are laid low, with all your plunder;  
and now let all who dwell in heaven rejoice,  
because your belly has been confounded.

*Devil:*

235 You don't know what you are nurturing, for your belly is devoid of the  
beautiful form that woman receives from man; in this you transgress  
the command that God enjoined in the sweet act of love; so you don't  
even know what you are!

*Chastity:*

How can what you say affect me?  
Even your suggestion smirches it with foulness.  
240 I did bring forth a man, who gathers up mankind  
to himself, against you, through his nativity.

*Virtues:*

Who are you, God, who held  
such great counsel in yourself,  
a counsel that destroyed the draught of hell  
245 in publicans and sinners,  
who now shine in paradisa! goodness!  
Praise to you, King, for this!  
Almighty Father, from you flowed a fountain in fiery love:  
guide your children into a fair wind, sailing the waters,  
250 so that we too may steer them in this way  
into the heavenly Jerusalem.

< *Virtutes et Anime* >:

- In principio omnes creature viruerunt,  
in medio flores floruerunt;  
postea viriditas descendit.
- 255 Et istud vir preliator vidit et dixit:  
Hoc scio, sed aureus numerus nondum est plenus.  
Tu ergo, paternum speculum aspice:  
in corpore meo fatigationem sustineo,  
parvuli etiam mei deficiunt.
- 260 Nunc memor esto, quod plenitudo que in primo facta est  
arescere non debuit,  
et tunc in te habuisti  
quod oculus tuus numquam cederet  
usque dum corpus meum videres plenum gemmarum.
- 265 Nam me fatigat quod omnia membra mea in irrisionem vadunt.  
Pater, vide, vulnera mea tibi ostendo.  
Ergo nunc, omnes homines,  
genua vestra ad patrem vestrum flectite,  
ut vobis manum suam porrigat.

## Finale

### *Virtues and Souls:*

In the beginning all creation was verdant,  
flowers blossomed in the midst of it;  
later, greenness sank away.

155 And the champion saw this and said:

"I know it, but the golden number is not yet full.  
You then, behold me, mirror of your fatherhood:  
in my body I am suffering exhaustion,  
even my little ones faint.

260 Now remember that the fullness which was made in the beginning  
need not have grown dry,  
and that then you resolved  
that your eye would never fail  
until you saw my body full of jewels.

255 For it wearies me that all my limbs are exposed to mockery:  
Father, behold, I am showing you my wounds."

So now, all you people,  
bend your knees to the Father,  
that he may reach you his hand.

## Explanatory notes

- 1           Isaiah 60, 8.  
6-8        Cf. Isaiah 60, 21.  
14         The souls, begging to be carried back to paradise, claim it is most justly theirs (cf. 11).  
18         in prima apparitione] I.e. in Anima's first appearance on earth, united to a body.  
22         Cf. Luke 7, 47.  
24         Cf. Song of Songs, I, 1.  
30         felix instrumentum] Hildegard may have two senses of *instrumentum* in mind: seeing Anima as instrumental in achieving her state of bliss, and as the blissful instrument on which God can play his music.  
30-1       I.e. Why are you so tearful at the prospect of crushing sin, which God achieved in the maidenly nature of Mary?  
32         in nobis] In terms of the play, Diabolus is in the midst of the Virtues; but the meaning may also be microcosmic: Anima must conquer Diabolus by using the powers (*virtutes*) within herself.  
34         As Hildegard uses *induo* with acc. at 39, and with double acc. at 184, she may also have written *quod es induta* here, but been 'corrected', by secretary or copyist, in the light of the (frequent, though not invariable) biblical Latin usage of passive forms of *induo* with abl. (cf. Dronke 1992, pp. 151-2). The reference is to the mortal dress that Anima has to complete (*perficere*, 38) before she can win the heavenly *vestem preclaram* (17).  
43         Cf. Genesis 3, 8.  
48         Fatue, fatue] These could also be constructed as masc. voc.: Hildegard later treats the masc. forms *fugitivus* and *peccator* (165, 176, 189) as being of common gender, applying them to Anima.  
49         amplectetur] The world's 'embrace' is the antitype of the divine embraces (cf. 125, 129, 195, 209).  
58         avariciam] Acc. for abl., or perhaps understand <*secundum*> *avariciam*.  
59         The syntax is difficult: either understand *que dicit* after *potestas*, or construe *quod* in a sense akin to *quasi*.  
60         dabo illi omnia] Cf. Matthew 4, 9.  
64-6       The fall of Lucifer (cf. esp. Isaiah 14, 12 ff.; Apocalypse 12, 7-12) is a leitmotif throughout Hildegard's writings.  
70         Cf. Luke 15, 8-10.

- 84 Eugel eugel] The double *euge* is used as a derisive shout in Psalm 34, 21 and 25; 39, 16; 69, 4; Ezekiel 25, 3. Diabolus here mocks both fear of God and love of God. With *Ubi est pugnator* . . . he is saying, there is no struggle, and no one to reward the winner in a struggle.
- 86 To counter his boast that he knows no *timor*, the Virtues remind Diabolus that he was afraid of God when he was plunged into the abyss.
- 90 osculum regis] Cf. Song 1, 1-3.
- 95 fontem salientem] Cf. John 4, 14.
- 98 conspectrix viventis oculi] Hildegard probably intends the genitive to have both subjective and objective force: Spes gazes upon God's eye, and she is the gazing of God's eye, 'the life of life' (cf. 101, 103).
- 104 (and 112) Neither Castitas nor Innocentia declare themselves, like the other Virtues. Hildegard presents them as timid figures, so that Castitas celebrates Maidenhood rather than herself, and Innocentia utters only the briefest words of encouragement, to the *oves* – presumably the audience, or *omnes homines* (267). The expression *oves* foreshadows the allusions to the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15, 3-7) at the opening of the next scene (160).
- 109 Flos campi] Cf. Song 2, 1.
- 126 dilectio in summo deo] The ambiguity may well be deliberate: Amor Celestis exists in the highest God and proceeds from him – or again, is a quality that opens heaven to mortals and comes to rest in God.
- 127 The name of the Virtue who sings these lines has been erased, and the reading *Caritas* in BL Add. 15102 cannot be right, since she has already declared herself (76-8). I adopt Maura Böckeler's suggestion *Disciplina*, from her edn (*Reigen der Tugenden*, Maria Laach 1927).
- 138 manum porrigere] Cf. the play's closing line (269).
- 141 Misericordia's anointing of the poor and weak recalls the action of the Good Samaritan, *misericordia motus* (Luke 10, 33-4).
- 143 Cf. 1 Kings 17, 50; Genesis 3, 15.
- 144-5 See the Introduction above, p. 150.
- 154 Cf. Song 2, 14.
- 156 Cf. Song 8, 5.
- 165 fugitive] Hildegard treats *fugitivus* as being of common gender (cf. note to 48 above).
- 166 fervens . . . absorbuit: cf. 144-5.
- 168 Noli timere] such an expression is characteristically used by angels in Luke: to Zachary (1, 13), to Mary (1, 30), and to the shepherds (2, 10).
- 169 Cf. John 10, 11 and 14; Luke 15, 4.
- 184 Cf. Romans 13, 12.
- 187 Cf. Psalm 37, 6.
- 193 Cf. Luke 15, 7 and 10.
- 220-3 The Virtues repeat their acclamation of Victoria (= 144-7).
- 227 Cf. Apocalypse 20, 2.
- 229 Cf. Genesis 3, 15, and 143 above.

240-1 Cf. John 12, 32.

249 Cf. Isaiah 60, 9 (*naves maris . . . ut adducam filios tuos*).

254 On Hildegard's concept and imagery of *viriditas*, see esp. Dronke 1984, pp. 82-7.

## IX *Ludus de passione* *The Passion Play, from the* *Carmina Burana* (Bressanone?)

### Style, meaning and structure

The *Carmina Burana Passion Play* shows in striking ways the contrast – and complementarity – between two radically divergent dramatic styles and uses of dialogue. There are many short scenes in which the presentation is succinctly biblical and the language virtually confined to that of gospels and liturgy; and there are two long scenes, one with Mary Magdalen as heroine in the first half, one with Mary the mother as heroine in the second, that are rich in dramatic and poetic invention, in the portrayal of emotions about which the gospels say nothing, and in captivating non-biblical, non-liturgical language. These scenes include vivid strophes in the vernacular as well as in Latin, strophes that will especially have reached out to and moved the unlearned in the early audiences. If the whole play, reckoning with the miming and *reprises* indicated in the text, took some two hours to perform, these large freely conceived scenes of the two Mariés will have occupied at least half that playing-time, and will have dominated the imaginative effect of the whole.

There are some indications that the *Carmina Burana* play, composed probably c. 1180 (cf. Dronke 1992, pp. 457 ff.) but copied a good half-century later, is defectively preserved. The most disconcerting is the initial rubric, which mentions the entry of two characters – Pilate's wife, and the Merchant's wife – who do not in fact appear in the play-text as it survives. Both have parts in the Resurrection-play (CB 15\*, at 14–17, 88–91) which precedes in the codex, though it was inserted later. There are at least three possibilities: (1) that the scenes which concern the Merchant and Pilate in the *Passion Play* are fragmentary, and once included further strophes that featured the two wives; (2) that the initial rubric here has been garbled under the influence of an earlier copy of CB 15\* (which includes 'Pilate and his wife' in its opening instructions, and which begins with the same liturgical responsory, 'Pilate having entered ...', as our play); (3) that the rubricator of the *Passion Play*, knowing a version of CB 15\*, regarded this as a sequel, so