THE BANQUET OF SENSE

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I USE the term "Banquet of Sense" to describe a theme in Renaissance art and literature: one of those patterns, literary and iconographical, that recur more frequently than is supposed; which import into the context in which they are found meanings that the modern eye can miss; and which can alter and deepen what seems to be the obvious significance of even familiar passages. It is permissible, since the publication of Curtius's book, to call such elements *topoi*, though this strains the original rhetorical sense of the term. Perhaps the vaguer "theme" will serve. The expression "banquet of sense" is probably most familiar from the title of Chapman's poem *Ovid's Banquet of Sense*, but that is one of the most difficult poems in the language, and I shall come to it last, when I have tried to provide some idea of what the theme implies in other contexts. It may be useful to consider first a familiar poem of which the structure, a very rigid one, is perhaps not generally understood, and which includes a rather full literary banquet of sense—Marvell's *Dialogue between the resolved Soul and Created Pleasure*.

This work is divided into two sections. In the first, the resolved soul, the true warfaring Christian, successfully resists a sensual temptation or trial. In the second he overcomes the temptations of women, wealth, glory and improper learning. In its entirety this scheme, rarely found in such purity, but also present in Spenser and in *Paradise Regain'd*, represents a totality of possible temptations: “Triumph, triumph, victorious Soul,

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1 A lecture delivered in the Library series of public lectures.
The World has not one Pleasure more." At the back of this is the common interpretation of Luke iv. 13 as signifying that the temptations undergone by Christ in the desert included all that were possible, and so indicated to the Christian the whole strategy of the devil. The translation to literature, and contaminated with the Renaissance myth of the Christianized Hercules, with help from St. Augustine in the discrimination between Christian and pagan Heroic Virtue, the theme of total temptation assumes the form given it by Marvell, and the defeat of sensual temptation is related to that of the Choice of Hercules. The rejection of Pleasure may take other forms (as, for example, those which imitate the refusal of Ulysses to drink of Circe's cup, so choosing Heroic Virtue; whereas those who drank of it fell into bestiality, called the opposite of Heroic Virtue in Aristotle's seminal Chapter, Nicomachean Ethics, VII. i). But Marvell chooses to open with a Banquet of Sense, properly rejected. The senses are treated in ascending order; from Taste and Touch, which operate only in direct contact with the object of sense; to Smell, which is a kind of mean between these and the higher senses, and to Sight and Hearing, the highest, which operate at a distance without contact. Then he proceeds to treat the other parts of the total temptation, until with its final temptation of forbidden learning rejected, the Soul completes its imitation of Christ.

The Banquet of Sense has both Christian and pagan sources. The Christian source is the passage on the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians x. Its interpretation was obviously of central spiritual and political importance in the seventeenth century. St. Paul speaks first of manna as a type of the Eucharist, observing that the backslidings of the Israelites in the desert teach us that, being allowed spiritual meat and drink, we should not "sit down" to unspiritual. Partakers of the body and blood of Christ, we should not with the Gentiles sacrifice to devils: "Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. . . .

If any man say unto you, this is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of the Lord.” And in the same chapter is the assurance that God “will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able”. The direct use of this passage in devotional writing may be illustrated by Jeremy Taylor’s recommendation of prayer before and after food so that we may “remove and carry up our mind and spirit to the celestial table, often thinking of it, and desiring it, that by enkindling thy desire to heavenly banquets, thou mayst be indifferent, and less passionate for the earthly”.¹

The pagan shadow of the Eucharist is the banquet, or Symposium, of Plato; and its opposite, the shadow of the Pauline “table of devils”, is “nature’s banquet”, or “the banquet of sense”.² As a matter of fact, the easily achieved association of a sense-by-sense temptation with the tale of the temperate man’s resistance to evil occurs very early, in the primal source of the Choice of Hercules motif, Xenophon’s account of the myth told by the sophist Prodicus; νάκλα promises the young man ease and pleasure: “You shall taste all of life’s sweets and escape all bitters. In the first place, you shall not trouble your brain with war or speculation; other topics shall engage your mind; your only speculation, what meat or drink shall you find agreeable to your palate; what delight of ear or eye; what pleasure of smell or touch; what darling lover’s intercourse shall most enrapture you; how you shall pillow your limbs in the softest slumber; how cull each individual pleasure without alloy of pain.”³ This treatment of the senses seems, however, to have been neglected by Xenophon’s

¹ Holy Living, ii. 7. See also Colet on 1 Cor. xxii, “... at the table of the Lord the case is this, that the communicants of Christ are turned into him, whereas, at the table of the devils, they either change the devils unto themselves; or are changed into the devils” (Colet’s Lectures on 1 Corinthians, ed. J. H. Lupton, London, 1874, p. 108). But Colet allegorizes: the good banquet is Scripture, the bad pagan learning.

² The two could have been associated by a recollection of the early Christian ἀγάπη, mentioned by Chrysostom (in 1 Cor. xi. 17, Hom. xxvii) and Tertullian (Apol. xxxix). It was familiar from religious controversy. See Hooker, Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Preface, iv. 3; Everyman ed., London, 1907, i. 110-11, and in 3.

earlier imitators, and to have been re-attached later to the theme of the temptation of Pleasure; and then the senses were given a more regular sequence, so that, as a rule, good love proceeded from the highest senses up to intellect, and bad to the lowest sense, touch. In short, like Circe's cup, the natural temptations of the senses as represented in a banquet of sense serve to distinguish clearly between men who aspire to Heroic Virtue (or to the love of God) and men who sink into bestiality, preferring the creature to the Creator. The passage on the senses in Augustine's Confessions no doubt remained in people's minds: it is indeed echoed in Marvell's language.

The schematic presentation of the senses as a group with clearly defined iconographical attributes relating to a banquet is a late invention. It does not seem to occur in Italian painting, though it is common in Netherlandish art, where it perhaps flourished by association with the popular theme of the Prodigal Son. Unluckily no art historian has provided a professional description of the material, and this is a very amateur account of the way it was used. An engraving by Adrian Collaert bears the legend: "Accipe homo quae quinque ferunt munera Sensus/Accipe, & oblatis prudentius utere donis; /Ne te quos tibi cernis famularier ulterior, /His famulum affectus reddat mala suada cupido", emphasizing the need for temperance, lest the...

1 For example, Silius Italicus, Punica xv, where Scipio is tempted. Voluptas urges him to shun war, offering him ease instead. The argument of Virtus prevails: "quis aetheris servatur seminis ortus/coeli porta patet". Silius perhaps avoided the senses because in Book XI he had already shown the demoralizing effect of feasting and pleasure-seeking in Hannibal and his troops at Capua. For a complete history of the Prodician Choice from antiquity forward, see Erwin Panofsky, Hercules am Scheidewege, Berlin, 1930. Elizabethan treatments of the theme are discussed in Hallet Smith, Elizabethan Poetry (1952), p. 296. The statement that in England the theme was "ignored until it was made widely known by Shaftesbury's thesis" (W. Wells, Leeds Art Calendar, iii (1953), 27) is false.

2 Confessions x. ii. et seq. Augustine on the pleasures of hearing ("his voluptates aurium tenacius me implicaverant et subiugaverant") may have suggested Marvell's "none can chain a mind That this sweet chordage cannot bind".

3 "Banquet" here has the usual sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sense of a light collation, not a main meal.
senses should become not servants but masters; for, in Chapman's favourite expression, "dati sunt sensus ad intellectum excitandum." The senses are "the five gates through which ideas and apprehensions enter to inhabit the soul", as Ripa puts it in his standard handbook. The danger is that the gratification of the senses should become an end in itself, so that a sensual Voluptas is mistaken for the highest good. In the Collaert engraving the senses are given their symbolic attributes, more or less according to Ripa: Sight with a looking-glass held up to the banqueter, an eagle and a burning cresset; Hearing, with a lute and a fawn; Smell with flowers and a hunting-dog; Taste with a basket of fruit and a cup of wine, a fruit-eating monkey above; Touch in contact with the banqueter and attended by falcon and tortoise, emblem of venereal pleasure. Touch is embraced by the diner, for whom Hearing is playing, and to whom Taste and Touch offer wine and flowers.

In Collaert the emphasis is on danger rather than on dissipation; sometimes the banquet setting seems little more than a way of treating pastime and good company, as in Teniers. But there is normally a moral in it. As a phase of the Prodigal Son story it is, of course, highly moralized by its context, even in so naturalistic a portrayal as Murillo's. On the whole the banqueter is in great danger, is being offered a seductive and disastrous benefit, like Circe's cup. Another way of putting the same case is in the ordinary Choice of Hercules: in the version of Annibale Carracci (called by Panofsky "canonical"), Virtue points to her height which is attained only by a steep road; on it stands a white horse, emblematic of Virtus, manly glory (sometimes it is Pegasus). She is supported by a figure with a Bible. Pleasure wears a revealing gown, and has about her emblems of idle delight—theatrical masks, instruments of music, and so on. There are innumerable variations, Virtue

1 Iconologia (ed. of 1603) p. 499: "I cinque porti, per li quali entranno l'idee, & l'apprensioni ad habitar l'anima."

2 For the pejorative association of monkeys with the sense of taste, see H. W. Janson, Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (1952), pp. 239 ff.
shading over in Pallas, Pleasure into Venus. An engraving after a lost picture by Peter Potter gives a christianized version: Hercules has become the Christian pilgrim choosing between Truth and the World, whom the devil inspires. The way of Truth, who carries a Bible, passes through a strait gate; it is a via crucis, not a way of fame; the angel stands by to crown the man who chooses right. The World offers pleasure and power; an orb in her hair, at her feet the minted gold of wealth; roses, drinking glasses, instruments, and a cushion represent the sensual appeal. Behind her one sees suggested orgies of various sorts, and behind them burning Sodom; Death leads the dance with his drum. Now this takes us very near to a point where the Choice of Hercules and the Banquet of Sense come together; and they do so in an anonymous etching after Sanraedam's Choice. Virtue, attired as Minerva, shows the hero a painting in which one distinguishes the virtues of Fortitude with her column, Justice with scales, Temperance with mixing bowl, and Charity with children. These are on the hill of Virtue. On the other, the hell side, is Vice, displaying a grotesque banquet of sense. The association of this theme with bestiality as opposed to heroic virtue is here extremely obvious. It is "nature's banquet"—to it Comus urges the Lady, and Satan Christ. The contrast, explicit in Paradise Regain'd, is with a heavenly banquet.

I come now to examples of the theme in English poetry, first in Ben Jonson, who uses it at least three times, first in Act IV of Poetaster. We hear of a "heavenly banquet" that Ovid arranges for his friends. Ovid in the play is a poet of talent, but dangerously immoral, and strongly contrasted with Horace whom, a little earlier, we have heard commending the frugal feasts of Scipio Africanus. We see that the term "heavenly banquet" is a deliberate irony; the company, drawn from a loose aristocracy and a court-aping merchant class, dress up as gods and goddesses. Ovid, playing Jove, proclaims that, "of his licentious goodness", he is "willing to make the feast no

1 Shaftesbury says "the shape, countenance, and person" of Pallas may be given to Virtue and those of Venus to Pleasure. (Characteristics [1714], iii. 364).
fast from any manner of pleasure” (iv. v. 15–17). The party takes its rather lascivious course, until music is called for; there is a song, and then another, “to revive our senses” (207). The object of this song, we gather, is:

To celebrate this feast of sense,
As free from scandal, as offence.
Here is beauty, for the eye;
For the ear, sweet melody;
Ambrosiac odours, for the smell;
Delicious nectar for the taste;
For the touch, a lady’s waste;
Which doth all the rest excell! (212–19)

The banquet is interrupted by the arrival of the Emperor Augustus, who is shocked by the blasphemous representation of the gods in pursuit of sensual pleasure; Ovid as a poet, with all the special responsibilities of a poet, is particularly to blame.

O who shall follow virtue and embrace her,
When her false bosom is found nought but air?
Who shall, with greater comfort, comprehend
Her unseen being, and her excellence,
When you, that teach, and should eternize her,
Live, as she were no law unto your lives? (iv. vi. 40–7)

The association of Ovid with the Banquet theme has no source in the poet himself, and must have arisen from Chapman or from the more emancipated reading of the *Ars Amatoria* and *Amores*. The writers of Elizabethan epyllia had gained a certain new freedom in erotic expression; Ovid seems to have become a sort of counter-Plato; and the formal opposition between the two could be expressed very economically in the contrast between the Banquet of Sense and the Banquet of Heavenly Love derived from the *Symposium*.

The clearest example of this collocation is also to be found in Jonson’s late play, *The New Inn*. Lovel, ”a complete gentleman, a soldier, and a scholar is a melancholy guest” in the New Inn where are also found the supposed Lady Frampul and her servants. Prudence, the chambermaid, is elected “sovereign of the sports” at the inn, and she sets up a court of love at which Lovel woos Frances, the supposed Lady, by giving her a full exposition of the true Florentine Art of Love. But Lord Beaufort, a less scholarly gentleman, is seized with an un-
Platonic desire for Laetitia, and in this the contrast resides. Lovel delivers a fairly pure version of some passages in the *Symposium*, modified by Ficino's Commentary upon it. First he is asked to define Love:

... by description,
It is a flame, and ardor of the minde,
Dead, in the proper corps, quick in anothers;
Trans-ferres the Lover into the Loved . . .
It is the likenesse of affections,
Is both the parent, and the nurse of love.
Love is a spirituall coupling of two soules,
So much more excellent, as it least relates
Unto the body . . .

(iii. ii. 95–102)

But Lord Beaufort disagrees:

I relish not these philosophicale feasts;
Give me a banquet o' sense, like that of Ovid:
A forme, to take the eye; a voyce, mine eare;
Pure aromatiques to my sent; a soft,
Smooth, deinty hand, to touch; and, for my taste,
*Ambrosiack* kisses to melt downe the palat. (iii. ii. 125–30)

Here the Plato-Ovid opposition is as clear as anyone could wish and here too the association of the banquet with Ovid and sensual love is so casual as to seem conventional. It is interesting to note that Jonson was disgusted at the failure of this play, and clearly did not believe that its inner meanings were beyond the scope of the common reader, whom he addresses thus: "If thou canst but spell, and join my sense, there is more hope of thee than of a hundred fastidious impertinents who were there present the first day, yet never made piece of their prospects in the right way"—as we should say, never got the right angle on it.¹ The theme was less esoteric than we might suppose.

Beaufort's praise of Ovidian love, of the anti-Platonic Banquet, is at once censured by Lovel; those who indulge it, he says

Are the earthly, lower forme of lovers,
Are only taken with what strikes the senses!
And love by that loose scale. (iii. ii. 131–3)

The distinction is basically that between the two Aphrodites of the *Symposium*—Lovel speaks for Ourania, Beaufort for

¹ It may be noted that Chapman uses precisely this figure in his Preface to *Ovid's Banquet of Sense*.
Pandemos, illustrating his case with kisses stolen from Laetitia, which are qualitatively very different from that formal, licensed, Platonic kiss, mixture of souls, which is to be Lovel's reward from Lady Frampul. We may, says Lovel, be attracted by "what's fair and graceful in an object"; but love must seek out the soul within, that which "can love me again", return love—the Anteros complementary to Eros.

Lovel: My end is lost in loving of a face,
An eye, lip, nose, hand, foot or other part,
Whose all is but a statue, if the mind
Move not, which only can make returne.
The end of love is, to have two made one
In will, and in affection, that the mindes
Be first inoculated, not the bodies.

Beaufort: Gi' me the body, if it be a good one. (III. ii. 148-55)

Lovel censures this remark; Beaufort's kind of love is

A mere degenerate appetite,
A lost, oblique, deprav'd affection,
And beares no marke, or character of Love;

and he concludes with a plea for purity, making the absence of sensuality a condition of true love. The words in which Lady Frampul signifies her approval sum up the whole theme:

O speake, and speake for ever! let mine eare
Be feasted still, and filled with this banquet!
No sense can ever surfeit on such truth! (III. ii. 201-3)

There is in this passage a clear and formal distinction between the two banquets of love. One is divine, one natural; one uplifting, one degenerate; one a banquet of the soul, which employs the senses properly, as agents of the mind; the other a

1 "All chaste lovers covet a kisse, as a coupling of soules together. And therefore Plato the devine lover saith, that in kissing, his soull came as far as his lippes to depart out of the bodie" (Castiglione, The Courtier, trans. Hoby, Everyman edn., 1928, p. 315). For kissing in cult-Platonism, see Nesca A. Robb, Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance (1935), p. 191. The Lovel-Beaufort opposition in Jonson may have taken from trattati d’amore, perhaps indeed from The Courtier, where Bembo's exposition of Platonic love is interrupted by the sardonic comments of Morello, who thinks that "the possessing of this beautie which he prayseth so much, without the bodie, is a dreame" (ed. cit. p. 307). Also Lovel is an older man, than Beaufort, which is again part of Castiglione's position.
banquet of sense which can only corrupt, which is a yielding to Voluptas or degrading natural pleasure rather than the food of the soul.¹

Jonson does not allow the high-minded view all its own way, and there may be ironic references to the cult-Platonism of the contemporary court; but this need not prevent us from tracing back the banquet-debate to a philosophical source in Ficino’s Commentary on the Symposium.²

Ficino distinguishes Venus Ourania and Venus Pandemos. The former is divine beauty, the object of the love of the contemplatives, belonging to the sphere of Mind. The latter is the vulgar or natural Venus, Venus Genetrix, the associate of the anima mundi; the force that urges men to procreate, and so to continue the earthly simulacra of divine beauty. The former is “quella intelligenzia, la quale nella Mente Angelica ponemmo” (that intelligence we attribute to the Angelic Mind); “l’altra e la forza del generare, all’Anima di Mondo attribuita” (the other is the generative power we attribute to the Soul of the World). Venus Vulgaris, though baser than the other because it finds satisfaction through the senses and the fancy, is not evil. But there is a third kind of love, which Ficino, as a physician, considers a form of madness, and calls “bestial love”.³ This is not properly love at all, and should not be called by “il sacratissimo nome di Amore”. It is merely an affair of the senses. About this kind of love we hear most in the Sixth and Seventh Orations; Tommaso Benci introduces it thus:

Da queste celesti vivande adunque state discosto,
state discosto, o empii; i quali involti nelle fecce terrene, e al tutto a Bacco, e a Priapo divoti, lo Amore, che e dono celeste, abbassate in terra e in loto a uso di porci. Ma voi, castissimi convitate, etc.

¹ Jonson again returns to the Banquet of Sense in his Loves Welcome. The King and Queenes Entertainment at Bolsover (1634), where it is combined with the myth of Eros and Anteros (Works, ed. Hereford and Simpson, vii. 807 ff.).
² This influential work, written in Latin in 1474, reports the remarks of seven Platonists of the Medici circle on the Symposium, supposed to have been made at the annual banquet on Plato’s reputed birthday (7 November). The text used here is Ficino’s own Italian translation (ed. Rensi, 1914).
³ For Ficino’s differences from Pico della Mirandola on this point, see Panofsky, Studies in Iconology (1939), p. 144.
Throughout the book there is, of course, a strong association of heavenly love with the Banquet of Plato's work, "il quale e Convito di Amore intitolato". Further, the three kinds of love correspond to the three ways of life; Celestial Love to the Contemplative Life, Terrestrial Love to the Active Life, Bestial Love to the Voluptuous Life. If a man chooses the last of these, there is a sudden fall "dal vedere . . . nella concupiscenza del tatto". Such a fall indicates vileness and dishonour; but those who do not so fall "pascendosi egliino delle vere vivande dell'Animo, s'empione piú e con piú tranquillità amano". What can be worse than that a man should fall thus? Through such madness he becomes a beast. "Il vero Amore non e altro che un certo forza di volare à la divina bellezza. Lo Amore adulterato e una rovina da'l vedere à'l tatto."

Ficino draws these strong contrasts between the extremes of bestial and heavenly love with reference to the banquet—the banquet of heavenly love—which the man who abandons himself to voluptuousness is giving up. Bestial love involves this collapse from the highest to the lowest of the senses, from sight to touch; for, in Ficino's work, the senses exist in a fixed hierarchy which he explains as follows:

Il senso per li cinque sentimenti del suo corpo sente le immagini è qualità de corpi, i colori per gli occhi, per gli orecchi le voci, gli odori per il naso, per la lingua i sapori, per i nervi le qualità semplici degli Elementi . . . Si che quanto appartiene al nostro proposito, sei potenzia della Anima . . . La ragione si assimiglia à Dio, il Viso al fuoco. l'Udito all'aria, l'Odorato à'Vapori, il Gusto all'acqua, è il Tutto alla terra.

Reason, which seeks the Celestial, has no seat in the body; Sight, as the noblest of the senses, is placed highest in it. Next come Hearing and Smell, and then Taste and Touch, corresponding to the lowest of the elements. Counting reason as a sense, three senses appertain to Body and Matter, and three to the Soul. Reason, Sight and Hearing nourish the Soul; Touch, Taste and Smell the body.¹

Questa grazia di virtu, figura, o voce, che chiamo lo animo à se e rapisce per il mezzo della ragione, viso e audito, rettamente si chiama Bellezza. Queste sono

¹ Aristotle (De Anima II. vi-xii) establishes the order Vision-Hearing-Smell-Taste-Touch; in De Sensu (441a) he calls taste a form of touch, which may explain why in literary treatment the order of these two is sometimes reversed.
The intellect, vision and hearing are concerned with beauty, and so alone have to do with love; the others are concerned with the opposite of beauty and bring about the collapse into the badness of touch.

Love is engendered in the eye; this is the first step in his progress towards the divine, un-material condition, through the stages which are familiar from Castiglione and Spenser's *Hymns*. The Imagination idealises the beauty sensed; the Reason interprets it, seeing it as a type not of visual but of moral beauty, and finally relates it to the one universal truth and beauty, which completes the "spiritual circuit" of the emanation and return of beauty to its source, a basic theme in Ficino and in philosophers and poets such as Spenser, who follow him. But if this primary ocular impression makes one yield to a desire to gratify the lower senses, and in particular Taste and Touch, that is the "love" that turns man into beast; the love symbolized, for example, in the story of Circe. In contradistinction to the Banquet of Intellect, or Heavenly Love, the gratification of the lower soul is justly represented as a voluptuous feast, a debauch of created pleasure, a banquet of sense.

It is now, I think, clear that Jonson expected to see his Court of Love scene as an exercise in this "topic". It occurs, less schematically, in other plays, for example in Massinger's *A New Way to pay Old Debts* (III. i), where the Prodigian Hercules is associated with the formal scheme of temptation. This use is merely episodic. In the exceptionally interesting academic play *Lingua* (1602-3?) attributed to Thomas Tomkis, there is an extended allegory concerning the senses which appear with standard allegorical attributes: one of them must be shown to be best; a crown is awarded to Visus and a vote to Tactus, which decision is celebrated in a banquet given by Gustus which reduces all the senses to wild and brutal uselessness.

Thirty years later Randolph alludes to the topic in *The Muses Looking-Glass*, in the speech of Acolastus, "a voluptuous epicure", which is balanced by that of Anaisthetus, representing
the other of two extremes between which Temperance is a mean. (Colax, the flatterer, applauds them both, the first in a speech which, failing to discriminate between the senses, and between satisfaction and indulgence, has been preposterously attributed to Randolph's own "Cyrenaic" philosophy by those who suppose that Milton was "answering" him in Comus.) The casualness of such allusions to the Banquet proves the currency of the idea; and it is not surprising to find that Shakespeare used it more than once.

In a simple form it occurs in Sonnet 141:

In faith I do not love thee with mine eyes,
For they in thee a thousand errors note;
But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise,
Who in despite of view is pleas'd to dote,
Nor are mine ears with thy tongue's tune delighted,
Nor tender feeling to base touches prone;
Nor taste nor smell desire to be invited
To any sensual feast with thee alone.

The senses are treated in order (eye and ear first, smell, taste and touch, the lower triad, last) and followed in the eighth line, as it were inevitably, by the expression "sensual feast". The theme recurs also in Timon of Athens. Timon's honour and nobility, much insisted upon, are firmly associated with his bounty and his lavish entertainments. There are two banquets in the play. At the first, Timon says grace, and a masquer dressed as Cupid enters to announce the arrival of his fellow-masquers.

Hail to thee, worthy Timon, and to all
That of his bounties taste! The five best Senses
Acknowledge thee their patron, and come freely
To gratulate they plenteous bosom. The Ear,
Taste, Touch, Smell, pleas'd from thy table rise;
They only now come but to feast thine eyes.

And he introduces "a masque of Ladies as Amazons, with lutes

1 Compare the absence of detail in Harington's marginal note on Ariosto's account of the behaviour of Ruggiero ("this new Hercules") with Alcina: "This lascivious description of carnall pleasure needs not offend the chaste eares or thoughts of any, but rather shame the unchast, that have themselves been at such kind of banquets" (Orlando Furioso in English Heroical Verse, 2nd edn., 1634, p. 409). Ruggiero yields all to the sense of touch, and is debased as Hercules was by Omphale.
in their hands, dancing and playing", who feast the eyes of Timon. There seems no doubt that this little entertainment is intended as part of that acute unspoken criticism of Timon’s misconception of Honour and Nobility which runs through the finely composed early scenes of the play. At the second banquet, when Timon understands his self-deceit, and is about to meet the consequence of his having so mistaken the nature of Honour, he offers his guests, with a misanthropic grace, dishes containing nothing but warm water—without smell, taste or colour—in token of his awareness that he had been wrong to calculate Honour in terms of gold and the sensuous delights it makes available. Timon is wrong about Magnanimity; failing in Heroic Virtue he sinks to bestiality.

In *Venus and Adonis* Venus has many of the attributes of Voluptas or Vice tempting the young man. Her rival is not Pallas but the martial sport of hunting. The splendid horse represents the active life, military virtue, as in Rubens’s *Choice of Hercules* in the Uffizi. Adonis wants to hunt the dangerous boar not the timid hare. But Venus assails him as the Voluptas-figure assails Hercules in some Baroque “Choices”—and the breaking away of the horse allows it to be used as an emblem of “natural” desire. The bridle, as we see in the Rubens picture and in Shaftesbury’s study of the theme, is an emblem of Temperance; under its control the horse was Manly Virtue, without it, natural lust. The hare likewise has a double function; it is not merely that which Adonis is ashamed to hunt, but also, as often iconographically, a symbol of voluptuousness. (When Venus, lost in the labyrinth of passion, rushes about the world in search of Adonis, her movements are described in language that deliberately recalls the passage about the hare.) If we are in doubt about the kind of love advocated by this Venus, there is a Banquet of Sense to satisfy us. Adonis has spoken, though coldly after long silence.

What! canst thou talk? quoth she, Hast thou a tongue?
O would thou hadst not, or I had no hearing!
Thy mermaid’s voice hath done me double wrong;
I had my load before, now press’d with bearing:
Melodious discord, heavenly tune harsh sounding,
Ear’s deep-sweet music, and heart’s deep-sore wounding.
Had I no eyes but ears, my ears would love
That inward beauty and invisible;
Or were I deaf, thy outward parts would move
Each part in me that were but sensible.

Though neither eyes nor ears, to hear nor see,
Yet should I be in love by touching thee.

Say that the sense of feeling were bereft me,
And that I could not see, nor hear, nor touch,
And nothing but the very smell were left me,
Yet would my love to thee be still as much;
For from the stillitory of thy face excelling
Comes breath perfum’d, that breedeth love by smelling.

But O, what banquet wert thou to the taste,
Being nurse and feeder of the other four!

This scheme is worked out with great care; it is perfectly proper that the ear should apprehend and love the inward beauty, having the power to do so only to a lesser extent than the eye—in fact, some would have called it the superior organ—but after that the sensual stimuli mentioned by Venus are all blind and deaf. A love which is "still as much" without the action of eye and ear, which can subsist on the lower senses, is bestial love. She comes finally to taste, which supports only the body, and calls Adonis a banquet to the taste alone. The implied contrast with true love and the true convivium of love is firmly established. 1

1 There are also allusions to the theme in Antony and Cleopatra. They suggest the use of banquets for the temptation of the "new Hercules" of Renaissance epic. There is a conflict, taken over from Plutarch, between heroic virtue and sensuality; and Shakespeare is at pains to emphasize the Herculean aspect of Antony. Plutarch says "he was thought to be descended from one Anton, the sonne of Hercules," and adds, "this opinion did Antonius seeke to confirme in all his doings." (North’s Plutarch [Tudor Translations, 1896], vi. 4). In the comparison with Demetrius he says that Antony at the mercy of Cleopatra resembled Hercules made effeminate by Omphale (vi. 91). (Cf. Antony and Cleopatra, ii. vi. 21–3.) The portents of Antony’s fall include the striking by lightning of the Temple of Hercules in Patras (vi. 13). Shakespeare stresses the Herculean side of Antony (i. iii. 84; i. v. 23, where "demi-Atlas" means "the substitute of Atlas"); IV. xii. 43–7) to the degree that he converts the god who deserts Hercules (IV. iii. 12–17) from Plutarch’s Bacchus into Hercules, and makes no mention of Bacchus, though to Plutarch’s Antony he was at least as important as Hercules. Octavius makes it clear that Antony was familiar with the hard Prodician road to glory (i. iv. 55–64); but he prefers to Roman gravitas that Egypt which is represented throughout as gluttonous feasting and sensual indulgence. Shakespeare also stresses the connections between Cleopatra and Venus, which Plutarch had also foreshadowed; but for him Cleopatra in the barge
Before undertaking Chapman's poem it may be useful to have a summary of the theme as it occurs elsewhere. The Platonic Banquet represents love, the ascent from sense to the higher powers of the soul, and ultimately the apprehension of the divine beauty. The Banquet of Sense represents a descent from sight to the senses capable of only material gratification—what Ficino calls "bestial love". Theologically the parallel is with the Eucharist and the "devil's table"; and sometimes this Christian sense is very active, as when Bembo rejects sense in order to achieve "the feast of angels".¹ There are distinctions that ought to have been introduced, had space permitted; the body must be served, and Renaissance Platonism made provision for the service of the terrestrial Venus, witness the treatises of Leone Ebreo and Mario Equicola, among others.² But in general the Banquet of Sense is not regarded as a good thing, and is concerned with love of the counter-Platonic or Ovidian variety. The blandishments it represents are trials to be overcome. Is it so or otherwise used by Chapman? To find out it is necessary to "passe through Corynna's Garden"³ with the aid of such lanterns as may be had. The Dedication seems to promise deliberate obscurity, but clarity at the heart of the matter. Poetry must not be as plain as oratory. With that appeal to the sister-art which renaissance criticism had made habitual, Chapman compares the poetical presentation of his theme with the painter's use of technical devices to give his work a depth and vitality impossible to mere outlines; his skill will be evident to the trained observer. It is with this controlled obscurity that Chapman intends to compose; the trained auditor, he says, will

¹ The Courtier, ed. cit., p. 322.
have means to "sound the philosophical conceits". In the "Justification" of Andromeda Liberata (Bartlett, p. 327) he nevertheless claims a poet's right to "Ambiguity in the sense".

It would appear that the story of Ovid in Julia's garden, the fiction which does the "varying" of the "Schema", is intended to adorn and give utility, or affective force, to the philosophic material. Now the scheme is a treatment of the senses in descending order: first, the three which act through a medium, without contact with what is sensed, and then taste and touch, the senses of necessity, which in the Ficinian scheme are base and do not affect the higher soul at all. Although Chapman heretically treats Visus third in order and ignores the intermediate position given to Gustus in the orthodox scale, the scheme of the poem, as Bush pointed out, presumably derives ultimately from Ficino, and should, as we have seen, be concerned with the collapse of the soul into bestiality, the descent to Tactus. It is therefore strange that Chapman should write in his fiction an apparent glorification of the sensual stimulation of the counter-Plato, Ovid.

My own view is that this is ironical; that Chapman is here portraying the Ovid whom Apollo called "lasciui . . . praeceptor Amoris" (Ars Amatoria, ii. 497). It must be confessed that a theory which treats the poem as having a persistent irony blended with its didactic tone makes it even more difficult, but that is no reason, in the case of Chapman, for rejecting the theory. It is an objection, certainly, that Chapman complained, in The Shadow of Night, of "fleshly interpretations" of myth, and preferred the older moralized Ovid: but this can be met, I think, by asserting his hostility to the contemporary erotic mythological genre exemplified by Venus and Adonis. Shakespeare's poem has a moral scheme cast into a fiction which is erotic in tone; but it betrays its "matter" by playing up the comic and erotic elements for their own sakes. It is this kind of subtle subversion of morality that Marston makes a show of objecting to in Pygmalions Image. Chapman, in Ouids Banquet, turns the screw once more and restores the "utility" of the poetry. He too has an erotic fiction in support of a philosophical scheme; but that scheme is itself an ironical sham, a learned

1 Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition (1934) p. 204.
defence by Ovid (the Ovid of the Elizabethan epyllion) of the counter-Platonic Banquet, the Ovidian Banquet of sophisticated sensual indulgence.

But this is not the opinion of Chapman's commentators, despite the fact that his hostility to the erotic sense and to Shakespeare has long been suspected on other grounds. Miss J. Spens, one of the pioneers, holds that "Chapman's subject is the sublimation of the senses", and even considers whether Julia is not "merely a name for what Shelley called Intellectual Beauty"; she thinks that Chapman's purpose is "to reach a spiritual ecstasy by means of the senses". Miss M. C. Bradbrook explains that Chapman evokes "a scene of extreme sensual delight only to reject the expected conclusions and to present his Ovid and Julia as models of Platonic chastity, who could extract all the delights of the senses without succumbing to their lure". And she quotes in support of this view, which seems to me frankly untenable, stanzas 35 and 36, without observing that they are spoken by Ovid and not by Chapman in propria persona. Mr. Hallett Smith is more cautious, and reminds us of the rejections of erotic poetry in the Coronet for his Mistress Philosophy, published with Ouid's Banquet; but he so far supports Miss Spens and Miss Bradbrook as to say that "Chapman rejects the idea that heaven can only be gained by labours of the soul and of continence", which is certainly not what is meant by stanza 63. M. Jean Jacquot sees the difficulty, but argues that the apparently contradictory attitudes of the poet in The Shadow of Night and Ouid's Banquet find their reconciliation in Platonism, and argues for Chapman's adherence to a Platonic scheme exalting a sensual ecstasy of the sort some writers find in Donne's "Extasy"; but I think he ends with a reconciliation of opposites impossible even to sixteenth-century Platonism when he says that "Corinna représente à la fois la Vénus céleste et la Vénus terrestre dont parle Platon".¹ If this is so we may as well give Chapman up as hopeless.

¹ Essays and Studies, xi (1925), 159; Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry (1951), p. 19; Elizabethan Poetry (1952), p. 97; George Chapman, sa vie, sa poésie, son théâtre, sa pensée (1951), pp. 65, 67–8, 227, 252; E. Rees (The Tragedies of Chapman, 1954) calls the poem "a tortured attempt to reconcile the sensual with the spiritual" (p. 21).
One does not forget that there was a strain of Florentine Neo-
Platonism, sponsored by Leone Ebreo, which condoned sensual
indulgence to a degree beyond what Ficino (in whom of course
the senses have their place as excitants of the mind) would have
countenanced. But even if Chapman, on the evidence improb­
ably, did subscribe to this how is the Coronet to be read? As a
palinode? For his own Banquet would then have to be regarded
as the product of “Muses that sing loues sensuall EmpeRie”.

The truth is surely that Chapman cannot be writing the kind
of poem he obviously and explicitly deplored, and against which
he writes in the Coronet.1 His love, Philosophy, “teaches by
passion what perfection is... all powre and thought of pridefull
lust depriuing”.

Her mind (the beam of God) drawes in the fires
Of her chaste eyes, from all earths tempting fewell.

He takes Ovid, for the present purpose, as the master of lascivious
arts and Julia as a libertine. (How, incidently, could this lady,
of all ladies, represent Intellectual Beauty?) Ovid, in fact, is the
counter-Plato, and Julia his sensual banquet, his anti-convivium.
What we are told of, despite the curious fictional disguise, is the
Circean fall into bestiality. This is the Ovid of Johnson’s
Poetaster; an Ovid associated not only with blasphemous
banquets, but with the view that love is of the blood, not of the
soul (iv. ix. 31ff.)

There is no question there that Ovid’s views are reprehensible;
and indeed the Poetaster as a whole is concerned to establish that
Ovid desecrates poetry and truth; a condemnation which, as
Mr. A. H. King has shown, includes the “Ovidians”, poets of
the period.2 I am certain that if we hold on to this clue we shall
get somewhere near the sense of Chapman’s poem.

1 Cf. Hero and Leander (Sestiad iii, 35), “Joy grauen in sence, like snow in
water wasts”; the passage on the avoidance of “vulgare Raptures” in Euthymia
Raptus (II. 504-24); and the distinction between two poetic “furies”—one
divine, the other degenerately human—in the Dedication of the Odysseys to
Somerset (Bartlett, p. 408). These all suggest that Chapman would have used
the Banquet scheme with the normal moral value. See also the congratulatory
poems preceding Ovid’s Banquet of Sense.

2 The Language of the Satirized Characters in Jonson’s “Poetaster” (Lund
Studies in English, x, 1941).
Ovid's treatment of each sense in turn is, basically, Aristotelian, with the usual accretions; for the most part it is not much unlike what a Renaissance Platonist might have said. But the object of his argument is, in the narrative context, to convince himself of the rightness of, and to persuade Julia to, sexual indulgence. In doing so he is abusing learning, as, on the view probably held by Chapman, the Shakespeare of *Venus and Adonis* was doing; for *Venus and Adonis* is also full of morality, but it is an erotic poem, and read as such; it had a contemporary reputation as a "lusurious marrowbone pie", an aphrodisiac dangerous to women.

In fact, Jonson, as M. Jacquot has seen, uses another topos; this is associated with seduction, and cannot very well be associated with anything else. Laumonier thought the scheme must have originated with a troubadour; but Curtius traces its origin to Donatus's commentary on Terence, *Eunuchus* iv. ii. 10: "Quinque lineae sunt amoris, scilicet visus, allocutio, tactus, osculum sive suavium, coitus". Sometimes "partes" replaces "lineae". The topos is of frequent occurrence in medieval Latin verse and the theme was still in use by French poets of the sixteenth century, including Marot and Ronsard. It turns up in the well-known song of "Come again, sweet love doth now invite", with the usual pun on "die", which here means what the French politely called the "don de mercy", the last part of love;

To see, to speak, to touch, to kiss, to die
With thee again in sweetest sympathy.

Professor Baldwin finds it in *Venus and Adonis*.¹

It is interesting that this *topos* is also used in the *Illustrations de Gaule* of Jean Lemaire des Belges (1509–12); for there are in that work hints also of the scheme of the Banquet of Sense. This was noticed by Schoell (as reported by Miss Bartlett, *ed.cit.* p. 431) and M. Jacquot pursued the line of enquiry. The *Illustrations* describes how Paris (associated, by the way, with the wrong choice of the voluptuous life) meets at the side of a fountain a nymph who offers him a banquet of fruits. We are told, with considerable learning, how his (higher) senses are ravished by her; and then the scheme passes into an exposition of the five degrees of love—"le regard, le parler, l'attouchement, le baiser; Et le dernier qui est le plus désiré, et auquel tous les autres tendent, pour finale resolution . . ." The "don de mercy" is granted, and the nymph "soccombre volontairement sur les tapis verds de l'herbe".¹ Now it is clear, allowing for the same degree of variation in the order of the *lineae amoris* that we have seen already in these examples, that from the moment when Ovid sees Corinna, and she him, the course of the poem, by accident or design, follows this scheme. He speaks, he kisses, he touches; and he does not die only because some "other Dames" (116) interrupt him. Chapman explicitly informs us that in this case we shall have to take the will for the deed; "intentio animi actio", he concludes. It would appear that Chapman deliberately conflates the schemes of Banquet and *lineae*, and that this is on the whole evidence that Ovid's intention is not, *au fond*, Platonic.

Corinna's garden contains a fountain with an elaborate piece of statuary erected by Augustus, and consisting of a statue of Niobe which he had brought from Mount Sipylus, so named after one of Niobe's sons. As Schoell pointed out, the description of the statue as a rock which looked like a woman only from a distance, is lifted out of Comes' account of Pausanias' description of the rock *in situ*; what is more important is that Chapman has invented the story of Augustus transferring it to this garden and surrounding it with statues of Niobe's fourteen children (3–5). He also adds the obelisks representing Apollo and Artemis, with an optical device by means of which they seem

¹ *Oeuvres* ed. Stecher, i. 177 ff.; Jacquot, *op. cit.* p. 66.
eternally to be wreaking their vengeance on the children, on
whose marble breasts they throw purple shadows. (These
divinities, as children of the Titaness Leto, killed Niobe’s children
because she boasted equality with Leto on account of their
number.) Now Niobe signifies presumption, as her father
Tantalus signifies the abuse of knowledge. There is a Florentine
engraving dated 1541, of Apollo and Latona striking the Niobides,
with the legend “Discite quam nulli tutum contemnere divos”.

This group, then, has the moral intention of warning mortals
against presumption; and it is unlikely to be a coincidence that,
as we are explicitly told, Augustus went to the trouble of having
it put where the poem says it is. We also know the tradition
that Augustus deplored the libertinism of Ovid, and outlawed
him for it. The statue is there to warn Ovid off; it is caution
against the rash act we see him about to commit. I do not see
why we should forget that Julia did grant the “don de mercy”,
and that Ovid suffered in consequence the wrath of the divine
emperor. Then why is Corinna referred to as “this Romaine
Phoebe”? Because the tears of Niobe fall upon her; or because
Ovid is behaving like Actaeon. A little earlier (8) she is compared
to Venus.

Corinna’s garden is a paradise of pleasure; but this in itself,
like the fountain in which Corinna bathes, is a two-handed
emblem. The nature of the garden depends upon the character
of Corinna herself, and I take it as a dangerous hortus deliciarum.

Having bathed, Corinna takes her lute and sings (12). Her
song is not at all easy to follow, but the sense of it is something
like this: It is better to despise than to love. It is also better
to be beautiful than to be wise, because it is through the sense
of sight that the souls of admirers are to be won rather than
through any intellectual sympathy. The eagle of Jove (signifying
perspicacity in Comes, II. i, as well as natural supremacy) is
taken by the dove of Venus (universally accepted as a symbol of

1 See Rodolfo Lanciani, Il gruppo dei Niobidi nel giardino di Sallustio (1906),
p. 24.

2 Augustus had, in the Renaissance, a reputation as a maker of pithy mottoes,
based on the report (Aulus Gallius, Noctes Atticae x. xi; Erasmus, Adagia, s.v.—
with increasing emphasis in succeeding editions) of his having invented the motto
festina lente.
lust). It is a woman’s right and privilege to enjoy the mischievous transformations wrought by beauty. This magic makes men follow them more the more they flee, as destiny follows the man who flies it; and it enables foolish woman to be praised as wise (because the man wastes his learning in the praise and pursuit of her, as Ovid is about to do) and also to mock the man for this waste of wisdom. In love, he calls female beauty wise, which is like calling profaneness holy; just as he tries to show that mere natural desire is a solemn matter of fate, and human wisdom mere foolishness because it is against this sort of love. I am not sure that I have construed the last part right, and “Nature, our fate” may have some connection with the Theophrastian quotation in the Margin at stanza 84: “Natura est uniuscuiusque Fatum”. (Chapman also uses “fate” sometimes to mean “character” or “disposition”.) But this does not affect the truth that the song of Corinna is a very improper song for Intellectual Beauty to sing, and would come better from a cultivated courtesan, which, of course, is nearer to the usual idea of Julia.

Ovid, who does not yet know that Corinna is going to be “mercifull” (13), overhears the song, and is immediately down to his ears in love: “loues holy streame Was past his eyes, and now did wett his eares” (14). He moralizes this with great expense of wit and learning. His hearing, he says, is “sette on fire With an immortall ardor” and the music “My spirits to theyr highest function reares” (17). This is unexceptionable, and so, one supposes, is Ovid’s desire to transfer his life into the inventive faculty of his lady, as the intellect passes into what it apprehends. So, he says, his life could be exhausted in harmony:

Thus sense were feasted,
My life that in my flesh a Chaos is
Should to a Golden Worlde be thus dygested. (25)

This is the golden world imposed upon chaos at the creation by the “deus et melior natura” of the opening lines of Ovid’s Metamorphoses. A divine, harmonious, principle of order reduced the microcosmic chaos to the same unexampled happiness and regularity. All this, says Ovid in his conceit, would happen if I could inhabit the harmony of her invention. It is a
harmless wish. Indeed the section on Hearing is for the most part an exceptionally brilliant set of variations on the "laus musicae", which would go quite well into any true convivium, though perhaps there is sufficient learned amorous hyperbole to hint that even here the presumptuous and wrongly-learned Ovid is sophisticating this knowledge and applying it to bad ends. The song ended, we are told that its accents "in this Banquet his first service were" (30).

The second service is Smell (31-40). The delicacy and power of this "course of Odors" (40) is also given a tremendous eulogy, with learning from Theophrastus; but when Ovid ceases to speak and the poet comments, it is thus:

So vulture love on his encreasing liuer,
And fruitfull entrails egerly did feede. (41)

The passion of Ovid is obviously having the outrageous physiological effects of the bestial kind of love. I do not understand the penultimate line of the stanza, but the meaning of the allusion to Diana is simple. From Apuleius on, the fable of Actaeon torn to pieces by his own hounds was used as a warning against becoming the victim of one's own passions. As the sight of Diana in similar circumstances brought Actaeon to this end, Ovid must beware. He is in danger of yielding not to Intellectual Beauty but the madness of lust.

Immediately Chapman inserts an explicit rhetorical warning to Ovid not to proceed to Sight, for if he does so he will

be prickt with other sensces stings,
To tast, and feele, and yet not there be staide. (43)

The Banquet is about to follow its downward course, and Touch implies the dernière pointe. Ovid, in doubt as to his most successful course of action (he is not thinking of withdrawal), prays to Juno, somewhat disrespectfully, as the goddess who since she rules "all Nuptiale rites", can "speede Such as in Cyprian sports theyr pleasures fix" (47). This is a frank prayer for help towards sensual satisfaction. He decides to be bold, observing that it is "Attempts, and not entreats get Ladies larges, And grace is sooner got of Dames than graunted" (48)—
maxims he might have derived from his own highly practical *Art of Love*, though not from the *Symposium*.

Chapman's discourteous syntax, with its disregard for the normal amenities of exposition, must be held responsible for the disturbances in the next section. The sight of Corinna strikes Ovid "to the hart with exstasie" (49). This must be the ecstasy of "thoughts cupidinine" described and condemned in the *Coronet*; relating to the love which can "eate your (i.e. "sensual amorists") entrails out with exstasies" (*Coronet* 5.9; 2.4). It is love for a beauty that deceives,

" tempting men to buy
With endless showes, what endlessly will fade." (51)

unless there is a true exchange of intellectual qualities, and this, from what we have heard Ovid and Julia say already, is not to be the case here, for the only intellectual activity is Ovid's squandering his "mine of knowledge" in beautifying a calculating coquette.

The opening lines of the next stanza (52) have, I think, misled commentators, and consequently the relationship between stanzas 52–5 and the remainder of the poem has been completely misunderstood. Chapman makes it quite clear that this passage is to be read as a digression; stanza 56 begins:

*With this digression, wee will now returne
To Ouid's prospect...*

This digression is not about Ovid's kind of love, but the opposite kind, which exists not when men yield to the shows which tempt them to buy "what endlessly will fade", but when souls are exchanged; the beauty that causes this (for all love is an appetite of beauty) is sacred, and "the feast of soules" (52) not a carnal banquet. This is the first stage of the Platonic ascent. This sacred beauty stands in obvious contrast to the other kind, which Ovid is advised not to venture upon. The digression has nothing to do with Ovid except to show what is wrong with him; in looking at Corinna he is yielding to the wrong kind of beauty; and this, I think, is clear enough despite incidental obscurities.

At stanza 56 Chapman returns to Ovid, and describes what he saw. The lady's beauty is warmly extolled and called a
miracle of nature; as she lies there she resembles a soul in Elysium, of which, indeed, her beauty makes her an emblem.

She lay at length, like an immortall soule
At endlesse rest in blést *Elysium*:
And then did true felicitie enroule
So fayre a Lady, figure of her kingdome.

Now Ouid Muse as in her tropicke shinde,
And hee (strooke dead) was meere heauen-borne become,
So his quick Verse in equal height was shrinde . . . (57)

Chapman here has a marginal note which is more than usually irresponsible in its syntax:

The amplification of this simile, is taken from the blisfull state of soules in *Elysium*, as *Virgill* faines: and expresseth a regenerate beauty in all life and perfection, not intimating any rest of death. But in place of that eternall spring, he poyntheth to that life of life thys beauty-clad naked Lady.

(Miss Bartlett reads "*peace of that eternall spring*" and records no variants, but this seems to me the safest of several possible emendations I should like to make in her text). Now this certainly sounds as if Corinna were the subject of a comparison with Elysium,¹ but what the note really means is this:

The Elysium to which I compare the lady is that of Virgil. Elysium is not death, but a new life of beauty and perfection. The state to which seeing her reduced Ovid may be compared to the condition of Elysium in that he was, as it were, struck dead with wonder when he saw her and, when he recovered from the shock, was reborn into a condition of ecstatic pleasure at her beauty. But the comparison applies in that respect only; for what Ovid was dealing with was not Elysium but the vital beauty of this lady.

It is not the simile, but Virgil's Elysium, that "expresseth a regenerate beauty"; in place of regenerate beauty Ovid is concerned with this "beauty-clad naked Lady". The candid reader who is familiar with Chapman's ways will agree that this is the likeliest interpretation. If his note means that Corinna stands for a regenerate, heavenly beauty, it is in conflict with everything that has gone before and comes after. Even Ovid realizes that Corinna is not this kind of Elysium. At first he says

¹ This is admittedly a *topos* in itself; one source is Dante, *Convivio*, Ode ii ("Amor, che nell mente mi ragiona") st. iv, and the commentary in Treatise iii. cap. 8.
she is, and tries to prove it by a series of elaborate conceits (58-60); she is different from Elysium only in that she can move about (61). But the comparison breaks down in the end:

"Elysium must with vertue gotten bee,
With labors of the soule and continence,
And these can yield no ioy with such as she,
Shee is a sweet Elysium for the sence . . ." (62)

In stanza 58 Ovid begins to carve with his eyes this un-Socratic feast of feasts; the terms in which he first praises what he sees are the amplification of this Elysium-simile. Having called Corinna an "Elysium for the sence" he attempts to justify this incontinent joy by arguing that the senses are not first in us unused. The 63rd stanza:

The sence is giuen vs to excite the minde,
And that can never be by sence excited
But first the sence must her contentment finde,
We therefore must procure the sence delighted,
That so the soule may use her facultie;
Mine Eye then to this feast hath her inuited,
That she might serue the soueraigne of mine Eye,
Shee shall bide Time, and Time so feasted neuer
Shall grow in strength of her renowne for euer. (63)

Now this is often taken to be the "moral" of the poem, and Ovid's sensual exercise upon Corinna's beauty a mere fictional demonstration of it. Unless the senses are contented, their mistress, the soul, cannot "use her facultie": "else a great Prince in prison lies". Furthermore, Chapman happens to give evidence elsewhere that he approves of the sentence with which the stanza begins, for in his note on the Vice-Virtue passage in Hesiod ("But before Virtue do the Gods rain sweat") he quotes it in a Latin version, the source of which I have not traced: "... by the worthily exercis'd and instructed organs of that body, her Virtue's soul received her excitation to all her expressible knowledge (for dati sunt sensus ad intellectum excitandum ").1

1 Poems, ed. cit. p. 219. The origin of this precise expression I have not traced, but the notion is familiar: cf. Aquinas, Summa Theologica i. lxxxiv. 6; "Secundum Platonis opinionem . . . sensibilia excitant animam sensibilem ad sentiendum, et similiter sensus excitant animam intellectivam ad intelligendum."
It would be surprising if Chapman did not hold this view, which is perfectly orthodox; the end of the senses is to inform, and to stimulate the mind. But Ovid is, as usual, disingenuous; he is expending his knowledge to "set wise glosses on the fool". Again, as usual, Chapman does not make it evident that the "her" of line 6 refers to "sence" rather than to Corinna or the soul, but it is so; the Eye invites the "sence" to the feast that it might serve the soul (the sovereign of mine Eye). The "sence" here must mean touch-taste. Much of Chapman's cloudy stuff could have been clarified by attention to the elements of exposition. What the last two lines mean I cannot say; but it remains clear that Ovid is using this learning about the ends of sense dishonestly, because it is not the mind he is in process of exciting. And the example he chooses of the attractive force of beauty is Helen, the beauty which pulled the towers of Troy about its ears (68), a disaster which was regarded as archetypal. Shakespeare uses it to enforce the universality of Lucrece's horror—Helen is "the strumpet that began this stir". (Here it is Ovid's fall that is presaged.)

After this we are told of Corinna's binding up her hair, and of the emblematic jewels she arranges in it. One has the sense, "Decrescente nobilitate, crescent obscuri" (70)—perhaps a reference to Ovid's presumption. Another is an "Eye in Saphire set and close upon it a fresh Lawrell spray"—with the posie Medio caret (71). In the margin Chapman explains that "Sight is one of the three sences that hath his medium extrinsically, which now (supposed wanting) lets the sight by the close apposition of the Lawrell: the application whereof hath many constructions". The construction in the text is that the emblem shows "not eyes, but meanes must truth display". Perhaps this means that the poet is improperly relying on the visual stimulus which, without the intervention of wisdom, is powerless to see truth. The last emblem is of Apollo and his team, with the motto Teipsum et orbem, which is surely a counsel of self-control; we remember that he killed the children of Niobe for a similar ignorant presumption. If these are warnings they are neglected; for in stanza 72 Ovid, despite his earlier philosophizing, is clearly bent on the baser sensual achievements.
And he shows himself to Corinna. She chides him for compromising her honour: "Thought Sights childe Begetteth sinne" (78), she says, apparently in no doubt that from Visus the development is, in this case, downwards. Ovid, of course, has his answer; this is an error of Opinion, for Reason would see that any harm done by looking at naked beauty is done to the looker (79 f.). But Love has entered his brain, and taken command of his actions; wherefore he must beg a kiss to satisfy Gustus and have the fourth course of his Banquet. He even makes this sound like a moral obligation, the motive of his soul (87) being incomplete while two senses remain unsatisfied. The communis sensus requires to be furnished with the remainder of the Banquet. Corinna very properly chides Ovid for his presumption and folly:

I see unbidden Guests are boldest still,
And well you show what weak in soul you are
That let rude sense subdued your reason skill . . . (89)

and, significantly, mentions the difference of their station; Ovid is not noble. He has his easy, orthodox reply to this: "Vertue makes honor" (91). Corinna responds with a purely Platonic argument:

Pure love (said she) the purest grace pursues,
And there is contact, not by application
Of lips or bodies, but of bodies virtues,
As in our elementar Nation
Stars by their powers, which are their heat and light
Do heavenly works, and that which hath probation
By virtuall contact hath the noblest plight,
Both for the lasting and affinitie
It hath with naturall diuiniteit. (92)

This is worthy of Lovel in the New Inn. Ovid's reply settles any remaining doubt about his idealism; he caps Corinna's philosophy, explaining that her virtual influence proceeds from form not substance, and that his present longings can only be satisfied by the latter (93). This frank preference for matter over form is surely the position of Beaufort in Jonson's play:
"Gi' me the body, if it be a good one." And in the next stanza his argument for a kiss is conducted by an analogy so ingenious that Corinna, delighted with his learning, yields; she will not, she says,

coylie lyft Mineruas shielde
Against Minerua.

And she resumes the tone of her song; the whole episode is for her only a problem in the craft of wooing, such as the Art of Love examines from both male and female points of view. So Ovid gains his kiss, the fourth course in the Banquet and the third Point of Love.

But the satisfaction of Gustus only renders the plea for Tactus more urgent; the transition from one sense to another is worked out in six surprisingly intelligible stanzas (97-102). Now Ovid is well on the way he says, to having the Golden World established out of the chaos of his flesh. But "with feasting, loue is famisht more" (101) and the touch must be brought into play.

Loue is a wanton famine, rich in foode,
But with a richer appetite controld,
An argument in figure and in Moode
Yet hates all arguments: disputing still
For sence, gainst Reason, with a senceless will. (101)

This is explicit enough. To dispute for Sense against Reason, which this kind of love must do, is "senseless"; "will", as often in Shakespeare, is here virtually "lust". The subjugation of Reason to Sense is, of course, the precise opposite of the discipline of the true convivium. And Ovid's praise of Tactus removes any remaining vestige of suspicion that this is more than a philosophical seduction, ironically described so that the true Platonic Banquet may be praised by implication. Touch he first says, is the "sences ground-worke" (102); but then he calls it "the sences Emperor":

is't immodestie
To serve the sences Emperor, sweet Feeling
With those delights that fit his Emperie? (103)

A sensual empery, indeed. Touch is the fundamental sense; but to the Platonist, a base drudge, not an emperor. The position
of Ficino is completely reversed. Since, continues Ovid, the mind cannot be corrupted by the actions of the body; since he means well, and *abusus non tollit usum*, he hopes he may touch Corinna. The lady is "glad his arguments to heare" (105) and, preparing for this act, exposes "Latonas Twinns, her plenteous brests". I do not see why they should be called Latona's twins unless it is to remind us that Latona's twins slew the presumptuous Niobides, and that Ovid, for all his ingenuity, is courting the same fate. Anyway, the favour is granted, and Ovid makes much of the hand which is to have the honour, calling it, among other things, "king of the king of sences" (107), that is, master of the sense of touch. Stanza 109 revives the conceit of Corinna's body as the figure of Elysium (but an Elysium of sense, not of regenerate life); and in stanza 110 Ovid touches her. He laments, as usual disingenuously, that he must with Touch, "a fleshly engine", unfold "a spirituall notion" (111) by which disability the difference between men and beast is obscured; the latter part of what he says is true. Despite this deficiency in the sense, he praises Touch:

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Sweete touch the engine that loues bowe doth bend,
The sence wherewith he feeles him deified,
The object whereto all his actions tend,
In all his blindenes his most pleasing guide,
For thy sake will I write the Art of Love . . . (113)
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We cannot expect much more clarity than Chapman gives us here. This love is blind; its end is the satisfaction of the lowest sense; to celebrate it Ovid will write a handbook of amorous seduction.

Tactus is the fifth course of the Banquet, and the fourth Point of Love. The *quinque lineae* scheme supervenes, and Coitus should succeed Tactus. But Ovid is forced by the arrival of other ladies to leave the garden. He grieves, like Alexander, "that no greater action could be done" (116).

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But as when expert Painters haue displaid,
To quickest life a Monarchs royall hand
Holding a Scepter, there is yet bewraide
But halfe his fingere; when we understand
The rest not to be scene; and never blame
The Painters Art, in nicest censures skand:
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THE BANQUET OF SENSE

So in the compasse of this curious frame,
Ouid well knew there was much more intended,
With whose omission none must be offended.

Intentio, animi actio. Explicit convivium. (117)

This figure occurs in The Rape of Lucrece, in Shakespeare’s description of the “imaginary work” in the Troy picture; it amounts to a claim on the part of the poet that he is able, as well as the painter, to suggest more than he describes. We are, in fact, invited to suppose the completion of the quinque lineae scheme, imagine Ovid’s love consummated, taking the will for the deed. Explicit convivium; a Banquet of Sense indeed, with the full moral implication we have found in the scheme elsewhere. Ovid is not to be counted among the castissimi convitati. Chapman’s use of the theme is perhaps intended as an ironical comment on erotic poets (notably Shakespeare) whose works in his view have dishonest moral pretensions. His Ovid represents such poets, and Jonson’s does; and he abuses philosophy for erotic ends, indeed involves himself in the impossible task of dressing up the Banquet of bestial love to look like the true convivium.

So, “if we can but spell and join his sense”, Chapman falls into line with the others; according to his habit, however, he obscures that sense, and allows us to misinterpret him as making an Ovidian celebration of “love’s sensual employ”. As in Hero and Leander his warnings are obscure (the portents, Ceremony) so here he is willing to allow folly to convert his work to its own purposes. But he himself remains the well-inspired moralist; and the poem from whose title I borrow mine is not in its theme exceptional.