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Russell J. Ganim

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, rganim1@unl.edu

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A KISS IS NOT JUST A KISS: THE USE OF *BAISER* IN LA CEPPÈDE'S *THÉORÈMES*

Russell Ganim

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

The combination of religious and erotic motifs plays a large role in shaping the artistic experience of the Renaissance. One thinks of paintings such as della Francesca's *Baptism of Christ* (1540), as well as Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* (1545). Lyric poetry also provides numerous examples of this aesthetic bond; among them Petrarch's "Chiare fresche e dolci acque" and Ronsard's "Je veux brûler, pour m'envoler aux cieux."¹ The lyric subgenre which perhaps most distinctly follows the trend of merging sexual and divine experience is the *baiser*, or kiss. Originally secular in nature, the *baiser* first appeared in epigram form in the *Greek Anthology*.² *Baiser* was adapted by Catullus and Ovid, inspiring what later became the *style mignard* of the Renaissance. Jean de La Ceppède's version of the *baiser* in his *Théorèmes* exemplifies the attempt during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to transform secular lyric types *a lo divino*.³ Elsewhere in the *Théorèmes*, the poet's method of blending lyric form and technique with a devotional topic finds expression in sonnets modeled after *emblem*, *pastourelle*, and *blason*. *Baiser*, however, is La Ceppède's most explicit attempt to fuse the carnal and the spiritual, paradoxically blending a kind of *style bas* in language and theme with the lofty, if not transcendental goal of moving his reader to receive Christ. Before discussing the poet's specific appropriation of the form, it will be useful to examine the history of the *baiser*, as well as the *a lo divino* tradition to which La Ceppède's *baiser* belongs.

Until around 1580, the Spanish term "a lo divino" referred to religious lyric expressed as "a reworded version of a pre-existing secular poem" (Crosbie 11). Critics agree that near the end of the sixteenth century, *a lo divino* poetry began to denote indirect, rather than direct imitations of secular literature (11). The link between sacred and profane works revealed itself in the similarity between human and divine love. Golden Age poets such as Lope de Vega, Luis de Góngora,

and Saint John of the Cross transformed profane exaltation of the beloved's beauty into celebrations of saints' powers and declarations of love for God. In one noted example, Lope reconfigures Góngora's consolation of a jilted woman into the consolation of the Christ-child (Wardropper 281).

The resemblance between human and divine love, however, finds its most common expression in the erotic. As Alvaro Pineda suggests, the relation between *eros* and *agape*, derives from numerous sources, with the two most important to Western devotional poetry rooted in Catholicism and Provençal lyric (295–96). The former's devotion to Mary as the Mother of God as well as the latter's equation of love for a woman with spiritual ecstasy resulted in a "cult of the lady" which showed a "desire to escape the rigor of devotional asceticism in favor of sensual pleasure."⁴ Wardropper notes that the poetry of St. John of the Cross introduces the most strident example of sensuality into Spanish religious lyric, with poems such as *En una noche oscura* tracing the journey of the soul toward quasi-sexual union with God (312–13). Nonetheless, within the *a lo divino* tradition poets both repress and indulge sexual impulse. In some cases, poets try to overcome erotic desire with spiritual transcendence, while others appeal to the intellect so as to convey a reciprocity between the two.

La Ceppède's association of physical desire with divine love is also ambiguous. When tempted by the trappings of the material universe, the poet/*dévo*t often portrays the inner anguish of subordinating the carnal to the spiritual.⁵ Many other sonnets strike a balance between intellect and affect as they engage the reader in the meditative process. Explicit depiction of the erotic, though less frequent, still constitutes a significant part of the meditant's spiritual exercise. As for the sources of the poet's *baiser*, it is difficult to ascertain if La Ceppède read the poets named above. Given his familiarity with the mystical tradition, however, it is quite likely that he at least

¹ For Petrarch, see poem 126 of Robert Durling's *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*. Ronsard's sonnet may be consulted in Henri and Catherine Weber's edition of the *Amours* (107).

² In general, I refer to what the *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* calls "a vast collection of short poems, mostly elegiac in nature, ranging in time from the seventh century BC to the tenth century AD" (39). Specifically, the part of the *Anthology* which most likely influenced Catullus and Ovid was the *Garland*, a text, according to Oxford, "compiled by Meleager in the early years of the first century BC . . . contain[ing] poems attributed to some fifty poets from Archilochus to Meleager himself" (Howatson, ed. 39).

³ In France and throughout much of Western Europe, this trend occurs mainly within the context of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. I shall discuss examples in Favre and Sponde. An excellent background source in Terence Cave's *Devotional Poetry in France*.

⁴ Here Pineda refers to C. S. Lewis's *The Allegory of Love* (8, 21–22).

⁵ See, for example, Sonnet 88 of Book One. Here the poet holds up as his inspirational model the adolescent in Mark (14:51–52), who, while attempting to follow Christ to His trial, is stripped of his clothes by Roman soldiers. In the octave of the sonnet in question, La Ceppède equates this clothing with material temptation:

Maintefois j'ay tenté de vous suivre, ô ma vie,
Par les sentiers connus que vous m'avez ouverts;
Mais tousjours, mais tousjours, vos ennemis divers
M'empoignant au linceul m'ont la force ravie.

Ores que saintement vostre Esprit me convie,
De retracer vos pas, par les pas de ces vers,
Ce monde, ce charmeur, cet ennemy pervers,
Me prenant au manteau veut frustrer mon envie. (255–56)

knew of St. John of the Cross's work. Closer inspirations come probably from French devotional poets whose direct association between body and spirit find echoes in La Ceppède's eroticism, Two examples, one from the ninety-eighth sonnet of Antoine Favre's *Centurie*, the other from Jean de Sponde's *Stances de la Cène* show the erotic subtext prevalent in devotional lyric:

. . . se donner vif en pain, pour de chair me paistre!
 Me faisant tant de biens ne veux tu rien de moy?
 Et que puis-je t'offrir si je ne l'ay de toy!
 Que veux tu donc, mon coeur? rien plus? qu'encore il
 t'aime
 Las! quant au coeur je l'ay: mais si froid qu'il n'est point
 Capable d'un tel feu, si tu ne fais que joint
 Au tien, ton sang bouillant l'eschauffe tout de mesme.
 (Cave 215)⁶

And from Sponde:

Embrasse estroitement ce corps brillant de gloire,
 Embrasse-le, mon ame, et face de croire.
 Mange-le tout entier, come tu dois manger,
 Hume ce sang vermeil respandu de ses veines, . . .

Or cependant qu'au Ciel ceste double substance
 Saoule l'avidité de ta ferme assurance,
 Avec le fruit entier de ce saint Sacrement;
 icy mon foible corps beaucoup moins que toy digne,
 N'en prend visiblement que le visible signe,
 Mais il prend tout par toy comme invisiblement.
 (208-09)

The importance Sponde accords to the kiss is representative of an entire subgenre centered on this theme, Sponde and La Ceppède draw on a number of sources in depicting their adaptations of the kiss, including the founders of the Pléiade. While the Pléiade poets look to classical antecedents for their versions of the type, the most prominent model comes from neo-Latins such as Nicolas Bourbon and especially Johannes Secundus (1511–1536) whose *Basiarum Liber* represented a “codification of the genre” (Mathieu-Castellani 154).

Basically, the type seeks to express the “sensual value” of a kiss, where attraction, suspense, acceptance, and rejection are described in a rather precious, or affected manner (155). Two kinds of kiss predominate: the relatively innocent “baiser colombin,” and the more explicitly erotic “baiser à l'italienne” (155). Secundus claims to portray the more chaste forms of kissing, underscoring tenderness in his famous *Basium IX*:

Non semper udum da mihi basium,
 Nec iuncta blandis sibila risibus,
 Nec semper in meum recumbe
 Implicitum moribunda collum.
 Mensura rebus est sua dulcibus:
 Vt quodque mentes suavius afficit,
 Fastidium sic triste secum

Limite proximior ducit.
 Cum te rogabo ter tria basia,
 Tu deme septem, nec nisi da duo,
 Vtrumque nec longum, nec udum:
 Aualia teligero Diana
 Dat casta fratri, qualia dat patri
 Experta nullos nata cupidines. (110)

[Kiss me: but not too much. / Whisper not always in my ear. / Make me not wary of the touch / Of soft arms ever near. // The rarer joys the sweeter are. / In love there should due measure be. / If pleasure is prolonged too far / It breeds satiety, // If for nine kisses I should cry, / Pay me the two and leave the seven. / And let the two be quick and dry / And not with rapture given (Routledge 67)]

Although in many instances Secundus contradicts this sanitized depiction of the kiss, one remarks in it a similarity with the effort to reveal a kind of innocence within the erotic. Here, the “pure” or “natural” in the erotic transcends the prurient. Within this context, then, I argue that La Ceppède adapts the *baiser* subgenre as a means of exploiting the erotic in framing divine mystery.

While it cannot be determined if La Ceppède knew the works of Secundus, it is certain that he read Ronsard, Secundus's principal imitator in France. Henri Weber claims that some of Ronsard's *Odes à Cassandre* are clear but free adaptations of Secundus's *basia* in which:

Ronsard substitue d'abord à la concision latine une tendresse familière, un mouvement d'invitation pressant et joueur; sans pouvoir garder la rapidité extrême du latin, il transpose avec élégance et grace le nombre de baisers accordés et demandés, l'aisance s'accroît d'ailleurs avec les corrections des éditions successives. (*La Création poétique au XVI^e siècle* 371–72)

Pointing out that Ronsard sometimes omitted the licentious details from his interpretations of Secundus, Weber also cites poets such as André Baïf who indulged such details:

Tousjours ne me donne pas
 Des baisers de moyte bouche,
 Ny tousjours entre mes bras
 Come mourant ne te couche. (374)

The portrayal of either a chaste or lascivious kiss, though valuable in itself, becomes less important to understanding the genre than the images and means of seduction.

Baiser's images and rhetoric focus largely on intense carnal pleasure. Resembling the *carpe diem* poems in fashion at the time, *baiser* relies on a sense of urgency and ardent hedonism to realize its full effect. Vivid portrayal of the body, nature, and the physical union of lovers comprise the central images of the *baiser*, while enticement through fantasy and its fulfillment make up the genre's standard persuasive method. Persuasion is also attempted through the use of certain stylistic techniques such as repetitions (anaphora, for example), diminutives for the bien-aimée, as well as dainty appellations

⁶ Quotes from Favre and Sponde are taken from Cave's *Devotional Poetry in France*.

coaxing the beloved to acquiesce. Within these parameters, many scenarios develop, with the poet gaining either the affection or contempt of his potential lover. The poet, primarily in ode, but occasionally in sonnet form, begins by requesting a kiss. Depiction of the kiss and its pleasures follow, with the poet recounting the euphoria of both body and soul, as in this example from Ronsard:

O dieux que j'ai de plaisir,
 Quand je sens mon col saisir
 De ses bras en mainte sorte:
 Sur moi se laissant courber
 Peu à peu la voi tumber
 Dans mon sein à demi morte.
 Puis mettant la bouche sienne
 Tout à plat desus la mienne,
 Je la mor, & suis remors,
 Deça & dela me darde
 Sa languette fretillarde
 Au bors, dedans & dehors,
 D'un baiser bruiant & long
 El' me suce l'ame adonc,
 Puis en soufflant la repousse,
 La ressuçe encore un coup,
 La resouffle tout à coup
 Avec son alarme douce. (376)

Here, the *baiser*, akin to what Mathieu-Castellani calls a "baiser morsure" (160), alludes to the spiritual dimension of the genre despite its physical content. *Baiser* often has a transcendent quality which Weber terms "plus fort que la mort," where the kiss symbolizes "l'union éternelle des amants, union que la mort ne peut briser et qui se prolonge jusqu'aux Enfers" (381). While the success of the appeal to eternity remains unknown, its frequent presence in Ronsard and Baïf makes it a recognizable trait of the genre.

Indeed, "le thème de l'éternité du baiser" (383) establishes the closest link between the genre and La Ceppède. As will be seen, the poet dispenses with several of the precious machinations of the genre—the "feigned resistance" on the part of the lady, insistence on a large number of kisses (370), as well as the affected rejection—to imbue his interpretation with a predominantly spiritual quality. Like many of La Ceppède's versions of different lyric types, the poet's adaptation of *baiser* exploits the analytical potential of an *exercice de style*. In other words, a genre's traits, both substantive and structural, are appropriated for the purpose of developing metaphysical inquiry.

Sonnet (I,3,13) depicts Christ and Mary's farewell kiss in an attempt to explain the transposition of human love to a divine plane:

Achevant ce propos, d'un long baiser jumeau
 De la Mere & du Fils les levres sont colées,
 Et leurs bras enlassez comme on voit accolées
 Les branches de la Vigne à celles de l'Ormeau.

Comme n'esteints tu point, ô Phébus, ton flambeau

A ce triste spectacle? ames trop desolées,
 Les Hebrieux pourroient bien vous rendre consolées
 S'ils vouloient à vos corps ne donner qu'un tombeau.
 Ils ne le feront pas. Il faut, Mere à cette heure
 Sans mourir, voir mourir ta chere nourriture,
 Haste donc tes Adieux il te la faut lascher.

Pren le dernier baiser: car les voix effroyables
 Des Juifs pressent des-ja les mains impitoyables
 Des bourreaux pour soudain de tes bras l'arracher.
 (484–85)⁷

On several levels, this poem imitates and departs from Pléiade *baiser*. The most striking resemblance is the bold eroticism which permeates the sonnet. Eroticism translates into a reality of the body where images of lips, arms and flesh call to one another, sparking tension which culminates in the kiss itself. The graphic description in the first quatrain of the "long baiser jumeau" and the "levres colées" evoke the "baiser à l'italienne," while the gentle urge to "Pren[dre] le dernier baiser" in the last tercet suggests a certain innocence in the gesture. La Ceppède's accent on both the pure and the prurient underscores the attempt to enhance the mystery of the kiss, and, by extension, divine love.

Like many *baisers* of the period, La Ceppède's poem concerns itself with movements and gestures between lovers. Movements and gestures refer to the lovers' interaction, verbal or physical, at any given time. In this poem, two types of gestures emerge, those enacted in the sonnet, and those merely alluded to. The recounted gestures include the joined lips as well as the entwined arms of the couple. However, the common tomb (8) and Mary's forced release of Jesus by the executioners represent projections of what could develop within the scene. The poet's rationale for juxtaposing "actual" and "potential" images at a moment of erotic and meditative *frisson* is to expand the reader's critical participation while extending the parameters of the genre. Rhetorical questions such as "comme n'esteints tu point, ô Phébus ton flambeau à ce triste spectacle?" (5–6) more fully engage the reader in the meditative process, while speculative images like that of the mutual grave amplify the *Théorèmes*'s link to mythological and literary tradition. Curiously, the poem's closest relation to the *baiser* tradition, that the kiss becomes "stronger than death," helps raise the genre above the *mignardise* which characterizes many expressions of the form. The eternity of the kiss, a theme represented in Ronsard, Baïf and Magny, holds new meaning in La Ceppède because for the poet, appeal to the eternal constitutes not only a seductive turn, but a clear depiction of spiritual reality.

La Ceppède's language expresses little preciousness or affectation. Apart from the apostrophe to Phebus (5) and the reference to Christ as "chere nourriture" (10), the poem lacks most of the stylistic techniques—repetitions, diminutives and

⁷ All quotes from the *Théorèmes* are taken from Yvette Quenot's 1988–89 critical edition.

vocabulary ending in “ard,” which typify *baiser*. Neither does the poem express the playfulness—through feigned reticence and eventual acceptance—common to the genre. According to Weber, Ronsard and his followers employ mainly verbs, rather than adjectives, to describe sensuality (376). La Ceppède, on the other hand, uses adjectives such as “jumeau,” “colées,” and “enlassez” in an erotic context, while his verbs (“lascher,” “arracher,” “mourir”) recount the painful actions which render the intense sensuality almost unbearable. Nonetheless, the poet’s depiction of Mary within an erotic context evokes Sonnet 37 of Ronsard’s *Amours Diverses*.⁸

The main difference between La Ceppède’s *baiser* and those of his predecessors involves the role of the poet. In contrast to Ronsard and Baïf, the poet in La Ceppède is not a true actor in the love scenario. He plays neither seducer nor seduced, instead placing himself somewhat outside the act of love presented to the reader. In Gerald Prince’s terminology, the poet/narrator becomes a “witness” as opposed to a “protagonist” (65–66), assuming an active role only at the poem’s conclusion, beseeching Mary to kiss her son before the Romans separate the two:

Ils ne le feront pas. Il faut, Mere à cette heure
Sans mourir, voir mourir ta chere nouriture,
Haste donc tes adieux il te faut la lacher.

Pren le dernier baiser: car les voix effroyables
Des Juifs present des-ja les mains impitoyables
Des bourreaux pour soudain de tes bras l’arracher. (485)

The tone in this warm but firm appeal to Mary to accept the Crucifixion and relinquish her son to fate is somewhat analogous to a Greek Chorus because it interprets and consoles while giving the impression of omniscience. As in traditional *baiser*, one notes the sense of urgency associated with the kiss. However, urgency here is employed not in the *carpe diem* mode of attaining immediate gratification, but to underscore the tragedy of the situation and its profound sense of loss. Repetition of the phrase “il faut” in verses 9 and 11 suggests the pre-ordained nature of Christ’s death, as the poet’s voice

⁸ See page 473 of Weber’s edition. The whimsical tone of Ronsard’s sonnet hinges on the word-play of the term “mary.” Ronsard’s narrator playfully expresses his desire to place a “baiser enfantin” on the lips of a chaste young girl, subtly associating this gesture while exploring the V/virgin’s sexuality:

D’autant que l’innocente & peu caute jeunesse
D’une vierge vaut mieux en la fleur de ses ans,
Qu’une Dame espousée abondante en enfans:
D’autant j’aime ma vierge humble & jeune maistresse.

J’aime un bouton vermeil entre-esclos au matin,
Non la Rose de soir, qui au Soleil se lache:
J’aime un corps de jeunesse en son printemps fleury:

J’aime une jeune bouche, un baiser enfantin
Encore non souillé d’une rude moustache,
Et qui n’a point senty le poil blanc d’un mary.

assumes an almost divine knowledge and authority to comfort and instruct Mary in her despair.

The assumption of a God-like voice on the part of the poet implies a sanctification of the *baiser*. Use of the imperative in the first hemistich of verse 12: “Pren le dernier baiser” reinforces celestial direction, helping elevate the kiss to the status of a holy act. Whereas the poet simply describes the *baiser* at the beginning of the sonnet, he prescribes it at the poem’s conclusion, thus rendering the act much more justifiable, if not mysterious, in the reader’s eye. The suggestion that the kiss between Christ and Mary is sanctified, perhaps even divinely ordained, raises the matter of the kiss’s literary and devotional meanings.

Initially, one must consider the poem within its narrative context. The kiss can be seen as a response to the sestet of Sonnet (1,2,97) where Mary, in an effort to comfort her son before death, expresses the desire to kiss Jesus, only to have the request thwarted by the Romans and Hebrews:

Belle Ame de mon Ame, Alme jour de mes yeux,
Doux object de mon bien, seul espoir de mon mieux,
Tu ne fourniras point sans moy cette carriere.

Ha! ma vie, Elle eut dit & voulut l’embrasser;
Mais voicy les Sergens prompts à la repousser,
Qui resserrent la file & la laissent derriere. (451)

In a sense, Mary’s disappointment represents a *baiser refusé*⁹ also common to the genre. While in this case denial comes from without rather than within, it nonetheless depicts the unfulfillment found in many *baiser* poems. Interestingly, though the *baiser jumeau* eventually realizes the Virgin’s wish, the poem evokes another cause of grief: the dashing of Mary’s hope to be buried with her son. One can argue that the erotic nature of the poem, the image of the shared tomb, as well as the very phrase “baiser jumeau” suggest a dual meaning of the term “baiser.” I will argue that this second refusal to grant Mary’s wish signifies another *baiser refusé*, this one symbolizing an eternal physical and spiritual bond. However, whether or not “baiser” should be interpreted as kiss or coitus is not as significant as the poet’s depiction of Christ and Mary as lovers. The amorous union between Christ and the Virgin carries with it the mysteries which guide the meditative sequence.

Explanation of the pair reveals itself in the first sonnet of Book Three where the poet, invoking the Virgin as his new Muse, refers to her as “ma sainte Uranie” (12). In annotation 4 of this sonnet, La Ceppède cites the seventh book of Plato’s *Republic* in describing Urania as the Muse “[qui] esleve nos esprits au Ciel & les y conduit” (463). Paul Chilton notes that in devotional lyric of La Ceppède’s era, depiction of Urania was quite prevalent (91). In Guy Le Fèvre de la Boderie’s *Encyclye*, Urania is invoked as the Muse of all divine mysteries, while in the Protestant Du Bartas, Urania emerges as

⁹ For a detailed explanation of the *baiser refusé*, see Mathieu-Castellani 136.

a "sainte beauté," and as "Venus Urania," whose function is "the elevation of souls to contemplation of the heavens and the inspiration of poets" (93).¹⁰

By portraying Mary as Christ's lover and the poet's Muse, La Ceppède appropriates the images of Urania to the Virgin, bestowing upon her the status of "la vraye Uranie" (463). In the same annotation, La Ceppède describes Mary/Urania's role as, "de nous eslever de la terre au Ciel, [et] de nous apprendre les mysteres celestes" (463). Thus, the Virgin personifies the association between love, mystery and poetry in her evolution as consummate lover and Muse. Remembering that in Sonnet (1,1,6) Christ emerges as the true Adonis, one could argue that Mary's portrayal as Urania/Venus poetically justifies the union of mother and son, as the two embody the perfect incarnation of love, fulfilling pre-ordained mythical and literary roles.¹¹ As mentioned, the analogy in verses 3 and 4 of Sonnet (1,1,13), of Christ's and Mary's arms to the entangled vines of an elm, along with the reference to the common tomb, evoke the myth of Tristan and Iseut, thus reinforcing the poetic ancestry needed to uphold such a coupling. One could even assert that the divine character of this pairing not only responds to, but redeems the sin of Oedipus and Jocasta, hence cementing the bond between Christ and Mary as the salutary inheritors of literary memory and experience,

With this literary authorization and fulfillment justifying Christ and Mary as lovers emerges a somewhat more profound devotional sanction of the *baiser*. From discussion of Mary as Urania, the idea of the Virgin as a divinely mysterious lover is clear. Yet, the exact manner in which Mary's love of Christ transcends the world and redeems man is somewhat less apparent. In order to contemplate fully the mystery of the *baiser*, it will be necessary to describe this act as the culmination of events derived from a biblical past. Contemplation of this sort enriches the instructional experience of the *dévo*t, resulting in the knowledge of how biblical chronology finds its *telos* in Christ.

Perhaps the most significant event to which the *baiser* responds is the birth of Christ. What the *baiser* effectively does is to prepare the rebirth of Christ through his reconception in

the same woman. Mary, as Urania, is divine and thus represents the perfect lover for Christ. Since Christ also embodies the Father, his desire to unite with Mary can be interpreted as a holy repetition of the act from which Christ came. Erotic depiction of Christ's reconception amounts to a human representation of what is unequivocally divine, instructing the *dévo*t that whatever appears to be fundamentally human in nature is meaningful only in terms of its ability to express a metaphysical or absolute truth. Viewed in this light, the erotic, even with its incestuous overtones, symbolizes a love in which the carnal interprets the spiritual, reflecting a desire to rechannel and purify the experience of physical passion rather than indulge it. This desire to re-create is ironically signified by the common tomb as a kind of bed which bears witness to Christ's, and consequently man's, rebirth.

With the redemptive, regenerative power of the *baiser* in mind, the *dévo*t can more concretely apprehend its relation to other biblical events, thus interpreting the significance of the subgenre in poetic and devotional terms. In Book One, La Ceppède assigns a number of sonnets to the portrayal of Judas's kiss. From a generic standpoint, Judas's transgression signifies a kind of *baiser volé*, since the kiss does not evince shared affection and constitutes a violation of the recipient. The poet decries the ignominy of the kiss in the sestet of Sonnet (1,1,43):

Las! il parloit encor' lors que voila paroistre
Ce traistre, qui le baise, & le fait recognoistre
Par ce malheureux signe aux sergens inhumains.

O baiser sacrilege! ô sacrilege signe,
Ainsi par vous Joab d'un tradiment indigne
Dans le sang de son frere ensanglanta ses mains.
(179)

As far as narrative context and biblical revelation are concerned, one can assert that the *baiser* of Christ and Mary absolves the treasonous kiss of Judas. The fallen disciple's "baiser sacrilege," which represented the separation of Christ and man, is now answered by the *baiser jumeau*, symbolizing a new-found union between the human and the divine. It should also be noted that within the context of biblical pre-figuration and redemption, the "incest" of Christ and Mary undoes that of Jacob's son Reuben, who, as La Ceppède remarks in (1,2,72), slept with his father's concubine and was thus forever branded with sin (Gen. 35:21–22, 49:4). In this instance Christ, like Reuben, in effect mounts his father's bed, but as a salutary gesture. Quite ironically, the erotic, particularly its incestuous character, adopts a pure, chaste form in order to rectify man's sullied, aberrant past.

Curiously, a distich in the sonnet which recounts Reuben's sin gives perhaps the best interpretation of both the human and divine dimensions of Christ's erotic quality. Expressing the unity between these two dimensions, La Ceppède describes Christ's humanity and divinity as married and hence inextricably linked: "Qu'est-ce autre chose, ô Christ, ta sainte humanité / Que l'Espouse, & le licit de ta divinité?" (412).

¹⁰ References to Le Fèvre de la Boderie are taken from Chilton's *The Poetry of Jean de La Ceppède*.

¹¹ See page 81 of Quenot's edition. This sonnet deals with the depiction of ideal lovers in an ideal location. In the second quatrain, La Ceppède urges all poets and painters to abandon representing Adonis in his garden in favor of Christ at the Mount of Olives:

Tymanthes malheureux, dont le pinceau s'abuse
A peindre d'Amatonte, & d'Adon les vergers,
Quittez ces Meurtes feints, & ces feints Orangers,
Peignez ces Oliviers la gloire de Jebuse.

Such an exhortation implies that Christ has succeeded Adonis, with the latter serving as a mythological typology for Christ. In this context, Pierre Grimal's remark that the name "Adonis" derives from the Hebrew word for "lord," takes on added meaning (13).

Using language of this type to describe the union of Christ's human and divine natures, La Ceppède assigns a glorified status to the erotic within his devotional method. In large measure, it is the erotic's regenerative quality which renders human and divine love equal, thus eliminating the need to oppose them. Deviating from patterns of ecclesiastical practice in representing divine love, La Ceppède employs the *baiser* subgenre to enrich his portraits of Christ and Mary as ideal human and divine lovers. Literary memory and devotional experience combine in a love process in which the regeneration of Christ is complete. The erotic thus represents a conduit leading to the consummation of the perfect love experience, with the *baiser jumeau* illustrating twin love between God and man. *Baiser*, now removed from its precious depiction in the Pléiade, stands as a literary expression of spiritual exercise. The subgenre has been cleansed so that humankind may attain the same purity, with literature's transformation enabling the reader's.

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