

Metamorphosis Roundtable

Narcissus

Lying flat on his stomach over the fountain, he began to drink from it and saw his face, his nose and mouth, clear and sharp. Then he was struck with wonder, for these shadows so deceived him that he saw the face of a child beautiful beyond measure. Then Love knew how to avenge himself for the great pride and the resistance that Narcissus had directed toward him. And Narcissus was well repaid ; he mused so long at the fountain that he fell in love with his own reflection and died of his love in the end. This was the outcome of the affair, when he saw that he could not accomplish his desire and that he was captured so inescapably that he could in no way take any comfort, he became so distressed that he lost his reason and died in a short time. Thus did he receive his deserved retribution from the girl whom he had scorned. (Langlois vv. 1481-1506, Dahlberg, p.50-51).

Sor la fontaine toz adenz	
Se mist lors por boivre dedenz,	
Si vit en l'eve clere e nete	
Son vis, son nés et sa bouchete,	1484
E cil maintenant s'esbaï,	
Cas ses ombres si le traï	
Qu'il cuida veoir la figure	
D'en enfant bel a desmesure.	1488
Lors se sot bien Amors vengier	
Dou grant orgueil et dou dangier	
Que Narcisus li ot mené.	
Bien li fu lors guerredoné ;	1492
Qu'il musa tant a la fontaine	
Qu'il ama son ombre demaine,	
Si en fu morz a la parclose :	
Ce fu la some de la chose,	1496
Car, quant il vit qu'il ne porroit	
Acomplir ce qu'il desiroit,	
E qu'il estoit si pris par fort	
Qu'il n'en pooit avoir confort	1500
En nule fin ne en nul sen,	
Il perdi d'ire tot le sen,	
E fu morz en poi de termine.	
Ensi si ot de la meschine,	1504
Qu'il avoit devant escondite,	
Son guerredon e sa merite.	

Fortune

There is a rock placed in the depths of the sea, in its center, projecting on high above it, against which the sea growls and argues. The waves, continually struggling with it, beat against it, worry it, and many times dash against it so strongly that it is entirely engulfed ;

again it sheds the water which has drenched it, the waves draw back, and it rises again into the air and breathes. It does not keep any one shape, but is always changing, always re-forming, appearing in a new shape and transforming itself. It is always clothed in a different manner. (Langlois, vv. 5922-37, Dalhberg, p.118)

Une roche est en mer seianz,
 Bien parfont, ou mileu laienz,
 Qui seur la mer en haut se lance, 5924
 Contre cui la mer grouce e tence.
 Li flot la hurtent e debatent,
 Qui toujourz a li se combatent,
 E maintes feiz tant i cotissent 5928
 Que toute en mer l'ensevelissent ;
 Aucune feiz se redespueille
 De l'eve qui toute la mueille,
 Si con li floz arriers se tire, 5932
 Don saut en l'air e si respire.
 Mais el ne retient nule fourme,
 Anceis se tresmue e refourme,
 E se desguise e se treschange ; 5936
 Toujourz se vest de fourme estrange...

Pygmalion

Venus, who heard the young man's prayer, was overjoyed because he was abandoning Chastity and striving to serve her as a truly repentant man, ready, in his penitence, to make his sweetheart quite naked within his arms, if he might ever possess her alive. Straightway she sent a soul to the image, who became so beautiful a lady that no man in any country had ever met one so beautiful. Pygmalion, since he had made his request, stayed no longer in the temple but returned to his image in very great haste, for he could no longer wait to hold her and gaze on her. He ran in little bounds until he came to her. Although he knew nothing of the miracle, he had great confidence in the gods, and the closer view he got of her the more his heart burned and fried and grilled. Then he saw that she was a living body ; he uncovered her naked flesh and saw her beautiful shining blond locks, rippling together like waves, he felt the bones and the veins all filled with blood, and he felt the pulse move and beat. He didn't know if she were a lie or the truth. (Langlois, vv. 21109-21140, Dahlberg, p.345)

Venus, qui la priere oï
 Dou vallet, forment s'esjoï
 Pour ce que Chasteé laissait
 E de li servir s'apressait, 21112
 Come on de bone repentance,
 Prez de faire en sa penitance
 Touz nuz entre les braz s'amie,
 S'il la peut ja baillier en vie, 21116
 A l'image enveia lors ame,
 Si devint si tres bele dame
 Qu'onques en toute la contree
 N'avait l'en si bele encontree. 21120

N'est plus au temple sejournez,
 A son image est retournez
 Pygmalions a mout grant heste,
 Puis qu'il ot faite sa requeste, 21124
 Car plus ne se poait tarder
 De li tenir e regarder.
 A li s'en cueurt les sauz menuz
 Tant qu'il est jusque la venuz. 21128
 Dou miracle riens ne savait,
 Mais es deus grant fiance avait,
 E quant de plus près la regarde,
 Plus art ses cueurs e frit e larde. 21132
 Lors veit qu'ele est vive e charnue,
 Si li debaille la char nue
 E veit les beaus crins blondeianz
 Come ondes ensemble ondeianz ; 21136
 E sent les os e sent les veines,
 Qui de sanc ierent toutes pleines,
 E le pous debate e mouveir :
 Ne set se c'est mençonge ou veir. 21140



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