

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF DRAMA

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(Translated by Robert Fagles)

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(Translated by Diane Aronson)

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HROTSVIT OF GANDERSHEIM

935?-1002?



HROTSVIT, a canoness in the tenth-century abbey of Gandersheim, in north-central Germany, lays claim to several significant firsts in the history of Western literature. She is the first known Christian dramatist, the first Saxon poet, and the first female historian of Europe. Her plays are the first performable plays of the Middle Ages, and her epic poems are the only extant Latin epics composed by a woman. Her sophisticated output has been a puzzle and anomaly for literary scholars and historians for centuries, and opinions about the works have often been shaped by an unwillingness to acknowledge that a medieval woman could possibly know as much or write with as much skill as Hrotsvit did. Only during the last decades of the twentieth century were Hrotsvit's achievements given the sort of attention that they deserve; and even now, there is much that we don't know and can't fully appreciate about this remarkable woman.

What little we do know of Hrotsvit's life comes from clues in her own writing. Scholars suspect that she was born around 935. Although nothing is certain about her activities before she entered the abbey at Gandersheim in 955, we can say a few things confidently about the nature of her education and religious service once she chose to live in that Christian community. First, she would have had access to many

classical Latin texts. During the medieval period, the major centers of learning in Europe were the monastic and cathedral schools, whose libraries amassed major collections of philosophical and theological writings. The Benedictine nunnery at Gandersheim was one of the most prominent of these centers. Such libraries collected manuscripts drawn not only from the Christian era but also from the classical Roman era that had preceded it. Because early Christian theologians believed that the pagan Latin texts were useful preparation for the more difficult challenge of reading Holy Scripture in Latin, students in monastic settings had access to much of the classical canon as well as to writings on church doctrine and biblical texts. Judging from clues in her own writings, it appears that Hrotsvit read Virgil, Ovid, and Terence among classical authors; she was also familiar with such early Christian philosophers as Augustine and Boethius. She was particularly well versed in saints' lives—the hagiographic texts that underlie many of her legends and dramas.

We also assume that Hrotsvit, like most canonesses who entered Gandersheim and other monasteries, was of noble birth. We know that she joined the community at about the same time that Gerberga II, a niece of Otto I (the German king and Holy Roman Emperor), came to the monastery.

In her writings, Hrotsvit credits Gerberga with much of her education. This connection to one of the most powerful families in Saxony suggests that either before or during her years at Gandersheim, Hrotsvit may have spent time at court, which would have given her further access to broad cultural influences.

Hrotsvit's oeuvre remained completely unknown to scholars for nearly five hundred years after her death; then, in 1494, the German humanist Conrad Celtis found what is now known as the Emmeram-Munich Codex, which he published in 1501. While German scholars, in a spirit of cultural nationalism, were quick to embrace Hrotsvit, critics elsewhere found her writing so advanced compared to other manuscripts from that period that they questioned its authenticity. In 1867, the Viennese scholar Joseph von Aschbach asserted that Celtis had forged the codex, arguing that no medieval woman could possibly have possessed Hrotsvit's knowledge of either the world or of classical literature. Aschbach's theories have subsequently been definitively refuted by the discovery of additional copies of Hrotsvit's writing, in their original Latin as well as in early vernacular translation. But the confirmation of the legitimacy of her oeuvre—which comprises eight verse legends; six plays in rhymed, rhythmic prose; two verse epics; and a short poem—has not resolved fundamental questions, particularly in the case of the plays, surrounding their genesis or historical significance.

Although we cannot definitively date Hrotsvit's work, most recent scholarship posits that she was at the height of her creative powers from 965 to 975. Scholars believe she began writing legends based on saints' lives soon after her arrival at the abbey, and her collection of plays followed. If these assumptions are true, then she may well have written her dramas at about the same time that the *Quem quaeritis* (Whom do you seek?) trope came to be added to the Easter Mass. This precursor to full-fledged medieval liturgical drama consisted of a short series of simple questions and answers between an angel and the women who come to Christ's tomb following the resurrection, sung by two halves of a church choir. Hrotsvit's work

could thus predate the first extant mystery plays, or dramas based on scriptural incidents, by about seventy-five years. This revised history would then throw into question the long-held theory about how drama "reemerged" in the West after the end of the classical era.

In the standard explanation, dramatic arts declined precipitously after the collapse of Rome—essentially lying dormant for six centuries, only to be reborn in the tenth century. This rebirth was the product of growing theatricality in the rituals of the Catholic Mass, starting with the *Quem quaeritis* trope. Liturgical drama eventually broke free of the confines of the Mass, evolving into the mystery cycles that were sponsored and performed by professional guilds. From that point, scholars have generally believed, it was merely a matter of time before the drama would fully reflower, as it eventually did during the Renaissance.

Hrotsvit's dramas disrupt the prevailing narrative of medieval theater history because her plays are much more sophisticated than the rudimentary seed from which the revived Western drama was traditionally thought to have grown. In addition, the plays of Hrotsvit, which the playwright herself describes as imitations of the Roman comic dramatist Terence, demonstrate a continuity between classical and medieval theater, not the revival of a dead form.

Even among scholars who recognize that Hrotsvit's work complicates the standard history, there is considerable disagreement about the influence of her plays on medieval drama generally. Some have characterized Hrotsvit's work as an "isolated experiment," or a mere "literary exercise," implying that her plays were neither widely known nor intended for performance. While the discovery of copies of her manuscripts in different locations suggests that her works were known within the Christian community in Europe and thus could indeed have had some impact on medieval drama, the current evidence allows no more than conjecture about what, and how extensive, that impact might have been. Whether her plays were works of theater or just literary exercises has proven a more vexing question. We

cannot conclude from the form of these six works that they were composed for theatrical performance. Like Seneca's plays in late antiquity, Hrotsvit's plays may simply have been examples of closet drama—pieces never staged, or never intended to be staged. But regardless of Hrotsvit's intentions, the plays themselves are undeniably theatrical, and can be performed.

The extent of Hrotsvit's understanding of theatrical performance is difficult to gauge, as many historians believe that Europeans in the tenth century had little knowledge of classical stage practice. In this era, written dialogues with speech prefixes (sometimes names of real people) were considered valuable pedagogical tools, but it is unclear whether they were meant to be read silently or aloud. Nor is it certain that such texts that we now understand to be dramatic or theatrical were distinguished from others in any way. Some scholars have speculated that dialogues may have been read aloud, either by a single person or by a number voicing the different "characters," with the suggested action silently dramatized by a mime, but there is little evidence to support or disprove this theory. What we can say is that of all of Hrotsvit's plays, *DULCITIUS* most strongly suggests its author's sense of performance. For this reason, it has emerged as a crucial text for historians seeking to explore the possible conjunction of dialogue and action in medieval drama.

Further complicating our interpretation of Hrotsvit's intentions is the self-deprecating tone of the prefaces and epistles that introduce many of her works. Initially, Hrotsvit's own prose was taken as evidence of her negligibility as a writer, but scholars have more recently acknowledged that it simply adheres to a common medieval Christian convention that gives God, not the writer, credit for whatever genius might be found in the work. A better clue to her sense of self and of her earthly mission may reside in the Latin *nom de plume* she adopted: *Clamor Validus Gandeshemensis*, or "the strong voice of Gandersheim." Perhaps, like some modern critics, she saw her own strength in a bold and daring design in her writings that was unmatched by any efforts of her

contemporaries, either in literature or visual art. Or perhaps she was thinking that representing wise, strong, and virtuous Christian women in texts to be shared within communities like her own would have the power to transform cultural stereotypes.

In the preface to her dramas, Hrotsvit explains her goals, declaring a debt to and a quarrel with the Latin playwright Terence:

Many Catholics one may find, and we are also guilty of charges of this kind, who for the beauty of their eloquent style, prefer the use of pagan guile to the usefulness of Sacred Scripture. There are also others, who, devoted to sacred reading and scorning the works of other pagans, yet frequently read Terence's fiction, and as they delight in the sweetness of his style and diction, they are stained by learning of wicked things in his depiction. Therefore I, the strong voice of Gandersheim, have not refused to imitate him in writing whom others laud in reading, so that in that selfsame form of composition in which the shameless acts of lascivious women were phrased the laudable chastity of sacred virgins may be praised within the limits of my little talent.

From this brief statement, Hrotsvit's plan is clear: she will revise Terence for Christendom. While borrowing his compositional style, she will correct his misogynistic portrayal of women and instead promote images of female virtue and chastity.

Although critics are divided about the extent and nature of Hrotsvit's debt to Terence, they generally agree that *Dulcitus* is the most Terentian of her plays. The influence of classical comedy may be seen in the play's lighter moments, such as the scene in which the Roman governor Dulcitus makes a lunge at pots and pans, thinking they are the young Christian virgins whom he wishes to ravish, ends up with soot all over his face, and is then mistaken for a demon. Comparisons can likewise be made between Terence's use of established classical character types, such as bombastic fathers, and Hrotsvit's adaptation of them as Roman figures of



An illustration from the 1501 edition of Hrotsvit's complete works showing the virgins Agape (love), Chionia (purity), and Hirena (peace) being burned alive.

authority. We may also observe a shared predilection for love conflicts as plot devices, and such motifs as scheming and disguise figuring in the works of both dramatists. Some critics, however, argue that these resemblances are isolated parallels, and that the spirit and content of Hrotsvit's plays much more thoroughly reflect medieval sensibilities. In their view, the comic scene and the conflicts between typed characters illustrate the use of Christian symbolism, as Hrotsvit pits the pagan forces of evil against the blessedness of Christian virtue and martyrdom.

Hrotsvit is remarkably faithful in *Dulcitus* to her source material, which is taken from the *Acta Sanctorum* (*Acts of the Saints*), a sixty-eight-volume compendium of exemplary tales of Christian saints' lives. The story that serves as the basis for *Dulcitus* describes the martyr-

dom of the holy virgins Agape (love), Chionia (purity), and Hirene (peace), all put to death by order of the Roman emperor Diocletian in Thessalonica in the year 290. In her careful schema, Hrotsvit opposes the idealized women to the pagan male authorities Dulcitus (who represents lust), Diocletian (arrogance), and Sissinus (cruelty). The virgins' death at the hands of torturers ensures their Christian salvation, while their pagan persecutors secure eternal damnation—made literal by Dulcitus's representation as the soot-faced devil—for their evil deeds. Like Christ, the women are tempted to abandon their religious beliefs and sense of mission, but they resist. They withstand torture and death, thereby overpowering their male aggressors, whom they show to be impotent in the face of Christian faith. Through these trials, Hrotsvit throws into

question the image of the weaker sex. Moreover, in female chastity she stands out with Eve—the dominant figure—but with the idealized Virgin Mary. These themes of female faith recur in Hrotsvit's *Calimachus*, *Alcega*, and especially *Sapientia*, which also depicts the martyrdom of young virgins. The work is thematically innovative and shows an astounding facility with dramatic structures, including stichomythia of alternating lines of dialogue to settle a dispute. By including short hymns of praise to the Virgin, Hrotsvit demonstrated her understanding of the role her work played in the broader arena of Christian drama, as well as her knowledge of the tradition and her skill at characterization. Her work is well-cited in early medieval literature. While scholars may not yet be able to determine how Hrotsvit's work has influenced the development of the medieval drama, it is clear that she has influenced the development of the medieval drama.

The Martyrdom of Agape

DIOCLETIAN, a Roman emperor
 AGAPE, a holy virgin
 CHIONIA, a holy virgin
 HIRENA, a holy virgin
 DVLCITIUS, a Roman official

The martyrdom of the silence of the night, Gothic script

1. Translated by Katharina M. Wilson

question the image of women as the weaker sex. Moreover, by celebrating female chastity she strongly links women not with Eve—the dominant association—but with the idealized Virgin Mary.

These themes of female fortitude and faith recur in Hrotsvit's other dramas, *Gallicanus*, *Calimachus*, *Abraham*, *Pafnutius*, and especially *Sapientia*, her last drama, which also depicts the martyrdom of three young virgins. The works not only were thematically innovative but also reflected an astounding facility with Latin rhetorical structures, including *stichomythia*, the use of alternating lines of dialogue to dramatize a dispute. By including doxologies (short hymns of praise to God) at the close of most of her works and in other ways, Hrotsvit demonstrated her clear understanding of the role her works might play in the broader arena of Christian education, as well as her knowledge of the liturgy. And her skill at characterization remains unprecedented in early medieval dramaturgy.

While scholars may never be able fully to determine how Hrotsvit's work may have influenced the development of the

medieval drama, her growing significance in the modern period is indisputable. Her plays have been translated and performed steadily from the late nineteenth century forward. Especially noteworthy is the 1914 production of *Pafnutius* in London by the Pioneer Players, which showcased the talents of three prominent women of the Edwardian theater. Edith Craig directed, using the English translation of Christabel Marshall (under the pseudonym Christopher St. John), and the performance featured the legendary actor Ellen Terry in the role of the Nun. The study of Hrotsvit's plays from the mid-twentieth century onward has forced scholars both to carefully reexamine foundational assumptions in theater history and to reconsider dismissive attitudes toward women's writing throughout the Western tradition. The rediscovery of other medieval women authors—most notably the twelfth-century dramatist and musician-composer Hildegard of Bingen, writer of the earliest extant liturgical morality play, *Ordo virtutum*—will surely help fuel this important critical dialogue.

J.E.G.

The Martyrdom of the Holy Virgins Agape, Chionia, and Hirena¹

DULCITIUS

CHARACTERS

DIOCLETIAN, a Roman emperor

AGAPE, a holy virgin

CHIONIA, a holy virgin

HIRENA, a holy virgin

DULCITIUS, a Roman governor

DULCITIUS'S WIFE

SISSINUS, a Roman count

SOLDIERS

GUARDS

The martyrdom of the holy virgins Agape, Chionia, and Hirena whom, in the silence of the night, Governor Dulcitus secretly visited, desiring to delight in their

1. Translated by Katharina M. Wilson.

embrace.² But as soon as he entered, he became demented and kissed and hugged the pots and pans, mistaking them for the girls until his face and his clothes were soiled with disgusting black dirt. Afterward Count Sissinus, acting on orders, was given the girls so he might put them to tortures. He, too, was deluded miraculously but finally ordered that Agape and Chionia be burnt and Hirena be slain by an arrow.

DIOCLETIAN³ The renown of your free and noble descent and the brightness of your beauty demand that you be married to one of the foremost men of my court. This will be done according to our command if you deny Christ and comply by bringing offerings to our gods.

⁵ AGAPE Be free of care, don't trouble yourself to prepare our wedding because we cannot be compelled under any duress to betray Christ's holy name, which we must confess, nor to stain our virginity.

DIOCLETIAN What madness possesses you? What rage drives you three?

AGAPE What signs of our madness do you see?

¹⁰ DIOCLETIAN An obvious and great display.

AGAPE In what way?

DIOCLETIAN Chiefly in that renouncing the practices of ancient religion you follow the useless, newfangled ways of the Christian superstition.

AGAPE Heedlessly you offend the majesty of the omnipotent God. That is
¹⁵ dangerous . . .

DIOCLETIAN Dangerous to whom?

AGAPE To you and to the state you rule.

DIOCLETIAN She is mad; remove the fool!

CHIONIA My sister is not mad; she rightly reprehended your folly.

²⁰ DIOCLETIAN She rages even more madly; remove her from our sight and arraign the third girl.

HIRENA You will find the third, too, a rebel and resisting you forever.

DIOCLETIAN Hirena, although you are younger in birth, be greater in worth.

HIRENA Show me, I pray, how?

²⁵ DIOCLETIAN Bow your neck to the gods, set an example for your sisters, and be the cause for their freedom!

HIRENA Let those worship idols, Sire, who wish to incur God's ire. But I won't defile my head, anointed with royal unguent by debasing myself at the idols' feet.

³⁰ DIOCLETIAN The worship of gods brings no dishonor but great honor.

HIRENA And what dishonor is more disgraceful, what disgrace is any more shameful than when a slave is venerated as a master?

DIOCLETIAN I don't ask you to worship slaves but the mighty gods of princes and greats.

2. The story of the martyrdom of the holy virgins in 290 C.E. derives from the *Acta Sanctorum* (*Acts of the Saints*), an encyclopedia of the saints recognized by the Roman Catholic Church. The virgins' Greek names mean Love, Purity, and Peace, respectively. Although there was an actual Dulcitus, a Roman military leader who in 369 C.E. was appointed *Dux Britanniarum* (commander of

Britain; Latin), he lived nearly a century after the events depicted in the play. Hrotsvit may have chosen the name simply for the irony of its link to the Latin *dulcis*, which means "sweet, charming."

3. Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus (ca. 245–316 C.E.), Roman emperor from 284 to 305 C.E. He was zealous in the persecution of Christians.

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AGAPE A

CHIONIA
HIRENA

AGAPE V

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He, too, was deluded miraculously
burnt and Hirena be slain by an

oble descent and the brightness
to one of the foremost men of
our command if you deny Christ

to prepare our wedding because
to betray Christ's holy name,
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What rage drives you three?

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Christian superstition.

the omnipotent God. That is

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Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus (ca.
C.E.), Roman emperor from 284 to
He was zealous in the persecution of

35 HIRENA Is he not anyone's slave who, for a price, is up for sale?

DIOCLETIAN For her speech so brazen, to the tortures she must be taken.

HIRENA This is just what we hope for, this is what we desire, that for the love
of Christ through tortures we may expire.

DIOCLETIAN Let these insolent girls who defy our decrees and words be put
40 in chains and kept in the squalor of prison until Governor Dulcitus can
examine them.⁴

*

DULCITIUS Bring forth, soldiers, the girls whom you hold sequestered.

SOLDIERS Here they are whom you requested.

DULCITIUS Wonderful, indeed, how beautiful, how graceful, how admirable
45 these little girls are!

SOLDIERS Yes, they are perfectly lovely.

DULCITIUS I am captivated by their beauty.

SOLDIERS That is understandable.

DULCITIUS To draw them to my heart, I am eager.

50 SOLDIERS Your success will be meager.

DULCITIUS Why?

SOLDIERS Because they are firm in faith.

DULCITIUS What if I sway them by flattery?

SOLDIERS They will despise it utterly.

55 DULCITIUS What if with tortures I frighten them?

SOLDIERS Little will it matter to them.

DULCITIUS Then what should be done, I wonder?

SOLDIERS Carefully you should ponder.

DULCITIUS Place them under guard in the inner room of the pantry, where
60 they keep the servants' pots.

SOLDIERS Why in that particular spot?

DULCITIUS So that I may visit them often at my leisure.

SOLDIERS At your pleasure.

DULCITIUS What do the captives do at this time of night?

65 SOLDIERS Hymns they recite.

DULCITIUS Let us go near.

SOLDIERS From afar we hear their tinkling little voices clear.

DULCITIUS Stand guard before the door with your lantern but I will enter
and satisfy myself in their longed-for embrace.

70 SOLDIERS Enter. We will guard this place.

*

AGAPE What is that noise outside the door?

HIRENA That wretched Dulcitus coming to the fore.

CHIONIA May God protect us!

AGAPE Amen.

75 CHIONIA What is the meaning of this clash of the pots and the pans?

HIRENA I will check. Come here, please, and look through the crack!

AGAPE What is going on?

4. The asterisks have been added by the translator to denote changes in locale or the passage of time; Hrotsvit's extant manuscripts contain no such scene divisions.

HIRENA Look, the fool, the madman base, he thinks he is enjoying our embrace.

AGAPE What is he doing?

80 HIRENA Into his lap he pulls the utensils, he embraces the pots and the pans, giving them tender kisses.

CHIONIA Ridiculous!

HIRENA His face, his hands, his clothes, are so soiled, so filthy, that with all the soot that clings to him, he looks like an Ethiopian.

85 AGAPE It is only right that he should appear in body the way he is in his mind: possessed by the Devil.

HIRENA Wait! He prepares to leave. Let us watch how he is greeted, and how he is treated by the soldiers who wait for him.

*

SOLDIERS Who is coming out? A demon without doubt. Or rather, the Devil
90 himself is he; let us flee!

DULCITIUS Soldiers, where are you taking yourselves in flight? Stay! Wait! Escort me home with your light!

SOLDIERS The voice is our master's tone but the look the Devil's own. Let us not stay! Let us run away; the apparition will slay us!

95 DULCITIUS I will go to the palace and complain, and reveal to the whole court the insults I had to sustain.

*

DULCITIUS Guards, let me into the palace; I must have a private audience.

GUARDS Who is this vile and detestable monster covered in torn and despicable rags? Let us beat him, from the steps let us sweep him; he must not
100 be allowed to enter.

DULCITIUS Alas, alas, what has happened? Am I not dressed in splendid garments? Don't I look neat and clean? Yet anyone who looks at my mien loathes me as a foul monster. To my wife I shall return, and from her learn what has happened. But there is my spouse, with disheveled hair she leaves
105 the house, and the whole household follows her in tears.

WIFE Alas, alas, my Lord Dulcitus, what has happened to you? You are not sane; the Christians have made a laughingstock out of you.

DULCITIUS Now I know at last. I owe this mockery to their witchcraft.

WIFE What upsets me so, what makes me more sad, is that you were igno
110 rant of all that happened to you.

DULCITIUS I command that those insolent girls be led forth, and that they be publicly stripped of all their clothes, so that they experience similar mockery in retaliation for ours.

*

SOLDIERS We labor in vain; we sweat without gain. Behold, their garments
115 stick to their virginal bodies like skin, and he who urged us to strip them snores in his seat, and he cannot be awakened from his sleep. Let us go to the Emperor and report what has happened.

*

DIOCLETIAN It grieves me very much to hear that Governor Dulcitus has
120 been so greatly deluded, so greatly insulted, so utterly humiliated. But these vile young women shall not boast with impunity of having made a

mockery of our gods and those who worship them. I shall direct Count Sissinus to take due vengeance.

*

SISSINUS Soldiers, where are those insolent girls who are to be tortured?

SOLDIERS They are kept in prison.

125 SISSINUS Leave Hirena there, bring the others here.

SOLDIERS Why do you except the one?

SISSINUS Sparing her youth. Perchance, she may be converted easier, if she is not intimidated by her sisters' presence.

SOLDIERS That makes sense.

*

130 SOLDIERS Here are the girls whose presence you requested.

SISSINUS Agape and Chionia, give heed, and to my council accede!

AGAPE We will not give heed.

SISSINUS Bring offerings to the gods.

AGAPE We bring offerings of praise forever to the true Father eternal, and to

135 His Son co-eternal, and also to the Holy Spirit.

SISSINUS This is not what I bid, but on pain of penalty prohibit.

AGAPE You cannot prohibit it; neither shall we ever sacrifice to demons.

SISSINUS Cease this hardness of heart, and make your offerings. But if you persist, then I shall insist that you be killed according to the Emperor's

140 orders.
CHIONIA It is only proper that you should obey the orders of your Emperor, whose decrees we disdain, as you know. For if you wait and try to spare us, then you could be rightfully killed.

145 SISSINUS Soldiers, do not delay, take these blaspheming girls away, and throw them alive into the flames.

SOLDIERS We shall instantly build the pyre you asked for, and we will cast these girls into the raging fire, and thus we'll put an end to these insults at last.

150 AGAPE O Lord, nothing is impossible for Thee; even the fire forgets its nature and obeys Thee; but we are weary of delay; therefore, dissolve the earthly bonds that hold our souls, we pray, so that as our earthly bodies die, our souls may sing your praise in Heaven.

*

SOLDIERS Oh, marvel, oh stupendous miracle! Behold their souls are no longer bound to their bodies, yet no traces of injury can be found; neither their hair, nor their clothes are burnt by the fire, and their bodies are not at all harmed by the pyre.

155 SISSINUS Bring forth Hirena.

*

SOLDIERS Here she is.

SISSINUS Hirena, tremble at the deaths of your sisters and fear to perish according to their example.

160 HIRENA I hope to follow their example and expire, so with them in Heaven eternal joy I may acquire.

SISSINUS Give in, give in to my persuasion.

HIRENA I will never yield to evil persuasion.

- SISSINUS If you don't yield, I shall not give you a quick and easy death, but multiply your sufferings.
- 165 HIRENA The more cruelly I am tortured, the more gloriously I'll be exalted.
- SISSINUS You fear no tortures, no pain? What you abhor, I shall ordain.
- HIRENA Whatever punishment you design, I will escape with help Divine.
- SISSINUS To a brothel you will be consigned, where your body will be shamefully defiled.
- 170 HIRENA It is better that the body be dirtied with any stain than that the soul be polluted with idolatry.
- SISSINUS If you are so polluted in the company of harlots, you can no longer be counted among the virginal choir.
- HIRENA Lust deserves punishment, but forced compliance the crown. With
- 175 neither is one considered guilty, unless the soul consents freely.
- SISSINUS In vain have I spared her, in vain have I pitied her youth.
- SOLDIERS We knew this before; for on no possible score can she be moved to adore our gods, nor can she be broken by terror.
- SISSINUS I shall spare her no longer.
- 180 SOLDIERS Rightly you ponder.
- SISSINUS Seize her without mercy, drag her with cruelty, and take her in dishonor to the brothel.
- HIRENA They will not do it.
- SISSINUS Who can prohibit it?
- 185 HIRENA He whose foresight rules the world.
- SISSINUS I shall see . . .
- HIRENA Sooner than you wish, it will be.
- SISSINUS Soldiers, be not afraid of what this blaspheming girl has said.
- SOLDIERS We are not afraid, but eagerly follow what you bade.
- *
- 190 SISSINUS Who are those approaching? How similar they are to the men to whom we gave Hirena just then. They are the same. Why are you returning so fast? Why so out of breath, I ask?
- SOLDIERS You are the one for whom we look.
- SISSINUS Where is she whom you just took?
- 195 SOLDIERS On the peak of the mountain.
- SISSINUS Which one?
- SOLDIERS The one close by.
- SISSINUS Oh you idiots, dull and blind. You have completely lost your mind.
- SOLDIERS Why do you accuse us, why do you abuse us, why do you threaten
- 200 us with menacing voice and face?
- SISSINUS May the gods destroy you!
- SOLDIERS What have we committed? What harm have we done? How have we transgressed against your orders?
- SISSINUS Have I not given the orders that you should take that rebel against
- 205 the gods to a brothel?
- SOLDIERS Yes, so you did command, and we were eager to fulfill your demand, but two strangers intercepted us saying that you sent them to us to lead Hirena to the mountain's peak.
- SISSINUS That's new to me.
- 210 SOLDIERS We can see.

- and easy death, but
 busily I'll be exalted.
 r, I shall ordain.
 e with help Divine.
 r body will be shame-
 ain than that the soul
 ts, you can no longer
 nce the crown. With
 ents freely.
 d her youth.
 e can she be moved to
- SISSINUS What were they like?
 SOLDIERS Splendidly dressed and an awe-inspiring sight.
 SISSINUS Did you follow?
 SOLDIERS We did so.
 215 SISSINUS What did they do?
 SOLDIERS They placed themselves on Hirena's left and right, and told us to
 be forthright and not to hide from you what happened.
 SISSINUS I see a sole recourse, that I should mount my horse and seek out
 those who so freely made sport with us.

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- 220 SISSINUS Hmm, I don't know what to do. I am bewildered by the witchcraft
 of these Christians. I keep going around the mountain and keep finding
 this track, but I neither know how to proceed nor how to find my way back.
 SOLDIERS We are all deluded by some intrigue; we are afflicted with a great
 225 fatigue; if you allow this insane person to stay alive, then neither you nor
 we shall survive.
 SISSINUS Anyone among you, I don't care which, string a bow, and shoot an
 arrow, and kill that witch!
 SOLDIERS Rightly so.
 HIRENA Wretched Sissinus, blush for shame, and proclaim your miserable
 230 defeat because without the help of weapons, you cannot overcome a tender
 little virgin as your foe.
 SISSINUS Whatever the shame that may be mine, I will bear it more easily
 now because I know for certain that you will die.
 HIRENA This is the greatest joy I can conceive, but for you this is a cause to
 235 grieve, because you shall be damned in Tartarus⁵ for your cruelty, while I
 shall receive the martyr's palm and the crown of virginity; thus I will enter
 the heavenly bridal chamber of the Eternal King, to whom are all honor
 and glory in all eternity.

5. In Greek and Roman mythology, a realm of punishment and torment beneath the underworld; in the Christian context of *Dulcitus*, Tartarus refers to hell.