



The Sultan's Daughter in the Flower Garden Die Sultanstochter im Blumengarten

Text Information

Author | Anonymous

Language | Middle High German

Period | 14th Century

Genre | Rhymed couplet tale

Source | Johannes Bolte, "Die Sultanstochter im Blumengarten," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 34 (1890): 18–31.

Collection | Cross-Cultural Encounters in the Premodern World; Gender, Sex and Sensuality: Writings on Women, Men and Desire

URL | www.sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/sultan_daughter

Translation and introduction by Sara S. Poor.

Introduction to the Text

The Sultan's Daughter in the Flower Garden is a 400-line rhymed couplet text in Middle High German that was probably composed anonymously in the 14th century. Categorized in scholarship as a "Klosterlegende" or monastery legend, but also exhibiting characteristics of saints' lives, courtship narratives, stories of noble "heathens" who convert, as well as of *docta ignorantia* (learned ignorance) and Marian literature, the narrative was probably translated from a no longer extant Latin source and is also transmitted in low German prose versions, as well as in song form.

While the prose versions have a modest transmission in late medieval manuscripts and early modern prints, the songs' reception stretches into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Middle High German rhymed couplet version presented here appears, however, in only two late fifteenth-century manuscripts: Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, mgo 222, dated to after 1475, and Budapest, Bibl. et Archivum P. P. Franciscanorum, Cod. Esztergom 11, dated to around 1500.

Both manuscripts were produced in the southern German-speaking areas and tell the following story: after learning of the arrival of a foreign nobleman whom her father wishes her to wed, the daughter of the Sultan of Babylon goes into their beautiful garden. Among the flowers, she marvels at the beauty of the lilies, whereupon an angel appears and recruits her to worship the God who made them, as long as she can commit to complete chastity. She agrees and he whisks her 3000 miles away, instructing her in the Christian mysteries along the way. The angel delivers her to a convent where she is accepted, baptized, educated, and eventually becomes abbess.

The dominant aspects of the tale situate it most comfortably in the traditions of Marian literature and *docta ignorantia* narratives. The references to lilies, to chastity, and to the annunciation from the angel in an enclosed garden come into greater relief in the Berlin manuscript compilation, which includes a number of other texts relating to the Marian tradition (e.g., a *pater noster* exegesis, a treatise about the rosary, a devotion to Mary, a set of Marian miracles, and an allegory about the heart as cloister). This focus corresponds to the known ownership of the manuscript, which, as indicated in the pastedown on the inside front cover, was a reformed convent of Augustinian nuns in Inzigkofen, a town located about 25 miles north of Lake Constance.

In contrast, the Budapest manuscript, most likely produced in a Franciscan context, seems more interested in instructing an audience of lay noblemen in the benefits of giving up their sinful behavior and embracing a more chaste existence for the sake of their fate in the afterlife. Accordingly, the other texts included in the Budapest compilation, many more of which are in verse—as opposed to the Berlin manuscript, where only the *Sultan's Daughter* text is rhymed—focus on the concepts of sin and confession (e.g., model confession texts, a Latin catalogue of sins, verse prayer for a good end, a *Totentanz*, the dream vision *Tundalus*, a section from the *Lucidarius* on the afterlife, and two secular rhymed couplet tales: *The Count of Savoy* and *The Knight in the Chapel*).

The text is noteworthy more for its content than for its poetic attributes, the rhymes and imagery being relatively mundane.



The combination of the variety of narrative models into one tale is of interest, however, as well as the miraculous trajectory of the clever maiden from an object of exchange between men in Babylon to model Christian, scribe, teacher, and ultimately abbess of a German convent. In addition, the focus in the text on the choice to obey the angel, that is, on the maiden's agency in determining her fate, is also striking.

About this Edition

The Middle High German text supplied here is based on Johannes Bolte's 1890 edition, published in the *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* (volume 34, pages 18-31), which is a diplomatic transcription of the Berlin manuscript (fols. 160r–170v). I have adopted Bolte's diacritics where possible. These include the regular umlaut as well as an *accent aigu* (´), which Bolte also used to indicate an umlauted vowel (presumably because the superscript e in the manuscript looks more like an accent than an e). Diphthongized vowels like a, u, and o, which in the manuscript are indicated with superscripts, have been written out as av, uo, and ov. Superscript abbreviations for er, en, and em have been written out as well. The manuscript often uses a v to represent the vowel u and when this is umlauted, that is also indicated with what looks like an accent (instead of the umlaut or an e over the vowel). In the transcription here, these have been changed to ú (as in úmmer and úber).

Bolte's suggestions for emendations have been adopted and appear in square brackets. My own interjections appear in parentheses. I have also consulted, where necessary, both manuscripts as well as Vizkelely's edition of the Budapest manuscript published in 2013 (András Vizkelely, "'Die Sultanstochter im Blumengarten' in einer ehemaligen Güssinger Handschrift (A szultánkisasszony a virágok közt. Verses novella egy Németújvárról elszármazott kódexben); Tanulmányok Mollay Károly születésének 100. évfordulójára [Studien zum 100. Geburtstag von Karl Mollay]," *Soproni Szemle [Ödenburger Rundschau]* 4 (2013): 440–53), as indicated in the critical notes.

Further Reading

Poor, Sara S. "Imagining the Origins of a Clever Woman: The 'Sultanstochter' and the Path to Learning in the Late Medieval Devotional Book." In *Mendicant Gender Discourse(s) - Comparative Studies*, *Reti Medievali* 41 (forthcoming, 2021).

- *Thorough introduction to the text, including detailed analysis of manuscript context.*

Poor, Sara S. "Women Teaching Men in the Medieval Devotional Imagination." In *Partners in Spirit: Women, Men, and Religious Life in Germany, 1100-1500*, edited by Fiona J. Griffiths and Julie Hotchin, Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2014, pp. 339–65.

- *Readings of late medieval German narratives of docta ignorantia featuring women, the manuscripts that transmit them, and the historical context.*

Morgan, Ben. "The Pleasure of the Text: What Two Manuscripts Can Tell Us About Becoming God." *Medieval Mystical Theology* 23, no. 1, 2014, pp. 52–64.

- *Examination of the Kirchheim reception of the related narrative, the Sister Catherine Treatise, with a focus on its theological content.*

Winston-Allen, Anne. *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages*. University Park, Penn: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997.

- *Informative study of the late medieval Marian literature through the evolution of the rosary and the poems, texts, and gardens associated with it. Includes excellent bibliography and also many illustrations.*



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In der statt zuo Babilon
da sass ain herre rich vnd schún,
der selb was gar ain erlich man
vnd gewaltig – –
der hett ain dochter, die was kluog,
zúchtig was siú genuog,
onmavssen schún vnd tugentrich,
in allen landen was ir nit gelich.
in sinen hof ain bömgart was,
da sprungent bluoman vnd öch gras,
der was wonneclich vnd schún,
die fogel sungent süss gedoen,
vil rosen dar in sprungent,
[vil gilgen us dem grase drungent,]
der bavm bluot was rovt vnd wiss,
es was ain irdesch paradiss.
dú iunkfrovw dáglich dar in gieng,
ir gebett siú allweg anfieng,
mit guoter andavcht sú das lass,
als sú das gelert was.
da warent gilgen vnd rosen vil
vnd ander bluoman *[als man wil]*.
diu junkfrow schún vnd zart
ainem hohen herren sú gemáchelt ward,
der kam mit ainem her dar schuon,
des ward im trurun benomen:
er wund, er sólt frólich hochzit havn,
es mocht im nit also ergavn.
vil schún in ir vatter empfieng,
haimlich sú zuo dem vatter gieng,
flisseclich sú in batt,
dz er ir erlopti ain haimlich statt,
da sú ir bett avn allen spot
spráchin irem herren got.
er sprach: vil liebunn tochter min,

In the city of Babylon
lived a wealthy and handsome lord
who was a very honorable man,
as well as powerful.
5 This lord had a daughter who was clever,
and also very well-mannered.
Immeasurably beautiful and rich in virtue,
there was no one like her in the whole world.
In the lord's courtyard, there was a garden
10 where flowers grew as well as grass.
It was delightful and beautiful –
The birds sang sweet melodies, while
many roses were sprouting and
[many lilies pressed up through the grass].
15 The blossoms of the plants were red and white;
it was an earthly paradise.
The maiden went there daily.
She always began her prayers there,
and read them with devotion,
20 just as she had been taught.
There were many lilies and roses
and other flowers *[as is said]*.
The beautiful and tender maiden
was betrothed to a noble lord
25 Who was coming there with a great army.
His sadness was being taken away,
for he thought he was going to have a happy marriage;
but in the end, this wasn't possible for him.
Her father received him very well.
30 Unbeknownst to him (the suitor) , she went to her father
and eagerly asked him
for permission to go to a hidden place
where she could say her prayers
to her lord God without reproach.
35 He said, my dearest daughter,



es sol dir erlovpt sin.
des selben mavls diu iunkfrovwe rain
gieng in den garten aber allain,
siú wolt niement mit ir lavn;
schún rosen sach siú bi ir stavn,
si fand da ainen gilgen stok,
dar vz gewachsen ain michel zog,
vil gilgen schún die warent her,
dar an kam ir gedank vil ser,
das niemand anderst wárin got,
kúnd si, si wolt tuon sin gebott.
sú gedavcht: ach got, wie schún der ist,
der des gewalt havt vnd den list,
das es das schópfen kan!
ach got, sách ich den selben man,
ich welt in anbetten fúr got
vnd welt ovch gern behalten sin gebott,
ich welt im uff die trúwe min
úmmer vndertánig sin.
dz fúgt er wol in kurzzer frist:
nun merkent, wem got genádig ist,
wem gnavd von im geschechen sol,
dz kan er bald fúgen wol.
dz merk ich bi dem wunder wol,
wie es der selbun magt ergieng.
es was ir desmavls vmb kainen spott,
ir gefiel recht wol der gilgen got,
ir kam von himel ain liechter schin,
got der wolt ir genádig sin:
ain schúner engel kam do dar.
do siú des engels ward gewar,
von siner schúni si erschrak,
dz siú vf der erde lag;
do gefiel er ir ie bas,
das was sinem recht wissent daz
das guot gaist liebent sich.
die boesen [aber] laident sich.
der engel nam si bi der hand

yes, you may.
At once this pure maiden
went into the garden again, alone –
she did not want to have anyone with her;
40 Standing near her she saw beautiful roses,
and among them she found a great lily stalk
out of which grew
many beautiful lilies – they were glorious.
Her thoughts then turned in earnest to the fact
45 that, if she could, she wanted to do the bidding
of no other than the true God.
She thought: "Ah God, how beautiful is he
who has the power and intelligence
to be able to create this!
50 Ah, God, if I saw this man,
I would pray to him as to a God
and would also gladly follow his commands,
I would truly
always want to be subject to him."
55 God brought this to pass a short time later:
now, please take note: to whomever God is merciful,
and on whomever he bestows his grace,
He can certainly make this happen quickly.
This is definitely what I take from the miracle
60 that happened to this maiden.
Her words were not in jest:
she really did like the God of the lilies.
A bright radiance then came down to her from heaven –
it was God who wished to bestow grace upon her –
65 and a beautiful angel appeared.
When she became aware of the angel,
she shrank back in fear from his beauty
falling to the earth;
but then he pleased her more and more,
70 which he found well and good, since he knew
that good spirits love one another
while evil ones hate each other.
The angel took her by the hand



do siú den erst ansach,
vil zúchteklich si zuo im sprach:
eya, vil lieber herren min,
tuo mir uff siner gnawden schin
vnd hab mir es nit fúr ainen spott:
sag mir, bist du der hailig got?
wan so wil ich dir dienen wol,
darnavch stavn mins hertzen begierd.
er sprach: nain, ich bin sin knecht.
junkfrow kluog, gesich mich recht
vnd merk, wie ain tropf múg gesin
gen dem mer vnd gen den Rin,
noch klainer ist die schúni min
gen dem liebsten edeln herren min.
ob du im geren dienen wilt
vnd dich sines dienstes nit beuilt,
dz ravt ich dir vff die trúwen min,
des soltu mir gefólgig sin.
des engels schúni ducht si gröss,
wie lútzel si der red verdross.
si sprach: vil lieber herre min,
ich wil dir gern gefólgig sin;
wist ich nun, wz im wár gezám.
oder was dienstes er von mir nám,
des welt ich úmer haben ruom
vnd welt es willenclichen tuon.
er sprach: so solt du kúnsch sin.
si sprach: ach sússer herre min,
ich fúrch, es si versummet gar,
man wil hinacht [*min*] nemen war ;
er ist ietz hie vff minen schaden,
ich welt, ich wár im entladen.
er sprach: ich gib dir noch wol rät,
ob es an dinem willen stät;
glob mir, ich hilf dir uss [*der*] novt!
ir baid hend sy im dar bott:
ich wil dir úmmer gehorsam sin

75 When she first looked at him directly,
She spoke to him very courteously:
"Ah, my very dear lord,
reveal (explain?) the light of His grace to me
and don't make fun of me:
80 Tell me, are you the holy God?
For if so, I wish verily to serve you,
My heart's desire is set on this."
He said: "No, I am his servant.
Clever maiden, behold me truly
85 and observe how (small) a drop (of water) is in comparison
to the sea and to the Rhine.
Even smaller is my radiance
in comparison to my dearest noble lord.
If you really want to serve Him
90 and you do not commend yourself to his service,
Then I counsel you truly
To do as I say."
She thought the angel's glow was glorious,
how little she was burdened by his speech!
95 She said: "my very dear lord
I will gladly do as you say:
if only I knew what would be suitable for Him,
or what service He would accept from me!
For this (service) I would wish always to have renown forever
100 and would do it willingly."
He said: "Then you must be chaste."
She said: "Ah, my sweet lord,
I fear, it is too late,
There is someone who intends to take me right after this;
105 he is here now, to my detriment.
I wish, I were released from him."
He said: "I will tell you what to do
if that is your will;
Believe me, I will help you out of this fix!"
110 She offered him both her hands:
"I will be obedient to you forever



úmer [unz] vff das ende min.
 er graiff ir linden an ir hand,
 vff zoch er si ze hand,
 er fuort si in ainer clainer wil
 me denn trútusent mil.
 es ducht si gar ain kurtzer weg,
 si kam weder vff brugg noch vff steg.
 vil zart vnd súss was sin ler.
 die er si lert vff dem ker,
 in ain closter er si bravcht.
 dz hett ir gemachel nit gedavcht.
 er wolt ir mit fróden niemen war,
 sin fród was im gezukt gar,
 irem vatter er do wider seit,
 dz er in betrogen hett,
 an tavber fuor er von dannan.
 ir vatter was ain trurig man
 vnd tett im des von herczen novt.
 er wust, das si nun lang wer tovt,
 erst huob sich sin novt.

Disen haiden súllen wir trurun lavn
 vnd wider zuo der iunkfröwun gan.
 nun hórent aber gern dz:
 der engel, der fieng an
 vnd seit ir vil súss,
 wie got die kúnschen magt grúst,
 vnd wie vil gnavden diú kúnschait havt,
 der si mit rainen herczen treit.
 er sprach: Kúnschait ist min schwester,
 — — — — —

vnd der engel die in dem himelrich sint,
 siú ist der gilgen gottes kind,
 Kúnsch ist des obrosten gemachel,
 Liebin ist vil sterker denn stachel.
 er seit ir sússikait noch gar vil,
 wie hoch got die kúnschait setzen wil:
 got nimpt si vornan an den tantz,
 kúnschait ist aller tugent ain krantz.

and ever until my death."
 He took her gently by the hand,
 and whisked her off immediately,
 115 moving her in a short span of time
 more than three thousand miles away.
 Yet it seemed to her a very short journey,
 for she tread on neither bridge nor path.
 Very tender and sweet was the teaching
 120 that he taught her on the way.
 He brought her to a cloister.
 This would not have occurred to her betrothed!
 He truly wanted to have the joy of knowing her,
 but his joy was wrenched away from him.
 125 To her father he then said
 that he had betrayed him
 and then he left the castle and departed from that place.
 Her father was a sad man
 and this matter gave him great pain.
 130 Yet only when he realized that she was probably long dead,
 did he really begin to grieve.

We should let this heathen mourn
 and return (our attention) to the maiden.
 Now listen to this!
 135 The angel, he began
 to tell her very sweetly
 how God greets chaste maidens,
 And how much grace is in the chastity
 that they bear in a pure heart.
 140 He said: "Chastity is my sister
 — — — — —
 and also (the sister) of the angels who are in heaven,
 and she is the child of the God of the lilies.
 Chastity is the most supreme spouse,
 145 love is stronger than a stinger."
 He told her many more sweet things,
 like how high God wishes to elevate Chastity:
 God chooses her before all others in the dance;
 Chastity is a crown of all the virtues.



von got vnd von Maria zart
kunt er, wie diú sin muoter ward
vnd in enpfing vn ovch gebar,
ir leben vnd ir liden gar,
wie got an dem crútz erstarb,
da mit er ´vns vil gnavd erwarb;
von got vnd aller himel schar
seit er ir, von ordnung gar
er was ir ain wiser vor.
er fuort si in zu dem tor
des fröwen closters in der nacht,
daz tett er als mit gottes macht
durch gantz wand mit beschlossener túr:
ain vil grovss wunder ich spúr.
vil lins er si da nider liess,
fuor den altavr er sie do sitzen hiess,
an di quoten statt
still (sy) sitzent er si battr,
bis das die frowen kámen
vnd disiú már vernáment.
sie tett alles das, das er sie hiess.
ainen liechten schin er vmb si liess,
ainen brieff gab er ir do in die hand,
dar an menig schún geschrift was
dz edel wunder avne wank,
ir baidir red kurcz vnd lang
dez engels vnd der iunkfrovwn quot,
vnd was sie hett in irem muot,
vnd wer si vor was vnd wie si kam dar,
dz was schún geschriben an
mit rotem gold, vnd wer es las,
der sach, daz si ain haidin was
vnd den tovff noch nie empfieng.
der engel si vor dem altar lie;
dise red, die er mit ir tett,
ducht si minneclich vnd súss.
der engel si vil geren sach,
vil zartlich vnd schuon si zuo im sprach:

150 Of God and of tender Maria
he informed her: how she became His mother
and conceived and also bore Him;
of her life and all her suffering, and
how God died on the cross
155 so that He could attain grace for us.
He told her of God and
of the entire heavenly throng and of the whole order of things;
He was a wise mentor to her.
He took her to the tower
160 of a convent during the night.
He did this with God's might
through thick walls and locked door:
In this I detect a very great miracle!
He lowered her down gently
165 in front of the altar and then bid her sit down.
He bade her to sit still
in this good spot
until the ladies came
and heard her tale.
170 She did everything he asked.
He [then] surrounded her in a bright light,
and in her hand, he put a letter
that contained much beautiful writing –
this noble miracle tale in its entirety;
175 what each of them said, the angel and the good maiden,
whether brief or lengthy;
what she had in her mind;
and who she was before and how she came there.
All that was beautifully written down
180 in red gold letters, and whoever read it
saw that she was a heathen
and had not yet been baptized.
The angel left her in front of the altar.
She found the teaching that he had given her
185 lovely and sweet.
She gladly gazed at the angel.
Very tenderly and beautifully she said to him:



ach lieber herr vnd engel min,
lavss mich dir enpholchen sin;
ich havn mich dir ergeben gar,
nim min in minen nöten war!
din red ist zucker súss,
minen herren du mir grúss;
mit dienst bin ich im berait,
mit willeklicher arbeit.
wan vatter vnd muoter vnd magen min,
die lassen ich durch den willen din,
grossen richtum lavss ich faren.
sag im, er sóll mich wol bewaren!
vnd [grúss] ovch mir die maget súss,
von der du mir vil havst geseit,
die die kúnschait des ersten anfieng;
sag ir, durch ir kind sitz ich hie
vnd si allain gesessen,
si sol min nit vergessen;
dz zimpt iren gnawden wol,
wan ich nit waiss, wav ich sol.
vil zartlich schied er do von ir,
er sprach: wiss, iunkrow, got ist mit dir.
Nun wist si nit, wa siú sass,
diú sprach des landes ir unbekant wz.
diú áptissinn des closters da
diu kam gegangen iesa
navch ir aller gewonhait
sú was táglich des ersten berait,
da man got dienen solt,
in dem kor si wolt.
do siu aller erst tratt hin in,
si sach die maget vnd den schin;
vil bald kert siú sich wider uss,
siu liuff bald in das schlavfhuss,
diu frowan siu bald wakt
vil schuon, dz si si nit erschrakti.
do siu si all ze samen bravcht,
siu seit in, was si sach vnd bedavcht;

"Ah, my dear lord and angel,
Allow me to be received by you,
190 I have given myself to you completely,
Take me in my moment of need!
Your words are as sweet as sugar,
Greet my lord for me;
I am ready to serve Him,
195 With willing toil.
For your sake I am leaving
my father, mother, and kin
and I am letting go of great wealth.
Tell Him to protect me well!
200 And also greet the sweet virgin [Mary] from me,
about whom you have told me so much,
and who was the first to be chaste;
Tell her, I have sat down and am sitting here
because of her child and her alone,
205 and that she should not forget me.
That would befit her great compassion well,
for otherwise, I do not know where I should (turn)."
Then he very tenderly took his leave.
He said: "Know this, maiden, God is with you."
210 Now, she did not know where she was,
nor was the language of the land familiar to her.
The abbess of the cloister
came along just then
which was her regular habit –
215 She was always the first to be ready
when it was time to sing the office.
(And so) she headed to the choir.
At the moment she stepped into the choir,
She saw the maiden surrounded by light;
220 She turned around quickly and went back out.
She sped to the dormitory
Where she immediately woke the ladies, though calmly
So that they wouldn't be alarmed.
When she had brought them all together,
225 She told them what she saw and thought;



siu sprach: ich wil hiut veriechen,
ich havn Mariun selv gesechen,
diu wil úns hiut erun;
zuo der sond wir keren
vnd sóllent si enphavchen.
siu begund vor an hin gavchen,
nach ir was gavch in allen,
si hettent sich navch erfallen.
si savchent die iunkfrowwen sin
vil herlich sitzen in iren schin.
si vielent fúr si an ir knie,
Salve regina sungent si,
dz betút: gotwilkomen kúnginn,
von vns solt du gegrússet sin.
hie von ich nit me sagen wil.
der eren was ir doch ze vil,
súss sungent ir münd rot,
den brief siu der áptissinen bot.
vil bald siu den über las
vnd las, wie es ergangen was.
diss wonders wavrent sie alle frow,
dz si got geeret hett also
fúr allú klóster in dem land,
den er sóllich botschaft litzel sant;
vil fród an iren hertzen lag,
si erbietten des tags.
ir aller sprách was ir vnkund,
vil schier funden si den fund,
dz si hain santent in die statt
ainen botten, der den bischof batt,
das er kám zuo in dar
vnd des wonders námi war.
vil pfaffent er do zuo im nam,
mit fróden er do zuo in kam,
den brief er do über lass,
er sach, das si ain haidin was
vnd das diss alles got wolt,
das man si da tóffen solt.

She said: "I want to tell you today,
That I have seen Mary herself,
She wants to honor us today;
We should return to her
230 And should welcome her."
She rushed ahead of them,
and all of them rushed after her
so fast that they almost fell down.
They saw the maiden
235 Sitting nobly in the light.
They fell to their knees before her,
[and] sang the Salve Regina,
which means: "God welcome you, Queen.
May you receive our greeting!"
240 About that I have nothing more to say.
This honor was of course too much for her (the maiden).
Their red mouths sang sweetly
as she offered the letter to the abbess
who read through it quickly
245 and saw how things had gone.
They were all happy about this miracle
that God had thus honored them
above all other cloisters in the land
to which He had sent no such message;
250 Their hearts were filled with great joy
(while) they waited for the day to dawn.
Their language was entirely unknown to her,
and so the sisters very quickly realized
that they should send a messenger into the city,
255 who would ask the bishop
to come to them
and see the miracle.
The Bishop gathered many clerics around him
and then gladly went to them.
260 He then read through the letter
and saw that she was a heathen
and that God wished
her to be baptized.



do er den brief hett vss gelesen,
er wolt do selb ir tott wesen
vnd töft si selb mit siner hand
vff der fart. diú äptissin si tovd fand
an allen sachen,
als man ain gaistlich mensch
sol machen.
do si was crastan worden,
do gab siu ir den orden
vnd die pfründ zem kloster.
da man schloft sy in gewand,
daz wz graw — — —
si wavrent all des wunders frow,
Te deum laudamus sungent si do,
die priester alt vnd iung
vnd di gantz samnung,
diss lob si sungent avne spott
der rosen vnd der gilgen got.
dar navch hiess man si leren,
ir hail dz wolt sich meren;
siu gelernet in kurtzer frist,
dz siu kund aller hand list
singen, lesen vnd schriben,
— — — — —
ir tugent was mengualt vnd grovss,
allú wisshait ir zuo floss.
diu äptissin dar navch starb,
ir lützel navch ir ampt warb,
wan si ducht allgemain,
wie disiu iunkfrow rain
vnder in diu best wár úber all;
dar zuo gäben si die wal,
dz si diu äptissin sólt sin,
diu da vor was ein ha*[i]*din.
niement hie voll sagen kan,
wes glúks dz kloster do gewan
an eren vnd an guot,
dz geschuof diu wolgemuot;

When he had read the letter to the end,
265 He himself wanted to be her Godfather
and he baptized her with his own hand
while he was there. The abbess
found her dead
in (to?) all things,
270 as a spiritual person should be.
When she had become a Christian,
she (the abbess) then gave her the rule
and her dowry to the cloister.
Then they dressed her in a robe
275 That was gray. — — —
They were all happy about the miracle
and then they sang Te deum laudamus,
all the priests, old and young
and the whole assembly.
280 They sang this earnestly
to the God of roses and lilies.
After that they had her taught –
her holiness wanted to grow!
She learned in a short time
285 that she had all kinds of ability
In singing, reading, and writing,
— — — — —
Her virtue was manifold and great:
all wisdom flowed to her.
290 Soon thereafter, the abbess died.
Few of the sisters applied for her office,
For it seemed to them all
that this pure maiden
was the best of all among them.
295 For this reason, they voted
that she should be the abbess
who had previously been a heathen.
No one here can really say
how much good fortune the convent won
300 in honor and in goodness because of this.
This created an atmosphere of good will and well-being.



mit wishiat kund siu des klostere pflegen,
got der het ir sinen segene
vnd alles hail zuo gesent.
wie schön si das wolt, si lert
si all tugend nacht vnd tag,
wie lützel si dar an erlag.
von künshait lert si zuo aller zit,
siu lert, was genavd dar an lit;
von der künshait besunder
seit siu menig wunder,
wan dz was ir vil wol kunt
worden von des engels mund.
ir ler was guot vnd rain,
noch süsser denne der huonig sain,
siu lert si allen, das si sturben,
dz si gottes huld erwurben.
siu was áptissin drissig iar,
siu dienot got avn alle swavr.
der engel dar navch zuo ir kam,
der si dórt vss dem garten nam,
er sprach: iunkfrow, diu zit ist hie,
du havst misstretten nie,
du havst behalten min gebott;
der rosen vnd der gilgen got
havl mich gesant zuo dir,
her navch dir stavl mins hertzen begir.
du solt dich cristanlich bewaren,
so wil ich bald navch dir faren
von hüt an dem dritten tag,
da von merk eben, was ich dir sag.
so erzaig wir dir, das ich dir verhiess,
do du den haiden faren liest.
dú iunkfrow ward der red frow,
sinem süssen rat folget siu do,
die frowan hiess si kommen dar.
do kament si vnd nament war,
was siu in seit an der stund,
in ward ain laidiges már kunt.

She was able to manage the cloister with wisdom,
for God had sent her his blessing
and everything holy.
305 As beautifully as she wanted, she taught
them all the virtues night and day;
How little she lay down on the job!
She taught of chastity at all times:
She taught about the grace that is inherent in it;
310 and of chastity in particular,
she told many miracle stories,
for these were made known to her
by the angel's mouth.
Her teaching was good and pure
315 even sweeter than honey.
She taught them all, so that when she died
She would attain God's favor.
She was abbess for thirty years,
serving God without any difficulty.
320 At the end of this time, the angel who had
taken her out of the garden came to her
and said: "Maiden, the time has come,
You have never had a misstep,
and have followed my orders;
325 The God of roses and lilies
has sent me to you –
my heart's desire is longing for you.
See that you keep Christian rule
and I will come for you soon,
330 three days from today.
Mark you well what I tell you now:
in this way we will fulfill the promise I made you
When you left the heathen."
This speech made the maiden happy,
335 and so she followed his sweet counsel
and called the ladies to her.
When they came and heard
what she said at that moment,
a sad tale was made known to them.



siu gab in do iren getrúwen ravt,
si hiess si baidú frú vnd spavt
got flisseclichen minnen
mit hertzen vnd sinnen
vnd mit fliss all tugent havn,
so mócht es in och wol ergavn.
ir aller iavmer der was grovss,
das wasser inen vss den ovgen floss
sie wudent all ir hend;
hie nam ir gewalt ain end,
des dritten tags do lag si tovd,
also schied sy von aller novt.
des selben tags kam der engel
vnd nam ir sel zartlich mit im
und fuort si in das himelrich
zuo andren mágten minneclich,
da ward er all ir fród gantz,
er fuort si an der iunkfrowan tantz.
gross iamer sich hie huob,
vil erlich man si do begruob,
ob irem grab si sunge:
ir ist recht wol gelungen.
got selber gen ir gie
gar wunneclich vnd minneclich er sie empfieng,
er fuort si an der engel schar:
got helff vns allen zuo ir dar.

Diss sol man geren hóren lesen,
der der kúnschait dester hólder well wesen;
wan wer die kúnschait lieb havt,
dem mag es hie och wol ergavn,
wer sich ir versummet havt,
dem wil ich geben den ravt,
das er si geren behalt;
wan got der kúnschait walt
vnd die vil lieb muoter sin,
die hoch himel kúnigin vnd kaiserin,
die wz die erst, die kúnschait erkos,
da von ir hail ist worden grovss,

340 She gave them her true counsel,
she bid them love God diligently
both morning and night
with heart and mind,
and keenly uphold all the virtues,
345 so that it would go well for them.
Their shared grief was so great
that tears flowed out of their eyes,
and they wounded all of their hands (from wringing).
Thus ended her rule (as abbess):
350 On the third day she lay dead,
and she departed from all sorrow.
On the same day, the angel came
and gently took her soul with him
and led her to heaven
355 to the other loving maidens.
In this way, he became the fulfillment of all their joy:
He brought her to the dance of the virgins.
Great lament arose here (on earth)
as they buried her with honor
360 and sang over her grave:
She had had a great success:
God himself had gone to her;
joyfully and full of love he had received her
and led her to the host of angels.
365 God help us all to join her.

This [tale] should be gladly heard told
To anyone who wishes to be that much more beholden to chastity;
For whoever holds chastity dear,
for him it will go well in this life,
370 Whoever neglects it,
him I would counsel
to preserve it gladly;
For God governs chastity
and His very dear mother,
375 the high Queen and Empress of heaven,
she was the first to choose chastity.
because of which her holiness has greatly increased



dar nach vil menig iunkfrow her,
dis von ir havnd genomen ler.
den kúnschen git si hohen lon,
sie setzt in vff der mágte kron.
wer aber sich ir versummet havt,
der tuo sich der vnkúnsch wider ab
vnd hab dar an vil státtē muot,
so mag sin ding noch werden guot.
wer unkúnsch lavt, e das sú in laut,
eye wie wol es im ergavt!
dz sag ich mannen vnd wiben,
das si vil stát dar an beliben
vnd folgen miner lere[n]
vnd sich da von kere[n].
her Salomon gesprochen havt,
das fliechen si der beste ravt.
wer kúnsche beliben well vnd das mag tuon,
dem git got grovssen luon.
got der git im die obrosten kruon
in sinem hóchsten tron.
da mit havt diss buoch ain end,
got vns sinen hailigen segen send
vnd verlich vns allen ain guotes end. Amen

and after which very many maidens followed her,
(that is, they followed) this lesson from her hand.
380 She gives high praise to the chaste ones,
she places the maidenly crown upon their heads.
However, he who has neglected it,
if he rids himself once again of corruption
and then is very steadfast in this,
385 then things can improve for him.
Whoever relinquishes corruption, before it spoils him,
ah, how well it will go for him!
This I say to men and women:
that they remain steadfast in this
390 and follow my teaching
and turn away from corruption.
Lord Solomon has said
that being clean is the best advice.
Whoever wants to and is able to remain chaste,
395 God will give him great praise.
God will give him the highest crown
in his highest throne.
Herewith the book is at an end,
may God send us His holy blessing
400 and solemnly grant us all a good end. Amen

Critical Notes

Transcription

- Line 4* Bolte suggests that the line is incomplete and offers "als ain soldan" as a completion. The Budapest manuscript for this line is: "gewaltig vnd sáldenreich" (powerful and fortunate).
- Line 14* As with this verse, text appearing inside square brackets hereafter indicates an addition or emendation by the editor, Johannes Bolte, that is not present in the Berlin manuscript.
- Line 70* Bolte misreads the manuscript here as "siú", but what he read as a u is clearly an n, which would make the diacritic an abbreviation for, in this case, em. This reading is confirmed by the other manuscript witness (which was unknown to Bolte), which for this line reads: "Das auch seinem recht was vnd ist" (emphasis added).
- Line 74* A series of em-dashes indicates a line that is missing.
- Line 104* "War nemen" in this context also means to know physically, as in, have sex with.
- Line 123* "niemen" is clearly a variant spelling of "nemen" here.



- Line 127* Bolte misreads the initial letter as c and in his edition where he has "cáber [?]." The manuscript clearly shows a t in "taber" (here with a diphthongized vowel, "tavber") means "fortress/castle" (fol. 163r).
- Line 139* Bolte's "ramen" has been corrected to "rainen" after consulting the manuscript (fol 163b).
- Line 142* Bolte's "dre" has been corrected to "die" after consulting the manuscript (fol 163b).
- Line 275* Bolte assumes missing text here, as well as an additional missing line (not included in the line count).

Translation

- Line 14* As with this verse, text appearing inside square brackets hereafter indicates an addition or emendation by the editor, Johannes Bolte, that is not present in the Berlin manuscript.
- Line 30* Insertions in parentheses are my clarifications.
- Line 74* In the Budapest manuscript, line 74: "ir was gen ym gemant" (she was driven towards him)?
- Line 94* Also possible, "bored."
- Line 104* "War nemen" in this context also means to know physically, as in have sex with.
- Line 106* "Ich welt, ich wár im entladen..." literally, I wish I was unloaded from him, as in property (the verb is used both in connection with unloading a horse, and also the unloading of one's emotions such as sorrow and guilt).
- Line 123* See note to line 104, above.
- Line 127* Bolte misreads the initial letter as c and in his edition where he has "cáber [?]." The manuscript clearly shows a t in "taber" (here with a diphthongized vowel, "tavber") means "fortress/castle" (fol. 163r).
- Line 191* The verb is again "warnemen" and her address here to the angel echoes the language of marriage/sex that she rejected with the earthly lord. No doubt, this serves as evidence for the reader that she is still a heathen, a novice in Christian behavior, and that she still has a lot to learn.
- Line 268* The Berlin manuscript has "töd" here, which could be a mis-writing of "totte" or "tottin" (meaning patroness or Godmother). See footnote 11 for the reading of the Budapest manuscript.
- Line 270* It's possible some lines are missing here. The Budapest manuscript has the following for this passage, which is also somewhat difficult to interpret: "Er pesneid si do in weis gewand/ Das pracht man dar mit list/ Sy stuend czu der selben frist/ vnd auch auf der selben vart/ die aptissin do ir got ward/ Do sy nun was christin worden/ Do gaben sy ir den orden." (Then he dressed her in white clothing -- that was cleverly done -- She stood at the same time and at the same time, the abbess then became her Godmother. When she had become a Christian, the abbess gave (taught) her the rule.)
- Line 275* Bolte assumes missing text here, as well as an additional missing line (not included in the line count).
- Line 393* Cleanliness is next to Godliness?