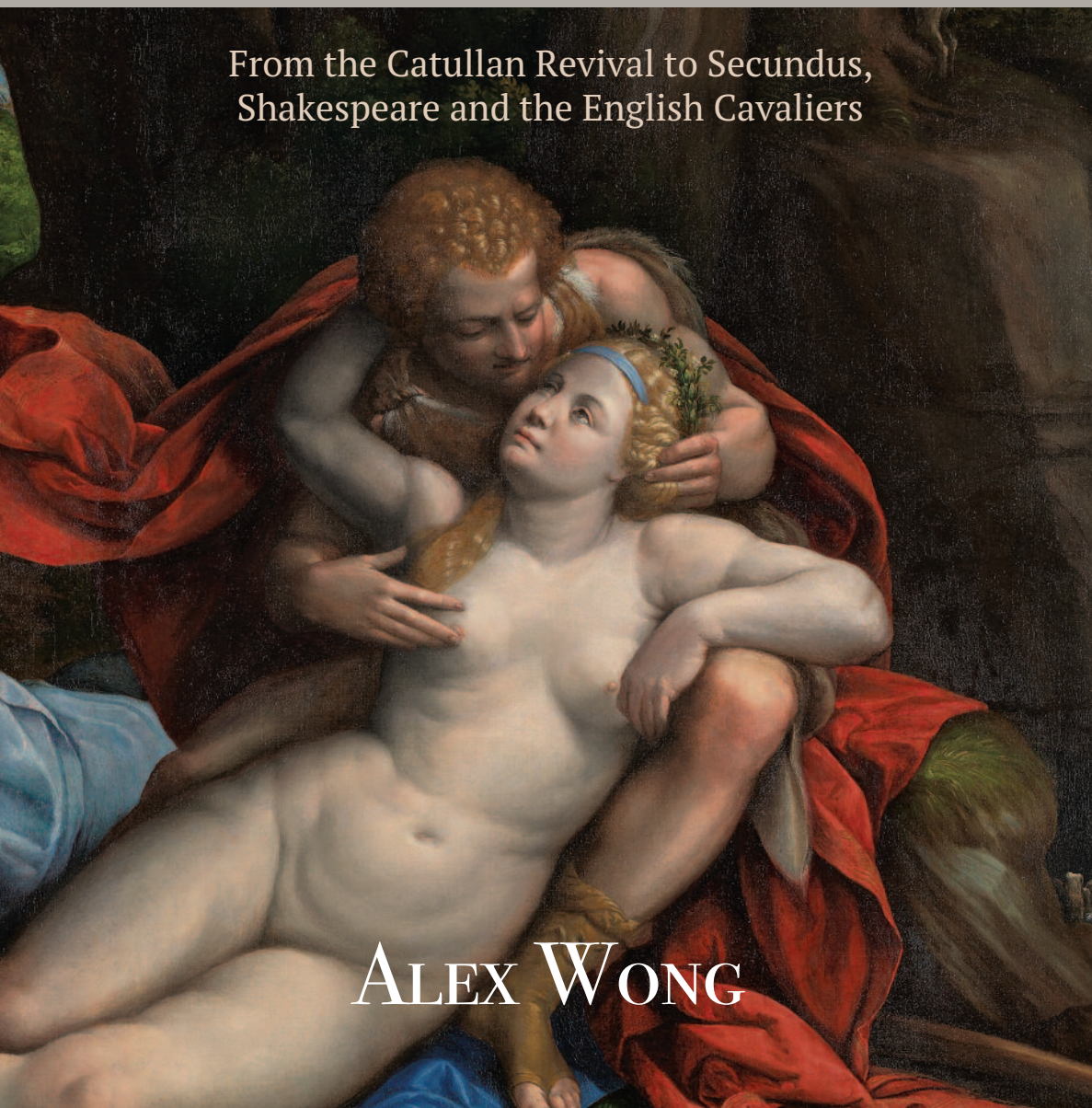


The Poetry of Kissing

IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

From the Catullan Revival to Secundus,
Shakespeare and the English Cavaliers



ALEX WONG

Studies in Renaissance Literature

Volume 34

THE POETRY OF KISSING IN
EARLY MODERN EUROPE

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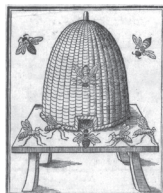
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EARLY MODERN EUROPE

FROM THE CATULLAN REVIVAL TO SECUNDUS,
SHAKESPEARE AND THE ENGLISH CAVALIERS

Alex Wong

D. S. BREWER

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Dedicated to the Memory of Philip Ford (1949–2013)
Professor of French and Neo-Latin Literature at the
University of Cambridge

CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
<i>Preface</i>	xii
<i>Notes on Editorial Matters</i>	xviii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xix
1 The Rise and Fall of a Genre	1
Generic History	1
The Career of the Kiss-Poem	3
Tradition, Kind and Mode	11
2 A Thousand Kisses	18
Rome to Renaissance	18
Latin into English	40
3 Erotic Transformation	54
Euphemism and Titillation	54
Tongues, Teeth and Role-Play	65
A Mixed Classical Heritage	82
4 Sexual and Generic Tensions	88
The ‘Catullan Law’	88
The Hard and Soft in Kiss-Poetry	98
Women Poets and Masculine Convention	115
A Dual Posterity?	132
5 The Soul in the Kiss: A Theme and its Variations	136
Soul-Kisses before Secundus	136
Poetic Platonism	153
Janus Secundus	171
The Later Soul-Kiss Poem	179
Questions of Form	194
6 The Kiss-Poem in the British Isles	201
<i>Basium</i> into Sonnet: Sir Philip Sidney and Giles Fletcher	
the Elder	201
Vernacular Strains: Drummond of Hawthornden	215
Scottish Neo-Latin: Buchanan, Ayton and Leech	227

Contents

7	Sophistication of the English Kiss	255
	From Genre to Mode: Shakespeare's <i>Venus and Adonis</i>	255
	Imitation and Parody: Campion to Cowley	275
	Cavalier Secundanism: Sir Thomas Stanley	294
	Conclusion	313
	<i>Select Bibliography</i>	317
	<i>Index</i>	331

If we decline to tolerate any borrowed forms in art, if we either set no value on antiquity at all, or attribute to it some magical and unapproachable virtue, or if we will pardon no slips in poets who were forced, for instance, to guess or to discover a multitude of syllabic quantities, then we had better let this class of literature alone. Its best works were not created in order to defy criticism, but to give pleasure to the poet and to thousands of his contemporaries.

Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* [1860, 1869], trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (1878), Part III

τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἔργον τῆς Ἀφροδίτης καὶ ὄρον ἔχει καὶ κόρον καὶ οὐδὲν ἐστίν, ἐὰν ἐξέλῃς αὐτοῦ τὰ φιλήματα: φίλημα δὲ καὶ ἀόριστόν ἐστι καὶ ἀκόρεστον καὶ καινὸν αἰεί.

For the Venereal act itself is soon ended, and brings satiety, and is nothing at all, if you take away the kisses; but kissing has no terminus, and is never satisfied, and is ever renewed.

Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe & Clitophon*, IV.8

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If, as we are asked to believe by one of the authors to be discussed here, great things can indeed be achieved even with small Latin and less Greek, it should not be too surprising that the present, very modest, monograph has been completed by someone who is certainly no classicist: completed with much expense of time and effort, but also with good guidance. Many thanks are due to David Money for his ungrudging advice on puzzling, time-consuming problems in the Latin. Jaspreet Boparai also gave me his opinions on tricky passages, while Elena Giusti has helped with Italian, and Renaud Lejosne with French. Ingrid De Smet let me read her unpublished work on Bonnefons, and Cassie Gorman offered advice concerning Margaret Cavendish on several occasions. Others whose conversation and reassurances have also helped, in a more general way, during the time it took to bring this work to fruition include Jennifer Wallace, Mark Mierowsky, James Jiang, Phoebe Dickerson, Martin Golding, Michael Schmidt, Robin Holloway and Alison Hennegan; also, more recently, Orietta da Rold and Michael Schoenfeldt; but much above all, Sarah Green, whom I thank *multis cum osculis* (not least—nor most—for assisting me with the reading of drafts and proofs, and with the index).

Some parts of this book have previously appeared in different forms elsewhere. For permission to reproduce material from my articles in *The Sidney Journal* and *The International Journal of the Classical Tradition*,¹ but also for their helpfulness and comments in the preparation of the original publications, I am obliged to my editors at both these periodicals: principally Mary Ellen Lamb and Jill Kraye. My editors for the present book, Caroline Palmer, Robert Kinsey and Nick Bingham, have also been patient, attentive and heartening throughout the process. Neither do I forget the several anonymous reviewers—at the Press, the journals, and elsewhere—who have contributed substantially to this work and yet remain unknown to me.

I wish to express separately my debts to the late Philip Ford, whose friendly appraisals of my work were of great help during the first few years of this project, and were missed subsequently. Philip died in April 2013, quite suddenly, only a few weeks after his last, but characteristically generous, offer of help—with French materials, on that occasion. His teaching while I was an undergraduate set me on the Neo-Latin track in the first place, though I never expected it to become such a large focus in my later research. Those who knew him or his work will see that Philip's interests lie behind much of this book, even where no specific piece of his published work gave the cue; and it is very unlikely that any of it could have been written, had it not been for his quiet enthusiasm and support. I am grateful to his family for allowing me to dedicate the book to him.

Finally I am indebted to Peterhouse, my first college at the University of Cambridge, for having funded my research between 2011 and 2014, and to St John's College at the same university for my current position, which has allowed me to complete and publish this book.

¹ 'Sir Philip Sidney and the Humanist Poetry of Kissing', *Sidney Journal*, 31:2 (2013), 1–30; 'The Hard and the Soft in the Humanist Poetry of Kissing', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 21:1 (2014), 30–66 (reproduced with permission of Springer).

PREFACE

The poetry of Western Europe, in the period of its 'early modernity'—in this case, let us say, from around Boccaccio's time to the waning of the age of Rococo, though the scope of the present study is not quite so wide—was full of kisses: repeated kisses, with a complement of repeating but evolving figures through which they were stylistically realized. Critical readers, for the most part, are so used to them that their functions and histories go unquestioned. In exceptional cases we may be struck by something compellingly different in the presentation. At other times, the thing most likely to strike a modern reader or scholar about a given literary kiss is its very conventionality; and it is all too easy to take conventions for granted, unless we have a good reason for being interested in them. Part of my argument in this book is that the conventions of the kiss in Renaissance poetry are worth examining, and that such an examination might make us more sensitive to the subtlety with which convention is treated in this or that example, as the poet variates upon a well-tried theme. But what makes the incidental kiss worth notice, what gives the literary scholar an excellent reason for attending to the conventions with which so many of these kisses are engaged, is the fact that the Renaissance had actually generated a complete poetic genre almost entirely devoted to the subject of kissing.

The tradition began in the fifteenth century, with the imitation of a handful of ancient poems. As the High Renaissance reached its culmination, the poem of kissing developed into a fully conventionalized Latin 'kind'. The *Basia* of Janus Secundus, let loose upon the humanist world in 1541, set the pattern for another hundred years and more of Latin kiss-poems, not to mention French *baisers*, Italian *baci*, and all manner of kissing, bussing and biting in vernacular verse across Europe. Succeeding chapters will show the kiss-poem in the process of becoming generic, blossoming, and then exhausting itself as a formal genre whilst continuing to spread ever wider as a *mode*. In the latter guise it crept into other genres without losing its own generic identity, and so its life was extended.

A study of this sprightly genre, typical, in an exaggerated way, of the poetic procedures of Renaissance humanism, but superficially so remote from our own modern values in creative literature, is more than just a foray

into the esoteric terrain of a forgotten form—although this, given the racy subject matter of the poems in question, would be absorbing, as well as useful, in itself. It is also a study of genre and imitation in the literary world of early modern Europe. The kiss-poem, however, is not only a convenient ‘case-study’. By being so highly ironic, so continually self-conscious, so extreme and repetitive in its protocols, it can add materially to our sense of the ways in which genres operated in the Renaissance, and to our appraisal of the habits imitation could sometimes adopt. It is an example unusual enough to modify and extend our conceptions of the greater, less graspable things it must exemplify.

This book is offered, therefore, as an examination of the workings of imitation and genre in Renaissance verse. But it is also a study of poetic sensuality. The poetry of kissing raises profitable questions about eroticism, licence and obscenity; about gender roles and the dynamics of power in amatory lyric; above all, questions surrounding the presentation of masculinity in the first-person love verse of the period. The *basium* tradition developed a special preoccupation with masculine sexuality, or rather with the various and competing notions of it that were available in the literary resources to hand. The tension between languid ‘courtly’ enthrallment and rampant priapic dominance was exploited with some enthusiasm in this genre, perhaps more than in any other; and with very pronounced irony.

These rival ideas of masculine sexuality correlate, in a general way, with the various poetic genres and traditions upon whose repertoires, quite knowingly, the kiss-poem drew. Of these, the authentically classical traditions were many. Lyric, elegy and ode—the Catullan, the Ovidian and the Horatian—were all important tributaries; epigram was another, both in the Roman manner of Martial and in the more lyrical style found in the Greek Anthology. But traces of modern influence were also frankly or deliberately displayed: the Petrarchan tradition, the *strambotto* of the Italian courts, and eventually the urbane lyricism of the Pléiade. So this will also be a book about the complex ways in which ancient and modern conventions of poetic love and desire were brought or rubbed together, and how these artificial postures of mixed provenance were ambiguously placed with respect to contemporary reality.

It is significant that my small list of ‘modern’ influences could just as well have been headed ‘vernacular’ influences. This brings me to the final, and perhaps the most important, function of the present study, which is to attend to the traffic between Latin and the vernacular. English is the vernacular language with which I shall be almost exclusively concerned, and it is English poetry about which I am best qualified to speak. The poetry of kissing will let us see a tradition running from the end of the

Roman Republic, through the continental Latin of the Renaissance, and finally into the English works with which many of us are most familiar. It illustrates not only the poetic commerce between Europe and the British Isles, an international relationship, but also the contact between the Roman and native languages. As the vehicle for such an investigation, the kiss, with its play of tongues, is both enticing and rather appropriate.

It is probably unnecessary to say that the English reception of the *basium* has been largely overlooked in previous scholarship. Dougall Crane, it is true, devoted some thirty-seven pages to the topic in 1931; but his discussion, though precise and intelligent, is relatively cursory, and his approach more philological than critical.¹ Since the 1930s, only a small number of scholarly articles have given more than fleeting attention to the influence of Janus Secundus on English verse, while the influence of the other continental 'basialists' has gone almost entirely unnoticed.

The main purpose of this study is to add to understanding and knowledge, rather than to theorize or counter-theorize; but the reader interested in the theory of genre or imitation will find plenty of observations which mean to extend or complexify the systems currently established. In other words, I have approached my material as the material seemed to demand, rather than with preconceived hypotheses to verify or a special method to test; and although I have profited much from the theoretical work of modern scholars, I have not obliged myself to follow or find fault with their structures of thought. Nor have I tied myself to the terminology of any particular system. The facts of the kiss-poem, in general or in particular cases, have not been accommodated, for example, to the enumerated types of imitation described by Thomas M. Greene in *The Light in Troy*.² Readers familiar with that book are invited to see how difficult (and interesting) any attempt at such accommodation might be: for the playful *basium*, frivolous and voluptuous, ostentatiously derivative, is a special case; it shows imitation in its most self-heralding mood. Or again, I have not kept strictly to the terms and categories of any particular work of genre theory, though if I had chosen to do so, it would certainly have been Alastair Fowler's *Kinds of Literature*.³ Most of my basic terms—*genre*, *subgenre*, *mode*—are used in the senses endorsed by him. But my intention has not been to supplement or correct his theory.

¹ Dougall Crane, *Johannes Secundus: His Life, Work, and Influence on English Literature* (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1931).

² Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

³ Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

In 1971 Professor Fowler posed the following question: 'So long as a single scholar is fit to keep it alive, is any generic Tinkerbell quite dead?'⁴ For the scholar seeking material for study, dead poems written in dead genres are just as good as living ones; they are neither more nor less revealing, though they are perhaps likelier to be passed over. Academic criticism as a field of endeavour ought to be able to judge both the quick and the dead, even if not always with strict impartiality. Like Professor Fowler, however, I think it matters a great deal whether a poem plucked from history seems to us either a dodo or a thing of apprehensible vitality; and what applies to the individual poem applies also to whole genres. I am not the only scholar nursing this particular Tinkerbell. Various aspects of the Secundan tradition have been examined by modern critics, and several articles have aimed to give, within a small space, a synoptic picture of the genre. Books have been written about particular authors, editions prepared, and comparisons made. But no one has undertaken a really substantial critical scrutiny of the *basium* in something like all its breadth, which is the task I have taken up. Academic work on Renaissance humanist poetry too often treats it as though it really were 'dead', and all the more so if the poems happen to have been written in Latin. In truth a great deal of the Latin poetry which was once considered great or accomplished seems now to be recoverable only to historical interest, and not to any modern sense of what 'poetry' might yet be. But many of the poems discussed in this book do not, or should not, fall into that category; so I have avoided as far as possible the *post mortem* tone. With a few adjustments of our own critical apparatus, they can be recognized as poetry still—even if my own translations in plain prose cannot hope to do justice to their characteristic patternings and parrotings, which rely for their effect almost entirely on the play of sound and rhythm, and the disposition of parts within a metrical structure.

The poetry of kissing was constituted not only by the mere repetition of motifs, the development of tropes. If it were really no more than this, it could hardly have flourished so vividly. And yet this very fact of the *popularity* of a genre whose conventions, to our ways of thinking, would seem to offer such narrowly limited possibilities, is perhaps the most puzzling thing for modern readers. How and why did it thrive for so long? The easy answer—that the early modern mind, placing less prestige on originality, was content with derivative and decorative literature—is certainly not satisfactory. The *basium* tradition came to have its own peculiarities of form, and its own specific kinds of ironic tension. It should be regarded as an autonomous genre, with an underlying rationale of some

⁴ Alastair Fowler, 'The Life and Death of Literary Forms', *New Literary History*, 2:2 (Winter 1971), 199–216; p. 208.

complexity, and a clear but flexible set of conventions, some of which had far-reaching influence. These sophisticated elements of the generic repertoire help to explain why so many poets thought it worthwhile to carry on the game of kissing. The kiss-poem presented a space in which poetic theory, eroticism and sexual politics could be explored, often in terms of one another, not always with wholly admirable morals, but still with extreme self-consciousness, great tonal range, and—more or less developed—an inherent sense of the facetious.

My aim, put simply, is to retrieve or reconstruct a fuller sense of what this genre once meant, in order to show how lively the tradition was, and thereby explain why it was so eagerly taken up, why it spread so widely, and why it proved so tenacious and robust. A better sense of the genre allows me, in due course, to offer new readings of some well-known poems, in the light afforded by those now considered obscure.

A few words about the structure of the book. Each section has its own set of concerns, but the argument is cumulative and no part can be fully understood when isolated from the chapters preceding it. The reason is simply that so much unfamiliar material needs to be introduced, and then held in suspension, before a many-angled criticism can be achieved. In particular, Chapters 6 and 7 offer several extended examples of the ways in which the *basium* mode enjoyed a continued life in the literature of the British Isles, and the discussion of these poems, most of them in the English vernacular, necessarily draws upon all the foregoing analysis. This is not because the British poems bring together elements which their Latin models had held apart, but rather because, for the sake of clarity, I have had to parcel up those elements in my own examination of them. Let me briefly explain the division.

Chapters 2 and 3 look at the *basium* tradition as an outgrowth of the Catullan revival of the fifteenth century. They begin with the most fundamental elements of the genre and show how they gradually formed and combined. The purpose is to rationalize the development of certain strands of the generic repertoire from the tropes and mannerisms of the original Catullan poems, and to show what other sources and traditions were drawn upon in the creation of the new generic kiss. In the long fourth chapter I have tried further to characterize the eroticism of these 'Catullan' kisses, which became rather more lascivious in the Renaissance imitations than they had been in Catullus himself. The ambiguous portrayal of masculine sexuality is, as I have said, a major preoccupation of the kiss-poem; but equally ambiguous is the erotic status of the act of kissing, which could be very chaste or decidedly unchaste, and was sometimes patently euphemistic. Balancing these ambiguities, the *basium* produced poetic tension by negotiating, in various ways, what I will call 'softness' and 'hardness'.

This entails an ironic play of competing registers or postures—the rough, the obscene, the wanton, the virile, against the smooth, the fey, the tender, the effeminate. The adjectives could be multiplied, for the tension remains and recurs while its terms and occasions vary. How this derives from Catullus, how it gained complexity from the merging of literary traditions, and what happened on the rare occasions when women authors chose to adopt a form so deeply engaged with the masculine persona, are all matters discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 5 turns to discuss the notionally ‘Neo-Platonic’ conceits which have long been associated with literary kisses. These tropes helped to shape a number of the formal conventions which must have contributed to the successful perpetuation of the *basium* genre—patterns of oscillation, especially, and narratives of languishment and revival. These are among the most dynamic elements of the tradition, and hitherto the least well understood. When a comprehension of these ‘Platonic’ elements is added to the account given in the previous chapters, we should arrive at a sense of the genre sufficiently well rounded to allow its influence on English poetry to be clearly perceived. This will be the goal of the remaining portion of the study (Chapters 6 and 7), in which authors as well known as Shakespeare, Sidney and Donne will be seen in a context that to modern scholars and students is unconscionably unfamiliar, and some less famous writers will be shown to advantage, at work in this particular corner of their literary environment.

A book on such a little-known family of poems must either ask readers to take its criticism on a basis of trust, or else it must produce a good deal of evidence, and so become a kind of anthology in itself. I have followed the latter course, not only because many of the Latin texts would be hard for readers to locate (if they wished to test my claims), but also because it seemed more exciting to let the poetry do its own work, as far as possible. There is, therefore, a large amount of quotation. Everything not written in English has been translated. Some of these poems have, as far as I know, never been reprinted since the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries.

My wish is that the following chapters should demonstrate, in a modest way, the value of attending closely to those aspects of literature which are most generic, imitative and repetitive: aspects usually regarded as dull. One day, somebody may have to explain at similar length why, in the twentieth century, large numbers of people never became bored by the twelve-bar blues, or why, at the start of the twenty-first, so much time and care, not to mention *charm*, was invested in the pursuit of internet ‘memes’. It is only by a deliberate and sympathetic effort of historical attentiveness that the original attraction of certain forms can be restored. The poetry of classical humanism is in need of such restoration, which it deserves.

NOTES ON EDITORIAL MATTERS

A few editorial conventions have been adopted so as to avoid messiness, as some of the poems have been cited from modern critical editions, and some from early printings, and the many variations in the presentation of material from so wide a range of sources would otherwise be distracting to the reader. The conventions followed are, briefly, these:

Quotations in all languages have been given as they appear in the editions cited, without modernization, excepting the following silent interventions, made for the sake of consistency:

- 1 excepting Greek, all lines of verse have been made to begin with a capital letter;
- 2 a decision was early taken to retain diacritical marks in the Latin only where they made a decisive difference to interpretation—though in what is now included in the book, this has never in fact been the case;
- 3 use of ‘u’ and ‘v’ in all languages, and of ‘i’ and ‘j’ in English, has been standardized to modern convention (consonantal ‘i’ in Latin has been retained where found);
- 4 abbreviations (including ‘&’) have been expanded, and typographical idiosyncrasies such as the use of ligatures (e.g. ‘ij’) in Latin have been replaced by standard type (i.e. ‘ii’).

Doubtful readings, editorial interventions (e.g. corrections of obvious typographical errors), and significant textual variants are clearly marked and given in square brackets. In cases where variant readings are supplied, trifling differences of punctuation and orthography have been ignored. Line numbers are cited only in cases where they are printed in the source text.

No rule other than familiar usage and inclination has governed my choice of vernacular or Latinized personal names (‘Politian’, ‘Sannazaro’, ‘Marullus’, etc.). Verse is given in the original language, with a translation if it is in any language other than English; but I have sometimes judged it sufficient to give prose quotations in translation only. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

ABBREVIATIONS

For the following volumes, which are frequently cited, full bibliographic references are not repeated in the footnotes. The following short titles are used throughout:

<i>Anth. Gr.</i> , ed. Beckby	<i>Anthologia Graeca</i> , ed. Hermann Beckby, 4 vols (Munich: Heimeran, 1957–8)
Barth	<i>C. Barthi Fabularum Aesopiarum Libri V</i> [etc.] (Frankfurt: Typis Wecheliani, Aubrius and Schleichius, 1623)
Bonnefons	<i>Johannis Bonefonii Arverni Carmina</i> (London: James Tonson and John Watts, 1720)
Buchanan	<i>Georgii Buchanani Scoti Poemata quae extant</i> (Leiden: Elsevier, 1628)
Campion	<i>Campion's Works</i> , ed. Percival Vivian (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909)
Catullus, ed. Thomson	<i>Catullus</i> , ed. with commentary D. F. S. Thomson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997, repr. with corrections 1998)
Dousa	<i>Iani Douzae a Noortwyck Poemata Pleraque Selecta</i> , ed. Petrus Scriverius (Leiden: Thomas Basson, 1609)
Dousa 1569	<i>Iani Douzae a Noortwyck, Epigrammatum Lib. II; Satyrae II., Elegorum Lib. I; Silvarum Lib. II</i> (Antwerp: Gulielmus Silvius, 1569)
Dousa 1576	<i>Iani Duzae Nordovicis Novorum Poematum: Secunda Lugduniensis editio, plus dimidia parte</i> (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1576)
Drummond 1616	William Drummond of Hawthornden, <i>Poems</i> , 2nd impression (Edinburgh: Andro Hart, 1616)
Herrick	<i>The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick</i> , ed. F. W. Moorman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915)
Jonson, <i>Works</i>	<i>Ben Jonson</i> , ed. C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925–52)

Leech 1620	John Leech, <i>Musae Priores</i> (London: [s.n.], 1620)
Leech 1623	John Leech, <i>Epigrammatum Libri Quatuor</i> (London: Bernard Alsop, 1623)
Lernutius	<i>Iani Lernutii Initia, Basia, Ocelli, et alia Poemata</i> (Leiden: L. Elzevier, 1614)
Martial	<i>Epigrams</i> , ed. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993)
Melissus 1574	<i>Melissi Schediasmata Poetica: Item, Fidleri Flumina</i> (Frankfurt: M. Harnisch, 1574)
Melissus 1586	<i>Melissi Schediasmata Poetica: Secundo edita multo auctiora</i> (Paris: Arnold Sittart, 1586)
Pontano, ed. Dennis	<i>Baiae</i> , ed. Rodney G. Dennis, <i>I Tatti Renaissance Library</i> 22 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006)
Pontano, ed. Oeschger	<i>Ioannis Ioviani Pontani Carmina</i> , ed. Johannes Oeschger (Bari: Laterza, 1948)
Ronsard, <i>Oeuvres</i>	<i>Oeuvres complètes</i> , ed. Jean Céard, Daniel Ménager and Michel Simonin, 2 vols ([Paris]: Gallimard, 1993)
Sannazaro	<i>Latin Poetry</i> , ed. Michael C. J. Putnam. <i>I Tatti Renaissance Library</i> 38 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009)
Secundus	[Jean Second], <i>Œuvres complètes</i> , ed. Roland Guillot, vol. 1 (Paris: Champion, 2005) [NB the abbreviated form refers only to this first volume]
Sidney	<i>The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney</i> , ed. William A. Ringler, Jr [1962], corr. edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965, repr. 1971)
Stanley 1647	Thomas Stanley, <i>Poems and Translations</i> ('printed for the Author and his Friends', 1647)
Stanley, ed. Crump	<i>The Poems and Translations of Thomas Stanley</i> , ed. Galbraith Miller Crump (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962)
Stratenus	Petrus Stratenus, <i>Venus Zeelanda et Alia eius Poemata</i> , ed. C. Boyus (The Hague: Theodorus Maire, 1641)
VA Q1	Shakespeare, <i>Venus and Adonis</i> [first quarto] (Richard Field: London, 1593)

Chapter 1

THE RISE AND FALL OF A GENRE

GENERIC HISTORY

Between the middle of the fifteenth century and the middle of the seventeenth, there existed in Europe a 'poetry of kissing'. Not every kiss which happened to appear in a poem belonged to this family, nor was it merely a class of poems with a common theme. The poetry of kissing was a distinct literary kind.

The great poet of kissing was the Dutchman Janus Secundus, who was born in 1511 and died, still a young man, in 1536. His collection of *Basia* (Kisses) initiated the *basium* genre, in which every poem was notionally a 'kiss'. In his amatory works, of which the *Basia* were the most famous, the impression of earlier Neo-Latin poets is deep, and his debts are especially obvious when it comes to the theme of kissing. But, after all, it was Secundus who made a genre from a *topos*. After him came a great many imitators, including several who followed his example in the composition of whole sequences of '*Basia*'.

The kissing-poem had thus become a form in itself. But its mode travelled far beyond the bounds of the kiss-poem proper. It had a wider reach than one would likely at first suspect, and its influence was much more than a matter of the mere theme and its figures; less obvious qualities of tone, register, mood and vocabulary made the poetry of kissing a considerable force. The present study is not a consideration of 'kisses in literature', but rather of the artistic development, the rise and fall, of a genre. It is therefore primarily a matter of poetics. And since the genre was, in the widest sense, lyrical in form, this will be a book concerned nearly exclusively with lyric.

Even the parallel idiom derived from the Song of Songs, which tended independently to gather kisses into its atmosphere, and to determine the figures in which the image of the kiss was elsewhere frequently featured (in religious writing primarily), was not allowed to intrude into the *basium* kind—strangely, one might think, given that the writers of these kissing-poems were at such pains to produce copious variety in their thematic

reformulations. In fact the autonomy of the *basium* tradition is one of the most curious things about it; for it sustained momentum over a space of two centuries, scattering influence abroad all the time, yet with a kind of self-containment and generic integrity which kept it largely distinct from the kisses described, say, in drama, or even those experienced in real life. Social historians have shown some interest in the cultural customs of kissing;¹ and indeed early modern drama is full of kisses, probably most of which may be said to function as markers of social relations, contributing to the presentation of manners, often with comedic effect. In that regard, the stage kiss is largely a reflection of the social kiss, the kiss in the world; and as such, it will be largely excluded from the present study. The lyrical kiss is quite different: its rationale, function and development are primarily poetic considerations, and in a sense the world rarely, and only indirectly, touches it.

This last point calls for some qualification. It will become clear, after not too many pages, that the changes undergone by the lyrical kiss between the time of Catullus and the age of Renaissance humanism were partly the result of a complete transformation of the social context; but nevertheless it is true that these alterations in the social position of the kiss-poem are discernible only upon careful historical consideration: the poems themselves look superficially similar, because many of the gestures, customs and values of the Roman originals have been artificially replicated. These ancient conventions looked very different in the early modern context, and much of the poems' irony comes of this fact. But taken out of their backgrounds there is sometimes little or no intrinsic sign in the poetry of the gap in manners, morals and sensibility between the classical models and the Renaissance poet. The social 'world' did touch the Renaissance kiss-poem to the extent that the pederastic elements of the Roman originals were only faintly revived, and then, in any case, soon petered out; and this is an important change to which I shall return later. But even in this respect, it is the poem, not the kiss within it, which is being touched. The point remains: the lyrical kiss that became the generic *basium* was almost completely unaffected by the changed and still changing status of the kiss as a social gesture. Kissing customs, internationally diverse, never seem to come into the poems which belong firmly within the genre.

This is not necessarily what might be expected by modern scholars, who have been particularly interested in the social contexts and political resonances of literature. But, as Alastair Fowler has said, 'literary and external histories need to be distinguished.' Criticism at present is more in the habit of looking to the 'external', which is concerned 'with social change

¹ See Karen Harvey (ed.), *The Kiss in History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

and with changes of sensibility'. Of course, it could be argued that evolutions of sensibility might be regarded as internal or 'literary' processes also; there are changes of sensibility within genres themselves. But the distinction, which is a valuable one, is really between *literary* histories, which have their own processes (even if these can never be isolated from the world at large), and that larger idea of History able explain literary manifestations as well as to be explained, or given its contours, by them in turn. 'Genre has its own history too', Fowler tells us;² and the history of the kiss-poem is to an uncommon degree 'purely' generic. So, for example, where the Renaissance *basium* does introduce elements at odds with the *mores* of the originating Roman love poets, the source of those elements is usually literary. Broadly, it could be said that the most significant addition to classical prototype was the infiltration of Petrarchan or Petrarchistic conventions, many of which were arguably no less remote than the poems of Catullus from the 'real life' experience of the poets with whom I am concerned.

THE CAREER OF THE KISS-POEM

Here it will be useful to give a rough outline of the history—the 'internal' or merely literary history—of the Renaissance *basium* genre. This initial survey shall also serve as an introduction to the *dramatis personae*, intimating something of their relations to one another, so that the reader may refer back to these pages for clarification later.

Roman love poetry was the major stimulus for the kissing genre. Catullus, although not the sole model, was by far the most important ancestral figure for the early modern kiss-poem, which was, at the outset, almost entirely a creation of the Neo-Catullan movement that emerged in Italian humanist circles of the fifteenth century.³ The first sustained symptoms of a Catullan kiss-lyric tradition are found in the works of Giovanni Gioviano Pontano (1426–1503) and two of his literary friends. One was the poet and soldier Michael Marullus (1458–1500), a peripatetic Greek who spent much of his life in the courts of Italy. The other was the Neapolitan poet Jacopo Sannazaro (1458–1530), a member of Pontano's

² Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 277.

³ On Neo-Catullanism generally, see Walther Ludwig, 'The Origin and Development of the Catullan Style in Neo-Latin Poetry', in Peter Godman and Oswyn Murray (eds), *Latin Poetry and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 183–97. See also Julia Haig Gaisser, *Catullus and his Renaissance Readers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 211–33; and Philip Ford, *The Judgment of Palaemon* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 55–69.

Academy at Naples. All three were among the most highly celebrated poets of their age. The contributions of Sannazaro and Marullus to the development of the kiss-poem depend upon a few poems only, though these were extremely important;⁴ but Pontano's frank, quasi-Roman eroticism, and his elaboration of a Catullan style, combined with his occasional employment of the Neo-Platonic idea of oscular soul-exchange, constituted the essence of what Secundus would later turn into the *basium*.⁵

At around the same time, various other Neo-Latin poets in Italy were also showing interest in the kiss, though they did not always accentuate the Catullan lineage. Among those I shall discuss are the Bolognese humanist Filippo Beroaldo (1453–1505), who wrote an early example of a sustained kiss-poem *without* the Catullan mannerisms, and Pietro Crinito of Florence (1475–1507). Among Crinito's verses is one poem representing a free expansion from a certain late-classical lyric, preserved by Aulus Gellius, which was itself an expanded version of an epigram attributed to Plato (this last being the major point of reference for the idea of the 'soul-in-the-kiss', with which we shall be occupied in Chapter 5).⁶ Beroaldo's poem, though we may be tempted now to consider it minor, was widely known and lauded in its day, holding its ground in this respect for some time, while Crinito's more modest lyric demonstrates something that ought to be of considerable interest to the literary historian: an engagement with the Platonic soul-kiss tradition that yet remains largely separate from the 'Catullan' poetics of Pontano, whom we know Crinito admired.⁷ Not much later, the two strands would become virtually inextricable.

In the Italian vernacular, too, oscular themes were plainly in evidence, and the vernacular kiss-lyrics borrow both from the *dolce stil nuovo* and from the current Neo-Latin trends. Serafino Aquilano (1466–1500), a poet and musician of the Roman court of the Borgias who was famed for his improvisations, lighted upon the Neo-Platonic kiss in one—or, depending on attribution, two—of his celebrated *Strambotti*, which had such pervasive influence that one authority on the Platonic soul-kiss considers them a likely inspiration to Janus Secundus himself.⁸ Such poems had considerable influence, and they show how the kiss had crystallized into a standard and fashionable poetic image. But when we trace the *basium* tradition backward from Secundus,

⁴ Sannazaro, epigrams 1.6 ('*Ad Ninam*') and 1.57 ('*Ad Amicam*'); Marullus, epigram 2.4.

⁵ On the role played by these poets, see esp. Gaisser, *Catullus*, pp. 220–33.

⁶ Both will be quoted and discussed on pp. 136–7.

⁷ See Walter Ludwig, 'Julius Caesar Scaligers Kanon neulateinischer Dichter', *Antike und Abendland*, 25 (1979), 20–40; pp. 20–3 and ff.

⁸ Nicolas James Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane: An Interpretative History of Kiss Symbolism and Related Religio-Erotic Themes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 198.

these appear peripheral. It was the main current, the Neo-Catullan current popularized above all by Pontano—and supported by famous, if sometimes less explicitly ‘Catullan’, lyrics by Marullus, Sannazaro and others—which ran a direct course into the formal *basium* genre of the 1530s onwards.

The man to effect that formalization was Secundus. The nineteen *Basia* composed by this young poet from The Hague amounted to one of the most famous poetic collections of the Renaissance, all across Europe. Each of the poems is addressed to a woman called ‘Neaera’, a name most immediately borrowed from Marullus, though it also refers to the beloved sung in the spurious third book of Tibullus, as well as to a fabled ancient Greek courtesan. After Secundus the name was cognate with the Secundan style, and was adopted by a wide range of authors including George Buchanan and Janus Dousa the Elder. When, in ‘Lycidas’, Milton alludes to the ‘tangles of Neaera’s hair’, the *basium* is indubitably a part of the associative aura.

In the *Basia* of Secundus, the playful Neo-Platonic motifs, which would henceforth be among the hallmarks of the genre, were fully developed, though only in a few of the poems. Catullanism was much in evidence, but in the variety of metrical schemes the poet also showed a clear Horatian influence. Indeed, variety of both form and thematic treatment constituted a self-conscious theme in itself: literary variety was equated directly with the varied kinds of kiss. This equation made possible the essential analogy of kiss and poem, and hence the idea of the poem as a *basium*, the *basium* as a genre. This is from the tenth *basium* of Secundus (lines 15–22), in a lively verse translation of 1775:

From thee receiv’d, or giv’n to thee, MY LOVE!
Alike to me those KISSES grateful prove;
The Kiss that’s rapid, or prolong’d with Art,
The fierce, the gentle equal joys impart:
But mark—be all my KISSES, BEAUTEOUS MAID!
With diff’rent KISSES from thy Lips repaid;
Then varying Raptures shall from Either flow,
As varying KISSES Either shall bestow:
And let the First, who with an unchang’d Kiss
Shall cease to thus diversify the Bliss,
Observe with Looks in meek Submission dress’d
That Law, by which this Forfeiture’s express’d:
‘As many KISSES as EACH LOVER gave,
‘As EACH might in return again receive;
‘So many KISSES from the vanquish’d side
‘The Victor claims, so many ways applied.’⁹

⁹ *Kisses, being an English Translation in Verse of the Basia of Joannes Secundus Nicolaius*, trans. John Nott (London: T. Davies, 1775), pp. 123–5.

In this way the supposed motive force behind the genre—driving the perpetuation of its conventions over many years—was powered by, or identical with, a rationale already written into its prime models: the notion of the unceasing pleasure to be had from unceasing kisses, so long as those kisses are varied unceasingly, and with skill. Thus the demand for variety, addressed ostensibly to Neaera, seems to have been taken by subsequent poets as though addressed to themselves. Looked at in this way, a genre continually preoccupied, as will be seen, with the meanings of masculinity, and with the erotic roles and instincts of men in relation to women, nevertheless relies on a series of male writers' having responded to their predecessors by implicitly taking upon themselves the feminine role of the beloved. And as for the games the writers play, again implicitly, with their readers, who initially must have been men and boys in the great majority of cases, they are games—usually gentle, but by no means always approvable—conducted by analogy with the erotic sport of kissing. So we readers are placed in the beloved's position in our turn; not to be seduced, exactly, but to be persuaded that we are still interested in further kisses: that we are still amenable, unsatisfied, and do not have better things to be doing with our time.

The complete *Basia* of Secundus were first published in a posthumous edition of 1541 and were an immediate success, spawning imitations and translations not only in Latin but in many European vernaculars. They enjoyed a particularly flourishing progeny in France, thanks to a large number of enthusiastic imitations: by Marot, first of all, some of whose basial verse actually pre-dates the publication of the Secundan cycle; but then also by Ronsard, whose work is full of *baisers*, especially in the *Odes* of 1550–2; by Belleau, with whom the kiss was a particularly frequent theme; and by Jean-Antoine de Baïf, the most prolific Neo-Catullanist in French, and the most extreme in style. This is to say nothing of Mellin de Saint-Gelais, Du Bellay and several other French poets, major and minor, who embraced the *basium*. These writers spread the oscular tropes so assiduously into French lyric, often in the deliberate cultivation of a vernacular 'Catullan' style, that many readers of early modern literature now think of *baisers* more readily than *basia*.¹⁰

¹⁰ On French Catullanism, see Ford, *The Judgment of Palaemon*, ch. 3. See also the articles by Bizer, Fontaine and Girot in Jean Balsamo and Perrine Galand-Hallyn (eds), *La Poétique de Jean Second et son influence au XVI^e siècle*, Les Cahiers de l'Humanisme, I (Paris: Belles Lettres/Klincksieck, 2000); Ruth Gooley, *The Metaphor of the Kiss in Renaissance Poetry* (New York: Lang, 1993); Ellen S. Ginsberg, 'Peregrinations of the Kiss: Thematic Relationships between Neo-Latin and French Poetry in the Sixteenth Century', in I. D. MacFarlane (ed.), *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Sanctandreami* (24 Aug.–1 Sept. 1982) (Binghampton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance

The second generation of formal Neo-Latin *Basia*—that is, whole collections of kiss-poems inspired by those of Secundus—took some time to materialize. Curiously, although kissing-lyrics were common in Italian poetry, the *basium* genre was now associated strongly with the North, no longer the South where Secundus had found much of his inspiration. Secundus himself was a literary hero in the Low Countries, and it is there that he was most explicitly imitated.¹¹ There are many authors who might be mentioned in this regard, among them both the Heinsii, and especially the doctor and poet Albertus Eufrenius (Albert Goedhart) of Amsterdam (1581–1626), whose set of fifteen *Basia* was printed in Leiden in 1601.¹² But by far the most important collections, and the most estimable, were by Lernutius and Dousa.

Jan Leernout (1545–1619), known in Latin as Janus Lernutius, was a humanist and poet from Bruges. He wrote a collection of twenty-nine *Basia* in which the mistress is named ‘Hyella.’ These were first published in an Antwerp edition of 1579 by Plantin, and they were reprinted in a larger edition in 1614. Many of the Secundan themes are clearly present in Lernutius’s kisses, but this collection is distinguished by a new characteristic: its preoccupation with the world outside the bedroom. The turbulence of the Dutch Wars is strangely palpable in these poems, and the kiss is established as a sign of peace, the antithesis to war and insidious politics. In the dedicatory poem prefacing the eventual 1614 publication of his *Basia*, Lernutius writes:

Nunc olim missos iuvat instaurare calores,
Et testudinea carmen hiare lyra.
Suaviaque auspiciis dimittere lucis in oras
Nostra tuis, nimium quae iacuere diu.

(Lernutius, pp. 303–4)

Now, at last, how pleasing it is to restore the warmth that has been driven away, and to sing a song with the tortoise-shell lyre; and to scatter our kisses—under your auspicious light—in these lands that for so long a time have lain in ruins.

Studies, 1986), pp. 331–42; and Claudie Balavoine, ‘À la suite des ‘Basia’ de Joannes Secundus: Questions sur l’imitation’, in Jean-Claude Margolin (ed.), *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Turonensis (6–10 septembre 1976)* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1980), pp. 1077–92.

¹¹ For an introduction to Dutch Secundanism, see Harm-Jan Van Dam, ‘Jean Second et la poésie néo-latine des Pays-Bas au XVI^e siècle’, in Balsamo and Galland-Hallyn (eds), *La Poétique*, pp. 169–84.

¹² *Poemata Alberti Eufreni Georgiadis, Amstelo-Batavi* (Leiden: Christopher Grotius, 1601).

The lines are addressed to Maximilien de Vriendt, a *Secrétaire* of the town of Ghent, who was a fellow poet of high standing. As the poem implies, publication came at a time of renewed, though temporary, peace—the so-called Twelve Years' Truce.

Appended to these *Basia* was a collection of Latin translations of kiss-themed poems from the Greek Anthology, '*Basia Graecorum ex septimo libro ANΘΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ, versa Latine*', by several hands.¹³ The contributors included Joseph Scaliger, Janus Dousa, Lucas Fruterius and Petreius Tiara; and just below Lernutius's own translation of the famous pseudo-Platonic 'soul-kiss' distich, he reprints the late-classical expansion of the same source preserved, as I have said, by Aulus Gellius.¹⁴ This appendix also contains a Latin version of a Greek epigram by Politian, the eminent Florentine humanist, not a poet associated with poems of kissing or with Pontanian Neo-Catullanism.¹⁵ The whole exercise indicates a philological (rather than a purely belletrist) interest in the very notion of a 'kiss-poem' as a form or tradition. And its acknowledgement of the Greek influences on the genre, which were much less obvious than the Roman, is notable. The generic status of the kiss-poem is either being taken for granted, or else constructed; but either way, we see it here subjected to a kind of critical scrutiny by the very poets who were doing most creatively to extend it.

One of these was Lernutius's friend Jan Van der Does the Elder (1545–1609), lord of Noordwijk in Holland. Janus Dousa *Pater*, as he was called in Latin, was an aristocratic statesman and scholar who became an important supporter of William the Silent in the Dutch Revolt, as well as an ambassador to the English court, a hero in the siege of Leiden, and one of the founders of the university in that city. His *Basia*, addressed to 'Ida', 'Rosilla' and 'Neaera', seem to have been largely completed by 1576, for in that year he published extracts from them under the title *Carmina Quaedam Selectiora, ex Savorum Libro*. The rest were published in a 1609 collection overseen by Petrus Scriverius, the scholar who would later edit the works of Secundus, partly from the manuscripts owned by Dousa.¹⁶

Dousa's *Basia* are learned, accomplished and varied, with occasional moments of priapic bluntness that hark back to the unabashed sexuality of Pontano—outdoing him, here and there, while likewise exceeding the limits of right sexual ethics, as it should appear to us. They are more

¹³ Lernutius, pp. 326–37.

¹⁴ Cf. pp. 4, 136–7.

¹⁵ Lernutius, pp. 335–6. The original is the twenty-sixth of Politian's Greek epigrams.

¹⁶ *Bodleian, MS Rawl. G. 154*. See P. Tuynman, 'The Legacy of Janus Secundus: The Bodleian MS of his Collected Poems', *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 43 (1994), 262–87; especially part III, §2 (pp. 277–9).

thoroughly classical, and less Petrarchan, than those of Lernutius. Like the latter, Dousa presents the reader on several occasions with some highly self-conscious literary reflections about the genre in which he is writing, often in poems addressed to friends and patrons; but unlike Lernutius, Dousa enthusiastically and explicitly invokes Janus Secundus on several occasions, thereby lending emphasis to the supposed national associations of the Secundan line. The basial tradition, its generic identity and genealogy, becomes one of its own subjects explicitly as well as implicitly.

The third and final great collection of *Basia* in this second generation comes not from the Low Countries but from France. Of the major post-Secundans, Jean Bonnefons (1554–1614), an advocate of the *Parlement* of Paris, was the least deliberately classical, his Latin compositions being steeped in the style of the Pléiades. His *Pancharis* contains, in the first edition of 1587, thirty-two love-poems to the eponymous mistress, each entitled ‘*basium*’, although many of them in fact go by without even the slightest allusion to kissing. In subsequent editions a few more poems were added. Upon the model of Secundus, who had also written an epithalamium in the style of the *Basia*, Bonnefons’ sequence was made to culminate in a long poem entitled ‘*Pervigilium Veneris*’, which is epithalamial in inspiration even if not expressly hymeneal.¹⁷

Dum strictim appliciti arctiore vinclo
Haeremus calidi, Venusque venis
Diffusa interioribus tepente
Artus languidos liquore rorat,
Alternantibus oculis utrinque,
Occursantibus hinc et inde linguis [...]

(Bonnefons, p. 35)

Tightly bound up with bonds now closer still, we cling together warmly; and love, diffused through the inner veins, trickles with a glowing liquid through the languidulous limbs, with mutual, alternating kisses; with tongues rushing this way and that ...

Bonnefons’ poems are erotic, at times profoundly so, without being flagrantly obscene; their manner is courtly, their style soft. Although written in the midst of the French Wars of Religion, the *Pancharis* shuns politics, and, unlike the kisses of Lernutius, the poems draw no explicit contrast between love and war. In the same year as its first publication, a

¹⁷ Bonnefons’ title alludes to the ancient poem of the same name (written in Latin by an unknown late-classical poet) which celebrates a Festival of Venus, and was frequently printed in the same volume as the poems of Catullus and Tibullus—as it still is, in the Loeb edition. Cf. p. 224, n. 61.

volume of French versions appeared, from the hand of the poet's friend Gilles Durant de la Bergerie, and some later editions contained both the Latin and French together.¹⁸ Thus the Neo-Latin text was well accommodated into the vernacular tradition upon which it had drawn.

Besides these important collections, the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries saw a great flowering of the kiss theme in the diffused Secundan tradition. Of course this extended throughout the continent in the work of Neo-Latin poets. A British example, to be discussed near the end of this book, is the Scottish poet John Leech, whose Secundanism came not only into his love poems to 'Panthea' in miscellaneous metres, but also into several of his 'Epigrams' and, more remarkably, into his Anacreontics. Strictly speaking, Catullan *basia* do not belong in imitations of the Greek lyric poet Anacreon, but, as we shall see, the two traditions curiously and rapidly merged.

Vernacular lyric saw an equally fruitful harvest of kisses in the same period. In English literature the kiss-poem frequently made its way into the songbooks, in lyrics of uncertain attribution or else wholly anonymous. And many further examples, though published without music, are 'songs' of one kind or another. This is the case in the work of Drummond, for instance, the major English poet who gives us the greatest number of kiss-poems. It is no coincidence that he was friends with Leech. Both men spent time on the continent, especially in France, and their interest in kiss-poems was probably sparked or fanned by European experience. Generally it also bespeaks the close connections in the later sixteenth century of Scottish and French culture. Although the Dutch claimed the Secundan school as their own, and Netherlandish ties were strong for the Elizabethans in the years of the Dutch Revolt, nevertheless the fame of Bonnefons in Britain is not to be underestimated, and there is good reason, particularly in the case of Leech, to suppose the French poet just as important a source of inspiration as Secundus.

In French, the conventions were followed with much more regularity, and the earlier enthusiasm for Secundus shown by such influential authors as Marot and Ronsard continued to fructify. In Italy, where the Pontanian Neo-Catullanism in Latin, and the elegant kissing tropes of Serafino and other courtly poets in the vernacular, had been early seeds of the tradition now so widespread, this period also witnessed a continued and even more pronounced interest in the lyrical kiss, sung above all in *canzoni* and madrigals. Neo-Platonic kiss-conceits in particular were copious

¹⁸ See Gilles Durant, *Imitations du Latin de Jean Bonnefons: Avec autres gayetez amoureuses de l'invention de l'auteur* (Paris: Abel L'Anglier, 1587). The original *Pancharis* came from the same publisher.

in Italian lyric, culminating in the baroque delicacies of the *Marinisti*. For in the wake of Tasso, as Mannerism and the baroque took hold, the Italian kiss-poem flourished; and both the style and the theme were closely associated with the greatest poet of his generation, Giambattista Marino. His *Canzone dei Baci*, the young poet's first great success, written as early as the 1580s, seems to have achieved considerable fame through manuscript circulation before its first publication in the *Rime* of 1602;¹⁹ but even this seminal composition had clear sources in earlier *canzoni* by the Bolognese court poet Cesare Rinaldi (1559–1636) and by Battista Guarini (1538–1612).²⁰ Later, Marino's collection *La Lira* (1614), an expansion of the *Rime*, contained a number of shorter poems among the *Madrigali e Canzoni*, clustered together at the start of that section of the work, which may aptly be termed *baci*; in their consecutive depictions of varying types of kiss—stolen kisses, warlike kisses, biting kisses, and so on—they are fully in the Secundan genre.²¹ The influence of these was wide, not only in Italy.

The last important example of a full collection of Neo-Latin *Basia* was written by the young Dutchman Pieter Van der Straten, or Petrus Stratenus (1616–1640), of Goes in Zeeland. It represents the nadir to which the genre had sunk—in unimaginative hands, at least. Stratenus offers nineteen *basia*, addressed to his 'Chloe', and rounded off with an epithalamium: the most authentically Secundan format possible. Published posthumously in 1641, exactly a century after those of his illustrious model, Stratenus's *Basia* thus continued the tradition well into the seventeenth century. But the seam was exhausted. Thenceforth the *basium* needed to break the bounds of its formal genre and find new life as a more flexible *mode*, operating in more diverse conditions.

TRADITION, KIND AND MODE

In this book I speak of the poetry of kissing as a 'tradition'. The word implies an act of handing on, or carrying forward. This is an apt image, given that each poet working in the *basium* kind renews the kisses of earlier poets, and repeats the primal Catullan plea for 'a thousand kisses', not to mention many other ubiquitous figures and motifs. The motivating erotic desire is interminable, unless fruition (which must entail something

¹⁹ See James V. Mirollo, *The Poet of the Marvelous: Giambattista Marino* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 8–9.

²⁰ On Marino's debts to the kisses of earlier poets, in this poem and others, see Francesco Guardiani, 'Oscula Mariniana', *Quaderni d'Italianistica*, 16:2 (1995), 197–243.

²¹ Especially items 13–30 (i.e. madrigals 11–27 and *canzoni* 1–3).

stronger than mere kissing) should bring satisfaction; and even then it will be only a matter of time. This is a large part of the acknowledged *raison d'être* of the kiss-poem, a justification of its reiterative nature. The demand for kisses, the kisses themselves, and the tropes in which they are dressed, are all handed down; and so the genre is transmitted along with its own jovial rationale: if you can never have enough kisses, you can never have too many kiss-poems. Short of parody, literary imitation can rarely have been so petulant, nor so frisky.

I also refer to the tradition as a 'genre', for at its centre was a discrete and formalized kind, the Secundan *basium*, and this kind was sufficiently recognizable to have developed its own *mode*. Both kind and mode are aspects of genre, and the 'tradition' runs through both; for it can be traced back to the ancient models, and followed downward even past the *basium* kind, into the smallest trickles, detectable in literature of all varieties, wherever one sees that a kiss, in its figurative treatment, has a heritage in the Secundan kiss-poem. Where I speak of 'mode', I mean it in Alastair Fowler's sense: it is the manner associated with its cognate kind, in those cases in which it spills beyond the bounds of the kind itself. Thus a Secundan kiss in a Jacobean play is a manifestation of the mode of the *basium*, but not of the kind, since the form of the work in which it appears is not a kiss-poem.

Is the *basium* not, as I occasionally term it, a *subgenre*? The narrowness of its repertoire, and the modest scale of its canon in comparison with larger kinds, almost persuade one that subgenre must be the right word. 'Division of kinds into subgenres', according to Professor Fowler, 'normally goes by subject matter or motifs'.²² With its clear specification of theme, the poetry of kissing seems to subsist at the sub-generic level of particularity. But of which parent kind is the kiss-poem a sub-division? No simple answer can be given. By instantiating the conceit of each poem's being a kiss (a *basium*), and then collecting these into a set of which the very tightness stressed the unity in the variety of its parts, Secundus had very convincingly created a 'form' which within itself embraced several different genres. The structures and conventions of elegy, ode and epigram were brought together under the new head '*basium*', with its dominating theme. So the kiss-poem as an individual unit is a specialized version of no single kind; but the gathered-together collection of *basia*—a generic aggregation—contained specialized versions of a handful of different kinds, each of which was a canonical and widely recognized classical form of its own, with firmly established *prosodic* characteristics: elegy in elegiac couplets, for example; or Horatian ode in a number of possible forms, such as

²² Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, p. 112.

alcaic or asclepiadic stanzas; or else Anacreontics, composed in glyconics and other characteristic metres; or epigram, which might be in couplets, hendecasyllables, hexameters or iambics. Hendecasyllabics in the manner of Catullus were especially common.

The other terms which may require clarification here are 'form' and 'lyric'. Genres (including 'modes') can be regarded as literary 'forms', as can just about any other conventionalized aspect of writing. I take the *basium*, as constructed by Secundus, to be a discrete form. In electing to write a *basium* rather than a sonnet or an eclogue, one is deliberately choosing one established form out of many. Apart from this usage, the word 'form' in this book will refer (as my last few paragraphs perhaps illustrate) to more technical characteristics of shape and pattern, structure and texture; not only prosody, but the disposition of material, and generally all stylistic details as opposed to matters of topic. 'Lyric' will often be used in the widest sense—that is, the Aristotelian or, if you like, Hegelian sense—as being the large category of poetry which is distinct from the narrative and the dramatic.²³ This is what is meant by the proposition that the poetry of kissing is a 'lyrical' genre. At times, however, it will be necessary to make distinctions between lyric and epigram, or between lyric and elegy. These distinctions are important in Latin poetry, where the term 'lyric' has never been generalized to the same extent as in vernacular poetics, and is identified by particular metrical schemes. Those familiar mostly with English poetry may be accustomed to regard 'elegy', for instance, as a type of lyric, but in Latin the elegiac couplet is considered quite separate from the range of lyrical forms.

It is a delicate matter to achieve the right balance between the terms of modern criticism and those used and understood by Renaissance writers on poetic theory. But here I might anticipate an important question. One of the basic premises of this book is that the poetry of kissing was, in its own time, a recognized genre, well enough known for its mode to be discerned and identified even in the unlikeliest places. Does this mean that it was recognized as a genre by contemporaneous theorists? My answer is that every critic writing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries must have responded to the *basium* genre as a familiar and well-defined kind or sub-kind, even though in fact I have never found it mentioned in any work of poetics. It does not appear in the lists of genres given by Scaliger, Patrizi, or others; but one should not expect to find it there. It was too small and, perhaps more importantly, too *new* a genre to warrant treatment in these works of classical scholarship. And the celebrated Secundus, one of the

²³ Anyone upset by this may mentally substitute 'short poem' in most cases, except where classical distinctions are drawn.

most widely read poets of the sixteenth century, never receives honourable mention in the catalogues of distinguished 'moderns' which often occur in such treatises. Even in the works of Dutch critics he is strangely absent. He did not have the required seriousness of stature, lavishly admired as he was; there was always about him something of a canonical alterity—he was the soft, charming, naughty poet of kissing. He may, indeed, have been a guilty pleasure for some.

A list of genres beginning (as in Scaliger's *Poetices* of 1561) with *Pyrrhics*, *Iambics*, *Scazons* and *Trochaics* might appear to be too technical, too prosodically precise, as well as too classical, to include such a mongrel breed as Neo-Latin *basia*. But if we look at practice rather than theory, it is evident that these conventionalized poetic kisses were treated with something of the same attitude as other genres. This can be seen from the ways in which the contents of printed books were organized. Collections of Neo-Latin poetry were almost always divided into sections determined by generic type, where genre was in most cases determined by technical form. Thus hendecasyllabics would often be collected in one place, and eclogues in another; there might be three books of epigrams, and two books of elegies, followed by a series of odes and some Anacreontics. Among these, *basia* were usually given their own section, with its own heading or title-page. Since compositions in different prosodic forms were normally segregated, the unified identity of the metrically mixed *basia* is notable. In tables of contents, kisses rubbed shoulders with venerable classical kinds, of which the names described or at least indicated the forms. So it was as though the *basium*, like the 'ode', had definitively established its own repertoire of acceptable forms; or as though a *basium* were made of kiss, just as an elegy was made of elegiacs. In this way, at least, the Secundan kiss-poem enjoyed an equivalence of categorical status with the more canonical kinds.

Alastair Fowler—to stay with him for a moment longer—sees the progress of a genre as a history in three phases, although, as he admits, these frequently overlap and may not always be easy to tell apart. The primary phase is a 'phase of assembly'. We have little problem placing the kisses of Pontano and Sannazaro in this phase. At the primary stage, the intention may not be consciously generic: 'The author perhaps thinks only of writing in a fresh way. It will often be his successors who first see the potential for genre and recognize, retrospectively, that assembly of a new form has taken place.'²⁴ Whereupon (in our narrative) enters Janus Secundus, who performs the official baptism and brings about a 'secondary' version of the kiss-poem genre—a form that the author consciously bases on the

²⁴ Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, p. 159.

earlier primary version.²⁵ In the tertiary phase, authors participating in the secondary form may use it ‘in a radically new way’, which may entail such sophisticated gestures as burlesque, parody, transplantation of scene, or the application of a new symbolic register.²⁶

The *basium* genre may not be such a straightforward case. The shades of knowingness, self-consciousness and sophistication which are usually associated with the secondary and tertiary phases are already palpable in the primary. This is partly because even the earliest examples—in Pontano especially—are imitations of fully formed and much older texts which, by virtue of their tone and theme, necessitated a playful and ironic response. The tradition that came out of this had first to identify retrospectively an essential genre-complex in a group of poems by Catullus too few to have been a true genre or subgenre in Catullus’s own day, but nevertheless forming a distinct constellation within his own œuvre. The Renaissance tradition then extended that complex by repeating its subjects, motifs and formal structures, whilst enriching them with other conventional material which lay to hand, both ancient and modern. Here we are speaking of poets such as Pontano, Sannazaro and Marullus. This new combination came to be imitated, and so reiterated, in its turn, with enough continuity and assiduity for the new works to be recognized as members of a *new* genre-complex, its repertoire profoundly involved with, but larger than, that of the Catullan originals. Once this new Renaissance genre had formed, some of its pre-Renaissance precedents—the later classical imitations which came between Catullus and modernity, such as those by Martial which will be discussed in the next chapter—were implicated (again retrospectively) in the story of the tradition, so that these effectively became early links in the chain of kisses. By the time of Secundus the tradition had obviously turned into a genre, and he duly provided the label, as well as the international impetus to continue its growth.

The authors I have labelled the ‘second generation’ of basialists, those who published collections of *basia* inspired by Secundus, might generally be considered either secondary or tertiary. Bonnefons, for instance, may be tertiary purely because his *basia* are not exclusively concerned with kissing, so that ‘*basium*’ has now come to denote something more than the superficial meaning, more than merely an index to a simple theme. Dousa may be tertiary by virtue of his having mentioned Secundus so prominently in several of his poems, bringing an extra dimension of self-conscious literariness to the genre. And Lernutius, by making the kiss an emblem of peace in a time of war, has reached the tertiary stage by the symbolic route.

²⁵ Fowler, ‘Life and Death of Literary Forms’, p. 212.

²⁶ Ibid.

But tertiary kiss-poetry could be curiously extreme. To see what all this kissing eventually led to, consider this passage from the twenty-fifth poem of Caspar von Barth's *Erotopaegnon* (1623):

Centum millia suctitus dabuntur
Mille millia linguitus dabuntur.
Centum millia dentitus dabuntur
Mille millia mordicus dabuntur.
Centum millia ocellitus dabuntur
Mille millia naritus dabuntur. [etc.]

A hundred thousand will be given suckingly; a thousand thousand will be given tonguingly. A hundred thousand will be given toothily; a thousand thousand will be given bitingly. A hundred thousand will be given eye-ly; a thousand thousand will be given nose-ly. [etc.]

They will also be given lippily, foreheadly, cheekly, chinly, neckly and boobily. How could, and why should, such lines have been written? By what strange ways and procedures did the *basium* genre reach this point? I hope to be able to explain, and the rest of this book will be the answer. And although Barth's mechanical drollery may be peculiarly tiresome, it is evidently meant to be, and it makes sense by the end of the poem. For there we see the poet explicitly acknowledge a generic heritage defined by two things: linguistic playfulness on the one hand, endless imitation on the other:

Quid me morosophi vident magistri,
Crispo numine barbarum notanteis,
Tot fictis Latio exsulem, sine arte
Solo amore Vocabulis probandis?
Ah me quam fatuum genus: fugit vos
Quam sit grammaticus bonus Cupido.

(Barth, pp. 126–7)

Why do the dull-witted schoolmasters look at me as though I were some barbarian with a shaggy god—an exile from Latium, devoid of art, with all these made-up words approved only by Love? Dear me, what a stupid bunch! Love flees from you! What a good grammarian is Cupid.

This is the final decadence of the genre. But while other late kiss-poets, like Petrus Stratenus, extended the repetitions to the point of joyless routine, Barth took them yet further, thereby insisting upon the pleasures of excess and ebullience. As love poetry it is ridiculous; yet in making a joke of the tradition in which it partakes, it is laughing with its models rather than at them. Above all, like the best of his precursors, especially Secundus, Barth