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Summa intelligentia rerum incorporalium:
Transcendent Knowing in the Carolingian Reception of Martianus

Abstract

This paper proceeds from the question of how Martianus became an authority in the Carolingian world. It underscores the importance of Carolingian glosses on De nuptiis as a primary historical source for the reception of Martianus Capella. Glosses illumine the value of pagan antiquity in the ninth century. Indeed, the pagan context of De nuptiis inspired them. De nuptiis functioned as a book on antique learning and pagan tradition, and so became a focal point for ancient learning and contributed to the vigour of the well-established encyclopaedic techniques of compilation.

Keywords

Glosses, pagan antiquity, transcendent knowing

Résumé

Cet article étudie la manière dont Martianus Capella est devenu une autorité pour le monde carolingien et souligne l'importance des gloses carolingiennes sur le De nuptiis comme source primaire pour l'histoire de sa réception. Les gloses, inspirées par le contexte païen du De nuptiis, mettent en effet en lumière la valeur accordée à l'Antiquité païenne au IX^e siècle. Utilisé comme ouvrage sur les savoirs antiques et la tradition païenne, le De nuptiis est devenu une référence dans le domaine des connaissances anciennes et a ainsi contribué au développement de techniques de compilation encyclopédique déjà bien établies.

Mots-clés

Glosses, antiquité païenne, savoir transcendant

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By the mid ninth century Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* circulated in Carolingian centres of learning. In this volume it has been cogently argued that places like Tours may well have been central to the 're-emergence' of the text and that Martianus was already known to the first generation of Carolingian intellectuals¹. Significantly, an important family of Martianus manuscripts emanated from the region Auxerre-Tours-Fleury in the ninth century². It is clear that the Carolingian *fortuna* of Martianus's allegorico-encyclopaedic compendium did not take place in a vacuum, as is evidenced by its pre-Carolingian transmission, as well as by the creation, development and edition of the text in the late antique period (e.g. its title, archetype, sources, form and subscription)³. However, the Carolingians solidified the status of *De nuptiis*. In addition, they avidly surrounded this text with all kinds of materials, establishing interconnected trackways between Martianus and other authors⁴. This paper focuses on the prestige of Martianus in the Carolingian age. It considers the question: Why was Martianus an authority in the Carolingian world?

¹ See the paper by Vanni Veronesi in this volume.

² O'Sullivan, *Glossae*, CX-CXVII.

³ See especially the papers by Lucio Cristante and Jacques Elfassi in this volume.

⁴ Teeuwen 2011, 19-37; O'Sullivan 2017, 3-24.

This paper notes that Martianus's antiquarianism and obscurantism were fundamental. Martianus's Carolingian reception illuminates the value of pagan antiquity in the ninth century. Martianus himself reached back to the ancient world for much of the lore he transmitted and modified in the process. And he in turn was perceived as a conduit to ancient learning and pagan antiquity⁵. The Carolingian reception of *De nuptiis* chimes with the wider interest in the classical age, an interest also underscored by the early medieval reception of Virgil.

For Carolingian commentators, *De nuptiis*, with its textbook on the liberal arts, became a focal point for gathering information from other authorities, thus attesting to the vigour of the well-established encyclopaedic techniques of compilation, excerption, and recombination. Crucially, Martianus's textbook was enveloped in allegory and personification. It was imbued with oracular tone and mysticism. It was framed by the opening allegorical books, with their many obscurities (pagan imagery, arcane allusions, mysterious passages, cryptic references, neologisms, and Greek words). These books were heavily glossed in the Carolingian age. For Carolingian annotators, they served as a focus for uncovering hidden meaning. The fact that *De nuptiis* was an allegorical and a difficult work was clearly an asset. It was precisely the combination of allegory and ancient learning that ensured the medieval success of *De nuptiis*. What sometimes causes disquiet to modern sensibilities – namely the seemingly promiscuous mixture of the allegorical with textbook information – did not trouble Martianus's Carolingian readers⁶.

The allegorical books provide an account of Philology's interplanetary journey through the regions of the sky to the celestial abode of the Olympian gods and her marriage to the god Mercury. Before her journey, Philology undergoes an apotheosis, leaving behind her mortal body. Thence she journeys *ad culmina arcis aeriae* ("to the summit of the citadel of the sky"), where she enters *aethereum aevum* ("the heavenly age") and *arces aerias* ("the citadels of the sky")⁷. This realm was interpreted by ninth-century glossators as the *celeste regnum* ("heavenly kingdom")⁸. It was equated with *immortalitas* ("immortality") and viewed as a royal abode⁹. When Philology reaches the heavenly sphere, she sees the fabric of the whole universe. In this sphere, Philology is privy to the highest understanding. She perceives *illam existentem ex non existentibus ueritatem* ("that truth which arises from non-existent things"), interpreted by Carolingian commentators as

⁵ Teeuwen - O'Sullivan 2016, 303-320.

⁶ O'Sullivan 2010, 28-38; 2011, 99-121.

⁷ O'Sullivan, *Glossae*, 350, 359, 366.

⁸ O'Sullivan, *Glossae*, 351, line 31.

⁹ O'Sullivan, *Glossae*, 351, lines 31-32; 366, line 7.

the majesty of God¹⁰. Philology resides in an *empyrio... intellectualique mundo* (“empyrean and intellectual realm”). This was explained by glossators as an unchanging realm, in which the angels and saints contemplate the God of all creation¹¹. In glosses, this fiery abode was deemed a place of pure understanding, where no corporeal bodies were to be found¹². This was the locus of transcendent knowing. For Martianus’s Carolingian readers, transcendent knowing or higher understanding was associated with obscurity, profundity, truth, immortality, the invisible, and the divine¹³. Carolingian commentators connected the liberal arts to this form of knowing, viewing the arts as hidden *in profundo memoriae* (“in the depths of memory”)¹⁴. They associated the arts with profound understanding, which was firmly situated in the realm of the gods, that is in the realm of the ethereal and extramundane.

The notion of deeper understanding, an understanding not regulated by earthly laws, was integral to early medieval intellectual culture. It underpinned two fundamental ways of thinking: *carnaliter* and *spiritaliter*. This binary opposition was at the core of biblical hermeneutics, which rested on the tension between the literal/historical and the allegorical. It structured late antique and medieval notions of figural interpretation. It was a constituent of typological thinking, which was grounded in the interplay between old and new dispensations, prefiguration and fulfilment, concealment and revelation. And it permeated Carolingian glosses on the Psalms, saturated with the Augustinian concept of intellectual vision and infused with the terms *carnaliter*, *corporaliter*, *spiritaliter* and *profunditas*¹⁵.

Before considering the appeal of Martianus in the Carolingian age, I shall briefly sketch Martianus’s Carolingian reception, underlining the significance of glosses as primary historical sources. Next, I shall focus on the importance of pagan antiquity and encyclopaedism. Finally, I shall consider transcendent knowing in the Carolingian reception of Martianus.

¹⁰ O’Sullivan, *Glossae*, 428, lines 6-7.

¹¹ O’Sullivan, *Glossae*, 425, lines 86-89.

¹² O’Sullivan, *Glossae*, 425, lines 83-85.

¹³ O’Sullivan 2011, 117-120.

¹⁴ Bower 2011, 57-73. I have drawn much inspiration from Calvin Bower’s paper on Carolingian approaches to knowing. O’Sullivan 2011, 115ff.

¹⁵ *CALIGO Caligo hoc profunditas scripturarum quas dedit Deus*. St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Csg 27, p. 80; *FACTVS SVM Merito tales circumhabitantes dicuntur, qui legem Dei non spiritualiter sed carnaliter aduertere uolunt*. St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Csg 27, p. 130.

1. *Glossing Martianus in the Carolingian age*

The evidence left to us from the Carolingian period demonstrates that Martianus Capella's late antique work, with its two allegorical books and seven books on the arts, found a particularly receptive audience among Carolingian scholars. The intensity of the scholarly attention given *De nuptiis*, as well as the wide geographical distribution of that attention, indicate that Martianus's significance and standing were considerable in the Carolingian age. This significance is registered in surviving manuscripts and in glosses¹⁶. Close scholarly attention to the text is attested by dense annotation, especially, though not exclusively, on books I-II. There are many indications that Martianus was regarded as an authority by the Carolingian scholarly elite: allusions and citations to *De nuptiis* in ninth-century writings, the widespread distribution of Carolingian manuscripts of *De nuptiis*, manuscripts supplied with glosses and diagrams, the copying of the text in important centres of learning, the circulation of several influential gloss corpora on *De nuptiis*, excerpts from these corpora in other works and the active intermingling of different traditions of Martianus glosses¹⁷. In sum, glosses, diagrams, illustrations, and textual editing bear witness to Martianus's importance, at the very least in the centres of learning in which these manuscripts were copied and distributed.

Glosses are a primary historical source for Martianus's *Nachleben*. They reveal much about the reception of Martianus in the ninth century. Glosses show that Martianus's language, imagery and textbook information guaranteed his reputation in the early medieval West. In short, Carolingian glosses on *De nuptiis* provide evidence for how Martianus was understood in Carolingian centres of learning. In this paper, I shall focus on the corpus of glosses once attributed to Martin Hiberniensis, which furnishes the earliest substantial evidence for the Carolingian reception of the text. I refer to it as the "oldest gloss tradition." One of three major Carolingian efforts to elucidate the work, it provides insight into the centrality of Martianus in the ninth century. The oldest gloss tradition survives in roughly twenty manuscripts dating from the second quarter of the ninth to the tenth century. No pre-Carolingian manuscripts transmitting this gloss corpus exist, though there is evidence for pre-Carolingian reception of the text. Most of the manuscripts transmitting the oldest gloss tradition date to the mid or second half of the ninth century, indicating a peak of glossing activity and interest in this period. The glosses are usually contemporary or near contemporary with the text hands in the

¹⁶ For the manuscripts transmitting the oldest gloss tradition, see O'Sullivan, *Glossae*, XXXV-CIX.

¹⁷ O'Sullivan, *Glossae*, V-XXXIV.

manuscripts. Annotations from the oldest gloss tradition were compiled in several places by Carolingian readers and circulated in the heartland of the Carolingian world in centres such as Auxerre, Fleury, Corbie and Lorsch. As for authorship of the corpus, this remains uncertain. What seems likely is that the gloss tradition was the product of many authors working in several places¹⁸.

Significantly, the glosses in the corpus were not just random accretions but comprised a vibrant gloss tradition, as is attested by its spread and influence. On the Continent, the two other major Carolingian gloss traditions on *De nuptiis* drew heavily upon it. The oldest gloss tradition cross-fertilized with other gloss traditions on Martianus and spread from the Loire valley and northern France eastwards towards Lorsch and Cologne and northwards towards Flanders, the Low Countries, Wales, and England. The corpus reveals many things about the interests of Carolingian readers, underscoring, for instance, the industrious attention paid to Martianus's abstruse language and imagery, especially to his Greek¹⁹.

2. Pagan antiquity and the Carolingian reception of Martianus

The oldest gloss tradition provides insight into the appeal of pagan antiquity in the Carolingian age. The pagan content of *De nuptiis* inspired Carolingian commentators. Ninth-century glossators on Martianus explained all kinds of details relating to the pagan past. They elucidated the origins of the Greek gods, myths, and fables; provided etymological interpretations of Greek names and places; furnished annotations on the *artes liberales*; clothed Martianus's pagan allegory and classical allusions in ethical reflection and allegorical interpretation; rationalised Martianus's myths by means of astronomy, physics, and the natural sciences; and surrounded Martianus with references to pagan and Christian authorities²⁰. Carolingian glossators were only too eager to explain the classical allusions, myths and obscure images in *De nuptiis*, as well as to see in Martianus's pagan allegory a source of clues to be followed, not just puzzles to be solved.

The sheer number of Carolingian glosses on Martianus's pagan content indicates a particular interest in Graeco-Roman antiquity. This accords with Carolingian classicism and fascination with Roman astronomy, biography, epic, ethnography, geography, history, and mythology. The evidence of the oldest gloss tradition demonstrates that the overwhelming response to Martianus's pagan

¹⁸ O'Sullivan, *Glossae*, V-CXXXIX.

¹⁹ O'Sullivan 2012, 67-94.

²⁰ Teeuwen 2013, 63-80.

content was one of acceptance and warm approval as is illustrated by the glosses on Apollo who is interpreted as a symbol of wisdom²¹. Martianus's pagan content not only interested Carolingian readers. It was a source of meaning. Similarly, the pagan content of Virgil was not discarded by early medieval readers. Carolingian glosses on Virgil demonstrate a keen interest in pagan mythology. For example, in the ninth-century reception of Virgil we find similarities between Virgil glosses, the Vatican Mythographers and the commentary on the *Thebaid* ascribed to Lactantius Placidus, an important conduit of Graeco-Roman mythology²². In short, avid glossing of the pagan content of Martianus's *De nuptiis* and Virgil's *Eclogues* demonstrates that Carolingian commentators had few qualms about reading pagan texts²³.

3. *Encyclopaedism and the Carolingian reception of Martianus*

The oldest gloss tradition also throws light on a vitally important tradition influencing Carolingian intellectual culture – encyclopaedism. The encyclopaedic tradition had an ancient pedigree. With its venerable ancestry, it found significant expression in the Carolingian world. Methodologically, encyclopaedism was based on the antiquarian practices of excerpting and citing earlier texts²⁴. Such practices are strikingly evident in Carolingian Martianus manuscripts where compilers assembled information from authorities. For instance, Carolingian glossators drew upon Boethius, Augustine and Macrobius, connecting, as Mariken Teeuwen has observed, «thematically related texts»²⁵. They referred to authorities such as Aristotle, Plato, Virgil, Servius, Pliny, Ambrose, Augustine and Isidore²⁶. Similar efforts are also evident in Carolingian glosses on Virgil where we witness prodigious efforts to surround the works of the poet with late antique and medieval Virgilian commentaries, as well as to cite the authority of Servius²⁷.

Moreover, Carolingian Martianus glosses not only exhibit the vitality of the encyclopaedic tradition, with its age-old antiquarian priorities of excerpting and citing authorities. They also attest to the scholarly predilection for interconnecting knowledge. *Collectio*, a constituent of early medieval scholarly practice and me-

²¹ O'Sullivan 2011, 111-112.

²² O'Sullivan 2018a, 155-188.

²³ O'Sullivan 2018b, 132-165.

²⁴ O'Sullivan 2020, 524-568.

²⁵ Teeuwen 2011, 24.

²⁶ O'Sullivan, *Glossae*, 8, lines 4 and 7.

²⁷ O'Sullivan 2016, 77-123.

dieval *memoria*, was frequently at the heart of Martianus glossing²⁸. Martianus glosses were evidently part of a wider collecting enterprise, as is evidenced by the range of materials found alongside *De nuptiis* in Carolingian manuscripts. These elements included glosses, illustrations, diagrams, neumes, syntactical glosses, textual variants, tironian notes, captions, subtitles, headings and *signes de renvoi*. Such vast assemblages of materials exhibit a desire to surround authoritative texts like Martianus with all kinds of information. We see this in the reception of Martianus, Virgil and the Psalms. Around Martianus, we witness efforts to gather materials on ancient learning and pagan antiquity; around Virgil, on Troy and ancient Rome; around the Psalms, on the Jewish past²⁹. Martianus, Virgil and the Psalms became focal points for encyclopaedic gathering. In Carolingian Europe, then, scholars were creating books filled with knowledge around works like *De nuptiis*.

4. *Transcendent knowing in the Carolingian reception of Martianus*

In annotating *De nuptiis*, Carolingian scholars endeavoured not simply to safeguard, assemble, and organise knowledge around the text. They also sought to unveil the abstruse and to surround the text with an aura of obscurity. Martianus's Carolingian commentators were not simply digging for ancient nuggets; they were searching for higher truth. They were interested in transcendent knowing or higher understanding, associated with the obscure, the incorporeal, and the sacred.

The two allegorical books of *De nuptiis*, orientated towards the transcendent, were a rich resource. Carolingian glosses demonstrate that the dense imagery of books I-II not only required elucidation by the ninth century, but that the opening books were regarded as a treasure trove of obscurity and hidden meaning. The importance of Martianus's allegory was noted by Carolingian scholars. It was underscored by glosses at the beginning of book III, where discussion unfolded around the utility of pagan fables. Martianus's pagan allegory provided an opportunity to explore what were essentially Macrobian formulations on fabulous narrative. For Carolingian commentators, truth was deemed to be concealed under Martianus's allegorical cover³⁰. Though some glosses associated fiction with falsehood, the attention paid to the pagan allegory by Carolingian glossators demonstrates that Carolingian scholars had few qualms about reading Martianus. And they were

²⁸ O'Sullivan 2017b, 3-24.

²⁹ O'Sullivan 2019, 185-196.

³⁰ O'Sullivan 2011, 113ff.

richly rewarded. The Neoplatonic and Neopythagorean undercurrents of *De nuptiis* provided a springboard for glosses on higher truth and invisible reality, as is exemplified by the story of the mortal Philology who reaches the celestial abode through various means and stages: theurgical initiation, apotheosis, astral peregrination and hierogamy³¹. The interest in incorporeal truth also emerges prominently in glosses on the following figures and images in the first two books: Pallas Athena, the sphere, and the cup of immortality from which Philology drinks a draft before her celestial journey.

In their annotations on Philology and Pallas Athena, Carolingian commentators, influenced by Platonic epistemology, juxtaposed earthly learning and heavenly wisdom. For Carolingian commentators, the mortal Philology stood in contrast to Pallas Athena. The former represented *inferior intellegentia* (“inferior understanding”) and *prudentia saecularis* (“secular wisdom”) that focuses on *humanas leges* (“human laws”)³². The latter symbolised the highest wisdom, which is *incomprehensibilis et incorruptibilis* (“incomprehensible and incorruptible”)³³. To obtain immortality and reach the celestial kingdom, earthly learning had to be cast off, as when Philology vomits forth all her learning, which was interpreted by glossators as *humana scientia* (“human knowledge”)³⁴. For Carolingian readers, the mortal Philology was not able to understand things truly³⁵.

Similarly, glosses on the sphere in book 1 evinced Carolingian reflection on corporeal and incorporeal reality. The sphere appears in the celestial realm. It is an image and model of the world. Carolingian glosses on the sphere include references to Plato and the Platonic ideas³⁶. Likewise, in their annotations on the cup of immortality, Carolingian glossators drew upon an essentially Platonic model of the universe divided between visible and invisible reality. They interpreted the outer parts of the cup as the *imagines corporum* (“images of corporeal reality”), manifested in fantasies and dreams; its inner parts as the *summa intellegentia rerum incorporalium* (“the highest understanding of incorporeal things”)³⁷.

³¹ Teeuwen - O’Sullivan 2016, 303-320.

³² O’Sullivan, *Glossae*, 435, lines 5-11; 158, lines 1-4;

³³ O’Sullivan, *Glossae*, 435, lines 5-11.

³⁴ O’Sullivan, *Glossae*, 341, line 5.

³⁵ *QVEM - LVMINE Quia quando mortalis fuisti non uere intellexisti*. O’Sullivan, *Glossae*, 312, line 1.

³⁶ *HIS - NATVRA Hactenus qualitates et quantitates mundi sensibilis describit. Nunc incorporeum describit mundum, i. intellegibiles omnium formas quas Plato ydeas uocat*. O’Sullivan, *Glossae*, 200, lines 1-3.

³⁷ *ROTVNDITAS Per exteriores partes ipsius oui intelleguntur imagines corporum, quae in fantasiis siue in fantasmatis seu in somnis speculantur. Interiores autem ipsius oui partes*

Moreover, for Martianus's Carolingian glossators, higher understanding was not only associated with the incorporeal and the Platonic forms. It was also linked with secrecy, illumination, and profundity. Hence, we read in glosses that Philology penetrates hidden, secret things³⁸; that the powers of Apollo, symbol of wisdom, are obscure and associated with hidden places³⁹; that Apollo is an image of eternal light⁴⁰; and that the liberal arts, symbolising learning, are concealed *in profundo memoriae* ("in the depths of memory")⁴¹. In their glosses, the *artes* were associated with the Platonic theory of *anamnesis* and with the idea of *profunditas* ("profound depth"). For Carolingian scribes, the truth of the arts was apparent only to immortals and to those contemplating the truth. For them, true knowledge was transcendent. That it was hidden is highlighted by glosses on the oracular powers of Apollo and the mystical nature of the sun⁴².

Furthermore, transcendent knowing was not just associated with the hidden, obscure, and incorporeal in the Carolingian reception of Martianus. It was also linked with the sacred. Higher understanding was enveloped in mystery. A good illustration is provided by annotations on Martianus's *Graeca*. Carolingian scholars gave considerable attention to the Greek words and phrases, loanwords

summa intellegentia rerum incorporalium qua per totum separamur a rebus corporalibus intellegimus esse. O'Sullivan, *Glossae*, 350, lines 6-8; 351, lines 9-10.

³⁸ *ARCANA secreta.* O'Sullivan, *Glossae*, 99, line 70.

³⁹ *IN MANTICEN ... maxime diuinatione ad Apollinem pertinet et recte quia in diuinatione obscuritas est et sol omnia aperta reddit.* O'Sullivan, *Glossae*, 35, lines 19-20; *ADYTORVM secretorum.* O'Sullivan, *Glossae*, 52, line 2.

⁴⁰ *LYCIAM Litius dictus est Apollo et templum eius Litiu a Licho uidelicet lupo. Sicut enim oculi lupi semper ui luminis pollent ut etiam noctu candeant uideantque et illuminent, ita et sol semper lucet et inextinguibilem luminis claritatem aeternaliter fouet uel etiam dictus est Litius Apollo, quia sicut lupus deuorat pec[c]ora ita sol humores.* O'Sullivan, *Glossae*, 55, lines 7-12. Bower 2011, 71.

⁴¹ *ACCIDENS ... Omnes homines habeant naturaliter naturales artes, sed quia p<o>ena peccati primi hominis in animabus hominum obscurantur et in quandam profundam ignorantiam deuoluuntur, nichil aliud agimus discendo nisi easdem artes, quae in profundo memoriae repositae sunt in praesentiam intellegentiae reuocamus* ("All men by nature possess the natural arts, but because of the punishment of the first man, they are (obscured) in the souls of men and sunk in profound ignorance, in learning we are doing nothing but recalling to the fore of the mind those same arts which have been hidden away in the depths of memory"). Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, VLF 48, fol. 32r. Translation based heavily on Lutz 1956, 67.

⁴² The sun's ethereal light is interpreted by the glossators as invisible and hidden. *ARCANIS FLVORIBVS inuisibilibus splendoribus; ARCANIS occultis; ARCANIS secretis.* O'Sullivan, *Glossae*, 405, lines 4-5.

from Greek and Greek mythology in *De nuptiis*. They not only transcribed, highlighted and glossed his Greek. They also added Greek. They explained the meaning of the Greek words, names, places, and terms in the text, introduced Greek into their glosses, transliterated Latinized Greek into Greek script and Greek into Latin script, furnished Greek etymologies, repeated Greek passages in the margins, provided the names of Greek letters and their numerical values, as well as interpreted the meaning of Greek words and mixed Greek and Latin letters.

Martianus's Greek, however, was received by Continental commentators not just as a language to be elucidated, but also as a way of creating a sense of mystery. In their interest in Martianus's *Graeca*, Carolingian glossators went well beyond pragmatic explanation. This is illustrated by the addition of Greek words, loan-words from Greek and Greek neologisms, use of Greek letters for Latin words and as cyphers, and the deployment of hypergraecizing techniques, that is, scribes made the Greek look even more Greek, for instance, preferring Greek Eta for Epsilon, Theta for Tau and Omega for Omicron⁴³.

The reasons why Carolingian annotators were interested not only in clarifying Martianus, but also in enveloping the text in obscurity are well known. Obscurity was a kind of stylistic and intellectual preference, part and parcel of what is generally referred to as the hermeneutic tradition. It underpinned early Christian and early medieval intellectual culture. Obscurity – however strange it now may seem – was no vain exercise. It was in line with well-known interpretative practices aimed at rendering knowledge less than immediate. As for the value of this intellectual preference, we can look to Augustine. In a passage later excerpted by the Carolingian compiler Hrabanus Maurus, Augustine explained how the Scriptures are filled with obscurities:

Sed multis et multiplicibus obscuritatibus et ambiguitatibus decipiuntur, qui temere legunt, aliud pro alio sentientes. Quibusdam autem locis quid uel falso suspicentur non inueniunt, ita obscure dicta quaedam, densissimam caliginem obducunt. Quod totum prouisum esse diuinitus non dubito ad edomandam labore superbiam, et intellectum a fastidio reuocandum, cui facile inuestigata plerumque uilescunt.

But casual readers are misled by obscurities and ambiguities of many kinds, mistaking one thing for another. In some passages they find no meaning at all that they can grasp at, even falsely, so thick is the fog created by some obscure phrases. I have no doubt that this is all divinely predetermined, so that pride

⁴³ O'Sullivan 2012, 67-94.

*may be subdued by hard work and intellects which tend to despise things that are easily discovered may be rescued from boredom and reinvigorated*⁴⁴.

For Augustine, obscurity was a constituent of the most sacred text, the Bible, a text that enjoyed unparalleled status in the Carolingian world⁴⁵. Obscurity and transcendent knowing were core features of the allegorical books of *De nuptiis*. Carolingian glossators explored these features in their glosses on learning and the arts, underscoring a Platonic worldview shaped by the dichotomy between visible and invisible reality.

Conclusion

To conclude, the metaphysical context, dense imagery, and abstruse language of the allegorical books furnished an opportunity for Carolingian reflection on transcendent knowing. The allegorical books set the stage for Martianus's compendium on the liberal arts. Martianus's allegory detailing a journey from the earthly to the heavenly domain served as a springboard for Carolingian interest in deeper or higher understanding. Both Martianus's allegory and his textbook on the *artes* spawned Carolingian glosses on learning, truth, and wisdom. Carolingian glossators viewed the liberal arts as buried in the depths of memory and the truth of the arts as revealed only to immortals. For Carolingian readers of *De nuptiis*, the liberal arts were enveloped in an aura of truth.

That Carolingian glosses reveal an interest in higher understanding was not unusual. This interest intersected with early medieval epistemology and hermeneutics, animated by notions of allegorical understanding, intellectual vision, and divine illumination. It cohered with an intellectual culture in which the created world at large served as a stepping stone to spiritual perception. According to this worldview, all learning, including pagan learning, was useful. What mattered was understanding. And for Martianus's Carolingian commentators, true understanding was firmly situated in a realm that was not only obscure, hidden, and sacred but also invisible, incorporeal, and transcendent.

⁴⁴ Green 1995, 61; Zimpel 2006, 466.

⁴⁵ Contreni 2012, 505-535; Ganz 2012, 325-337.

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