IMAGERY IN MEDIEVAL ENGLISH LOVE LYRICS:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS USES FROM 1200 - 1500

by

Brenda Pauline Townsend

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Southampton

November 1973

Master Copy
The aims of this study are to provide an outline of the main categories of imagery in the medieval English love lyrics from 1200 - 1500; to examine the literary backgrounds of this imagery, and to use this information to help elucidate its functions in individual poems. A major aspect of this investigation is the consideration of the developments in style and in the uses of imagery across the period.

The introductory material is concerned with the difficulties and divisions of the genre. The imagery, however, is a uniform feature throughout the period and thus forms a useful basis for study. The reasons for this homogeneity are examined and there is an attempt to account for the major differences in style between the pre-Chaucerian lyrics and the fifteenth century poems. The major critical work to date is adumbrated and it is noted that no study of the love lyrics across the period has been attempted.

The imagery is divided into three main categories: seasons introductions and natural settings; imagery used in the analysis of the emotion of love, and that used in the description of the lady. In each case, analysis of the operation of this imagery in individual poems follows the examination of its literary backgrounds.

It is demonstrated that the early poets invest the traditional language of love with a sense of personal conviction. Their originality lies in their subtle manipulation of imagery for specific poetic effects. Their stylistic techniques are aimed at serving their wish to impart urgency and directness to their lyrics. The fifteenth-century poets are more concerned with superficial decoration, and this, together with their more standardised literary language, can give their lyrics a more impersonal tone. The popularity of the allegorical method of exposition can cause the later poems to seem more abstract. However, it is essentially a period of stylistic experiment, and as a result, the quality of the poetry is patchy. Nevertheless, there are notable achievements in the variations of the conventional imagery so that it still has validity.

In conclusion, it is maintained that a clear view of the later medieval developments can only be obtained by seeing the fifteenth century poems in relation to the pre-Chaucerian lyrics. Furthermore, the medieval imagery of love continues to be used by the Tudor poets, and their more polished lyrics follow in the wake of the fifteenth-century experimentation.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge gratefully the patient and conscientious supervision of this thesis by Miss Anne Leyland. During the early stages of my work I benefited from discussions with Ms Bella Millett, who, together with Dr. Paul Harvey of the Department of History, also helped with the transcription of unprinted poems. Professor B.F. Huppé of the State University of New York, who was visiting Southampton in 1970 - 1971, was also kind enough to take an interest in my project. To Dr. K. Hall of the Department of French I am grateful for advice about medieval French literature. I wish to thank Mrs. J. Bromley for her general interest and encouragement. The unfailing support of my husband and his invaluable help in checking the typescript must also be acknowledged. The faults of this thesis are, of course, entirely my own.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Seasons Introductions and Natural Settings</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>The Analysis of Emotions</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>The Description of the Lady</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion: The Continuing Validity</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of Medieval Imagery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix: The Interpretation of Brook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. 9</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABBREVIATIONS

For convenience, the following abbreviations have been used to refer to the editions from which quotations are taken:

Brook  
C.B. XIII  
MacCracken  
Mackenzie  
Muir  
PL  
Robbins  
Steele  
Stemmier

The Harley Lyrics, ed. G.L. Brook.
English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, ed. Carleton Brown.
The Poems of William Dunbar, ed. W. Mackay Mackenzie.
Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries, ed. R.H. Robbins.
The English Poems of Charles of Orleans, ed. R. Steele and Mabel Day. Where possible, Charles of Orleans' poems are referred to simply by the number given them by Steele and Day.
Medieval English Love Lyrics, ed. Theo Stemmier.

All quotations from Chaucer's works are taken from F.W. Robinson's New Cambridge Edition, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. Quotations from classical Latin are from the appropriate edition in the Loeb Classical Library. G.C. Macaulay's The Complete Works of John Gower: The French Works has been used for quotations from the Cinkante Balades. Any abbreviations of periodical titles are in accordance with those used by the MLA.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. The Lyric Genre

The medieval English love lyrics present critics with a number of problems. The patchy distribution of the poems across the period accounts for some of these difficulties, making it impossible to assemble a full picture of their origin and development. There are no extant love lyrics from before 1200, and from the whole of the thirteenth century fewer than ten remain to us in anything like complete form. The genre has a brief flowering in the first half of the fourteenth century with the dozen or so outstanding love poems from MS. Harley 2253, but, until Chaucer, there is very little outside this collection.¹ Not until after Chaucer's influence has been felt do we find any number of English love lyrics surviving.

It is generally agreed that much lyric poetry from the early period has been lost to us and certainly there are many fragments of lyrics and references to poems no longer known to us, which suggest that this is so.² Sometimes a reference may occur in another work, as in the case of the Pardoner's song of "Com hide, love, to me." Fragments may find their way into manuscripts containing quite different material, as with four lines beginning "Me pingkit pou art so louel" (Robbins, no. 142), which is in a
collection of theological and moral pieces. Similarly, six lines are found in a manuscript otherwise devoted to a prose tract which has been entitled *The Clergy May not Hold Property.* Even a graffito on a pillar of a now ruined church at Duxford near Cambridge has yielded a snatch of love poetry (Robbins no. 145).

There are practical reasons for this scarcity of early material. Most scribal activity took place under the auspices of the Church and a scribe would find it difficult to justify the use of expensive vellum or parchment for the recording of frivolous lyrics. We certainly have evidence that the clergy disapproved of love lyrics, for one twelfth century sermon has a couplet taken from a now lost lyric as its text, to typify the kind of song which is to be strongly discouraged. It is not until the fifteenth century, when nobles and rich citizens could afford to own collections of prose and verse, and indeed began to turn their own hands to composition, that the love lyric is easily recorded and preserved.

Further difficulties are associated with the divisions within the genre. Inevitably, a group of poems spanning a period of three hundred years will not form an homogeneous body. These differences are of two main kinds. A natural division falls between the early poems and those written after the influence of Chaucer has been felt and a major aspect of this study will be the analysis of developments which separate the two groups. The general influences
which produce these developments will be discussed in a separate section. The other distinction is usually that between courtly and popular poetry, although I hope to show that this is more accurately a distinction between forms rather than attitudes.

Rosemary Woolf has commented upon the unlikelihood of truly popular poetry surviving from the Middle Ages:

> In the Middle Ages lyrics composed by the common people for the common people will have had very little chance of surviving. In England at least the only popular lyrics that can be recognized beyond all doubt are the dance-songs; though of course most of these will have vanished, being ephemeral pieces, hardly worth recording when isolated from their music and social setting.5

When the attitudes and imagery of the love lyrics are examined, it becomes clear that they are part of a sophisticated poetic tradition rather than remnants of folk art. Robbins divides his anthology according to the popular/courtly distinction but he makes his division on the rather arbitrary basis of the manuscript a poem is found in rather than any intrinsic qualities of the poems themselves:

> The first two sections of this anthology, then, illustrate the poems circulated among the 'lowd!'... These texts were preserved only because the manuscript, to which they were incidental, was preserved. On the other hand, the more formal courtly lyrics, because they were written by and for people of wealth, were preserved for their own supposed worth.6

If some of the love lyrics described by Robbins as popular are examined, however, it can be seen that the attitudes they display towards love and the imagery through which they operate are essentially the same
as those of the poems he describes as courtly. "Al nist by pe rose, rose" (Robbins no. 17) is apparently a popular poem, while "Bryd one brere, brid, brid one brer" (Robbins no. 147) is courtly. Yet in their use of the traditional imagery of love poetry they are equally sophisticated. A further factor which links rather than divides them is their simple diction, a characteristic of the earlier poems.

Neither is it possible to draw a line between poetry written for a courtly audience and other types of verse. Peter Dronke has pointed out that a courtly audience would be a very mixed group, ranging from the humblest member of the household to the nobility. Moreover, we have no reason to believe that a courtly audience would eschew the more robust examples of medieval poetry. Rosemary Woolf comments:

Indecent songs, however, did not belong exclusively to tavern audiences. In the Tudor song books, for instance, are some archery songs (set in the form of the old man's complaint), whose sole point lies in the ingenious and sly display of sexual symbolism. For the courtly audience this kind of song is more oblique and clever than the boisterously coarse songs provided for their rustic counterparts. But, as one would expect, obscenity in itself cannot be taken as criterion for distinguishing the popular from the courtly, if by courtly is meant the literature of the court.

Of course, the obscene songs included by Robbins in his anthology are not strictly speaking a part of the lyric genre. Essentially they are tales of sexual adventure, while the love lyric is concerned with the lover's emotions, but they have a peripheral significance as they sometimes parody the language of the refined love lyric.

Another way of defining courtly poetry is to say that it is poetry which takes "courtly love" as its subject. Courtly love
is discussed in Chapter III but it is necessary to say here that there is no fundamental difference in the attitude to love seen in a poem like "Of evrykune tre" (Robbins no. 16) and those which are described as courtly. Dronke has shown that a certain humility in the lover's demeanour and a sense of awe at the lady's perfection are universal features of love poetry, and these are as discernible in the so-called popular poetry as in the courtly.

Very often the distinction between popular and courtly lyrics is a distinction between forms rather than attitudes to love. Many of the poems described by Robbins as popular are in the carol form which has been defined by R.L. Greene:

the word 'carol' denotes a poem for singing, on whatever subject, in uniform stanzas and provided with a burden, a choral element which is sung at the beginning of the piece and repeated after every stanza. . . . Within this general verse-form many variations may occur, but one formula is particularly prominent, that of a couplet burden rhyming with the last line of a tail-rhyme stanza of the form a a a b and with four measures to the line . . . 11

Inevitably, this is a simpler verse-form than some of the complicated stanza patterns used by the Harley poets or the sophisticated ballade and roundel and ubiquitous rhyme-royal of the fifteenth century. The more ornate verse forms may involve longer lines, complicated patterns of repetition and more elaborate rhyme schemes, all of which produce a more consciously literary effect.

In practice, the terms "popular" and "courtly" can be confusing when applied to the love lyric. Robbins' labelling of "Al nist by be rose, rose" (Robbins, no. 17) and "Myn owne dere ladi fair & fre"
(Robbins no. 19) as popular belies the sophistication of their composition and of the poets' attitude to the subject. It is more useful to consider what poems can be comprehended under the general term "love lyric," while accepting that this is not an homogeneous genre as far as form and method are concerned. In order to do this, some definition of word "lyric," in the context of this study, is useful.

When applied to medieval literature, the word "lyric" tends to be used loosely to describe any short poem regardless of subject matter or poetic intention. In its Greek and Latin origins the word implied a poem intended to be sung, and this definition is given by Puttenham. Although many of the medieval lyrics, especially those on the subject of love, are songs, there is usually no attempt to confine the term's currency to poems of that nature. More important are the later connotations of the word. Ruskin defined lyric poetry as "the expression by the poet of his own feelings" and this has led us to see a certain immediacy and emotional intensity as the hallmark of the lyric.

This definition refers not simply to poetic form but to a certain type of poetic expression, and it is here that many of the difficulties in using the term in connexion with medieval lyric arise. J.E. Townsend's use of the phrase "lyric viewpoint" helps to elucidate this. "Lyric viewpoint" focusses on emotional response rather than on a developing situation, so that external
factors and circumstantial details are relevant only in so far as they throw light on that emotional response. As such, the lyric viewpoint need not be confined to any one genre, it may be present in any type of poetry at points at which intense emotion is being expressed. Townsend, then, is defining not lyric as genre but the features of poetic expression that can be termed lyric.

Undoubtedly, many medieval love lyrics are written from the lyric viewpoint and few of them are concerned with developing a sequence of narrative events. A poem like "Foweles in be frith" (C.B. XIII no. 8) is totally without narrative details. The reader is faced solely with an emotional reaction. Other poems use narrative detail only in order that the reader might understand the nature of the emotion being expressed, as in the case of "A wayle whyt ase whalles bon" (Brook no. 9). However, if intensity and immediacy are the criteria of lyric viewpoint, there are many love lyrics which do not fit this description. Admittedly, with some poems this is a result of failure on the part of the poet to understand the most effective way of dealing with emotion, but there are also several types of poem in which these effects are not appropriate. The love allegory, for example, which may take lyric form, is concerned with a developing emotional situation rather than a concentrated emotional reaction. Similarly, the poems derived from the French pastourelle, which involve dialogue and a sequence of events, do not aim at this type of intensity.
Instead of taking lyric viewpoint as the main defining criterion of medieval love lyrics, therefore, I think the broader basis of the poet's attitude towards love is required. The love lyrics may be seen as short poems which are concerned with the emotions and experience of love within the limits of the medieval understanding of refined sexual love. At times, the poet may wish to evoke an intense emotional response, at others he may wish to follow the development of a love situation or to refract the lover's emotion through his praise of the lady. He may even discuss the problems of love generally rather than in relation to a specific situation. This makes it possible to include under the heading of the love lyric those poems which have a narrative framework, the debate poems, and even those which parody the exaggerated postures of the lover and the stereotyped beauty of the lady, since these too rely on a pre-established attitude towards love. It clearly excludes, however, the less delicate lyrics of sexual adventure, which are concerned with action, often from a comic viewpoint, rather than feeling. Their relationship is more with fabliau than with love lyric. Occasionally, however, these are relevant to the examination of the love lyric because they may parody its imagery.

2. Imagery and Convention.

Although the medieval love lyric is heterogeneous in many respects, it shows a striking uniformity in its use of imagery, and this uniformity cuts across differences of form, style and viewpoint. More correctly,
it is true to say that this uniformity is a feature of secular medieval poetry about love generally, but it assumes a major importance as a common factor in the lyrics because here the essential part of the expression of love is contained in the imagery.

The expression of love achieved by the medieval poets is universalized and it is their clearly defined language of love which links these poems across the period and in their different forms. Love is seen consistently as a form of suffering which may affect the lover as a sickness or a wound. The lady is his physician and her favour his remedy. He suffers love more acutely when he compares his situation to that of the natural world in which sexual fulfilment is an unhindered aspect of the pattern of life. If the lover's suit is unrequited, he expects to be a martyr in the service of love, while success is compared to heaven. The object of love is an ideal creature whose beauty epitomizes that of flowers and precious stones. The background for the love lyric is the fertile spring season when the whole of nature re-awakens. This is the prevailing imagery of the love lyric, and the poets are content to work within its framework, modifying and varying it for specific poetic effect.

Individuality in the terms in which they describe love is not what the medieval poets are seeking. It is impossible, for example, to recognize individual poets by their idiosyncratic imagery, as is often possible with poets writing at a later date. We can identify John Donne's poetry by its precise comparisons from mathematics, astronomy, medicine and martial tactics. Yet, if any attempt were
made to isolate particular medieval poets in this way, no conclusions could be reached. In this respect, the love lyrics, may indeed be called, in Rosemary Woolf's words, "genuinely anonymous." 19

Since uniformity of imagery is so basic a characteristic of these lyrics, to search for original figures of speech, as one might expect to do with more modern poetry, seems to me the wrong approach. Such a search can lead the critic to rash conclusions. It may be that through our own unfamiliarity with a specific metaphor or simile, we assume it to be equally new to a medieval audience. In an essay on fifteenth century poetry, Douglas Gray quotes what for him is a striking line: 20

fful sore hit greueth me when I by yow sate,
And say other better belouyd than I,
And ye in your Armes so truly hym knyt,
And I lyke a syphyr syt yow by.

(Robbins no. 138).

The comparison of the lover to a cipher, to the figure nought, is, perhaps, not one of the better known medieval similes. However, it is used by Dunbar and occurs also in another fifteenth century lyric, this time in one of the English poems of Charles of Orleans:

Me thynkith right as a syphir now y serve
That nombre makith and is him sif noon

(Ballade 56).

In fact the simile has a long history; it appears in the De Planctu Naturae of Alanus de Insulis:

Illic vespertilio avis hermaphroditica, cifri locum inter aviculas obtinebat. 23

Curtius has traced the origin of the comparison to Islamic-Spanish culture, the word itself deriving from Arabic, sifra. 24 Thus a simile
which is striking to the modern reader is probably a medieval commonplace.

The method of these poets is to describe love within the limits of an accepted range of expression. Although the lover professes that his emotions are unique, his sufferings unparalleled and his lady more beautiful than any other, these protestations are themselves part of the accepted language of love. Although the poets purport to analyse the private feelings of the lover, this analysis is based on a shared understanding of how love is experienced; the individual is seen in relation to a general view.

This cohesive attitude to love has not always been recognised and a failure to understand it can lead the critic to search for features which are unlikely to be a characteristic of the genre. A.K. Moore, for example, has found the Harleian poets lacking in the range of expression necessary to give personal conviction to their feeling:

> Particularized passion requires for its proper expression a vocabulary of affective language. The Harleian poets for lack of such terms were not well equipped to manage complex emotional situations and had therefore to depend to a great extent on objective methods.

Yet the "particularized passion" of these poets is only a pose. They may stress the depth and uniqueness of their feeling but this is in keeping with the general understanding of the experience of love. This is not to deny originality in the love lyrics but simply to question the kind of originality Moore is seeking. Individuality in these poems is a result of the manipulation and adaptation of the conventional terms rather than of the poet seeking new or idiosyncratic means of expression.

As has been said, this type of uniformity is a feature of secular love poetry generally, and R.Dragonetti has commented on the
same situation in trouvere poetry. In France there is a far greater volume of extant love lyrics from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries but Dragonetti enumerates almost the same tropes from these poems as form the basic imagery of the English love lyrics. Metaphors and similes concerning sickness, flowers, light and, more noticeably in French poetry, the relationship of the lover to the lady as her pledged vassal. Dragonetti comments on the use poets make of this imagery:

Nous avons pu voir que les mouvements lyriques et leurs images relèvent d'un style traditionnel qui, de par sa nature même, exclut l'expression d'un état d'âme singulier. Aucun effet de choc n'y est sensible puisque de l'originalité des images n'est pas ce qui préoccupe le trouvere, mais seulement une certaine manière de se mesurer avec une tradition poétique et de faire valoir sa maîtrise. 26

This assessment of the method of the trouveres is equally valid in respect of the English poets, and unless this attitude is recognised it is impossible to make cogent critical appraisals.

The acceptance of an established tradition can have its drawbacks. The too frequent use of a simile or metaphor in a conventional manner can render it lifeless, and, by the fifteenth century, some poets had become so careless in the repetition of certain formulas that they employed them without regard to accuracy. Robbins prints a poem from a late manuscript in which the lady's fingers are described as "bothe large & longe" instead of the more flattering "long and slender" which is the usual phrase (Robbins no.129).
In other respects, however, the wide acceptance of literary conventions allows the poets greater opportunity for subtlety of expression than is possible where no rules of composition exist. Because the audience understands the operation of the conventions, the poet can achieve variations of meaning and shifts of emphasis in a unique way. As at all times, the subtlety achieved depends on the skill and sensitivity of the specific poet.

A simple kind of manipulation is the substitution of a slightly unusual word in a well-known context. This puts emphasis on the new word and throws into relief the poet's adherence to the convention up to that point. This technique is to be seen in the Harley lyric "Bytuene Mersh ant Aueril" (Brook no. 4), where the description of Alysoun is conventional in all details except one; her eyes are black instead of the expected grey. This unexpected detail brings the portrait to life.

From the opposite point of view, it is also possible to use words which are strongly associated with a conventional usage in a slightly different context, so that they have a new significance, while not entirely losing their established associations. I think this is happening with the word "remedy" as used in a fifteenth century lyric (Robbins no. 175) in which an old man regrets the loss of love and wonders why he can no longer count on constancy:

Why is loue no more stedfast:
Now in trowth what remedy?
Presse forth, in youth be not a-gast.
Why pleseth not age with novelry?

The term "remedy" is usually applied to some form of sexual fulfilment which has the power of alleviating the lover's sickness. Its use here may be ironic, since the figure if the old man in love is usually
a comic one. The old man is complaining both that he no longer meets constancy in love and also that he cannot be happy with what is new. I think the use of the word "remedy" points to his own inability to fulfill a lover's role as the real cause of his dissatisfaction.

An example of more complex subtlety within conventional means of expression occurs in the fourteenth century lyric already briefly mentioned, "Of euerykune tre" (Robbins no.16). Here, the first stanza is constructed of the simplest elements and amounts to a statement that the hawthorn is the best of trees:

Of euerykune tre -
of euerykune tre -
pe haweborn blowet suotes
of euerykune tre.

By the second stanza we realize that the emphasis placed on the repeated "euerykune" is to allow us to draw a parallel with its use in connexion with the lady. Peter Dronke's amended reading of the penultimate line, arrived at by studying the manuscript under ultra-violet light, makes the analogy more precise:

My lemmon sse ssal boe -
my lemmon sse ssal boe -
pe fairest of ever[y k]inne
my lemmon sse ssal boe.

The lady is being projected not simply as one who must be as beautiful as the hawthorn but within a wider comparison. The hawthorn is the best of trees, the best of its own kind, but the lady must be the beat of everything, a superlative among superlatives. From what might have been a mundane simile the poet achieves a powerful hyperbole.

The uniformity of the imagery of love is a feature which requires explanation both in terms of what the poets were themselves setting out
to achieve and in terms of the conditions, practical and intellectual and social, under which the lyrics were composed. From what we know of medieval education, a poet's intellectual training would certainly have encouraged conformity. Education was centred on the seven liberal arts, and E. Curtius has pointed out that most emphasis was placed on the *trivium*: grammar, rhetoric, and logic. Grammar and rhetoric were subjects which overlapped and both included the study of the technicalities of literature. In particular, rhetoric involved the study of classical Latin, Carolingian and early medieval authors. Curtius gives lists of curriculum authors which include Virgil, Martianus Capella, Horace, Persius, Juvenal, Boethius, Statius, Terence and Lucan.

The study of models was reinforced by attention to the rhetorical treatises of Horace, Quintilian and Cicero, and, probably, to the medieval equivalents of these classical treatises by people like Geoffroi de Vinsauf, John of Garland, Matthieu de Vendôme. The whole approach to poetry is to see it as part of an established tradition with certain generally accepted principles rather than as a highly individual outlet for self-expression. This is implied by W. F. Bolton when he summarises the effect of the medieval system of education:

the study of models implies imitation as one stage of learning one's grammar, including all that we now know that term meant. And indeed we have not only the statutes which provide for the regular composition, presentation and criticism of Latin prose and poetry; we have in addition at least some examples of the anthologies which provided for this kind of practice. . . . The kind of centralized core of literary knowledge, area of literary expectation, and order of literary sensibility, that this system implies, is again of paramount significance for our critical approaches.
The extent of the influence of the medieval rhetors has been a matter of dispute. Chaucer's references to the treatises have led some scholars to assume that they were widely known:

But for to telle yow al hir beautee,
It lyth nat in my tonge, n'yn my konnyng
I dar nat undertake so heigh a thyng.
Myn English eek is insufficient,
It woste been a rhetor excellent,
That koude his colours longynge for that art,
If he sholde hire discryven every part.

(Squire's Tale, 11. 34 - 40)

However, J. Murphy feels that too much significance has been attached to the few references to the rhetors which appear in Chaucer's poetry:

The point to be made here is that we can by no means assume the existence of a native English rhetorical tradition during Chaucer's lifetime. On the face of things, therefore, there would seem little probability that any English writer of the period would be influenced by rhetoric in its several medieval forms.

Despite this, I think we can still look to the medieval treatises for evidence of the approach taken to poetry by medieval writers because these were not in themselves innovating works. They re-state and elaborate the principles of the classical Latin rhetors, and classical Latin rhetorical practice would have been familiar to medieval poets, indirectly at least, through the study of models. The treatises of the medieval period use many of the commonplace expressions, in the examples they give, which are found in the love lyrics, especially in relation to the description of the lady. Thus they form a useful point of convergence between theory and practice.
In the light of this background, the readiness of the poets to accept a set of literary conventions to describe the emotions of love is understandable. The scope of those conventions and the literary backgrounds to which they belong are examined in the ensuing chapters.

Intellectually, the Middle Ages was also dominated by Christian theology, and this can be seen as a general influence on the poets, creating a pervasive atmosphere and contributing to specific elements in their poetry. Indeed the pervasiveness of religious philosophy tends to blur the barriers between religious and secular poetry. It is not always possible to be sure that a poem is wholly secular or wholly religious in its intention. In a thirteenth century lyric, "Somer is comen wip loue to toune" (C.B. XIII no. 52), a thrush and a nightingale discuss the love of women. To support their arguments, they draw comparisons from biblical and classical sources. The winning argument is that of the nightingale, who defends all women in the name of one, the Virgin. Although this does not conform to the kind of poem usually offered in praise of Mary, it is still not possible to describe it as a purely secular poem. It demonstrates that the climate of thought is such that it is natural for medieval poets to combine the religious and the secular.

Even in the most overtly secular love lyrics, the influence of religious thought can be seen. Antifeminist views, for example, derived from patristic writings, find their way even into love lyrics. One of the Harley poems (Brook no. 32) contains a cynical comment on the faithlessness of women:
be loue of hire ne lestep nowyht longe,
Heo hauep me plyht ant wytep me wytp wronge.

A side effect of the influence of religious thought was that it probably contributed to the tendency of the medieval poets to maintain a traditional and uniform approach to their poetry. This point is reinforced by E.P. Hammond's view that religious philosophy deflected attention away from a profound interest in man for its own sake:

The numerous class of ecclesiastically-trained writers shows the repressive, inhibiting power of the Church on letters; the Church contemned, as always, the human senses, contemned direct observation of any sort; it favored the symbol rather than the fact, and approved the didactic without any criticism of its quality....the Church's opinion of the human senses acted as an inhibition to any real study of man by man....

Of course, in more recent years, scholars like D.W. Robertson have emphasised the influence of religion far more, seeing it as the underlying impetus of all serious medieval literature. This approach seems to me to involve an unjustified pre-conception about the intentions of medieval poets. While it is certainly a possible key to the interpretation of some works, it is surely better to allow each poem to exist as a separate entity and to speak for itself. Poetic intention is by no means clear in much medieval poetry, but it is safer to search for meaning from within, only afterwards applying knowledge of the period's literary ethos to bear on the facts, instead of starting off with a belief that the poet is bound to be working from a specific viewpoint. Nevertheless, the influence of religious
thought can be recognised as yet another of the forces acting for uniformity of expression rather than diversity.

The practical requirements of writing poetry which is to be delivered orally are another factor conducive to the homogeneity of expression in medieval poetry. For literature which is to be read aloud or sung, idiosyncrasy of expression would present a real problem of understanding for the audience. There would be no opportunity for pausing to consider a single word or phrase for fear of losing the general drift of the poem's meaning. The experience of poetry would tend to be that of audience and performer sharing easily comprehensible ideas familiar to all.

The implications of oral delivery for composition have been discussed by Ruth Crosby, who traces its background and comments on its importance for the Middle Ages. Oral delivery has its origins in classical Greek and Roman times, when the works of Homer and Virgil were read aloud. There is also evidence of this type of performance later and nearer home when the scop relates his tales in Beowulf.

Crosby shows that reading aloud had a variety of functions; it could be used for spreading information, for helping people to learn and for entertainment. The professional storyteller held an important position in medieval society and literature has frequent references to reading aloud. Crosby cites examples from Gower, Deschamps, Robert Mannyng and others. She notes that literature designed for oral delivery displays certain characteristics of which the most important is repetition:
Perhaps the constant repetition of words, phrases, situations, and ideas is one of the most striking differences between the work of medieval and of modern poets. Today we attempt to avoid repetition; whether we are writing prose or poetry, we seek for variety of phrasing. It was not so, apparently, with the medieval poet. The more often a theme or a phrase had been used, the better suited it was to his purpose.

These comments are equally applicable to the short lyrics as to the romances with which Crosby is specifically concerned. Repetition was not fostered only by the needs of oral delivery, however. Many kinds of repetition are discussed as embellishments of style in the rhetorical treatises, so that there is a twofold emphasis on this feature in medieval literature.

Certain types of repetition are linked directly to desire of the poet to give the audience time to assimilate a complex idea. Where an unusual concept is involved, compression of meaning may be precluded by the conditions of oral delivery. In order to give the audience time to consider the meaning of what he is saying, the poet may use repetition. In one lyric a paradoxical statement is made:

che sente me be cherye  
with-outyn ony ston,  
& so che ded be dowe  
with-outyn ony bon.  

(Robbins n. 45)

In order to give the audience time to puzzle over this, the whole riddle is repeated in a slightly different form:

how xuld ony cherye  
be with-oute ston?  
& how xuld only dowe  
ben with-oute bon?
The situation is resolved in the last stanza when we realize that all these things are symbols of a girl's unfulfilled love. Repetition in many forms of both ideas and expression, has important functions in medieval poetry.

These conditions working together produce a climate for poetic composition which is not favourable to individuality in the choice of ideas and imagery. Originality tends to be revealed in subtle modifications of traditional forms of expression, rather than in striking innovations. The homogeneous imagery which forms the basis of poetic language throughout the period allows us to treat the body of English love lyrics as a cohesive genre, despite the obvious differences of style which separate the pre-Chaucerian lyrics from the fifteenth century poems.

3. The Fifteenth Century: Developments and Influences.

Despite the predominance of a traditional imagery of love, the approach of the later poets makes the fifteenth century lyrics appear often impersonal and abstract in comparison to the urgency and conviction of the pre-Chaucerian poems. There is no simple explanation for this change in style but certain influences tending to produce these developments can be seen.

The changing social and economic conditions of the fifteenth century have been cited by some scholars as likely causes for the shift in attitude of the later poets. H.S. Bennett has emphasised the importance of the progress in education, which meant a wider
reading public and a movement away from the situation in which most scribal activity was linked to the Church and the aristocracy. The spread of education and the rise of the middle classes resulted in a new audience for poetry:

Hence a new public was awaiting the writer. He was no longer forced to depend mainly on the generosity of one person or on one small group of persons, but could begin to cater for the great body of rising middle-class men and women who, with money in their pockets and a little learning in their heads, were asking to be instructed and amused.

Richer families were beginning to own manuscripts and, with the innovation of printing, to build up libraries of books. As well as this, the amateur writer begins to compose his own lyrics. Among the Paston Letters is a Valentine sent to John Paston by Margery Brew, which includes a verse:

And yf ye commande me to kepe true wherever I go,
I wyse I will do all my myght yowe to love and never no mo.
And yf my freendys say that y do amys, thei schal not let me so for to do,
Myn herte me byddys ever more to love yowe
Truly over alle erthely thyng.

Conditions were now much more favourable to the preservation of poetry, but often it is of a kind written as a result of a social rather than an intellectual impetus. The amateur poet fashioning a graceful compliment to a lady has not the same serious poetic intention as the professional. Similarly, poems written to fill the demand for a certain fashionable mode of writing aim at competence rather than brilliance. Many of the poems printed by Robbins are of this type and if they are elegant and competent they probably more than fulfil the poetic expectations of their composers.
The lyrics of more seriously intentioned poets may also be impersonal and repetitive in their use of formulae. Again, this has been partly explained by social conditions. John Stevens has referred to some of the customs of noble society and suggests that the composition of love lyrics along established lines was part of a range of activities connected with chivalrous behaviour and gentility. He sees the code of refined love as a welcome alternative to the rigorous teaching of the Church, which taught men to despise the pleasures of the world:

The especial appropriateness of the fiction of courtly love was that it showed how life in "middleearth," which orthodox theology taught men to despise, could be a beautiful and worshipful thing. It gave the urge to make beautiful objects, the artistic and creative urge, a legitimate field of expression outside the Church. The Bible did not tell a man whether he might pare his nails at table, kiss a lady when he met her, or write a love-song. It told him of his salvation, of his duties and responsibilities, of the spirit in which he should work and pray.  

He sets the etiquette of love among the pastimes of leisured society alongside hunting, Christmas games, May games, and the celebration of St. Valentine's Day. Like other games, love has its set pattern of behaviour, its own formulae of expression:

The impersonality of the courtly love lyric has, then, some partial explanations. The poems were written in a traditional "language of love," drawing on a huge stock of hallowed terms and phrases. This language, dependent as it was on social usages, never pretended to be self-sufficing; it was never intended to be more than words on a page; it was part of a social drama.

More specific than the general influences of social conditions is the impact of the linguistic changes which affected the period.
N.F. Blake sees the fifteenth century as a period of transition between the fourteenth century, when literature was written in a number of different dialects and in many places, and the sixteenth century, when it was associated with the courts at London and Edinburgh and language was standardized:

The differences between the two periods imply that the fifteenth century was an age of transition, and this transitional status may in turn have affected the quality of the poetry produced. Such differences can be grouped under three major heads: the growth of a standard language within the general linguistic condition of the time, the development of the Chaucer tradition and new attitudes towards style, and the relationship between alliterative poetry and the courtly style. 41

He explains that although the fifteenth century witnessed rapid linguistic change, with the completion of the Great Vowel Shift and the final fall of inflexions and the "continual drift southwards of northern forms," there was nevertheless an attempt to mould a standardized literary language based on the London dialect. Blake notes Caxton's difficulties in finding a standard form of English which would be widely understood. 42

Alongside the emergence of a standard literary language was the desire to achieve an elegant literary style in imitation of Chaucer:

The important points are that Chaucer was the "founder" for a new literary form and that he gave "ornate eloquence" to English. Thus the fifteenth century imitated him by using a French vocabulary, a courtly style with rhetorical embellishments, allegory, stanza, rhyme and possibly a decasyllabic metre. 43

A major problem which the poets cultivating this style encountered was
the "gap between the literary language and colloquial usage." 41

The pre-Chaucerian poets were writing in their own dialects, in which there was no such gap, and to this much of the directness in their style can be attributed. The later poets, consciously developing an artificial literary language, inevitably lost that quality and could not always avoid seeming impersonal. This difference in approach need not result in an inferior style; directness may be replaced by other qualities - gracefulness, elegance, careful regard to sound patterns - but, clearly, the change is a major one.

In contrast to the English poets, Blake sees the Scottish writers as being unhampered by radical linguistic change, although still being strongly influenced by Chaucer. The stability of their language allowed them to absorb outside influences without undergoing a basic change in their approach to style:

Chaucer's influence did not really extend to the language; it was limited to non-linguistic features like the use of allegory and stanza. He may have exercised some influence on the vocabulary, but Scottish writers had always drawn upon Latin sources for the enrichment of their vocabulary and they continued to do so in the fifteenth century. In other words, Scottish authors were acting in a typically medieval way: they were writing in their own dialect while absorbing influences from other dialects and from Latin. There is no break with their past or their own traditions; there was no conflict between their literary and their colloquial language. 45

What could be added to this analysis is reference to the range and variety of styles in Scottish poetry. There is a far greater awareness of the effectiveness of varying diction to suit subject matter in the poetry of the Scottish Chaucerians. Dunbar can
produce the highly ornate *Ane Ballat of Our Lady* (Mackenzie no. 82), the diction of which is not emulated by any of Chaucer's "fresch anamalit termes celicall." But he can also achieve *The Twa Harriet Wemen and the Wedo* (Mackenzie no. 47), in which the diction is varied with skill and wit.

A further consideration discussed by Blake is the change from alliterative to rhymed poetry. The Scottish poets make the transition by moving through a "stage of alliterative poetry with rhyme and stanza."

The southern poets, however, imitate Chaucer and try to make the change all at once:

Chaucer had managed it, so they had to follow him. But in the fifteenth century the instability of accent made a poetry which relied on stress without alliteration difficult, and the instability of many vowel sounds made rhyme a difficult medium. The irony of the situation is that the sound changes of the fifteenth century would hardly affect composition in alliteration, though they profoundly affected rhyme. The occurrence of *take* or *tak* of *eggs* or *eye* or of *[oi]* or *[i]* in a word like *great* will not affect the alliterative sequence at all, but it could upset the rhyme. To change from one system to the other at such a time is bound to have an unsettling effect upon the poet.

These developments in language and in the technique of poetry itself left the fifteenth century poets with a continuing tradition of themes but a break in the previously accepted standards of composition.

Blake feels that this may account not only for the fluctuating standards of the poetry but also for the reliance on rhetoric:

The variation in vowels, accent and inflexions may have led to a blurring of syntax and morphology. So the fifteenth century poet concentrated more on rhetoric. This provided him with the poetic
framework which syntax owing to the instability of the language did not. Rhetoric was so widely adopted in the fifteenth century that, although one can attribute some of its appeal to Chaucer's example, there may well be a more fundamental reason for its use, such as the contemporary condition of the language. 47

Although the imagery used in the love lyrics is basically the same in both pre-Chaucerian and fifteenth century poems, these social, linguistic, technical and stylistic developments had a profound influence, and because the two groups of poems are stylistically so different, critics have made little attempt to treat the love lyrics as a continuing tradition. It seems to me, however, that it is only by seeing one group in relation to the other that a clear view of what is happening to the imagery of love can be observed.

A further feature of the fifteenth century lyrics is their trend towards abstractness. This can have a variety of causes. It can be simply a feature of the vocabulary chosen, or a result of the tendency to almost summarise the concrete imagery of the earlier poets, reducing it to some essential quality. 48 It is also a characteristic of fifteenth century poetry generally, linked to developments in the use of allegory. Pamela Gradon comments on features of fourteenth century French allegory which have a bearing on fifteenth century English trends:

Yet the late Middle Ages sees the development of an allegorical mode which is didactic rather than truly allegorical. Thus, for example, if we look at Machaut's Fonteinne Amoureus we find that, effectively there is no allegory. . . . Many other such allegories are to be found in the works of Machaut, Froissart,
Descamps, poems, that is to say, in which there is no genuine allegorical action but only allegorical pageants, static scenes, such as the pictures round the fountain in *La Fonteinne Amoureuse*, which serve, on the one hand, to give pictorial effects and, on the other, to make didactic points.49

The same tendency to describe static scenes, to use personifications as allegorical characters without defining them through description or giving them a distinctive role, is seen in the narrative English love allegories of the fifteenth century. In the *Assembly of Ladies*, for example, these methods are discernible and the result is clearly a much more abstract poetry than that of Guillaume de Lorris. Pamela Gradon refers to J.L. Lowes' comments on these developments in Machaut's poetry:

His pages are thronged with capitalized personifications, but Guillaume de Lorris's caroling, dancing, gaily-robed abstractions, alive and concrete in all save their names, have given place to names alone, with which a clever dialectician conjures. 50

The influence of allegory is discussed more fully in Chapter III but at this point I wish to make one reservation about the extent to which this type of writing can be objectively judged abstract. If the enormous popularity of *Le Roman de la Rose* is accepted, then it is possible that the fifteenth century poets could have expected their audience to bring its existing knowledge of the descriptions and roles of the more popular personifications to bear on the figures the poets merely name. It is impossible to fully appreciate the literary taste of the period from such a distance, yet undoubtedly the poets would have been influenced by it. The literary climate of the
fifteenth century may have been such that a mere mention of a personified figure was sufficient to evoke a vivid visual response in the imagination of the audience. What appears static and abstract to modern readers may have seemed far more immediate to a contemporary audience.

The medieval love lyric is thus a diverse and difficult genre to handle and it is impossible within the scope of this study to deal with the problems exhaustively. Some attempt to supplement the existing critical work with a survey of the whole period, based on the one cohesive factor, the imagery, seems to me to be valuable, however.

4. The Major Critical Work to Date.

The major critical work on the English love lyrics can be divided into five main groups for the convenience of discussion, although, inevitably, some overlapping occurs:

1) Introductory or explanatory material in editions of lyrics and anthologies containing love lyrics.

2) Studies of the European context and background of the poems.

3) Work on the Harley lyrics and other pre-Chaucerian poems.

4) Studies of the secular lyric in general.

5) Analyses of individual poems.

The introductions to editions and anthologies containing love lyrics are usually of a general nature, providing background information.
rather than critical assessments. The first editor to include information at any length in an anthology was E.K. Chambers, who appended an essay "Some Aspects of Medieval Lyric" to the anthology Early English Lyrics: Amorous, Divine, Moral & Trivial, which he edited jointly with F. Sidgwick. Here, he tries to trace the origin of lyric poetry, suggesting that primitive folk-art preceded the more polished compositions of the minstrel and trouvère. He then summarises the French background to the English lyrics, making a division between the *chanson courtois* and the *chanson populaire* in its many forms. The *chanson populaire* he saw as a half-way stage between folk and art-poetry. Turning more specifically to English poetry, Chambers notes the late date at which lyrics are first found in English and comments on some of the similarities between the Harley lyrics and trouvère poetry. He dismisses the lyrics of the fifteenth century somewhat summarily and concludes with an outline of the themes and forms of religious verse. The essay provides a useful introduction to the subject, although the folk origin theory can be misleading, since the first English love lyrics are clearly the work of sophisticated, well-schooled poets.

The introduction of Carleton Brown to his anthology *English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century* again deals mainly with background information and descriptions of the manuscripts in which poems are found. He comments on the excellence of the Harley lyrics and suggests that four of the poems are of common authorship; his evidence is based on close similarities of phrasing. He does not become involved in critical analysis of the poems. Similarly, R.H. Robbins, in the
introduction to *Secular Lyrics of the XIV and XV Centuries*, supplies mainly factual information. He lists the types of manuscripts in which poems occur and explains the lines along which he has divided his anthology. Briefly he discusses metrical patterns in the poems and suggests that the theory of French influence, especially in relation to the later poems, has been overstated.

G.L. Brook is concerned only with the lyrics of MS. Harley 2253 and he describes the manuscript and gives general background in his edition of the poems. He classifies the lyrics and deals with the relationship of courtly love to the Harley lyrics, with the cautious reminder that "there will be individual differences of outlook, which will cause exceptions to any generalisations about the work of the troubadours or their northern French counterparts, the troubéros." He does include a brief critical section in which he praises the descriptive power of the poems, the competence with which ornaments of style are handled and the occasional touches of humour and pathos. He makes no attempt to arrive at a conclusive critical assessment, contenting himself with the general comment that "the faults of the lyrics are those of most Middle English literature: the excessive use of conventional phrases and the lack of a sense of balance and proportion."

More recently, two anthologies of medieval verse have appeared in which introductory essays occur. R.T. Davies, in *Medieval English Lyrics: A Critical Anthology*, deals with the themes and forms of the lyrics and is the first of the editors to link these to their wider literary backgrounds. However, as his selection comprises both
secular and religious lyrics from the whole medieval period, he is unable to deal with love lyrics in great detail. Theodore Silverstein's introduction to *Medieval English Lyrics* is concerned primarily with the difficulties of definition in the field of the medieval lyric, although each poem selected is prefaced by a brief résumé of its literary cadre. Theo Stemmler is the most recent editor of an anthology of lyrics, *Medieval English Love Lyrics*, but he does not include any critical comment.

Clearly, the work of editors has been focussed mainly on the production of suitable texts and their introductory essays are a starting-point for literary research rather than a for a broad or deep critical analysis.

An important field of research has been that which relates the English lyrics to their European background. H.J. Chaytor's *The Troubadours and England* is concerned specifically with the influence of troubadour poetry on the English lyric, although he accepts that this influence could have been spread through the poetry of the trouvères rather than by direct contact of English poets with Provençal literature. He draws useful parallels between the attitudes and imagery of troubadour poetry and the English love lyrics, mainly the Harley lyrics, but neglects to relate this imagery in turn to its wider European context. He also notes some stanza patterns in the Harley lyrics which correspond to troubadour technique. However, since his remarks are confined largely to the Harley lyrics and because he does not relate the parallels in imagery to the wider field of European
poetry, he tends to overstate the influence of the troubadours on English lyrics.

Two invaluable studies by Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love Lyric* and *The Medieval Lyric*, are not primarily concerned with the English poems but with the genre on a much wider scale. In the former, he demonstrates that the expression of love universally involves certain fundamental attitudes and types of imagery, and that these connect the medieval love lyric wherever it originates, so that the Latin love lyrics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries need not be artificially divided from vernacular poetry. In the course of this research, Dronke deals with some pre-Chaucerian English love lyrics, which he analyzes in detail, paying attention to the subtlety of their expression. In the second of these books, he divides the medieval lyric into types: religious, love, *alba*, dance-songs, "lyrics of realism." There is a useful reconstruction of the conditions in which love lyrics were probably composed and performed and there is more cogent analysis of pre-Chaucerian lyrics, including emphasis on the way the English poets impart a native pithiness and wit to the traditions they have absorbed from many directions.

These three books are major contributions to our general view of the medieval European love lyric but they do not aim at a detailed analysis of the English poems alone. Most work in this sphere has concentrated on the pre-Chaucerian lyrics, especially the Harley poems. Although T. Wright edited the secular lyrics of the manuscript
in 1842, it was K. Büddecke's edition of the English poems which prompted much of the early research on the lyrics. Following Büddecke's study of the language of the poems, A. Schlütter set out to give a fuller picture of the dialects of the lyrics, showing that some of the poems were of a more northerly dialect than either Wright or Büddecke had thought. He also undertook a metrical study of the poems.

A more general interest in the literary background of the Harley lyrics was shown in a dissertation by J.A. Gibson in 1914. He gave important evidence for dating the poems which has since been supported by Theo Steinhilber. Taking note of the historical poems in the manuscript, Gibson argues that the latest poem must have been written between 1338 and 1340. The love lyrics are seen as belonging to the later group of poems because of their alliterative metre, which would appear to associate them with the alliterative revival. Büddecke had assigned a terminus ad quem of 1310 to the manuscript. Gibson studies the background to the spring introductions of the lyrics, relating them to the similar openings of Goliardic poetry. Although such introductions are also a feature of Provencal and French lyric poetry, he sees the Goliards as the most direct forerunners of the Harley poets. The pastourelle opening is examined and the individual lyrics are described. There is also a section dealing with some of the more difficult cruces in the poems.

A fresh spate of interest in the early lyrics occurred between 1957 and 1962, when three American dissertations and a German one were produced. Patricia Abel, in Imagery in the Medieval Secular Lyric
in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, begins by contrasting the method of modern and medieval poets. The medieval poet did not seek novelty of expression but worked "almost always within a well-defined limit of definition." She concentrates on the early lyrics because after the fourteenth century "nothing remained but recapitulation, weakening and technical virtuosity."

She examines the lyrical passages in metrical romances such as *Kyng Alysaunder* which use seasons or dawn preludes and relates these to similar introductions in the lyrics. Her failure to investigate the complex literary background of such imagery, however, leads her to seriously misunderstand its functions. Her conclusion about imagery in the lyrics generally is that it is conventional, decorative, but seldom tightly integrated.

Both Sister M. Theresa Hogan and Theo Stemmler produced studies of the Harley lyrics in 1962, although Stemmler's research is confined to the love lyrics alone. Sister Hogan's work is mainly useful as an introductory study as its wider scope prevents detailed examination of literary backgrounds. She begins by describing the manuscript and its contents and discussing editions of the poems and the problems of dating. She notes the lack of continuity of the lyric from Old to Middle English and she briefly comments on the French background and other influences seen in the poems. She continues with an analysis of individual poems under sub-headings, paying attention to imagery, alliteration and structure of the poems. The main problem here is the superficiality of many of the critical assessments and the failure to note the intricacy and subtlety of the poems.
Stemmler's thesis, concentrating only on the love lyrics, is the major contribution to the literary study of the poems to date. He claims a threefold objective: to reconstruct the history of the English love lyric, to argue for the precision and finished form of the Harley poems, and to stress the importance of the native tradition as well as the Romance tradition in the lyrics. He begins by surveying previous research and continues by analysing the earliest fragments of English love lyric. There are no love lyrics in Old English but erotic motifs are present in some poems such as the Wife's Complaint. The early fragments of lyrics have details which are prescient of the love-complaints in the Harley manuscript and do not point to folk origins. The hints of alliteration in these early pieces show that the alliterative tradition was not entirely forgotten in the thirteenth century.

He discusses the dating of the poems, supporting Gibson's view of a later terminus ad quem for the manuscript than had previously been accepted. His next concern is with the rhetorical background of the poems and he analyses the tropes used in the poems which derive from the teaching of the rhetors. Alliteration in the poems is examined and seen as a structural reinforcement of meaning. This is followed by a metrical survey. Stemmler continues with detailed analyses of the poems in which attention is paid to the literary backgrounds of the ideas and this background information is used to elucidate the intentions of the poets.

Another American dissertation, Imagery in Middle English Secular
Lyrics: The Love Lyrics, by Jane Curry, sets out to "characterize the 'essence' of the English love lyrics, to demonstrate wherein they differ in spirit from their courtly contemporaries, and to determine why their peculiar grace subsided into the decorative superficialities and the aureate effusion of much of the later poetry." She tries to establish that the immediacy of the best of the Harley lyrics is a result of the use of visual and sensory imagery and that this immediacy is lost when the poets rely on more sophisticated imagery. As with Abel's work, there is no attempt to understand the literary backgrounds of the imagery, and, as a result, there is no genuine understanding of the way in which the Harley poets are using it. Since the author does not examine any of the fifteenth century lyrics, it is hard to see how she achieves the aims set forth in the introduction.

The most recent study of the Harley lyrics has been an article by A.T.E. Matonis, "An Investigation of Celtic Influences in Harley 2253." In this it is suggested that features such as assonance, internal rhyme, verbal repetition and alliteration are used in much the same way in these poems as in Celtic verse and that the influence of Celtic poetic techniques may have been underestimated and overblown by the tendency to see the poems in relation to the French tradition.

More general surveys of the secular lyrics have been undertaken by A.K. Moore, John Speirs and Raymond Oliver. Moore's The Secular Lyric in Middle English aims at a history and discussion of the lyric across the period. He distinguishes three stages in the development of the lyric: embryo, immature and perfected. The embryo lyric supposedly has its roots in folk art, while the next stage is linked
with artificial society and is characterized by its mixed methods and "uneven movement." Into this category he puts the Harley lyrics, and it was against this view that Stemmler's desire to show the poems as precise and finished was directed. Chaucer achieved the "perfected" lyric but the fifteenth century poems, with the exception of Dunbar's lyrics, are seen as the "Debris of the Transition." It was clearly Moore's approach which influenced much of the criticism of Abel and Curry. Many of his individual analyses are startlingly unperceptive and his general theory of the development of lyric poetry has been convincingly refuted by Stemmler.

Speirs' essay "Carols and other Songs and Lyrics" also sees popular elements behind the medieval secular lyric. Although his derivation of the carol form is probably accurate, his linking of this with some of the Harley poems is not convincing. His explications of individual lyrics are subjective and made without reference to literary background.

The most recent study of the secular lyrics is Oliver's Poems Without Names. He notes a high degree of "stylistic coherence" in the lyrics and links this to the nature of poems suitable for oral delivery. He distinguishes three functions for these poems: celebration, persuasion, or "social artifacts" in which reliance on certain traditions is accepted. As the scope of the study is wide, the love lyrics do not form a major part of work, and the author is not primarily concerned with imagery.

Some of the most useful literary criticism of medieval love lyrics
has come from articles on single poems and account will be taken of these when the specific poems are analysed. However, Leo Spitzer's article "Explication de Texte: Applied to Three Great Middle English Poems" should be mentioned as its method is a stimulus for all critics working in the field of medieval poetry. The detailed analysis backed by reference to relevant literary background has proved a method for genuinely exploring the possibilities of poetic expression in medieval poetry. For Stemmler, Spitzer's analysis of "Blow, northene wynd" (Brook no. 14) was over-elaborate, but despite the possible danger of over-interpretation, Spitzer's method seems to me to offer a means of appreciating the full scope of the poems.

I have attempted to outline the general pattern of research on the medieval English love lyric to date. With the exceptions of Moore and Oliver, who were not exclusively concerned with the love lyrics, no critic has attempted to examine the poems of the whole period. They have been content either to discuss the fifteenth century lyrics as a mere degeneration of earlier traditions or, as in the case of Stemmler, to see them as entirely separate from the early poems. N.F. Blake's article has provided a challenge to the first of these views and Pamela Graden's wide-ranging book Form and Style in Early English Literature has begun to show how much can be added to our understanding of fifteenth century style by comparison with earlier poetry.

Since the imagery is a unifying feature throughout the period, I have used this as the foundation of my study of the lyrics. By imagery is meant any type of double vision, of seeing an object or
idea in relation to another. As a generic term, therefore, it covers a whole range of rhetorical devices. It comprehends both metaphor and simile, in which a twofold presentation is obviously involved, and symbol, which is a kind of telescoped metaphor. All these figures of speech are a means of achieving "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time," as Ezra Pound defined imagery. However, it may also comprehend looser associations of ideas, since the whole setting of a poem may involve a symbolic significance. It is in this last sense that seasons introductions and natural settings qualify for inclusion under the term "imagery."

The imagery has been divided into three major categories: seasons introductions and natural settings; imagery used in the analysis of emotion; and that used in the description of the lady. Within each group, the literary backgrounds of imagery are examined, as these so often hold the key to our understanding of the operation of the imagery in the individual poems. In each chapter I have dealt with the early lyrics, examining the operation of imagery within them and trying to avoid duplicating the work of Sister Hogan and Stemmier. I have attempted to adopt modern methods of criticism by paying attention to the choice of words and their structural and syntactical relationships.

On turning to the later lyrics, I have tried to identify the influences which produced the major differences in style in those poems. From comparison with the earlier lyrics, it becomes clear
that the fifteenth century is a period of fluctuating literary achievement. At times the traditional imagery is revitalized in impressively subtle ways while at others it is merely repeated by poets who seem to have lost a clearcut poetic intention. Through all the vacillations of style and language, however, the same tendency to use the conventional imagery as material for variation and manipulation is seen.

In conclusion it is maintained that this continuing thread of imagery links the poetry throughout the period and that it is only by obtaining a clear view of the later lyrics in relation to the earlier poems that it is possible to understand the developments of the fifteenth century. Furthermore, this imagery has a continued validity for the renaissance period and links the inconsistent lyrics of the fifteenth century to the more settled, polished and re-invigorated love poetry of the early sixteenth century.

Chaucer's love lyrics have not been subjected to examination in this study, except in so far as they contribute to the general influence of his poetry on his successors. On account of the existing pattern of Chaucer scholarship, it was felt that his lyrics would be best seen in the light of the rest of his poetry.
Notes to Chapter I

1. The dating of the poems is discussed on p. 34 below.


So Stemmler's drawing attention to the fourteen secular lyrics of Harley and the sixteen in other MSS. prior to 1340 ... and his ensuing discussion give sufficient hints that the polished metrics and terminology of Harley 2253 follow in the wake of previous experimentation.


9. Ibid., 286:

Comparatively little of the Harley lyrics is given to the analysis of the lover's feelings: tears, sighs, sleeplessness, longing for death with protestations of unending but hopeless service, never form the sole substance of the lyrics as they do in so many of their French counterparts and English successors. Moreover, when they do occur, they are not related introspectively, but with an external and unexpected zest, being offered as a fitting tribute to the lady's beauty.

Contrary to Woolf, I would say that the lover's emotions are the first subject of the lyrics and that the description of the lady is offered as justification for the intensity of his feeling. This accords with the function of the descriptio given by Matthieu de Vernòme (see Chapter IV, pp. 197 - 198 below).


12. H.J. Chaytor has shown that some of these stanza forms derive from those of the troubadours, The Troubadours and England (Cambridge, 1923), pp. 99 - 105.

13. Cf. Dronke, The Medieval Lyric, p. 30:
   The songs performed for a clerical and a noble audience shade off almost imperceptibly into the songs performed by a popular one, and popular songs themselves continually absorb the influence of more sophisticated art - songs.
   
   The lyrical repertoire that was largely shared by all medieval Europe, and which we can trace back in its essential features and in many points of detail to not long after 1000, is thus the product of ancient and scarcely separable traditions of courtly, clerical and popular song.


15. Quoted by Woolf, ibid., p.l.n.: Puttenham defined a lyric poet as one who wrote 'songs or ballads of pleasure to be song with the voice, and to the harpe'...  

16. Quoted by Woolf, ibid., p.l.n.:  


18. Chaucer is the obvious exception to this rule, especially in his humorous lyrics.


21. Mackenzie no. 12, 1. 20: Bot ay as syphir set amang thame.

22. I have not become involved in the discussion on the authorship of these English versions of Charles of Orleans' French lyrics as the problem is outside the scope of this thesis. Steele and Day argue for the authorship of the English poems by the composer but Stemmler argues for an unknown translator of the poems,


27. Derek Brewer, "The Ideal of Feminine Beauty in Medieval Literature," *MLR*, 50 (1955), 262:

   We should not overlook here the famous poem 'Alysoun' . . . It is clear that Alysoun belongs to the same golden-haired, dark-eyebrowed, slender-waisted type. . . . Here four characteristics out of the five mentioned are entirely typical . . . Her black eye, however, . . . is an unusual touch. Eyes are usually 'great and grey enough,' as in the 'Fair Maid.'


36. Ibid., 102.


   I find the views of Bennett and Hammond unconvincing, though it is difficult to prove or disprove theories which use historical conditions to account for literary performance.

40. Ibid., p.215.
42. Ibid., 150.
43. Ibid., 151.
44. Ibid., 152.
45. Ibid., 153.
46. Ibid., 155 - 6.
47. Ibid., 156 - 7.
48 These developments are discussed in Chapter III, pp.145 - 6 below.
50. Ibid., p. 335.
51. Donald Davie has noted a similar disparity between twentieth century imagination and that of the eighteenth century. In *The Purity of Diction in English Verse* (London, 1952), p.40n., he comments on Oliver Goldsmith's elaboration of a few lines of poetry by James Thomson:

> We cannot deny that there is beauty in the picture visualized by Goldsmith, and though he contributes much that is unsaid by Thomson, he probably contributes nothing that was not in Thomson's intention. For Thomson could count on finding in his readers a ready allegorical imagination, such as seems lost to us today.

52. (London, 1926).
53. Brook p.9.
54. Brook p. 23.
and Literature (1941), pp. 81-95.


60. "Über die Sprache und Metrik der mittelenglischen weltlichen un


63. Diss. Missouri 1957.

64. Ibid., p. 2.

65. Ibid., p. 8.


68. Diss. Stanford 1962.

69. Ibid., p. 2.

70. *MP*, 70 (1972), 91 - 108.


72. (California, 1970).

73. *Archivum Linguisticum*, 3 (1951), 1 - 22.


76. See pp. 337-8; 358 - 9; 344 - 5.

SEASONS IMAGERY AND NATURAL SETTINGS

1. The Literary Backgrounds.

A. The Seasons Introduction

The seasons introduction, which is found consistently in English love lyrics throughout the period, has already been the subject of considerable research and discussion in relation to English, Provençal and both medieval and classical Latin poetry. However, its complexity and importance as a form of imagery make it necessary to separate the various strands which form its literary background, before any discussion of its role in the English love lyric can begin and any assessment of its development made.

The immediate background of the English lyric genre lies, on the one hand, in the Goliardic poems and, on the other, in the songs of the troubadours and their northern counterparts, the trouvères, in France. Both Goliards and troubadours employ seasons introductions in a number of ways, so that they have no single symbolism, but their link with poems where the main subject is love is especially prominent with both, although there are differences in the actual presentation of the description.

For the troubadours, description of a spring scene as an introduction to a love lyric tends to be brief and selective. The poets choose details which characterize the change of seasons and the effect that change has on the natural world. The details emphasized are the ending of harsh weather, the renewal of growth in trees and plants, the song of the birds and the mating of animals. Generally there is no attempt to evoke a vivid visual impression of a specific scene which the poet is remembering; the interest is in the effect of spring rather than the scene itself.
After the introduction there is a sudden change of perspective from the world of nature in general to the world of man; a shift which serves a double purpose. Simultaneously it places man in the context of the whole created world, which is governed by certain natural laws, and it invites comparison of man with that world. Giraut de Borneil uses such an introduction to preface his own joy in love:

\[
\text{Can lo glatz e} . \text{l frechs e la neus} \\
\text{S'en vai, e torna la chalors,} \\
\text{E reverdiz lo pascors,} \\
\text{Et auch la voltas dels auzeus,} \\
\text{M'es aitan beus} \\
\text{Lo dolz tems a l'issen de martz} \\
\text{Que plus sui salhens que leupartz,} \\
\text{E vils non es chabrols ni cers.} \tag{3}
\]

The elements in the description are reduced to what is required to capture the essence of spring; the warmth returns, everywhere is green, the birds sing. The poet's statement of his own joy extends the harmony of the natural world to his private emotions. Because of his happiness in love, he can share the well-being brought by the onset of spring.

Yet this easy transition from macrocosmic to microcosmic harmony is not the only function of spring introductions in the love lyrics of the troubadours. Jaufre Rudel, for example, describes the sorrow of a lover who is parted from his mistress, but still gives a spring introduction:

\[
\text{Lanquan li jorn son lonc, en may,} \\
\text{M'es belhs dous chans d'auzelhs de lonh;} \\
\text{E quan ni suy partitz de lay,} \\
\text{Remembra. m d'un'amor de lonh;} \\
\text{Vau de talan embroncx e alis,} \\
\text{Si que chans ni flors d'albespis} \\
\text{No.m valon plus qu'iversns gelatz.} \tag{4}
\]

Again, the detail is minimal, with the spring association in fact being only one part of the significance held by the reference to the song of birds from afar. As a link with the rest of the poem, the fact of their coming from afar is as important as their connexion with spring. \tag{5} Unlike
the previous example, in this lyric there is a sudden contrast of mood; since the poet does not participate in the joy around him, spring holds no more comfort for him than winter. He is at variance with nature's harmony.

The Goliardic poets also make use of these two attitudes to spring, although the style of their descriptions is different. They tend to take a greater interest in the description for its own sake; it is not so condensed as that of the troubadours. Nevertheless, the details are still stylized and rhetorical rather than visually evocative of a specific scene. The famous Cambridge song "Levis eisurgit Zephyrus" is a useful example. Three stanzas of description occur before a personal statement is made. The introduction is more ornate in its use of figures of speech; the earth is personified, "iam terra sinus aperit;" similarly spring, "Ver purpuratum exiit." Apart from stylistic differences, however, the description is being used in the same way as in the Jaufré Rudel poem. It gives way to a mood of sorrow, what the lady persona sees with her eyes and hears with her ears is not matched by the emotions in her heart:

Quod oculis dum video
et auribus dum audio,
heu, pro tantis gaudiis
tantis inflor suspiris.

From the Carmina Burana, we see the fusion of man's joy with that in nature which was also seen in Giraut de Borneil's poem:

Nemus revirescit,
frondent frutices,
hiems seva cessit:
leti iuvenes,
congaudete floribus,
amor vos allicit iam virginibus.

Clearly, the extensive use of the spring introduction in English love lyrics is part of a widespread tradition. Far from being merely an introductory device, it is the hub of ideas vital to the view
of the lover given in medieval poetry. The often sparse, condensed
details are distilled from a complex cumulative literary and
philosophical background.

The most important contribution made to tracing the sources and
development of these ideas has been made by Rosamond Tuve. The
linking of love and springtime is found in classical literature in
connexion with the role of Venus. Tuve has cited the opening passage
of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* in praise of Venus to illustrate the
point:

```
nam simul ac species patefactast verna diei
et reserata viget genitabilis aura favoni,
seriae primum volucre te, diva, tumque
significat initum perculsae corda tua vi.
inde ferae pecudes persultant pabula laeta
et rapidos tranant amnis; ita capta lepore
te sequitur cupide quo quamque inducere pergis.
denique per maris ac montis fluviosque rapacis
frondiferasque domos avium camposque virentis
omnibus incutiens blandum per pectora amorem
efficis ut cupide generatim saecla propagat.
```

(11.10-20),

It is through Venus' power that all living things receive their desire
to propagate; the fertility of the season is seen as something with a
cause outside of the creatures and growing things themselves. The
fulfilment of love in spring results in the harmony of nature at that
time.

Although the Lucretian passage gives the most detailed description
of the harmony brought by Venus through her instigation of love in
spring, it does not in itself form a direct source for the medieval
poets, as this work was not known until the fifteenth century. However,
while this passage must be seen as a submerged link in the tradition
which the medieval poets followed, a similar, if more condensed, outline
of the same ideas would have been available to them from Ovid's *Fasti*:
A later connexion of Venus and the harmony of spring occurs in the *Pervigilium Veneris*:

ipsa gemmis purpurantem pingit annum floridis;
ipsa turgentes papillas de favoni spiritu
urget in nodos tepentes; ipsa roris lucidi,
noctis aura quem relinquit spargit umentes aquas.

(Stanza IV)

The details selected to characterize spring may vary, but an important reference in the Lucretian passage and the *Pervigilium Veneris* is to the west wind. This is often mentioned in medieval lyrics as favourable to love and finally symbolizes, alone, the whole equation of spring and love in the Tudor song "Westron winde, when will thou blow". The *Pervigilium Veneris* also stands as a forerunner to the use of the spring introduction as a contrast to the sorrowing mood of lovers. The abrupt change of atmosphere after the long description of frenzied joy brings the whole poem into focus. The result of the combination of the lavish description of rejoicing and the stark compression of the lover's grief is a powerful pathos. The isolation of the sorrowing lover amid such joy heightens his distress.

In these passages lies the classical, pagan foundation of the medieval use of spring description to introduce love poetry. Lucretius' description gives a detailed insight into the way love and spring are linked. The whole of nature, of which man is a part, shares the awakening of love in spring as an instinctive reaction to the power of Venus. The fulfilment of this love and the ensuing regeneration, results in harmony and joy.
For man, spring is the time when he too is stirred by the same instincts as creatures, plants and trees. If his love is fulfilled, he can share nature's joy. If it is unfulfilled, his resulting sorrow is exacerbated by his sense of going against nature.

J.J. Wilhelm in his discussion of spring introductions does not take account of this need for man to feel in harmony with nature. Instead, he claims that spring introductions have an association with grief which stems from classical Latin literature. The starting point for this research was Wilhelm's own perplexity at the abrupt change of mood in the Jaufré Rudel poem already quoted. Noting the similar change of atmosphere in the Pervigilium Veneris, he interprets it here as a shift from illusion to reality. He sees the festivity of the poem as an ideal dream world from which the poet is excluded:

He re-creates a vision of universal harmony that is so realistic that he is lured into its fiction. But once inside his portrait, he realizes that he is an outsider: that art is not life, that idealism is not reality, that when the play or visual scene dissolves, the rest is silence.

From this point, Wilhelm sets out to prove the connexion between spring and sorrow in classical Latin literature.

Unfortunately, his argument has two flaws. He fails to explore the nature of man's relationship with spring and he draws his examples from poems which are not about love. He thus confuses the many functions of the seasons introductions; there is no reason why the significance of spring should be the same in, say, a moral poem as in a love lyric.

He refers, for example, to Ovid's Tristia. However, the description of spring in Book III, xiii is a nostalgic dream while the poet is in exile. Nothing is more natural for him to remember his own country in the midst of spring while he is suffering far away in the grip of winter.
The nostalgia here throws no light on the use of spring description in poems about love.

Again, with Horace, Wilhelm notes the connexion between sorrow and spring in the Odes. Here, however, the cycle of the seasons becomes an analogy for the transitoriness of human life. In Book I, Ode IV, for example, a spring description gives way to a stark picture of death visiting both cottage and palace. In one sense this poem does share something with the love lyric, but not in the way Wilhelm suggests. Horace's picture, with its reference to Venus, does imply a link between love and spring:

iam Cytherea choros ducit Venus imminente luna,
  iunctaeque Nymphis Gratiae decentes.

Yet Horace by no means denies the intrinsic joy of that time for man; he describes the festive spirit:

nunc decet aut viridi nitidum caput impedire myrto
  aut flore, terrae quem ferunt solutae.

Instead, he reminds us that such pleasure is short-lived; he warns, "O beate Sestia vitae summa brevis spera nos vetat incohare longam". This is a different branch of the significance of the spring description from that of the spring introduction to love lyrics. Horace, like another of the poets cited by Wilhelm, Ausonius, stresses the ephemeral nature of joy. The message is rather to "gather rosebuds" than to dwell on grief.

The antecedents of the seasons introduction in medieval love lyrics lie at least partially in the classical view of harmony and fertility in springtime into which man naturally fits, and this is most clearly stated in Lucretius' De Rerum Natura, as Tuve has shown. It is this view which gives the key to the significance of the spring descriptions in the Pervigilium Veneris and the medieval love lyrics. The path taken by Wilhelm, on the other hand, leads to a maze of unrelated usages of this imagery.
Tuve has also shown that the harmonizing, life-bringing qualities attributed to the pagan goddess Venus in classical literature are later transferred to figures more in keeping with medieval thought, as this view of springtime becomes absorbed into the Christian ethos. In the *De Planctu Naturae* of Alanus de Insulis, for example, Natura herself has Venus' role of bringing harmony to the created world, as she does in the *Architrenius* of Jean de Hauteville. The harmonizing role of Venus from classical literature merges with the Neo-Platonist interpretation of the role of Natura in these works.

At this point, it is necessary to add to the groundwork done by Tuve. Although her outline of the tradition behind medieval spring introductions is of great importance, it does not attempt to explain the correlation of spring with the melancholy mood of a sorrowful poet. Commenting on the occurrence of such combinations in troubadour poetry, she simply states:

The season may appear as a contrast to the waning courage of her lover or as a joyful parallel to his quickening spirits, or as a mere setting for his amorous adventure, or as a convention by which he may insist on the powerfulness of all save love.

In fact, works like the *De Planctu Naturae* give a further insight into why the poets of the medieval period found the contrast between joyful nature and sorrowful man particularly appropriate. Alanus shows the rejoicing of the created world at the coming of Natura. Man alone spoils the picture of harmony and this is the cause of Natura's complaint. Alanus demonstrates this waywardness of man through the symbolic tearing of Natura's garment, on which the created world is depicted, in the place where man is represented, thus indicating man's post-fall state. Natura in this work stands for harmonious creativity, she is *natura naturae*, intrinsically a force for good and her message is one of moderation.
Venus now has the more limited role of representing sexual love but Alanus shows that this can be of two kinds. By her lawful union with Hymen, Venus stands for moderate, fertile, sexual love but in her adulterous relationship with Antigamus she symbolizes excessive and unnatural sexual indulgence, which is a blemish on Natura's domain.20

In the context of the love lyric, of course, the message of moderation is not relevant. When the poets contrast the joy of spring with the sorrowful lover, they are drawing on the concept of man's conflict with nature but substituting the fulfilment of love for the triumph of reason over the senses, as the pathway back to harmony. In this way the poets draw on associations which will help the audience understand the extent of the lover's suffering but use them in a way distinct from that of didactic religious literature.

Indeed, in religious poetry, seasons imagery has its own uses. The early Christian poets used spring description frequently because its suggestion of re-birth and awakening was clearly appropriate to poems about Christ's resurrection. Sedulius Scottus has a spring introduction to his Carmen Paschale:

Surrexit Christus sol verus vespere noctis,
surgit et hinc domini mystica messis agri.
nunc vaga puniceis apium plebs lacta labore
floribus instrepitans pobilite mella legit.
nunc variae volucres permulcent aethera cantu,
temperat et pernox nunc philomela melos. 21

For Paulinus of Nola, the symbolism is the more general one of the spiritual awakening he feels in his poem for St. Felix Day.22 In patristic writings, seasons imagery is expounded symbolically. For St. Ambrose, the yearly rebirth of nature contained the message of resurrection:

Why should I speak of the fruits of the earth?
Do they not seem to die when they fall, to rise again when they grow green once more?
That which is sown rises again, that which is
dead rises again, and they are formed once more
into the same classes and kinds as before.
The earth first gave back these fruits,
in these first our nature first found the pattern of
resurrection.25

It is important to recognise this early alliance of spring
symbolism for a specifically Christian message, as many scholars have
attributed its use in medieval religious verse solely to borrowing
from the tradition of secular love poetry.24 It is true that religious
lyrics employing the spring introduction sometimes combine it with the
vocabulary of secular love in order to turn the intensity of that
language to a new purpose,25 but the spring details alone have always
been subject to a number of interpretations, among which various
religious significances have their own tradition. Indeed the Bible
provides its own source of spring description which in fact strengthens
both the religious and erotic use of the topos. In the Canticum
Canticorum, the spring detail in the biblical love-poem reinforces the
connexion between love and spring on a literal level, while on an
allegorical level it adds relevance to the symbolic significance of
spring for religious purposes:

\[
\text{Iam enim hiems transiit, imber abit, et}
\]
\[
\text{recessit.}
\]
\[
\text{Flores apparuenter in terra nostra,}
\]
\[
\text{tempus passionis advenit: vox turturis}
\]
\[
\text{audita est in terra nostra.}
\]
\[(II, 11-12)\]

An early use of seasons symbolism linking love and spring occurs
in the twelfth century debate The Owl and the Nightingale, where the
nightingale represents the connexion of love and springtime:

The Nightingale sees the Owl as full of the miseries
of winter, while she herself is part of the joys of
summer... and is answered by the Owl's accusation
that the Nightingale is full of the lechery of summer
in song and deed ... and when she has glutted her lust
her boldness and songs are gone. 26
Here the thorough integration of the imagery into the main argument indicates the ripeness of that imagery. The nightingale epitomises all those features of spring relevant to the love lyric, but the owl's accusations extend the symbolism to comprehend the idea of the transience of joy which is another strand of seasons imagery that becomes more prominent in later lyrics.

Apart from the lyric poetry of the thirteenth century, comparable seasons descriptions and references occur in romances but in this genre they are frequently used as a means of moving the narrative along. This is to be seen in King Horn, where a brief seasons reference accompanied by the chanson d'aventure opening often found in lyrics is no more than a technical device:

Hit was von a someres day,  
Als ihc vou telle may,  
Murri p e gode king  
Rod on his pleing  
(ll. 31-34).

In religious lyrics, however, the symbolism of spring is usually an integral part of the poem's meaning and the poets draw upon both the religious and the erotic associations of the season. Of the three religious lyrics using this imagery printed by Carleton Brown, which do not belong to Ms. Harley 2253, one is entirely independent of the secular tradition, one represents a dual dependence on both traditions, and the third deliberately overlays spring details with the emotional language of the secular love lyric.

In "Somer is come & winter gon" (C.B. XIII, No. 54) the seasons description is quite independent of connotations from the secular lyric. There is no emphasis on fertility in the details given, as would be the case in a poem exploiting the erotic associations of spring description. At first sight, it is simply a picture of joy which contrasts with the poet's sorrow:
Somer is comen & winter gon,
his day biginnip to longe,
& pis fowles anerichon
Ioye hem wit songe.

So strong kare me bint,
al wit Ioye pat is funde
in londe,

The inability of the persona to achieve harmony with nature is there, but without sexual overtones. The true significance of the spring introduction is revealed in the final stanza which deals with Christ's resurrection and with man's. The implication is that man's life on earth is his winter, regardless of physical reality, and that his spring will be his resurrection. The man who dies without faith, however, will never be released from the care the poet has obliquely associated with winter:

he ros him ene pe bridde day,
& sette him on is trone;
he wule come a domes-day,
to dem us enerich one.
grone he may and & wepen ay,
be man pat deiet wit-oute lay alone
grante ous, crist,
wit pin uprist &
to gone.

This symbolism is in accordance with that used by the early Christian poets.

The spring introduction of "Nu pis fules singet hand maket hure blisse" (O.B. XIII, No. 31) is linked clearly with the subject of the song, Mary, by the idea of fertility. The poet elicits the common factors; the birds "maket hure blisse", the grass "up ringet" and Mary is chosen as the mother of Christ. By the one word "makeles", however, he illustrates the difference between the natural world and Mary. While this introduction can be clearly related to the secular love song tradition, it owes no great debt to it. The poet is moulding the conventional imagery in his own way. There is no question of confusing
the "makeles" maiden with the ideal lady of the secular love lyric because her identity is revealed in the next line. As in the fifteenth century poem using the same phrase, the foremost meaning of "makeles" here is "without a mate". It is the comparison of Mary the Virgin with the lesser creatures whose fertility is a result of sexual union that is stressed. The "MV yh/blosta sprynge" (O.B. XIII, No. 63) is in fact another version of a poem found in MS. Harley 2253 (Book no. 18). A comparison of the introductions of both versions is particularly interesting. It is clear that in both poems the intention is to induce audience expectation of a love lyric. This is shown not so much by the opening couplet of spring description, since this is fairly neutral and would be quite appropriate to either a religious or a secular love poem, but through its combination with the language of erotic love. In the Harley version, however, this tendency is more prominent. In B.M. MS. Royal 2, the poem refers simply to a "swete longinge" whereas MS. Harley 2253 has "a suete love-longynge". In the Royal MS. the longing is described simply as having sprung up in the heart:

a swete longinge
myn herte purephut sprung,

while in the Harley version, the heart is pierced by love-longing:

a suete love-longynge
my herte pourhout stong.

The piercing of the heart is far more in keeping with the imagery of erotic literature, and these two alterations make for a much more pronounced reliance on the secular tradition. In both versions, it is not until the second stanza that we learn the new love is in fact Christ. Here there is a very clear adaptation of the secular implications of spring-time for a religious purpose, although this is less a result of
the spring details themselves than of their conjunction with the language and imagery of secular love.

B. Natural Settings

The love lyrics, especially those with a narrative element, often involve a natural setting which, like the seasons introduction, has an important contribution to make to the thought of the poem. The natural settings used by the poets can be divided into three main groups. One is the countryside of the French *pastourelle* or, more generally, the *chanson d'aventure*. The next is the setting of wild nature, often a forest, which may be placed in opposition to the third setting, that of the ideal landscape or *locus amoenus*.

The *chanson d'aventure* is a form comprehending many specific genres which are usually seen as originating in Provence. The common factor is that in all of these the poet or persona rides or walks out alone into the countryside and experiences a number of possible chance encounters. One of the most popular of the French forms is the *pastourelle*, which provides a basic pattern of which the other types are variants.

The *pastourelle* has a rustic setting which is the backdrop for a narrative account of a casual amorous adventure between a knight and a peasant girl. A Jeanroy believed that this genre began with the troubadours in Provence, later achieving greater popularity in northern France. He describes the basic pattern in the following way: A knight, riding out into the countryside, encounters a peasant girl whose beauty attracts him. He dismounts and offers her his love with suitable protestations of the depth of his emotion. The girl refuses him in a number of possible ways. She may not be able to believe in a love so hastily conceived or she may draw attention to her own unworthiness because of the inferiority of her position, or simplicity of her dress. Sometimes,
she warns that her father and brothers or lover are working nearby. The knight then makes her extravagant promises to persuade her to comply with his wishes. He may succeed by offering her rich clothes or by complaining that, without her love, he will die. If she continues to refuse, he may take her by force, although the girl often capitulates despite her protests.

In Jeanroy's view, the natural setting of the pastourelle was designed to contrast in its simplicity and naïveté with sophisticated courtly society. He sees this type of poem as representing a boastful wish-fulfilment of aristocrats, in which they can relate their amorous fantasies without fear of implicating the ladies of court society, with whom they need to form more delicate relationships. The rural setting represents the opposite in every respect of the rigid court society and is almost compulsory for these adventures, being beyond the boundaries of normal rules of conduct. It is also quite different in scope from the relevance of the seasons introduction, which proposes a vital relationship between man and the macrocosm. Of course, a pastourelle may involve a seasons introduction as well, but this is related to the overall medieval attitude to the theme of love, while the setting has the function of defining the type of love to be experienced. The popularity of this genre, particularly with the trouvères, means that there are many variations of the opening device and description of the setting; however, the first stanza of this anonymous lyric is typical:

En ma forest entrai l'autrier
pour moi deduire et solacier,
si truis pastore gente;
aignias gardoit en un vergier desouz l'onbre d'une ente.

In English, the French genres are often considerably modified, so that a chanson d'aventure framework of the persona riding out into the countryside may be used simply as an opening device, without being related
to the *pastourelle* or its derivatives. Such is the case with the passage cited from *King Horn*, in which the "riding out" formula is simply a means of moving the narrative along. Even where this opening is used in conjunction with the specified rural setting the significance of the surroundings is not static. Such openings may, for example, be adapted for religious lyrics:

> By a forest syde walking, as I went
> Disport to take In o mornynge,
> A place I fond, schaded with bowes ybent,
> Iset a-boute with flowrs so swete smellyng
> I leydeme down vpon that grene,
> And kast myn ey^e^en me aboute:
> I fond there breddes with fedres schene,
> Many on sitting vpon a rowte.\\footnote{38}

The poem develops into a penitential lyric in which a bird tells the poet of the loss of his four feathers which symbolize youth, beauty, strength and riches. Here the *chanson d'aventure* opening is followed by a description of an ideal landscape with overtones of a spring description, so that the poet is drawing from a variety of symbolic imagery from the secular tradition and adapting it to his religious lyric.

One of the most interesting natural settings used in the love lyric is that of wild, desolate nature, which is often represented by a forest. This normally opposes the ideal landscape or *locus amoenus*, which is usually associated with love. A recent study of this setting occurs in Paul Piehler's *The Visionary Landscape*.\footnote{39} Piehler considers that the wilderness represents all those forces which man, through his organisation, tries to bring into order and submission. Successful control of these forces is manifested in the ordered life of cities and communities and there is a perpetual conflict between ordered society and the potentially hostile state of disorder outside. A corresponding psychological distinction can be made between the rational side of man's nature and the emotional and instinctive forces which he is continually trying to tame.
He shows that this dual picture crops up repeatedly in European medieval literature. He points, for example, to the founding of Heorot in Beowulf and its polarity with the hostile outer landscape inhabited by monsters. The roots of this contrasting view lie in classical philosophy and poetry. Aristotle uses the word hyle, literally forest, to describe chaos before it was resolved by Form. The forest thus becomes a symbol of the unbridled instincts in man and Virgil uses it in this way in the Aeneid (VI, 131), referring to the wood in which the Golden Bough is hidden: "silvas, tenebras, et lustra in quibus feritas et libido dominantur".

Mention might also be made of the biblical wilderness in which Christ is subjected to temptation, which seems to involve the same conflict of reason and emotion or instinct. It is interesting that Milton's description of that wilderness in Paradise Regained in fact conforms to the picture of the forest:

    nor slept the winds
    Within thir stony caves, but rush’d abroad
    From the four hinges of the world, and fell
    On the vert wilderness, whose tallest Pines,
    Though rooted deep as high, and sturdiest Oaks
    Bowed their Stiff necks,loaden with stormy blasts.
    (Book IV. 11.413 - 416)

Curtius' exploration of the forest setting is less far-reaching than Piehler's, but he points to some of the most important instances of it in medieval romances:

But with the rise of the courtly romance in verse, the primitive landscape requirements of the heroic epic are far exceeded. The new genre is a creation of France and first appears about 1150. One of its principal motifs is the wild forest - "una selva selvaggia ed aspra e forte," as Dante will later put it. Percival grows up in the forest. Arthur's knights often pass through wild forests on their journeys. But in the midst of the wilderness there is frequently a locus amoenus in the form of a verger.
It is probably from these early French romances that the English poets derived their use of the forest setting. In Marie de France's *Chevrefoil*, for example, we see the connexion between the forest setting and the unhappy lover when Tristram is banished because of his love for the queen:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{En la forest tut seul se mist,} \\
\text{Ne voleit pas que hum le veist} \\
\text{En la vespre s'en esseitt,} \\
\text{Quant tens de herberger esteit.}
\end{align*}
\]

In English romances the wilderness or forest setting is also popular and it fits into the prevailing view of the lover. He is seen as existing in a perpetual state of balance between two psychological and physical extremes; the bliss in which he has his health, mental control and general happiness because of the acquiescence of the lady and his complete physical and mental destruction if his suit is unsuccessful. The whole terminology for describing this dual picture is found in the many definitions of love which capture its antithetical nature through the use of oxymoron. Hence, the wilderness represents the destructive side of love and is often opposed to the *locus amoenus* which represents the lover's highest wish-fulfilment. This is seen in *Sir Orfeo*, where the wilderness is placed in contrast to the garden in which Orfeo's wife used to sit before she was taken from him. After her loss, Orfeo seeks the wilderness which symbolizes his mental state:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Neuer eft y nil no woman se} \\
\text{In-to wilderness ichil te,} \\
\text{& live per euermore} \\
\text{Wip wilde bestes in holtes hore.}
\end{align*}
\]

Similarly, both Sir Tristram and Sir Launcelot are shown by Malory to take to the woods in fits of love-madness. The Goliard poets also use the setting for unsuccessful lovers. One of the Cambridge songs describes a lover hiding in the woods away from the society of man:
The opposite side of this picture is the ideal landscape which is the almost ubiquitous setting for love in narrative poetry. As far as the lyric is concerned, the **locus amoenus** does not occur frequently, as most lyrics do not involve lengthy circumstantial descriptions. However, where it is found, in the later poems, it clearly shares the symbolic function it has in narrative verse.

Curtius has shown the classical derivation of the **locus amoenus** by pointing to Homer and the pastoral poetry of Virgil. In Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* descriptions like that of the Gardens of Alcinous are the models for many of the medieval pictures:

> Here fertility is made an element of the ideal landscape. The most elaborate variant is afforded by the Gardens of Alcinous (Od; VII, 112). Here there are fruits of the most various kinds: pomegranates, apples, figs, pears, olives, grapes. The trees bear all through the year, for it is always spring and the west wind always blows - the island of the Phaecians is indeed a land of faery. Two springs water the garden. **46**

However, the classical derivation of the **locus amoenus** is only one side of the medieval heritage. Equally important are the biblical gardens of Eden and the Canticum Canticorum. The uses of the various types of ideal landscape are by no means clearcut; the grove, the valley, the garden and the enclosed garden each have their own possible significances yet may also overlap. H.R. Patch has shown the diversity of backgrounds which contribute to the medieval uses of such settings and their complicated interaction in poetry:

> When one considers the interrelations of medieval stories and their details, one will realize that elements were shuffled together like cards. And thus a story with Celtic proper names might represent an originally Oriental tale with a few added details from the German. **47**
Attempts to simplify the interpretation of ideal settings have been largely unsatisfactory. Pieher comments on D.W. Robertson's use of the exegetical tradition as a means of understanding them:

It has been suggested that Patristic and medieval Biblical exegesis provides a sure key to the interpretation of the appearance of the 
locus amoenus
in any medieval literary text. D.W. Robertson's paper "The Doctrine of Charity in Medieval Literary Gardens" makes the important point that underlying the contemporary interpretations of such gardens would be an awareness of the contrasted gardens of charity and cupidity that frequently appear in the scriptural commentary of the period. Robertson's investigations of the exegetical tradition, though undeniably a major contribution to medieval scholarship, involve the assumption that writers of secular poetry wished to express precisely the same point of view as the theologians, that secular literature was no more than ecclesiastical literature in disguise. In fact if this method of interpretation were to be found plausible, it would hardly be necessary to interpret any medieval garden in any other terms than those of Charity and Cupidity.

That opposing symbolism in the use of garden settings exists is undoubtedly true but Robertson makes too dogmatic his analysis of their significance in secular poetry. His interpretation of Chrétien de Troyes' Cligés, for example, is not really borne out by the outcome of the story. He describes the significance of Cligés' and Fénice's enclosed garden:

Chrétien's purpose... was to show the foolishness of idolatrous cupidity in an entertaining way that his audience would understand. Implicitly he wished to promote the opposite of cupidity, Charity.

Since the poet allows the lovers to resolve their problems and live happily as man and wife, however, it seems unlikely that the enclosed garden of their illicit love has this function. It is certainly relevant to their illicit sexual liaison, but it is illusory not through the distinction between cupidity and charity but because the lovers are deceiving themselves into believing that they can escape their problems by shutting them out of their ideal world. Only when the difficulties of
real life have been overcome can they achieve a secure and genuine happiness.

Instead of limiting the possibilities of the symbolism of the *locus amoenus* for the medieval poets, it seems more reasonable to allow the context to indicate the interpretation. That an ideal landscape should signify successful love, albeit of a sexual nature, is not an unreasonable hypothesis, and is seen, for example, in *Floriz* and *Blauncheflour* as the setting from which the "Amyral" chooses his brides:

```
Then shul men bringe doun of Pe Toure
Al pe Maidens of grete honour,
And bringe hem into an Orchard,
Pe feiries of al myderd:
eryn is mony fowles song;
Men myt leve eryn ful longe:
About Pe Orchard is a walke,
pe fowlestone is Cristalle,
And a welle sprynge erynne;
Men myt leue a welle mult peys,
pe stremes com froo Paradys.
```

As a setting for the love lyric, however, it does not appear until the fifteenth century, after Chaucer, in particular, had placed added emphasis on *Le Roman de la Rose* as the definitive picture of love.

2. The Pre-Chaucerian Lyrics.

Spring introductions are a prominent feature of the early love lyrics. The terse, condensed form of "Foweles in pe frith" (C.B. XIII, No. 8) suggests the confidence with which the poet is using the familiar imagery; he feels no need to expand or explain his ideas:

```
Foweles in pe frith,
pe fisses in pe flod,
And i mon waxe wod.
Mulch sorw I walke with
For beste of bon and blod.
```

However, critics who have commented on this important poem have been unable to agree as to its quality or meaning. A.K. Moore judges the use of the spring introduction unfavourably:
Hopelessly stereotyped by the thirteenth century, the nature preludes came to serve a decorative use and often were not organically related to the main issues of the poetry which they introduced. Thus, the nature setting of a brief song of MS. Douce 139 is insufficiently articulated with the poet's love-longing.

Unfortunately Moore has applied his general comment to a specific example which in reality does not illustrate his point. The stereotyping of a convention can be the result only of poets mechanically repeating it for its own sake. In none of the religious poems of the thirteenth century examined, for example, was this the case; the poets showed a genuine awareness of the need to adapt the device for their own specific purposes.

In this lyric, the relationship of the introduction to the rest of the poem is clear if it is seen in the light of literary and philosophical background already outlined. Indeed, without the implicit comparison with nature, the poet's later statement of his own suffering would be meaningless. It is because he is out of key with nature that his sorrow is so keenly felt.

If the word "mon" here is understood as meaning "man" in apposition to "I", as has been suggested, then the comparison between the lover and his environment becomes quite explicit.

Another critic has interpreted the poem along religious lines. The poet's sorrow is seen as a result of his sudden awareness of his own sin, which prevents him from achieving the innocent joy of nature. "Pecat of bon & blod" refers to Christ whose sacrifice makes the poet doubly sorrowful at his own unworthiness. Such an interpretation would certainly accord with the view of man given by Alanus and Boethius. However, linguistic analysis of the lyric shows this interpretation to be unlikely. The phrase "waxe wod" is chosen by the poet for its primary associations, which are with the common medieval idea of the madness of erotic love. Since the phrase is not linked with religious fervour, it does not point to a religious intention on the part of the poet. Similarly, the phrase "Beste of bon & blod"
is an alliterative cliche used frequently to describe the ideal lady of love poetry, so that once more the most obvious association is with erotic love. Nowhere in the poem is there an indication that the poet is investing these phrases with a religious significance.

The most perceptive explication of the lyric is Peter Dronke's:

It begins with the contrast characteristic of the stylised, often highly rhetorical, nature-prelude common in love-lyrics; the implication is that the birds and fishes, being in their element, are happy and fulfilled. The lover's languishing state is conveyed (far more effectively than in many more elaborate complaints) by the two stark words waxe wod. The close has a haunting quality; the lover does not describe his state further, nor does he describe the woman who causes it; he reiterates his sorrow with utter simplicity, and mentions his beloved only in a phrase which was probably even then an alliterative cliche. Why then does it have this strangely powerful effect? Is it not because the opening words still reverberate in one's mind, and compel one to associate the last line with them? - She too is bone and blood, a physical being - what right has she to be different from the rest of the living world? If she is the best in nature, can the blood in her veins be colder than that of the birds and fishes?

Dronke's interpretation shows clearly how each stage of the lyric must be related to the spring opening; the lover's sorrow contrasts with the joy of nature; the lady's recalcitrance is in opposition to the spirit of the season. Into a few, brief lines the poet has packed a total love experience and has achieved a step-by-step structure in which every line interacts with each of the others.

"Somer is commenwip love to toune" (O.B. XIII, No. 52) is in fact a debate in which a nightingale and a thrush argue for and against woun. The spring introduction is clearly less vital a part of the central meaning of the poem than in the previous lyric, but it is nevertheless integrated with it in two ways. Since the subject of the poem is the nature of women's love, the spring details are appropriate because of their established connexion with the subject. Furthermore, the details of the description
place much emphasis on the activities of birds and this acts as a general introduction to the interlocutors, the thrush and the nightingale:

Somer is comen wip louse to toune,  
Wip blostme, and wip bridys roune  
Pe note of hasel springe,  
Pe dewes darknep in pe dale  
For longing of pe nittegale,  
Pis fowele marie singe.

"Sprik[s] the sprai" (C.B. XIII, No. 62) takes the form of a chanson dramatique. This is really a variant of the pastourelle in which a peasant girl, complaining of the unfaithfulness of her lover, or scorning her husband, is overheard by the poet, often in the persona of a knight. He may reveal his presence and attempt to console the girl. In the English lyric there is a refrain to the peasant girl's song which includes spring detail and reference to her sleeplessness because of sorrow in love:

Sprik[s] the sprai,  
Al for louse icche am so seeke  
That slepen i ne mai

The spring detail here thus has the same contrasting function as was seen in "Foweles in pe frith".

Offset against the girl's complaint is the picture of the persona of riding out and overhearing her. There is a hint the enclosed locus an amoenus in the setting of "herber swot" in which the girl is found. Yet, despite this, no love relationship between poet and girl develops. It is interesting to note, however, that in a French poem which closely parallels the English lyric there is a fourth stanza in which the poet successfully woos the love-sick girl. 58

The wild nature setting is used in the fourteenth century poem "Maiden in the mor lay" (Robbins No. 18), and I believe that the love poetry using such settings holds the key to our understanding of this lyric. It has been already noted that the wilderness setting is used in Sir Orfeo
when Orfeo seeks refuge after the loss of his wife. It is further described how he must fend for himself in his wild surroundings:

He hat y-had plente
Of mete & drink, of ich deynte
Now may he al-day digge & wrote
Er he finde his fille of rote.
In somer he liueb bi wild frut & berien bot gode lite. 59

This passage has similarities with "Maiden in the mor" in two ways; both Orfeo and the maiden are situated in wild nature and both find sustenance from their surroundings:

Welle was hire mete
wat was hire mete?
pe primerole ant the -
pe primerole ant the -
Welle was hire mete
Wat was hire mete?
pe primerole ant the violet.

Of course the lyric is notoriously elliptical and the poet does not tell us who the maiden is or why she is "in the mor". 60 However, her identification with wild nature suggests that like other unhappy lovers she has shunned the world of man. In my interpretation of the poem, we are given the girl's situation only at its conclusion and the poem presupposes a history of unsuccessful love. The figure of the shunned or deceived girl is more popular in French lyrics than in English but is not unknown in English medieval poetry. Perhaps the most direct comparison can be made with a sixteenth century poem, in the Maitland Manuscript, "Still under the levis grene". This is in the form of a chanson dramantique in which the poet overhears a forsaken maiden's lament. She relates her history and describes how she must spend her life wandering the woods. Particularly important is the reference to forsaking the bower for a cold bed outdoors, which has a clear echo of the last stanza of "Maiden in the mor":
In to his wod ay walk y sall
Ledand my lyf as wofull waycht
Heir I forsait bayth bour and hall
And all yir bigingis that ar brycht
My bed is maid full cauld
With beistis bryme and bauld. 61

To place a similar interpretation on "Maiden in the mor" is, of course, conjectural, but it fits into an established pattern of imagery and avoids the complicated, esoteric symbolism seen in the poem by D.W. Robertson. 62

The Harley lyrics show a more expansive use of the spring introduction and usually the same kind of close relationship between the opening and the main body of the poem as was seen in "Foweles in pe frith". In the famous lyric in praise of Alysoun (Brook, No. 4) spring description occupies half of the first stanza. The details are conventional:

Bytuene Mersh ant Averil
when spray biginnap to springe,
pe lutelfoul hap hire wyl
on hyre lud to synge.

However, in the next line we move to the lover and see that unlike the birds "who hap hire wyl" he is unfulfilled. This comparison, borne out structurally by the division of the stanza into two equal halves, immediately relates the spring introduction to the main body of the lyric. The poet's own frame of mind, while disturbed, is nevertheless hopeful of joy to come:

Ich libbe in loue-longinge
for semlokest of alle pynge;
he may me blisse bringe;
icham in hire baundoun.

It is this mixture of hope and distress which characterizes the poem and which has its origin in the spring opening. The poet's awareness of spring awakens conflicting emotions in him; his "loue-longing" is more keenly felt because he is out of harmony with nature but he is also
given renewed hope by the promise which spring contains. Although the individual stanzas are full of the poet's sorrow, they are interspersed with a joyful refrain:

An hendy hap ichabbe yhent,
iuch from haene it is me sent;
from alle wymmen mi loue is lent,
ant lyht on Alysoun.

Without the spring opening, the poem would have no foundation stone on which to build this pattern of contrasting emotions. Its effect controls the whole poem, allowing the poet to express his sorrow in the past tense in the last stanza, as he pins all his hope on the promise of the season:

Icham for wowyn g al forwake,
wery so water in wore,
lest any reue me my make
ychabbe y3yrned 3ore.

"Lenten ys come wip loue to toune" (Brook, No. 11) contains the longest and most detailed of the spring introductions in this collection. For A.K. Moore, the poem was primarily a "nature study", the unity of which was disturbed by the "intrusive love motif". This judgement ignores the obvious and important fact that the subject of the lyric, love, is mentioned in the first line of the poem. Certainly the progress to human love is slow and incremental but there is present throughout the theme of Boethian love which "governeth erthe and see" and which is responsible for the beauty and harmony depicted in the natural world. Also, as Theo Stemmler has shown, the activities of the natural world are described in anthropomorphic terms. Furthermore, the details selected for emphasis all concern fertility, which is the main link between springtime and the human lover.

This is not to deny, however, that the spring description has become much more here than simply introduction; indeed, the amplification of the conventional imagery is in itself noteworthy. The list of birds contains not only the predictable and literary "nyhtegale" but also the less
obvious "prestelcoc" and "woderous". Similarly, the stock rose and lily are joined by the more interesting "Feny" and "fille". Through all the description the theme of harmonising love is maintained and is captured most evocatively and imaginatively in the simile comparing the mating of the animals to a "strem pat strikep stille". The unhindered flow of the animals' lives, which are in thorough accord with the inevitable pattern of nature, is contained in this imagery.

The introduction of the despondent human lover into this scene is not intrusive, since the picture of the created world would be incomplete without man. It is only man's mood which jars the scene, but this is thoroughly in accord with the Boethian force of the poem. Even so, the lyric does not depend solely on the relationship between man and nature for its unity. The three stanzas are painstakingly interconnected by the poet through an elaborate use of repetition of key words, technically the rhetorical device of conduplicatio. The final stanza picks up many of the words from the first two verses as if to summarise the situation against which the human lover is to be set. The repetitions are as follows:

1.25 pe mone mandep cf. 1.16 pe mone mandep
1.27 briddes singep cf. 1.2 briddes
1.29 rounes cf. 1.2 roune
1.31 wowe cf. 1.19 wows
1.32 waxep cf. 1.15 waxen
1.34 wile cf. 1.15 wille
1.35 wunne weole cf. 1.11 wynne wele

This careful verbal patterning stresses the plight of the human lover in contrast to the rest of nature, which fulfils itself effortlessly, by the use of key words in connexion with the man unhappy in love which previously described a picture of unalloyed joy. The repetitions of "wille" and "wunne weole" are particularly important. The inference is that the natural world has a complete integration of desire and action:
be leues on be lyhte wode
waxen al wip wille.

For the lover, there is always the possibility of a divergence of desire
and action and, if this is the case, he will flee the joy he sees around
him but cannot share:

yeelf me shal won'te wille of on
pic wunne woole y woole forgon.

At this point, the poet introduces the setting of wild nature, symbolized
by the woods ("ant wyht in wode be flemet") and we realize that his rejection
of the joy he sees around him but cannot share is a complete submission
to the destructive side of love, to the turmoil of his own emotions.67

A less fundamental role is played by the spring introduction to
"In May hit murgep when hit dawes" (Brook, No. 12). Although it is
appropriate to a song about love, it does not have the same controlling
influence seen in the previous lyric. However, there are verbal parallels
which bind it securely to the main body of the lyric. The description in
1.4, "blosmes bredep on þe bowes", is paralleled by the picture of the
ladies in ll. 6-7, "Y not so freoli flour ase ladies þat bop bryht in
bour". As the love relationships of the ladies are to form the subject of
the lyric, the spring opening forms an analogy for their activities.

Seasons description in Brook No. 14 is contained, not in the
introduction, but in the refrain:

Blow, northene wynd,
sent þou me by suetyng!
Blow, norpene wynd,
blou! blou! blou!

At first sight, it is difficult to equate this elliptical seasons
reference with spring at all, since one would expect the west wind to
be invoked, Zephyrus rather than Boreas. However, it can be explained
by the diversity of sources available to the medieval poets. In this
case the source is not classical but biblical, deriving from the
Canticum Canticorum:
Surge, Aquilo, et veni Auster, perfìa
hortum meum, et fluant aromata illius.
(IV, 16)

In both its unusual position and variation of detail, the seasons
reference here escapes mere conventionality. A.K. Moore finds the
refrain "lovely, though irrelevant". The relevance in fact is the
oblique message of hope which springtime has for the lover.

Spring description is reduced to two lines in the introduction
to "When pe nyhtegale singes pe woies wæs &e grene" (Brook, No. 25)
but it is woven into the basic imagery of the lyric by the association
of ideas. The growth of woods, leaves, grass and blossom is seen in
opposition to the growth of love in the poet's heart; they thrive while
he fades. For the lover to "waxe grene" is an outward sign of his
sickness, while for the plants, it is a sign of flourishing. The
metaphor of love drinking the poet's blood is echoed obliquely in the
third stanza of the poem, where the lover wishes the lady would be his
"leche", and we remember the main remedy of the medieval physician. This
imagery of love thriving in the lover's heart by drinking his blood and
the implication of blood-letting is linked more closely to the spring
imagery if it is seen in connexion with details in the Secrata Secretorum.
Rosamund Tuve has pointed to this treatise as a likely source for many
of the specific details used in medieval spring descriptions. The section
on spring contains all the basic ingredients for such description, but
particularly interesting in relation to this lyric is the reference to
the rising of the blood in spring and the beneficial effects of blood-
letting:

And perynne nevys be blood and spredys all be
membrys to profyt of h&m pat ys of enene
complexioun .... No tyme is bettir to latyng of blood.
The complex integration of literary and medieval scientific material in the poetic imagery of this lyric ranks among the best examples of individual adaptation of conventional thought.

The Harley lyric "In a fryht as y con fare fremede" (Brook, No. 3) is one of the few English lyrics which conforms entirely to the pastourelle pattern. The contrast between the high social status of the poet/knight and the rustic simplicity of the girl is handled most skillfully, with the rural setting, mentioned only briefly, having an important part to play.

When the poem opens, we are prepared for the status of the girl by the fact that the poet encounters her "in a fryht", instead of in the courtly bower. After this definitive setting, there is an effective verbal counterpoise between the knight's description of her in the praising terms he might use of the lady in the bower and what is implied about her social status through her use of her colloquial speech:

In a fryht as y con fare fremede
y founde a welcome fonge to fere;
he gelystenede ase gold when hit glemede;
nes ner gome so gladly on gere.
Y wolde wyte in wold who hire kenede,
bis burde bryht, yef hire wil were.
Heo me bad go my gates lest hire gremede;
ne kepte heo non henyng here.

The contrast between the two figures has a comic effect but also reveals the intention of the knight; neither audience nor girl can really believe his protestations of love.

The poem stands out among the early English lyric partly because it is one of the few true representatives of the pastourelle at this time but mainly through the poet's skilful handling of his material. Rosemary Woolf praises the lyric for "the spiritedness of its dialogue and witty manipulation of argument". 71
With the thirteenth century poems and the Harley lyrics, spring introductions and natural settings are forms of imagery which have a vital contribution to make to the thought of the lyrics. In the Harley collection, the adaptation, amplification and individualization of these conventional modes of thought is of the highest technical and intellectual calibre.

3. The Fifteenth Century Lyrics.

It is a long way from the Harley lyrics to the copious output of love poetry in the fifteenth century but there is little extant material from this genre in between. The lyrics which survive, written after Chaucer, are still using seasons imagery and symbolic natural settings, but stylistic changes and shifts of emphasis give the conventional imagery a different complexion and a more blurred outline.

Clearly, a major influence on the later poets was Chaucer, although in his own lyric poetry, the seasons introduction appears only in The Complaint of Mars and shows here use of one development of that imagery, its broadening to encompass the St. Valentine's Day poems. Nevertheless, it is his treatment of love in his major works, drawing more on the later French poets like Machaut and Deschamps instead of the troubadours and trouvères, which sets the style for the fifteenth-century poets.

It was Chaucer's use of French metre and vocabulary which formed the pattern for the fifteenth century; he represented the elegant and fashionable style in language as opposed to the old "rude speche & incongrue". A look at the most famous of Chaucer's spring descriptions, the opening of The General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, illustrates this shift of style. Mixed with the native vocabulary, Chaucer uses the more sophisticated French words "engendred" and "licour", the Latin
"inspired" and "Zephrus", together with astronomical details:

When that Aprill with his shoures soute
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
When Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slegen al the nyght with open ye
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages);
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages.

(11. 1-12)

While the traditional imagery remains intact, Chaucer's presentation of it has a quite different flavour, which is owing partly to the intermingling of spiritual and sexual implications and partly to the language. The combination of erudite language and simpler native words is a major stylistic development which has a deep influence on the later poets. Chaucer's control over his style is proof against pomposity and abstruseness, but his successors, trying to emulate their master, often lack his sense of proportion. The opening stanzas of Dunbar's *Goldyn Tarpe*, for example, are a much cited instance of a heavily ornate style:

Ryght as the stern of day begouth to schyne,
Quhen gone to bed war Vesper and Lucyne,
I raise and by a rosere did me rest;
Up sprang the goldyn candill matutyn,
With clere depurit bonnes crystallyne,
Glading the mery foulis in their nest;
Or Phebus was in purpur cape reveste,
Up raise the lark, the hevyns menstale fyne
In May, in till a morow myrthfull est.

Full angellike thir birdis sang thair houris
Within thair courtyns grene, in to thair bouris
Apparalit quhite and red wyth bloomes suete;
Anamalit was the felde wyth all colouris,
The perly droppis shake in silvir shouris,
Quhilk all in balme did branch and levis flote;
To part fra Phobus did Aurora grete,
Hir cristell teris I saw byng on the flouris,
Quhilk he for lufe all drank up wyth his hole.

(Mackenzie, No. 56)
Pamela Gradon comments: "The style is aureate, as is evident from the use of the words *matutynye, rovent, purpur* and, that favourite word of aureate poets, *cristall, crystallyne*. Also very prominent is the classical allusion; instead of referring directly to sun, moon, dawn and so forth, the poet employs the Latin proper nouns.

The effect of the aureate style is to make the reader continually aware of the poet's self-conscious pre-occupation with decoration and elevation of the poem's surface. The early poets tended to fuse together imagery and thought so closely that an impression of directness, almost of spontaneity, was achieved. The later poets clearly take a greater delight in the presentation of the description itself.

Few lyrics involve seasons introductions written in such a heavily aureate style as Dunbar's, but the opening of a poem describing a parliament of birds is a typical Chaucerian imitation in its use of the pronominatio "Phoebus" instead of a direct reference to the sun, the astronomical detail, and the French word "socour":

```
In May when euer herte is lyt
And flourys frosschely sprede & sprynge
And Phebus w^t his bemys bry^te
Was in pe Bole socler schynyng
p^t sesyn in a morwenynge
Myn sor for syghte to don socour
W^t inne a wode was myn walkynge
Par moy ouhter hors de doelour. 73
```

The use of the French concluding line is less a contribution to the aureate style than a device for a specific poetic effect. The purpose of the poem is for each bird to expound its particular attitude to love and to conclude its speech with a maxim in French. This use of a French tag is turned to good effect when the "uncurteys" cuckoo summarises his views in plain English because he "can no French sop to seyne". This picture of the cuckoo is consistent with its role in medieval love allegories. Chaucer describes it as "the cukkow ever unkynde" in The Parliament of Fouls (1.358) and in Jean de Condé's *La Messe des Oisins* et
li Plais des Chanonesses et des Grises Nonains the poet tells of the
cuckoo, who had been driven away into the forest, interrupting the
mock religious service out of revenge. 74

It is not possible to attribute Charles of Orleans' use of a
French vocabulary in his English poems simply to a desire to achieve an
aureate diction, of course, but there is a clear Chaucerian influence on
his phraseology and this is seen most clearly in the many specific
Chaucerian allusions. There is not an obtrusive use of Latinate
vocabulary although the use of pronominatio throws up such figures as
Phoebus, Flora and Lucina.

For Lydgate a Latinate vocabulary is as important as a French one,
and the result of his aureate diction can be a conscious sophistication
and elegance. In none of his love lyrics does he use the spring
introduction in quite the same way as it appears in the Harley Lyrics.
However, the opening of The Complaint of the Black Knight involves the
conventional association of spring and love and has similar character-
istics to the poem describing the parliament of birds. There is use of
pronominatio again, astronomical reference, the aureate form "orysont", and
what Pamela Gradon terms "semantic density" 75 in the two synonymous
descriptions of the sun's brightness:

In May, when Flora, the fress[t] lusty queene,
The soyle hath clad in grene, rede and white;
And Phebus gan to shede his stremes shene
Amyd the Bole, wyth al the bernes bryght;
And Lucifer, to chace away the nyght,
Ayen the morowe our orysont hath take
To byd[l] lovers out of her slepe awake...

(HacCracken No. 3)

Although the ornate style is fairly subdued in this passage, the
poet's consciousness of the workmanship in his description is obvious
and forces itself upon the attention of the reader.
As well as stylistic developments, the seasons imagery of the later poems undergoes several shifts of emphasis. The actual timespan of the spring season, never very specific, is extended by the late fourteenth century poets to comprehend St. Valentine's day and therefore to combine the general spring symbolism with the specific significance of that day. Poems for this occasion are seen by D.S. Brewer as having arisen from the court customs of the late fourteenth century, which included a festival on this day in which the essential element was choosing a love-match for the year. The necessary subject of poems celebrating this time naturally lends itself to a linking with the traditional spring imagery and poets usually allow themselves sufficient licence to impute spring conditions to mid-February, as Chaucer does in his closing song in *The Parliament of Fouls*. Indeed, for Gower, St. Valentine takes over the harmonizing and motivating function previously attributed to figures like Venus and Natura:

Seint Valentin l'amour et la nature
De tous oiseauls ad en governement;
Dant chascun d'eau semblable a sa mesure
Une compaigne honneste a son talent
Ealist tout d'un acord et d'un assent.

(Balade XXXIII)

A further ingredient is often added to the St. Valentine's Day introduction and that is the arousal of the lover or lovers associated with the aube. This is illustrated in Chaucer's *The Complaint of Rocyn*:

Gladeth, ye foules, of the morowe gray!
Lo! Venus, rysen anong yon rowes rede!
And floures fressh, honoureth ye this day;
For when the sunne uprist, then wol ye sprede.
But ye lovers, that lye in any drede,
Fleeth, lest wikked tonges yow espys;
Lo! yond the sunne, the candel of jelosye!

(11.1-7)

For the fifteenth century poets this is often an opportunity to develop an elaborate description of the dawn, as Lydgate does in *The Floure of Curtesye* (MacCracken, No. 4). He begins by establishing the occasion:
In Feuerer, when the frosty moone,
Was horned ful of Phebus firy lyght,
And that she gan to rejse her streames sone,
Saynt Valentyne, upon thy blisful nyght
Of dewetee, when glad is every wight,
And foules che8e, to voydo her olde sorowe,
Eueryche his make, upon the nex[۲]morowe... 

The description of the dawn is continued in stanza 6 and the style of
the passage is graceful and elegant. The personification of dawn as
Aurora, the use of alliteration for specific sonorous effects rather
than any link with older alliterative patterns, the choice of vocabulary,
all combine to show Lydgate's descriptive powers at their best:

Whan Aurora, for drery complaynyng,
Can distyl her chrystal teeres weye
V pon the soyle, with sylver dewe so swete,
For she durste, for shame, not apere
Vnder the lyght of Phebus beames clere.

Here the Latin and French terms "Aurora", "distyl", "chrystal", "Phebus",
are not too abstract or too obtrusive. Through the use of alliteration
they integrate well with the native words "drery" and "sylver". In his
choice of words Lydgate has not allowed himself to be tempted to use
too heavily aureate terms without regard to meaning. The verb "distyl"
here is, in fact, better than a simpler, native word like "drop" because
of the sound pattern it establishes with "chrystal".

Charles of Orleans makes St. Valentine's Day the occasion on which
he enters the service of love:

We this haue doon not to repele
In no manere
Gyve on the day of Saynt Valentyne pe martere,
As in the Castelle of humbille desere
As for the tyme oure counselle holding here.

(Steele p. 2)

He also sets individual poems on this day, and in Ballade 72 the emphasis
of the introduction is almost entirely on the dawn scene so that, although
a season's reference is a part of the implication of St. Valentine's Day,
it is in no way developed by the poet:
When fresshe phebus day of seynt valentyne
Had whirlied vp his golden chare aloft
The burnyd bemys of it gan to schyne
In at the chambre where y slepid soft
Of which the light that he had with him brought
He wook me of the slepe of heuynes. 78

As well as shifts of emphasis, the seasons imagery of the
fifteenth century has a wider range of significances than is seen in
the earlier love poems. A particularly popular symbolism of the cycle
of the seasons is mutability and sudden reversals of situations. The
same idea may be conveyed by references to the changing of weather.
Essentially this is proverbial imagery, occurring frequently in both
French and English. However, a possible source of the idea may be
Horace's ode describing the return of spring (Book IV, Ode VII), in
which the ever-changing cycle of the seasons is described:

frigora mitescunt Zephyris, ver proterit aestas
interitura, simul
pomifer autumnus frugos effuderit, et mox
bruma recurrit iners.

Outside the lyric genre, the mutability of the weather or seasons is not
confined to later works. The Ancrene Riwle uses the analogy of the
weather, "Lowerd, pat makes stille efter storme". Similarly, Piers
Plowman contains the changing pattern of the weather, "After sharpe
showres most shene is the sonne". In Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde,
the weather imagery is supplemented by a reference to the seasons:

For I have seyn, of a ful misty morwe
Folowen ful ofte a myrie someris day;
And after wynter foloweth grene May.
(Book III, ll. 1060-1062)

Generally, this concept of sudden change is linked in the love lyrics
with the vagaries of fortune, and this aspect of the imagery is discussed
more fully in Chapter III. However, Charles of Orleans links the
seasons imagery with the idea of changing fortune in a typically
individual way. The poet considers the evidence of constant change in
nature but regrets that only his lady does not confirm to this pattern:

Aftir wyntir the veer with foylis grene
Aftir the sterry nyght the morow gray
Lucyna chaungyng in her hornys shene
The enpese made of many gret affray
The sondry chaunge of thynge  so y may
But ye swet hert so voyde are of pite
That for no thyng y kan yow write or say
The change of youre mystrust kan y not se

(Balladé 88)

The style of the passage is typical of the more abstract approach of the later poets. The imagery is intellectual and conceptual, being used consciously to establish a specific, logical point. Everything changes and after the unpleasant comes the pleasant; this is established by the poet as an essential quality of nature. The lady's intransigence is thus seen as more than cruel, it is also unnatural. Here, the visual aspect of the imagery is underplayed, with the description being made general and symbolic. The earlier poets used concrete, visual imagery which operated through implication rather than by the poet's obtrusive interpretation, but here the poet himself draws together the link between his imagery and his meaning. The earlier descriptions also had a sense of immediacy with the poet's actual presence in the scene being implied, whereas here Charles is generalizing from his experience and observation.

This style is characteristic of a fundamental difference in approach from the earlier poets. One of the features of the earlier lyrics was the complete subjugation of the poet to his persona, the lover. However, rhetorical the imagery with which he worked, the poet managed to express it in a direct, naturalistic poetic diction. With the later lyrics, however, the rhetoric tends to be in relief and the reader is constantly aware of the poet acting as interpreter of the lover's feelings. The development can be seen in later fourteenth century poems such as Gower's *Cinkante Balades*. In one lyric Gower too uses seasons description
to convey the idea of change but he also combines it with the other important strand of seasons imagery, the connexion between spring and love. However, the poet intervenes to stress the analogical function of his description and this is a clear shift away from the use of seasons descriptions as an actual context into which the lover fits. Gower's spring becomes an abstract comparison in the same way as Charles' seasons imagery, where the earlier poets were careful to stress that it was the fact of its being spring now which influenced the lover:

L'ivern s'en va et l'estée vient florir,
De froid en chald le temps se muera,
L'oisel, qu'aingois avoit perdu son ny,
Le renovelle, u q'il s'esjoiera:
De mes amours ensa le monde va,
Par tel espoir je me confort de ases.

(Balade II)

The group of ballades from Bodleian MS. Fairfax 16, attributed to the Duke of Suffolk, tend to display conventional imagery in an abstract, conceptual way but also in a very condensed form. The poet does not amplify his descriptive passages but alludes to them only briefly. He refers to the change of seasons as part of an inevitable pattern of life which is linked with the government of fortune. The brief two-line reference tucked into the middle of the poem is far removed indeed from the prominent descriptions of the Harley poets:

Lat every secon have hys tyme and space
As fortune wyll, ther is non othir chois.
But yit among thou maist thyself reioys.
For at thyse tyme, though thou sumwhat he greuyd
Here-afterward yit maistow be releuyd.82

With Charles of Orleans comes also a new type of individuality. The Harley poets varied emphases and showed dexterity in their manner of relating the seasons introduction to the main part of the lyric. There was also variation in vocabulary. However, the basic situation of the lover in relation to the wider context of his natural environment
remained unchanged and was a vital part of the thought of the poets. With Charles of Orleans there is an occasional tendency to redirect the imagery in a new and personal way. His is an individuality prescient of poets like Wyatt and Surrey, who open new channels of significance for medieval imagery. In one of his ballades, he reverses the normal description of a May scene, depicting storms rather than sun and birdsong. He then relates the conditions of his surroundings to his own mood, introducing the "pathetic fallacy" attitude to nature, which is not predominant in medieval poetry. This attitude involves the poet's believing that the natural world can assume sympathy with his own mood, whereas the normal medieval approach is the reverse, that man is governed in his feelings by nature:

```
This dyane day the first in moneth of May
Me thynkith a berith hem verry welle to me
For right as y nave plesere to my pay
Within myn hert but gret aduersite
Right in lijkwise god wott is he to see
Fortrobelid als with thondir wynde and rayne
A hath be wont more fressher forto be
In tyme that y afore this day hawe sayne.
(Ballade 53)
```

Again, the style of the passage reflects the tendency of the later poets to obtrude their interpretive presence into their verse. His analogies involve the use of almost pleonastic connecting phrases: "me thynkith", "For right as", "Right in lijk wise".

The major differences in the style of seasons description between the early and later lyrics concerns the choice of poetic diction and this more obtrusive presence of the poet as interpreter. The earlier poets wrote in their own dialects, absorbing influences from troubadour, Godiardic and northern French poets as well as from classical and sources. Yet none of these influences is thrust upon the reader, because the poets subjugate everything to their immediate, natural language
and experience. It is true that the Harley poets use a certain amount of French vocabulary, but, for the most part, this consists of words which are well absorbed into the language by the thirteenth century. Their technique is to incorporate a European cultural background with a native English mode of expression.

The fifteenth century poets inherit a conventional imagery and apply to it a new consciousness of style. At times there is a preoccupation with the superficial decoration of an etiolated imagery, which can result in a very limp poetry. However, it is also a period of experiment, when new emphases are given to stereotyped ideas and when a genuine elegance of style can be achieved. While poets like Charles of Orleans and Lydgate are, almost inevitably, patchy in quality, they are also capable of showing a positive attitude to the development of imagery and expression, extending and varying the usefulness of old ideas.

The natural settings of the earlier poems continue to be found in the fifteenth century lyrics, with the locus amoenus, in particular, coming into focus, mainly as a result of the influence of the love allegories, especially *Le Roman de la Rose*. The *pastourelle* on the other hand appears to feature more in sixteenth century lyrics than in those of the fifteenth century. The *chanson d'aventure* opening is found frequently enough but usually merely as an opening device rather than as an introduction to the *pastourelle* proper. It is found, for example, in religious lyrics, where any connotations of a free and easy countryside, divorced from the polite conventions of courtly society, would be inappropriate. In one such poem, the *pastourelle* is deliberately adopted for a religious purpose. The persona rides out into the wood and encounters not the expected peasant girl but the Virgin Mary. However,
the introductory stanza plays on our expectation of a traditional pastourelle:

As I walked me this endurs day
to be grone wode for to play
& all heuynes to put away
my-self alone. §5

For many of the love lyrics, the chanson d'aventure opening is simply a useful introductory device. In the unprinted Compleynce 84 Asynst Hope, there are hints of such a setting but the result is curious. The poet starts out as if he is about to encounter somebody or something:

As that I me stoode in studyng aloone
Astonyed Right'soor' in studyes ful oolde.

Instead, he meets himself, as it were, and starts to relate to himself his sorrow in love:

By myselfen bemenyng pore soo my moone
And of my woo to myselfe right' pus I tolde.

The most imaginative adaptation of this setting comes from Charles of Orleans, who shows a much greater awareness of its possibilities. He employs both the opening device and the forest setting but his is the metaphorical forest of "noyous hevynes". This not only conveys with economy the turmoil of the mournful lover's mind but has further relevance because the poet re-invests the forest of the pastourelle with the significance of wild nature in which the disconsolate lover seeks refuge. This adaptation of the pastourelle opening and setting results in a patent contrast between the carefree knight who rides out for his pleasure and the wandering lover lost in the gloom of his own thoughts:

In the forest of noyous hevynes
As y went wandryng in the moneth of may
I mette of lare the myghti gret goddes
which axid awh thither y was away
I hir answorid as fortune doth convey
As oon exylid from ioyE& be me loth
That passyng welle alle folkes me clepyng may
The man forlost that wot not where he goth.

(Ballade 70)
The wilderness or forest setting occurs in another late poem in which a deceived lover takes to woods. Like Orfeo and the "maiden in the mor", he trusts to nature to provide for him:

\[
\text{oj bod schall be under be grenwood tre,}
\]
\[
\text{a tufft of brakes ynder my hed,}
\]
\[
\text{as on ffrom joye were fled;}
\]
\[
\text{thus from my lyff day by day I fflee,}
\]
\[
\text{and all for on.}
\]

The Ronnyng stremes shall be my drynke,
acorns schalbe my ffoode, (Robbins No. 20)

The \textit{locus amoenus} is a feature of the later lyrics rather than the earlier ones mainly as a result of its popularization in love allegories, especially \textit{Le Roman de la Rose}. When Dunbar uses the garden setting in "Swet rois of vertew and of gentilnes" (Mackenzie No. 49) he is clearly following \textit{Le Roman de la Rose} tradition, using the same symbol for the lady herself. The setting is a straightforward projection of a place which contains all the lover's hopes and desires. He wanders into a garden and all around are signs of a welcome for love, yet all is not well as an essential element is missing. The lady's lack of pity is allegorised:

\[
\text{In to your garthe this day I did persew,}
\]
\[
\text{Thair saw I flowris that frosche wer' of hew;}
\]
\[
\text{Baith quhyte and reid moist lusty wer to seyne,}
\]
\[
\text{And halsum herbis upon stalkis grene;}
\]
\[
\text{Yet leif nor flour fynd could I nane of rew.}
\]

The leaf and \textit{flower} imagery for the lady's pity allows poet also introduce a variation on seasons imagery. We learn that this is not the expected period of April or May; instead the \textit{cold} winds of March are still blowing instead of warm Zephyrus:

\[
\text{I doute that Merche with his calid blastis keyne,}
\]
\[
\text{Hes slane this gentille herbe that I of mene.}
\]

The garden imagery here has been used for the poet's own adaptation of the accepted pattern of love which ordains that a lover should meet many
rebuffs before he achieves success, a situation summarized by Chaucer in The Legend of Good Women:

Al founde they Daunger for a tyme a lord
Yet Fite, thurgh his stronge gentil uyght,
Forgaf, and made Mercy passen ryght.

(F. 11. 160 - 162).

Dunbar implies that the developing of spring in the garden offers hope that after initial coldness, pity will grow within the lady:

That I wald wak to plant his rute agane,
So confortand his levis unto me bene.

In its individual application of conventional imagery and its style, uncluttered by unnecessarily ornamental devices, this lyric is outstanding among fifteenth century love poems.

The garden simply of sexuality appears as the setting for an anonymous lyric of double entendre "I have a newe gardeyn" (Robbins No.21). The lyric also features the pear tree, an overt sexual symbol common in medieval literature.

It is a pear which falls on Fénice in her enclosed garden in Chlés, and in English the most obvious example is the pear tree in The Merchant's Tale. The symbolism of the pear tree has been commented upon by Paul A. Olson:

Pirum is a phallic pun in the "Lydia" ... as is "poire" in Thibaut's Li Romanz de la Poire ... An illumination in the ms. of Thibaut's romance shows the pear tree with Cupid sitting in it, supervising the stratagems of a pair of young lovers ... The pear's association with the male genitalia and with amorous affairs in general is based on the double meaning which both "pirum" and "poire" bear; both mean pear and rod.
The point of the lyric depends on a series of puns. The poet has a pear tree which will bear only one kind of fruit:

In be myddis of my gardyn
is a preryr set,
& it wele non per bern
but a per Ienet.

The sexual relationship between lover and girl is contained in the pun on the word  **gyff** , "graft":

be fayrest mayde of his toun
prayid me,
for to gryffyn her a gyf
of myn pery tre.

However, the girl eventually denies to her lover that he is the father of her child:

bat day twelfus month,
bat wayde I mette:
che seyde it was a per robert
but non per Ionet!

Further  **locus amoenus** settings are found in Charles of Orleans' introductory poem to his ballade sequence, in which he calls Hope "out of the presse into an herber grene" (Steel p. 7), and in the anonymous lyric describing the bird's parliament, where the poet encounters the birds in "an herber sote and grene". 86

It can be seen that seasons descriptions and natural settings form a continuous thread of imagery from the earliest surviving English love lyrics through to those of the fifteenth century and, of course, beyond this period. The developments in its uses may be seen as a result of a changed attitude to style combined with imitation of Chaucer and the move towards a more standardized literary language; a shift towards reliance on later French models and a
broadening and mixing of the significances and emphases of the imagery itself. This changing pattern not unnaturally produces poetry of a patchy quality, but, on occasions, poets like Charles of Orleans, William Dunbar and Lydgate can find an exciting new approach to conventional ideas, and it is only by seeing the later lyrics in relation to the earlier, more homogeneous poetry, that a clear view of what is being achieved can be obtained.
Notes to Chapter II


4. Ibid., p. 32.

5. The motif of the lady's distance from the lover runs through each stanza and the return of the birds in springtime has clearly set in motion the lovers wish that his distant lady might also be near him.

6. Tuve draws attention to the difference in style between the Goliard poems and the English lyrics. The former she sees as deriving from the tradition of classical rhetoric and the latter from popular native tradition, Seasons and Months, p. 79.

7. Medieval Latin Lyrics ed. and trans. Helen Waddell, 4th ed. (1933, rpt. London, 1966), p. 160. See also a song from the Carmina Burana which closely parallels the idea of Jaufre Rudel. In "Terra iam pandit gremium" (Medieval Latin Lyrics pp. 218-220), the spring description is concluded with the lines:

    si friget in qua ardeo,
    nec mihi vult calere,
    quid tunc cantus volucrum
    mihi queaut valere,
    cum tunc circum precordia
    iam hyems est vere.


10. The Cruelest Month.

11. Ibid., p. 29.

12. The poem referred to is 'De Rosis Nascentibus; Medieval Latin Lyrics, p. 36.
16. Seasons and Months, pp. 12-13:

Alma Venus was disguised as Ver, Flora, May; the concept which produced the Lucretian figure merges also with the idea of God as creator and pattern-maker, into which the medieval Neo-Platonists translated the "Artificer" of the Timaeus and his "eternal design." This idea of God's purposeful direction, through his vicarious nature, was an integral part of the concept of Alanus, in Boethius as Chaucer translated him, in Death and Life as well as in such didactic plays of the Renaissance as Nature or Rastell's Four Elements.

18. The view of man's conflict with nature is a fundamental concept in medieval thought. Alanus derived the symbolic tearing of the gown from Boethius' description of Philosophy in the Consolation and the general view of man in opposition to nature is illustrated in that work, as Chaucer translates:

all this accordaunce of thynges is bounde with love, that governeth erthe and see, and hath also commandement to the hevene. And yif this love slakede the bridelis, alle thynges that now loven hem togidres wolen maken batyle contynuely, and styven to fordo the fassoun of this world, the which they now leden in accordable feith by fayre moevynge. This love halt togidres peples joyned with an holy boond, and knytteth sacrement of mariges of chaste loves; and love enditeth lawes to trewe felawes. O weleful were mankynde, yif thilke love that governeth hevene governede yowre corages.

(Book II, Metrura 8).


I am using naturans and naturata . . . for the distinction Alan evidently wishes to emphasize in the Complaint - that between Nature as a creating or regulating power, and the totality of created things.

20. The Visionary Landscape, pp. 64-65.


25. See pp. 59-60 below.


27. Although Stanley's reference is to "Summer," probably because of the reference in the first line of the poem, "Ich was in one sumere dale," the Nightingale's words, "be blosome ginne springe & sprede," (1.437) seem to indicate spring as the season in question. This does not conflict at all with the use of "sumere" as A.K. Moore has shown that "somer" was frequently used to indicate spring in Middle English, "Somere' and 'Lenten' as Terms for Spring," Notes and Queries, 194 (1949), 82-83.


29. Woolf, The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages, p. 65, does not connect the spring introduction here with this final stanza:

    There is also a change of feeling in that the spring love song is not resumed in the last stanza . . . and instead the poem adopts the harsh warning style of a sermon.


31. S. Manning, "I Syng of a Mayden," PMLA, 75 (1960), 8-9:

    Makeles means matchless, as editors usually gloss it, but this is a secondary meaning deriving from its primary meaning of without a mate, i.e. sexual mate . . . Our poet, then, announces he is singing of a maiden who is without a mate and thus calls immediate attention to her virginity.

32. The variants in the Harley MS. are listed by Carleton Brown (C.B. XIII, p. 215).

33. See pp. 112-4 below for a discussion of "wound of love" imagery.

34. The term is first used by E.K. Chambers, Early English Lyrics, p. 266, and is adopted by Helen Sandison, The Chanson d'Aventure in Middle English (Bryn Mawr, 1913), who uses it to cover any poem which uses the structure of the persona riding or walking out and encountering some adventure.


37. See p. 57 above.


40. European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, p. 201.


The nightmarish wasteland to which Douglas dreams he is transported has been variously interpreted. I take it to represent a sudden reversal of Fortune . . . and, more specifically, a reversal or setback in love. There is a point by point contrast between this landscape and the spring garden. . . . The contrasted scenes recall the paradoxical description of the garden in Chaucer's Parliament of Fowls (lines 127 ff.) as a place where ' grene and lusty May shal ever endure' and yet 'neve tre shal fruyt ne leves bere.' Together they form a kind of visual chiasmus, an allegorical equivalent of the lover's 'joly wo.' The barren landscape thus represents the harsher side of love.


45. Medieval Latin Lyrics, p. 158.

46. European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, p. 185.


49. The Visionary Landscape, p. 79.


51. The Trentham MS., ed. G.H. Mcknight, EETS, o.s. 14 (1866), 90.

52. The Secular Lyric in Middle English, p. 29.


55. J.S.P. Tatlock and A.G. Kennedy, A Concordance to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Washington, 1927), for example, lists many instances of Chaucer describing the lovesick as "wood" but there are no occasions on which he uses it in connexion with religious fervour.

56. See Brook nos. 7, 11, 5-6 and 14, 1,10.

57. The Medieval Lyric, p. 145.


60. The possibility may be mentioned that "Maiden in the mor," as printed by Robbins, is incomplete and that the whole poem consists of this part, together with the lyric "Werkwouwer in pis toun" (Robbins no. 9), which follows it directly in the manuscript. This possibility is acknowledged by J. E. Wells, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1400 (London, 1916), p. 493, and is supported by the burden lines beginning "Welle wo" which echoes the "welle" lines in "Maiden in the mor." In this case, interpretation of the poem would be much easier. The lover is describing the plight of his "lemmon" who has been unfaithful to him but has been deceived, hence her flight to wild nature. The desire of her lover is to take revenge on her deceiver.


63. Stemmler, Die Englischen Liebesgedichte des MS. Harley 2253, p. 162, notes also the way in which the refrain is linked by rhyme to the main stanzas of the lyric, the last line of the refrain rhyming with the last line of each stanza.

64. The Secular Lyric in Middle English, p. 53.

65. See note 18 above.


67. Cf. Brook no. 24, in which the lover describes how he has suffered alone in the woods "fer from hom ant eke from men vnder pe wode gore."

68. The Secular Lyric in Middle English, p. 65.
69. **Seasons and Months**, pp. 46-70.

70. *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum*, ed. R. Steele, EETS, e.s. 74 (London, 1898), I, 73.


72. *Form and Style in Early English Literature*, p. 351.


74. W.A. Neilson, *Origins and Sources of the Court of Love*, p. 67

75. *Form and Style in Early English Literature*, p. 18.


77. For a discussion of this genre see C.R. Baskverill, "English Songs on the Night Visit," *PMLA*, 36 (1921), 565-614.

78. Steele, p. 278, notes the similarities between the opening of this ballade and that of *The Flower and the Leaf* and with the penultimate line of *The Squire's Tale*.


81. See pp.122-4 below.


84. MS. Harley 7333, f. 135a. The poem is also in two other manuscripts; MS. Bodleian 2078, f. 209b and MS. Bodleian 3896, f. 195b.


CHAPTER III

THE ANALYSIS OF EMOTIONS

1. The Imagery Used and the Literary Backgrounds Involved

In their discussions of the literary treatment of love in the Middle Ages, past critics tended to generalize about a strictly formulated code. However, it is now widely accepted that many aspects of what was called "courtly love" are variables, which poets did not feel bound to include in their expositions of love. Certain the least rigid features of courtly love, insofar as this can be identified as an homogeneous code at all, are those which concern the situations in which love may arise and certain aspects of the lover's behaviour: whether he may address himself only to married ladies; the extent to which he treats the lady as if she were his feudal overlord; whether the ultimate aim of the relationship is sexual or spiritual fulfilment; how far his service of love governs his attitude towards life in general; these characteristics may vary widely in the poetry of the troubadours, but still more in later medieval poetry.

The analysis of the lover's private experience of love, on the other hand, is governed by a far more tightly organized frame of reference. The features of this analysis are virtually constant; they include the lover's initial response to the lady's beauty and his ensuing sensations of sickness (with its attendant symptoms of sleeplessness and the inability to eat or drink); his sense of sorrow; his sensations of wounding and burning; and a feeling that he is being trapped or ensnared.

In the earliest surviving English romances, the situations from which love stems and the developing relationships between couples show few of the characteristics usually linked with my first category. The imagery through which love is described, however, is consistently in
keeping with a stock view of love found throughout the period.

In King Horn, the facts do not fit a classic courtly love situation. It is true that Horn believes himself in fact to be the social inferior of the lady, Rymenhild, but this is quite different from the pose of feudal subservience through which the courtly lover expresses his devotion to the lady. Furthermore, the aim of the lady, from the beginning, is marriage. While these outward facts do not fit the pattern described by C.S. Lewis,² the effects of love on Rymenhild are thoroughly in accord with convention, although they are not amplified to the extent found in the lyrics or later romances:

& mest him louede Rymenhild,
be kynges oȝene dȝoster.
He was mest in bȝste.
Heo louede so horn child,
pat neȝ heo gan. wexe wild,

Hire soreȝc ne hirc pine
Ne mjȝte neȝre fine.²

The picture is the same in romances of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The situations of the lovers may vary considerably but their inward experience of love is stereotyped. Josian's emotions in Sir Bevis of Hamtoun, for example, are more thoroughly explored than Rymenhild's but they fit the expected pattern; she will die if she cannot marry Bevis, she is smitten with love-longing:

O Mahoun! shei seide, our drigate
What Beuis is man of meche mighte!
Al this world yif Ich it hedde
Ich him yeue me to wedde:
Boute ho me lome Icham dod.
Swete Mahoun, what is the red
Lowe longing me hath becought.⁴

Further instances might be cited from the earliest extant versions of Guy of Warwick, Floris and Blancheflour and Sir Orfeo, in all of which the situations are varied but the effects of love are strictly controlled.

At first sight, the love lyrics, especially the Harley lyrics, may seem to present a different case. After all, H.J. Chaytor has suggested
a number of links between the English lyrics and troubadour poems. If his thesis is accepted, then a more tightly formulated code of behaviour taken directly from troubadour poetry might be expected. However, such expectations are not really met. In practice, most of the parallels, other than those of stanza patterns, concern the imagery through which love is expressed and the lady described; imagery which itself is widespread in medieval poetry. Also, as a body, the English love lyrics do not place much emphasis on the outward features of love. They are concerned primarily with the lover's feelings, and the external facts of the situation are largely outside their interest. However, the lyrics do show a unified attitude to the analysis of love, and this attitude can be traced in the earliest extant poems and shown to carry consistently through the period.

In a recent anthology edited by Theo Stemmler, which brings together both fragments and complete lyrics from the thirteenth century, the conventional imagery is a recurrent feature. In "Pet hi con witte ful-wis" (Stemmler, no. 6), suffering and sickness are the terms in which the lover describes his pangs of jealousy:

```
Se&en furst þe heo was his, 
iloken in castel wal of ston, 
nes ic hol ne blipe iwís
ne prîmmindæ mon. 
lîlde mon non bîlded me
abiden & blipe for to boe-
ned after mi deað me longgeð;
```

The symptom of sleeplessness is described in "He may cume to mi lef" (Stemmler, no. 11):

```
Wanne me lust slepen
þanne moti wakie.
Wnder is þat hi livie.
```

Love causes madness in "Foweles in þe frith" (Stemmler, no. 12), and the slightly later "Bryd one brere" (Stemmler, no. 14) has similarly hyperbolic statements about the suffering of love: "Or greið, lef
greid bu me my grave". Although the first of these poems suggests an adulterous relationship, the others give no circumstantial information about the lovers.

Clearly, a full survey of the troubadour treatment of love, insofar as a unified code can be found in their poetry, would be superfluous here, since English poets do not rely heavily upon it. Only those features which form an integral part of the English love ethos need be examined in relation to their background. Such external characteristics as are found in the lyrics form a framework in which the imagery of the analysis of emotion operates.

One of the attitudes governing the behaviour of lovers, accepted widely in the English love lyrics, is secrecy. On those occasions when adulterous love is the subject of a lyric, as in some troubadour poems, the expediency of secrecy is obvious. However, the importance of secrecy in love is a general one, rather than a requirement of a specific type of relationship. It becomes a form of protection for love itself. Hoshé Lazar sees it as a basic rule of "fin' amors", because the lover can trust no-one: "chacun est pour lui un envieux virtuel, un ennemi possible". The fear of malicious gossip is one reason for preserving secrecy and these attitudes are linked closely by the poets. The troubadours present these ideas with some humour. Bernard de Ventadour, for example, believes that everyone should preserve secrecy; then he need fear no unpleasant stories about his mistress' unfaithfulness:

Deu li do mal' escharida
Qui porta mauvais mestage!
Qu'eu agra amor jauzide
Si non foso lauzengar. 9

Secrecy is mentioned several times in the Harley lyrics, although
it is not always amplified or explained in any way:

When derne dedis in day derne are done.

(Brook no. 3)

Lutel wot hit any mon
hou derne loue may stonde

(Brook no. 32).

In another of the poems, however, specific reference is made to an adulterous relationship:

y wolde chaunge myn for his
pat is here fere

(Brook no. 9)

so that the later phrase "loue^ derne" is clearly particularly appropriate to the circumstances. Secrecy is also implicit in the lover's reluctance to name the lady directly in "Ichot a burde in a bour ase beryl so bryht" (Brook no. 3). Her identity is contained in a pun: "In Annote is hire name".

Later fourteenth century poets continue to make secrecy and the fear of gossip part of the framework of love. In one of his Cinkante Balades, John Gower invokes the curse of God on the "mesdisants" who hinder love:

As mesdisantz, dont bon amour s'esfroie,
De male langue dieus les motz maldie;
Q'en lour despit a vostre amour m'otroie;
Car qui bien aime ses amours tard oblie.

(Balade XXV)

Chaucer shows us Troilus' concern with hiding his feelings from the world and Criseyde's appreciation of his discretion. With the proliferation of the love lyric in the fifteenth century, the need for secrecy continues to be stressed. One poem gives the ten commandments of love and includes secrecy among its rules:

Secretly behaue you in your werkes
In schewing countenaunce or meuing of yur  iye;
Though soche behaauor to some folke be darke,
He that hath loued wull it sone aspie.

(Robbins no. 177).
Somewhat more complex is the lover's attitude of humility. Such an attitude certainly has an important place in the English love lyric and in other genres but it is difficult to correlate this general manner precisely with the more formal humility of the troubadours. In the Provençal lyrics, there is certainly an analogy between the lover's service to his lady and that of a vassal to his overlord, an analogy used also by the trouvères. In the poetry of both the north and south of France, the terminology of feudal service is adopted. This conscious imagery is far less prominent in English poetry. In the early lyrics, the sense of the lover's humility is refracted through his superlative praise of the lady and his general awe at her perfection, rather than through the feudal language of the troubadours. Occasionally a French term is found which carries overtones of the feudal lord-vassal relationship, such as "driwerie" (C.B. XIII no. 52, l.76) and "beaudoun" (Brook no. 4, l.8), but these are exceptions.

In the early lyrics, the lover's humility is implied rather than stated. Even when the lover tries to describe the quality of his lady, he comes closer to a religious reverence than to feudal service, as for example in this declaration by a Harley poet:

Leuesi wip al miht
my loun is on pe liht,
to menske when y may;

(Brook no. 5)

With Chaucer, Gower and their successors, there is a greater emphasis on the lover's service but even at this stage it does not involve the precise feudal similes and metaphors found in troubadour and trouvère poetry. In Chaucer's own lyrics there is frequent stress on the desire to serve the lady:

For so good and so fair as ye be
Hit were right gret wonder but ye hadde
Of alle servantes, bothe of goode and badde;
And leest worthy of alle hem, I am he.

(A Complaint to His Lady, 11. 64-67).
The concept of service is seen also in the later poems in the frequent references to the lady as the lover's "suffernage" or "hertes quene". However, it remains a far more general attitude than is seen in the poetry of the troubadours and trouvères. A further variation favoured by the later poets is to place more importance on the lover's service to the god of Love, a development owing more to the tradition of the "court of love" poems and the love allegories than to the feudal imagery of the earlier French poets.14

Indeed, many of the more formal aspects of the lover's behaviour, which do find a more prominent position in the later lyrics, can be explained by the popularity of the love-allegory, especially Le Roman de la Rose, rather than by the direct influence of the troubadours. Charles of Orleans, for example, shows how his service to love makes him careful to revere all women and he begs them to take no offence if he praises his lady:

Ye ladies and allo fayre bothe lowe and hie
That herith this me praysing my lady
I yow bische to take no displesera
I say hit not to yowre disprayse for-thy
But me to shewe hir servaunt to y dy
(Ballade 9)

Such an attitude is recommended to lovers by the god of Love in Le Roman de la Rose, as Chaucer translates:

And all wymmen servo and preise,
And to thy power her honour reise;
And if that ony mysanier
Dispise wymmen, that thou moist here,
Blame hym, and bydde hym holde hym stille.

(ll. 2229-2233)

While the English poets have a clear view of the way the lover should comport himself, this view is not rigidly controlled and flexibility in both situation and attitude is seen. Essentially, the lover's outward behaviour involves humility, discretion and faithfulness, but these ideals form only the outer shell of the analysis of love in the lyrics.
The inward experience of love is more complex yet also less subject to variation. Its complexity is at least partly owing to the diversity of sources from which the imagery used in the exposition of love is derived. For the medieval period, the "loveris maladye of loving" is medical fact, so that the description of its symptoms and the picture of the sick lover are not entirely metaphorical. However, this view of the lover certainly shades into metaphor in the ramifications which involve the lady as the lover's physician and his hyperbolic fear of death. As well as from medical treatises, this imagery derives from biblical and classical literature. Indeed all the basic imagery of wounding, warfare, thirst, hunger, snares, is found in both sources.

In classical poetry it is used as a means of portraying, not without humour, the powerlessness of the lover to control his feelings. His emotional state is expressed through imagery which sees him as the victim of outside forces over which he has no influence. It conveys, also, the disruption of his normal way of life. In biblical literature, however, the same imagery reflects a judgement, implying that weakness of the flesh produces its own suffering.

As a result of this varied heritage, medieval descriptions of love as an emotion show a uniform imagery but widely differing potential interpretations. It is my view that critics have tended to overlook the possibility of the same imagery being used for different purposes: each significance being governed by its specific context. For example, the famous descriptio Cupidinis, which brings together much of the conventional imagery from Alanus de Insulis' De Placitu Matris, is clearly the springboard for many literary definitions of love, but the fact that poets imitate this definition does not necessarily mean that they are using them in the same way. Pamela Gradon, however, makes no
allowance for the different contexts of Alanus' description and that in Petrarch's *Trionfi* or a love lyric by Alain Chartier.\(^{17}\)

The overall effect of Alanus' definition is that it warns against love, not, as Paul Pfeiffer has said, simply because the bad qualities outweigh the good, but because, in the balanced structure of the definition, each good effect is cancelled by a bad one. Alanus' description has its role in the context of the work as a whole, the message of which is to warn men against immoderate and perverted sexual indulgence. The *descriptio Cupidinis* is fundamentally a definition of what happens when the senses are allowed to rule instead of reason.

Physical pleasure may result but the true effect is disruptive to harmony:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Pax odio, fraudique fides, spes juncta timori,} \\
\text{Est amor, et mistus cum ratione furor.} \\
\text{Naufragium dulce, pondus leve, grata Charybdis,} \\
\text{Incolusis languor, et satiata famæ.}^{19}
\end{align*}
\]

While Natura does not condemn love confined to the limits imposed by moderation and sobriety, she wishes to show that the man who is the servant of love, and thus of his senses, is giving himself up to evil.

When Jean de Meung puts this definition into the mouth of Reason in his continuation of *Le Roman de la Rose*, he is simply presenting Alanus' argument in dramatic form. However, this doctrinal view of love, which condemns the senses, is not necessarily that taken by poets using the same definition.

Taken out of context, and divorced from moral judgement, Alanus' antithetical description is also an accurate account of a psychological state. This is particularly appropriate for the medieval poets, who need to reconcile the idea of a literal sickness, as described in the medical treatises, with the pleasure of love. Such a position invites the oxymoron of the *descriptio Cupidinis* without necessarily involving any
condemnation of love itself.

Very careful analysis of these definitions is required, therefore, in order to establish the purpose of an individual poet. If the lyrics which stand solely as definitions of love are examined, they are seen to have more in common with the didactic tradition than with that of love poetry. This is especially true of "Loue is a selkud wodenesse" (C.B. XIII no. 9) which has a vocabulary tinged with biblical disapproval:

Loue is a selkud wodenesse  
bat be idel mon ledeth by wildernesse,  
bat burstes of wilfulescipe and drinket sorwenesse  
And with lomful sorwes menget his blithnesse.

"Loue is sofft, loewe is swet, loewe is goed sware" (C.B. XIII no. 53) is less rigorously biblical in its language but the tone is essentially the same, with the last stanza being cleverly worded so as to embody a warning to everybody. The ambiguous "mid" can refer either to the lover who courts "lauedi", "maide" or "quene" or to the ladies themselves:

Loue comse wip kare and hendep wip tene,  
Mid laueidi, mid wive, mid maide, mid quene.

These poems can be seen more clearly as warnings against sensual love if they are compared with the description of spiritual love given by Rolle. In this, a similar balanced structure is used, but the images which describes the negative side of love in the definitions of sensual passion, are here shown as good, positive qualities. Hence the destructive fire of sensual love becomes a cleansing flame which destroys sin; the burden is light; the bonds are natural ones linking blood and bone, rather than the restricting bonds of passion:

Lufe es thought wyth grete desyre, of a fayre louyng;  
Lufe I lyken til a fyre, bat aloken may na thyng;  
Lufe vs clenses of oure syn, lufe vs bote sail bryng;  
Lufe be keynges hert may wyn, lufe of joy may synge.

Lufe es a lyght byrthen, lufe gladdes þong and alde;  
Lufe es with-outen pyne, als lefors hase me talde,  
Lufe es a gastly wynne þat makes men bygge & balde,  
Of lufe sal he na thyng tyne, þat hit in hert will halde.
Lufe es be swettest thyng but man in orth has tane,
Lufe es goddes derlyng, luf byndes blode & bane;

Rosemary Woolf compares Rolle's lyric with the definition poems, noting a particular similarity between the metre of "Lufe is sofft,
loue is swet, loue is good sware" (C.B. XIII no. 53) and Rolle's poem:

The similarity of metre suggests that Rolle may have known the poem from which this quotation comes: certainly in style it could have formed a transition between the French manner and that of the mystical poetry. For the French style, with its many Latin analogues, insists primarily upon epigrammatic paradoxes: whereas the English is more concerned with the insistence upon the power of love, conveyed through the accumulation of definitions. In Rolle's poem there are no paradoxes...and the substance of the poem is not in origin poetical, for it derives from the Incendium amoris. But certainly it would not have been given this structural and stylistic form, had it not been for the precedents, remote perhaps, in French, and immediate in English literature.21

Here, the paradox in the English poem is underestimated. Undoubtedly, the structure is not so tightly antithetical as in the descriptive Cupidinis, but, nevertheless, the statements about the good effects of love are neutralized by the references to its ill effects. The reference to the lack of paradox in Rolle's poem, however, touches the crux of the matter. The definitions of sensual love imply that physical pleasure can be bought only at considerable cost, hence the paradox. Rolle's poem, commenting on spiritual love, shows how the ingredients of suffering from sensual passion can be put to advantage. In the same lyric, Rolle makes a direct comparison between fleshly love and the love of Christ:

But flescly lufe sal fare as close be flower in may,
And lastand be na mare pan one houre of a day,
And sythen syghe ful sare par lust, par pryde, par play,
When pai er casten in kare til pyne bat lastes ay.

The definition poems which stand alone, without the supporting context of a narrative or a love lyric, therefore, fit into this didactic picture, which condemns immoderate sensual indulgence. However, this
does not prevent poets from using similar antithetical definitions in love lyrics and narratives in contexts which do not indicate a didactic intention. In love lyrics, such definitions are in fact analyses of the conflict of the lover's emotions. When a poet writing towards the end of the medieval period makes these traditional antithetical statements about love, there is no tinge of disapproval or self-deprecation; he is merely analysing a state of mind in the terms available to him, which are readily comprehensible to his audience:

   The figurat dairt Invennomit with bliss,  
   forgit with lufe and fedderit with delyt,  
   Withowttin wame hes wondit me, I-wiss;  
   (Robbyns, no. 132)

   The individual metaphors and similes which make up these definitions have both biblical and widespread literary backgrounds. Indeed, Peter Dronke has demonstrated how much of the traditional medieval imagery of love is universal in its application. Nevertheless, much of this imagery occurs in the classical literature which would have a direct influence on medieval writers. The hyperbolic description of love as a sickness, for example, although both a part of medical lore and universally popular, would have had added interest from its appearance in Ovid's poetry. In the *Heroides*, there is a detailed account of the sickness of love when Canace describes her feelings for Muscereus:

   fugerat ore color, macies adduxerat artus  
   summebant minimos ora coacta cibos;  
   nec somni faciles et nox erat annua nobis,  
   et gemitum nullo laesa dolore dabam.  
   nec, cur haec facerem, poteram mihi reddere causam  
   nec noram, quid amans esset; at illud eram.  
   (XI, 11. 27-32)

   Equally well known, although lacking in detail, would have been the reference to love as a sickness from the *Canticum Canticorum*:

   1) Fulcite me floribus, stipate me malis:  
      quia amore langues.  
   (II, 5)
2) Adjuro vos, filiae Jerusalem, si inveneritis
dilectum meum, ut nuncietis ei quia amore langueo.

(V, 8)

It is reference to the Canticum Canticorum which reminds us of the exciting possibilities of varying source material with context. Chaucer's manipulation of Ovidian and biblical imagery in The Merchant's Tale is an interesting example. Damian is portrayed in the secular tradition of the lover:

Almoost he swelte and swnowned ther he stood,  
So soore hath Venus hurt hym with hire brond,  

(ll. 1776-7)

January, on the other hand, who has convinced himself that wedlock is "so esy and so clene" describes his feelings in terms of the Song of Songs:

Com forth, my white spouse! out of doute  
Thou hast me wounded in myn herte, O wyf!  

(ll. 2144-5)

For the medieval period, of course, the Song of Songs had allegorical import, so that January's choice of imagery represents an amplification of his earlier tenet, "Love wel thy wyf, as Christ loved his chirche" (l. 1384).

Chaucer's manipulation of sources highlights the gap between January's own perception of his desire and its true nature. While skill of this calibre is not usually displayed in the love lyrics, an awareness of the possible sources of the imagery of love and the different significances such imagery can have is nonetheless important if we are to appreciate the full potential of medieval attitudes to love.

The imagery of the lover wounded by love can be used simply to convey the suffering of the emotion, as was seen with January, or it can fit into the wider context of the warfare and hunt of love. The major development of the warfare metaphor is its allegorical treatment in Le Roman de la Rose. The influence of this work on the use of wounding and warfare
imagery is very clear in the love lyrics. The early poems rely less on the full-scale drama of warfare, but, nevertheless, frequently portray the wounded lover. The aggressor may be the lady or Love personified, while the later poems rely more on Cupid and the battle framework, revealing both the heightened desire to display classical knowledge and the influence of Le Roman de la Rose. Again, the background is both biblical and classical for the wounding trope:

1) Vulnerasti cor meum, soror mea sponsa,
   vulnerasti cor meum in uno oculorum tuorum,
   et in uno crine colli tui.
   (Canticum Canticorum IV, 9)

2) Et mihi cedet Amor, quamvis mea vulnerat arcu
   Pectora, iactatas excutiatque faces.
   Quo me fixit Amor, quo me violentius ussit,
   Hoc melior facti vulneris ultor ero:
   (Ars Amatoria, Book I, 11. 21-24)

The development of the more general context of warfare can be seen in Ovid's Amores:

Militat omnis amans, et habet sua castra Cupido;
Attice, crede mihi, militat omnis amans.
quae bello est habilis, Veneri quoque convenit aetas.
turpe senex miles, turpe senilis amor.
   (Book I, ix, ll. 1-4)

The major predecessor of allegorical warfare is the Christian epic of Prudentius, the Psychomachia, which depicts battles between Vices and Virtues.

The imagery of sickness, wounding and its wider framework of warfare is employed extensively by the Goliards and troubadours:

1) roseus effugit ore color,
   blandus inest meo cordi dolor.
   cura crescente,
   labore vigente,
   vigore labente,
   miser morior,
   hei morior, hei morior, hei morior. 24

2) Pres n'ai lo mal don cug qu'aurai la mort, 25
   Si'n breu de temps no fai de que m'cofort.
   (Guilhelm Ademar)
3) Unius in amore
puelle vulneror
multimodo dolore, 26
per quem et atteror.

4) El dieus d'amor a.m nafrat de tal lanske;
Don no. m ten pro sojornars ni jazers; 27
(Folquet de Marselha).

5) Ergo militemus
Simul Veneri; 26

6) Ieu am plus fort selieves que me guerreya,
Pus er l'am tan que m'es mal'enemya. 29
(Guilhem de St. Leidier).

The suffering of love is also expressed through variations on the
metaphor of fire. Such imagery is used by the Church Fathers to describe
lust:

And if the flesh has seen the flame, let us not
cherish that flame in our bosoms, that is, in
the depths of our heart and the inward part
of the mind. Let us not instil this fire into
our bones, let us not bind bonds upon ourselves, let
us not join in conversation with such as may
be the cause to us of unholy fires. The
speech of a maiden is a snare to a youth, the
words of a youth are the bonds of love. 30

Classical poetry yields many examples of this imagery but most appropriate
are the numerous references of Ovid:

Cedimus, an subitum luctando accendis ignem?
Cedamus! leve fit, quod bene fertur, onus.
vidi ego iactatus mota face crescere flammae
et vidi nullo concutiente mori.

(Onores I, ii, 11. 9-12)

It is a popular category of imagery for Goliardic poets and troubadours:

1) Ignis vivi tu scintilla,
discurrens cordis ad vexilla;
igni incumbens non pauxillo
conclusi mentis te sigillo. 31

2) Mos volers cans
Qu. m sal denan
Me fai creire qe futz es pans, 32
(Raimbaut d'Orange).
Behind this whole range of expression lies a unifying theme, the sense of the lover as a passive victim who suffers effects which are not of his agency and over which he has no control. Since the lover is in fact the pursuer of the lady, this is an interesting reversal of the true situation, signifying, perhaps, his rational reluctance to submit to his own desires. However, whatever the psychological motivation behind such imagery, a further extension of the theme is to be found in the projection of the lover as the prey of the lady, as a captive. A range of metaphors may be used to convey this idea; chains, bonds, reins, yokes, enslavement. Once more there is the dual biblical and classical background for these ideas:

1) Et inveni amariorem morte mulierem, quae laqueus venatorum est, et sagena cor ejus, vincula sunt manus illius:

   (Ecclesiastes VII, 27).

2) Iusta precor: quae me nuper praedata puella est aut amet aut faciat, cur ego semper amem!

   (Ovid, Amores I, iii, 11. 1-2)

Many variations of this imagery are seen in the lyrics of the Goliardic poets and the troubadours. One Latin lyric shows the lover boldly demanding an equal yoke for himself and his lady but ends with a recognition that he is in fact the lady's prisoner: "tue reus, domina, dulcedini". A troubadour, Guillem de Pietier, is unable to loosen the chains by which his lady binds him: "No m solvera de son lia m".

This basic imagery forms the raw material from which the medieval poets mould their analysis of the lover's emotions. It reappears continually throughout the period, although shifts in attitudes towards style give it a different complexion in the fifteenth century poems.
The sources for this picture of love's "joly wo" are biblical and classical, and Alanus de Insulis' *descriptio Cupidinis* is an important drawing together of the popular metaphors and similes. The use of oxymoron in this passage lends itself to both the didactic purpose for which he designed it, to warn against immoderate sexual indulgence, and also to the purpose of the secular poets who wish to portray emotional conflict. The terms used to convey the depth and quality of the emotions are hyperbolic, just as the praise of the lady was seen to be, for her perfection both demands and justifies an excessive response.

The pivot of this suffering is the lady herself, but with her, too, lies the remedy, and the lover often polarises his picture of woe with projections of the ecstatic joy fulfilment of his desires could bring. One means of describing this joy is through the use of religious imagery. However, this is a complicated category in which the developments across the period are fundamental and qualitative, instead of involving simply the more superficial changes in style.

The Harley poets, seeking the highest expression of love's joy, make use of religious comparisons and terminology because they wish to equate their physical and emotional experience with the highest spiritual aspirations they know. The lady is "blipe yblessed of Crist" (Brook no. 3); the physical consummation of love is "heaven"; "heuene y told al his, pat o nyght were hire gest" (Brook no. 5).

H.J. Chaytor has noted comparable expressions of love's joy in troubadour poetry, but here the religious imagery is more thoroughly integrated into the love ethos of these poets. In the English lyrics, such comparisons are less systematised. In troubadour poetry, adoration of the lady may well reach the stage at which the lover may "apprehend the divine through her". The English poets, however, place far less emphasis on the spiritual possibilities of love. For them, the use of
religious imagery represents the lover struggling to find an analogy to express the intensity of his emotion and the value he places on the fulfilment of his desires.

These occasional comparisons have an intensity quite lacking in the formal elaboration of religious imagery into the mock religion of love which is found in the later lyrics. W. Neilson has shown how the development of the mock religion of love goes hand in hand with the Court of Love framework, found first in Provençal, Old French and Latin poetry. In the Romaricimontis Concilium or Concile de Remiremont of the late eleventh or early twelfth century, an assembly of ladies of religion discuss love and the poem develops into a debate about the relative merits of clerks and knights. The poem also contains a parody of a church service, in which Ovid is read in place of the gospel and love songs are sung instead of hymns. Similarly, Jean de Condé's La Messe des Oiseaux et li Plais des Chanonesses et des Grises Nonains contains a mock religious service given by birds. Commenting on the similar mixture of elements in Gower's Confessio Amantis, Neilson says:

We have noticed from time to time in previous chapters a tendency of the prevailing metaphor in the Court of Love to change from the feudal to the religious. A temple sometimes replaces the castle; prayers with incense and offerings take the place of legal pleadings; and an altar with a statue appears instead of a throne occupied by a living sovereign. It has already been remarked also, that the religious forces that thus crept into the allegory were not those consistent with the worship of a pagan deity, but were rather those of medieval Christianity. Venus, in fact, was put in the place of the Virgin; or rather, the modes of adoration of the Virgin were transferred to the shrine of Venus. Auxiliary to this was the fashion of using the terminology of religious devotion towards a lady in non-allegorical poetry.

The extent to which this parallel religion of love is developed varies considerably. Sometimes it is no more than the application of
religious terminology to certain areas of love, while on other occasions it involves major extensions of the theme. In the *De Arte Loneste* *Amans* of Andreas Capellanus, for example, we are told of an afterlife in which lovers are punished or rewarded according to their former practice of love's laws. A major influence on the English poets must have been *Le Roman de la Rose*, which clearly involves many elements of the mock religion of love. The god of Love in this poem is clearly far more than a personification of love or a classical deity, he has complete power over men:

he can chanles daunten, he
And maken folkis pride fallen;
And he can wel these lordis thrallen,
And ladies putt at low dege,
When he may hem proude to see.

(ll. 880-884)

His attendants are compared to angels; "For they were lyk as to my sighte, To angels that ben fethered brighte" (ll. 741-742). The garden in which the god of Love reigns is "a place espirituel" (l. 650) and unlike any place "in paradys" (l. 652).

It is this formal, parallel religion which can be seen at work in the fifteenth century lyrics. What for the Harley poets was a single metaphor or simile became for the fifteenth century an elaborate structure for encompassing their analysis of love. Although not a major feature of the imagery in Charles of Orleans' ballade sequence, it is nevertheless a recurrent idea:

In lowers paradise as them among
Not long to come myn hert shalle have a place
And ellis a trouthe me thynkith he had wrong

(Ballade 24).

This is clearly far removed from the urgent directness of the Harley poet who compared the whole of heaven to one night with his lady. Charles' "lowers paradise" is consciously literary and is not an attempt to reflect the emotional response of the lover. With Lydgate, too,
there is a conscious evocation of a literary scene in "Every maner creature" (MacCracken no. 6):

Who parte out of Paradys,
From that place so ful of glorye,
Wher as Mirthe is moste of pryse,
And Ioye haue souerain victorie,
What wonder whanne he haue memorye,
Of al, though he beo dul of chere,
For I am euer in Purgatory
But whanne I see my lady dere.

That this is the literary garden of the tradition of Le Roman de la Rose is made quite clear from the reference to the personified figures of Mirthe and Ioye.

The religious imagery of the Harley poets is no less conventional than that of the fifteenth century, but it is not organised into an artificial structure. Moreover, it is introduced in direct language which creates an impression of an immediate emotional response on the part of the lover. Lydgate and Charles of Orleans, on the other hand, are obtrusively derivative in their allusions to the religion of love, and with Lydgate particularly, the diction is consciously literary rather than a "selection of the language really used by men". This systematizing of imagery causes a qualitative change, removing from it the intensity and sense of awe with which the Harley poets employed it. As a parallel religion, the religion of love runs along equivalent but separate lines from the true religion. The reward of the lover is no longer analogous to the true Heaven but has its own separate reality.

Although the imagery outlined above is part of the accepted view of love in medieval poetry and, as such, is not confined to any one genre, there are certain categories of imagery, like the mock religion of love, which are more particularly a feature of the longer, narrative love allegory. The influence of the love allegory is not seen to any great extent in the love lyric until the later fourteenth century. There is one earlier poem, "Blow norther wynd" (Brook no. 14), in which elements
from the love allegory appear, but here they are used in a manner distinct from that of the later lyrics. In this poem a miniature Court of Love allegory is introduced into what has hitherto been a straightforward love lyric in praise of the lady. It is used as a conscious contrast to the method of the rest of the poem and is a complete episode in itself.

In the later lyrics, there is a tendency for the allegorical device of personification to be used on a fragmentary basis, not necessarily within a completed narrative. Also, the imagery most frequently associated with the narrative love allegory plays a more dominant role. The Court of Love framework and its attendant legal imagery is one such category. Neilson has shown that the roots of the Court of Love concept lie in classical descriptions of Venus, in which great power is ascribed to her, even over the other deities. The troubadours are the first to refer to the god of Love as an arbiter in love disputes. BERTOLMEO ZORZI, for example, shows the god of Love passing judgement on a pair of lover after he has heard both sides of the argument. More formal courts are to be seen in the Romaricimontis Concilium, Florence et Blancheferret and Jean de Condé's Messe des Oisaus et li Plais des Chanonesse et des Grises Nonains. The extent to which allegory is used as a narrative method in such works varies but Neilson has demonstrated a close link between the Court of Love framework and the use of allegory.

This is the background to the Court of Love allegory in "Blow, norbl wynd", in which the lover takes a lawsuit to the god of Love and receives his judgement. This framework and legal imagery is used also by Charles of Orleans in his ballade sequence, as well as in an anonymous fifteenth century poem, The Parliament of Love.

One category of imagery associated with the love allegories and,
in English, with the later love lyrics is the symbolism of the heart. There are many variations on this imagery; the hearts of the lady and the lover may be personified and play independent roles in an allegorical narrative or the heart may be used as a symbol of the faithful service of the lover. An early sophistication of this symbolism occurs in the French crusade songs of the twelfth century, a genre which soon merged with the love lyric. As the warrior takes leave of his lady, her heart is said to go with him or his heart to remain with her:

La! k'ài je dit? Ja n' m'eu part je mie!
Si li core va servir Nostre Signor,
Mes cuers remauint del tot en sa baillie.

(Conon de Béthune).

This conceit is discussed at length by Chrétien de Troyes in Cligès (ll. 2779-2814), who decides that it is logically impossible, since no one can be in two places at once and no one can have two hearts. The problem is overcome later in the poem by an exchange of hearts. Cligès takes Fénice's heart to England while his stays with her in Greece.

Despite its early appearance in French poetry, however, the giving and exchanging of hearts does not become really popular in English poetry until the fifteenth century. In the Harley lyrics, there is an oblique reference to this idea in "Blow, northene wynd", (Brook no. 14). In the allegorised section, the poet suggests that the lady has control of his heart:

To Loue, þat leflich is in londe,
y tolde him, as ych vnderstonde,
hou þis hende hap hent in honde
on huerte þat myn wes,

With the fifteenth century poets, however, conceits involving the exchange of hearts are increasingly popular. They may have derived the imagery direct from French sources, but more likely through Chaucer, who employs it at least twice in his later poetry. In Book II of Troilus and Criseyde, the exchange of hearts in Criseyde's dream is an elaboration
of the Italian source material. Troilo is the dreamer in Boccaccio's
*Il Filostrato* and he sees Crisyeide's heart torn out by a wild boar.
Chaucer, however, has Crisyeide as the dreamer, and she sees her own
heart torn out by an eagle, who replaces it with his own:

> And as she slep, anonright, tho hire mette
> How that an egle, fethered whit as bon,
> Under hir brest his longe claws sette,
> And owte hire herte he rente, and that anon,
> And did his herte into hire brest to gon,
> Of which she nought agroos, ne nothyng smerte:
> And forth he fleigh, with herte left for herte.

(ll. 925-931)

The exchange of hearts is found also in *The Squire's Tale*:

> I yaf him al myn herte and al my thoght
> God woot and he, that ootherwise noght
> And took his herte for chaunge of myn for ay.

(ll. 533-535)

For Charles of Orleans the idea is a constant source of imagery. In
one ballade, the personified heart is sent out to the lady, but, since
she does not yet return his love, she does not send him her own heart
in exchange. The poet wonders how long he may live in this "heartless"
state:

> Who ist nmy liue or longe goon on his feet
> Withouten an hert as y my lijf haie lad
> Now certis noon that dar y yow bihet.

(Ballade 20)

The love allegories also contain figures who are not abstracted
emotional traits or features of the lovers themselves. Among these,
Venus, Cupid and the god of Love are obvious and widespread examples
whose roles need no preliminary discussion in connection with the
love lyric. An important part is also played by Fortune, who is a
more complicated figure in medieval poetry.

Although originally a pagan deity, she is usually integrated
into the Christian ethos by the medieval poets.
philosophical discussion of Fortune occurs in Boethius' *Consolatio*. In Book I, she is shown to be constantly changing; she is the least trustworthy when she appears to be smiling, and is capable of proving to men their true friends when she sends adversity. In Book V, Boethius states what becomes the standard view of her in Christian philosophy. She is seen as an inscrutable agent of Divine Will; as Chaucer translates and explains:

Right so fortune, that semith as it fletith
with slakid or ungoverned bridles, it suffreth
bridelis (that is to seyn to be governed), and
passeth by thilke lawe (that is to seyn,
by the devyne ordenaunce).

(Book V, Metrum 1).

In his poetry, Chaucer makes use of all of Boethius' ideas about Fortune. In the *Balades de Visage sans Peinture* he discusses the idea of change and the way Fortune reveals to men their true friends. He allows Fortune to state her role as an agent of Divine Will:

Lo, th'execucion of the majestee
That al purveyeth of his ryghtwysnesse,
That same thing "Fortune" clepen ye,

It is this connection between Divine Will and Fortune that culminates in Troilus' inner debate on pre-destination and free will in Book IV of *Troilus and Criseyde*. However, for the most part, the philosophical and religious ramifications are beyond the scope of the love poets. They treat Fortune more as she appears in *The Book of the Duchess*, as capricious and treacherous, as someone to blame when love goes wrong.

Clearly, the fifteenth century poets had numerous precedents for assigning Fortune a role in love. Apart from the famous Chaucerian passages, she also occupies an important position in French poetry. Chaucer himself made use of French sources such as Machaut's *Jugement dou Roy de Behaigne* in *The Book of the Duchess* for the section on Fortune. She also appears in the lyric poetry of Machaut and Deschamps. In John Gower's *Cinkante Balades*, there is an interesting denial of the
accepted view of constant change. The lover has suffered for so long that he can see no likely release and the permanence of his sorrow leads him to reject Fortune:

Fortune om dist, de sa Roe vire ades;
A mon avis mais il n'est pas ensi,
Car as toutz jours la troeve d'un reles,
Qe jeo sai nulle variance en li,
Ainz est en mes deseases establi,
En bass me tient, q'a lever ne me lesse:
De mes amours est tout ceo qu jeo di,
Ma dolour monte et ma joie descrese.
(Balade XX).

Such an individual view, however, is not usually taken in fifteenth century love lyrics. The most detailed picture of Fortune is given in Charles of Orleans' long poem Love's Renewal (Steele pp. 156-178), which, in the English version only, connects the two halves of his ballade sequence. Here, it is mainly her appearance which concerns the poet. The major characteristic of her apparel is the motif of change seen in its varying colour and the different patterns worked in embroidery:

That forto say yow how she ware hir gere
Hit was y-doon hardly at poynat devise
And if that y shalle say yow what sche were
But verrv god me bou't it passyng nyse
Alle though it riche were of a wondir prise
For eyrmore the coloure gan to chaunge
So semyd me hir surcot verrv straunge

For the body was kowchid thorugh & thorugh
As eyrmore a Saphir and a balayse
That to bholde it as y tolde yow now
So as the playtis up and downe arayse
So did dyuurse the hewe in sondry wise
For thogh on wey the Safir shewid blew
This way the balise geveth a purpil hew

(ll. 4974-4987).

For the lyric poets Fortune is seldom an excuse for detailed description but instead is used as a butt when love is unsuccessful.

A further aspect of the expression of love in the later lyrics
is the increased amount of classical allusion, although this is linked more to the developments in style which encourage imitation of Chaucer and a more ostentatious show of learning. Indeed, when many of the fifteenth century poets use classical imagery, it has a Chaucerian flavour. Charles of Orleans, for example, compares his sorrows with those of the Furies, echoing a similar reference in Troilus and Criseyde:

Karfulle Seufan that waylith ay in woo
Which clepid is the goddess of torment
Nadde never half the greef thou hast as no
(Ballade 74)

Chaucer's reference to the Fury is:

To thee I clepe, thou goddesse of torment
Thou cruel Furie sorwynge evere in peyne.
(Troilus and Criseyde, Book I, 11. 8.9).

In the same poem Charles declaims "O Lachesse to longe thou makist thred," while Chaucer has "Til Lachesse his thred no longer twine" (Troilus and Criseyde, Book V, 1. 7). Despite the different contexts of the two poets' references, Charles' phrasing suggests a Chaucerian source rather than a directly classical one.

The above survey covers the major categories of imagery used by the poets of the love lyrics to analyse the emotion of love. Superimposed on this prevailing imagery are stylistic developments which give the fifteenth century poems a different flavour from the earlier lyrics. These are developments of technique and diction rather than any change in the attitude to love itself, and an examination of these trends will be an important part of the ensuing analysis of individual lyrics.

2. The Pre-Chaucerian Love Lyric

It was seen at the beginning of the chapter that the earliest extant English love lyrics and fragments of love poems used the conventional
imagery to describe the emotion of love. 52 Unfortunately there is so little lyric poetry surviving, which pre-dates the Harley collection, that it is difficult to draw conclusions about the early development of the genre. However, if analyses of love in the early romances are also taken into account, one clear point emerges. There is an obvious movement from brief, pithy statement to considerable amplification of the analysis of emotion.

The brevity of the earliest lyrics must not be taken as an indication of simplicity. On the contrary, the terseness and allusiveness of the descriptions of love point to the confidence of the poets in handling the imagery. The complexity of "Foweles in pe frith" (C.B. XIII no. 8) has been noted in Chapter II. 53 Similarly, the poem described by Carleton Brown as "perhaps the earliest example of the secular lyric" is sophisticated in its allusion to a situation instead of overt statement; it is a poem of evocation and feeling rather than of fact. 54 Peter Dronke has mentioned the "possibility of wordplay" 55 in a brief lyric found in a collection of thirteenth and fourteenth century sermons:

So longe ic haue lauedi
yhoued at pi gate
bat mi fot is ifrore faire lauedi
for pi luve faste to pe stake. 56

He suggests the double meaning "the stake as gatepost, and as the place of execution of love's victim". If this is the case, then I think the possibility of further allusion must be considered. The use of the verb "ifrore" in conjunction with the stake and its corollary of fire is an oblique use of the oxymoron of the definitions of love.

Similarly brief analyses of love are found in the earliest versions of romances like King Horn and Sir Beves of Hamtoun. 57 The Harley lyrics, with their greater amplification of the theme of love,
are comparable to romances of the same period. In the Auchinleek MS. of Guy of Warwick, Guy's declaration of love, which is more detailed than similar passages in King Horn or Sir Beves of Hamtoun, shows many of the devices of the Harley lyrics, which are used to give fuller expression to the emotions:

\begin{verbatim}
þou art þe þing þat y most þerne,
Fro þe no may mine hert terne;
Upon al oper þy loue þe,
Y no may it letæ ded to þe.
Vnder heuen no þing nis,
Noþer gode no qued þy-wis,
þat þy for þe don þy nolde
To letæ þat liif don þy wolde.
þou art mi liif, my ded þy-wis,
Wipouten þe haue þy no blis;
Y loue þe and tow nouȝt me,
Y dye for þe loue of þe.
Bot þou haue merci on me,
For sorwe ichil me self þle,
For wistestow þe heynesse,
þe sorwe and þe sorinisse,
þat is on me niȝt ant day
\end{verbatim}

(11. 357-373)

Guy singles out Felice from all other women. "Opon al oper I love þe"; this might be compared with lines from the refrain of "Bytuene Mersh ant Aueril" (Brook no. 4):

\begin{quote}
from alle wymmen mi loue is lent
ant lyht on Alyson.
\end{quote}

There is repetition of a basic idea, with changes of form and emphasis. Guy describes the lady as both his life and death and later declares "I dye for þe love of þe". In "Mosti ryden by Rybbesdale" (Brook no. 7), there is a similar repetition of thought in lines 24("for duel to deþ y dreȝe") and 29("y dye for deþ þat me demeþ").

The fuller expression of the early fourteenth century lyrics and romances is not achieved through a widening in the scope of the basic imagery but through the use of rhetorical devices, many of which can be classified according to the categories described in the rhetorical
treatises. Within the Harley lyrics can be found examples of \textit{Exclamatio}, \textit{Repetitio}, \textit{Interrogatio} and \textit{Ratiocinatio}, all of which enable the poet to amplify his analysis. The use of rhetorical devices in these poems has a quite different effect from their use in the fifteenth century lyrics, however. In the earlier poems, the use of dialect and of direct colloquial and proverbial phrases means that the rhetorical devices are less obtrusive, whereas the ornate diction of the later lyrics emphasises the rhetorical figures.

Although the conventional analysis of love is used and amplified in the Harley lyrics, it is not simply a case of a repetitive formula recurring in the poems. In the hands of these poets, the conventions are never static, but always invested with a fresh nuance or emphasis. Sometimes this is achieved by a variation in the method of making a statement. In "Bytuene Mersh ant Aueril" (Brook no. 4) the poet describes the lover's sleepless state, first directly, "Nihtes when y wende ant wake", then through a simile which has a proverbial ring to it, "wery as water in wore". When another poet wishes to describe the sleeplessness of the lover, the imagery is varied again, although the simile has a proverbial sound; "my rest is wiþ be re" (Brook no. 5).

These poets are conscious too of the onomatopoeic possibilities of their alliteration, so that it is possible for the sound to reinforce the meaning of a line. In the same poem we find the line "y gred, y grone, unglad", which carries a distinct echo of the lover's grinding teeth. It is by attention to details of this kind that the Harley poets give fresh vitality to the imagery of love.

Inevitably some phrases are repeated and thus do not have the freshness which characterises the poems as a whole, but these generally fit the requirements of alliteration:

\begin{verbatim}
 to deþ þou hauest me diht,
y deþ e longe er my day;
\end{verbatim}

(Brook no. 5)
Apart from phrases of this sort, repeated from poem to poem for the convenience of alliteration, the attention to detail and to the integration of thought and structure makes each of these poems a highly individual work.

"Bytuen Marsh ant Aueril" (Brook no. 4) contains four integrated strands of thought: a spring opening, description of the lady, expression of the lover's suffering, and a joyful refrain. As was noted in Chapter II, the spring opening is linked in thought to the joyful refrain because of the note of hopefulness it introduces; it anticipates and justifies the lover's joy. Theo Stemmler has shown how the refrain is also linked technically to the stanzas by its rhyme scheme; the refrain following the same pattern as the last four lines of each stanza and repeating the rhyme of the last lines through the name "Alysoun".

The description of the lady is an amplification of the poet's declaration in the refrain. He states that he is lucky to have placed his affections upon one above all others. Such a statement of the lady's superiority requires the support of a more specific description. In turn, this concentration on her superiority and beauty justifies the excessive degree of emotion felt by the lover. The arrangement of the stanzas is such that portrait and emotion are juxtaposed to give a structural reinforcement of ideas. Although the imagery is conventional, involving the hyperbolic expectation of death:

Botehe me wol to hire take
forte buen hire owen make
longe to lyuen ichulle forsake
ant feye fallen adoun.

and the sickness of love evoked through the symptoms of sleeplessness
and pallor:

Nihtes when y wende ant wake,
forþi myn wonges wakeþ won;

the finished poem has its own individuality, which is a result of the
close interdependence of structure and thought. The careful integration
of ideas lends conviction to the conventional expression of love. The
poet's use of the first person and the active voice give the poem the persona-
force and sense of urgency normally associated with the lyric genre, features
which are sometimes replaced by a more indirect mode of expression in
fifteenth century poems.

A tightly integrated structure is also a characteristic of "Wip
longyng y am lad" (Brook no. 5). Stemmler has drawn attention to the
stanza-linking by alliteration and to the repeated pleas to the lady which
bind the stanzas and give the lyric a personal note. He found these
the only device used to connect the thought of the poem, however:

Ohne dies ständen die einzelnen Gedanken
und Motive unverbunden und ungeordnet
nebeneinander. 53

Yet there are further connections within the poem which give an under-
lying unity to the ideas expressed. In the first stanza, the reference
to the lover's madness as "on molde" is not simply an alliterative
line-filler, it is the key to our understanding of the antithetical
balancing of this stanza with the fourth. The first stanza is the
current and actual nadir of the poet's suffering, the reality of which
is realised in the phrase "on molde". The fourth stanza is a dream
wish of the peak of joy he could achieve:

heuene y tolde al his
pat o nyht were hire gest.
The references to heaven and earth capture these two extremes, and, in turn, both antithetical experiences are a result of the same phenomenon, the lady's superlative beauty, which is described in the fourth stanza:

Lylie-whyt hue is,
hire rode so rose on rys,
bat reue me mi rest;
wymon war ant wys,
of prude hue berep pe pris,
burde on of pe best.
bis womon wonet by west,
bryhtest under bys;

In these first and last stanzas, it is the opposed words "molde" and "hevene" which point to their structural balancing; in the central two stanzas, it is a coincidence of phrasing which shows a link. Both stanzas begin with the word "LeUedi" and both first lines contain a superlative. The force of the phrase "of alle londe", in the first line of the second stanza, is "best in the world" and this is balanced by the lover's response in the third stanza; he reacts "wib al my miht".

As a completed work, therefore, the poem has a number of internal links to give it unity. There is a concatenation of stanzas brought about by the alliterative links and the repeated pleas to the lady; then there are the verbal links within the stanzas which give internal correlations of ideas, so that the first stanza is linked to the fourth and the second to the third. In a way similar to that seen in "Bytuene Meurh ant Aueril" (Brook no. 4), the lyric's organisation of the conventional analysis of love, involving the lover's madness and sorrow (stanza 1), captivity (stanza 2) and death (stanza 3), gives it its own individuality. The reader is conscious of a poet actively controlling and moulding the stereotyped imagery into a new synthesis.

With another of the Harley lyrics, "A wayle whyt as whalles bon" (Brook no. 9), discussion of the poem is hindered by difficulties over the order of the verses. The stanzas are of six lines, with the exceptions
of the sixth and the ninth. Stanza 6 has an extra two lines, one of which is irregular in length, while stanza 9 has only five lines. These inconsistencies have led critics to believe that perhaps the stanzas as they stand in the manuscript, and as reproduced by Brook, are in the wrong order.

The main theories about the correct arrangement of the stanzas are discussed by Stemmler. He is in favour of the solution put forward by J.A. Gibson in 1914. Another assessment of the poem has been made by Stuart Degginger, who takes no account of Gibson's thesis. It seems to me that Degginger's interpretation of the poem relies on a misunderstanding of the first two stanzas and this makes it difficult for him to trace a coherent line of thought through the lyric. I would agree with Stemmler in accepting Gibson's construction of the poem and I would interpret the poem along the most obvious lines, rejecting Degginger's unnecessarily complicated analysis.

In my interpretation, it is a lyric in which the lover describes his emotions, the reaction of the lady, and gives an account of her physical beauty. It differs from the previous lyrics in that it gives certain circumstantial details as well. From the line "while y may glewe" (Brook l. 5) and from the devices which are seen by Gibson as opening topoi (Brook ll. 39-40), the lover is established in the role of the minstrel. In the normal way of things he is able to please his lady by singing to her:

\[
\text{hire gladshipes neuer gon, whil y may glewe.}
\]

Now that he is in love with her, his suffering prevents him from singing:

\[
\text{Hou shal bat lefly syng pat bus is marred in mornyng?}
\]
The basis of the relationship has changed; from being her minstrel, the lover now aspires to be the lady's lover. The matter is further complicated because the lady is married:

\[ y \text{ wolde chaunce myn for his pat is here fere. } \]

For this reason the lover is unable to declare his love:

\[ nys \text{ no fur so hot in helle al to mon pat loue\text{p} derne ant dar nout telle whet him ys on. } \]

Again, it is in the handling of the imagery of love that the poet excels, for his material is predictable enough; the lady is responsible for his sorrow; he is likely to die before his time; her eyes have wounded him. The arrangement of these ideas is, however, masterly. In stanza 2, according to Brook's edition, the poet notes that the lady is happy when he sings to her. This fact is followed by his own surmise that a woman is happiest when "heo ys blype to bedde ybroht". This is a subtle projection of his own desires on to the lady. He has seen her happiness in the permissible pleasure of his singing to her; he would like her also to be aware of the sexual happiness he could bring her.

His own suffering and yearning are related to his contemplation of her beauty, so that cause and effect are brought together:

\[ \text{Hyre he}^e \text{ hauep wounded me ywisse, hire bende browen, pat bringe}^p \text{ blisse; hire comely mouth pat minte cusse in much murpe he were; } \]

Stammler has shown too how the poet opposes his feelings for the lady with hers for him, and this polarity is structurally strengthened by the use of alliteration:

\[ \text{Durch gleiche Alliteration...sind die Gegensatzpaare ausgewogen. Damit ben}ügt sich der Dichter jedoch nicht; Auch der Rest der Strophe is antithetisch aufgebaut: } \]
This is illustrated in the following lines:

Ich vnne hire wel ant me wo;  
ycham hire frend ant heo my fo;

Through this opposition of ideas, the poet conveys the tension between his potential happiness and his actual suffering. By referring to the lady's reaction to him, he captures succinctly the paradox of love, its antithetical nature. Clearly, this technique is of limited application, not allowing the poet any complex analysis of the interplay of emotions between lover and lady. It is in this field that allegory has a useful role to play and it is easy to imagine how a later poet might have allegorised this type of passage. Instead of referring to the lady as the lover's "fo", for example, he could select one trait from her character, probably calling it "Daunger" to stand for her rejection of him. By so doing he would have more scope to explore other facets of her emotional or psychological response. The allegorical method can release the poet from turning alternately from lover to lady and can allow him freedom of movement to analyse a more complex emotional situation. In this lyric, the reader is not aware of any strain in the devices used to present both sides of the picture, but clearly there are not many more variations open to the poet.

In fact, allegory is used in only one of the Harley lyrics, but it is clear from this example how its use can give more freedom. It occurs in "Blow, norhene wynd" (Brook no. 14) after the long description of the lady's beauty. Its function is to portray, in dramatic form, the internal conflict caused in the lover by contemplation of the lady's beauty and excellence. It is not used here to explore the emotions of both parties but to give a more detailed and varied analysis of the lover's feelings and behaviour. Essentially it describes the process of taking a decisive step forward in the
As Leo Spitzer has shown, the allegorical section takes the form of a lawsuit in which the lover makes a complaint to Love personified. He explains how his heart is in the control of "Sykyng, Sorewyng ant poht". These are not simply personified abstractions, for they are given a further dimension by the poet in being identified as knights in the service of the lady. They have overcome the power of Peace within him. Again, Peace is projected as a ruler under attack rather than simply as an abstraction. The judgement of Love is that the lover should address his plea to the lady at once and the culmination of the allegory in this specific counsel completes it neatly. The result is a self-contained explication of the workings of the lover's mind which lead him to make this decision. The lawsuit framework and the concrete identities of the personifications give the allegory an easily comprehensible shape and prevent it from becoming too abstract.

The final stanza takes up again the anaphora technique seen in the first half of the poem and concludes the lyric by a summary of the lover's symptoms:

For hire loue y carke ant care,
for hire loue y droupne ant dare,
for hire loue my blisse is bare,
ant al ich waxe won;
for hire loue in slep y slake,
for hire loue al nyht ich wake,
for hire loue mournyng y make
more pen eny mon.

Again, detail is important. In the last line the lover states that he suffers the symptoms of love more than any man, and the intensity of his emotion is an appropriate response to a lady who has been described as the quintessence of perfection.

An alternative to the allegorical technique for portraying both sides of the relationship, an actual dialogue, is seen in "My dep
y loue, my lyf ich hate, for a leuedy shene" (Brook no. 24), in which both the girl and the lover are present to state their feelings. Both Stemmler and Brook have commented on the similarities of this lyric to the pastourelle, basically because of the dialogue between girl and clerk and the pattern of rejection followed by capitulation in the girl's part. However, it omits the opening formula of a chance encounter. Instead, it starts at a point where the clerk has already made some headway with the girl, since we learn that they have already "custe (vs) fifty sype".

If humour exists in any of these lyrics, then it is surely here, and it lies in the gap between the tones of the two lovers and, at the end of the lyric, in the way that gap is closed. Stemmler has noted the difference in the language of the two participants but does not detect the humour:

Ein besonderes Merkmal dieses Gedichtes ist ferner die Diktion, die aus verschiedenen Bereichen zusammengesetzt ist.72

He sees the mixture of tones as evidence that the poet belongs to the Goliardic school:

Dieses Nebeneinander von zwei Stilebenen lässt sich leicht dadurch erklären, dass der Verfasser von Br. 24 offenbar zu den Vaganten gehörte, die mit fast allen literarischen Einflussmöglichkeiten in Berührung kamen und die nichts hinderte, höfische und goliardische Elemente in ihren Dichtungen zu verbinden.73

The clerk expresses his love in an elegant manner, using the elevated, exaggerated conventions of the refined literary lover. He grows pale, a symptom of love's sickness:

al y falewe so dop pe lef in somer when it is grene.74

He is made captive by the personified features of his mood, to the extent that he fears madness and eventual death:
He describes the object of his love according to the descriptive conventions for portraits of noble ladies; she is his "leuedy shene", "briht so daies liht".

The girl's response to this rhetoric, however, is a rigorous "Do wey, þou clerç, þou art a fol". This is followed later by the proverbial "be is bettere on fot gon þan wycked hors to ryde", and by invective ("Be stille, þou fol"); all of which is quite uncharacteristic of a "leuedy shene", whose disdain should be of a more dignified nature.

The situation is like that of Nicholas and Alison, and indeed follows the same pattern, with the pose of virtue on the girl's side being soon cast off. Yet, with her virtue, she also abandons her realistic tone, and slips into the refined rhetoric of her lover:

"þou semest wel to ben a clerç, for þou spekest so stille; shalt þou naer for mi loue woundes pole grylle;

Like Alisoun, she is impressed because her lover "spak so faire" and now that she is no longer protesting her innocence, she too adopts the language of love, the smooth veneer which disguises the sordid transaction.

The parody of refined love here adds another dimension to the conventional imagery. After two stanzas of outpouring from the clerk, supposedly aimed at the distant and disdainful lady of the courtly bower, comes the contrasting prosaic retort of the girl, with the result that both clerk and girl become the butts of humour. It is this humorous element which may well explain the poem's lack of the normal pastourelle introduction. When this is used, the reader expects the persona to encounter a peasant girl; here, however, the poet wishes to withhold the true identities of the pair until the moment when the
disparity between the lover's tone and his intention becomes clear.

With "When pe nyhtegale singes pe wodes waxen grene" (Brook no. 25), the main interest is the spring introduction and the way this is integrated into the main body of the poem. However, Stemmler has also noted how a sense of urgency is created by the lover's repeated pleas to the lady:

ich haue siked moni syk, lemmom, for þin ore
(1. 6)
Sweete lemmom, þench in me, ich haue loued þe þore
(1. 8)
Sweete lemmom, y preye þe of loue one speche;
(1. 9)
Sweete lemmom, y preye þe of a loue-bene;
(1. 13)
Sweete lemmom, y preye þe þou louie me a stounde.
(1. 19)

Stemmler comments:

Bestimmend für das ganze Gedicht wird eine einzige Bitt-formel, die sich jeweils über einen ganzen Vers erstreckt. Um deren Eindringlichkeit zu erhöhen, wird ihr erster Teil dreimal unverändert wiederholt, während der zweite Teil nur in der Formulierung - nicht bedeutungsmäßig - leicht verändert wird. ⁷⁵

Once again, there is a sense of directness and personal involvement through the use of this repeated plea, which invigorates the conventional picture of the lover as suffering from the wound of love and sighing in despair.

Analysis of some of the individual love lyrics from MS. Harley 2253 shows that the poets are alive to new possibilities in imagery which is totally conventional. By organisation, by tone, by variations of detail and emphasis, they prevent the stereotyped expression of love from stagnating. In comparison with thirteenth century lyrics and
romances, they show greater amplification of the theme of love. For Stemmler these poems represented both a high point and finishing point in the tradition of the English love lyric. As far as style is concerned, they do represent such a finishing point, since with Chaucer and his successors the native alliterative style, the use of dialect and rigorous colloquial language are abandoned. Despite this, the basic analysis of love remains unchanged, and it is only by comparison of the later poems with the earlier that a true picture of the changes in style can be assembled.

3. Fifteenth Century Lyrics
A. The Developments in Style

An important part of the success of the Harley lyrics was the adaptation of conventional imagery and formal rhetorical devices to create a sense of urgency and personal conviction. The extent of this success can be gauged by the reactions of critics who, trusting their first impressions and failing to recognise the many literary forces at work in the lyrics, saw in them vestiges of spontaneous folk art. With the fifteenth century poems comes a reversal of this situation; the reader's first impression is of an impersonal, abstract, highly stylised poetry.

The reasons for this change are neither simple nor uniform, but it is possible to isolate some of the most important developments. The general linguistic trends of the fifteenth century, which are discussed in Chapter 1, meant that there was a move towards a standard literary language based on the London dialect; a trend which militated against the individuality of diction seen in different dialects. Superimposed on this more standardised language was the conscious development of an ornate style, bound up with imitation of Chaucer. A clear statement
of the admiration felt for such a style is made by Dunbar in *The Goldyn Targe* (Mackenzie no. 56):

O reverend Chaucer, rose of rethoris all,
As in our tongue ane flour imperial,
That raise in Britane evir, quho redis rycht,
Thou beris of makaris the triumph riall;
Thy fresh annamalit termes celicall
This mater could illumynit have full brycht:
Was thou nought of oure Inglisch all the lycht,
Surmounting evry tong terrestriall,
Alis fer as Mayis morow dois mydnycht?

O morall Gower, and Ludgate laureate,
Your sugurit lippis and tongis aureate,
Bene to oure eris cause of grete delyte;
Your angel mouthis most mellifluate
Oure rude langage has clere illymynate,
And faire ourgilt our speche, that imperfyte
Stude, or your goldyn pennis schupe to wryte;
This Ile before was bare and desolate
Off rhetorike or lusty fresch endyte.

(ll. 253-270)

Clearly Dunbar is cultivating here the very style he is praising. His choice of a Latinate vocabulary, revealed in such words as "imperiall", "annamalit", "celicall", "terrestiall", is itself an example of the type of "overgilding" he describes.

The ornate style practised in the fifteenth century involves the use of such aureate diction; that is, of Latin, French and, sometimes, obscure technical or scientific words, out of their proper context, in preference to simpler, native words. The selection of aureate vocabulary is governed not by a desire for precision of meaning as for a flowing, dignified sound and an elegant, sophisticated tone. Where the emotions of the lover are concerned, there is perhaps less scope for this panache than in passages describing scenes or people. However, aureate vocabulary is certainly in evidence in some of the more abstract Latin and French terms used to convey the lover's suffering and, sometimes, in the imagery. Lydgate in *The Floure of Curtesye* (MacCracken
no. 4) has one stanza illustrating the use of abstract terms and of aureate imagery:

Thus may I se[yne, and pleyn[e]kes] alas!
My woful ho[ur]e and my diss[enture],
That doulfy stoude in the same case,
So ferre behynde, from al helth and cure.
My wounde abydeth lyke a sursanure.

With diction of this kind, the reader is continually conscious of an obtrusively literary intention, where the simpler vocabulary of the earlier lyrics resulted in a more direct expression of emotion. The "sursanure" simile in reference to the lover's wounds might be compared with the simpler, more naturalistic statement of a Harley poet, "Hyrre heue hauep wounded me ywisse" (Brook no. 9, l. 25).

Imitation of Chaucer is revealed not only in the cultivation of a more sophisticated diction but also in the increased amount of classical allusion. It has already been noted that much classical allusion in fifteenth century poems seems to owe more to Chaucer than directly to classical sources. The reference to Troilus in an anonymous lyric, for example, draws not only Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde but also on the reference to the lover as a second legendary figure found in Chaucer's lyric To Rosemounde:

Go litill bill, with all humblis
unto my lady, of womanhede be floure,
And saie hire howe newe troiles lithe in distre3,
All-onely for hire sake and in mortall langour;

(Robbins no. 190)

For Lydgate, classical allusion is often a means of ornate amplification of a theme. Such is the case with the second stanza of A Complaint, for Lack of Mercy (MacCracken no. 2). The weeping lover is a stereotyped picture, but Lydgate develops an elaborate hyperbole in which he uses metaphor, simile, a somewhat submerged personification, and references to Nyobe and Myrra deriving from Ovid's Metamorphoses.
When Charles of Orleans uses classical allusion there is also a sense of imitation of a medieval source rather than a specifically classical one. In one ballade he refers to Pygmalion, who fell in love with a stone statue he carved. The comparison is fully developed taking in the ideas of the lover as an equivalent of Pygmalion, the intensity of love, and a picture of the lady as paradoxically flesh and blood but as merciless as if she were the carver's stone figure. Charles has probably derived his allusion from the story of Pygmalion in Jean de Meung's continuation of Le Roman de la Rose:

The gret kerver the prince pigmalioun
Karfe in ston so quykly a figure
The bewte of which so raught him his resoun
That he hir lovid so hoot out of mesure
To that she turnyd a flesshely creature
So ofte he prayde to god and hir aloon
But ye the whiche seme flesshely of nature
For ought y pray y fynde yow but a stoon.

(Ballade 90)

The ornate style also involves a more ostentatious use of rhetoric. Both *figurae verborum* and *figurae sententiarum* are used for a more consciously literary effect. Of course, the earlier poets used rhetorical figures, but with a different intention. Favourite *figurae verborum* are *exclamatio*, *anaphora* and *conduplicatio*.

The *exclamatio* of the Harley poets is usually reserved for the lover's direct pleas to the lady and this way has a clear function in adding a sense of urgency to the lover's plight:

Adoun y fel to hire anon
ant crie, 'Ledy pin ore!
Ledy, ha mercy of by mon!

(Brook no. 32)

This direct approach might be compared with an *exclamatio* from Lydgate's *Complaint of the Black Knight* (MacCracken no. 3), in which the poet takes the opportunity of making a classical allusion in the form of an invocation:
O Nyobe! let now thi teres reyn
Into my penne

(11. 178-9)

Here the *exclamatic* is being used for a consciously literary effect; indeed the lover's concern with how he expresses his emotion shows an obtrusive preoccupation with style quite absent from the earlier poems.

The *anaphora* in "Blow, northen wynd" (Brook no. 14) in which the lover describes his sorrow is clearly a conscious rhetorical feature, but its combination with uncomplicated language and its not over-lavish use allows it to function as a means of emphasis, as well as being *stylistically decorative*:

For hire loue y carke aut care,
for hire loue y droupne aut dare,
for hire loue my blisse is bare;
aut al ich waxe won;
for hire loue in slep y slake,
for hire loue al nyht ich wake,
for hire loue mournyng y make
more pen eny mon.

The fifteenth century poets take a more obvious delight in the device for its own sake. One anonymous poem has a "farewell" *anaphora* which continues long after its emphatic function has been established:

ffarewell ladi of grete pris,
ffarewell wyse, both fair & free,
ffarewell frefull flourdelys,
ffarewell burell bright of ble. 84

(Robbins no. 205)

There follow twelve more stanzas in the same vein. A ballade
(no. 59) by Charles of Orleans in which each line begins with the word "alone" is another example of the somewhat brash employment of the device seen in the later poems.

It was demonstrated how the poet of "lenten ys came wip love to toune" (Brook no. 11) used *conduplicatio* very subtly in his last stanza to bring together the important words in the poem for emphasis. The same technique
may be found in the fifteenth century lyrics, but again it is used obtrusively, with the repetitions being placed in close proximity so that they are immediately obvious to the reader or audience:

\[
\text{What is this lijf a lijf or deth y lede} \\
\text{Nay certes deth in lijf is lyklynes} \\
\text{(Ballade no. 60).}
\]

In this case, Charles of Orleans is manipulating the meanings of his words in such a way as to justify the rhetorical device on more than simply ornamental grounds. However, the change of technique is clear.

In the use of metaphor and simile, the most frequent types of figurae sententiarum in the lyrics, there are two main developments which give the traditional imagery of love a different complexion. Firstly, there is a tendency to amplify the basic features of the suffering of love in a far more elaborate way. Much of the expression of sorrow in the Harley lyrics is through direct statement, simple phrases such as:

\[
\text{Ich libbe in loue-lenging} \\
\text{(Brook no. 4)}
\]

\[
\text{Weping hauep myn wonges wet} \\
\text{(Brook no. 6)}
\]

In the later poems such statements are often an opportunity for the introduction of a decorative metaphor or simile. These are popular because the later poets take a delight in such imagery for its own sake rather than because it adds anything to our understanding of the lover's state. In *A Complaint, for Lack of Mercy* (MacCracken no. 2), it is not enough for Lydgate merely state the fact that the lover is weeping; he goes on to describe the extent of the lover's tears, taking the opportunity to introduce classical allusion:

\[
\text{The salt teres that fro myn yen reyne,} \\
\text{Theyre tyme spente yn wepyng, & not els,} \\
\text{Which may be called the petows floses twyne;} \\
\text{And pe hede sprynge with his whofull welles} \\
\text{Of dedly constreynte my corage so compellys,}
\]
Lyke Nyobe and Myrra fast by,
Which wepten euer, as theyre story tellys,
Withoute recure, for lacke of mercy.

Although the comparison is appropriate, the introduction of classical figures makes the reader more aware of the poet as interpreter of the lover's feelings, where in the earlier lyrics a sense of directness was cultivated.

Side by side with this tendency to be more elaborate in the use of imagery is a qualitative change in the mode of expression of that imagery, which is a feature particularly noticeable in the analysis of emotion. This is the trend towards abstract rather than concrete comparisons. Where the Barley poets have a strong visual emphasis in their imagery, the later poets sometimes make the literary quality of the love they are describing more obvious by using abstract rather than concrete comparisons. Charles of Orleans describes his restlessness by reference to a romance:

When I am leyd to sleep as for a stound
To ha e my rest y kan in no manere
For alle the nyght myn hert aredith round
As in the romance of plesaunt pancer

(Ballade no. 6)

If this intellectual rather than visual simile is compared with one from the Harley lyrics, the effect is seen to be very different:

Icham for wowyng al forwake,
Wery as water in wore.

(Brook no. 4).

Further comparison might be made with Gower's technique in the Cinkante Balades. He too uses the idea of water agitated to convey the lover's restless state. Here the comparison is developed into an elaborate tableau, however, where the Harley poet's simile was succinct. In Gower there is a more obvious delight in developing the full visual potential of the imagery:
De la fonteine ensi comme l'eau pure...
Tressaill et buée et court aval le prêe,
Ensi le coeur de moi, je vous assure,
Pour votre amour demeine sa pensée;
Et c'est toutdits sans repos travaillée,
(Balade VII).

If the more abstract imagery of the later poets is further examined it can be seen that in quality it often represents a distillation of what has been fully explored in visual terms by earlier poets. The metaphor of the wound of love provides an example. A Harley poet describes love entering his heart like a spear:

When je nyhtegale singes, je wodes waxen grene;
leff ant gras ant blosme springes in Auoryl, y wene,
ant love is to myn herte gon wi^h one spere so kene,
nyht ant day my blod hit drynkes;
(Brook no. 25).

Charles of Orleans speaks of the wound of love thus: "Plesaunt bewte (Ballade no. 71) had wounded sore myn hert" / Here the personification is one reason for the abstract quality of the line, but it is also interesting that Charles omits any reference to the way the wound was inflicted. While he is not bound to elaborate on this statement, of course, I feel that he is nevertheless relying here on a submerged visual impact which is supplied from other sources. The arrow "Beaute" has been fully illustrated in Le Roman de la Rose, as Chaucer translates:

The swiftist of these arowis fyva,
Out of a bowe for to dryve,
And best fethered for to fle
And fairest eke, was clepid Beaute.
(11. 949-952).

The later poet's more telegraphic method of referring to the wound may rely on an audience fully aware of its potential visual realization.

These stylistic developments—the use of aureate diction, rhetoric employed with panache, a move towards a more conceptual imagery in the analysis of emotions—are not, of course, confined to the lyric genre in the fifteenth century or indeed to secular poetry. Similar
developments in the longer love allegories and narratives are particularly relevant to what is happening in the lyric. In Lydgate's Complaint of the Black Knight (MacCracken no. 3) aureate diction is employed in the description of the knight's sorrow, and this undoubtedly contributes to the impersonality of the passage, although it is mainly caused by the modesty topos affected by the author in imitation of Chaucer's opening to Troilus and Criseyde. This makes the reader aware of the poet rather than of the lover:

For vnto wo accordeth compleyning,
And delful chere unto heuynesse,
To sorow also sighing and wepyng,
And pitouse morenyng vnto drerynesse,
And who that shal writen of distresse,
In partye nedeth to knowen felyngly
Cause and rote of al such malady.

(ll. 183-189).

Anaphora is used across three consecutive stanzas in the Kingis Quair.

Although the device is very suitable to the catalogue the poet is giving, it is clearly being used very obtrusively:

The lyoune king and his fere lyonesse,
The pantere, like vnto the smaragdyne,
The lytill squarrell full of besynesse,
The slawe aso, the druggare beste of pyne,
The nyc6 ape, the werely porpayne,
The percyng lynx, the lufare unicorne,
That voidis venym with his euour horne

(W. 155f).

From the same poem we see the tendency to use the more elaborate intellectual smile when describing the lover's sorrow:

As Tantalus I travaile ay but-les,
That ever ylike hailith at the well
Water to draw with buket botomles,
And may nought spede, quhois penance is ane hell.

(v. 70).

The lyric also shares with the longer, narrative poem the predilection for allegorized imagery as a means of focussing closer attention on the
workings of the lover's mind in response to the lady. Undoubtedly the impetus towards the extensive use of allegory in fifteenth century English poetry comes from Le Roman de la Rose, although in France the narrative love allegory was firmly established well before this was written. The main developments in fifteenth century allegory are the loss of concrete visualisation and, sometimes, of a clearly defined function for the personifications.

The personified figures in Le Roman de la Rose are given external reality by their detailed descriptions. Daunger, who is a particular favourite of the later poets and who appears to have been an invention of Guillaume de Lorris, is suitably menacing. Chaucer translates:

With that sterte out anoon Daunger,
Out of the place were he was hid.
His malice in his chere was kid;
Full gret he was and blak of hewe,
Sturdy and hidous, whose hym knewe;
Like sharp urchouns his her was growe;
His eyes reed sparclynge as the fyre glowe;
His now frounced, full kirked stood.

(11. 3130-3137)

This clearly reinforces the personification as imagery; it is as if the poet had said Daunger is like a man who has the following appearance.

The fifteenth century poets tend to omit this vitalizing description, so that their personifications are often total abstractions. In The Goldyn Targe (Mackenzie no. 56), Dunbar produces a list of the attendants of "Suet Womanhede", none of whom is described beyond what is implied in the personification itself:

Sche led wyth hir Nurture and Lawlynes,
Contenance, Pacience, Gude Fame, and Stedfastnes,
Discrecioun, Gentrise, and Consideraunce.
Lewe ful Company, and Honest Besynes,

(11. 163-168).

The function in the narrative of all these figures is summarised in a single line: "All their bure ganyeis to do me grevance". The Kyngis Quair
relies far less on personification of abstract traits, and where they do occur they are linked to a specific role. However, there is by no means the individualising detail given in *Le Roman de la Rose*:

\[
\text{Strue at the dure Fair Calling; hir veschere,}
\text{That coude his office doon in connyng wise,}
\text{And Screttee, hir thrifty chamberere,}
\text{That besy was in tyme to do seruise.}
\] (v. 97)

The trend is not confined to fifteenth century English and Scottish poetry. Similar developments are seen in fourteenth century French allegories, such as Machaut's *La Fontcinne Amoureuse* and Neilson has found a comparable situation in the early Provençal allegory, the *Chastel d'Amors*:

\[
\text{It is a specially pernicious kind of allegory,}
\text{for it is so impossible to visualize the things}
\text{described that the concrete side of the parable}
\text{goes to confusion and the poem is inconsistent and}
\text{incoherent throughout. 90}
\]

The personifications have gained popularity as figures in their own right and this leads poets to employ them as an integral feature of the analysis of love without adequate regard to their full allegorical development. This "devitalization" of the personifications often accompanies a failure to develop more than one continuous level of meaning, so that the allegory is no longer, in Pamela Gradon's term, "truly polysemous". She points to Lydgate's *Temple of Glas* as an example of this type, which begins by raising our expectations of allegory but develops into simple narrative. Lydgate's *Complaint of the Black Knight* also uses allegorical devices in a non-allegorical context. 91

Clearly, this is what is happening in many of the later love lyrics in which individual personifications occur, not within a developed allegory but almost as an extension of poetic language. A similar situation is seen in fourteenth century French lyrics. Machaut and Deschamps use personifications in their lyrics, sometimes on a fragmentary basis and sometimes as part of fully developed miniature allegories. In
one of Deschamps’ ballades, the familiar figures occur with neither
description nor distinguishing role to give them life:

\[
\text{Je fu jadiz emprisonnez} \\
\text{En la tour Dangier le villain,} \\
\text{Pour ce que trop enamoure} \\
\text{Fu de la tresbelle qui j’ai.} \\
\text{La m’assailli Honte et Deadain} \\
\text{Et Faulx Semblant li ypocrites,}^{92}
\]

Chaucer, also, in his Complain unto Pity, uses the allegorical method and
its occurrence here must have influenced the later lyric poets. An
analysis of the poem is useful because it shows many of the trends which
become major features of the fifteenth century lyrics. The use of
allegory here may also be compared with that of the Harley lyric,
"Blow, nor\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ wynd" (Brook no. 14).

Chaucer’s lyric may be divided into three sections.\(^{93}\) The first
explains how the lover stands in relation to the lady; the second
describes the lady’s reception of the lover, and both these sections
display "truly polysemous" allegory. The third is the lover’s Bill of
Complaint, which, although closely connected to the allegorical narrative,
could exist independently of it, simply as a plea for mercy.

The first section shows the lover complaining of the "cruelt\_\_\_\_\_\_e and
tirannye" of love and seeking Pity as an intermediary and an ally, both
to plead for the lover with Love and avenge him on Cruelte. The allegorical
presentation here allows room for a more detailed analysis of the lady’s
reactions. The Harley poets, who made little use of allegory, were
prepared to accept the simple polarity of the lover’s adulation and the
lady’s distance. Here the lover addresses himself to one quality in the
lady, which he hopes to arouse, Pity, in order to counteract the other
facet of her character, cruelty, already known to him.

The continuing coldness of the lady is portrayed through the concept
of the death of Pity and the description of the funeral.\(^{94}\) In this
allegorical presentation, division between praise of the lady and the analysis of emotion becomes blurred. Praise is refracted through the personifications themselves:

And freshe Beaute, Lust and Jolyte
Assured Maner, Youthe and Honeste,

These personifications lack the further dimensions of individual description found in *Le Roman de la Rose*, but they are contained within a completed narrative and their function is subtly indicated by the poet. In this second section, we see the personified virtues of the lady standing inert "withouten any wo" around the hearse. The significance of this tableau is not clarified until the *Bill of Complaint*, in which we learn that the lady's other virtues are useless to the lover until they are activated for his good by Pity, "coroune of vertues alle". This is an allegorical version of Pandarus' warning to Criseyde "Wo worth that beaute that is routheless" (*Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. II, l. 346), an idea which is picked up in several fifteenth century lyrics.

The *Bill of Complaint* is the means by which the lover amplifies his own suffering and this is done mainly in the conventional manner; he is near to death; he suffers "peynes smerte". It is linked to the main allegory by its consideration of what Pity could do for the lover. However, since we know that Pity is dead there is a sense of irony and pathos in the *Bill*. This section of the poem, in using the concept of the complaint and being in the form of a letter, also shows further formal stylistic developments important for their influence on fifteenth century poetry which are to be discussed later in the chapter.

In comparison with the allegory in "Blow, northene wynd" (*Brook no. 14*), Chaucer's use of it is clearly a strong movement in the direction which the fifteenth century poets are to take. The lawsuit framework and the
metaphorical roles of the personifications in the Harley lyric meant that a tight control was exercised over the functions of the figures. Furthermore, the metaphorical realisation of the personifications—Sorrow is a knight, Love is a judge, and so forth—was a neat way of compensating for lack of description, for which there is little scope in the short lyric. Clearly a knight is easily visualised, while sorrow, simply as a personification, is less tangible. Like Guillaume de Lorris, although of course on a much smaller scale, the Harley poet has thoroughly exploited the dramatic potential of allegory. A central conflict is resolved through a narrative in which the personifications have clearly defined roles. With the Chaucerian lyric, the construction is looser, the personifications are not fully realised through description or metaphor, and there is a movement away from clearly defined active roles, although this is in some part a result of the theme of the lyric itself. In particular, the list of personified traits surrounding Pity's hearse, although justified by Chaucer's desire to show them as inert virtues, is dangerously close to the abstract lists of personifications produced by later poets.

For further comparison, it is interesting to note how John Gower handles allegorical devices in his *Cinkante Baladea*. The popular personified figures do appear in these lyrics, but they operate in a kind of submerged allegory in which the poet/lover remains the interpreter of the thoughts and emotions, without allowing them to take on the roles of fully active personifications. In the following example, the presence of the poet, and the control over his thought, exercised by use of the possessive adjective, gives the later reference to thought as a *Messenger* a metaphorical force, similar in quality to that of the Harley lyric, and it becomes something more than a simple personification:

*Si mon penser* saveroit a sa venue
A vous, ma douce dame, recontier
Ma volente et sa revenue
Vostre plaisir a moi au ci conter,
En tout le mond n'eust si bon Messager;
Car Centmillfoitz le jour jeo luy envoie
A vostre court, tanque jis vous revoie.

(Balade VIII).

The active interpretative presence of the poet here prevents any barrier forming between the expression of his feelings and the audience.

In another poem, Gower allows himself a freer hand in the use of personifications, but the allegory remains subservient to the development of a central analogy, which in turn is a means of identifying or describing the personifications and thus once more prevents the lyric from becoming too abstract:

Camelion est une beste fiere
Qui vit tansoulement de l'air sans plus;
Ensi pour dire en semes la maniere,
De soul espoir qe j'ai d'amour conçuz

(Balade XVI).

The comparison of hope to the chameleon which lives on air develops into the paradox of the lover whose hunger grows the more he is fed. The allegorical elements are introduced only as a means of completing this central imagery. The lover is fed by Vain Hope; Hope prepares a feast at which Desire has a prominent role and at which Longing is a chamberlain:

N'est pas ma sustenance assetz pleiere
De vein espoir qe m'ad ensi repuez;
Ainz en devient ma faim tant plus amiere
D'ardant desir qe m'est d'amour accruez:
De mon repast jis sui ensi deçuz,
Q'ore voide main espoir ses douns presente,
Qui qu'est devant, souhaid n'est pas derere
Au feste quelle espoir avera tenuz;
A volonté sans fait est chamberere.

In using the popular personified figures, the poet is finding his own supporting framework for them. This is not the narrative structure of the Harley lyric, but the unity of the extended analogy imposes an equally
tight control on the operation of the personifications.

Chaucer and Gower both display an active concern with adapting the allegorical devices, which are more suitable for dramatic interplay within a fully developed narrative, to the lyric genre. Many of the fifteenth century poets, however, simply incorporate allegorical devices into their love lyrics without giving sufficient consideration to what is appropriate to the lyric genre.

The style of the fifteenth century lyric is further influenced by two widely used forms, the verse-epistle and the complaint, forms which often coincide, as in the Bill of Complaint in Chaucer's Complaint Unto Pity. The stereotyped formulae of letter-writing, derived from the ars dictaminis, are particularly appropriate for praising the lady in their use of effusive opening topoi. However, certain formulae are relevant to the expression of the lover's own emotions. It is the "health formula" which is most appropriate, and it is described by Norman Davis in his list of the most popular conventional items in fifteenth century English letters:

1. a conditional clause deferentially offering news of the writer's welfare;
2. a report of the writer's good health 'at the making of this letter';
3. thanks to God for it.

In the Duke of Suffolk's poem "Myn hertys Ioy, and all myn hole pleasaunce" (Robbins no. 189), the lover offers information on his own health in precisely the way Davis describes, only adapting the formula to accommodate his heartfelt suffering:

And yf ye lyst have knowlech of my qwert,
I am in hele - god thankyd mot he be -
As of body, but treuly not in hert,
The humility of tone is inherent in the letter style but, of course, it also coincides with the conventional attitude of the medieval lover.

The complaint is seen by N. Dean as an offshoot of epistolary literature, having its own conventions and deriving from Ovid's *Heroides*:

Evidence suggests that the Latin *planctus* is not the *fons et origo* of all "complaints", but the ancestor of the public lament; and that the personal love lament may be descended from Ovid's *Heroides*, those individual letters of complaint by miserable heroines.

Concerned mainly with Chaucer's individual adaptation of the complaint, Dean asserts that in general it is a genre which is impersonal and stereotyped in its presentation:

The "complaint", a cousin to the salut and the love epistle, appears to be derived from the classical epistolary elegies: the *Heroides*, *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*. In subject matter it is related at times to the *Amores* and the *Heroides*. In lack of individualization it suffers the effect of poetic theories like that of Hermogenes, the desire to idealize courtly subjects, and the increasing interest in form itself. With the proliferation of genres—ballade, virelai, chanson—an amatory complaint could appear in any form, including that of the love epistle, although Machaut for one considered it a separate lyric genre.

Clearly the use of epistolary formulae and the less flexible complaint form is another important factor in the more impersonal and stylized impression produced by the fifteenth century lyrics.

In considering of the large number of anonymous lyrics, the critic is faced with different problems. Undoubtedly many of these poems are exercises in the popular literary techniques of the time. Their survival is a result of social change rather than intrinsic merit. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, nearly all manuscripts were attached to the Church. Robbins (pp.xvii-xxi) divides these in which
lyric poetry is found into five main categories: Friar Miscellanies; Sermons and Sermon Note Books; Mystical and Devotional Works; and Closet Hymns. The secular lyrics remaining from this earlier period have survived in spite of these conditions, and obviously much has been lost to us.

Robbins states that in the fifteenth century, however, "the volume of writing increased by leaps and bounds" (p. xxi). Now the wealthy and the nobility were collecting poems for their own entertainment as well as turning their hands to composition. Again, Robbins comments: "many of the poems are obviously attempts at composition by non-professional poets" (p. xxxi). They are poems designed to fill a social rather than an intellectual need. John Stevens sees such lyrics as fitting into a framework of leisure and recreation. They repeat conventions because the conventions are appreciated for their own sake.

The literary critic is bound to make some distinction between such poems and those of professional poets or those with serious artistic intentions. It is not possible to group together all the fifteenth century love lyrics as an homogeneous collection.

B. The Use of Allegory and Allegorical Devices in Individual Lyrics

The most extensive use of allegory in the lyric is seen in the Ballade sequence of Charles of Orleans. The first half of the sequence, dealing with the lover's courtship of the Lady Beauty up until her death, uses allegory fairly consistently within the framework established in the poems which introduce the sequence. In this section, the allegorical figures are not the full-scale characters of *Le Roman de la Rose*, but neither are they merely ornamental devices. Charles attenuates the characters to suit the small-scale lyric genre. He also personalizes
them to suit his own psychological processes. Figures like Hope and Heart are projected as his friends, the relationship between the lover and these figures is close and intimate. In the ballades written after the long poem Love's Renewal, the allegory becomes less prominent and less consistent. The poet is still concerned with love, but other themes come to the surface—imprisonment, old age, death—and these are expressed not so much as part of a sequence but as subjects for individual poems.

The allegorical framework of the sequence is established in the introductory poem, La Retenue d'Amours, the first part of which is lost in the English version. Its substance, however, can be supplied from the French, and is summarised by Steele:

> Age is sent by Nature to bid Youth lead Charles to the service of the god of Love, where he is welcomed by Bel Acueil and Plaisance and presented to the god; who shows him Beauty. Beauty receives his submission and pleads his excuse to Love. Love bids him observe ten commandments. Charles swears to keep them and is given a patent of service leaving his heart in gage.

(p. xxx).

This framework, which clearly derives from the tradition of narrative love allegories which culminates in Le Roman de la Rose, is later linked to the ballade sequence by the withdrawal of the poet/lover into an "herber grene", where he sits down with pen and paper to write.

The method of introducing the personified figures in La Retenue d'Amours differs from that of Le Roman de la Rose in two important ways. Firstly, they are not fully realised through lengthy description. The figures in Le Roman de la Rose are substantiated by portraits which include physical and symbolic details. Ydelnesse, for example, is presented as the perfect lady of lyric and romance and also
associated with sexuality through the symbolism of her white gloves. Charles gives no description of his personifications either here or in the ensuing ballades, and this is a difficulty, especially for the modern reader who does not readily accept the allegorical method. However, the enormous popularity of Le Roman de la Rose may have meant that a fifteenth century poet could reasonably have expected his audience's own imagination to supply the descriptive reality of his figures. When he introduces Age, for example, the medieval audience may well have needed no prompting to recall such details as "A foul, forwelked thyng was she, / That whylom round and softe had be". Within individual ballades, the problem of bringing the figures to life is often surmounted by the situation they are placed in, which gives them an easily identified role.

Secondly, the personifications of Le Roman de la Rose are given their own existence, which is defined by the enclosed garden of the lover's dream world. This framework overcomes any objections we might have to the independent activities of single traits from the psyche by placing them beyond external reality. Charles gives no dream framework in the first half of the ballade-sequence to help bridge the gap between realistic and imaginary narrative. Instead, he launches directly into an autobiographical sequence of poems in which the main figures are illusory. Again, the modern critic has to allow for the literary taste of the period. The allegorical method of exposition is so firmly established in medieval poetry that the gap between realism and imagination may not have worried either poet or audience.

If these difficulties of changing poetic taste are not allowed to become barriers to our appreciation of what the individual poet brings to his work, then Charles of Orleans' lyrics have much to offer. One of the strongest advantages is that his use of an autobiographical
framework allows him to sustain the interplay of personifications from
lyric to lyric, at least in the first half of the sequence.

This is best illustrated by following through one of his favourite
figures. The lover's heart plays a major role, especially in the first
half of the sequence, and the poet treats it fairly consistently. At
times, however, it is only a personification in bas-relief, since it
does not always have a fully active role. Sometimes the lover acts
as an intermediary, interpreting the heart's emotions, even though we
know he is no longer in possession of it. In the Patent of Service, he
gives his heart to the god of Love as surety for his faithful allegiance,
and in the following, for which there is no French equivalent, he is
beginning to worry about the transaction. With a variation of the
exchange of hearts imagery, the poet begs the god of Love to allow him a
heart to replace his own:

Wherefore as this biseche y yow licence
Me forte graunt as of yowre nobille grace
To sew aftir my childisshe ynnocence
As for myn hert anothir to purchase
Where as y haue be-take myn for a space
A space: ye/ for while y lijf endure
I gete it not ayeyne, this am y sure.

(11. 91-97).

This develops into a conceit in which the lover reasons that the god of
Love really does not need all the hearts he collects and can therefore
afford to let him have the lady's as a replacement. This elaboration of
the exchange of heart's imagery appears to be derived from Thibaut's
Le Roman de la Poire, in which the lover's heart is also taken as a
pledge and the lover asks for the lady's heart in return. 106

This opening prepares the ground for the operation of the heart as a
personification in the ballade-sequence and it plays a major role in
the following poems, while occurring briefly in many others.

In the first half of the sequence, the lover treats the heart
as a confederate in his suit to the lady, as the chief recipient of joy and sorrow. Only at the time of the lady's death do the lover and heart seem to merge, suffering as one at the loss. In Ballade 2, the imagery of warfare provides the context for the heart's afflictions. The lady attacks it with her eyes and the lover's role is that of helpless observer:

By verry god ye sle me lo vpright
Which ouyrthrowith myn hert in such a plight
That what to doon not wot y welle y-wis

The heart is still under attack in Ballade 4 and is used effectively as a means of describing obliquely the lover's suffering. The heart is seen as naked and vulnerable because, now it is separate from the lover, it is no longer protected by his clothing:

How may he him diffende be pouer heart.
Ageyn two eyen when theyv pon him light
Which nakid is withouten cloth or shert
Where in plesere the eyen are armýd bright

The description is effective because the imagery relating to the personification coincides with our knowledge of the relative situations of the lover and the heart. It is also more effective in the English than in the French, for two reasons. In the English version there is a pun on the word "light". Consistently, the lady of the love lyric is seen as having the power to irradiate the lover's life and this power is often linked to the shining quality of her eyes. Fifteenth century poets frequently pun on the various meanings of the word "light". The offsetting of the verb "light" with its rhyme companions "bright", referring to the lady's eyes, exploits both the idea of radiance and the striking of the eyes at the heart; a possibility not contained in the French "assailler". Similarly, the English description of the heart as "withouten cloth and shert" reinforces the personification far more than the abstract French
adjectives "seul, desarmé, nu et tendre".

In the following stanza, the heart is further substantiated by its projection as a valorous soldier. The method is indirect, with the poet using vocabulary which establishes a situation rather than giving a visual impression. The noun "cowert" and, more important, the verbs "flight", "ouyrthrowe", "yelde", convey a warfare situation:

Then must he dye or yelde him as cowert
For to gret shame is flight for any wight
Or manly to abide his greevous smert
To that a-saweone he ouyrthrowe vpright.

This type of definition by situation helps to give depth to the personifications, preventing them from becoming too abstract. At the same time, it is an individual method of employing conventional imagery.

A dialogue between the lover and the heart occurs in Ballade 6, with the lover putting forward the type of argument to be expected from the personified figure of Reason, while the heart's replies are emotional. The lover warns the heart that Fortune is against them, but the heart has been encouraged by a look from the lady. The lover reasons that this is not worth a lifetime of suffering, but the heart is determined to serve her. This poem draws together the imagery of the attack of the lady's eyes found in the previous ballades. The poet also gives a genuine conversational tone to the interlocutors by the use of exclamations ("I-wis", "Alas", "O pese", "O y-wis") and colloquial phrases ("nay sett there a nayle", "cast me lo a kayle").

Charles of Orleans' visual imagery is as individualized as his more abstract composition. Ballade 26 uses the totally conventional analogy of fire in an adaptation of an idea of Alain Chartier. Chartier imports urgency to the idea of the heart being aflame by suggesting the situation of a burning building:

Au feu! au feu! au feu! qui mon cuer art
Par ung brandon tiré d'un douz regart
Tout enflambe d'ardant desir d'amours.
Charles makes the situation more explicit by actually comparing his heart to a blazing house:

Brennyng desire to see my fayre maystre
Hath newe assaylid the nakid pore loggyng
Of my faynt hert which dreipth in distres
That in eche where within his fyre brennyng
Hath he so sett that in a gret feryng
Stande y god wot lest hit wolde not be queynt

Like Chartier, Charles conveys the urgency of the situation by his cry
"I brenne, y brenne, o frendis come rennyng". Adapting Chartier's call for the help of "Eau de pitié de larmes et de plours", Charles gives a pathetic picture of the inadequacy of the lover's tears to quench the flames:

I have assyld with teeris of larges
This forto quenche but alle to my felyng
The worse is hit this fyre hit wille not cesse
Without ellis-where y have sum releuyng

Another dialogue between the heart and the lover occurs in Ballade 27, in which the poet gives a stichomythia type of arrangement. The lover assures the heart of the faithfulness of the lady.

The first half of the ballade sequence is concluded by a group of poems which return to the Court of Love situation first established in La Retene d'Amours. The lover petitions for the return of his heart and in Ballade 78 receives it:

On knees downe y felle right humbly
To thankyn loue the grace he hath me lent
For where as in an extreme forto dy
Myn hert lay he deed hit to him heant
And bi comfort so hath it to me sent
Wrappid in blak and y fulle esily
Put it into by bosom well content
To doon with alle what that y lust treuly

This completed narrative framework allows the heart to play a sustained role through the ballades of the first half of the sequence. In the second part, dealing with the New Lady, it does not have such a clearly defined role. The narrative setting for the heart acts as a unifying
support preventing a disintegration into unrelated parts. At the same time, individual lyrics have an independent validity, with the poet elaborating a single central metaphor so that the lyric is self-contained and need not rely too heavily on the developing sequence, as was the case with Ballade 26.

Apart from the heart, the main fully operative personifications are those introduced in The Patent of Service, "daunger and his affynyte", "bewte", "gret disdayne", "hope" and "pite". These are the figures who play important roles in the love narrative, especially in the first half of the sequence. However, the poems are crowded with minor personified characters, and, in the second half of the sequence, their treatment by the poet undergoes a qualitative change which has been described by John Fox, writing on the French lyrics:

The traditional allegory inherited from the past underwent a subtle and radical transformation, corresponding less and less to the brightly painted puppets of the Roman de la Rose tradition, and more and more to his own feelings. 109

In part, therefore, Charles is using the traditional method of expounding the development of love and in part exteriorizing his own moods.

In the love narrative of the first ballades, it cannot be said that Charles realises the fullest potential of the allegorical method. Like so many of Guillaume de Lorris's successors, he cannot handle a complex interplay of feelings from both sides and he cannot always maintain the separate identities of the personifications. The personification of "bewte", for example, although at first separate from the lady herself, in being that trait which first affects the lover, after the Andreas Capellanus tenet that love is engendered through the eyes, soon becomes simply a name for the lady, so that, by Ballade 9, it is impossible to separate praise of the lady from praise of "bewte".
The figures of Daunger and Disdayne are more successfully handled, Daunger being the more prominent. He is the persistent foe of the lover, always lurking ominously in the background. For substance, Daunger relies far more on the continuing narrative than the lover's heart, for while the poet successfully treats his heart as a close confederate in love, he finds it more difficult to bring to life his enemies. Ballade 16 shows the abstract quality which characterizes so much fifteenth century poetry using allegory:

Madame ye ought welle know to my semyng
What ioy that y have had or yet plesaunce
In yowre servise for this without gabbyng
Togidere yet y never had puysshaunce
Oon only plesere to my suffisaunce
But even as sone as that y have it raught
Daunger birewith hit me such is mychaunce
The smalle plesere that y have to me kaught

More effective is Ballade 44, which has the brisk pace of some of Charles' best poems. Here the lover challenges Daunger to a duel, accusing him of being a traitor to love. Again, it is the easily recognisable situation which gives life to the personification:

O Daunger here y cast to thee my glaue
And thee appele 0 traytour of tresoun
Tofore the hy and myghti god of lode

In this case, the French version maintains the pace better than the English, the lover's threat to kill Daunger with his own hands being more direct:

Par Dieu vilain vous y mourres
Par mes mains, point ne le vous celle
S'a Leauté ne vous rendés! 110

The syntax of the English poem hinders the directness of the threat:

That carelle to dye thou shalt hit not eschewe
As thorugh myn hond bi god so late me welle
Without so be thou yelde thee to ben'trewe

Generally, however, the lyric is successful both within the narrative context of the sequence and alone. Within the narrative, it represents
a sudden burst of anger from the lover who, hitherto, has walked in
terror of his foe. The contrast between his habitual timidity and his
sudden passion is comic in effect, but is, nevertheless, a welcome sign
of spirit. This lyric also does move to substantiate the figure of
Daunger from any other. This is partly because of the situation and
partly through the realistic tone of the lover's abuse. The colloquial
phrasing of his outburst creates the impression that he is genuinely
addressing another person:

Alwey thou thynkist yville yville mote pu proue
So fulle art thou of fals suspicioun
Welle shewist than bi thi dedis as thi move
Thi foster fadir was sum carle feloun
What grevith thee though that we hare in wone
As forto love to sett youre bisynes
To occupy youre tyme of lustynes
In placis fulle of ioy and grete plesaunce

The figure of Daunger is employed successfully again in Ballade 61,
in which the lover plays chess with his foe. Again, the personification
is substantiated by an easily recognisable situation rather than by
description. Although the game of chess is a conventional allegorical
device from the French tradition, the obvious source for Charles is
Chaucer's Book of the Duchess. The main similarity is the taking of
the queen by Fortune:

fortune came to strengthyn his mater
O woo worthe she that my game ayrthrew
For tane she hath my lady welawy

The connexion of Fortune and Daunger, however, is Charles' own variation,
and implies that, in this allegorical game of love, Daunger would be
fairly matched if it were not for the intervention of Fortune, a force
over which the lover has no control.

While the use of the personification Daunger potentially allows a
great amplification of the lady's reactions to the lover's addresses,
with Charles, this tends to be horizontal rather than probing in depth.
Daunger is not, on the whole, seen in situations which justify his existence,
he is treated more as an ever-present obstacle. The reader still has a very limited knowledge of the lady's inner feelings and the approach to her is still through the lover.

The most consistently treated personification from the lover's psyche is Hope. Again, the figure is substantiated mainly through its sustained role in the narrative rather than through description. In the prefatory poem, the lover summons Hope as his first ally:

I me withdrewe and called unto me hope
Out of the prese and into an herber grene.

Like Daunger, it is a fully active personification speaking as a figure in its own right. The poet portrays Hope as an intimate companion, as he does his heart, and, indeed, in Ballade 37, he goes to see them together:

But late agoo went y my hert to se
As of his fare to haue sum knowlechyng
I fond him sett with hope in compame

As the lyric progresses, the poet introduces colour symbolism. The heart, which has been accustomed to wearing black for sorrow, "with hope now blusshith red". The connexion of red with hope seems to be Charles' own variation, as red is usually linked with anger or valour, although Machaut's poem on colour symbolism links red with passion. 112

Fortune is another of the major personifications in the ballade sequence and, unlike the other figures, she is given a long description. This occurs in the narrative dream vision which introduces the second part of the sequence, Love's Renewal. In this Fortune appears to the Lover and he describes her garments, an idea Charles may have derived from Alanus de Insulis, who describes Natura's garments in De Planctu Natura, and Boethius, who describes those of Lady Philosophy.

The details of the portrait concentrate, naturally enough, on the
aspect of constant change:

Hir visage was eek wel y-made
But then sumwhile she lowrid sore
And even as scorne she lookid glad
And in hir hand a wheel she bore
And gan to turn it euymore. 113

(Steele p.68 )

Charles is not concerned with the philosophical ramifications of Fortune in a Christian ethos, but he treats her seriously and consistently. She represents that side of life over which the lover has no control and the ultimate instance of this is the death of his lady.

N.L. Goodrich hints at deeper philosophical difficulties in Charles' use of Fortune, stressing particularly the imagery used to describe her:

Thus, associations are added, now giving:
Fortune, water, death, wheel, woman and love.
All this seems to indicate that we are dealing with the concept of Fortuna dea, whose survival from Rome posed a serious problem to Christianity. 114

However, as has already been shown, medieval poets had little difficulty in absorbing the pagan concept of Fortune into a Christian philosophy along the lines of Boethius. The imagery used to symbolise Fortune is an integral part of the medieval view of her. In Ballade 28, the poet talks of the "see of Fortune" but the sea is a traditional symbol of instability and is used as such by Boethius:

Ofte the see is clearer and calm withouten moeyynge flodes, and ofte the horrible wynd Aquylon moeveth boylynge tempestes, and overweyth the see.

(Book II, Metrum 3)

Fortune's wheel is equally widely accepted, featuring in both literature and visual arts as a symbol of her continual movement. Even the "moral" Gower refers to it:

And thus the whiel is al miswent
The which fortune hath upon hinde; 115

The connexion with death, woman and love may well have been suggested by The Book of the Duchess, since Charles too shows Fortune taking part in a game of chess. There is nothing in Charles' poetry to suggest the
incompatibility of his picture of Fortune with the prevailing religious ethos.

Essentially, she is used to register the various reversals in the lover's life. Throughout the sequence, Fortune acts as a butt for the lover's blame when he suffers a setback; equally her changing nature allows him hope, as in Ballade 41:

Hope hath me now freshe gladsum tidyng brouȝt
Whichought to doon me comfort & likyng
He saith that fortune hath hire newe bithought
And tath hir syl in a better avisyng
Forto amende in every maner thyling
That she hath doon me in displesere falle
So that her wheel shalle take a newe turnyng
But ihesu grant that hit may sone bifalle.

Charles' method of dealing with allegory in the first half of the sequence is clearly indebted to the tradition of narrative love allegory for characters and situations. However, his technique of applying allegory to the lyric genre is his own. Although he clearly offers less substantiation of the personifications through description, and gives a less complex analysis of the interplay of the lover's and the lady's psyche than in a major narrative allegory like Le Roman de la Rose, Charles, like Chaucer and Gower, is conscious of the need to realise the personifications for the reader.

In his use of situation as a defining context, and of narrative links through the sequence, which support the roles of his characters, together with the intimate relationship he establishes between the lover and figures like the heart and Hope, he has made positive achievements.

Allegory in the second part of the ballade sequence and in the roundels undergoes a qualitative change. Charles now deals far less with sustained narrative and more with fragmented allegorical devices, which are a means of externalising his moods. Often the personifications are
barely activated as in the following references to "waylying wepyng and distres". His fear of becoming their "thrål" suggests that they are personified, but the poet develops the imagery no further:

Farewel
Farewel
For unto waylyng wepyng and distres
From this tyme forth bicomen must y thral.

(Roundel no. 60)

A similar method is seen in Ballade 99, in which sorrow is seen in terms of a human relationship through use of the verb "aqueyntid" but never becomes an active personification:

For who with sorowe list aqueyntid be
As come to me and spille no further way

The suggestion is that the lover himself is the total personification of sorrow. This very underdeveloped use of personification has little in common with the allegorical machinery of the lengthy love narrative. It is fitted more closely to the poet's personal expression of feeling.

Both with a major figure like Lydgate and many anonymous poets, allegorical devices occur on a fragmentary basis, rather than with sustained roles in a narrative framework. Very often they do little more than allude to the allegorical tradition. Such is the case with the envoy to Lydgate's A Ballade, of Her that Hath all Virtues (MacCracken no. 1). In this the potential dramatic conflict between the lover's emissary and Disdayne and Dauenger is not exploited. Personifications are introduced simply as an ornate expression of hope for the lady's favour:

Go, lytel balade, and recomaunde me
Vn-till her pyte, hir mercy, and hir grace;
But first be ware aforne, pat pou weel see
Disdayne and daunger be voyde oute of pat place,
For allys pou mayst haue leysier noon, ner space,
Trewly to hir do done my message
Which habe all virtues sette in hir ymage.
Lydgate uses the popular personifications as part of his amplification of a theme in lyric poetry, rather than in a narrative or dramatic context. Since he also gives no description, their impact depends almost entirely on what the reader knows of them from outside the specific poems. This is true of *The Servant of Cupide Forsaken* (MacCracken no. 8) in which the poet elaborates the theme of the forsaken lover, concluding with an attack on the faithlessness of women. Since the poet is generalising about his experiences of love, the figures are not tied to the response of a particular woman to a specific situation. Hence Daunger becomes the general enemy of the lover:

```
For crewel Daunger was my guyde
Withoute mercy ober grace,
And so for me can ay provyde,
I was forsake inne ry place.
```

The general tone combined with the use of isolated personification produces an abstract style. Even so, what the poet is doing here is new and interesting. Far from repeating etiolated formulae, he is extending and adapting them by using the conventional personifications of the love tradition but adding the rider of an attack on women's hypocrisy from the didactic antifeminist tradition, a fresh viewpoint is achieved. Lydgate is not simply adding a palinode in the manner of Andreas Capellanus; instead he is showing how the experiences of the lover lead not to the expected goal but to an insight into the nature of women. Daunger and Disdayne are seen not as stages of resistance to be eventually overcome but as permanent and inherent features of women's nature. The two views of women which are normally kept apart are in this way brought together, so that the love tradition is invalidated and the antifeminist view reinforced by the very characteristics on which the love tradition relies.

In putting the attack on women in the form of a complaint, Lydgate
is also giving a new significance to a formal genre. Normally, the complaint takes the form of a plea for mercy, but here we are shown that there is no such mercy to be obtained.

With many of the anonymous late love poems, it is clear that personifications are used merely because they are a popular "façon de parler". They are introduced arbitrarily without descriptive or narrative reinforcement and clearly add to the abstract, impersonal quality of the poems. In "With wofull hert & gret mornyng" (Robbins no. 127), the reference to "daunger" is in fact less part of the analysis of emotion than of the moral description of the lady:

In her Erthly no faute is found;  
But only daunger hath her bound  
pat she shall shaw, no mercye.

In many of these poems, the abstract qualities normally personified in love allegory are simply listed as traits of either the lover or the lady. The idea of active personifications is neglected:

And though ye be of high renoun,  
Let mercy enclyne your hert so fre;  
To you, lady, pis is my boun,  
to graunt me grace in some degree.  

And wrye me not pat am so trewe,  
ne dryve me to deth with your danger;  
but tendrely, lady, on me rewe,  
thurgh pite & mercy of your power.

(Robbins no. 205)

The long, unprinted Complevnte Ageynst Hope (MS. Harley 7333, f. 159a) is interesting in its personifications of Hope and its opposite, Wanhope. It is a long, at times rambling, poem, involving an uneasy combination of proverbial imagery:

Now may I goo where I wolle whistel in my fiste  
(1. 13)

I mot nowe pe candell'forpe holde  
(1. 39)

And' I als mury panne as man vndir moone  
(1. 56)
But right as pe shene sonne grete snowes melte

(1. 61)

and more aureate abstract words, "lamentacioun" (1. 75), "Clarefied" (1. 81).

The personification of Wanhope is substantiated by the metaphor used to denote his power:

Graunte me goode lorde pis bone cely boone
Wanhope bus bat wyndethe me vndernepe his mace
Comaundepe him leeve lorde bt he me leve sone

(11. 50-52)

Hope is brought to life through the use of dialogue. Hope interrupts the lover's complaint by reminding him of the lady's excellence:

late be Qd' he to me by lamentacioun
Awise be on be vertues in by ladye semblde'
For bt is in soopenesse better occupacioun
pan pis mater bt po' hast here nembled'

(11. 73-76)

The lover agrees, but finds the lady lacking in mercy and pity. However, Hope continues to encourage him and they agree to write to the lady together. The lyric ends on an ironic note:

I leve bt hope tellith me
Bette bt & I wt eyen see
hope in hope owte bus cane oftte fools Æde.

The Duke of Suffolk addresses complaints to both Fortune and Daunger, and, while the unity of thought achieved by the single theme maintained throughout each poem gives a clear context to the personifications, the trend towards the abstract and the impersonal is very clear. The description of Fortune lacks any kind of concrete visual detail and is tied solely to her function:

O thou, Fortune, whyche hast the gouerneunce
Of alle thynge kyndely movyng to and fro,
Theyme to demene aftyr thyn ordynance
Ryght as thou lyst to grant hem wel or wo; 117

Similarly, in his complaint addressed to Daunger, there is no visual substantiation of the personification:

O cruell daunger all myn aduersarye,
Of whom alle lcuers aught sore to complayne,
Sechyng the ways to thayr entent contrarye,
Syche as be trew to have hem in dysdayne. 118

Direct imitations of the narrative love allegory, reduced in scale
to suit the lyric genre, can be more effective. William Dunbar employs
the siege and warfare framework of Jean de Meung's section of *Le Roman
de la Rose* to tell the story of a successful love suit in *Betwy and the
Presoneir* (Mackenzie no. 54). The miniature narrative is crowded with
personified figures: the lady Betwy, the porter Strangenes, the captain
Comparesone, the watchman Langour, the jester Scorne, the lover's
allies, Gud Houp, Lawlines, Fair Service, Petie, Lust, Thocht, Bissines.
Although these figures are not given physical descriptions, they are
tied to specific roles, and this helps us to identify each personification
as an active entity more effectively than in, say, the simple list of
figures in the Deschamps lyric quoted:

> Langour was weche upoun the wall,
> That nevir slepit bot evir wouke;
> Scorne was bourdour in the hall,
> And oft on me his babill schuke

The story is simple and straightforward. The lover gazes at Betwy and
is taken prisoner in the "castell of penance," which is heavily guarded.
The lover's allies attack the castle, killing the guards and obtaining
victory. Sklandir, who now arrives, is put to flight by Matremony. The
lyric escapes the abstractness of so many poems using allegorical devices
by the brusque pace of the action. The description of the battle is
rigorous and direct, the dialect words replacing a more pretentious
diction:

> Thai fyrit the yettis deliverly
> With fagottis wer grit and huge;
> And Strangenes, quhair that he did ly,
> Wes brint in to the porter luge,
> Lustily thay lakit bot a juge,
> Sik straikis and stychling wes on steir,
> The semdist wes maid assege,
> To quhome that he wes presoneir.
Thrucht Skornes nos thai put a prik,
This he wes banist and gat a blek;
Comparisone wes erdit quik,
And Langour lap and brak his nek.
Thai sailyeit fast, all the fek,
Lust chasit my ladies chalmirleir,
God Fame wes drownit in a sek;
Thus ransonit thai the presoneir.

There is clearly no consistent attitude towards the use of allegory in fifteenth century lyric poetry, although a fairly clear dividing line can be drawn between those poets consciously adapting a popular mode of thought to specific needs and those merely imitating an established tradition. Such poets as Charles of Orleans and Dunbar, and, at times, Lydgate, are striving to produce a new synthesis of the established imagery of love and the allegorical mode of expressions in the lyric genre.

C. The Traditional Imagery of Love

The fifteenth century love lyric continued to use the traditional analysis of love, although this was subjected to the general stylistic changes outlined previously. Imagery drawn from religion, as has been already noted, underwent an important change in later poetry. It became the basis of a more systematised religion of love rather than a source for occasional metaphors and similes. This development is seen in an extreme form in The Lover's Mass, which parodies a religious service. Of course, the poem also has close links with narrative love allegory, since it is an elaboration of one element often found in that genre. It also makes use of allegorical devices. The poem alternates between the lover's personal complaint to the god of Love:

Mercy: Mercy: contynuely: I crye
In gret disioynt: vpon the poynyt: to deye

(11. 73-74)
and expression of a lover's emotions in generalised terms:

Now lorde that knowest hertys alle
Off lovers / that for helpe calle
On her trouthe / of mercy rewe
Namly on swyche as be trewe
Helpe to recure.
(11. 133 - 137)

As a parody of a religious service, the poem is clearly very skilful, the parallels between this poem and a specific Mass are noted by F.T. Simmons. E.P. Hammond has also commented on the effective strophic variations:

Its author is not merely dexterous and graceful in the complexities of the Kyrie, and aware of the dear singing quality of the Gloria-stanza, but he is sufficiently sensitive to make the change to the deeper, slower seriousness of the Orison.122

The impressiveness of the poet's adaptation of his form is without question, but the impact of the religious imagery is less satisfactory. The occasional religious imagery of the Harley poets gave the impression of spontaneity and exalted sexual love:

An hendy hap ichabbe ynent
ichot from hêene it is me sent;
from alle wymmen mi love is lent,
ant lyht on Alyscoun.
(Brook no. 4)

In the later poem, however, the artificiality of the form tends to make the reader aware of the technical skill of the poet but leaves an emotional gap.

Despite John Fox's statement that "Religion was rarely pressed into service by Charles to provide imagery", the underlying mock religious concept is present throughout Charles of Orleans' ballade sequence. Often this is not ostentatious, as it is in the opening line of the Patent of Service, which imitates the introduction of an episcopal letter, but is nevertheless a consistent theme. There are references to the lover as a martyr in
the service of love, to the singing of mass in the chapel of love, to confession, to the idea of the lover's paradise and to pilgrimage. In Ballade 67, the religious imagery provides the central theme for the poem. The description is unusually graphic because abstract ideas, which are so often turned into equally abstract personifications, are here described in concrete metaphors:

I Haue the obit of my lady dere
Made in the chirche of love fulle solempnely
And for hir sowle the service and the prayere
In thought waylyng hare songe hit hevyly
The torchis sett of sighis pitously
Which was with sorow sett aflame
The tovmbe is made als to the same
Of warfulle cry depayntid alle with teeris.

Again, this is far removed from the awe-filled exclamatory comparisons of the Harley poets. However, as a development of the mock religion of love theme, it is an effective combination of realism and allegory. The poet both exploits the visual potential of the scene and gives the imagery added validity through the coincidence of what is actually and what is allegorically appropriate. The lover is mourning the death of his lady, so the tomb-side scene is an apt framework for the metaphorical manifestations of sorrow. The passage has a visio-dramatic quality prescient of something like the tomb scene in Romeo and Juliet.

Lydgate also uses religious imagery in the tradition of the love allegory in My Lady Dere (MacCracken no.6). His description of Paradys, peopled by Mirthe and Ioye, clearly owes more to Le Roman de la Rose than to a genuine religious impulse:

Who partephe out of Paradys,
From pat place so ful of glorye,
Wher as Mirthe is moste /of / prys,
And Ioye haue souerain victorye,
What wonder whane he haue memorye,
Of al, he alwaye beo  ded of chere,
For I am ever in Purgatorye
But whanne I seo my lady dere.
A somewhat different connexion with religion is made in a poem using the "Go, little bill formula". This describes a tableau in which the lover, neatly categorised by the detail "With a sper-hauk on my hand" sees his lady in church with her chaperone and watches them say matins together. The treatment of the church is similar to that in Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Prologue, in which "prechyng" and "pilgrimages" are occasions "to se, and eek for to be seye" or in the description of the temple in Troilus and Criseyde where it is Troilus' custom to walk up and down "Byholding ay the ladies of the town". The anonymous fifteenth century poet hopes the lady has noticed him:

yet ones or twyes at the lest,
She did on me her ee kest;
then went I forthe prevely,
& hayloed on thaym curtesly.

(Robbins no. 194).

Legal imagery is found more frequently in narrative love allegories of the court of love tradition and it is therefore not surprising that, as far as lyrics are concerned, Charles of Orleans' ballade sequence should employ it most obtrusively. Charles introduces legal imagery in The Patent of Service when he agrees to leave his heart with the god of Love as surety:

For serwte more he leuys in morgage
His heart without disdayne of corage
Not to refuse in thenkynge it bondage
(11. 37-39)

In this poem, Charles supports the specific metaphor by the use of vocabulary with a legal flavour; "rent" (l. 9), "iust" (l. 13), "parlement" (l. 18), "frawdyng" (l. 21), "forfetyng" (l. 23), "feodaries" and "counselle" (l. 50). This typifies the neatly unified approach to imagery which he has, even though concrete visual analogies are not being made.

Reference to the legal power of the god of Love is made throughout
the sequence; in Ballade 3, for example:

0 god of love ne takith displeasyg
Though that ye say as ye haue knowlechyng
As of yowre bond the rage ani gret Iuyyse.

By Ballade 24, the poet is hoping to ransom his heart:

But what good hope as bit me comfort fonge
And saith he wolle outplegge him in short space.

At the end of the first half of the sequence, the lover presents a petition to Cupid in order to redeem his heart:

Also he left wel wot ye how
his hert with yow
To ben his plegge of faithfull trewe desire
The whith that now your humbly doth requere
But displesere
Of yow to pardone him as well ye mow.

(Steele p. 93)

In the ballade sequence, the legal imagery is clearly a conventional reinforcement of the Court of Love framework and is never particularly individualised or emphasized by Charles. In a roundel, however, he shows a more independent attitude. Here, the lady's debt of kisses to the lover becomes the subject of legal action. The poem takes both humour and vitality from this original twist:

Ye are to moche as in my dette madame
Ye owe me swete to many cossis dere
Which wold full fayne if hit were your plesere
Ye payde hem me in savyng of yowre name
So that of dette y ought yow not to blame
Which dar not don me thanke hit for daungere
Ye are to
Ye owe me
Wite ye y haue a writ out for be same
To tache yow with / y rede yow pay hem here
lest ye be restid with an officere

(Roundel 47).

Connected with the legal framework of the court of love tradition, but not really making active use of legal imagery, are two fifteenth century poems, *The Parliament of Love* and *A Parliament of Birds*. The first of these is essentially a literary exercise on a well-known
theme; Neilson comments:

This short work contains nothing new, and is only one more proof of the familiarity of the Court of Love tradition in the fifteenth century. 129

The second is clearly derived from Chaucer's Parliament of Fowles but it omits the framework of judgement given by Chaucer:

"Ye know wel how, seynt Valentynes day
By my statut and thorg my governance,
Ye come for to cheese - and fle your way -
Your makes, as I prike yow with plesaunce;
But natheles, my ryghtful ordenaunce
May I nat lete for al this world to wynne,
That he that most is worthi shal begynne.

(11. 386-392)

Here, a chanson d'aventure opening shows the poet going out into "an erber sote & grene" and hearing the birds sing, each expressing his own view of love. There is no formal decision about love but the poem concludes on a firm note with the "throstilcok's" advice to lovers to remain faithful to one:

be throstilcok song last of alle
And seyde it was no stedfastnesse
In love to turne as a bal
Ne no tokene of gentillesse
Wherfore I rede yow alle to dresse
Of on to syngn wt herte entyre
pt wele not fayle in non distresse
En dieu maffie sanz departer.

A further link with legal imagery is seen in the idea of love's laws or commandments. This occurs in La Retenue d'Amours of Charles of Orleans, in which Beaute formulates four commandments which subjects of the god of Love must swear to keep and six rules which are not binding but are nevertheless advisable. Perhaps the most detailed forerunner of these laws is Andreas Capellanus' De Arte Honeste Amandi, in which two sets of rules are provided, although Neilson traces the origins of the concept to Ovid and follows it through Provençal, French, Italian and German analogues. One fifteenth century poem offers ten formal commandments
for lovers; they are faythe; entencion, discretion, pacience, secretnesse, prudence, perseverance, pitie, measure and mercie (Robbins no. 177).

The imagery of sickness and death continues to be popular in the later poems. Charles of Orleans refers specifically to the lover's disease in Ballade 82 after the death of the lady Bewte, when he hopes never to experience love again:

So that ye trust ye nevir shalle agayne
Falle in the self diseas to that ye day
The which is called lovis malady

Ballade 99 contains a description of the lover's symptoms:

With excesse shake forsekid & forfaynt
The poor karkes so enfeblisshed is
The hert in woos weset and so attaynt
That even a deth it is to lyue as pis

The most impressive use of the sickness/death imagery occurs in Ballade 60 in which the use of oxymoron and paradox has more in common with a later poet like Wyatt, or, indeed, the metaphysical poets. Although antithetical statements are a dominant feature of the medieval definition of love, they are of a highly stylised and repetitive nature. Charles of Orleans gives a carefully worked out conceit which is supported by an intricate pattern of repetitions. The first stanza relies on the sustained idea that now he has lost his lady, the lover finds his own life the equivalent of death, while, since she is dead, death itself offers life, because it is a means of joining her:

For dedy lijf my lyvy deth y wite
For ese of payne in payne of ese y dye
For lengthe of woos/lengtith me so lite
That quyk y dye/and yet as ded lyue y
Thus nyh a-fer/y fele the fer is ny
Of thing certeyne that y uncertayne seche
Which is the deth sith deth hath my lady

In the second stanza, the symptoms of love's sickness are replaced by the signs of death taken from the religious lyric tradition. Religious lyrics contain such descriptions in order to inspire a proper awe of death and
its power:

Wanne mine eyh en misten
and mine heren sissen,
and mi nose koldet,
and mi tungefoldet,
and mi rude slaket,
And mine lippes blaken,
and mi mup grennet,
and mi spotel rennet,
and min her riset,
and min herte griset,
and mine honden bwien,
and mine ffet stiuien,
al to late, al to late,
wanne pe bere ys ate gate.

(C.B. XIII, no. 71)

The lover, however, invites the signs of death as relief from his fruitless existence:

0 gost formatt yelde vp thi breth attones
0 karkas faynt take from this lijf thi flight
0 bollid hert forbrest thou with thi grones
0 mestid eyen whi fayle ye not yowre sight
Syn deth allas hath tane my lady bright

The preoccupation with death gives way, in the third stanza, to a genuine self-questioning on the part of the lover about the value of his life, and he appears to be wrestling with the limits of his own understanding:

What is this lijf a lijf or deth p lede
Nay certes deth in lyf is liklynes
For though y fayne me port of lustihede
yet inwarde lo it sleth me my distres.

This can be fairly compared with Chaucer's adaptation of the Petrarchan sonnet in *Troilus and Criseyde* (Book I ll. 400-420). The same intense personalisation of a conventional situation can be seen. Charles has taken a thoroughly stereotyped idea, that sorrow in love is a kind of sickness leading to death, and used it as the basis for his analysis of the lover's inner turmoil. Although the rhetorical device of repetition is made overt, it is also justified by the sense of the poem and is not merely a decorative device.

For Lydgate, the paradox of the lady being both the cause of sickness and suffering and its potential cure forms the central idea of *A Complaint*. 
for Lack of Mercy (MacCracken no. 2). This is only hinted at in the first stanza in which the lover describes his suffering and regrets his lady's indifference:

Noe more cause haith no man to complayne,
Than, y, alas! w ich langwyshyn sekenesse,
And at myn hert abyde the dedely payne,
Whiche daye and nyght dothe me to constreyne;
Such a cotydyan halt me so greiusly,
And worse than deth, my leche dothe disdeyne
Me to recure, for lacke of mercy.

The dual role of the lady as both cause and cure of suffering is captured in an elaborate comparison with Achilles' sword, one side of which wounded mortally, while the other cured. The ornate style of the simile is best illustrated by comparison with a similar reference of Chaucer:

And of Achilles with his queynte sper,
For he koude with it bothe heele and dere.

(The Squire's Tale 11. 239-240)

Lydgate amplifies the comparison, using ornate vocabulary:

Achilles swerd the egge was keuning,
The plat therof was softe and recureabile;
Wounded of the egge was mortall yn werkyng,
The fatall plate was medycynabil;

Dunbar's Quhone he List to Feyne (Mackenzie no. 50) hinges on this idea of the lady as both the "man slayar" and the cure of the lover's suffering. The poet captures this neatly in the oxymoron "swete assured fe", the type of oxymoron associated with the definitions of love. The style of the poem is highly rhetorical, with exclamatic, anaphora and interrogatic being often used. However, the combination of decorative rhetorical devices with straightforward Scottish dialect words, rather than aureate vocabulary, is a less obtrusive concern with surface style. Indeed the rhetorical devices are handled with careful regard to meaning as well as decorative effect. Anaphora, for example, is confined to stanzas containing catalogues of the lovers' symptoms or the lady's qualities:

Bihaald my deidlee passioun dolorous!
Bihald my hiddows hew and wo, allace!
Bihald my mayne and murning mervalous,
Withe sorrowfull teris falling frame my face!

The imagery is at its most impressive in stanza 3, in which personification
is used, not in the manner of the love allegory, but for a specific effect.
The normal picture of life leading to death is reversed and death is seen
in pursuit of the lover's life, as, for example, in The Dance of Death:

My deathe chasis my lyfe so besalic
That wery is my goist to fle so fast;
Sic deidlie dwayne so mischeifaislie
Ane hundrithe tymes hes my hairt oairpast;
Me thynk my sprit rynnis away full gast;

The imagery of sickness and death in many of the anonymous lyrics is
merely a conventional way of registering the suffering of the lover:

for I was sek the day be-fore -
that letter heyled, I was sek no more!

(Robbins no. 193)

One brief lyric is an echo of Charles of Orleans' Ballade 60:

This ys no lyf, alas, þat y do lede;
it is but deth as yn lyves lyckenesse

(Robbins no. 165)

More interesting is a late poet's play on the idea of the lady's actual physi-
ilness. Since his health depends on her, her sickness in turn affects him:

As in yow resstyth my Ioy and comfort,
youre disesse ys my mortal payne;
Sone god send me seche reporte
þat may comfort myn hert in every vayne.
ho but þe may me sustayne,
Ar of my gref be þe remedy,
but sone ye haue amendement of yowre Malady.

(Robbins no. 164)

Just as the catalogue of charms was parodied by the later poets, so the
exaggerated symptoms of love's sickness are the subject of satire. The
first stanza of "Lord how shall I me complayn" leads us to expect a
conventional love complaint:

Lord how shall I me complayn,
Unto myn own lady dere
for to tell her of all my payne

The refrain, however, reverses the picture of the sleepless lover ("that
I slepe I cannot wake and the succeeding stanzas continue to appear to conform to the normal symptoms of love's sickness but then state the opposite. The lover is unable to eat, that is, while he is still asleep: "I ete no mete tyll that I Rise!" He drinks no ale, when he can have wine instead, "but comonly I drynk non ale ywis/ yf I may get any good wine!"

He can scarcely button his sleeves because he is getting fatter instead of wasting away; "I may vnneth bot on my slevis, so myn armes waxith more,."

The wound of love is sometimes simply an extension of the sickness and death imagery, conveying the suffering of the lover, although often it refers more specifically to the onset of love:

And gif to me hat ys most gracious,
In colours savyn, in hart I-represant,
I-vounded sor with darttes amorous.

(Robbins no. 196)

However, it is also often combined with the more general imagery of warfare. This is most in evidence in Charles of Orleans' ballade sequence and was seen in the allegorical opening passages which show the lover's heart under attack from the lady's eyes. A similar idea is developed in one of Charles' roundels, although it is interesting that here Charles advises the besieged heart to take the opposite course of action from that seen in Ballade 4. Where he previously considered flight too shameful for his heart, he now advises it:

Fleth the shott of swete regard
Myn hert without thou willist forto day
Which nakid art of wepene and aray
For witty flight is signe of no coward
Abide and thou art tane maugre thi berd
Without thou cast thee vn to love abay

(Roundel 51)

As with many of the ballades, Charles is defining the position by evocation of an active situation which the reader enters with the opening line, rather than through visual description. The imperative opening is brusque and forceful and is yet another example of Charles' ability to give directness and vitality to conventional imagery.
The use of imagery of fire and burning as another means of conveying the suffering of love continues to be popular in the later lyric. In many of the anonymous poems, this is not explored with any individuality, but is merely a conventional mode of expression:

Syth thou haste set me on the fyere  
My hert to bren thou wyll not spare  
(Robbins no. 128)

In bytter bale y am y-brent  
(Robbins no. 162)

Whan so sore yur pleasant looke enfireth  
(Robbins no. 177)

These statements lack the intensity of the Harley poet's comparison, "nys no fer so hot in helle" (Brook no. 9). Undoubtedly, the best use of this imagery is made by Charles of Orleans in the allegorical passages already discussed.

Love as a form of trap or as a means of binding the lover remains a popular comparison in the later poems. In "Mercy me graunt off bat I me compleyne" (Robbins no. 139), the imagery is overlaid with the type of abstract, ornate vocabulary which gives the later poems an impersonal quality:

Mercy me graunt off bat I me compleyne,  
to 3ow my lyfis sa1eraigne plesaun3;  
And ese 3our servaunt of the importabyl paye  
bat I suffer in your obeysaun3  
And let e your femenygme natur dissolue be cheyne  
bat me bond thorg oo look of 3our eyen tweyne;

Other examples are merely repetitive of a convention:

Witt locces of loue I am be-sette  
(Robbins no. 134)

To him bat bound is in lous's lace  
(Robbins no. 177)

And to haf pite of me, caitife bound & thrall  
(Robbins no. 196)
Most interesting is Lydgate's "knotte in hert of remembraunce" which occurs in *A Gentlewoman's Lament* (MacCracken no. 5):

For whane we were ful tendre of yeeris,  
Flouring boöpe in oure chyldheei,  
Wee sette to nothyng our deayres,  
Sauf v n-to playe, and took noon heede,  
And gaderd flowres in be meede,  
Of youße bis was our moost plesaunce,  
And Love poo gaf me for my meede  
A knotte in hert of remembraunce,

Which but never may beo vnbounde,  
Hit is so stedfast and so truwe,

This metaphor has been discussed by both A. Renoir and J. Norton-Smith. Renoir sees it as having a dual function but referring essentially to a love-knot:

Here, the image of the "knotte in hert" serves a double purpose. Not only does it emphasize the restlessness of the gentlewoman's grief, but it makes us visualize a quasi-physical aspect of it. 132

J. Norton-Smith's view is that, fundamentally, the metaphor is of a knot of permanent remembrance rather than a love-knot.

The child's reminder may never be undone for the action which Love reminds her eventually to perform is beyond the woman's character and social station. 133

Norton-Smith's interpretation certainly has more support from the actual text but I think there is also a link with the preceding picture of the childhood sweethearts gathering flowers. Kurath and Kuhn give one meaning of the word "knotte" as "bundle" and Lydgate's shift from the gathering flowers scene to the knot in the heart is contained in a subtle transition achieved by the double meaning of "knot" as both Norton-Smith's "knot of remembrance" and a knot or nosegay of flowers.

The imagery of love remains consistent throughout the medieval period, the developments being of presentation rather than the basic analysis. Despite the many factors which work towards a more abstract and impersonal style, a poet like Charles of Orleans is able to give new emphasis to old ideas, to
exploit new stylistic techniques, and frequently, achieve his own directness of expression. Dunbar, too, shows an active consciousness of the problems of style, and his absorption of a wide range of traditions results in a new synthesis. Perhaps, like Lydgate, they lack consistency of style and standard but this is a natural consequence of experiment.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1 Moshé Lazar, Amour Courtois et 'Fin' Amors' dans la Littérature du XIIe Siècle (Paris, 1964), p. 17:

L'on a donc vu naître des théories fondées sur des généralisations inconsistantes. On a parlé ainsi (et l'on continue à le faire), de la Courtoisie au Moyen Âge, de l'Amour Courtois au Moyen Âge, etc., comme s'il était possible de confondre en un seul bloc toutes les époques du moyen âge et d'invertir les auteurs et les textes, sans considération de l'ordre chronologique le plus élémentaire ou des nuances idéologiques qui les différencient.

Also Peter Dronke, The Medieval Lyric, p. 118:

From several generations of poets in southern France after Guillaume's death (1127) a wealth of love-lyric survives that has often been presented in the past in a far too homogenised fashion. Phrases such as 'the code of courtly love' or 'the conventions of troubadour lyric' have badly blunted the perception of what is alive and individual in this world of songs.

The same author discusses the problem more fully in Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love Lyric, I, 1-56.

3 Cambridge MS., ed. Hall, pp. 15-17.
4 Ed. Turnbull, p. 37.
5 The Troubadours and England.
6 Medieval English Love Lyrics (Tübingen, 1970).
7 Raimbaut d'Orange, for example, stresses the need for his lady to deceive her husband:

Vejatz, dompna, cum Dieus acor
Dompna que d'amar s'agrada:
Q'Iseutz estet en gran modor,
Puois fon breumens conseillada
Qu'il fetz a son marit crezen
C'anc hom que nasques de maire
Non toques en lieis: mantenen
Astrestal podetz vos faire!

(Anthology of Troubadour Lyric Poetry, p. 114).

8 Amour Courtois and 'Fin' Amors', p. 66.
Les jongleurs, les troubadours vont lui rendre un service amoureux, copié sur le service féodal. Ils vont l'appeler _mi dons_ ... lui reconnaissant cette autorité que le vassal reconnaissait à son seigneur. Le poète devient l' _homme-île_, le serviteur loyal de sa dame.

12 Dragonetti, _La Technique Poétique des Trouvères_, pp. 72-77.

13 Ibid., p. 70. Dragonetti describes the words _druc_ and _duy_ as feudal terms used as synonyms for _ami_; "L'amant et l'aimée s'appelaient aussi en langage féodal _druc_ et _duy_."

14 See p. 117 below.

15 As Peter Dronke has demonstrated in the first chapter of _Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love Lyric_, much of the imagery of love is universal and cannot and need not be related to specific sources. However, the important point about the biblical and classical sources of reference for the medieval period is that they do form the direct literary background of both poets and audiences. For this reason, relating the popular medieval imagery to its use in these sources can often elucidate the ideas expressed by the medieval poets.

16 J.L. Lowes, "The Loveris Maladye of Hereos," _MP_, 11 (1913-14), 491-546. In this article, descriptions of the lover's sickness from medieval medical treatises such as the _Liber de Parte Operative_ of Arnaldus de Villanova and the _Lilium Medicinae_ of Bernardus of Gordon are cited. Similar descriptions are traced to Arabic and Greek sources.

17 _Form and Style in Early English Literature_, pp. 249-50. See also Woolf, _The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages_, pp. 169-171, who notes the similarity between Rolle's "Luf es lyf bat lastes sy" and the tradition of love definitions from French secular poetry but makes no reference to Alanus' _descriptio Cupidinis_.

18 _The Visionary Landscape_, p. 67.

19 _FL_, CCX, 455, par. 299.

20 _Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century_, no. 84.

21 _The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages_, p. 171.

22 See note 15 above.
Patristic interpretations of the allegory varied and the bride was seen not only as the Church but also as the Virgin Mary or the individual soul.

Medieval Latin Lyrics, p. 280.


Medieval Latin Lyrics, p. 274.


Medieval Latin Lyrics, p. 224.


St. Ambrose, Select Works and Letters, p. 341.

Medieval Latin Lyrics, p. 270.

Anthology of Troubadour Lyric Poetry, p. 120.

J. Wimsatt, Chaucer and the French Love Poets (Chapel Hill, 1968), pp. 39 ff. notes how the idea of the lover as prey can be developed into the allegory of the hunt in French love poetry. He lists examples from the anonymous Dis dou Cerf Amoureus, the Prize Amoureuse of Johan Acart de Hesdin and the Chasse aux Mésdizants of Raimon Vidal.

Medieval Latin Lyrics, p. 242.

Anthology of Provençal Troubadours, p. 6.

Peter Dronke, Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love Lyric, I, 4-5.


Origins and Sources of the Court of Love, pp. 220ff.

Ibid., pp. 220-221.


Brook no. 5.

Origins and Sources of the Court of Love, pp. 12-17.

Ibid., pp. 29-30.

46 Political, Religious and Love Poems, ed. F.J. Furnivall, EETS, o.s. 15 (1866), 76-79.

47 Paul Zumthor, Histoire Littéraire de la France Médiévale, VIe-XIVe Siècles (Paris, 1954), p. 149:

(appel aux armes, réflexions morales sur le "pèlerinage", regret du croisé quittant son amie, plaintes d'une femme dont l'ami s'est croisé, satire politique), elles se confondent très tôt (dès environ 1175 en occitan, 1160-70 en français), soit avec la chanson d'amour, soit avec le sirventes on son analogue français le sirventois.

48 Lirica Cortese d'OTI, p. 204.


51 Cf. Dante, Inferno, Canto VII.

52 See pp.102-3 above.

53 See pp. 67-9 above.

54 Dronke says of "\( \text{\`e} \) pet hi can wittes ful-wis" (C.B. XIII, p. xii):

What is remarkable here is not the evocation of the lover's state of feeling (though this has a rueful, down-to-earth tone that carries its own conviction), but the suggestion of a vivid background of events swiftly adumbrated in two lines... which lend concreteness and dramatic power to the complaint. Behind the forthrightness of the language we perceive the adroitness and tact of a narrator who knows how to work evocatively.

(The Medieval Lyric, p. 144).

55 Ibid., p. 147.


57 Of the earlier romances which involve some form of love situation, King Horn, ed. J. Hall, has a passage, quoted p.101 above, in which Eymenhild declares her love. In Havlok the Dane, ed. W.W. Skeat, EETS, e.s. 4 (1880), the love theme is totally undeveloped, only at the end of the tale is the love between Havelok and Goldborough...
mentioned, but the emotion is not analysed. Sir Tristrem, ed. P.G. McNeill, Scottish Text Society, 8 (1886) gives virtually no analysis of love despite the obvious importance of the love relationship to the story. Floriæ and Blancheflour, ed. G.H. McKnight, EETS, 14 (1886) explores love more fully than any of the early romances but even so, the editor states that, in adapting the story from the French, the English poet has modified the tenderness and sentimentality.

58 Ed. J. Zupitza, EETS, e.s. 42 (1883).
59 The full range of rhetorical devices used by the Harley poets is described by Stemmler, Die Englischen Liebesgedichte des MS. Harley 2253, pp. 35-63.
60 More accurately, perhaps, it has the sound of an alliterative tag although it is not among those listed by J.P. Oakden, Alliterative Poetry in Middle English: A Survey of the Traditions (Manchester, 1935). On the other hand, Brook notes of the "ro" simile that it is a "common alliterative phrase," p. 76.
61 See p. 72 above.
62 See p. 96 above, note 63.
63 Die Englischen Liebesgedichte des MS. Harley 2253, p. 121.
64 Ibid., pp. 119-121.
65 Ibid., pp. 122ff.
68 For a full refutation of Degginger's thesis, see Appendix.
69 Die Englischen Liebesgedichte des MS. Harley 2253, p. 124.
70 "Explication de Texte' Applied to Three Great Middle English Poems," 17.
71 Brook p. 7; Die Englischen Liebesgedichte des MS. Harley 2253, p. 154.
72 Ibid., p. 155.
73 Ibid., p. 157.
74 Brook glosses fælæwe, fade, from OE fealewian. Stemmler, however, gives the meaning as "grow pale," op. cit. p. 156. This interpretation certainly suits the comparison with the green leaves more as green seems often to be used in connection with
sickness and pallour in Middle English, cf. *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book IV ii. 1154-5:

And thus she lith with hewes pale and grene,
That whilom fresh and fairest was to sene.

75 Die Englischen Liebesgedichte des MS. Harley 2253, p. 139.

76 Ibid., p. 216: Die Harley Gedichte sind nicht nur Höhepunkt, sondern Schlusspunkt einer Entwicklung: Weder die Dichtung Chaucers noch die übrige Lyrik des 14- und 15-Jahrhunderts knüpfen an die stiltradition an, die in MS H zu grosser Meisterschaft gebracht wurde.

77 Speirs, although recognizing that "the best of them imply a craft of song-making that must have been long practised before it could have attained that degree of accomplishment," still places the origins of "Bytuene Mersh ant Aueril" and "Lenten is come wi& loue to toune" in the "songs and dances celebrating the annual spring return or triumph of summer over winter," "Carols and Other Songs and Lyrics," pp. 50 and 53; see also Curry "Imagery in Middle English Secular Lyrics" and O. Heider, Untersuchungen zur me. erotischen Lyrik, 1250-1300, Diss. Halle (1909).


79 Lydgate is echoing Chaucer in the use of this word, *The Franklin's Tale*, l. 113.

80 See p. 125 above.

81 "For which ful ofte I of myself devyne/ That I am trewe Tristam the secunde."

82 Quoted pp. 144 -145 below.

83Faral, *Les Arts Poétiques*, p. 48: La tradition antique livrait au moyen âge: d'une part, la distinction déjà établie chez Quintilien entre les figures de grammaire et les figures de rhétorique; d'autre part, la distinction entre les tropes et les figures de mots et pensée.


85 For the development of the "arrow of love" imagery, see Neilson, *Origins and Sources of the Court of Love*, p. 54.

Neilson, *Origins and Sources of the Court of Love*, p. 51:

But we have already produced sufficient instances of exactly the kind of thing of which the Roman de la Rose is the supreme example to show that allegory was an increasingly favorite form before Guillaume began his poem, and to justify the assumption that it would have been more and more extensively employed though he had never lived.

Ibid., p. 53.

Gradon, *Form and Style in Early English Literature*, 335.

*Origins and Sources of the Court of Love*, p. 29.

*Form and Style in Early English Literature*, p. 374.

*Oeuvres Complètes*, V, 13.

For a more detailed analysis of the poem in which a greater complexity of meaning is claimed, see M. Pittock, "Chaucer: The Complaint unto Pity," *Criterion*, I (1959), 160-168.

E. Flügel, "Chaucers kleinere Gedichte," *Anglia*, 23 (1901), 196, notes that Deschamps had referred to Pity as sleeping.

The idea of the chameleon living on air derives from Pliny,* Naturalis Historia*, Book VII, li.

Jean Robertson discusses the development of this technique in the post-medieval period in *The Art of Letter Writing: An Essay on the Handbooks Published in England during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London, 1943).

"The 'Litera Troili' and English Letters," *RES*, 16 (1965), 236.


Ibid., 26-27.

See p. 123 above.

Gradon, *Form and Style in Early English Literature*, pp. 336-147 gives a helpful discussion of Charles of Orleans' use of allegory but takes insufficient account of the narrative framework of the ballades and this sustains the allegory on two levels of meaning rather more than she asserts.


A particular feature of Charles's characters, distinguishing them from the stock figures of
the Roman de la Rose tradition, is that they are never wholly exteriorized, never fully committed, as though he had never decided between the merits of the physical and mental worlds. The lengthy descriptions of outward appearance which are such a feature of Guillaume de Lorris's work are totally absent from Charles's verse.

103 John V. Fleming, *The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography* (Princeton, 1969), p. 85, shows that white gloves can be used as a symbol of sexuality; cf. Robbins no. 28: isk þo began to rowne in myn ere:

'loke þat pou be priücy & grant þat pou be bere, a peyre wyth glous ic ha to þyn were'

104 See Ballades 2, 4, 6, 14, 20, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 33, 34, 37, 43, 48, 55, 56, 71.

105 Gradon, *Form and Style in Early English Poetry*, p. 341, considers the personification of the heart to be "a metonymy, a dramatic development of a conventional thought."

106 Thibaut's work is summarised by Neilson, *Origins and Sources of the Court of Love*, pp. 56-58.


108 *One Hundred Ballades, Rondeaux and Virelais from the Late Middle Ages*, p. 100.

109 *The Lyric Poetry*, p. 61.

110 *Poésies*, I, 65.

111 Ll. 652-656.

112 Colour symbolism is discussed in Chapter IV, pp. 225 - 229 below.


118 Ibid., 161.

119 See p. 150 above.


121 *Lay Folks Mass Book*, EETS (1879), 390-95.
In sonnet cxl the military metaphor is sustained throughout and used as a means of expounding Petrarch's meaning and elucidating the lover's experience... It is an essential part of the structure and meaning of the whole poem. The image, then, is, to use John Crowe Ransom's distinction, 'metaphysical' rather than 'romantic.' That is the poet's feelings and thoughts are expressed through his chosen image and not simply associated with it in a vague, suggestive way.
CHAPTER IV
THE DESCRIPTION OF THE LADY

1. The Uniformity of the Portrait

Most of the English love lyrics are written to a lady by her lover; only a few, mainly from the fifteenth century, are addressed to the lover by the lady herself. In pleading for his lady's favour, and in expressing the intensity of his love, the lover frequently offers a description in praise of her. The picture which emerges is one of uniform perfection; she is revered because she fulfils all the requirements of an established pattern of beauty, rather than because of any sense of her value as an individual. A general explanation of this tendency to present a universalized picture has been given in Chapter I. However, in relation to the portrait of the lady, the situation can be further clarified.

It is here that the influence of the rhetorical treatises can be seen most clearly. Both Matthieu de Vendôme and Geoffroi de Vinsauf offer guidance and give examples for the presentation of the descriptions of people. Matthieu de Vendôme stresses that description should have a function rather than be merely decorative. One example he gives is particularly relevant to the function of description in the love lyrics. In narrating the story of Jupiter and Callisto, he says, a poet would require a description of the nymph, so that the
audience would be able to understand that only a woman of outstanding beauty could tempt a god:

*Praecipua enim debuit esse affluentia pulchritudinis quae Jovem impulit ad vitium corruptionis.*

In love lyrics it is part of the function of the description of the lady to help the audience understand why the lover should experience such extreme emotion.

The treatises give illustrative descriptions to show how certain types of portrait should be presented. Geoffroi de Vinsauf limits himself to only a few examples, as he says descriptive technique is sufficiently well known. Matthieu de Vendôme, on the other hand, gives examples of the portraits of a prelate, a prince, a skilled orator, a cynic, a virtuous woman, a beautiful lady and an old woman. Edmond Paral comments that all these descriptions are governed by the aim of the writer to praise or to blame his subject. This aim tends to formalize the view taken of character and appearance, preventing a detached assessment of individuals and inclining towards types:

*elle explique que, dans toute la littérature du moyen âge, la description ne vise que très rarement à peindre objectivement les personnes et les choses et qu'elle soit*
toujours dominée par une intention affective qui oscille entre la louange et la critique. This opinion is expanded by Ruth Colby in relation to French medieval romances. She claims that the aim to praise or to blame is linked to fixed ideals of beauty and concepts of ugliness. Only if there is an agreement among writers about what constitutes perfect beauty can they be sure to evoke the correct audience response. In this way, the stereotyping of portraits is not a result of the influence of rhetorical treatises alone, it is also a practical necessity of this type of writing. This combination of practical requirement and rhetorical instruction results in a simple polarity of characterisation and description which does not leave much room for complexity or paradox in the subject.

The technique of presenting the portrait is shown in the treatises by example, and the approach is formal. The attention to various details of the face and body and of moral and spiritual qualities is not new, of course, but an adherence to principles which were long established in literary tradition. In Faral's view, the portrait of the medieval rhetor is a catalogue which follows a fairly strict order:
La description du physique obéit à des lois strictes. Souvent précédée d'un éloge du soin donné par Dieu ou par Nature à la confection de sa créature, elle porte d'abord sur la physionomie, puis sur le corps, puis sur le vêtement; et dans chacune de ses parties, chaque trait a sa place prévue. C'est ainsi que, pour la physionomie, on examine dans l'ordre la chevelure, le front, les sourcils et l'intervalle qui les sépare les yeux, les joues et leur teint, le nez, la bouche et les dents, le menton.9

In practice, however, writers do not conform rigorously to this order. Ruth Colby has shown that in twelfth century French romances, for example, most writers follow a descending order in their portraits but do not adhere to the strict arrangement of individual features outlined by Faral.10 In the English love lyrics such a full description of the lady is rare. Generally a few details are selected, which are sufficient to suggest a picture of perfection to the audience. Where a full description is given, however, it does tend to confirm Colby's observation. In "Mosti ryden by Rybbesdale" (Brook no. 7), a descending order is followed in general but the eyes are described before the forehead and the
eyebrows and chin before the mouth.

Colby makes the further point that the stereotyped nature of these portraits is less a result of their formal structure than of the nature of the descriptive phrases used. She suggests that anyone reading a large number of these descriptions might well seem to be encountering the same person over and over again. Certainly the reader of a large number of love lyrics might be left with the impression that they were all addressed to the same lady.

From descriptions in French medieval literature, it is possible to show how certain features, described in a certain way, emerge as ideal in the picture of a beautiful woman:

(a) ... portrait of an ideally beautiful woman would contain the following details: long gleaming blond hair divided by a straight parting; a reasonably large, smooth white forehead; finely drawn dark eyebrows with a wide space between them; sparkling eyes; a bright face; a rosy youthful complexion; a straight, well-formed nose that is not very large; a small mouth with moderately full red lips and small white teeth not separated by wide spaces; a long neck; gently curving shoulders; long, straight arms; white hands
with long, slender fingers; a white bosom with little breasts; a small waist; and slender sides and hips. Our fair lady would also be tall or fairly tall, and her skin would be white.12

This outline certainly forms a basis for descriptions in medieval English literature, Chaucer's portrait of the lady in The Book of the Mess (ll. 817-1014) being an obvious example. However, many of the earlier romances, although they dwell on the superlative quality of the lady, tend not to give lengthy descriptions; the picture of Belisaunt in Amis and Amiloun is typical:

pat riche douke, pat y of told;
He hadde a douhter fair & bold,
Gurteise, hende & fre.
When sche was fiften winter old,
In al pat lond nas per non yhold
So semly on to se,
For sche was gentil & auenaunt,
Hir name was cleped Belisaunt. 13

A frequently used technique is for the poet to select one or two details from the catalogue which are sufficient to evoke the conventional picture of ideal beauty. Such is the technique of the Gawain poet when he describes Guenevere:
The poets of the love lyrics clearly adhere to this tradition in describing their ideal ladies, although one late poem contains an interesting reaction against this accepted pattern of beauty. The poem asserts that a brunette can be as good as a blond:

blac wol do as god a nede
as pe wyte at bord & bedde;
& per-to also treu in dede,
& per-to y ley my lyf to wedde.

(Robbins no. 33)

The accepted ideal, however, is usually upheld, and this is a result of a combination of influences. The theory expounded in the medieval rhetorical treatises coincides with, and confirms, the practice observed in Greek and Latin classical tradition. It also serves the needs of poets who wish to establish clear standards and so control audience response. Any departure from the accepted standards is immediately obtrusive and is thus clearly marked out as important to our understanding of the writer's intentions.
The presentation of the description of the lady is also governed by the point of view from which the poems are written. All description in these lyrics passes through the filter of the lover's point of view. He is the true subject of the lyrics and it is his emotion which is analysed. For this reason, the poet is not concerned to depict the lady as she really is, but as she appears to the lover. Since part of the function of this description is to justify the lover's reverence of her, the poet must show that she is worthy of adoration. In such a situation, anything less than perfection would make the exaggerated reactions of the lover ridiculous. It is this point of view which explains the excessive use of superlatives in the descriptions:

brightest vnder bis

(Brook no. 3)

for semlokest of alle bynge

(Brook no. 4)

founde were pe feyrest on
pat euer wes mad of blod ant bon,
in boure best wip bolde.

(Brook no. 7)

Apart from the use of grammatical superlatives, the poets also use imagery which is, itself, a type of superlative. The lady is compared to the
best things in nature; precious stones, flowers, birds, or characters from secular and religious literature who stand as representatives of moral or spiritual perfection. Such imagery, although concrete and visual, is not intended to enable us to build up an accurate mental picture of her but to reveal her importance to the lover. If she is compared to a precious stone, this does not help us visualize her, although there are obviously general associations of beauty. On the other hand, it does reveal quite a lot about the lover's attitude to the lady; she is highly valued by him, he is proud to possess her, and, in some cases, may find her curative or magical in her effect on him, in the way some gems were thought to be.

Of course, imagery producing a visual reflection is not excluded from the lyrics, but very often a straightforward comparison of colour, for example, has other associations, which are more important than visual accuracy. The comparison of cheeks to roses conveys colour as well as a sensory effect in terms of softness and fragrance. More important, however, is the fact that cheeks like roses are a feature of the ideal beauty. The visual impact of the simile does not result from a direct observation on the part of the poet but is a by-product of a conventional association. If the
lady is to be praised then her cheeks will be described in terms of roses.

Even where a lyric is devoted entirely to a praise of the lady, as in the case of "Ichot a burde in a bour ase beryl so bryht" (Brook no.3), no clear picture of this paragon emerges. What is understood from the lyric is the effect she has on the lover. It is fruitless to search for the "real" Annot in this poem and such a search can lead only to false conclusions about the lyric. If a visual impression of the lady is sought, then the critic can only assume that the poet has failed to draw this picture. Yet the "real" Annot is not the subject of the poem; it is the poet's reaction to her which is refracted through his praise of her.

This synthesis of established rhetorical practice, poetic requirements for an accepted standard of beauty, and the lover's point of view results in the idealised, uniform, oblique picture which we have of the lady in the love lyrics.

2. The Imagery Used and the Literary Backgrounds Involved

In describing the lady's physical beauty, the poets frequently compare her to flowers, with the rose and the lily being particularly popular as
comparisons for her complexion. This imagery was widespread in medieval literature, in both secular and religious poetry. Indeed there is a direct parallel between imagery used in Marian poetry and that used to praise the lady of the love lyric.¹⁷ There is no real conflict between these uses of imagery in religious and secular verse, since Mary was herself a kind of exemplar of perfect womanhood and was portrayed in literature in the same kind of social framework as the lady of love poetry. Leo Spitzer comments:

Now it is well known that since the twelfth century the Virgin comes to appear more and more, in literature as well as in art, as a lady (as Our Lady, Notre Dame, Unsere Liebwomanen), that is as a noble woman with social attributes. It will then not surprise us to learn (from the commentary of Carleton Brown) that the attributes bestowed on the loveliest lady in land ... are those usually ascribed to the Virgin who is said to be, in the Old French poem he quotes, "safir esprové, / Jaspes alosé, / Amirené pure, / Lubis alumez, / Diamant amez / De noble nature."¹⁸

A further reason for the associations of both the rose and the lily with secular and religious poetry is the duality of sources in which this
imagery is found. In biblical literature there are precedents for its use in connexion with Mary. The reference to the rose in Jericho is found in Ecclesiasticus XXIV, 14 and the "rosa sine spinis" description used in Marian poetry derives from patristic writings. The imagery of the lily, also applied to Mary, is found in the Canticum Canticorum II, 2, where the reference is to the "lilium inter spinas."

Classical literature offers such passages as Virgil's description of Lavinia in the Aeneid:

accept vocem lacrimis Lavinia matris
flagrantis perfusa genas, cui plurimus ignem
subiecit rubor et caelefacta per ora curcurrit.
Indum sanguineo veluti violaverit ostro
si quis ebur, aut mixta rubent ubi lilia multa
alba rosa: talis virgo dabat ore colorum.

(Book XII, ll. 64-69)

In medieval literature, therefore, there is a convergence of religious and secular imagery, which, in the case of the rose, has been summarized by Rosemary Woolf:

In classical legend it had been said that the rose first blossomed when Venus rose from the waves or that it had sprung from the blood of Adonis. Lyric poets, such as Catullus, compared the modest blush of their
mistress to the colour of the rose. In the early Christian tradition the rose became the symbol of the blood of martyrs or of Christ Himself, whilst at the same time there developed the fancy that in Eden the rose was not only unfading but also grew without thorn. In the Middle Ages the Christian association of the rose with martyrdom and the Passion survived, but the pressure of the secular tradition was stronger, and far more often the rose was related to the Virgin ....

Behind the English fifteenth-century use there extends, on the one hand, a long line of Latin hymns in which the Virgin is saluted as "rosa sine spinis", and, on the other, the long tradition of French secular poetry in which the classical simile had become a commonplace.20

The rose is used more specifically as a sexual symbol in Ausonius' poem De Rosa Nascentibus, and this sense is confirmed and extended for the Middle Ages not only in the lyric poetry of the troubadours and trouvères but also in the allegorical Roman de la Rose. Furthermore, both the rose and the lily appear as comparisons in the examples of descriptions given in the treatises of Matthieu de Vendôme and Geoffroi de Vinsauf:
In addition to its religious and sexual associations, the rose later acquired a political significance, according either to its colour or simply as England's emblem as opposed to the fleur-de-lis of France:

Witnesse thies clerkes, pat ben wysse,  
be rose is be flour most holdyn in prysse;  
berfore me thynke be flour-de-lyse  
Scholde wirchipe be rose of rysse  
And ben his thralle.

In the case of the lily there is a similar development. It was used as a symbol for Mary and for the idealised lady of love poetry, while later, in the emblem books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it appears as a symbol of decay. Like the rose, its religious use can be seen as, at first, a separate development due to the reference in the Canticum Canticorum. It is seen in passages praising Mary in Latin hymns:

tua sunt ubera  
vino redolentia  
candor superat lac et lilia  
odor flores et balsama.
Potentially, this situation of a number of symbolic significances appertaining to one type of imagery is confusing. In practice, however, difficulties seldom arise; the context can be relied upon to provide the key to how the symbol is to work.

Both Goliardic poets and troubadours use the rose and the lily as comparisons for the lady in their love lyrics, and they are frequently found together in such descriptions, as in this poem from the Carmina Burana:

Odor roseus
spirat a labiis;
speciosior
pre cunctis filiis,
melle dulcior
pulchrior liliis,
subveni! 26

Chaytor has noted the same imagery in troubadour poetry:

Roza de pascor
Sembla de color
E lis de blancor 27

(Peire Vidal)

In the English love lyrics the rose and lily appear as comparisons for the lady's complexion:
In such comparisons the intention of the author is clear and the reader is not worried by the other possible associations of the two flowers. However, the similes are representative of perfection rather than purely visual. The way in which this kind of comparison works can best be illustrated from an example in Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*. In the description of Alisoun, E.T. Donaldson has noted that Chaucer juxtaposes a flower commonly associated with the ideal lady of refined love poetry with a far less delicate-sounding wild flower; "She was a prymerole, a piggesnye" (l. 3268). The two flowers stand as symbols for the contrasting elements of Alisoun's attraction: her beauty and her lack of refinement. It is the symbolic association of the flowers, rather than their visual aptness which counts.

When no specific flower is mentioned there is again little visual impact. Generally the comparison of the lady to a flower implies perfection:

\[
\text{Y not non so freoli flour} \\
\text{ase ladies pat bep bryht in bour} \\
\]

(Brook no. 12)
now swete flour of femynyte
(Robbins no. 140)
yhe is fayr, and flur of alle.
(Robbins no. 147)

Indeed, as a symbol of perfection the flower is used in contexts where any visual impression would be inappropriate. Chaucer uses it frequently to denote perfect chivalrous behaviour:

And in his hoost, of chivalrie the flour
(The Knight's Tale, 1.982)
That good Arcite, of chivalrie the flour,
(The Knight's Tale, 1. 3059)

Clearly the concept of perfection is the main emphasis here, rather than visual or sensory connotations of the symbol.

A further symbolic association of the flower is with transitoriness. Again, there are biblical and classical sources for this connexion. Probably the most obvious biblical reference is the comparison of man's life to a withering flower in Job XIV, 1-2:

Homo natus de muliere, brevi vivens tempore, repletur multis miseris.
Qui quasi flos egreditur et conteritur, et fugit velut umbra, et numquam in eodem statu permanet.
In classical literature, Horace refers to the short-lived rose in Ode III of Book II:

```
   huc vina et unguenta et minimum breves
   flores amoenae ferrae iube rosae,
```

This symbolism is naturally more appropriate to didactic poetry dealing with the *de contemptu mundi* theme, such as Dunbar's "Memento, homo, quod cinis es" (Mackenzie no. 74), in which beauty and youth are compared to flowers:

```
   Thy lustye bewte and thy youth
   Sail feid as dois the somer flouris;
```

However, one thirteenth century poet consciously denies this view and describes women as "floure bat lastep longe" (Brown XIII no. 52). This metaphor occurs in a defence of women offered by a nightingale in a debate poem, and the line has an air of obstinate defiance. Chaucer also uses this symbolism of flowers in *Troilus and Criseyde*. His warning at the end of the poem about the world that "passeth soone as floures faire" (Book V, l.1841) is an ironic echo of the first line of Troilus' letter to Criseyde: "Ryght fresshe flour, whos I ben have and shal" (Book V, l.1317).

The connexion between flowers and transitoriness also has relevance in the poems of the flower and the leaf, in which these two parts of
the plant vie for supremacy. This contest appears in the poetry of Deschamps, who wrote four ballades on this subject, and Chaucer refers to the contest in *The Legend of Good Women*:

Allas, that I ne had Englyssh, ryme or prose,
Suffisant this flour to preyse aryght!
But helpeth, ye that han konnyng and myght,
Ye lovers that kan make of sentement;
In this cas oghte ye be diligent
To forthren me somewhat in my labour,
Whethir ye ben with the leef or with the flour.

(P. 11. 66-72)

It is also the subject of a fifteenth century poem of dubious authorship and of at least one late lyric, while Charles of Orleans refers to the contest in his ballade sequence. Pearsall links the argument with a court game practised probably in France and England and perhaps associated with May Day:

It may be assumed, then, that one of the diversions of court society in England and France at the end of the fourteenth century was to divide into two amorous orders, and to argue no doubt with great subtlety, the comparative merits of the flower and the leaf.
In poems dealing with this subject, one of the arguments used against the flower by the leaf is that the flower fades while the leaf remains.

Although flower imagery is used mainly in the praise of the lady's beauty, it can refer to moral qualities as well. Dunbar's description of his lady as "Sweit rois of vertew and of gentilnes" (Mackenzie no. 49) concentrates more on qualities of character than on physical beauty. A wider diversity of functions is seen in other kinds of imagery. It has already been noted that birds are associated with love through spring description, but they are also used to denote specific qualities of character or beauty.

Again, both biblical and classical sources connect birds with love. In the Canticum Canticorum, the singing of birds is part of the spring description, "vox turturis audita est in terra nostra" (II, 12). Comparison with the dove is employed in the description of the beloved, "Ecce tu pulchra es amica mea, ecce tu pulchra es, oculi tui columbarum" 32 (I. 14). Classical literature reveals many links between love and birds, but perhaps most appropriate is a passage in Ovid's Amores (Book II, vi). Here, the poet laments the death of his lady's parrot, a bird
frequently featured in medieval love poetry, and many of the other birds frequently associated with love are mentioned; the nightingale, the turtle-dove and the phoenix. As well as having literary associations, these birds are connected with certain types of behaviour through Pliny's study of them in his *Naturalis Historia* and through the bestiaries.

Birds are associated with love in Latin and French debate poems and love allegories. In the various poems from the *De Phyllide et Flora* group, which debate the respective merits of knights and clerks as lovers, *Florance et Blancheflor* shows a court of birds discussing the problem and *Li Fablel dou Dieu d'Amour* shows a lover having a dream vision in which birds debate the subject. The mock religion of love may also involve birds, as in Jean de Condé's *La Messe des Oisaus et li Plais des Chanonesses et des Grises Nonains*, in which birds hold a service with a nightingale singing a mass and a parrot delivering a sermon. English lyric poetry also has birds involved in debates, but the subject is women. The thirteenth century poem "Somer is comen wip loue to toune" (C.B. XIII no. 52) has a thrush and a nightingale discussing anti-feminist and pro-feminist views, and two fifteenth
century poems show debates between nightingales and clerges.

Goliardic poems tend to link birds with the locus amoenus as providing a pleasant background for love:

\[
\text{In hac valle florida} \\
\text{floreus, fragratus,} \\
\text{intra septa lilia} \\
\text{locus purpuratus} \\
\text{dum garritus merule} \\
\text{dulciter alludit} \\
\text{philomena carmine} \\
\text{dulcia concludit.}\]

Comparable descriptions are found in troubadour and northern French lyric poetry, but here bird imagery is also used in the description of the lady:

\[
\text{Les espaules ben assis,} \\
\text{Poy le ney e la peitrine,} \\
\text{La char blanche plus ke cyne,} \\
\text{Par tut en porte le pris.}\]

In several ways, therefore, the use of bird imagery plays an important role in medieval love poetry and its appearance in descriptions of the lady is only one aspect of its currency.

Sometimes it may be used simply to praise a specific trait which is comparable to a feature of a particular bird:
hyre swyre is whittore þan þe swon

(Brook no. 4)

swannes swyre swyþe wel ysette

(Brook no. 7)

On other occasions the poet may wish to refer to a moral quality which is also associated with a certain bird. Both Pliny and the bestiaries tell us, for example, that the turtle-dove remains faithful to her mate, even if he dies before her:

In bok if þe turtwe lif
writen o rime, wu lagelike
ge holdep luve al hire lif time;
...
Oc if hire make were ded,
and ge widue wore,
þanne fleged ge one and fared,
non oðer wile ge more; 37

It is in character, therefore, for the turtle-dove in Chaucer's Parliament of Fowls to remark:
"Nay, God forbede a love re shulde change!" (1.582)

Naturally enough, the lover finds the quality of faithfulness in his lady most praiseworthy:

O tortle þat min herte is on,
in tounes trewe

(Brook no. 9)

to trewe tortle in a tour y telle þe mi tale;

(Brook no. 3)
for ye be bothe fair & free,
therto wysse & womanly,
trew as turtyll on a tree

(Robbins no. 130)

When the poets compare the lady to the phoenix
ey are basically using a kind of superlative, for
Pliny and the bestiaries state that the phoenix is
unique: 38

Heo hap a mete myddel smal,
body ant brest wel mad al,
ase feynes wipoute fere,

(Brook no. 7)

She is the sovl fenyx of Arabye

(Charles of Orleans,
Ballade 9)

In the case of the nightingale, literary
tradition has a twofold development, which may
explain why this bird appears sometimes in praise
of love and sometimes as its detractor. From the
story of Tereus, the nightingale has associations
with disastrous love; hence the reference to this
story in Book II of Troilus and Criseyde (11.63-70).
From Pliny, however, comes the information that
the nightingale sings all day and night in spring
and that her song is very agreeable:

Luscinis diebus ac noctibus continuis
garrulus sine intermissu cantus densante se
frondium germine ... ut non sit dubium
hanc suavitatem praemonstratam efficaci
auspicio cum in ore Stesichori cecinit
infantis.

(Naturalis Historia, Book X, xliii)

In the thirteenth century debate poem "Somer is
comen wip love to toune" (C.B. XIII no. 52), the
nightingale defends women while a thrush represents
the anti-feminist point of view. In two fifteenth
century debate poems, however, the nightingale is
seen arguing with a clerk, in both cases against
women and love. The nightingale is not so
frequently used as a simile or metaphor for the
lady, although it occurs in a Harley lyric both as
a compliment to the sound of the lady's name and
as paronomasia:

hire nome is in a note of þenyhtegale.

(Brook no. 3)

Jewel imagery in the love lyrics is another
means of comparison which has a number of functions.
It may be part of the praise of the lady's beauty,
it may indicate her moral qualities and general
superiority over other women, or it may reveal the
power she has over her lover. In all cases, such
imagery relies on a sphere of associations long
since lost to us. The lore of precious stones on
which it relies is part of a complicated tradition
involving astrology, medicine, magic and Christian belief, but stretching back further than written records.\textsuperscript{40}

The belief in the virtues of precious stones was a part of the scientific knowledge of the Babylonians and found a place in their astrology. The classical world also attached importance to the study of precious stones. The earliest surviving treatise is ascribed to Theophrastus (c.315 B.C.) and this gives information about stones used for engraving. The origin of stones is treated by Plato in the \textit{Timaeus}, where they are linked to the four elements of the universe. The magical qualities of stones are discussed by Pliny in his \textit{Naturalis Historia}, but with an air of scepticism. Most medieval treatises on gems derive from Marbode's famous lapidary, which in turn is taken from a Greek treatise attributed to Damigeron, although this survives only in a Latin translation.

The Christian church absorbed some of the lapidary lore, although it was opposed to the magic, and combined it with the references to precious stones in the Bible. In the early seventh century St. Isidore of Seville considered gems in his \textit{Etymologiae} and was critical of their magical qualities. Marbode, Bishop of Rennes, wrote his
lapidary in the early eleventh century and this was clearly very popular, for a large number of manuscripts survive and it was translated into many languages. Although some sixty stones are described and their qualities given, it does not pay special attention to the biblical stones.

After Marbode, lapidaries flourished in the Middle Ages. In English there are eleventh century treatises which derive from these earlier sources, although the popular verse lapidary is not yet found in English, and there is no translation of Marbode's work into English. Generally the lapidaries describe the gems and their place of origin and give an account of their properties; magical, spiritual and prophylactic. The emerald, for example, is described in the London Lapidary:

Emeraunde passeth all pe grenesses of grenhed, & pe bokes seyn vs pat pe emeraude & pe prames been growyng to-gedre, & pat pe fine emeraudes comen oute of pe land of syre & of a water of paradys. Emeraudes amenden the sight to beholde vpon.

The properties and attributes of the stones, however, are not fixed, and variations do occur.

As with other categories of imagery which have both biblical and secular sources, jewel imagery is
as appropriate in eulogies to both the Virgin
as to the lady of love poetry. Carleton Brown
notes a French poem in M.S. Digby 86 in which a
list of precious stones is used in praise of the
Virgin:

Safir esprove
Jaspes alose,
Amiraude pure,
Lubiz alumez
Diamaunt amez
De noble nature.

(C.B. XIII p. 231).

In troubadour poetry, precious stones are found in
comparisons for the lady's beauty:

De rovin ab cristaill
Sembla qe deus la fe. 44

(Aimeric de Belenci).

The English poets tend to use precious stones
to praise the lady's moral perfection, while her
physical beauty is often compared to precious
materials such as ivory or gold:

hire teht aren white ase bon of whal,

(Brook no. 7)

heo glystned e ase gold when hit glemede,

(Brook no. 8)

your nek as whyte as whalles bone,

(Robbins no. 130).
Where specific jewels are mentioned, they may be linked to particular moral qualities:

Heo is coral of godnesse,
heo is rubie of ryhtfulnesse,
heo is cristal of clannesse.

(Brook no. 14)

The fifteenth century poets continue the tradition of comparing the lady to precious stones; one anonymous writer selects specific properties, which he finds praiseworthy in his lady:

ffarewell saphir, souerain of assay,
ffarewell feir, fresshest & fre,
ffarewell Rubye, rial of Aray,
ffarewell Dyamand, dere in degre

(Robbins no. 205)

Sometimes linked with jewel imagery is the symbolism of colours. Colour, in the description of the lady, can be used in two ways. Firstly, there are the straightforward associations of certain colours with the ideal form of beauty. W. Curry has noted the colours usually employed in portraits of beautiful women:

the type of feminine beauty praised by the poets in their catalogs of charms is, without an exception, a blonde, whose hair is golden or like gold wire, eyes sparkling bright and light blue in color, cheeks lily-white or
rose-red, forehead broad and without wrinkles, red lips, white evenly set teeth, long snow-white arms, and white hands with slender fingers. The use of colour in this way is simply part of the homogeneous standard of beauty shared by medieval poets. It means that any deviation from the pattern is immediately obtrusive. Many critics have commented on the black eyes of Alyson in the Harley lyric "Bytuene Mersh ant Aueril" (Brook no. 4), for example:

On heu hire her is fayr ynoh,
hire browe browne, hire e3e blake

Curry states that black eyes are usually ascribed to ugly people, but clearly that is not their significance here; the variation adds an individual note to a stereotyped description.

Colours may also be used according to their specific symbolic significances and it is here that colour and jewel imagery sometimes overlap. G. Wickham comments on the use of colour symbolism in tournaments:

Colour was the simplest method of assisting recognition. ... For Christians of the Middle Ages, the meanings of many colours had been standardized by the rules laid down for their use in vestments in 1198; and the process thus
begun was continued by those responsible for formulating the codes of Heraldry, due largely to the requirements of the Tournament. Thus colours, besides serving the simple function of distinguishing one armoured combatant from another, could be given additional allegoric significances. \(^4\)

It is not until the later period that colour symbolism occurs in the English love lyrics. Indeed, this whole area of imagery seems to be more popular with the French poets. Froissart's *Dit dou Bleu Chevalier*, for example, has a knight dressed in blue to signify his fidelity; Machaut's *Remède de Fortune* involves a blue shield of true love. Machaut also composed a lyric on colour symbolism:

\[\text{Qui de couleurs saroit à droit jugier} \]
\[\text{Et dire la droite signification,} \]
\[\text{On deveroit le fin azur prisier} \]
\[\text{Dessus toutes; je n'en fais pas doublance.} \]
\[\text{Car jaune, c'est faussete,} \]
\[\text{Blanc est joie, vert est nouvelleté,} \]
\[\text{Vermeil ardeur, noir deuil, mais ne doubt mie} \]
\[\text{Que fin azur loyauté signifie.} \]

The only similar poem in English I have been able to find occurs in MS. Trinity Cambridge 1450, f. 76v.
The poem is listed by Robbins in his article "Middle English lyrics: Handlist of New Texts," but the handwriting is of the sixteenth century:

The lover true
In Colour blew
Hymme selfe he dothe adorne.
The virgyn' brighte
All whyte in sighte
The sadde in black dothe morne.
The lustye greane
Right well besene
Betokenethe the flowers of yowthe,
The 'manne' forsaken
In Tawney is shapen
As a manne full of Ruthe,
The joyfull yellowe
The Redde dothe folowe
for anger as hote as fyre.
The Russett hue
hopythe to ensue
The fruytz of hys desyre.

Perhaps reflecting the influence of French poetry, Chaucer uses colour symbolism, mainly for clothes. In The Book of the Duchess, the dreamer encounters "a man in blak" (1.445). Ironically, Criseyde sends to Troilus a "blew ryng", symbol of true love (Troilus and Criseyde, Book III, 1. 885).
The opposing associations of blue and green are seen in a lyric which has been attributed to Chaucer, although Robinson includes it among his "Short poems of doubtful authorship":

To newe thing your lust is ay so kene;
In stede of blew, thus may ye were al grene. 49

When Lydgate uses jewel imagery in My Lady Dere (MacCracken no. 6) the colour of the stones is also involved, but the poet appears to have reversed the qualities and symbolism normally attributed to the gems he uses:

emeraude eke is ay lasting
Whil hit abydepe with his hert truwe,
be saphyre with his hevenly hewé
Makepe grounded eyen clere;

The green of the emerald and the blue of the sapphire would normally symbolize the reverse qualities to those given them by Lydgate, and although the properties of precious stones are not fixed, it is usually the emerald which has the power of healing eyesight. 50

The moral superiority of the lady may be described through comparison with exemplary figures. The tendency of the medieval poet to think in terms of types rather than individuals encourages the comparison of the lady to figures from favourite sources; the Bible, classical literature, romances—
who stand as representatives of certain qualities. Such comparisons are used by the troubadours:

Plus blanca es que Elena,
Belazors que flors que nais, 51

(Arnaut de Marueill)

In the earlier lyrics, figures from the romances and the Bible predominate. In "Somer is comen wip loue to toune" (C.B. XIII no. 52), the thrush uses biblical characters to convey the worthlessness of women:

'ępnk oupon saunsum þe stronge,
Hou muchel is wif him dude to wronge,'

However, the nightingale defends women by reference to the Virgin:

'O fowel, ði mouþ þe haueþ I-shend!
þoru wam wes al þis world I-wendi?
Of a maide meke and milde,
Of hire sprong þat holi bern
þat boren wes in bedlehem,'

The fifteenth century poets may use such comparisons as an excuse to display their classical learning, as in Lydgate's A Ballade of Her that Hath all Virtues (MacCracken no. 1):

Of Nyobe þe sure perseueraunce,
Of Adryane þe gret stedfastnesse,
Assured trouthe, voyde of varyaunce,
With yonge Thesbe, exsample of kyndenesse
of Cleopatres abyding stabulnesse,
Since part of the function of the description
of the lady is to enable the audience to understand
the nature of the lover's reaction to her, an
important type of imagery is that which shows the
extent of the power she has over him. Elaborations
on light imagery are sometimes used to convey this
idea. The quality of radiance in the lady's
appearance is praised with reference to many of
her features; her hair, her skin, her eyes. Curry
states:

Beautiful hair shines like gold wire, or is
as yellow as gold wire, or as bright and
glistening. 52

Concerning the skin he writes:

Bright may at times be supposed to refer to
the lustrous beauty of white skin. 'Lady
bright', even when used to fill out a line
or for purposes of rime, seems to sum up
all the charms of the heroine. 53

In particular, the eyes are associated with a
shining quality, and Curry suggests that the descrip-
tion of the eyes as grey may have implied radiance:

The eyes of both men and women, to be
considered beautiful, must be bright and
radiant and above all in color grey. In fact
grey seems at times to have lost any definite
color significance it may originally have had, and to be merely a synonym for beautiful or bright and radiant. Curry notes further:

In order to make impressive the splendor and brilliance of the eyes of his heroes and heroines, the poet compares them to stars, to gems and to shining glass. 54 It is unlikely that any specific sources for this type of imagery could be found, since clearly it is of a universal nature. In respect of the lady’s eyes, however, it is interesting that in classical and medieval Latin the word lumen is often used as a synonym for oculus 55 in descriptions, and this may have influenced the medieval poets in their attribution of the quality of brightness to the lady’s eyes. Some of the specific imagery occurs in the rhetorical treatises. Matthieu de Vendôme, for example, compares the eyes of Helen to stars, "Stellis praeradiant oculi." 56

This quality of brightness, which is associated with the lady’s beauty, can be elaborated to produce statements about the power she wields over the lover. In suggesting her radiance, the poets may imply that she illumines the lover’s whole existence; she becomes his only source of light, and thus he is dependent on her. A similar emphasis is
put on light imagery in trouvere poetry:

Esclairier s'emploie aussi fréquemment à propos de la beauté qui brille, illumine:
beauté ou virtu, sources de lumière qui répandent leur clarté comme le soleil ou l'étoile du matin. 57

A troubadour compares his attraction to the lady with that of the sunflower to the sun:

totz temps, dompna, vos anera seguen
go·l girasol que·l solleil sec ades.58
(The Monk of Montaudon).

In the same way, the English poets compare the brilliance of the lady to the sun or moon:

he mone wiþ hire muchel maht
ne lenep non such lyht anaht
(pat is in heouene heȝe)
ase hire forhed dop in day

(Brook no. 7)
farewell as bryght as sonne ouer hyll,

(Robbins no. 204).

Another way of expressing her power over the lover is to concentrate on her ability to heal his sickness or alleviate his pain. The poets might use imagery of medicine/herbs, or describe the lady as the lover's physician. The same idea is also present in jewel imagery, since prophylactic powers were ascribed to some precious stones. In
a sense, this imagery is an extension of that which describes the lover's suffering as a form of sickness; clearly the only antidote to his illness is the lady herself. An important source for this idea is the description of the beloved as a healer and comforter in the Canticum Canticorum:

Fulcite me floribus, stipate me malis:
quia amore langueo.

(II, 5)

The troubadour, Jaufre Rudel, seeks the healing power of his lady's call:

Amors, de terra lonhdana,
Per vos totz lo cors mi dol;
E no n puec trobar mezina
Si non au vostre reclam, 59

The lady's healing powers are a frequent source of imagery for the English poets:

a suete cos of by moup mhte be my leche

(Brook no. 25)

And so may send it to his lady round
Which is the leche to alle his soore felyng.

(Charles of Orleans, Ballade 21)

Muge he is ant mondrake pourh mhte of pe mone,

(Brook no. 3)

Ase baum is hire bleo;

(Brook no. 7).

This imagery can be further elaborated if the poet
makes use of the paradox that the lady is both the cause of the lover's sickness and its remedy. This type of paradox is central to the definition of love in medieval literature. The description of love as a sickness which the lover welcomes, the thirst which increases the more he drinks, the living death and so forth, are constant features of the lover's expression of his own emotions. This peculiar situation of the lady as both source and cure of the lover's suffering is utilized by the later poets especially. Lydgate writes:

And, worse than death, my leche dothe disdeyne
Me to recure, for lacke of mercy.

(MacCracken no. 2)

and Charles of Orleans:

But welcome now to mende bat is a-mys
And welcome now my leche to sle or saue.

(Ballade 98)

The categories which have been outlined form the main areas of imagery used in the description of the lady. In the following analyses of a selection of individual lyrics, the ways in which this imagery functions will be examined and chronological developments of style investigated.

2. THE PRE-CHAUCERIAN LYRICS

The Harley lyrics are the earliest love poems in which the description of the lady appears in any
detail. However, the thirteenth century poems which remain to us, either in full or in fragmentary form, have brief descriptive details of a kind that demonstrate that the type of portrait found in the Harley collection is a continuation of an established tradition rather than an innovation.

In "Foweles in pe frith" (C.B. XIII no. 8) and a fragment printed by Carleton Brown in the introduction to his anthology, "[hen pat hi can wittes fule-wis" (C.B. XIII p. xii), the lady is portrayed in the superlative terms of the later poems:

1) best of bon & blod
2) lafdi þet is pris
   of alle þet in bure god

Indeed, the reference to her as "in bure", in what Brown describes as "perhaps the earliest example of the secular lyric", hints at an early establishment of the sophisticated, refined love lyric in English. In "Somer is comen wip loue to toune" (C.B. XIII no. 52), the nightingale, who defends women, describes them in similarly eulogistic and sophisticated terms. There is use of superlatives, light imagery, and reference to the nobility of the lady and her position within the bower:

For he beþ hende of corteisy,
Hy beb feire and briȝt on hewe.

...

Hy beb briȝttore ounder shawe
pen pe day wenne hit dawe
In long someres tide.

...

Hy beb of herte meke and milde,
Hem-self hy cunne from shome shilde
Wipinne boures wowe,

A similar picture emerges from the early romances. In Sir Beves of Hamtoun, the mother of Beves is praised briefly for her physical beauty:

The kinges doughter of Scotlonde
So faire and bright; 60

(11. 26-27).

King Horn presents a rather different situation, since it is the hero rather than the heroine who is described. In the earliest version, the Cambridge Manuscript, Horn is praised in the terms of ideal beauty:

He hadde a sone þat het horn,
Fairer ne miste non beo born.
Ne no rein vpon birine,
Ne sunne vpon bisschine,
Fairer nis non þane he was,
He was briȝt so þe glas,
He was whit so pe flur,
Rose red was his color. 61

(11.9-16)

Although the Harley lyrics are the earliest poems in which the portrait of the lady is a major feature, comparable passages from earlier lyrics and romances of the period help to place them in the context of a continuing English tradition. The main feature of the Harley lyrics which distinguishes their descriptions from the earlier lyrics is the much greater amplification of the portrait.

"Ichot a burde in a bour ase beryl so bryht" (Brook no. 3) is devoted entirely to a praise of the lady by the lover. She is not praised in terms which help the reader visualize her, although the imagery itself is vivid and concrete. Instead, she is seen in terms of the power she has over the lover and the reactions she stimulates in him.

The poet organizes his praise with great care, keeping separate kinds of imagery in different stanzas. The stanzas are linked and unified by his consistent attitude to her and by the repetition of a particular view of the lady, which is maintained in each stanza. This view of her is the picture of her in her setting; she is a "burde in a bour," and in all stanzas the poet places at least one of his
comparisons in its setting too, so that the analogy is more precise. In the first stanza she is "saphyr in seluer" and "gernet in golde"; in the second her complexion is as "pe rose pat red is on rys"; in the third the birds with which she is compared are seen within a typical environment; in the fourth she is "canel in cofre", and in the last "legeu in tour". Since the phrase "burde in a bour" and many of the others suggesting a setting are alliterative clichés, it is a tribute to the poet's skill that he has been able to stress their original intrinsic meaning rather than use them in a mechanical way.

The first stanza of the poem contains comparisons of the lady with precious stones. The effect of the imagery is cumulative; it is the overall impression which counts rather than the individual metaphors and similes. It is as if the poet is unable to find sufficient stones of rarity and beauty in Creation with which to compare his lady. The first six lines concentrate on praise of her physical beauty; the lady in her bower is as beautiful as a jewel in its rich setting. However, in the last three lines more emphasis is given to the properties of the individual stones. The poet stresses that it is the power of the emerald and the marguerite which is important:
The power of the emerald is that it can "amend the sight to beholde upon", as the London Lapidary states. Since we already know that the lady "lamep wip liht", the power of the emerald seems the more appropriate. The marguerite or pearl is also famed for its medicinal properties:

& pey han vertu of comfort by al kend perof;
& somme seyne pat pey conforten lymes & membris,
for it clensep him of superfluite of humours &
fasten pe lymes, & helpen azen pe cordiacle
passioun & agens swonyng of hert &,azens
febilnes of Flux by cause of medeyne.

The ability of the lady to heal the lover is another of the poem's recurrent statements, and since love is seen as a sickness, it is apt that the lover should value this power in the lady.

In the last line of the stanza the lady's complexion is compared to the carbuncle; "ffor charbocle ich hire ches bi chin ant by chere". Most of the lapidaries explain that the carbuncle shines more brightly than any other stone:

Twelfta is carbunculus haten, se is byrnende
glede ge-lic.

Thus the comparison becomes a kind of superlative praise of the lady's beauty.
The comparisons with flowers in the second stanza concentrate on praise of her physical beauty and healing power. Two lines of the stanza, however, seem to me to have been over-simplified by editors of the poem. They are:

Oonyte ase columbine such hire cunde ys,
glad vnder gore in gro ant in grys.

A pun on the words "coynte" and "cunde" may be intended here. The sexual implication of the line is brought out by the next line in the phrase "glad vnder gore". E.T. Donaldson has raised the question of the use of this phrase in the Harley lyrics and feels that the original sense of this alliterative tag may not have been entirely lost here. 65 Interesting in this connexion is a phrase in The Owl and the Nightingale, l. 515, "habbe he istunge under gore", which is a clear sexual reference. 66 Since the poet's technique in this lyric is to stress the true sense of alliterative clichés, I think that Donaldson is certainly right about "glad under gore" and that this phrase reinforces the pun in the preceding line.

In the third stanza the category of imagery is birds and included are those that are most frequently associated with love poetry, the "tortle" and the "nyhtegale". The list of comparisons is headed by the "papeiai" or parrot. Although this bird has
associations with love poetry through its appearance in Book VI of Ovid's *Amores*, its specific role in this lyric may have another source. It is linked by the poet with the ability to cure the lover of his sorrow, and Theo Stemmler has shown that this idea occurs in a tenth century Latin work written in Germany, the *Bobasis cuiusdam captivi per tropologiam*. Here the king of the animals is sick and he sends for all his subjects, hoping to find one to cure him. Among these are birds who can cure with their song, and they include the nightingale, the blackbird, the swan and the parrot. While this certainly elucidates the curative role of the parrot in this poem, this line still seems to me to require further exploration. G.L. Brook glosses it "she is the parrot who cures my pain for me when I am in torment", taking the phrase "in pyn" to refer to the lover. While this interpretation is no doubt sound on linguistic grounds, from a literary viewpoint it is unsatisfactory. The other birds in the stanza are seen in a typical environment of enclosed space:

> to trewe tortle in a tour y telle þe mi tale;
> he is þrustle þryuen in þro þat singþ þin sale,
> þe wilde lauercoc ant wolc ant þe wodewale;
he is faucoun in friht, darest in dale,
and wip eueruch a gome gladest in gale.

These analogies recall the picture of the lady within her bower in the first stanza. This, together with the alliteration of the line, suggests that "in pyn" refers back to the parrot rather than to the lover. If this is correct then a possible derivation of the word is OE penn rather than "pine". In Old English the word penn is of obscure meaning, although it is usually glossed as an enclosure for sheep or cattle. However, in Middle English it is used in the sense of a coop or pen for poultry as well, as in the line "my polyle pat is penn-efed and partrykes bope".

The spelling of the noun with -i instead of -e is not unparalleled. A.H. Smith, in Place Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire and York, has an entry for Kilpin. The -pin element here derives from the OE noun penn, and may also be present in another place name, Harpings. It is also interesting to note that Joseph Wright in The English Dialect Dictionary gives a Cheshire noun "pin" which he describes as an enclosure or pen. This is from the same N.W. Midlands area which G.L. Brook locates as the possible origin of the lyric. Another example of a connected word containing the -i spelling is the verb "pennen" which occurs in Piers Plowman A, Passus V. 1. 127:
"putte hem in a pressour and pinnede hem perinne". 72

Skeat glosses this line:
I put them in a press and penned them fast in it.

Of course a poultry coop may not be an appropriate housing for an exotic bird like the "papeiai", but since the word "cage" is a French loanword, I believe the poet may have chosen an older, native word with the right general meaning in order to preserve the alliteration of the line. If, as I believe, my interpretation is correct, then the line will read "she is the parrot in a pen who cures my pain for me". This interpretation conforms to the poet's pattern of seeing each comparison in its setting just as the lady is seen in the bower; however, it does not interfere with the function of the parrot as the healer of the lover's suffering.

The fourth stanza compares the lady to herbs and plants which have curative or aphrodisiac properties. On the whole the emphasis here is on the power of the lady over the lover; but there is also a sense of her rarity and value: "she is trewe triacle ytold wip tonges in trone" and "comyn in court." There is also an interesting variation on the idea of the lady being the best from "Irlond
into Ynde" (Brook no. 12). In this poem the lady is seen as "such licoris mai leche from Lyne to Lone", another example of the way the Harley poets introduce subtle variations on conventional comparisons.

Exempla are used to praise the lady in the final stanza, and the selection of people is both unusual and intriguing. Some of the names remain unidentified. Carleton Brown was unable to find satisfactory explanations for Wyrwain and Wylcadoun. The other examples come from Arthurian Romance and from the Mabinogion. The Harley poet compares his lady to both male and female characters, choosing them for the qualities they epitomise, despite their sex.

Brook has an emendation to the first line of the stanza in his edition. The manuscript in fact reads "He is medierne of miht, mercie of mede". Brook's emendation of "medierne" to medicine does not seem at all satisfactory to me. Firstly, it seems unlikely that a scribe would mistake a common word like "medicine" for the much more unusual word "medierne". Secondly, it is a characteristic of this poem that each stanza begins with an example of the imagery that is to be predominant in the rest of the stanza. This suggests that "medierne" is in fact a proper noun. In the second half of the line
the word "mercie" also causes difficulties, although here I would agree with Carleton Brown that it is being used adjectivally so that the phrase means "generous in reward". This again is in keeping with the poet's technique in the other stanzas, where in the opening lines, the poet takes one metaphor or simile and qualifies it in some way before proceeding with his list.

If the word "medierne" is a proper noun then the problem of identification still remains. It is just possible that this could be Madyene Le Crespes (French: Medians li Crespes) who appears in Merlin as a lord fighting against rebel vassals; however he is a very minor figure.

I have deliberately given a detailed analysis of this lyric, as I feel it has not been sufficiently appraised in the past. In particular I feel it should be vindicated against A.K. Moore's judgement of it as "a patchwork of redundant images and hackneyed phrases." The poet's skill in controlling his categories of imagery and in emphasising the literal sense of cliché phrases make it, I believe, one of the richest medieval lyrics in praise of a lady.

Description in "Bytuene Mersh ant Aueril" (Brook no. 4) is subordinated to the lover's expression of his own feelings. In the first
stanza the poet states simply that she is the "semlokest of alle pynge." The use of the superlative acts as an explanation of his confession that he is living in "louel longing."

The next stanza begins a selective catalogue description in which the poet sets out to prove the superlative statement in the first:

On heu hire her is fayr ynoh,
hire browe troune, hire e3e blake;
wiþ lossum chere he on me loh,
wiþ middel smal ant wel ymake.

Here of course we have the famous departure from convention in the description of Alysoun's "e3e blake". Only half of the stanza is devoted to description of Alysoun; however, the lover is too engrossed in his own feelings to digress from these for long.

The effect of this intertwining of information, a little about the lady, a little about the lover, is that it captures the restlessness of the lover's own mind. It is a structural reinforcement of the lover's turmoil depicted in such phrases as "nihtes when y wende ant wake" and "wery so water in wore." 77

Again this poem is less about Alysoun herself than about her effect on the lover. Description is through superlatives, through the statement that it is impossible to do full justice to her beauty
and through catalogue details. The cumulative effect of this fragmented information is to reveal how much the lover adores her.

In "Mosti ryden by Rybbesdale" (Brook no. 7), the portrait is presented in the conventional catalogue form and a general descending order is followed. All the lady's features conform to the expected pattern of ideal beauty.

The lyric is prevented from becoming a mere repetition of conventions by the poet's individual elaboration of the imagery. A commonplace comparison to the sun is amplified by the emphasis on the sun's influence all over the world:

\[ \text{Ase sonnebem hire bleo is briht;} \]
\[ \text{in vche londe heo leomeq lyht,} \]

Light imagery is woven throughout this poem, emphasising the lover's dependence on the lady. In this case the sun simile has become a type of superlative, with the poet implying that the lady is the most radiant in any country. The same imagery is taken up in the second stanza:

\[ \text{Hire hed when ich biholde apon,} \]
\[ \text{þe sonnebem aboute noon} \]
\[ \text{me þohte þat y seþe;} \]

Again this is a kind of superlative, since the sun is brightest at noon. The sun simile in this stanza is balanced by a comparison with the moon:
The simplicity of the language here belies the complexity of thought behind this imagery. The parenthetical phrase "bat is in heouene heȝe" is slipped in casually enough, but it has an important significance. The wonder is that the lover's life can be more illuminated by his earthly lady than by the moon in heaven with its celestial power. Furthermore, the contrast between the moon at night and the lady in daytime is cogent. The moon appears to shine so brightly because it has a background of darkness, but his lady needs no such contrasting background; she excels under any conditions.

Again this imagery amounts to the use of superlatives; the poet manipulates the comparisons in order to suggest the greatest kind of perfection possible. In stanza four he achieves this by hyperbole:

swannes swyre swype wel ysette,
a sponne lengore þen þy mette,
þat freoly ys to fede.

There is perhaps a touch of humour here, but this metaphor
is intended to convey a similar impression to the preceding intensified imagery. If a long neck is considered beautiful, then her neck must be longer than any other because she is more beautiful than any other.

The comparison of her breasts to "apples tuo" in the next stanza is conventional enough, but the qualifying phrase "of Parays" gives the simile wider implications. Her breasts represent Paradise for the lover and yet have a hint of the forbidden fruit of the Genesis story.

Jewellery is used in the description of her dress and relies on lapidary information for its effect. The poet refers only allusively to the gem in her buckle:

\[\text{'per wipinne stont a ston}
\text{pat warmep men from wo;}
\text{be water pat hit wetes yn}
\text{ywis hit worbep al to wyn;}
\]

This stone is the Dyonisias, which is described as follows in the Peterborough Lapidary:

\[\text{Dianya is a ston, & is blak & hape redyssh}
\text{schynyng. Yf }\text{pu wil make wyne or all or}
\text{water, it makeb gode sauor to drynke; and}
\text{grynde bis ston & put it in pe wyne or ale}
\text{or water, & anoon it schal make pe licor of}
\text{good sauour to drynke & dope no harme.}\]
In the final stanza another of the conventional comparisons is given a touch of freshness by the poet. As G.L. Brook has remarked, "a lady is not only whiter than milk; she is whiter than the morning milk" (Brook p. 21). I do not, however, agree with Brook that this means that the poet has a real lady in mind and is trying to individualise her portrait. Variation of the standard imagery is an integral part of medieval poets' technique and need not be related to a "real life situation" or direct observation on the part of the poet.

Praise of a particular lady is embedded in praise of women in general in "In May hit murgep when hit dawes" (Brook no. 12). To give a balanced effect, the poet also counterpoints the feelings of a specific lover with the behaviour of man in general. The poem asserts that all women are beautiful but one is more beautiful than all, just as men are treacherous, except one. In such a state of affairs, it would be clearly best for the most beautiful woman to accept the love of the only faithful man:

\begin{verbatim}
    ah wolde lylie-leor in lyn
    yhere leuely lores myn
    wip selpe we weren sahte.
\end{verbatim}
The poem begins by drawing a direct comparison with the spring blossoms and women, a comparison which is often implied but not always so clearly stated:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{blosmes bredep on } & \text{be bowes} \\
\text{al } & \text{his wilde wyhtes wowes,} \\
\text{so wel ych } & \text{underfynde.} \\
\text{Y not non so freoli flour} \\
\text{ase ladies pat bep bryht in bour,} \\
\text{wip love who mihte hem bynde;}
\end{align*}
\]

The simile is a carefully worked out parallel structure. The blossoms are seen on the bough, the ladies in their bower; the blossoms "bredep," the ladies are happy if they can "bind" themselves with love. The true nature of this "binding" is explained later. The result of ladies binding themselves to treacherous men is that they "liht byleyn," lie deflowered.

Description of the particular lady is kept to a minimum; she is best from "Yrlond into Inde" and her beauty is tersely summarised by the metaphor "lylie-leor" in the final stanza. The compliment to her lies in the lover's singling her out from other beautiful women in order to save her from the treachery of other men. However, the lover surely holds the trump card. Since, by his own admission men are faithless, the lady must still take a certain risk in trusting him.
"Blow, northene wynd" (Brook no. 14) is another of the lyrics giving a full catalogue description of the lady. In fact the poem is in two sections, a description in two parts followed by a condensed love-allegory.

The first stanza contains general praise in which the lady is placed above all others. The alliterative cliché "burde of bon ant blod" is given literal emphasis. The type of perfection described is that which belongs to the ideal world of art and literature but the poet stresses that in this case it is embedded in a living being.

The next four stanzas present the catalogue of her physical charms from the point of view of the lover. The comparison of her cheeks to a "launterne anyht" in stanza three captures the sudden change in his life when he catches a glimpse of her. Stanza five contains a simile for her voice and this comparison with sophisticated musical instruments is in keeping with the suggestion of a high-born lady inherent in the phrase "burde in a bour." It suggests too that the poet would forego the best of courtly entertainment if he could listen to her instead:

Maiden murgest of moup;
bi est, bi west, bi norp ant soup,
The reference to the points of the compass is of course yet another variation on the idea of the lady being the best in the world. The portrait is completed by a stanza comparing the lady with precious stones.

This poem has been analysed by Leo Spitzer, who shows that the object of the lover is to prove that the lady excels all others and that the poet's descriptive technique is to break down the portrait into minute details. The perfection of the lady is expressed quantitatively through this detailed presentation and by the use of repetition and accumulated superlatives. It is also vitalised by the technique of seeing her beauty in terms of what it means to the lover in action, in phrases like "feir ant fre to fonde" and "face feir to fonde". It is this technique which Chaucer uses in his description of Criseyde in Book III of *Troilus and Criseyde*. He gives details which belong to the conventional catalogue of charms, but because they are listed at the moment of the physical consummation of Troilus' and Criseyde's love, they give her a palpable existence for the lover instead of turning her into an abstract ideal.
Hire armes smale, hire streghte bak and softe,
Hire sydes longe, fleshly, smothe and white
He gan to stroke, and good thrift bad ful ofte
Hire snowisshe throte, hire brestes rounde and lite:

(11. 1246 - 1250).

The Harley poet invests his lady with similar reality by this method, despite the catalogue technique, which often tends to dehumanise her.

Leo Spitzer goes on to show how the second part of this lyric, a love-allegory, derives naturally from this portrait. The influence of the lady stems from her perfect beauty; thus the progression from portrait to an allegory, in which his own feelings are presented, is logical:

The method of our-apologetical-poet is deductive. An unspoken "hence" is suggested at the beginning of the poet's dialogue with the Allegory of Love.

To this it should be added that a proleptic hint of the ensuing love-allegory is also given in the poet's wistful expression of his own wish while he is describing the lady; "God wolde hue were myn!"

For the Harley poets, the conventional imagery of the portrait is a challenge to their ingenuity. They utilize the stock comparisons but are not limited by them. Their technique is never static;
each lyric has its own contribution to make. In "Ichot a burde in a bour ase beryl so bryht" (Brook p. 33, no. 3) the poet turns a potential weakness of the poem, an accumulation of imagery, to his advantage. By intensifying this imagery and placing emphasis on phrases that are more often mere line-fillers he re-states the perfection of a lady in a unique way.

The poet of "Bytuene Mersh ant Auril" (Brook no. 4) presents a fusion of conventions: a nature prelude, description, and the expression of emotion, interspersed by a refrain. Here it is the structural interdependence of the imagery which is individual. The hope of spring makes possible a joyful refrain and counterpoints the lover's suffering. Between these expressions of the lover's "loue-longing" come snatches of the lady's portrait in explanation and justification of that emotion. In "Mosti ryden by Rybbesdale" (Brook, no. 7) it is the variation of detail which causes us to re-assess the conventional phrases, and in the two-part "Blow, nor the new wynd" (Brook, no. 14) the portrait is both intrinsically valuable and important as an introduction to the love-allegory.

Apart from the Harley lyrics, only a few love lyrics from this period remain which involve description. The traditional symbol for the lady, the rose, is put to good use in "Al nist by pe
rose, rose" (Robbins no. 17). Here, the rose plant as a whole is a symbol for the lady, while the flower itself has a precise sexual significance:

darf ich noust þe rose stele
ant þet ich bar þe flour away.

A considerable compression of meaning is achieved in this poem. As well as having an allegorical function, the symbol of the rose carries all its associations with the beautiful lady of a love situation; the poet implies a background of service to love by his use of this symbol which is also a compliment to the lady's beauty. The poem is set at the climactic moment of achievement instead of the usual early stages of courtship.

From the early fourteenth century, or perhaps the late thirteenth century, comes the song "Bryd one brere, brid, brid, one brere!" (Robbins no. 147). Here description of the lady is implied first obliquely through a play on the word "brid" which means both bird and lady. The lover's first reference to the "Bryd one brere" is a means of evoking a springtime setting, but the second reference, "blið-ful biryð on me þu rewe," is to the lady, and the play on words implies a comparison between the two. In the second stanza, description is direct, through superlatives and traditional imagery:
Hic am so plipe, so bryhit, brid one brere;
quan I se þat hende in halle -
yhe is quit of lime, loue-li, trewe,
yhe is fayr, and flur of alle.

Somewhat puzzling is the description of the
lady in a pastourelle, "As I stod on a day, me self
under a tre". Normally, the encounter in a
pastourelle is between a knight and a peasant.
Here, however, the girl is apparently richly
dressed and carrying a book, factors which indicate
a noble lady rather than a peasant:

A seemlier to min sith saw I ner non,
Of a blak bornet al wos hir wede,
Purfiled with pellour doun to the teon;
A red hode on hir heved, shragid al of shridis,
With a riche riban gold be-gon.
That birde bad on hir boke evere as he yede

Yet the lady's speech is hardly in keeping with her
noble appearance, as Stemmler has commented:

In krassen Gegensatz zu dieser hofischen
Atmosphäre steht jedoch die sprache, deren
sich diese 'Dame' bedient: 83

He notes particularly the lines:

'Sche bar me fast on hond, that I began to rave,
And bad me fond ferther, a fol for to feche.
'Quaer gosellis all thi speche?
Thu findis hir nont hire the sot that thu seche.'
This strange mixture of elements obscures interpretation of the poem.

A tantalizing scrap of description occurs in one fragment from the fourteenth century, in which it is the lover rather than the lady who is being described. Unfortunately, however, insufficient remains to allow us to understand the poem:

\begin{verbatim}
A1 gold lonet is þin her
(al gold) lonet is þin her
... þin lankyn ... lankyn leman (dere). 84
\end{verbatim}

On account of the scarcity of material from the early period, it is the Harley collection which stands as the chief representative of the early fourteenth century love lyric tradition. The description of the lady continues to be a feature of the post-Chaucerian love lyric, although changes in style make the portrait different in quality from that found in the Harley poems.

4. The Fifteenth Century Lyrics

Although love lyrics from the later fourteenth century are few in number, the description of the lady is still very much in evidence in Chaucer's poetry, and it is here that we find many of the developments which are to influence the fifteenth century poets. In his early poetry, Chaucer's attitude could be conventional enough, as is seen in The Book of the Duchess, where a detailed catalogue
portrait of the lady is given, in accordance with the accepted ideal of beauty. Yet this is balanced by the ironically exaggerated imagery of *To Rosemounde*, which is a subtle precursor of the fifteenth century parodies of stereotyped descriptions. Through all Chaucer's major work, there is an active concern to remould the conventional techniques to suit specific poetic intentions. Alisoun, in *The Miller's Tale*, is a piquant blend of ideal beauty and unrefined sexuality; the Prioress in *The General Prologue* is all too studied a replica of the lady in the bower. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, as has been noted, the catalogue description of Criseyde occurs at the critical moment of the physical consummation of her love for Troilus. In Chaucer's hands the standardized view of beauty is a means to an artistic end rather than an end in itself.

Yet the very skill with which Chaucer handles his conventional material has its problems for his successors; it means they are left with a set of stereotyped ideas and an extremely high poetic standard to emulate. Even those poets who are capable of producing lyrics of a high standard are not free from the problems involved in dealing with conventional material which has already been exploited almost to the limits. In using the
catalogue of charms, they often seem to have lost touch with its purpose. Patricia Thomson has commented on this in relation to the poetry of Charles of Orleans. One of his roundels uses the catalogue technique:

The smylyng mouth and laughyng eyen gray
The brestis rounde and longe smale armys twayne
The handis smobe the seides strei3t and playne
Yowre fetis lite what shulde I further say?

(Roundel 69).

Miss Thomson remarks:

The trouble with Charles d'Orleans's roundel describing his mistress is that it says both too little and too much. It is far too literal and naturalistic. The absurdity of detailing "armys twayn " ... is as obvious as the failure to give a total impression, or an equivalent from our general aesthetic or human experience. 85

The problem is also a failure on the part of the poet to give a clear function to his portrait. The Harley poets balanced superlative praise of the lady with the extreme emotional response of the lover; one helped justify the other. Here, this balance is lacking; the praise of the lady is limp and the lover's reaction subdued. It should perhaps be added that there is little direct
description in Charles' ballade sequence and he does not always handle it inexpertly. In this case, however, he clearly lacks the skill of the Harley poets or of Chaucer to give any significance to his portrait.

Many of the anonymous poets merely repeat the catalogue because it accords with their view of what a love lyric should contain. They are clearly unable to understand its function. In "O lord of loue, here my complaynt" (Robbins no. 128), the poet praises the lady mainly in general terms; "so fayre she ys and also fresch," "here stedfast stature stands full bryght." The only details he picks out for individual praise are her hands and feet:

Here feete, here hondys that byth full smale,
And all that to here body longe,
Of kynde the comlyste I here calle,

This is not merely arbitrary selection of detail, it is totally unrepresentative of what a lover is most likely to praise in his lady.

As well as difficulty with the subject-matter, the later poets also have to contend with the developments in style discussed in previous chapters. A descriptive passage can be a good opportunity for an array of aureate vocabulary and rhetorical devices. In fact the most startling
examples of ostentatious rhetoric are found in
descriptions of the Virgin Mary rather than of the
mystic mistress. Rosemary Woolf has described the increasing prevalence of the application of the
descriptive conventions of secular love poetry to the Virgin:

In the earlier poetry, secular influence could be seen chiefly in isolated phrases: in the fifteenth-century lyric it appears in long passages and whole poems. Complete imitations of this kind are first found in the Vernon Manuscript, a volume which, like John of Grimestone's preaching-book, in its contents both reflects the older style and, in part, inaugurates the new. An interesting example of the new style is the second half of the poem beginning 'Mayden, Modur, and comely Qween' in which every part of the Blessed Virgin is enumerated and called blessed. 86

Perhaps the most balanced assessment of the use of aureate diction comes from Douglas Gray:

One result of the widespread interest in style and rhetoric has often been exaggerated and misrepresented. This is the 'golden' or 'aureate' diction ... found in some poems ... This is not the normal manner of late medieval verse, nor is it necessarily bad 'poetic
diction', 'rootless, without actuality' as one critic calls it. There are certainly cases where it is little more than 'half-changed' Latin (a contemporary criticism), but such experimental excesses, like those of the introducers of 'inkhorn terms' in the following century, were committed in the good cause of 'illuminating' the vernacular, and making it a fit vehicle for eloquent poetry. Moreover, the best fifteenth-century poets use 'aureate' diction with some tact and sense of decorum; it is found most characteristically in religious poetry, especially in poems of salutation to the Virgin Mary enthroned in majesty as Queen of Heaven, where it recalls the splendid, corruscated Latin of the Litany and the Marian hymns. 87

In Dunbar's poem "Haile sterne superne! Hale in eterne" (Mackenzie no. 82), the aureate style surrounds the imagery conventionally associated with the lady of secular love poetry:

Hale sterne superne! Hale, in eterne,
In Godis sicht to schyne!
Lucerne in derne for to discerne
Be glory and grace devyne;
Hodiern, modern, sempitern,
Angelicall regyne!
Our term inferne for to disperm
Help, rialest rosyne.
Ave Maria, gracia plena!
Haile! fresche floure femynyne!
Yerne us, guberne, virgin matern,
Of reuth baith rute and ryne.

No secular love lyric contains a description which makes such a self-conscious display of aureate diction as this. Instead, there is a tendency for the vocabulary to use Latin and French terms for the more abstract qualities of character which form a more prominent part of the portrait in later lyrics. These features are seen in Lydgate's *The Floure of Curtesye* (MacCracken no.4):

And as the ruby hath the soueraynte
Of ryche stones and the regalye,
And the rose of swetnesse and beaute,
Of fresshe floures, without any lye,
Ryght so, in sothe, with her goodly eye,
She passeth al in bountie and fayrenesse,
Of manere & of gentylnesse.

For she is bothe the fayrest and the beste,
To reken al in very sothefastnesse;
For every vertue is in her at reste,
And furthermore, to speke of stedfastnesse,
She is the rote, and of semelynnesse
The very myrrour, and of gouernaunce
To al example, withouten varyaunce.

In the first of these two stanzas, the ruby and the rose are being used as superlatives, standing as the highest representatives of their types. This more concrete imagery is embedded in vocabulary which is at times merely abstract, at times more aureate; "soueraynte," "regalys," "bountie," "fayrenesse," "gentlynesse," "sothefastnesse," "semelynesse," "gouernaunce," "varyaunce." The words are not obscure or startling in the manner of the vocabulary of Dunbar's poem, but their effect relies on sound and elegance rather than specific meaning, for they all convey general praise.

If the style of this description is compared with that of the Harley lyric "Ichot a burde in a bour ase beryl so bryht" (Brook no. 3), a clear shift of attitude can be seen. The Harley poet's concentrated, concrete imagery is tightly organised and subordinated to a controlled view of the lady in her setting. The choice of imagery is no less conventional than Lydgate's, but the poet turns this to his advantage. He saturates his poem with conventional comparisons, but also adds less obvious similes and metaphors from the same categories, as if to say, my lady fits the accepted ideal pattern
of beauty and more. Lydgate's selection of the ruby and the rose is limp in comparison; the Harley poet has extended the validity of the conventional phrases, moulding them into an intense compliment to the lady; Lydgate has merely repeated a stereotyped formula.

His concentration on abstract qualities is again a particular feature of the later poems. It is to be seen in the later fourteenth century in Gower's *Cinkante Balades*:

> Si femme porroit estre celestine  
> De char humeine a la creacion,  
> Jes croi bien qe ma dame soit devine;  
> Q'elle ad le port et la condicion  
> De si tressainte conversacioun,  
> Si plein d'onour, si plein de courtoisie,  
> Q'a lui servir j'ai fait ma veneisoun,  
> Sanz mal penser d'ascune vilenie,  

*(Balade XXI).*

It is partly a result of the combined influences of fourteenth century French lyric poetry, which shows a similarly abstract tendency, and of the allegorical method of presenting love. The popularity of the allegorical technique encourages poets to isolate traits from the lady's character and to personify them in their descriptions. Gower does this in the next stanza of the same poem:
... Car elle ad de sa covine
Honte et paour pour garder sa mesoun.
Similarly, in Chaucer's *Complaint unto Pity*, description of the lady is refracted through the personified figures gathered around Pity's grave:

Aboute hir herse there stoden lustely,
Withouten any woo, as thoughte me,
Bounte parfyt, wel armed and richely,
And fresshe Beaute, Lust, and Jolyte,
Assured Maner, Youthe and Honeste,
Wisdom, Estaat, Drede, and Governaunce,

These developments result in the more impersonal, artificial tone of the later lyrics. This is the world of polite compliment, of pleasure in the literary conventions for their own sake.

The use of certain formulae in the later poems also contributes to this effect. A favourite form for praise of the lady is the verse-epistle, which uses the conventions of ordinary letter writing derived from the *ars dictaminis*. As Norman Davis and other scholars have pointed out, the impetus for the use of the letter form in the fifteenth century undoubtedly comes from Chaucer's *Litera Troili* in *Troilus and Criseyde*. In particular, they imitate the effusive opening of Troilus' letter, "Right fresshe flour, whos I ben have and shal." Davis has described this as
a conventional opening technique:

A form of address most commonly beginning with the word 'Right' and an adjective of respect ('worshipful', 'worthy', 'well-beloved' &c) 89

The love poets of the fifteenth century use this opening formula as a means of praising the lady. Among the verse-epistles printed by Robbins are the following forms of address:

Excellent soueraine semely to see
   (no. 205)
ffresshe lusty beaute Ioyned with gentynnesse
   (no. 131)
Myn hertes Ioy and all myn hole plesaunce
   (no. 189)
My owne dere ladi fair & fre
   (no. 19)
Now fresshe floure to me that ys so bryght
   (no. 138)

Although imitation of Chaucer is a major factor in the popularity of this form, letter formulae do appear elsewhere in fourteenth century poetry. Stemmier has pointed to the use of a conventional phrase in the Harley lyric "Lutel wot hit any mon" (Brook no. 32): 90

Ifayrest fode vpo loft,
my gode luef, y pe greete.
There is also a fourteenth century verse-epistle "Haue godday, mou, mergerete" (Robbins no. 149), and Gower has some ballades in this form:

A vostre ymage, tout ceo que jeo proie,
Quant ceste lettre a vous serra venue;
(Balade XV).

The influence of Chaucer is undoubtedly a feature of all these stylistic developments, and is also revealed in the increased use of classical allusion and imagery in the description of the lady. Indeed, many of the later poets obtain their classical allusions from Chaucer rather than from a direct classical course. Derek Pearsall makes the point that many of Lydgate's classical references are obtained indirectly:

his knowledge of classical Latin writers is, apart from Ovid, very limited, far more limited than his own frequent allusions would suggest, and it is very often secondhand. A comparison of the lady to the sun in The Floure of Curtesye is ultimately derived from Seneca and Ovid, but Lydgate's source is more obviously Chaucer's descriptions of Nature in The Parliament of Fowls (ll. 298-301):

Tho was I war that ther sat a queene
That, as of lyght the somer sonne shene
Passeth the sterre, right so over mesure
She fayrer was than any creature.
Lydgate elaborates the comparison:

Ryght by example as the somer sonne
Passeth the sterre with his beames shene,
And Lucifer amonge the skyes donne
A–morow sheweth, to voyde nyghtes tene,
So verily, withouten any wene,
My lady passeth, who–so taketh hede,
Al tho alyue to speke of womanhede.

(MacCracken no. 4)

These aspects of the fifteenth century lyric
will be illustrated in the following analyses of
individual lyrics containing descriptions of the
lady. Again, it is necessary to distinguish
between the work of amateurs, writing for their
own pleasure in the conventions of the period, and
that of poets with serious artistic intentions.

Many of the anonymous lyrics printed by Robbins
are no more than exercises in formal composition;
if they are competent, they probably fulfil the
poetic expectations of their writers, and it is
hardly appropriate to subject them to rigorous
criticism.

An example of such a poem is "With wofull
hert & gret mornyng" (Robbins no. 127). This is a
competent catalogue description, which does nothing
to advance or revitalize the conventional imagery.
The portrait is offered in explanation of the
poet's opening statement of his suffering:
Hir bevtfey, her fayrnes -
Thise bryng me yn gret distresse,
And wel ner to myn endyng.

Both presentation of the catalogue and the use of imagery are predictable. Her hair is "yelou as the gold," her complexion "like pe rose in may." Like the Harley poet, the lover wishes his lady to be blessed of Christ. The most interesting metaphor is in stanza ten, "this garison of pleasaunce," although the poet does not take advantage of a potential double meaning. Since he mentions the lady's "daunger" in the same stanza, the traditional arch-enemy of the lover, he could have combined the imagery of the war of love here, making "garison" imply both treasure-store and the lady's "fortification" against his advances.

"O Excelent suffereigne, most semely to see" (Robbins no. 130) is a love letter in praise of the lady, which concludes with a statement of the poet's undying love. The portrait is lengthy and ambitious in its use of imagery. It also contains rather more aureate diction than is normally found in the anonymous lyrics:

o Rubyclounde Roose, o lyllye most delycyouse,
splendent In bewtye as a dymond most precyouse,
        In syght.
Unfortunately, the portrait lacks a unified arrangement, both in the order in which the features are described and in the selection of imagery.

The catalogue is quite disorganised, with no pretence even to a descending order. The poet moves back and forth from one feature to another as if he cannot decide what to praise. The imagery too is arbitrarily selected. In one line her lips are compared to both strawberries and honey, the one relating to colour, the other having a sensory effect, yet the selection of a metaphor and a simile, both with connotations of taste, for two separate ideas is irritating. This might be compared with the control of imagery seen in "Ichot a burde in a bour ase beryl so bryht" (Brook no. 3), where the separate categories of imagery are handled so skilfully.

Yet, like so many of these poems, it contains details which impress. The extended lavender simile in the second stanza is unusually precise:

& your-selfe as swete as ys the gelyfloure
or any lauender sedes strawen in a cooffer
To smell.

Similarly, the light imagery in the fourth stanza surprises the reader with its pun. There is a tendency in the later poems to play on the double
meaning of the word "light." Here the poet combines the two meanings in his phrase "herte lyght." The description of the lady's face as shining implies that she both illuminates and brings joy to his heart. The effect is spoilt only by the pompous Latinate term "fulgent," through which the shining quality is implied:

Your bryght fulgent face,
replet full of grace,
& your goodly pace
makethe my herte lyght.

Another ambitiously rhetorical lyric is "Excellent soueraine, semely to see" (Robbins no. 205). It is divided into two somewhat inconsistent parts. The first half contains the lover's protestations of devotion, together with some description of the lady; the second half is a lengthy farewell anaphora containing a eulogistic list of metaphors and similes for the lady.

In detail, much of the phrasing of imagery is reminiscent of the Harley lyrics. The lady is a "lanterne lussom of light," and the poet wishes he were a bird, like the poet of "A wayle whyt ase whalles bon" (Brook no. 9):

Ofte y wyssh - so haue y blysse -
a bird invisible for to be,
With my wynges pat y myght flussh
Pryvyly to you, swetyng fre.
Again, however, it lacks the control of the Harley poems. Although the poet tends to group like comparisons together, his approach is not consistent. He devotes two stanzas to gem imagery (23 and 24) but returns to this category in stanza 33. There is no pattern in the choice of characteristics praised; moral and physical qualities are mixed haphazardly together. As a result, the farewell section is a mere list of heterogeneous imagery, with no controlling pattern.

The tendency to concentrate on the moral perfection of the lady is seen in "Exemplye sendyng to you, rowte of gentylnes" (Robbins no. 198). The poet intersperses praise of the lady's virtues with assurances of his devotion and pleas for mercy. The vocabulary is abstract and often aureate:

Both true and trusty stok of al nature,  
the bon-ayre Replenysyd wythe perfet clennesse;  
   to you, dyere hert, wynde me hole honoure  
As pe muste profoundy in womanly stature,  
   to whom god hathe yeve you soueraynyge  
   Suffysance,  

In vertu, benevolens, & trowthe wyth-out  
   vayriaunce.  

Only in the final stanza does the imagery become concrete and effective in a neatly developed sun metaphor:
O ye fayre son wythe all youre bryghte bemys,
your beaute and your gentylnes,
haue mercy on me, & let sum of youre lyght lemys,
Dyacend don to your seruande that lyth in heuynes.

It is not useful to continue listing examples of anonymous lyrics in praise of unknown ladies, in which conventional imagery is reproduced, often in inflated vocabulary. On turning to the more serious poets, we find a patchiness of quality in keeping with what Alan Renoir describes as an age of transition. At times there is a loss of touch with the function of the imagery used, at times too much reliance on repetitive formulae, but also there are genuine extensions of the validity of the conventional ideas.

The sequence of ballades in English by Charles of Orleans and the smaller number of roundels contain surprisingly little direct description of the ladies to whom the poems are addressed. Again, praise tends to be abstract rather than through specific description.

As is seen in his analysis of the lover's feelings, an advantage of the sequence is that imagery can be sustained through several poems, with considerable variation of nuance and emphasis. A
similar technique is used in his portraits. "Fresshe bewte riche of yowthe & lustynes" (Ballade 9) is the first poem to be devoted to a praise of the lady; hitherto the poet's attention has been focussed on the lover. The first stanza imitates the catalogue method but is concerned mainly with abstract moral qualities:

Fresshe bewte riche of yowthe & lustynes
The smylyng lookis casten so louely
The plesaunt speche governyed by wittynes
Body welle shape of port so womanly
The high estat demenyd so swetely
The welle ensewridnes of word and chere
Without disdeyne shewyng to lowe & lye
For which alle folk hir prayse and so do y
Alle thewis goode this hath my lady dere.

The summarising last line of the stanza, which in the French version is "De ces grans biens est ma Dame garnie," 94 is an imitation of a line from Chaucer's Clerk's Tale, "Of thewes goode, yset in heigh bountee" (1.409).

As with the earlier lyrics, the concentration is still on the lady's perfection but the emphasis on her abstract moral qualities appeals to our intellect rather than our emotions. There is not the same intensity of response from the lover to virtue as to the more tangible
charms of physical beauty. The later comparison of the lady to a goddess tends to confirm this ethereal view of her:

> She is more lijk than woman a goddes  
> I trowe that god hath sent hir almyghty  
> Into this world to schewe his gret larges  
> What vertu he kan sett in oon body

In the same stanza, the poet conveys the idea of the uniqueness of his lady by describing her as a phoenix, a metaphor not found in the French version. Although the imagery is conventional, Charles' phrasing has a Chaucerian ring. This is the first use of the phoenix metaphor, but the poet is to take it up again in a later ballade:

> She is the sovl fenyx of Araby  
> which may not be thorugh praysid in a yere.

The phoenix imagery occurs again in a ballade written after the lady's death, "Shulde I make a lady newe Fy Fy" (Ballade 62). This time it is given a new twist. Interestingly enough, there is no French equivalent of this poem, just as there was no reference to the phoenix in the French version of Ballade 9. In the first stanza, the poet rejects the idea of finding a new lady; such a thing is impossible, since she was unique. In the next stanza, however, the poet develops another strand of the phoenix legend. As the phoenix dies,
another is believed to arise from its funeral pyre to replace it. He implies that if the lady is like the phoenix in all respects, there is hope that she too might be replaced:

But of the asise as these clerkis seyne
Of this Fenyx ther cometh an othir blyve

The idea is rejected, however; the poet dares not hope for such a miracle:

But me to thynke god wot hit were but in vayne

To se such on in alle my paynyd lyve.

Charles handles symbols of the lady's beauty in allegorical contexts far more convincingly than direct, abstract description. In "The ioly tyme the first fresshe day of May" (Ballade 65), he draws on the theme of the flower and the leaf. Having previously spoken of the death of his lady, the poet now describes his sorrow at his loss. It is spring again and the lover, despite his sorrow, is spending his leisure in the company of others. For diversion and to "expelle all thoughte heue," it is suggested that each person should make his choice between the flower and the leaf. As he has lost his only flower, his lady, the lover will choose the leaf:

For syn thorugh deth y lost haue welaway
She which was sorse and flowre of all bewte
Which was my loue my swet herte and lade

...  

Wherfore I hen the leave as well y may

Forth alle this yere or more so may hit be.

He stresses that he means no slight to the flower in his choice, and ends on a sorrowfully philosophic note, stressing the transitoriness of both leaf and flower in a wistful Chaucerian simile:

 Ther nys leef nor flowre that doth endewre
  But a sesoun as sowne doth in a belle 95

The symbolic associations of the flower and the leaf are continued in Ballade 66. In a dream the lover is visited by a flower, who accuses him of forgetting her. He defends himself by replying that he did not intend to offend the flower, which will always have his true allegiance:

Als yow in cheef that do y honoure ay

What part y am as is me welle sittyng

Alle for oon flowre that me was tane away.

This is a delicate and skilful handling of descriptive imagery. The twofold symbolism of the flower, both as a graceful compliment to the lady and as signifying transience, gives the game a double focus. On the surface the game is merely a summer diversion but for the lover it has these inner significances which are appropriate to his actual situation.
The poet combines the ubi sunt theme with the portrait of the lady in "When y revolue in my remembraunce" (Ballade 64):

When y revolue in my remembraunce
The bewte shap^and pe swete eyen tayne
Of hir y callid myn hert hool pleasaunce
My lyvis ioy my sovl lady souerayne
Of eche good thewe that was pe fressh
fountayne
Which newly deth hath tane o welawey
For which I say with wepyng eyen tay
That this world nys but even a thyng in vayne.

The use of exempla too is combined with this theme:

In tyme a-past ther ran gret renomaunce
Of dido cresseid Alcest and Eleyne
And many moo as fynde we in romaunce
That were of bewte huge and welbesayne
But in the end allas to thynke agayne
How deth them slew and sleth moo day bi day

Again, because of the lover's actual situation, the imagery is given a literal force. The portrait is not only a tribute to the dead lady but a confirmation to the lover of the didactic message of the ubi sunt tradition. This kind of literal emphasis and combination of more than one tradition
for a different emphasis is a characteristic of Charles' poetry which is prescient of the method of Wyatt, and reveals the ways in which the conventional imagery is still adaptable for new effects.

The catalogue technique is also adapted by the poet to produce a new effect in "So fresche bewte so moche goodlynes" (Ballade 120). Here Charles alternates praise of the lady's charm and beauty with references to those features of coldness and mercilessness which the lover finds unfavourable. The effect is to bring the oxymoron of the definitions of love to the description, and this is a genuine extension of the conventional portrait:

So freshe bewte so moche goodlynes
So skace of grace so large of crewelte
So moche vertew and so moche gantilnes
So long this straunge so bareyne of pite
So lusty yowthe so replete of bounte
So litil mercy and so gret disdayne
So fervent loue then as hit cawsith me
How may it be owt sleying in peyne

At his best, Charles of Orleans is able to mould the old imagery into new syntheses. He has a facility for drawing in separate traditions, sometimes that of secular poetry, sometimes the
Lydgate is capable of careful control over his imagery and can introduce subtle variations of detail, although he seldom achieves the originality of approach shown by Charles of Orleans. In _A Ballade of Her that Hath All Virtues_ (MacCracken no. 1), he sets out to prove that his lady is the epitome of perfection, and does so by selecting one category of imagery, exempla, with which to compare her.

He links each figure with a specific quality of the lady:

Wyfly trouthe with Penelope,
And with Gresylde parfyte pacyence,
Lyche Polixcene fayrely on to se,
Of bounte, beaute, having pexcellence
Of qweene Alceste, and al pe diligence
Of fayre Dydo, pryncesse of Cartage.

Despite the unity of imagery and the careful attempt to avoid monotony in the structure of the stanza, seen in the use of enjambement in the last two lines, the figures here become tediously repetitive. It lacks the urgency of approach of Chaucer's poem in praise of Alceste sung by the ladies in attendance on her and the God of Love in _The Legend of Good Women_, which Lydgate is clearly imitating:
Hyd, Absalon, thy gilte tresses clere;
Ester, ley thow thy meknesse al adoun;
Hyd, Jonathas, al thyn frendly manere;
Penelope and Marcia Catoun,
Mak of youre wyfhod no comparisoun;
Hyde ye youre beautes, Ysoude and Eleyne:
Alceste is here, that al that may desteyne.

(G. 11. 203-209).

Chaucer has brought an individual approach to the use of exempla by reversing the normal attitude. Instead of saying Alceste is worthy to be compared with all these legendary paragons of beauty, he suggests that all previous fair ladies should be ashamed to compare themselves with her. This clearly revitalizes a conventional form of imagery. For Chaucer, too, the context of the poem governs the choice of exempla, giving them added relevance. Lydgate, however, merely compiles a conventional list and a sense of stagnation is unavoidable.

He also concentrates so much on the lady's abstract virtues - "gentylnes" "plesaunce" and so forth - that she becomes herself no more than a personification of those features. The poet fails to relate these qualities to any aspect of his own emotions which would give the reader some idea of what response the lady causes in the lover. The aureate vocabulary also adds to the impersonal
quality of the poem: terms like "avysiness", "perseuerance", "surplusage" strike the wrong note in praise of a mistress.

Lydgate focusses attention mainly on the lover's suffering in *A Complaint, for Lack of Mercy* (MacCracken no. 2). However, he does refract some description of the lady effectively through a series of interrogatives. His lady represents all the qualities listed, but since she lacks mercy, the value of all of them is negated:

What vayleth vertu which is not treteabill?
Recure of sykenesse is hasty medecyne.
What vayleth bewte which is not mercyabill?
What vayleth a sterre when it do not schyne,
Or gret poure that lyste not to declyne
His heres downe, to here pytusly
Compleynt of nedy,
This is a powerful presentation of description despite being an imitation of a technique used by Chaucer in *Troilus and Criseyde*:
Wo worth the faire gemme vertulees!
Wo worth that herbe also that dooth no boote!
Wo worth that beaute that is routhelees!
Wo worth that wight that tret ech undir foote!
And ye, that ben of beaute crop and roote,
If therewithal in yow ther be no routhe
Then it is harms ye lyven, by my trouthe!

(Book II, 11.344 - 350).
Chaucer's passage seems to have had a far-reaching influence on the fifteenth century poets; an imitation of it occurs, for example, in an anonymous lyric:

Wo worth trust vnstrusty!
Wo worth love vnlovyd!
Wo worth hape vnblamyd!
Wo worth favtt vn-namyd -

(Robbins no. 206)

The influence of Chaucer is seen again in The Floure of Curtesye (MacCracken no. 4).

W. Schirmer describes the poem's attempts to emulate Chaucer's style, and compares it favourably with The Complaint of the Black Knight:

More felicitous in this respect is The Floure of Curtesye, a eulogy of the most perfect of women, modelled upon Chaucer's praise of Alcestis. In a mere 270 lines (likewise in Chaucerian stanzas, and terminated by a ballad in regular structure), an elegant or at least pleasing, turn is given to the well-worn themes of the poet taking his morning promenade, abstract praise of his lady, allegories from the Roman de la Rose, and heroic women famous in history and mythology. 96

While it can be agreed that Lydgate handles his material competently in the lyric, there is little
attempt to vary or extend the use of imagery. A major feature of the description is again the use of exempla but the formulae are simply repetitive:

For good she is, lyke to Polycene,
And in fayrenesse to the quene Helayne,
Stedfast of herte as was Dorigene
And wyfely trouthe, if I shal not fayne,
In constaunce eke and faythe, she may attayne
To Cleopatra, and therto as secre
As was of Troye the whyte Antygone.

A Gentlewoman's Complaint (MacCracken no. 5) has its own freshness, because it is addressed to the lover by a lady, a situation not frequently found in the English lyrics. Wisely, the poet reduces description to a minimum. It is contained in one stanza in which praise of the lover is linked to the effect his physical beauty has on the lady. The short passage has a wistful charm:

His poorte, his chere, and his fygure
Been euer present in my sight,
In whos absence eke I ensure,
I cane never be gladde ne light:

The substance of My Lady Dere (MacCracken no.6) is amplification of a single theme. Lydgate selects a number of different categories of imagery in order to demonstrate that the lover's only happiness lies in the sight of his lady, hence all the imagery is
is designed to show her power over him.

Imagery of light and darkness is given particular emphasis and is fully explored. In stanza four, he implies a comparison of the lady with the sun and stars and includes paronomasia on the word "light" by juxtaposing it with "glad":

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{be sterres of be heghe heven} \\
&\text{Feyrest shyne vn-to oure sight,} \\
&\text{And the planetis alle seven} \\
&\text{Moost fulsomly yif ber hir light;} \\
&\text{And Phebus with his bemis bright} \\
&\text{Gladdest shynep in his speere} \\
&\text{But I am neuer glad ner light} \\
&\text{Save whanne I see my lady dere.}
\end{align*}
\]

He takes up the Phoebus simile again in the next stanza and relates it specifically to the contrast between night and day. The pun on the word "light" is still implied by the antithetical use of the word "sorrow":

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Eke Phebus in our emyspirye} \\
&\text{Affter derknesse of pe night,} \\
&\text{At his vpryst } [\text{yolowe as golde clere}] \\
&\text{Erly on morowe, of kyndely ryght,} \\
&\text{Whanne cloudis blake haue no might} \\
&\text{To chace awey his bemys clere;} \\
&\text{Ryght so frome sorowe I stonde vpright} \\
&\text{Whane pat I se my lady der.}
\end{align*}
\]
Finally, in stanza twelve, he picks up the night and day contrast again, this time stating that, like the night, his sorrow comes when the sun, his lady, disappears. Despite the conventional nature of this imagery and the verbosity which results from the use of aureate terms like "emyspirye", Lydgate has controlled this extended comparison with skill. He develops three lines of thought through the three stanzas; there is simple praise of the lady implicit in the cosmic imagery, punning on the meaning of "light", and the use of the day and night contrast.

Other categories of imagery are not so happily managed by the poet. Sometimes the connexion between the objects and the creatures which he is describing and the repeated statement that he is only happy when he sees his lady is very tenuous, lacking the precision of the sun and star analogies. When he describes animals, for example, he links them to his personal statement only by the general idea of shared happiness. The animals are content in their freedom, the lover's joy depends on sight of the lady:

pe hart, pe hynd in pe forest
Moost luste beo of peyre corage,
And every maner ober beest,
Bope pe tame and oke sauvage,
Stonden most at avauntage
In laundis whanne þey renne efeer;
The poem continues with an elegant rendering of a proverb:
What is a fisshhe outof the see,
For alle his scales siluer sheene,
but ded anoon as man may se?
Jewellery, flowers and colour imagery are also employed. It is really the poet's method which is interesting and individual rather than his evocation of visual impressions, although the picture of lilies and roses, for example, is delicately embroidered by the poet:
pe floures on þeyre stalkis vncloose,
Spryngyng in þe bavmy med,
þe lylyes and þe swoote roos,
þe daysyes, who takeþe hede,
Whanne Phebus doþe his bemy spred
In somer, lyke as men may lere.
More noteworthy is his reversal of the normal process of comparison and the oblique analogy for the lady. It is the lover who is to be compared with the flowers, not because of any of the normal associations of such imagery but in relation to their natural blossoming when they see the sun. The sun, of course, becomes a symbol for the lady.
Lydgate may lack the facility for subtle new variations of imagery that Charles of Orleans clearly had, but he can be attentive to the need to do more than merely repeat formulae in a conventional manner.

The love lyrics of William Dunbar contain little in the way of direct description of the lady. In "Sweit rois of vertew and of gentilnes" (Mackenzie no. 49), the lady is portrayed gracefully through the symbol of the rose. "My hartis treasure, and swete assured fo" (Mackenzie no. 50) has one stanza of description but this is continually balanced by the lover's plea for mercy instead of being presented in catalogue form. The combination of "dove" and "turtle" as metaphors for the lady is an echo of the Canticum Canticorum:

Quhyte dow, quhair is your sobir humilnes?
Swete gentill turtour, quhair is your pete went?
Quhair is your rewthe? the frute of nobilnes, Off womanheid the tresour and the rent;

Two other poems by Dunbar have a different approach to description. "This hindir nycht in Dunfermeling"(Mackenzie no. 27) is not a love lyric in the sense that it deals with the lover's expression of emotion. Instead, it is a grim narrative with no pretence of refined feeling. However, it is relevant to this study of the view of the lady in the love lyrics because it offers a
complete contrast to the normal attitude to her. It provides an unusual breath of realism against which to place the idealised lady with whom the reader of medieval love lyrics is so familiar. It takes the form of an allegory in which animals stand for human beings and it tells an amorous episode in the life of the king.

The animal symbolism here is quite different from that seen in the Lydgate poem where the hind and the hart are connected with the freshness of a perfect spring landscape. Here the animal imagery denigrates instead of idealising human behaviour. The descriptions of the fox and the lamb are far from the world of the courtly lover:

The tod wes nowder lene nor skowry
He was ane lusty reid haird lowry
Ane lang taild best and grit with all;
To sic ane tribbill to hald ane bace:
Dunbar shows the girl here as the victim, the prey of a rapacious lover, and the animal symbolism makes this victimisation quite clear. This is a far more realistic picture of betrayed innocence than is seen in any of the fifteenth century poems of deceived serving-wenches and laundry-maids. These lyrics usually preclude sympathy for the girl because she is not portrayed as a wronged party; she is usually a willing accomplice who hides
behind protestations of innocence. It is different in atmosphere too from the *pastourelle*, where the girl usually displays considerable artifice in capitulating at the moment when her would-be lover has offered the highest "price" for her favours.

The girl of Dunbar's poem is not sophisticated enough to protect herself from the "tod" and the episode is seen on the level of animal behaviour that is appropriate. The realism of this poem contrasts with the illusory idealism of the love lyric, and the complete identity of imagery and meaning is an important step forward from some of the earlier slackness in this respect.

"In secret place this hyndir nycht" (Mackenzie no. 28) belongs to the group of burlesque poems found in the fifteenth century in which the conventional imagery of the love lyric is parodied. Here Dunbar puts the language of refined love into the mouth of a thoroughly unsavoury suitor:

His bony beird was kemmit and croppit,
Bot all with cale it was bedroppit,
He describes the lady in a mixture of conventional panegyric and unflattering animal imagery, which, as in the preceding poem, serves to show the true level of the couple's activity. Hence the lady is
both "My hairet, swet as the hunye" and "quhyt as quhallis bane" and she is "My kyd, my capirculyon."

The humour of the lyric lies in this juxtaposition of the language of refined love and the suitor's highly individual epithets for his mistress and in her equally mixed replies.

The parody of the catalogue description is popular in the fifteenth century, and Robbins prints three examples. "Vnto you, most froward, þis letter I write" (Robbins no. 208) mocks the love epistle. The poet deliberately selects imagery which is the direct opposite of that used to praise the lady. Although the poem is addressed to a man, the imagery parodied is that usually applied to the ideal lady.

It begins by deliberately comparing the lover's faithfulness with a weather-cock instead of a turtle-dove:

To my trew loue and able -
As the wedyr cok he is stable -
This letter to hym be deliveryd.

In the first stanza there is a reaction against the usual type of bird imagery. The lover is compared to an owl. If the nightingale is associated with lovers, the owl is connected with ill omens, and the opposition of these two symbolisms is seen in The Owl and the Nightingale. Similarly, the lover
is compared in the second stanza with animals who have no place in the love lyric:

youre manly visage, shortly to declare,
your forehed, mouth and nose so flattte
In short conclusyon, best lykened to an hare
Of alle lyvyng thynges, saue only a catte;

The second of the parodies printed by Robbins is a reply in like kind to this letter. "O Fresch floure, most plesant of pryse" (Robbins no. 209) is also aimed against the aureate style. The poet uses inflated vocabulary:

O Fresch floure, most plesant of pryse,
Fragrant as fedyrfoy to mannys inspeccion,
Me semyth by youre countenaunce ye be wonder nyce,
you for to medylwith any retorucion;
To me ye haue sent a lettre of derusion,
Endyghted ful freshly with many coryous I-

Werfore I thanke you as I fynde cause.

The derisive imagery is even more preposterous than its predecessor's:

YourCamusyd nose, with nose-thryllys brode,
Vnto the chyrch a noble Instrument
To quenche tapers brenmyng afore the roode,
ys best apropred at myne avysament;

Equally boisterous is Hoccleve's parody of the catalogue of charms. Its procedure is similar to
that of the previous two lyrics. The traditional comparisons are transferred to features where they are inappropriate. Whereas the radiance of the lady is normally stressed, Hoccleve uses similes of dullness:

Hir browes been lyk to dym reed coral,

And as the Icet hir yen glistren ay;

The traditional use of hyperbole is parodied, again, in an incongruous metaphor for the lady's nose:

Hir nose a pentice is þat it ne shal

Reyne in hir mowth thoogh she vp-ryghtes lay -

The poet also takes one of the birds connected with love but twists the comparison so that it becomes unfavourable. The parrot was valued because it could imitate speech; however, the lady's imitation of the parrot would hardly be so pleasant; "And she syngith ful lyke a pape-Iay."

Other parodies in the same vein are "I have a lady where so she bee" 99 and "O Mossie quince hanging by your stalke." 100 Although such poems are little more than light entertainment, they reflect a reaction against the stagnation of the conventional imagery and point to a need for reassessment of the ways in which it can be used. Ultimately such questioning of the accepted modes of expression leads to the realistic approach of
Shakespeare's sonnet "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun."

The description of the lady in medieval English love lyrics depends on an accepted ideal of beauty and a conventional body of imagery. Pre-Chaucerian lyrics show an exciting, individual approach to adapting this imagery for specific effects. The later lyrics reflect both a stagnation of that imagery, which is often related to a failure to understand its function, and a continuation of that earlier approach of adaptation and variation. Charles of Orleans, Lydgate and Dunbar all have genuine contributions to make which keep the imagery alive and give it new channels of significance. Partly, this is a result of developments in style; but it can also stem from a genuine awareness of the need to see the conventional imagery in a new light.
Notes to Chapter IV

1. See Robbins nos. 22 and 23.

2. See pp. 8-21 above.


4. Les Arts Poétiques, p. 119.

5. Ibid., pp. 121-132

6. Ibid., p. 76.

formal descriptions would be thought admirable or horrible by means of stylization. Only if all writers describe the same kind of beauty and ugliness will any one of them be sure of success.

Misener shows that formal portraits were a feature of Greek legal documents for the purpose of identification. In literature, the tradition began with Homer and was used in satire, history and biography and sometimes in poetry. The form of the portraits was linked with the study of physiognomy and this is the subject which Evans investigates. She demonstrates that certain physical features were linked with moral qualities.

9. Les Arts Poétiques, p. 80.

10. The Portrait, p. 22: There is a tendency to maintain a more or less descending order in describing the parts of the body by portraying the head before the rest of the body, but a strict rule of descending order ... does not determine the structure chosen by the poet ...

12. Ibid., p. 69.


Cf. Larry D. Benson, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (New Jersey, 1965), p. 57: the Gawain poet can characterize Guenevere's ideal beauty by specifying but one detail ... the "yzen gray" alone evoke the whole stock descriptio feminae pulchritudinis.

15. See Leo Spitzer, "'Explication de Texte' Applied to Three Great Middle English Poems," 5-7. Here Spitzer shows the various ways in which the poet of "Blow, norweyne wynd" (Brook no. 14) expresses the superior quality of his lady's beauty. There are not many examples of the grammatical superlative but the descriptive technique nevertheless implies that the lady in question is the most perfect of all. This is done by asserting that no-one else is like her; by comparing her with ideal objects; and by presenting individual characteristics which she possesses as universally desirable. This picture is reinforced by repetitive devices.

16. This difficulty is encountered by Curry, "Imagery in the Middle English Secular Lyrics," p. 37:

Their (the Harley poets') self-confidence leads them to attempt overpowering the reader with a glut of metaphors and similes that are purely intellectual and have no real relation to the real Annot.


18. "'Explication de Texte' Applied to Three Great Middle English Poems," 10. Spitzer goes on to explain that the selection of eulogistic terms for the lady, drawn from different "semantic areas," is also a feature of Marian poetry. The comparisons are a type of superlative expressing excellence:

each single periphrase must consist of a metaphor expressing excellence, the
different realms of nature (and of society) being scanned for representatives worthy to serve as comparata: the ruby, the diamond etc. among gems; the lily, the rose etc., among flowers ...(11).


21. Les Arts Poétiques, p. 130

22. Ibid., p. 214


25. Lateinische Hymnen des Mittelalters, ed. F.I. Mone (Freiburg, 1853-5), II, 297.


27. The Troubadours and England, p. 113


29. A similar emphasis on perfection, on the flower as the best part of the flower, is seen in the deviant spelling "flour". The flour is wheatmeal after the bran and other coarse elements have been removed, i.e. the best part of the wheat. See O.E.D.


32. See also II, 14; IV, 1.
33. Neilson, Origins and Sources of the Court of Love, pp. 36, 37, 41, 67f.

34. Outside the lyric genre, the earliest debate poem in which birds are featured is, of course, The Owl and the Nightingale, in which part of the significance of the nightingale is her association with erotic love.

35. Waddell, Medieval Latin Lyrics, p. 246.


38. Pliny, Naturalis Historia, Book X, ii:

Aethiopiae atque Indis discolores maxime et inenarrabiles esse ferunt aves et ante omnes nobilem Arabiae phaemiam, haut scio an fabulose, unum in toto orbe nec visum magno opere.


40. The history of the belief in the magical, prophylactic and other properties of precious stones is examined by Joan Evans, Magical Jewels (Oxford, 1922).

41. Exodus XXVIII, 17-21; Apocalypsis XXI, 19-20.

42. See Anglo Norman Lapidaries, ed. P. Studer and J. Evans (Paris, 1924).


45. The Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty ..., (1916; rpt. New York, 1972), p. 3

46. Ibid., p. 60: "Eyes of ugly people, when the color is given at all, are generally described as being black." Curry notes the exception of Alysoun, however. See also Derek Brewer, "The Ideal of Feminine Beauty in Medieval Literature," MLR, 50 (1955), 262.


49. *Against Women Unconstant*.

50. See p. 223 above.

51. *Anthology of the Provencal Troubadours*, p. 55.

52. *The Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty*, p. 16.

53. Ibid., p. 84

54. Ibid., pp. 51 and 56.

55. Again, the influence of the rhetorical treatises may be important here. Matthieu de Vendôme uses *lumina* as a symbol for *oculi*, see p. 210 above.


61. Ed. J.M. Hall, p. 3.

62. See p. 223 above. Abel comments on the "attractiveness" of the metaphor but fails to link it with a specific function as she does not explore the significance of the emerald in the lapidaries: The emerald image ... is equally attractive not so much because emeralds are very much prettier or more powerful in the morning than any other time, as that "emereud amorewen" is extraordinarily attractive in sound and in association. "Imagery in the English Medieval Secular Lyric", p. 133.


64. "Old English Lapidary," in *English Medieval Lapidaries*, p. 14
65. "Idiom in the Miller's Tale," 131:
Now "gore," which meant originally a triangular piece of land and later ... a triangular strip of cloth, hence by synecdoche a skirt or apron, is obviously a technical word, and the fact that Chaucer used it only twice may not be significant. But when one recalls the number of vernacular ladies — including Alison's namesake in the Harley lyrics — who were "geynest vnder gore," or "glad vnder gore," one may, perhaps become suspicious. To be sure, scholars assure us that these phrases, along with such variants as "worthy under wede," "lovesome under line," "semely under serk," are merely stereotyped superlatives and presumably have no sexual connotation. But in their literal meanings they could have such a connotation and in their origin they probably did have.

66. Ed. Stanley, p. 64: Habbe he istunge under gore We last his luue no leng more.


70. English Place Name Society, XIV (Cambridge, 1937): See also John Field, English Field Names: A Dictionary (Newton Abbot, 1972) in which there is an entry Pincroft in which the pin- element is derived from OE penn.


73. In a review article of Stemmler's work on the Harley Lyrics, Medium Aevum, 32 (1963), 146-50, Peter Dronke suggests that these phrases are "something characteristic and distinctive in the language of the English lyrics" (p. 147). However, Chaytor, The Troubadours and England, p. 119, has shown similar comparisons in Provencal poetry:
quar sa valors sai qu'es tan granda
que dels Portz entro en Yrlanda
pot si·l plai, triar els melhors.
(Úc d'Albi).

74. Stemmler, Die Englischen Liebesgedichte des MS. Harley 2255, p. 211, finds the meaning of the word unclear, rejecting both Brook's emendation and Carleton Brown's interpretation. He does not suggest that it may be a proper noun.

75. Since the stanza already contains names from the Mabinogion and following A.T.E. Matonis' view that there is far greater Celtic influence in the Harley lyrics than has previously been recognised, see p. 37 above, I suspect that Celtic medieval literature may hold the key to the identity of Medierne and of the other mysterious figures.

76. The Secular Lyric in Middle English, p. 67.

The pulsation of emotional movement from beloved to self and its return again to the heart's desire reveals the stress and tension of internal preoccupation.

78. English Medieval Lapidaries, p. 85.

79. Again, this is one of the phrases which Dronke (see note 73 above) feels may be peculiar to the English lyric. The M.E.D. cites many instances to the lantern as a simile for eyes, however, and it is more likely that the Harley poet is simply varying a conventional expression by using it as a simile for the lady's cheeks instead.

80. "Explication de Texte' Applied to Three Great Middle English Poems," 5-6:
(1) the purpose of the poet is to prove his Beloved to be the absolute Paragon of Excellence; (2) his stylistic treatment seems to depend for effect to a large extent on repetitive devices; (3) the procedure of the description is to break down the "totality" of the figure of his Beloved into minute details ... Surely there must be a common denominator for the three features just mentioned; and this would be a concern with the quantitative presentation of ideal beauty.
81. Ibid., 15; cf. Curry, "Imagery in Middle English Secular Lyrics," p. 34:
Needless to say, the mixture is a failure as is usually the case with a scissors and paste effort. Whether simple and sensual or complex and subtle, the successful lyric is consistent in point of view of technique of imagery.


83. Die Englischen Liebesgedichte des MS. Harley 2253, p. 158.


86. The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages, p. 275.


88. Book V, ll. 1317-1422; see also pp. 145-5 above.

89. "The 'Litera Troili' and English Letters," 236.

90. Die Englische Liebesgedichte des MS. Harley 2253, p. 166.

91. John Lydgate, p. 35.


95. Troilus and Criseyde, Book II, 1.805, "Or sown of belles whil that thei ben ronge."


97. See Robbins nos. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29.


100. Ibid., p. 504.
CONCLUSION

The Continuing Validity of the Medieval Imagery

The imagery of the medieval English love lyrics can be seen as a basically uniform feature of the poems across the period. The technique of the poets in handling the conventional imagery of love is to vary its nuances and emphases for subtle effects. This technique is seen at its best in the pre-Chaucerian lyrics, especially the Harley poems.

The fifteenth century is a period of changing attitudes to style, a situation which has been summarised by Pamela Gradon:

*It was predominantly a period of new ideas and old themes, of stylistic originality and conventional content. It was, in fact, a mannerist age in which, in spite of new stylistic techniques, the arteries hardened. It was in a sense a Pre-renaissance, in a sense a Renaissance manqué, especially in England, where a writer of the brilliant originality of a Rabelais or a Villon was lacking.*

Of these new stylistic techniques, it should be said that there is sometimes a failure to link style and subject matter in a convincing way. This is seen, for example, in the abstract descriptions of the lady which, though often elegant in diction, do not convincingly reflect a lover's attitude to his mistress.

The developments in English and the movement towards a standard literary language, the shifting attitudes towards style, the popularity of allegory as a technique of expression combined with the increased demand for poetry for pleasure from a wider
audience, meant that the objectives of poets were easily blurred. Much lyric poetry of seriously intentioned poets is experimental, especially in the field of poetic diction; much is imitative of Chaucerian style, and as a result the quality is patchy. Even so, the traditional method of varying the conventional imagery can still be handled successfully, especially in the English poetry of Charles of Orleans. Alongside the work of the serious poets, there is the large body of mainly anonymous lyrics which were clearly written simply to satisfy the demand for competent traditional love poetry. Hence, the fifteenth century lyrics in no way form an homogeneous group. The scope of the changes affecting the later poetry can best be seen by comparison with the earlier, more settled lyrics.

It is probably not until the Tudor period that the major problems facing the fifteenth century poets are overcome; that is, when the poets once more have a confidence in their language and a clearer sense of the need to relate style and subject matter so that they can pursue unhindered the traditional method of presenting the conventional ideas in new ways. Clearly an examination of these later developments would be a major study but I want to indicate briefly some of the ways in which the problems of the fifteenth century are overcome and how these achievements are often foreshadowed, sometimes in an undeveloped way, by the best of fifteenth century poetry.

Mason places Wyatt's love lyrics at the tail end of what he sees as an homogeneous courtly tradition which served a social rather than a literary need; "Wyatt, like the court writers, was merely
supplying material for social occasions. Consequently the study of these poems belongs to sociology rather than to literature. John Stevens has accorded to Wyatt a similar position: "To sum up, the lyric of courtly love from Chaucer to Wyatt is in its most characteristic form a mere gambit in the 'game of love' — deliberately stylized in language, oblique in purport, idealistic, bantering and abusive by turns." It has been demonstrated in previous chapters, however, that the fifteenth century was a period of fluctuating standards in lyric poetry and that such terms as "courtly" and "popular" cannot be rigidly applied. Mason and Stevens reveal part of the picture but not all of it when they classify poetry in this way. Similarly, in grouping Wyatt with the fifteenth century poets, they are showing only one aspect of his work.

Wyatt and the Tudor poets certainly continue the medieval view of love so that the same imagery, seen first in English in the thirteenth century, is still to be found. Equally, and perhaps inevitably, they perpetuate much that is artificial and imitatively conventional. Yet, in the confidence with which they are able to handle the language, in the syntheses of established imagery which they contrive, and in their success in the use of rhyme and metre, they display positive achievements. Perhaps their progress in these areas is the more interesting because it represents a resolving of native, internal problems rather than reflecting an invigorating influence from outside.

The seasons imagery first encountered in "Fowele in be frith" is used by Wyatt in a poem on May Day (Muir 92), which can be directly
compared with a poem by Charles of Orleans (Roundel 62). Wyatt and Charles select virtually the same details for comparison. Both poets contrast their own state of unhappiness as they languish in their beds to the joys of successful lovers who are able to rise early and celebrate the joy of the season which matches their own pleasure. As far as the choice of ideas is concerned then, the praise accorded to Wyatt by Patricia Thomson should be applicable to Charles too:

Wyatt's effect of independence and irony is obtained because the stock ideas and phrases in this poem are not merely 'strung together'. He uses a selection of them for contrast, the wakeful and dreaming lover, the happy and the unhappy.

Yet, despite the selection of the same material for "contrast", Wyatt's sonnet is undeniably the superior poem, and this success, I would suggest, has less to do with the choice of ideas than his confidence in the use of language and metre, which allows him to impart a personal urgency to a traditional theme.

Both Charles and Wyatt refer to the lovers rising early; Charles writes:

This tyme when louers djormoost defie
Eche keuy thought as forforth as pei may
And rise or phebus in be morow gray
Leiyng aside alle siuthe and slogoardy
To here the byrdis synge so lustily
Our yr the spryngeyng bodies on pe spray.

Wyatt commands:

You that in love finde lucke and habundance
And live in lust and joyful jolitie,
Arrise for shame! Do away your sluggardie!
Arise, I say, do bay some observance!
Wyatt's imperative tone in itself is enough to give it the edge over Charles' less emotionally charged description, but the advance in the use of language is clear. The loose syntax of Charles' roundel involves the use of almost pleonastic line-fillers. "Albermoost" and "ferforth as bei may" contribute virtually nothing to the meaning of the poem, yet "albermoost" receives two metrical stresses in Charles' iambic pentameter. The only make-weight phrase in Wyatt's poem is "I say" but this is justified within the imperative tone of the line. Wyatt's tighter construction and the sense of urgency imparted by the commands allows conventional, generalised imagery to be presented under the guise of personal conviction, while in Charles' poem the sense of the personal is lacking.

The commanding element in the sonnet does most to foster the "effect" of independence and irony for its implications are many. It contains anger, envy, impatience and sorrow, and these emotions explain the poet's bitter resolution to stay in bed and dream of the happiness of others. The earlier poem is almost devoid of emotional colour, so that the contrast between the joyful lovers and the sorrowing poet is conceptual; it never comes alive as Wyatt's does. Although both poets deserve credit for their interesting use of material, it is Wyatt, with his surer manipulation of the language, and clearer understanding of the components of emotional intensity, who realises its full potential.

The anonymous "Westron winde, when will thou blow" displays a confidence of diction which allows the poet to achieve all the terseness of "Poweles in be frith". The poem's four lines summarise
the longing of the lover for the return of the spring season so favourable to love, and his sorrow at the lady's distance, which Jaufré Rudel had elaborated in "Lanquan li jorn son long en may." The economy of the language allows an emotional density, especially in the last two lines:

Christ if my love were in my arms,
And I in my bed again.

The fifteenth century poets would have had all the material for such a lyric but not the sureness of touch that produces such compression. They would have been unable to resist the temptation to elaborate each line to the full, expatiating perhaps on the vagaries of fortune and begging the god of Love for mercy. Here the simple but emotional reference to Christ is untrammelled by the mock-religion of love and is closer to the exclamations of the Harley poets.

The natural setting of the wood is found in The Nithbroyn Layd in combination with the debate on the faithlessness of women which is seen in two fifteenth century lyrics (Robbins nos. 179 and 180). These elements are transformed into a unique and sophisticated synthesis. The symbolic wood setting runs through the whole poem, sometimes repeated almost as a refrain, "For I woste to the grene wode go/ Alone a banisshed man," but also elaborated to be the refuge of the lovers and their means of sustenance:

Amonge the wilde dere, suche an archier,
As men say that ye be,
Ne may not faile of good vitaile,
Where is grete plente;
And watir clere of the riveres
Shall be full swete to me,
There is the theme of testing, akin to that in The Wife of Bath's Tale, in which total subjection to an ostensibly unfavourable situation is rewarded far more happily than had been expected.

The purpose of this synthesis is not revealed until we realise that the two interlocutors have been merely posturing; the debate was a means of conducting their own love relationship, as we see when the squire changes his general tone to introduce specific personal detail:

Now understande! To Westmorelande,
Which is my heritage,
I will you bringe, and with a ringe
By way of mariage
I will you take, and lady make
As shortly as I can.
Thus have won an erles son
And not a banished man.

It is doubtful whether a fifteenth century poet would have thought the lifeless debate on women needed any further justification than discussion of the topic for its own sake. This type of manipulation of conventional elements into a new combination was foreshadowed by Charles of Orleans in several of his ballades but clearly The Nutbrown Maid goes much further in this direction.

In their analysis of the lover's emotion, the poets of the early sixteenth century are still rooted very firmly in the Middle Ages. Wyatt plays skilfully with the oxymoron of love, his imagery is derived from the definition poems but in applying a personal logic to a conventional theme he places the imagery in a new light:

Of hete and cold when I complain
And say that hete doeth cause pain
When cold doeth shake me every vain
And boeth at ons, I say again
It is impossible.

(Muir no. 77)
The solution to this paradox is, of course, the miracle of love which produces opposing effects simultaneously. This method of looking logically at an apparently impossible situation was used by Charles of Orleans in his treatment of the exchange of hearts theme:

Whoso may lyve or longe goon on his feet
Without an hert as y my lijfe hare lad
(Ballade 20).

In Lydgate's *A Lover's New Year Gift* (MacCracken no. 7) a topos is used which has been shown by Curtius to be frequently associated with openings or endings of works. Lydgate bids his song travel safely across the sea to his lady:

Let no wavys nor no wynde letbyn by passage,
Ne stormes of pe salte see, ne no rokkes rage;
be streemes of hir hevenly looke shul alle by sorowes steer.

Although Lydgate's stanza is elegant and free from pompous diction, it has the impersonality of a literary embellishment. It is not used specifically to define the possible hostility of the lady to his gift. Wyatt, using similar imagery, in "My lute awake! performe the last" (Muir no. 66) might easily have given it the same function as Lydgate, since he too is sending a song to his lady:

The Rokkes do not so cruelly
Repulse the waves continually,
As she my suyte and affection,
So that I am past remedy:
Whereby my lute and I have done.

Miss Thomson comments on Wyatt's use of such imagery: "No one will claim that nature images, among the oldest in literary stock, are original, but the relevance and economy with which Wyatt uses them are marks of artistry." Like the Harley poets, Wyatt is often able to bring the
The predilection of the fifteenth century poets for parody of the conventional analysis of love takes a more subtle turn in an unprinted poem of the sixteenth century which also uses the storm and wind imagery. In the form of a question from the lover and a reply from the lady, it is, on the surface, a plea for mercy and a message of hope. The lover asks when lady's cruel storms will be past and she answers in the imagery of sudden reversals telling him that calm follows the storm. The true question and answer, however, are hidden in the first word of each line. The lover asks when he may meddle with the lady and she replies that he may when the time is right.

It was noted that the fragmentary use of allegorical devices in fifteenth century love lyrics, often with neither description nor narrative framework to support them, could have a flat, abstract effect. Dunbar is one of the most successful manipulators of the allegorical figures, in Berley and the Proconsir (MacKenzie no. 54), because he saw the value of a fully developed narrative and of clearly defined roles for his personifications. Dunbar's technique is prescient of William Cornish's "The knight knocked at the castle gate." However, he cannot rival its brisk pace and economy of language. I think it is the understatement of each couplet, the ability to adumbrate a situation through a minimum of information, which allows the allegory to work so effectively:

The knight knocked at the castle gate
The lady marvelled who was thereat.

To call the porter he would not blin
The lady said he should not come in.
The portress was a lady bright;  
Strangeness that lady hight.

She asked him what was his name  
He said 'Desire, your man, madame.'

She said, 'Desire, what do ye here?'  
He said, 'Madame, as your prisoner.'

He was counselled to brief a bill,  
And show my lady his own will.

'Kindness,' said she, 'would it bear;'  
'And Pity,' said she,'would be there.'

So often the fifteenth century poets used allegorical devices in a  
cumbersome way, ornamenting their verses with lists of figures who  
did or said nothing. Here the poet is in total control of his material  
and the coy humour of the last couplet is a neat finishing touch:

Thus how they did we cannot say,  
We left them there and went our way.

Again, this terseness reflects a confidence in the use of language  
lacking in the work earlier poets.

Skelton's poems in praise of Margery Wentworth, Isabel Pennell  
and Margaret Hussey reintroduce an element of control which had been  
lost in the panegyrics of his immediate predecessors. His use of  
a somewhat irregular iambic trimeter, seen previously in the  
Harley lyric "Wif longing y am lad" (Brook no. 5), fosters a  
brisk pace and discourages long lists of abstract qualities. Although  
conventional, the imagery is visual and delicate, forming a charming  
compliment to the lady:

The columbine, the nepte,  
The gilliflower well set,  
The proper violet,
Ennewed your colour
Is like the daisy flower
After the April shower.
(To Mistress Isabel Pennell).

Skelton has recovered the sureness of touch of the Harley poets:

Lylie-whyt hue is,
Hire rode so rose on rys,
bat reueb me mi rest;
(Brock no. 5).

The renewed success in handling the conventional imagery achieved by the Tudor poets follows the experimentation of the fifteenth century. Far from being a period of poetic stagnation it is a period of upheaval, when the changing conditions of poetic composition interact to confuse the objectives of poets. Inevitably, such a situation has its negative side, but there are also positive achievements, as Pamela Gradon has observed:

But it must be observed that the late medieval period is not, as is often suggested, merely a period when the old forms are repeated with increasing rigidity and decreasing validity. It was also a period of increasing verbal subtlety and experiment, a period when the enriched language moved towards new forms of expression. 12

Of course, the love lyrics are only a small part of the poetic output of the fifteenth century but, in their use of the traditional imagery of love they illustrate many of the literary problems which face the period as a whole.
Notes to the Conclusion

1. Form and Style in Early English Literature, p. 335.
4. Sir Thomas Wyatt and His Background, p. 127.
8. Sir Thomas Wyatt and His Background, p. 132.
10. Early English Lyrics, no. 25.
11. Ibid., nos. 20, 21 and 22.
12. Form and Style in Early English Literature, p. 381.
Gibson's theory about the structure of the poem, which has been supported by Stemmler, has the advantage that all the requests for the attention of the audience are in the most logical place, at the beginning of the lyric, and the pattern of stanza-linking is preserved. He suggests that the last two lines of stanza 6 are in fact part of an incomplete introductory verse which can be reconstructed as follows:

```
- - -
- - -
ne half so freo
Whose wole of loue be trewe,
do lystne me.
```

This would be followed by stanzas 7 and 8 and then stanzas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 in their existing order.

Degginner's reconstruction of the poem depended on his interpretation; he maintained that there were "elements in it incongruous as a part of the whole which are no longer so when isolated or when their position is changed" (86). His problems arise from the overelaborate interpretation he places on the first four stanzas:

As it stands here, we find the poet declaring that his beautiful beloved is happy when he sings; that his only wish is to be with her when she is happy; but that now she is angry with him he blames a wife. That it his own wife who has ruined his love-affair is not
clear but seems likely from the third stanza
in which his comment is worthy of Chaucer.
Since he knows that she (possibly the wife
but more likely his drue) does not want him,
his heart is woe." He has begun by saying
that her joy does not cease so long as he stays,
but now "how shall he who is injured with
sorrowing sing pleasantly?"

Degginger finds that the content of the seventh and eighth verses
is not compatible with his interpretation of the first four:

as we have already noted, the theme of
the seventh and eighth strophes is not
exactly consonant with the earlier portion
where the poet tells us that he once did
sing to his"lemon" so now we must presume
she knows of his affection, yet here he says
he cannot tell her (8?).

Although the interpretation of a poem is often necessarily
subjective, it seems to me that Degginger has misunderstood the poem
seriously. He is puzzled over the inconsistency in the reference to
singing; at first he says he cannot tell her of his love. What
Degginger has missed here is the lover's profession. Surely the
verb "may glewe" is a reference to his occupation, the lover is
a minstrel. In the normal way of things he is able to entertain the
lady by his songs but this does not necessarily imply that he sings
to her of his love. Now that he is in love with her, his emotion
prevents him from singing happily to entertain her.

Secondly, Degginger takes the reference to the wyf too
literally. In Middle English this word may be used simply as a
synonym for "woman" and here it is used as a variation of vocabulary
for the "wayle whyte." Even if the modern meaning were intended, it
could still refer to the "wayle" because we learn later that she is married. It is totally unnecessary, however, to bring in a second woman who may or may not be the lover's wife.

The "care" in line 11 for which Degginger would blame this second woman is surely no more than the suffering of love for which the "wayle" is responsible. In the third stanza, the poet is still referring to this lady, although he does so obliquely, in a general reference, through which he indulges in a little wishful thinking:

A wyf nis non so worly wroht;
when heo ys blye to bedde ybroht,
wel were him pat wiste hire poht,
pat bryuen ant pro.

In Degginger's reconstruction of the poem, stanza 9 is in fact a refrain while the long line at the end of stanza 6 is a heading to the poem. Stemmler, however, points out that it is unlikely that a refrain would be placed at the end of the poem. Degginger arranges the stanzas in the following order: 7, 8, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. This, he believes, sets a "rollicking" tone, with the performer of the lyric able to take full advantage of its variety; he summarizes each stanza, according to his organization thus:

- expansiveness (stanza 1), contrast (II),
- descriptiveness (III), satire (V), mock sadness (VI), mock courtliness (VII), ending in outright mockery (VIII).

Thus heems the poem is a parody and places much emphasis on the fact that the "wayle" is not an aristocrat in a "tour" but a "belle bourgoise" in "tounes trewe." However, Stemmler points out
that it is quite unnecessary to see any hint of parody in this phrase as it has only the general significance associated with the similar phrases like "in lord."

In conclusion, I would accept, with Stemmler, Gibson's reconstruction of the lyric and reject Degginger's over-complicated interpretation and reconstruction.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

LIST OF WORKS CITED

1. Editions Containing English Love Lyrics

A full list of editions containing English love lyrics may be obtained from The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature. Vol. I. Ed. W.F. Bateson. Cambridge, 1940; Vol. V, Supplement, 1957 and from the annual bibliographies of the MLA.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Editor</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location, Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td>Medieval English Love Lyrics. Middle English Texts No. 1. Tübingen, 1970</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2. English and Other Medieval Texts Excluding English Love Lyrics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Editor</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alenus de Insulis.</td>
<td>De Planctu Naturae. Ed. J.P. Migne in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ambrose, St. of Milan.


Basil the Great, St.


Bliss, A. J., ed.


Brown, Carleton., ed.


Capellanus, Andreas.


Chaucer, Geoffrey.


Davis, Norman, ed.


McKnight, G.H., ed. Floriz and Blancheflour. EETS, o.s. 14 London, 1886.


Mone, F.J., ed. Lateinische Kyuren des Mittelalters. 3 Vols.
Morawski, Joseph, ed.
Morris, R., ed.
D'Orléans, Duc.
Pearsall, D., ed.
Press, Alan, ed.
Robbins, R.H., ed.
Serjeantson, M., and Evans, J., eds.
Simmons, F.T., ed.
Skeat, W.W., ed.
Stanley, E.G., ed.
Steele, R., ed.
Toja, Gianluigi, ed.
Tolkien, J.R.R., and Gordon, E.V., eds.
Turnbull, W.B.D.D., ed.

Freiburg, 1852 - 1855.

Proverbes Francais Antérieurs au XV° Siècle.

An Old English Miscellany. EETS, o.s. 49.

London, 1872.


Anthology of Troubadour Lyric Poetry.


Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries.


English Medieval Lapidaries. EETS, o.s. 190.

London, 1933.


Havelok the Dane. EETS, e.s. 4. London, 1880.

Piers the Plowman. 2 Vols. London, 1886.

The Owl and the Nightingale. Nelson's


Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum.

EETS, e.s. 74. London, 1898.


Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. 2nd ed., revised

Sir Beues of Hamtoun. Maitland Club.
Vinaver, Eugene, ed.


Waddell, Helen, ed.


Whicher, G.W., ed.


Wilkins, Nigel, ed.

One Hundred Ballades, Rondeaux and Virelais from the Late Middle Ages. Cambridge, 1969.

Wright, T., ed.


Zupitza, J., ed.


3. Works of Literary Criticism and of Reference

Abel, Patricia, A.


Audiau, J.


Baskervill, C.R.


Bennett, H.S.


Benson, Larry, D.


Blake, N.F.

Bolton, W.F., ed.  
History of Literature in the English Language. 

Brook, G.L.  
"The Original Dialects of the Harley Lyrics." 
Leed Studies in English, 2 (1933), 38 - 61.

Brewer, D.S.  
"The Ideal of Feminine Beauty in Medieval 
Literature, Especially 'Harley Lyrics', 
Chaucer and some Elizabethans." MUR, 50 
(1955), 257 - 269.

Chaytor, H.J.  

Colby, R.  
The Portrait in Twelfth Century French 

Crosby, R.  
"Oral Delivery in the Middle Ages." Speculum, 
11 (1936), 88 - 110.

Curry, Jane,L.  
"Imagery in the Middle English Secular Lyric: 

Curry, W.  
The Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty, 
as Found in the Metrical Romances, Chronicles, 
and Legends of the XIII, XIV and XV Centuries. 

Curtius, E.R.  
European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages. 

Davie, Donald.  
The Purity of Diction in English Verse. 

Davis, Norman.  
"The 'Litera Troili' and English Letters." 
RES, 16 (1965), 234-244.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


Heider, O. "Untersuchungen sur me. erotisch Lyrik." Diss. Halle, 1905.


Manly, J.M.  
Manning, S.  
Mason, H.A.  
Matonis, A.T.E.  
Mendenhall, J.C.  
Misener, Geneva.  
Moore, A.K.  
Neilson, W.A.  
Norton-Smith, J.  
Oakden, J.F.  
Oliver, Raymond.  
Olson, Paul A.  

"I Syng of a Mayden." PMLA, 67 (1960), 8 - 12.  
Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court.  
The Secular Lyric in Middle English. Lexington, 1951.  
"'Somer' and 'Lenten' as Terms for Spring." Notes and Queries, 194 (1949), 82 - 83.  
"Lydgate's Metaphors." English Studies, 62 (1961), 90 - 03.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Sandison, Helen, E.  
The Chanson d'Aventure in Middle English.  
Bryn Mawr, 1913.

Scheludko, Dmitri.  
"Zur Geschichte des Natureinganges bei den  
Trobadors."  
Zeitschrift für französische  
Sprache und Literatur, 60 (1937), 257 - 334.

Schirmer, W.  
John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of  
the XVth Century.  

Schlüter, A.  
"Über die Sprache und Metrik der mittelenglischer  
weitlichen und geistlichen lyrischen Lieder  
der MS. Harl. 2253."  
Archiv, 71 (1884),  
153 - 184 and 357 - 388.

Smith, A.H.  
Place Names of the East Riding of Yorkshire  
and York.  
Cambridge, 1937.

Speirs, John.  
Medieval English Poetry.  

Spitzer, Leo.  
"'Explication de Texte' Applied to Three  
Great Middle English Poems."  
I. Archivum  
Linguisticum, 3 (1951), 1 - 22.

Stemmler, Theo.  
Die Englischen Liebesgedichte des MS. Harley  

Stevens, J.E.  
Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court.  
Tatlock, S.P. and Kennedy, H.G.

Thomson, Patricia.

Townsend, J.E.

Tuve, Rosamond.

Wellek, R. and Warren, A.

Wickham, Glynne.

Wilhelm, J.J.

Wilson, F. P., ed.

Wilson, R.W.

Woolf, Rosemary.


"The Construction of 'In a Fryht'." Medium Aevum, 38 (1967), 55 - 59.

Wright, Joseph, ed.


Zumthor, Paul.

**Histoire Littéraire de la Littérature de la France Médiévale; VIᵉ – XIVᵉ Siècles.**