A BLACK MONK IN THE ROSE GARDEN

LYDGATE AND THE *DIT AMOUREUX* TRADITION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores connections between the courtly poetry of John Lydgate, monk of Bury, and works which belong to the French tradition of the *dit amoureux*. A theoretical framework has been adopted for this study which insists upon the need to historicise Lydgate's *dits*; these were occasional poems. Linked to this historicisation is an acknowledgement of the important relationships in late-medieval literature between ideology and genre and between ethics and politics. A study of the genre of the *dits amoureux* in the fourteenth century reveals poems which are didactic and courtly; they also frequently refer to specific historic referents.

No courtly commission has hitherto been sought for Lydgate's *dits amoureux*. The suggestion that Henry Bolingbroke, the future Henry IV, features in both the *Complaynt of the Black Knight* and the *Temple of Glas* positions these poems amongst Lydgate's earliest extant works. The *Complaynt* may refer to Bolingbroke's exile in France; the *Temple* may have been written to celebrate his marriage to Joan of Navarre. I conclude that the *Complaynt* exploits the tradition of the French *dit amoureux* to use the allegory of an unhappy courtly lover to express political and androcentric concerns. I propose a multiplicity of readings for the *Temple*. It depicts a 'marriage' in Venus' temple of love, produces an implicit critique of courtly language and courtly love and teaches the importance of gaining popular support through eloquent speech in the public forum. The last of these 'readings' reveals what is probably Lydgate's most important contribution to the tradition of the *dit amoureux*.

The monk of Bury emerges from this study as a highly-skilled and self-conscious court poet, acutely aware of literary tradition and conventions and of their potential relationship to ethics and politics.

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Above all, I am grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Alastair Minnis for his encouragement, support, and inexhaustible patience. The thesis is dedicated to the usual suspects.

DECLARATIONS

I declare that I have read and understood the paragraphs on plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct in the University's Ordinances and Regulations.

This dissertation is the result of my own work.

Signed .....

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING THE MONK FROM BURY: POET, PRINCE-PLEASER, MAN OF MANY WORDS

> And by a ryuer forth I gan costey,
> Of water clere as berel or cristal,
> Til at the last I founde a lytil wey
> Tovarde a parke, enclosed with a wal
> In compas rounde; and by a gate smal,
> [W]ho-so that wolde frely myght[e] goon
> Into this parke, walled with grene stoon.
>
> And in I went.....[1]

John Lydgate (c.1371-1449), monk of Bury St. Edmunds, wrote well over one hundred and forty thousand lines of poetry, some sacred and some secular. The verses above, in which Lydgate's narrator steps into a beautiful courtly garden, or park, might be read as an allegory of the monk's own experience as he entered the world of court poetry and patrons. In the course of this thesis I shall argue that Lydgate's *dits amoureux* owe their inception to a commission from some member of the court nobility.[2] Although the term 'court' has become ever more problematic for medievalists during recent years, Michael Bennett helpfully points out that late-medieval writers did not suffer the same problems but simply

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[1] These are lines 36-43 of Lydgate's *A Complaynt of a Loveres Lyf*. See *John Lydgate: Poems*, ed. J. Norton-Smith (Oxford, 1968), p.48. All future references to the *Complaynt* refer to this edition.

[2] For a discussion of the term 'nobility' as it was understood in fifteenth-century England, see K. Mertes, 'Aristocracy' in *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. R. Horrox (Cambridge, 1994), pp.42-60. Mertes demonstrates a very close link between 'noble' and 'gentle', both terms being related to 'being well bred.....[and] belonging to an important family' (p.45).

'acknowledged the existence of the king's court'.[3] Whilst the concept of the 'royal court' might remain somewhat 'nebulous' for modern scholarship, Bennett does not hesitate to posit 'the king's person' at its centre. The king's 'immediate entourage' are likewise unproblematically included, but then Bennett widens the focus to include the never-constant gathering which made up the 'king's companions'. These were 'members of the royal family; his "favorites", high-born and low-born; his confessor and chaplains; his hosts on his perambulations; foreign visitors; and so on'.[4] The small but significant selection of Lydgate's work with which this study principally concerns itself has close associations with the royal court in its most exclusive sense. Indeed, the two poems which I shall analyse as part of Lydgate's contribution to the tradition of the *dits amoureux* can be associated with Henry IV. One of the aims of this thesis is to demonstrate that a recognition of the close connection between Lydgate and the Lancastrian court is crucial to the reading of at least some of Lydgate's courtly poems.

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[3] M.J. Bennett, 'The Court of Richard II' in *Chaucer's England: Literature in Historical Context*, ed. B. Hanawalt (Minnesota, 1992), pp.3-20 (p.8).

[4] Paul Strohm offers a very different definition of 'court' in relation to Lydgate. He argues that in order for Lydgate (and Hoccleve) to be credited with having written 'court poetry' the 'court' must be 'understood less as an entity or even a font of material reward than as an imaginative stimulus and emotional aspiration'. P. Strohm, 'Hoccleve, Lydgate and the Lancastrian Court' in *The New Cambridge History of Medieval Literature* ed. D. Wallace (Cambridge, 1999), pp.640-61 (p.641). In the light of the extended contact with, and commissions from, the Lancastrian court which I shall demonstrate, it seems to me that Strohm's description (at least with reference to Lydgate) is inappropriate.

In the course of this first chapter, as well as providing a review of recent Lydgate criticism I shall construct a 'life' for Lydgate. This 'life' is derived from such evidence as is available, both within his poetry itself and in extant historical documents. The purpose of this exercise is to illustrate Lydgate's close connections with the Lancastrian court throughout most of his adult life. In concentrating almost exclusively on Lydgate's courtly poetry, I inevitably set the monk against a predominantly courtly background. It might therefore be argued that the 'life' which emerges here derives from an overly-exclusive approach. However, as will be shown below, royal and noble patronage can be associated with most forms of his work, both sacred and secular.[5] The historical and social contexts in which Lydgate's *dits amoureux* were commissioned and written cannot and do not differ from those which fostered the majority of his works.

1. A 'life' for Lydgate: patrons and poetry

Above all else, the *dits amoureux* were courtly poems. Commissioned by members of the court circles of Western Europe, these works were designed to entertain and instruct the nobility,

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[5] Lydgate did, however, write a few short pieces for those who were not aristocratic. Julia Boffey draws attention to the 'Legend of St George', written for the armourers' guild. J. Boffey, 'Middle English Lives' in *The New Cambridge History of Medieval Literature* ed. Wallace, pp.610-34 (p.627). Various 'mummings' were commissioned by the guilds for perfomance before the mayor of London. For a full list of Lydgate's mummings, see D. Pearsall, *John Lydgate (1371-1449): A Bio-bibliography* (Victoria, 1997), p.29.

and, I shall argue in later chapters, often carried a political message.[6] In the following pages, a 'life' will be presented for a writer about whom very little is known. His works do, however, provide some information regarding his contacts and patrons. For various occasions he wrote everything from courtly poetry to fables, mummings to processional verse, the story of Troy to the life of the Virgin Mary. In reviewing the details which remain as evidence of Lydgate's life, I hope to refute, once and for all, the notion that he spent most of his time cloistered at Bury, and was therefore somehow remote both from his patrons and from their emotional and political motivations.

Derek Pearsall's latest publication on Lydgate, his *Bio-bibliography*, is a careful listing of the records which remain regarding Lydgate's life. They show just how much of Lydgate's time was spent on royal commissions, and at the same time demonstrate how little proof there is that the literate monk spent much time at all either outside or inside the monastery walls of Bury St Edmunds between the late 1390's and early 1440's.[7] Pearsall is cautious regarding Lydgate's possible links with his noble patrons, and argues for a life for the monk which consists of prolonged stays at Bury coupled with brief excursions into the

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[6] The way in which I use 'politics' and 'political' in this thesis is in line with the definition of politics given by Mark Ormrod: '"political consciousness" - .... an awareness of the personalities, events, institutions and policies that determined the way the kingdom was run'. W.M. Ormrod, *Political Life in Medieval England, 1300-1450* (Basingstoke, 1995). I shall argue, however, that Lydgate sought, through his courtly poetry, to influence both the Lancastrian aristocracy and a number of its peers. His involvement in the politics of his time therefore extended slightly beyond the bounds of the definition given above.

[7] See note 4.

outside world. Whilst there is no doubt that Lydgate did both begin and end his adult life at Bury, how he spent the period in between is open to question.

After rising to the office of priest at Bury in 1397, Lydgate went to study at Oxford. Pearsall gives an account of the scanty records relating to Lydgate's stay there, and points out, with reference to John Norton-Smith's account, that Henry Monmouth (the future Henry V and son of Henry Bolingbroke) was at Oxford at the same time.[8] Richard Firth Green entertains the 'intriguing though perhaps remote possibility' that Lydgate was enrolled as a chapel clerk to the royal chapel. Green cites Thomas Elmham as a prior example of a monastic in such a position.[9] It does not seem such a 'remote possibility', therefore, that Lydgate followed suit. Lydgate wrote two poems based upon psalms ('Benedic anima mea' and 'Gloriosa dicta sunt') which were, according to Shirley, written for the dean of the royal chapel at Windsor, Edmund Lacy.[10] Lacy was a close friend of Henry Monmouth (the future Henry V) and

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[8] *Poems*, ed. Norton-Smith, pp.150-51.

[9] R.F. Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1980), p.88. Frank Taylor and John Roskell argue against Elmham having been a chaplain as he was a regular (i.e. monastic) member of the clergy; royal chaplains, they maintain, were secular priests. They dismiss the evidence of a royal letter which refers to him as 'capellanus noster', pointing out that the title of chaplain 'could be used honorifically'. F. Taylor and J.S. Roskell, *Gesta Henrici Quinti* (Oxford, 1975), p.xxii.

[10] Pearsall, *Bio-bibliography*, p.20. For 'Benedic anima meo' and 'Gloriosa dicta sunt' see *The Minor Poems*, ed. H.N. MacCracken, 2 vols., EETS ES 107 and OS 192 (London, 1911-34), I, 1-7 and 315-23 respectively.

went on to become Bishop of Exeter.[11] Regarding the relationship between Lydgate, Lacy and Henry, Pearsall speculates as to whether it might not have been possible that Henry and Lacy 'together helped shape the direction and style of Lydgate's religious verse'.[12] Equally plausible is the notion that the highly-educated Lydgate influenced the future development of Henry's own literary experience. After all, born in 1387, Henry can have only been ten or twelve years old when he met Lydgate at Oxford, whereas the monk was already in his late twenties. Was Lydgate, like Lacy, a close associate, if not friend, of Henry V? It is an intriguing question to which there is no clear answer, but precedents exist in Guillaume de Machaut (1300-77) and Jean Froissart (1377-after 1404) for cleric-poets who lived and worked in royal households.[13]

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[11] Pearsall, *Bio-bibliography*, p.20.

[12] Pearsall, *Bio-bibliography*, p.17.

[13] For an outline of the lives of both poets, see D. Poirion, *Le Poète et le Prince: L'évolution du lyrisme courtois de Guillaume de Machaut à Charles d'Orléans* (Paris, 1965). Machaut's life is also reviewed in *Le Jugement du roy de Behaigne and Remede de Fortune* eds. J.I. Wimsatt and W.W. Kibler (Athens, Georgia, 1988), pp.3-4. Machaut was the notary and secretary to the king of Bohemia until the king arranged for him to become a canon at Reims. As far as is known, Froissart was attached firstly to the Hainault court, and travelled to England with Philippa of Hainault when she married Edward III. Following Philippa's death, Froissart returned to France, serving Guy de Blois and Wenceslas of Bohemia. Both poets had other noble and royal patrons. Machaut gives a vivid, if idealised, description of what was probably his own relationship with the Duc de Berry in his *Fonteinne Amoureuse*, lines 1211-93. In this poem, Machaut's knight (a representation of the Duke), on seeing the narrator, leaves the company he is with and greets the narrator warmly. The narrator describes his own love for the knight; the picture which emerges is of a close and sympathetic friendship. See *Guillaume de Machaut: The Fountain of Love (La Fonteinne Amoureuse) and Two Other Love Vision Poems* ed. and trans. R.Barton Palmer (New York, 1993), pp.154-58.

Henry was removed from Oxford early in 1399 by Richard II, yet between 1406 and 1408 (then as the prince of Wales) he wrote a letter on Lydgate's behalf to prevent the monk's recall to Bury.[14] At the time that the letter was written, the prince was intermittently occupied with affairs on the Welsh border. [15] It would seem, therefore, that Henry's interest in Lydgate already extended beyond the short period when they were both studying at Oxford. The letter requests that Lydgate's stay at Oxford be prolonged, and this suggests that the period of his stay had already been substantial. In his recent PhD thesis, James Clark explains how a stay at Oxford for a Benedictine monk obliged him to 'complete a bachelor in less than a decade'.[16] Lydgate, therefore, could have been at Oxford for anything up to ten years at the time the prince's letter was written. There is another explanation for Lydgate's presence at Oxford, however, and that is that his function there was to teach as well as to study.

Josef Schick, in his introduction to the *Temple of Glas*, refers to an account of this period of Lydgate's life which he himself rejects. A tradition seems to have begun with John Bale in the sixteenth century that Lydgate completed his studies at Oxford and then travelled to France and Italy to study there. Schick rejects the hypothesis of the visits to both France and

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[14] Pearsall, *Bio-bibiography*, pp.15-17.

[15] K.B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford, 1972). For Henry's stay at Oxford, see p.104. For his involvement in the border fighting, p.105.

[16] J.G. Clark, 'Intellectual life at the Abbey of St. Albans and the Nature of Monastic Learning in England c. 1350-1440' (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Oxford, 1997), p.62.

Italy. As regards Lydgate's early 'French experience', Schick notes that the monk's 'translation of Deguileville's *First Pilgrimage* wouuld have afforded him an opportunity of showing off his knowledge of Paris University-life'.[17] As no such 'showing-off' is evident in the translation, Schick concludes that Lydgate did not travel to France in order to continue his studies. One has only to remember that the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1343-1400) is devoid of references to London to realise that Schick's logic is flawed; if the same logic is applied to Chaucer's work then the conclusion would be reached that Chaucer never lived in the capital. Lydgate's obvious expertise in translating French works provides evidence of another counter-argument to Schick's conclusions. Although expertise in translation could have been gained through an education in England, it seems more likely than unlikely that *Reson and Sensuallyte*, Lydgate's skilful translation of part of the French poem, *Les Echez Amoureux*, was the product of exactly the period of study which Bale suggests.[18] Ernst Sieper, who edited *Reson and Sensuallyte*, argues for a date of composition early in Lydgate's career (between 1406 and 1408).[19] With regard

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[17] *Lydgate's Temple of Glas*, ed. J. Schick, EETS ES 60 (London, 1891, repr.1924), pp.lxxxviii-xci, (p.lxxxix).

[18] The prince's letter itself, written as it was in French, provides evidence of the continuing life of the French language in England. John Burrow points out that French was still, in early fifteenth-century England, an 'official' language, being 'with Latin, the language of Privy Seal documents at the time'; J. Burrow, 'Hoccleve and the Middle French Poets' in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, ed. H. Cooper and S. Mapstone (Oxford, 1997), pp.35-49 (p.35).

[19] *Lydgate's Reson and Sensuallyte*, ed. E. Sieper, 2 vols., EETS ES 84 and 89 (London, 1901-1903), p.5. Anthony Edwards remarks that *Reson and Sensuallyte* owes its attribution to Lydgate to John Stow in the sixteenth century, and that the lack of any further proof of Lydgate's authorship problematises its inclusion in the Lydgate canon; A.S.G. Edwards, 'Lydgate Manuscripts: Some Directions for

to Bale's account of Lydgate being in Italy, Schick remains unconvinced even after reviewing the slender extant evidence.[20] Schick's hesitation in this respect is well-founded, as no obvious traces remain of Lydgate's familiarity with the Italian language. Bale makes a further interesting assertion which refers to Lydgate's return from Europe. At this point in his career, according to Bale, the monk set up a school for the sons of the nobility.

If Lydgate did establish such a school, then prince Henry's letter, which has been construed to mean that Lydgate be allowed to continue his studies, would be incongruous.[21] However, the letter itself is in French, and refers to Lydgate's wish to continue 'a les Escoles'. 'Escoles', in late-medieval French, meant school and not study.[22] Moreover, Lydgate is described as 'diligent pour apprendre', and again an ambiguity appears, as 'apprendre' meant both to learn and to teach.[23] Whilst ambiguity is slim evidence for supporting Bale's account of Lydgate's early

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Future Research' in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. D. Pearsall (Cambridge, 1983), pp.15-26 (pp.24-25). However, it seems to me that the style of the poem is decidedly that of Lydgate, and therefore, in the absence of any evidence to challenge Stow's assertion, there are no grounds to doubt the attribution.

[20] *Temple*, ed. Schick, pp.lxxxix-xc.

[21] See Pearsall, *Bio-bibliography*, p.56, for the introduction to the prince's letter as it appears in *Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions from All Souls MS. 182*, ed. M.D. Legge, Anglo-Norman Text Society, No.3 (Oxford, 1941), No.347, p.411.

[22] *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue Française et de tous ses dialectes du IXe au XVe siècle*, ed. F. Godefroy, 10 vols. (Paris, 1880), III, 413.

[23] *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue Française*, ed. Godefroy, III, 95.

years away from Bury, the idea suggested by Schick, that Bale deliberately created a fiction, seems bizarre and inexplicable. The embellishment of known details might be a probable practice for a scholar such as Bale; the creative fictional exercise suggested by Schick seems most unlikely. However, the only indisputable conclusion which may be drawn from the prince's letter is that there was an ongoing connection between the prince and Lydgate. This connection soon manifested itself in substantial commissions.

As prince of Wales, Henry commissioned Lydgate to write the *Troy Book*.[24] This work, the monk informs his reader, occupied him for eight years (1412-1420). Also to this period belongs the 'Balade at the Departing of Thomas Chaucer'.[25] Thomas Chaucer, son of Geoffrey, provides an intriguing subject for a poem, and raises the question of the extent of Lydgate's social contact with his patrons. The poem paints a complimentary and detailed picture of Thomas as one who is generous, hospitable and well-loved, and refers to one of Thomas' closest acquaintances, Sir William Moleyns, as being amongst those who most keenly feel Thomas' absence. Pearsall argues for caution in assuming that Lydgate visited the Chaucer household: 'whether Lydgate was a visitor at Ewelme and how well he knew Thomas Chaucer and his circle are ... uncertain'.[26] Walter Schirmer, however, sees the poem as providing

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[24] *Lydgate's Troy Book*, ed H. Bergen, 4 vols., EETS ES 97,103,106,126 (London, 1906-35). For the author's description of his commission, see *Troy Book*,I, pp.3-4.

[25] 'Balade at the Departing' is in *Poems*, ed. Norton-Smith, pp.4-6.

[26] Pearsall, *Bio-bibliography*, p.20.

evidence of 'Lydgate's contact with the gentry', i.e. with the Chaucer family. The work contains personal details, and ends with the narrator describing himself as being 'pure sory and hevy in myn hert' at Thomas' departure (line 72).[27] Schirmer's argument for a firm relationship between Lydgate and various members of the Chaucer family, seems the more likely in the light of the ongoing links which he demonstrates between Lydgate and Thomas Chaucer's daughter Alice.[28] If Lydgate did not personally know his patrons, and particularly Thomas himself, it seems unlikely that he could have produced such a familiar piece of poetry as his 'Balade at the Departing'.

In order to situate Lydgate geographically at around this time, it is necessary to invoke at this point a charter of 1423 in which Lydgate was granted, together with three other monks, the rents from Newington Longeville in Oxfordshire.[29] The grant of this income significantly predates the charter itself. The charter states that the grant was the result of letters patent of Henry IV and Henry V. The question therefore arises as to whether or not, on leaving university, Lydgate was attached in some way to Newington Longeville, which was a Benedictine house close to

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[27] Walter F. Schirmer, *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the Xvth Century*, trans. A. Keep (London, 1952), p.59.

[28] Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, p.61.

[29] Pearsall, *Bio-bibliography*, p.57. Robert Steel, 'Documents relating to Lydgate' in *Lydgate and Burgh's Secrees of old Philisoffres*, ed. R. Steel, EETS ES 66 (London, 1894), pp. xxiii-iv. Lydgate's concern regarding his financial revenues is also shown in the battle he has later in life to secure for himself the revenue from letters patent of Henry VI. See Pearsall, *Bio-bibliography*, pp.37-38 and pp.59-63.

Oxford. Giles Constable, in his *Cluniac Studies*, describes how the income (or tithes) in such English Cluniac houses usually went to the resident monks themselves.[30] It is possible, therefore, that Lydgate and the other three monks mentioned in the charter of 1423 were, before 1414 when Henry V suppressed all such Cluniac houses in England, based at Newington Longeville.[31] It is worth noting that Newington Longeville was some five miles from Oxford and less than five miles from Ewelme, home of Thomas Chaucer. If one assumes that Lydgate was at Newington until at least 1414, then his 'Balade' for Chaucer's departure may almost certainly be dated to coincide with Chaucer's expedition to France in 1414.[32]

To the second decade of the fifteenth century also belongs *The Life of Our Lady*, another work commissioned by Henry Monmouth, who became king in 1413. Johnstone Parr argues that the date for the commission of this poem was 1415. Parr relies on Lydgate's

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[30] G. Constable, *Cluniac Studies* (London, 1980), p.600.

[31] According to E.L. Taunton, Henry's action may have had the support of many of the English Cluniac monks themselves. He argues that they had been unhappy for over half a century at the notion of being controlled by foreigners. Taunton describes how Henry seized the estates belonging to the Cluny houses, such estates then being 'vested in the Crown'. The revenues were 'mostly bestowed upon other monasteries or schools'. E.L. Taunton, *The English Black Monks of St. Benedict* (London, 1897), p.132. Taunton's argument would therefore indicate that the case of Lydgate and his fellow-beneficiaries was exceptional. Further evidence that Lydgate was, in fact, living at Newington for a period of time is provided by his translation of the 'Legend of Seynt Gile'. (See *The Minor Poems*, ed. MacCracken, I, 161-73.) Newington's parish church is St Giles, and Newington was also known as Newington St Giles. Lydgate may, therefore, have been providing a 'saint's life' for his own parish church. For St Giles at Newington, see M. Gelling, *The Place-Names of Oxfordshire*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1953 and 1954), II, p.132.

[32] Pearsall offers two possible dates for the 'Balade', being either 1414 or 1417. See *Bio-bibliography*, pp.20-21.

meticulous astronomical introduction to the poem, and relates it to Henry V's invasion of France and to his will, made on July 24th, which included provision for the masses which should be said in the event of his death. As Parr points out, Henry dictates that one of these masses should 'commemorate a stage or "mystery" of the Virgin Mary's life; that is, the Assumption, Annunciation, Immaculate Conception, Nativity, and Purification. These stages .....are, of course, the very substance of Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady*'.[33]

Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* may also be dated to this period.[34] No commission is apparent for this work, but one such is almost certain to have existed. Henry appears to have been Lydgate's almost exclusive patron at this time and is therefore the most likely candidate, with any dedication becoming irrelevant and inappropriate when the king suddenly died in 1422. I shall also argue that the *Complaynt of a Loveres Lyf* and the *Temple of Glas* belong to this earlier part of Lydgate's literary career and that these works, too, owe their commission to a related source. During the period 1397-1422, therefore, all of Lydgate's commissions may be connected, either directly or indirectly, with Henry V. The connection between the Lancastrian court and the poet throughout this time appears constant. Lydgate was fulfilling the role of 'court poet'.

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[33] Johnstone Parr, 'The Astronomical Date of Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady*' in *Philological Quarterly* 50 (1971), 120-25. *The Life of Our Lady*, ed. J.A. Lauritis, R.A. Klinefelter and V.F. Gallagher, Duquesne Studies, Philological Series 2 (Pittsburgh, 1961).

[34] *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes*, ed. A. Erdman and E. Ekwall, 2 vols., EETS ES 108 and 125 (London, 1911-30).

Following Henry's death in 1422, Lydgate was appointed prior of Hatfield Broad Oak. The move to Hatfield, however, may have taken place as early as 1414. In this case Lydgate would have been living very close to Hertford castle. Hertford was the preferred residence of Henry V, and was one of the castles most frequently visited after Henry's death by the widowed Catherine and her small son. Queen Catherine herself now became one of Lydgate's patrons, and the monk's connections to the court appear to have been reinforced, rather than weakened, as the result of Henry's death.[35] Amongst the various mummings which the poet produced were those which were specifically created for the entertainment of the Queen and the very young prince Henry VI.[36]

Meanwhile, it is obvious that Lydgate's links with the Chaucer family had not been severed. A clear indication of the continuing relationship comes from the commission by Alice Chaucer's second husband, the Earl of Salisbury, for *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*.[37] The marriage between Alice and the Earl took place in 1424, so that a date after this time is certain. The translation may well have been initiated either

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[35] Pearsall, *Bio-bibliography*, p.30.

[36] For an interesting theory regarding the 'Mumming at Hertford', see Derek Forbes, *Lydgate's Disguising at Hertford Castle: The first secular comedy in the English language* (Cambridge, 1998), pp.65-70. Forbes suggests that the performance may have marked the transference of the care of the young prince from the ladies, who were in constant attendance in his early years, to the knights and their male-dominated training which ensued.

[37] See *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man Englisht by John Lydgate, A.D. 1426, from the French of Guillaume de Deguileville, A.D. 1330, 1355* ed. F.J. Furnivall, 3 vols., EETS ES 77, 83 and 92 (London, 1899-1904).

during or after the visit of both Lydgate and the Earl to Paris in 1426. There is little doubt that Lydgate was kept busy, in the first three decades of the fifteenth century, writing for royal and noble patrons. The 'Invocation to Seynte Anne', which was written, according to Shirley 'at the commaundement of my Ladie Anne Countesse of Stafford' demonstrates yet another connection with the family of Lancaster.[38] Pearsall links the composition of the 'Invocation' to that of the 'Legend of St Margaret', and argues that the 'Invocation' was written for Anne's daughter, 'my lady Marche', hazarding a guess at a date in the mid-1420's. However, there can be no certainty for the accurate dating of either poem.[39] As poetry of this kind was often composed to mark specific occasions, perhaps in due course research into the lives of these powerful women will reveal possible events, such as their entry into a confraternity or the founding of a chapel, which may shed new light on the works themselves.[40]

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[38] 'An invocation to Seynte Anne' is in *The Minor Poems*, ed. MacCracken, I, 130-33. Anne Stafford was the daughter of Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, brother of John of Gaunt. She was therefore cousin to Henry IV. For the 'Invocation' see MacCracken (ed.), *The Minor Poems*, I, pp.130-33.

[39] Pearsall, *Bio-Bibliography*, pp.31-32. In fact, Pearsall's estimates, and his assumptions regarding the patronage of the 'Legend of St Margaret' may be questioned. As Margaret Connolly points out, when Humphrey, earl of Stafford, son of the widowed Lady Anne Stafford, married Anne Neville (grand-daughter of John of Gaunt and daughter of Joan Beaufort) some time before October 1424, his wife assumed the title of Lady Anne Stafford. There were, therefore, after this marriage, potentially two Lady Anne Staffords, either of whom could have been Lydgate's patroness. See M. Connolly, *John Shirley: Book Production and the Noble Household in Fifteenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 1998), p.41. For the 'Legend of St Margaret', see *The Minor Poems*, ed. MacCracken, I, 173-92.

[40] Julia Boffey describes the links which works by contemporary writers display either with family members of the patron, or with a specific occasion. Referring to the work of another fifteenth-

Other commissions relating to the 1420's confirm Lydgate's continuing close affinity with the Lancastrian court. In 1426, Lydgate was in France. His visit there may well have been in the company of either the Duke of Bedford or the Earl of Warwick.[41] It was Warwick who commissioned the 'Title and Pedigree of Henry VI', which Lydgate wrote whilst he was in France.[42] Other commissions from members of Warwick's family were, according to Pearsall, forthcoming at around this time.[43] Humphrey of Gloucester, brother of Henry V and uncle of Henry VI, commissioned the epic *Fall of Princes*, and was another of Lydgate's powerful patrons.[44]

The various assertions, that Humphrey was Lydgate's 'most important patron' (Connolly), his 'most lasting patron' (Alain Renoir) or his 'most famous patron' (Schirmer), should be challenged simply because they marginalise or ignore the important

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century writer, Osbern Bokenham, Boffey illustrates how 'some choices of saint reflect particular family preferences', whilst prologues 'recollect the circumstances in which the work was commissioned'. Boffey, 'Middle English Lives', p.626.

[41] If Lydgate travelled to France with Bedford, then he was there before 1426; Bedford had returned to England in 1425. See E. C. Williams, *My Lord of Bedford, 1389-1435* (London, 1963), pp. 137-47.

[42] See *The Minor Poems*, ed. MacCracken, II, 613-22. The digressions which Lydgate makes near the beginning of his poem, each devoting well over a dozen lines to the praise of the Earl of Warwick and the Duke of Bedford respectively, demonstrate the importance patrons assumed in Lydgate's work.

[43] See Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.167-68 for a guess of 1425 being the date of the composition of 'Guy of Warwick', commissioned for the Earl's daughter, Margaret. The Earl's second wife, Isabella Despenser, commissioned the 'Fifteen Joys of Our Lady', and this time Pearsall assigns a date of 1425 or 1426. Pearsall, *Bio-Bibliography*, p.51.

[44] See Pearsall, *Bio-Bibliography*, pp.32-33.

relationship between Lydgate and Henry V.[45] Humphrey, in terms of political importance, may be compared to Henry V. He was Protector of England during Henry VI's minority when the Duke of Bedford was in France.[46] However, Humphrey never exercised absolute rule, so that his 'power' and 'importance' did not match that of Henry V as king.[47] Regarding Lydgate's literary output, Henry was responsible for commissioning, amongst other works, *The Life of Our Lady* and the *Troy Book*, and these two poems are amongst Lydgate's largest and most distinguished works. Humphrey produced only one certain commission, the *Fall of Princes*. Schirmer's label of 'most famous' must also surely fail when Duke Humphrey is compared with King Henry. The assumption on which Renoir bases his claim, that Humphrey was Lydgate's 'most lasting patron', is that Humphrey himself commissioned the poem 'On Gloucester's Approaching Marriage' before his marriage to Jacqueline of Hainault (the poem was written before the death of Henry V in 1422).[48] *The Fall of Princes* was not finished until

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[45] Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), p.43; Connolly, *John Shirley*, p.81; Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, p.61.

[46] R.A. Griffiths, *The Reign of Henry VI: The exercise of royal authority*, 1422-1461 (London, 1981), pp.13-24.

[47] Humphrey's powers were repeatedly curbed, most importantly by the Duke of Bedford, his elder brother and regent of France. See J. Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge, 1996, pp.115-117. For a somewhat dated, but nonetheless exhaustive study of Humphrey, see K.H. Vickers, *Humphrey Duke of Gloucester* (London, 1907).

[48] The poem is in *Minor Poems*, ed. MacCracken, II, 601-606. Given that there is no obvious evidence of any other patron, it is not unreasonable to nominate Humphrey for the role. Pearsall remarks that, in his rubric to the copy in Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.20, Shirley 'does not say whether Lydgate was asked by Humphrey...to celebrate the forthcoming marriage'. *Bio-bibliography*, pp.22-23. There is always the possibility,

1438, so that these two poems seemingly prove that Humphrey's patronage extended over at least sixteen years. However, there is no evidence that Humphrey himself either did or did not commission the 'marriage' poem. It may well have been a gift from a noble well-wisher. As Pearsall points out, there is no doubt that the poem which Lydgate wrote when the marriage collapsed, 'A Complaint for my Lady of Gloucester and Holland', cannot have been commissioned by Humphrey, as it implicitly censures his behaviour.[49] Indeed, Pearsall uses this criticism of Humphrey as the basis of his own rejection of the poem from the Lydgate canon. However, Margaret Connolly does not share Pearsall's view. As she points out, in the earlier manuscript of the poem (copied while Humphrey was alive), John Shirley was extremely reticent about the identity of the author, whilst in the later version (copied after Humphrey's death), Shirley provides Lydgate's name in the margin. Connolly argues that this may have been deliberate diplomacy on Shirley's part, protecting Lydgate during Humphrey's lifetime from any open or direct connection between the poet and the 'Complaynt'.[50] Interestingly, Shirley introduces the 'Complaint' in his later copy as being written by 'a Chapellayne of my lordes

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therefore, that the poem was commissioned by someone close to Humphrey, rather than by Humphrey himself.

[49] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.166. The 'Complaint for my Lady of Gloucester' is in *Minor Poems*, ed.MacCracken, II, pp.608-13. The sympathy which the poem shows for Jacqueline's plight was reflected in the actions of the ladies of London, who censured Humphrey on his failure to help Jacqueline, who had been imprisoned in Hainault by Philip of Burgundy (having been abandoned there by Humphrey). See Vickers, *Humphrey*, pp.157-61 and pp.203-204.

[50] Connolly explores the relationship between Lydgate and Shirley in detail. See Connolly, *John Shirley*, particularly pp.80-88.

of Gloucestre Humfrey'.[51] Shirley's identification of Lydgate as Humphrey's chaplain adds weight to Green's speculation about Lydgate being attached to the royal chapel during Henry IV's reign. It also raises the question of whether or not Lydgate was attached to the chapel of the royal court at various stages of his career. At the time that the 'Complaint' was written, Jacqueline was back in Holland and, the poet tells us:

> Hir godsone affter hire dothe calle.
>
> (line 126)

This 'godsone' is none other than Henry V's baby son, and his appearance in line 126 (the very last line of the poem) guarantees that the reader/listener is left with the infant's image as the work ends. It is not impossible, therefore, that either the king (in the case of 'Gloucester's Approaching Marriage') or someone close to him (in the case of this poem and the 'Complaint of My Lady of Gloucester and Holland) commissioned these works. If one accepts Renoir's argument that Humphrey commissioned 'On Gloucester's Approaching Marriage', however, there are still grounds for questioning whether or not Humphrey was the most 'lasting' of Lydgate's patrons. I shall argue that two of Lydgate's *dits amoureux* were written close to the turn of the century and may be connected with Henry V when he was prince of Wales. Therefore, it can be claimed that Henry's patronage lasted for over twenty years.

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[51] *The Minor Poems*, ed. MacCracken, II, 608.

Another member of the nobility who may have had close connections with Lydgate is Thomas Beaufort, duke of Exeter, who 'retained a lifelong attachment' to Lydgate's monastery, Bury St. Edmunds.[52] It is probably worth noting that it was this same duke who was charged with the upbringing of Henry VI after his father's death.[53] Lydgate's commissions after the death of Henry V suggest that, at the very least, he was in close association with those who were responsible for the upbringing of the future Henry VI. The poem for Catherine, and the mummings which Lydgate prepared for her and her son, together with the works he completed for other members of the Lancastrian nobility, lend weight to a speculation that he did not return to Bury, or reside cloistered at Hatfield Broadoak, during this period. How great or how small was Lydgate's role in the prince's early life must remain a matter of speculation. The monk's close connections to the court, and particularly with the Earl of Warwick, would argue that the circles in which Lydgate was moving were either similar or even identical to those in which Henry VI spent his youth. Henry VI did not grow up into a king who resembled either his father or grandfather. The upbringing and influences upon the young prince produced a young man who, at the age of fifteen, was described by one visitor as 'mild, gentle and calm... less like a king or secular prince than a monk'.[54] However, in the year in which Thomas Chaucer died, and in which the Duke of Bedford set off on his last fateful trip to France, Lydgate began to distance himself

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[52] Pearsall, *Bio-bibliography*, p.22.

[53] See Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI*, p.51.

[54] For a study of Henry's personality, see Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics*, pp.103-11.

from court life. It may have been that changing circumstances at court influenced this move. By now, the young prince was twelve years old and eager to begin personal rule. In 1434, during the writing of the *Fall of Princes* for Humphrey, Lydgate applied to return to Bury.[55]

Pearsall conjectures that 'Lydgate was probably in Bury on a permanent basis by the time of the royal visit that was announced on 1 November 1433 ..... even though the *dismissio* to leave Hatfield and return to Bury was not recorded until 8 April, 1434'.[56] However, there is no evidence of Lydgate's return to Bury before 1434. Why the monk should have returned to his mother house at this time is also a matter for speculation. Pearsall, arguing that Lydgate thereafter remained permanently at Bury, suggests that perhaps financial insecurity may have been his motivation. Pearsall draws attention to the fact that, during the writing of the *Fall*, Lydgate addressed a witty poem to his patron which was unmistakeably a reminder that the poet was short of money.[57] Pearsall thus raises the question of whether Lydgate resorted to the haven of Bury 'for security now that Gloucester's support had turned out to be so erratic'.[58] However, there are other possible explanations for the monk's arrival at Bury in 1434.

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[55] *Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, ed. H. Bergen, 4 vols., EETS ES 121, 122, 123 and 124 (London, 1924-27).

[56] Pearsall, *Bio-bibliography*, p.34.

[57] 'Lydgate's Letter to Gloucester' in *Minor Poems*, ed. MacCracken, II, 665-67.

[58] Pearsall, *Bio-bibliography*, p.33.

It may be that Lydgate returned to Bury either with, or to prepare for, his noble patrons. Once there, and having received sustained spiritual guidance for almost four months, the ageing monk may have asked the prior of Hatfield to release him, so that his base once again became Bury.[59] Another possibility is that Abbot Curteys simply decided that it was time for the illustrious writer to return to his mother house. The most likely explanation for Lydgate's return to Bury in 1434, however, is that the monk was simply trying to avoid catching the plague; 1434 was a year in which many people died of the pestilence, particularly in London.[60] Like Machaut before him, faced with an epidemic, Lydgate may have decided that the safest place for the time being was well away from the capital and the court.[61] The extended visit of his noble patrons may also have been motivated more by self-preservation than by piety.

There is no evidence to support Pearsall's assumption that Lydgate's return to the cloister in 1434 was permanent, or that even in his later years the monk remained at Bury. Schirmer

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[59] Pearsall, *Bio-bibliography*, p.58-59.

[60] See J.A. Thompson, *The Transformation of Medieval England, 1370-1529* (London,1983) for dates of epidemics (pp.7-8).

[61] Machaut gives a graphic account of his own fugitive response to the plague in his poem, *Le Jugement du Roi de Navarre*. See *Guillaume de Machaut: The Judgement of the King of Navarre*, ed. and trans. R.Barton Palmer (New York, 1988), pp.15-23. For a study of the influence of the plague on the *Decameron* of the Italian poet Boccaccio (1313-75) see G. Mazzotta, *The World at Play in Boccaccio's* Decameron (Princeton, New Jersey, 1986), pp.13-46. Mazzotta explores various contemporary ideas and discourses concerning the plague, and also reactions to it.

assumes that Lydgate did, in fact, live at the monastery (although there is no proof for or against this), but draws attention to a letter which Stow annotated as 'written by Mas Burgh in the Prays of John Lidgate.... boothe dwelyng at Windsor'.[62] Pearsall dismisses Stow's note as 'guesswork', and argues that Burgh met Lydgate (presumably at Bury) in the late 1440's.[63] No firm conclusion can be drawn as to Lydgate's whereabouts between 1434-39, except that he was clearly still in touch with Windsor and therefore, perhaps, with the court.

It is not known what prompted the yearly grant made in 1439 by Henry VI to Lydgate. The wording of the king's document is interesting in that it speaks of Henry's gratitude (for Lydgate's services to himself, his father, his deceased uncles and Humphrey of Gloucester), thus underlining Lydgate's long-standing and wide-ranging connections with the royal family. The letters patent associated with the grant proved, however, to be flawed.[64] Lydgate had to petition the king for new letters, and, in this petition, the influence of another of Lydgate's lifelong patrons can be detected. It is Alice Chaucer's husband, the Duke of Suffolk, whose name appears on the petition in support of Lydgate's claim.[65]

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[62] Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, p.248.

[63] Pearsall, *Bio-Bibliography*, p.40.

[64] Pearsall, *Bio-Bibliography*, p.62.

[65] The Duke, it should be noted, was an obvious representative, as the income which Lydgate received was drawn from property in Norfolk and Suffolk. However, this does not weaken in any way the deduced connections between Lydgate and Alice Chaucer. The Duke of Suffolk was an influential and powerful figure in the court of Henry VI. Watts deals at length with Suffolk's career and influence. The references are too numerous to list, but see e.g. Watts, *Henry VI*, pp.198-99, pp.205-207.

Thus, right at the end of the poet's life, his affinity to the Lancastrian court is still evident. The grant from the king could be interpreted as a gesture designed to guarantee a comfortable old age for the monk. It could be suggested that, by 1439, the elderly poet's capacity for commissions was becoming inadequate. However, Lydgate was still engaged on what can only be construed as a royal commission right up until his death. The *Secrees of Old Philisoffres*, which he left unfinished, was the translation of a French version of a work which was believed, in its original form, to have been a letter from Aristotle to Alexander. Written at Alexander's request, it instructed the king in matters of government, both of the state and of his person. As Robert Steele points out in the preface to his edition of Lydgate's poem, the translation was almost certainly intended for king Henry VI.[66] That the king should support Lydgate whilst he was engaged in his task would be quite unexceptional, and the grant may have been simply fulfilling this purpose.

The evidence provided by Lydgate's life and work therefore establishes that he wrote for a noble clientele for most of his life, and that his connections with Henry V and the Lancastrian court were very strong indeed. The courtly verse which is the focus of my thesis must surely be placed within this social, courtly context. The interpretation of Lydgate's poetry has hitherto frequently been coloured by a view which insists on placing the poet on the outside fringe of Lancastrian courtly

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[66] In his introduction to the poem, Steele concludes that the translation was intended for Henry VI. *Secrees of Old Philisoffres*, ed. Steele, pp.xiii-xvi.

society. Lee Patterson's recent analysis of the *Siege of Thebes* takes as its starting point the view that Lydgate was one who 'all his life remained an observer', one who 'presents himself as simply a transparent vehicle' whose 'exclusion' from the world of courtly language was 'all the more pronounced' because he was a monk. Patterson's argument becomes open to serious question if it can be established that Lydgate was one who was not excluded from the courtly society of the patrons for whom he was writing.[67] The monk from Bury was the associate, and possibly the friend, of princes, kings, at least one queen, nobles, ladies and the speaker of the House of Commons (Thomas Chaucer). His popularity and reputation, however, have subsequently suffered a serious reversal, and Patterson's assessment stems from the predominantly negative evaluations of Lydgate's work which have been produced in the later part of the twentieth century.

2. A reversal of fortune: from 'Lancastrian Laureate' to 'driveling monk'

There was no more revered poet in England after the death of Chaucer than John Lydgate. The poetry he wrote was designed to accommodate his patrons' requests, and his success in carrying out his commissions is evident in the continuing prominence and influence of his works during the ensuing centuries. The monk's

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[67] Patterson's chapter, 'Making Identities in Fifteenth-Century England: Henry V and John Lydgate' is found in *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History*, ed. J.N. Cox and L.J. Reynolds (Princeton, New Jersey, 1993), pp.69-107, (pp.72-73).

reputation as a great poet lasted, as Schirmer points out, until the eighteenth century.[68] Schirmer perceptively links Lydgate's loss of popularity to changes in literary taste. Such changes caused a devastating reversal in the appraisal of Lydgate's work which has persisted until the present time. If there has been one aspect of Lydgate's verse which has been singled out as the cause of his fall from favour, it must surely be his style. Renoir thoroughly reviews the adverse comments upon Lydgate's work which begin with an essay of Thomas Percy in 1765.[69] Percy simply finds Lydgate 'dull and prolix', but in the early nineteenth century Joseph Ritson produces a damning condemnation of the 'voluminous, prosaic, and driveling monk'.[70] Renoir rightly remarks that most of the literary critics of this period 'enlarge complacently upon defects which they rarely illustrate specifically'.[71] As Renoir points out, Lydgate still had occasional admirers, such as the poet Thomas Gray. Renoir's explanation for the persistent devaluation of Lydgate's work is that the critics 'searched Lydgate in hope of finding Chaucer, and their disappointment at failing to find qualities that were not there led them to overlook qualities that were'. This explanation remains valid for most of the criticism of Lydgate's work which has appeared in the twentieth century.

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[68] Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, pp.255-59.

[69] Renoir, *The Poetry*. Renoir provides a thorough study of the way in which opinions regarding Lydgate's work have changed over the centuries. See particularly pp.1-31. The description of 'driveling monk' comes from Joseph Ritson's *Bibliographica Poetica*, published in 1802, from which Renoir quotes on p.7.

[70] Renoir, *The Poetry*, pp.6-7.

[71] Renoir, *The Poetry*, p.7.

In the following review of twentieth-century Lydgate criticism, certain critics who are referred to only briefly will be re-introduced in later chapters as their views become relevant to discussion. As the end of the twentieth century looms near, a large proportion of the criticism of Lydgate scholars which continues to be read is that which dates to the earliest part of the same century. The introduction to the *Temple of Glas* which Joseph Schick produced in 1924 remains the point from which many readers approach this poem. Schick argues that the monk's poetry lacks form because 'the notion of artistic structure, by which all ideas form, in mutual interdependence, an organic whole, is entirely foreign to him [Lydgate]'. Schick complains of the monk's 'carelessness in language', and also objects to an 'inconsistency in depicting his ideas' which is centred on a confusion of the secular and the sacred. However, the 'grotesque confusion' which Lydgate produces is, Schick argues, also present in the work of Dante, Boccaccio, Chaucer and Gower.[72] As all these other poets have since received considerable attention and acclaim, the question arises as to why it is that Lydgate largely remains, for students of medieval literature, outside the general curriculum.

A number of studies have been produced in the last fifty years which have attempted to rekindle interest in Lydgate's work. Alain Renoir, writing in 1967, has argued that if Lydgate's work is to be appreciated, it should be approached 'with the

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[72] *Temple of Glas*, ed. Schick. See particularly pp.cxxxiv-vii.

intellectual awareness of what he meant to his own age'.[73] However, his conclusion, that Lydgate may be viewed as 'a thorough craftsman who occasionally rises to the level of poetic excellence' emphasises the gulf which still remains between the way in which Lydgate's poetry was appreciated in the fifteenth century and the way in which it is now read. In arguing, as he does, that Lydgate creates a bridge between medieval and Renaissance literature, Renoir claims that Lydgate is an early humanist.

Derek Pearsall, writing three years after Renoir, rejects the idea of a 'humanist' Lydgate. However, Pearsall appears to echo Renoir's plea for a more sympathetic approach to Lydgate's poetry. Pearsall argues that, in approaching works of the fifteenth century, 'Our ambition should be to create in ourselves a state of mind in which we find it possible to see the literature as it appealed to its author and its audience'. What may be needed, Pearsall argues, is 'a broader definition of what we mean by poetry'.[74]

There is no evidence that this 'broader definition' has been achieved, and the lack of an appropriate contextualisation thus continues to hamper Lydgate criticism. Lois Ebin's 1985 attempt to go beyond the stage of contextualisation (a stage which has never been successfully established) leads her to examine Lydgate's perception of his role as a poet. In her own review of

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[73] Renoir, *The Poetry*, p.142.

[74] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, pp.13-14 and p.298.

Lydgate criticism, she identifies three different critical approaches to Lydgate's work. The first is that which reads Lydgate almost exclusively through the poetry of Chaucer, which inevitably leads to a detrimental view of Lydgate's work, as Lydgate can never be Chaucer. The second she typifies with recourse to the arguments of Schirmer and Renoir, which defend Lydgate on the strength of his being a poet of the fifteenth century and, as such, the necessary link between Chaucer and the Renaissance. The third of Ebin's groups includes Pearsall and Eleanor Hammond, both of whom lay emphasis on the social background against which Lydgate's poems were produced. Ebin argues that all these approaches to the monk's work fail to answer 'many questions about the nature of his poetry and his particular aims and purposes as a poet'.[75] Ebin acknowledges, however, that understanding of Lydgate's work has been greatly increased as a result of the work of these various critics with their various approaches.

The courtly poems were clearly intended to be performance pieces, almost certainly for oral delivery. Joyce Coleman, in a study of public reading in the late Middle Ages, concludes that much of the literature of the early fifteenth century (including the work of Lydgate) was intended to be read out loud. Coleman makes specific reference to Lydgate's phrase 'that ye shal here' in his *Complaint of the Black Knight* (referred to in this thesis

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[75] See the Preface to L. Ebin, *John Lydgate*, Twayne's English Authors Series 407 (Boston, Mass., 1985).

as the *Complaynt of a Loveres Lyf*).[76] Many of Lydgate's shorter religious poems also merit this 'performance' approach, even when they are meditative in nature.

Unlike Walter Schirmer, whose work on Lydgate filled a vacuum which had existed for centuries, I have the distinct advantage of being able to build upon the work of earlier scholars. Whilst, therefore, Pearsall provokes frequent disagreement, it is true to say that without the enormous amount of energy which he and Schirmer have expended on Lydgate studies this thesis could never have come into existence. However, whilst I must acknowledge my indebtedeness to the giants upon whose shoulders I shall endeavour to stand, I feel that the most recent monograph, that of Lois Ebin, whilst raising the issue of Lydgate's connection to a French tradition, has failed to provide an adequate literary contextualisation for Lydgate's courtly poems. Whilst the 'French love visions of Machaut, Deschamps and Froissart' are mentioned in connection with the *Complaynt of a Loveres Lyf*, there is no exploration of possible French influence and connections.[77] The result is an analysis of the poet's role which cannot pursue the question of poetic intent, and therefore does not extend beyond a claim for Lydgate's success in the 'embellishment and extension of familiar matter'.[78] Ebin's study, like those of Pearsall, Schirmer and Renoir, extends across the whole corpus of Lydgate's work. My own thesis, although it draws

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[76] J. Coleman, *Public reading and the reading public in late medieval England and France* (Cambridge, 1996), p.198.

[77] Ebin, *John Lydgate*, p.20.

[78] Ebin, *John Lydgate*, p.38.

many works into the discussion, never attempts such a global approach. The close and extended study which I shall make of Lydgate's *dits amoureux* relies upon the historicisation of both Lydgate and his *dits amoureux*. This historicisation is a process which has already been initiated by a small number of those interested in a theoretical approach to the literature of the late Middle Ages.

3. Poetry and politics: a theoretical appraisal

The 'life' which has been outlined above suggests a strong connection between Lydgate and the Lancastrian court throughout the first half of the fifteenth century. Such a close and lasting correspondence between poet and patrons has never before been claimed.[79] However, a link between Lydgate and the Lancastrians has been acknowledged and explored by those scholars who have recently turned their attention to a selection of the monk's longer poems: *The Siege of Thebes*, *The Troy Book* and the *Fall of*

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[79] Pearsall concludes that 'we should be wary of assuming too readily that he was a frequent visitor in society'; *Bio-bibliography*, pp.21-22. Dom David Knowles, on the other hand, remarks that 'it is not easy to understand how a cloistered monk, even of such a great house as Bury, could have obtained the patronage, known the circumstances, and met the demands of so many distinguished patrons'; D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1955)II, p.274. Margaret Connolly, in her recent book on John Shirley, states simply, and with no corroborating argument, that 'Lydgate seems to have spent little time in Bury until he retired to there in 1434'; M. Connolly, *John Shirley*, p.84. However, the quotation of Shirley's accompanying note to Lydgate's 'Everything to his Semblable' which tells that the poem was 'made by Lydegate affter his resort to his religyoun' would suggest that the monk had something to 'resort' from. Connolly quotes Shirley's note in her book on p.161.

Princes. Inevitably, in linking a writer to a dynasty, these scholars have pursued the question of social and political issues as they believe them to be expressed in the works. Indeed, Lee Patterson argues that 'writing must be understood as above all a social practice'.[80] Patterson's insistence upon the importance of historicising literature is not an attempt to alienate medieval literature within its own historical confines, but an endeavour to engage medieval culture as a 'living past with claims upon the present'.[81] As scholars such as Patterson have begun to take an interest in Lydgate's weighty secular writings, it is evident that, for these works at least, the process of making 'claims upon the present' has begun.

Paul Strohm shares Patterson's dedication to the historicising of literature and also takes an interest in Lydgate's work. Strohm describes Lydgate as a writer dedicated to the Lancastrian cause. In the *Siege of Thebes* the monk, according to Strohm, produces a 'resolutely single-voiced moralization of historical events' from 'a vantage-point formally vested with ethical responsibility'.[82] This 'ethical responsibility' appears limited, however, as in a later work Strohm argues that Lydgate will make every effort 'to adjust obstinate circumstances and putative enemies to the requirements of the Lancastrian

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[80] L. Patterson, *Literary Practice and Social Change in Britain, 1380-1530* (Berkeley, 1989), p.4.

[81] Patterson, *Literary Practice*, p.3.

[82] P. Strohm, 'Fourteenth and Fifteenth-Century Writers as Readers of Chaucer' in *Genres, Themes and Images in English Literature From the Fourteenth to the Fifteenth Century*, ed. P. Boitani and A. Torti (Tübingen, 1988) 90-104, (p.99).

solution'.[83] For Strohm, the 'Lancastrian solution' must overcome 'Henry IV's murderous usurpation'. Strohm's certainty that Richard II was murdered should not go unquestioned, however, as there is no firm evidence regarding his death. Stories circulating at the time suggest either that he was starved, or that he starved himself to death.[84] Strohm problematises the notion of Lydgate's 'ethical responsibility' even further by drawing attention to the way in which Lydgate, in his 'Of the Sodein Fal of Princes in Oure Dayes', describes Richard as 'feyne' (willing) to resign and die.[85] Given that Strohm's argument rests upon Richard's murder, the conclusion drawn from Lydgate's choice of words in the 'Sodein Fall' is that the monk is even willing to pervert the truth in order to further the Lancastrian cause.[86] Strohm concludes, citing the view of Lydgate's work taken by Patterson, that the tensions produced by Lydgate's poetical

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[83] P. Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (London, 1998), p.190.

[84] Contemporary accounts regarding Richard's death can be found in C. Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution* (Manchester, 1993), pp.224-45. A recent article by Michael Bennett raises interesting questions regarding the English succession. Bennett has come across a late-fourteenth century copy of a charter dating from the reign of Edward III in which he created a male entail. Such an entail would mean that succession to the crown could only pass to male family members. If the copy is genuine, then on Richard's death, Bolingbroke would have been the rightful heir to the throne. See M. Bennett, 'Edward III's Entail and the Succession to the Crown, 1376-1471', *English Historical Review* 113 (1998), No.452, 580-609.

[85] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, p.190. For 'Of the Sodein Fal of Princes in Oure Dayes' see *Minor Poems II*, ed. MacCracken, pp.660-61.

[86] If this is the case, then the same must be said of Gower. In his *Cronica Tripartita*, he describes Richard as having sought death by refusing food. See *The Major Latin Works of John Gower*, ed. and trans. E.W. Stockton (Seattle, 1962), lines 440-46, pp.324-25.

practices produce texts which are 'constantly at odds with themselves' as 'none of these texts can avoid incorporating its opposite'.[87]

Patterson himself, however, produces arguments which might call in question Strohm's claim for Lydgate's wholehearted support for the Lancastrian cause. Patterson puts forward a case for the essential part played by the monk in providing Henry V with the 'monastically-generated materials needed to sustain royal authority' (Patterson is referring to the *Troy Book*).[88] In the later *Siege of Thebes*, according to Patterson, Lydgate deliberately 'took it upon himself both to exemplify and to promote his role as the monastic supporter of Lancastrian rule'.[89] There is a significant shift in emphasis here, from patron to poet. Strohm sees Lydgate subsumed into the Lancastrian cause, whereas Patterson finds a poet who contemplates his own role as exemplified in his writing. The tension which Patterson finds in Lydgate's poetry centres on a belief that Lydgate was sceptical regarding his role as 'spokesperson for Lancastrian interests'. In the *Siege of Thebes*, Patterson suggests, Lydgate perhaps acknowledges that 'poetry and power can never be brought to a perfect identity of purpose'. [90]

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[87] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, p.190.

[88] Patterson, 'Making Identities', p.72

[89] Patterson, 'Making Identities', p.74.

[90] Patterson, 'Making Identities', p.93. Patterson's reading of the *Siege* as a poem whose sober lessons regarding civil war are actively directed at Henry V is in line with most recent criticism. However, an alternative analysis of motivation and inter-relationships suggests itself if recognition is made of London's medieval imaginary alliance with Troy, not Thebes. The

Strohm and Patterson take as the point of departure for their historicist readings of Lydgate's work the premise that Lydgate was a Lancastrian propagandist. It was Pearsall who first attached the label of 'royal propagandist' to Lydgate, and Strohm and Patterson reinforce this type-casting.[91] In his recent doctoral thesis, Scott-Morgan Straker provides a convincing counter-argument against this notion. Responding to Patterson, Straker argues that in Lydgate's *Troy Book* the opposites which the text incorporates are there by design, not by accident.[92] Lydgate's purpose in emphasising the horrors and mistakes of the Trojan war is the moral instruction of prince Henry. Technically, therefore, Lydgate cannot be a propagandist 'because the illocutionary force of his address to Henry V does not provide the

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Siege was written following the Treaty of Troyes, which marked Henry's successful defeat of the French in 1420. All fighting had taken place, as was usual in the Hundred Years' War, upon French soil. Thebes could therefore have been more closely aligned in the early fifteenth century English imagination with Paris, rather than London. Recent critics of the *Siege* have fixed their focus on potential political division in England. However, Lydate's contemporary, Thomas Hoccleve, in his *Regement of Princes*, used the example of France in his condemnation of civil war, and coupled this with an exhortation that Katherine of France should marry prince Henry. *Hoccleve's Works III: Regement of Princes*, ed. F.J. Furnivall, EETS ES 72 (London, 1897), pp.191-94.

[91] D. Pearsall, 'Lydgate as Innovator' in *Modern Language Quarterly* 53 (1992), 5-22 (p.15).

[92] S.M. Straker, 'Ethics, Militarism and Gender: John Lydgate's *Troy Book* as a Political Lesson for Henry V' (unpublished D.Phil. dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1998), pp.122-56. I agree with the point made here by Straker. Lydgate's work shows no sign of an author who sought to avoid conflict in his work; as I shall argue below, the *Temple of Glas* provides one of the best examples in medieval English literature of the deliberate incorporation of opposites.

unambiguous affirmation that propaganda presupposes'.[93] Strohm and Patterson have attested to Lydgate's inability to provide such 'unambiguous affirmation'; Straker asserts that this was no inability, but a deliberate choice made by a highly self-aware, skilful and proficient writer (a view of Lydgate which was shared by his fifteenth-century contemporaries). Rather than attempting to exclude or ignore difference, the *Troy Book* embraces both negative and positive exempla in 'a portrayal of the underlying processes and personal dispositions that affect public action'.[94] Straker argues that 'support and criticism are not incompatible', adding the proviso that the *Troy Book* demonstrates that criticism should deal only with a ruler's 'personal qualities', avoiding anything which might 'strike at the nature of lordship or social distinction more generally'.[95]

The self-conscious poet depicted by Straker is also found in the critical work of James Simpson. Writing on the *Siege of Thebes*, Simpson argues for Lydgate's awareness of the 'almost architectural role for truth-telling poetry in political construction'.[96] Lydgate deliberately 'sets his narrative squarely within the realm of politics'.[97] Simpson sees an opposition in the

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[93] Straker, 'Ethics', pp.250-52. Straker adopts Austin's theory of the speech act; see J.L. Austin, *How to do things with Words*, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford, 1962).

[94] Straker, 'Ethics', Introduction, p.7.

[95] Straker, 'Ethics', p.264.

[96] J. Simpson, '"Dysemol daies and fatal houres": Lydgate's *Destruction of Thebes*' in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray* (Oxford, 1997), pp.15-33 (p.17).

[97] Simpson, 'Lydgate's *Destruction*', p.23.

Siege between the voice of the cleric (Lydgate) and the voice of military rulers. Writing on the *Troy Book*, Simpson continues this theme, raising questions regarding Lydgate's use of Guido delle Colonne's *Historia Destructionis Troiae* as the basis for his own version of the Troy story. After all, there were other versions of the Troy story available to Lydgate (such as the *Aeneid* of Vergil). Simpson argues that the Guido tradition of the Troy story was 'resolutely anti-imperialistic in every way'.[98] Rather than presenting a positive view of human action, this tradition demonstrates that 'history is held in the balance by purely human passions and divisions'.[99] The decisions and actions of the characters within the story thus become culpable; rulers are responsible in some way for the disasters which befall themselves and their families. In allying himself with this tradition, Lydgate both produced a critique of the belligerent practices of the ruling (Lancastrian) aristocracy and ensured a greater role for his own clerkly position in the mapping-out of politics within his work. Simpson suggests that the failure of aristocrats in the *Siege* to listen to the voices of wisdom, and the very scarcity of such voices, produce a text in which 'The narrative cries out for

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[98] J. Simpson, 'The Other Book of Troy: Guido delle Colonne's *Historia Destructionis Troiae* in Fourteenth and Fifteenth-Century England', *Speculum* 73 (April, 1998) 397-423 (p.397). See also *Guido de Columnis, Historia Destructionis Troiae*, ed. N.E. Griffin (Cambridge, Mass., 1936) and *Historia Destructionis Troiae: Guido delle Colonne*, ed. and trans. M.E. Meek (Bloomington, Ind., 1974).

[99] Simpson, 'The Other Book', p.412. An opposing view is found in the Ph.D thesis of Nigel Mortimer. He argues that in the *Fall of Princes*, Lydgate frequently deviates from his French source 'to highlight the haphazard and independent working of Fortune'. N. Mortimer, 'A Study of John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* in its Literary and Political Contexts' (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Oxford,1995),p.204. According to Mortimer, therefore, Lydgate is removing control and culpability from the characters in his text.

prudential, clerical voices to guide aristocratic behaviour'.[100] The narrator himself has the opportunity to provide this 'clerical' voice, commenting in such a way as to shape audience response.

Simpson explores the notion of audience-response in greater depth in his comparison of the *Anticlaudianus* of Alan of Lille and the *Confessio Amantis* of John Gower. Although Simpson's study does no more than touch on the works of Lydgate, it offers an insight into the deeply political nature of the poetics employed by many medieval writers. Simpson's approach provides an alternative methodology to that espoused by Strohm and Patterson. These latter writers juxtapose historical event with text to argue for the political motivations of both author and patron; Simpson uses the text as the basis for his theories regarding poetics and politics. The most crucial point which Simpson makes with relation to my own work on Lydgate's courtly poetry takes its direction from an earlier study by Minnis of Gower's poem.[101] This is that there exists a direct link between politics and love in the *Confessio*: 'Politics and the matter of love are..... inextricably related discourses, each leading into the other'.[102]

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[100] Simpson, 'The Other Book', p.420.

[101] A.J. Minnis, 'John Gower, *Sapiens* in Ethics and Politics', *Medium Aevum* 49 (1980), 207-29.

[102] J. Simpson, *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alan of Lille's* Anticlaudianus *and John Gower's* Confessio Amantis (Cambridge, 1995), p.217. There was a copy of the *Anticlaudianus* at Bury. See M.R. James, *On the Abbey of S. Edmund at Bury 1. The Library* (Cambridge, 1895), p.82. The political agenda which Simpson finds in the *Anticlaudianus* takes as its basis Plato's *Timaeus*. The *Timaeus* was a text with which Lydgate would have been familiar; there was a copy at Bury. See James, *On the Abbey*, p.13. Minnis elsewhere argues of Gower that 'he was certainly

I shall argue that this statement must also underpin any reading of Lydgate's *dits amoureux;* poetry and politics in these poems are interrelated.

Simpson's reading of the *Anticlaudianus* is little short of revolutionary, as he argues that Alan urges his reader to look for a 'supercelestial' form for the poem. Such a form requires that reading of the poem should begin, not with Book I, but with Book VI (the sequence is thus Books VI to Book IX, followed by Books I to V). Simpson finds that the reader's perception, following Alan's instruction, should pass from outer to inner form, and that this inner form, which depends on an artificial and sophisticated ordering, is found at the innermost part of the work, the centre. My analysis of Lydgate's *dits amoureux* reveals a poet who, like Alan, places a high value on the centre point of his work. Rather than regarding the end of the work as the most critical location for the 'meaning' conveyed, the centre stanzas of Lydgate's *dits* provide the reader/listener with the material which will inform a reading of the remainder of the poem. Simpson contrasts Alan's practice with that of Gower, whose *Confessio,* with its denigratory revelation that the 'lover' in the poem is in fact an old man, encourages the reader, on gaining this information at the end of the poem, to 'reflect back across the whole dialogue'.[103]

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certainly aware of this belief in the link between ethics and politics'. A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship* (Aldershot, 1988), p.184.

[103] Simpson, *Sciences and the Self,* p.269. John Burrow reaches a similar conclusion. He also demonstrates the similarities between the figure of 'Amans' in the *Confessio* and the courtly lover of the French *dit amoureux* tradition. See J. Burrow, 'The Portrayal of Amans in *Confessio Amantis*' in *Gower's* Confessio Amantis:

Simpson interprets the politics of Alan and Gower through their poetics. Alan thus emerges as a true disciple of Plato. Written in Latin for a boy-king (Philip II of France), firmly drawing attention to its own centre, Alan's epic mirrors and advocates an absolutist politics. Gower, writing in the vernacular (English), produces a work which is, through its structure, de-centred and therefore deeply critical of monarchical claims to absolute rule'.[104] Gower's politics, according to Simpson, 'should be described as consensual and constitutionalist'.[105] The centre of Alan's poem provides its starting-point; interpretation of the work is dependent upon this 'key', to which all other parts of the work are subordinate. The text draws its 'sense' from this 'supercelestial' reading, available only to an élite few. Alan's politics are in line with this arrangement; an all-powerful ruler (equipped with self-knowledge) is central to the well-being of the state. Gower, in his *Confessio*, adopts a method which requires an almost 'post-modern' reading: the end of the work, which is physically located in an outer, or marginal, position, informs that which has come before, thus a re-reading is required. The re-reading reveals that all earlier parts of the poem and its final section are interdependent, but that no adequate reading can be made without reference to the final section. Gower's 'constitutionalist' politics are represented by the *Confessio* itself; the central

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Responses and Reassessments, ed. A.J. Minnis (Cambridge, 1983), pp.5-24.

[104] Simpson, *Sciences and the Self*, p.281.

[105] Simpson, *Sciences and the Self*, p.284.

governing force must recognise its body politic, and the body politic must recognise its centre or head (the king).

In my own task of attempting to position Lydgate in this scheme of political representation through poetics, I find that Simpson's methodology is relevant and useful. Conversely, I have discovered little in Paul Strohm's analysis which resonates within the details of what is known of Lydgate's life, or within the monk's poetry. The continuing success of a court poet in any period suggests a writer who is both politically astute and self-aware. The inept poet whom Strohm sees accidentally producing texts which are 'constantly at odds with themselves' would be an unlikely candidate for scholarly recognition and acclaim lasting centuries.[106] I shall, in the course of the following chapters, set out to challenge the picture which Patterson paints of Lydgate as a writer on the margins of court affairs. Patterson's dismissal of Lydgate's courtly poetry as irrelevant to politics will also be questioned.

Whilst I agree with Simpson's argument that Gower is de-centralising his work, it seems to me that his argument that Gower, in this work, is most interested in consensus and the 'common good' can be greatly strengthened by applying the 'supercelestial' method of Alan of Lille. Whilst there can be no question that the end of the poem demands a modified reading of the remainder of the text, there is evidence that Gower, like Alan, used the centre of his work as a key to the poem's principal

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[106] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, p.190.

interests (although not its starting-point). The opening of Book V, the central book of the *Confessio*, begins with the word 'Ferst'. The following lines describe a time, at the beginning of creation, when 'al was set to the comune'.[107] The importance of these central lines to the main theme of the poem should not be underestimated, and therefore Gower's 'constitutionalist' poetics, which rely as much on the centre as on the periphery of the work, are seen to be truly 'consensual'. However, it is possible that the reasons for Gower's 'political' de-centralisation of his poem may also have included a personal element.

A poetic structure which works in a retrospective way (such as Gower adopted for his *Confessio*) had previously been used by Machaut, in his *Voir Dit* and by Froissart in the *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece* (1373).[108] These poems were presented, like the *Confessio*, as autobiographical works (they have a central character who is the narrator; Gower names himself at the end of the poem). A further possible explanation for the 'de-centring' of all these works would therefore be that these 'autobiographical' poems contain a central character who exists on the margins of courtly society. The poem thus becomes a literal depiction of the social situation and perspective of the narrator,

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[107] *The Complete Works*, ed. Macaulay, II, 402.

[108] *Le Livre du Voir-Dit de Guillaume de Machaut*, ed. P. Paris (Paris, 1875); *Jean Froissart: Le Joli Buisson de Jonece*, ed. A. Fourrier (Paris, 1975). The central position of Machaut's *Voir Dit* is occupied by the story of the king who does not lie, thus exemplifying the truth/falsehood theme of the entire work. The centre-point of Froissart's poem, a *virelay* addressed to 'Ma droite dame d'onnour' (lines 2746-74) relates directly to, and must be re-read in connection with, the 'lay de Nostre Dame' with which the text ends.

as well as an opportunity for what Simpson describes as a more 'consensual' reading. The political agenda of the narrator is thus a powerful force in the shaping of the work. However, in any of these readings, whether 'absolutist' or 'consensual', the centre of the poem is of key importance. It is this poetic practice of centralisation which, as will be seen in my later chapters, Lydgate can be seen to be adopting when writing his own *dits amoureux*.

Lydgate certainly employs the device of a first-person narrator in his *dits amoureux*. Although he is not the central character, but an observer, this narrator, if one follows Simpson's argument, inevitably de-centres the work. The dream-frame which Lydgate also employs could further this de-centring. In such a reading, Lydgate might appear even more 'constitutionalist' than Gower himself. However, it could also be argued that the monk was following the tradition of the first-person narrator begun by French writers such as Machaut and Froissart. In giving prominence to such a narrator, the author either reduced or replaced the role of the members of the nobility traditionally found in courtly poetry. The replacement 'clerkly' figure was a reflection of the author himself. There is no doubt that these poets were, like Gower, using the structure of their work to represent a political viewpoint which envisaged a more constitutional, consensual picture. However, Machaut and Froissart, like Lydgate, belonged to religious houses, and a more accurate argument might be that what is depicted in their work is a de-centring which concerns power-sharing between Church and

State (or sacred and secular), rather than between king and body politic.[109] These religious clerics were creating an enlarged and therefore more important space for their own issues, both moral and political.

The influence of Lydgate's religious background should not be underestimated, and his position within the Church must, I think, form a point of departure in any discussion of Lydgate's own politics. However, the vast range of the monk's work, which ranges from fables to mummings to saints' lives to 'mirrors for princes', argues for a poet with broad interests. Like Alan and Gower, Lydgate was much concerned with the way in which a king interacts with his subordinates.[110] As Simpson and Straker have demonstrated, Lydgate's support for the Lancastrian monarchy was not unqualified; rather he felt able, like Gower before him, to assume a critical role. There can be no extensive comparison between Lydgate's shorter, courtly poems and the 'fables of the soul.....psychological allegories' of Alan of Lille and Gower.[111] However, I have already suggested a similarity of intent between the *Confessio* and the *dits amoureux*: both employ the conceit of courtly love to express political concerns.

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[109] Indeed, Patterson reads the *Siege of Thebes* as a poem representative of a certain conflict between Lydgate and Henry V. Patterson, 'Making Identities', particularly pp.93-97. The clerical/military dichotomy is also in line with Simpson's argument regarding the *Troy Boook*, outlined above.

[110] The *Fall of Princes* is the most obvious example, with the author's many and lengthy interpolations leaving no doubt as to his active engagement with his subject matter.

[111] Simpson, *Sciences and the Self*, p.114.

In Simpson's comparison of the poetics of Alan and Gower, he addresses the issue of the way in which their works function. This is an issue which is vital in approaching Lydgate's courtly poetry. Simpson stresses that the *Anticlaudianus* and the *Confessio* are 'enactive' in nature; 'they draw readers into their action in such a way as to reproduce problems and/or experiences within the reader'.[112] The problems which are produced call upon the reader to seek a resolution. The 'enactive' force of the poem demands an attempt by the reader/listener to resolve the problems depicted (at many levels) within the work. These works demand the active participation of the audience. I aim to demonstrate the way in which Lydgate encourages an 'active' and 'prudent' reading of his courtly poems. The historico-literary approach of Patterson and Strohm has produced a description of Lydgate which, according to Simpson and Straker, underestimates the monk's ability to self-consciously adopt a poetics which accurately reflects his own politics. An intent to historicise Lydgate's poetry, however, is found in the work of all these scholars. The relationship focused upon is that which existed between the king and his subjects (who included Lydgate himself). At first glance, Lydgate's *dits amoureux* may seem to interest themselves in relationships of a very different kind.

The relationships portrayed in Lydgate's *dits amoureux* are exclusively those of courtly heterosexual lovers. In this respect the poems belong to, and are typical of, the late-fourteenth/early fifteenth century French *dits amoureux* tradition. However in

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[112] Simpson, *Sciences and the Self*, p.120.

late-medieval poetry, as Minnis and Simpson have argued, love and politics are often strongly linked. Lydgate's *dits amoureux* must therefore be examined with regard to the politics which emerge from the poetics. My own work on Lydgate's *dits* will insist upon a serious attempt to historicise the poems; no such attempt has hitherto been made. I shall argue that these were occasional poems produced in relation to specific events. However, in my view, an attempt to locate a poet's political stance from within his literary work requires more than a link to historic incident and the analysis of one text (or part thereof). I would argue that intertextuality, and particularly generic intertextuality, is equally crucial. In adopting this stance, I am indebted to the work of Simon Gaunt.

Gaunt has advanced the theory that genres in medieval French literature were 'predicated on distinct ideologies'. The way in which the different genres constructed gender, therefore, created an intergeneric dialectic. In a genre such as that of the *dits amoureux*, which was primarily concerned with love, Gaunt maintains that 'gender is the key to understanding the underlying ideology'.[113] Lydgate, a writer who has produced work belonging to a variety of genres in which his attitude to women appears contradictory, would provide a fascinating case-study for Gaunt's theory. Such a study, however, would probably require a book of its own. My present concern is with the monk's courtly poems. In analysing Lydgate's *dits amoureux*, I shall endeavour to take Gaunt's arguments into account. My aim, therefore, will be to

[113] S. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge, 1995), p.17.

link historicisation of Lydgate's *dits* with an exploration of intertextuality which seeks to illustrate the construction of gender within these works. I shall extend Gaunt's theory to address the way in which such gender construction in its turn produces a dialectic which seeks to include the poem's reader/listener.

The Lydgate 'political' criticism which has been evaluated above illustrates differing critical standpoints on the literary/political spectrum. The highly-influential voices of Strohm and Patterson have done little to enhance Lydgate's reputation amongst twentieth-century readers. Their studies of Lydgate's work inevitably owe much to earlier scholarship, such as that of Pearsall. Pearsall's 'traditional' emphasis on a Chaucerian approach to Lydgate thus manifests itself in the work of those critics who favour a 'new' literary/historical approach. That Strohm should take such a position in an article entitled 'Fourteenth and Fifteenth-Century Writers as Readers of Chaucer' is unsurprising. However, it illustrates well the exclusive literary context in which Lydgate criticism has located itself over the last half century. Thus Patterson, writing apparently about Lydgate and Henry V, finds that 'it is his difference from Chaucer that establishes Lydgate's identity'.[114] Simpson's searching work on Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* compares it to, and contrasts it with, Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. Lydgate's inevitable association with Chaucer is relentless. I would argue that this 'inevitable' association is a powerful factor in keeping Lydgate's

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[114] Patterson, 'Making Identities', p.76.

work on the margins of the literary canon. I have therefore adopted, as the basis of my methodology, a non-Chaucerian approach. I shall argue that Lydgate's courtly poetry does not derive exclusively from the English work of Chaucer, but owes much of its inspiration, both for structure and content, directly to late-fourteenth century French writers of *dits amoureux*.

As the phrase 'dit amoureux' is one which has been much used but little defined, a thorough study of what such a generic term might mean is provided in Chapter Two. An analysis of possible medieval understandings of the term is related to late-twentieth century usage. Given the importance of a notion of genre to my arguments regarding Lydgate's ideology, this chapter also explores the nature of the *dits amoureux* as inherited by Lydgate. A 'working hypothesis' is created which establishes the loose generic boundaries within which I believe Lydgate's *dits* must be situated. Chapter Three concerns itself principally with a reading of Lydgate's *Complaynt of a Loveres Lyf* as a *dit amoureux*. The literary context I provide for this poem associates the *Complaynt* with those French *dits amoureux* which were inspired by the themes of Latin pastoral, and I shall argue that in this instance the most significant theme is that of exile. Chapter Four deals with the far more complex politics and poetic practices found in Lydgate's *Temple*. The *Temple* can again be shown to have been influenced at least as much by the work of French writers as by the poetry of Chaucer. Its theme of marriage places it within a specific *dit amoureux* marriage/temple tradition (a tradition to which Chaucer did not contribute) which had long been established.

In the course of this thesis, therefore, I shall demonstrate that Lydgate's impetus and inspiration for his courtly poetry came from the royal household itself. The 'voice' which emerges from these poems is clearly one which was intended to further the Lancastrian cause. Despite such an apparently pro-courtly agenda, this 'voice', particularly in the *Temple of Glas*, has moral overtones, and an implicit critique emerges of the values associated with both courtly poetry and courtly behaviour. The writer who emerges from this study is highly-skilled and self-conscious, acutely aware of literary tradition and conventions and of their relationship to matters of government. Internal evidence from the poems themselves will be combined with social and historical evidence in order to illustrate how the monk's fifteenth-century works contribute to the tradition of the *dits amoureux*.

CHAPTER TWO

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF *DIT AMOUREUX*

The fundamental argument of this thesis is that rather than passively attempting to imitate Chaucer, Lydgate draws directly on his own knowledge of the French tradition of the *dit amoureux*. If it is accepted that such a tradition existed, then generic boundaries must be recognised for the *dit amoureux* in order for poems to be either included or excluded from the genre. A notion of how the genre of the *dit amoureux* was constituted is essential if Lydgate's contribution to such a genre is to be assessed. Only after possible generic parameters are established can discussion of intergeneric borrowing or dialectic take place. Theories regarding gender and genre, such as those introduced in the previous chapter, also rely upon the existence of generic classification. In the following pages, therefore, criteria will be established for what might be included under such a generic heading. Following a brief introduction to late twentieth-century usage of the term *dit amoureux*, I shall provide an outline of the literary inheritance which influenced fifteenth-century poets such as Lydgate. In this way, a tradition will be traced from thirteenth-century France into fifteenth-century England. Characteristics which emerge from the texts themselves will provide the initial parameters for my 'new', flexible definition of the genre. I shall then be able to use my findings to inform a thorough review of twentieth-century scholarship concerning the genre of the *dit amoureux*. I shall incorporate or reject other critics' criteria for the *dits amoureux* in the light of the already established textual evidence.

Crucial to the loose generic definition which I shall propose for the *dit amoureux* is the interpretation of the word *amoureux*, the medieval meaning of which has often been overlooked in recent criticism. 'Amour' in medieval French could denote love in the sense of heterosexual passion, but might also imply love in the sense of 'amitié', i.e. attachment to someone, denoting friendship. This meaning may be traced back at least to Cicero's *De amicitia*, which concerns itself not with heterosexual passion but with close friendships between men.[1] Moreover, the idea of forming an attachment extended, in the later Middle Ages, beyond people to things, so that one could be 'amoureux' regarding an object or even a place. To complicate matters even further, 'amoureux' might mean 'worthy to be loved', or 'worth loving', and also 'that which generates love', meaning that attachment might be inspired by an object or by a person.[2] Whereas, therefore, late-twentieth century critics have singled out and used only one possible meaning for 'amoureux' (relating to heterosexual passion), a plurality of meanings for 'amoureux' provided a broad interpretative context for late-medieval reader/listeners. However, there is one single attribute for the adjective 'amoureux' which remains constant in courtly poetry of the Middle Ages; it could only be applied to members of the nobility.[3] In this respect the term becomes exclusive, and must form the basis of any attempt to establish generic parameters for the

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[1] *M. Tulli Ciceronis: Laelius Sive de Amicitia Dialogus*, ed. H.E. Gould and J.L. Whiteley (London, 1941).

[2] *Dictionnaire Historique de la Langue Française*, ed. A. Rey, 2 vols. (Paris, 1992),I, 65-66.

[3] See Mary Wack's study of lovesickness in the later Middle Ages, in which she concludes that this particular 'illness' became the prerogative of the nobility. M. Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania, 1990), particularly pp.146-76. Wack describes medieval lovesickness as something which 'enabled lovesick aristocrats to cope with their own erotic vulnerability' (p.174).

form the basis of any attempt to establish generic parameters for the *dits amoureux*. I shall argue that 'amoureux' should be interpreted not within the context of heterosexual relationships, but as representing ideals of late-medieval courtly life. This approach will enable many *dits* of the earlier part of the fourteenth century to be included within the genre of the *dits amoureux*.

In my analysis of the term *dit amoureux*, I shall also have to take account of a confusion which may quickly arise simply from the alliance of the words *dit* and *amoureux*. This confusion results from the use of the entire phrase by some recent critics as opposed to the use of the word *dit* alone by others. However, the critics whose work will be reviewed below are often discussing the same works, and are all discussing works which, I shall argue, ultimately fall within the generic boundaries of the *dit amoureux*. Whilst, therefore, critics may refer simply to *dits* rather than to *dits amoureux*, the terms are, in most cases, interchangeable. I shall make clear those instances where this is not the case.

1. An introduction to the dit amoureux *in the twentieth century*

The Chaucer scholar who first used the phrase *dit amoureux* and introduced it into Anglo-American Chaucer research was James Wimsatt. It is innocently dropped into his introduction to *Chaucer and the French Love Poets*: 'The stages by which the *dit amoreux* (a convenient name for the French love narrative) became what it was in 1369 are not sharply

defined, though there is assuredly a progressive development'.[4] Wimsatt has almost certainly borrowed the phrase from the Machaut passage quoted below:

> Rien ne me doit excuser ne deffendre
> Que ne face le bon commandement
> De vous, Dame, se je vous say entendre,
> Par qui j'ay corps, vie et entendement;
> Dont droit est quant vous me ordenez,
> A faire *dis amoureux* ordenez,
> Qu'a ce faire je me soutive:
> Mais je vueil bien estre a ce fait donner,
> Tant qu'en ce mond vous plaira que je vive.
> (lines 28-36)[5]

(Nothing ought to excuse or defend me if I do not carry out the good commandment of you, Lady, if I know how to attend on you, through whom I have body, life and reason. So it is right that you order me to make well-ordered 'dis amoureux', which I apply myself to do. I well wish to be dedicated to this task in order that my living in this world will please you).

In this passage, taken from Guillaume de Machaut's *Prologue* to his *Oeuvres*, the poet is responding to an address from Nature. It is Nature who has given him body and life, and who, in this passage, is referred to as the courtly 'Dame'; it is Nature who compels him to write his 'dis amoureux'. It is reasonable to assume that Machaut, a highly educated fourteenth-century cleric, understood well what he meant when he used the phrase 'dis amoureux'. However, over time, the medieval phrase has been construed in different ways, and its meaning has become problematic. Although the same phrase is used by Machaut and then by Wimsatt, it will become evident that they attach different meaning to the same words. In a later work, Wimsatt developed a broader perspective on the genre, and posits Machaut's *Remede de Fortune* as 'the

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[4] J. I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the French Love Poets* (New York, 1972), p.2.

[5] *Les Oeuvres de Guillaume de Machaut*, ed. P. Tarbé (Geneva, 1977), pp.3-39 (p.5).

archetypal poem among Middle French dits amoureux'.[6] It is difficult to single out which attributes of the *Remede* Wimsatt finds 'archetypal', as he moves from stating that it is a 'mirror of court life' (which, I shall also argue, is a fundamental characteristic of the *dits amoureux*) into a précis of the poem which includes details which are excluded from many other *dits amoureux*, such as the encounter between a lover and a lady, or the appearance of Lady Esperance. However, Wimsatt singles out 'lyric discontinuity' for further discussion, and from this one may deduce that his definition of the *dits amoureux* uses as its starting point the assumption that the work is a poem in narrative couplets which also contains intercalated lyrics.[7]

Wimsatt, however, was not the first to identify the *dit amoureux* as a specific genre. In his book *Poètes et Romanciers du Moyen Age*, writing nine years earlier than Wimsatt, Albert Pauphilet asserts that Machaut 'a inventé un genre à demi narratif, à demi lyrique, le *dit*'.[8] Therefore whilst Wimsatt refers to the works of Machaut and Chaucer as *dits amoureux*, Pauphilet discusses Machaut and his supposed invention of the *dit*. Pauphilet is introducing *La Fonteinne Amoureuse*, a poem which Wimsatt refers to as a *dit amoureux*, and this affords a clear example of

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[6] J.I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and his French Contemporaries: Natural Music in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto,1991), pp.30-31 (p.31). For the *Remède* see *Le Jugement*, ed. Wimsatt and Kibler, pp.167-409.

[7] Wimsattt, *Chaucer and his French Contemporaries*, p.31.

[8] A. Pauphilet, *Poètes et Romanciers du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1952), p.955. Pauphilet's argument takes no account of the early thirteenth century poem of Jean Renart, his *Roman de la Rose*, a substantial work in narrative couplets with intercalated lyrics, which surely must have influenced later writers. For the *Roman*, see *Jean Renart, le Roman de la Rose ou de Guillaume de Dole*, ed F. Lecoy (Paris, 1970). The most extensive list of works with lyric insertions is given in M.B. Boulton, 'Lyric insertions in French narrative fiction in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries' (unpublished B.Litt. dissertation, University of Oxford, 1981), Appendix 1 (pp.344-46).

two critics using a differing term to describe the same genre. Both Pauphilet and Wimsatt are primarily concerned with poetry of the later half of the fourteenth century, but I shall argue that their definition proves inadequate when applied to the work of other writers, both earlier than and contemporary with Machaut. This is one of the main problems in attempting to establish a workable definition for a supposed genre of *dit amoureux*. The definition applied by Wimsatt and Pauphilet refers to a limited and specific type of poetry which, I shall argue, would have been only one of the forms admitted by medieval writers under their much broader heading of *dits amoureux*.

Wimsatt also includes under his heading of *dits amoureux* poems which fourteenth-century writers excluded, as will be demonstrated below. Machaut did not invent the *dit amoureux* as defined by Wimsatt, nor was he the first to use intercalated lyrics.[9] By the fourteenth century, poets had been referring to some of their works as *dits* for at least two centuries; fourteenth-century poets inherited their own understanding of *dit* from earlier writers. Wimsatt discounts the many poems written and referred to by Watriquet de Couvin (an early

[9] Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* (written in Latin), part prose, part verse, had provided an earlier model for varied forms as well as an allegorical vision. See *Boethius: The Theological Tractates and The Consolation of Philosophy*, ed. H.F. Stewart and E.K. Rand (London, 1918). Ardis Butterfield thoroughly discusses the use of interpolated lyric in medieval poetry, and explores Boethius' influence on medieval poets. See A. Butterfield, 'Interpolated Lyric in Medieval Poetry' (unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge, 1987), particularly pp.3-4. Kevin Brownlee traces the progress of French poetry containing intercalated lyrics from the thirteenth to the end of the fourteenth century. However, Brownlee's discussion argues for the emergence of 'the 14th-century generic entity known as the *dit* (story)', and thus ignores thirteenth and early fourteenth-century works referred to by their authors as *dits*. K. Brownlee, 'Generic Hybrids' in *A New History of French Literature*, ed.D. Hollier (Cambridge, Mass., 1989, pp.88-93 (p.92). For a detailed discussion of the medieval Boethius with particular reference to Chaucer, see *Chaucer's* Boece *and the Medieval Tradition of Boethius*, ed. A.J. Minnis (Cambridge, 1993).

(a poem which aims to teach courtliness to young noblemen).[10] Wimsatt argues that the *Tournois* 'does not merit the adjective *amoreux*'.[11] Wimsatt therefore must have had some notion of the term *dit* which differentiated it from his 'dit amoreux', or 'love poems'. Again, Wimsatt may have followed Machaut in separating the two words as well as using them together to create different meanings.

A closer look at the work of Machaut shows that in his *Prologue* *dit* and *amoureux* had a separate, as well as a united, existence:

> Puisque Nature, Retorique
> Ay presents, Sens et Musique;
> Et li Dieus d'Amours qui mes sires
> Est et des maux amoureux mires,
> Veut que j'aie bonne Esperance,
> Dous penser et douce Plaisance,
> En faisant son tres dous service,
> Bonnement sans penser a vice,
> Et leur commande travillier
> Pour moy aidier a consillier
> A faire dis et chansonnettes
> Pleinnes d'onneur et d'amourettes,
> (lines 115-126)[12]

(Because Nature presents me with Rhetoric, Reason and Music, and the God of Love, who is my lord and the healer of the ills of love, wishes me to have good Hope, Sweet thoughts and sweet Pleasure in doing his very sweet service simply, without thinking of evil, and commands them to work to help and advise me in making 'dis' and songs full of honour and small sweet things).

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[10] For details of what little is known about Watriquet's life and an edition of his extant works, see *Dits de Watriquet de Couvin*, ed. A. Scheler (Brussels, 1868). The *Tournois* is on pp.231-71.

[11] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the French Love Poets*, p.62. The *Tournois* does not feature a languishing lover, but is clearly and explicitly a 'mirror of court life', as Watriquet bases his poem in the castle and grounds of 'Monferrant', where he is staying. However, the theme of the narrator's dream is the acquisition of Christian morals. See *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp.231-71. It seems to me that this poem, with its springtime setting, allusions to mating birds and to hunting, dreaming narrator and allegorical virtues, cannot be unproblematically excluded from the tradition of the *dits amoureux*.

[12] *Les Oeuvres*, ed. Tarbé, p.7.

work to help and advise me in making 'dis' and songs full of honour and small sweet things).

It is Nature who presents the poet with 'Retorique', 'Sens et Musique', all of which he will need in order to compose the many kinds of poetry he goes on to describe. Armed with these gifts of Nature, the poet is in the service of the 'Dieus d'Amours', writing at his command. In this long list of his different kinds of work, Machaut lists 'dis' as just one of many forms which he will use. The adjective 'amoureux' no longer accompanies 'dis', as it did earlier in the 'Prologue'. The term 'dis' itself seems to have been used loosely both by Machaut and by other late-medieval poets. However, I shall demonstrate that there is a huge gulf between any recorded medieval understanding of the genre of the *dit* (or the *dis amoureux* as described by Machaut) and the generic definition proposed by Wimsatt and Pauphilet.

2. *The* dit *in the early fourteenth century*

2i. Poems of instruction

First, an attempt will be made to establish what medieval writers understood by the word *dit*. The works of thirteenth-century poets such as Rutebeuf (c.1245-1280) were frequently entitled *dits*.[13] Anthime Fourrier, in his introduction to Froissart's *Dits et Débats*, concludes that for Rutebeuf the term was synonymous with the modern understanding

[13] See *Oeuvres Complètes de Rutebeuf*, eds. E. Faral and J. Bastin, 2 vols. (Paris, 1969) for poems such as 'Le Dit des Cordeliers' (I, 229-37) and 'Le Dit de Guillaume de Saint-Amour' (I, 242-48). For a description of one thirteenth-century manuscript with clear use of the word 'dit', see p.12.

the term *dit* must be accepted as representative of his own thirteenth-century experience. However, as a more specific meaning seems to be attached to *dit* in the fourteenth century, this study will begin there. This means that no account will be taken, in this chapter, of the thirteenth-century *Roman de la Rose*, a poem whose structure, imagery and themes all exerted an important influence upon the tradition of the *dit amoureux*.[15] It seems to me, however, that the *Rose* could not be easily accommodated within any single generic description. The poem is the site of so many competing and conflicting discourses and genres that classification is a futile exercise. I do not intend to attempt the impossible, and shall not even try to categorise this problematic and distinguished poem, but it will appear from time to time in later chapters with reference to intertextuality or thematic borrowings. I shall begin, therefore, in the early fourteenth century, with the work of poets who proved to be a direct source of inspiration for both Machaut and Froissart. Amongst those early fourteenth-century writers was the prolific and influential Watriquet de Couvin, who, despite the footnotes of Wimsatt and others over the last twenty-five years, is

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[15] The edition to which I shall refer is *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. F.Lecoy, 3 vols. (Paris, 1965). For a discussion of late-medieval reception of the *Rose*, see P.Y. Badel, *Le Roman de la Rose au XIVe siècle: Etude de la réception de l'oeuvre* (Geneva, 1980), p.63. According to Badel, the *Rose* was predominantly regarded as a moral, didactic poem in the fourteenth century. Badel explores the influence of the *Rose* on fourteenth-century *dits*, but concludes that although later writers clearly knew the *Rose* 'on chercherait en vain dans tous ces vers des expressions qui garantissent une dépendence littérale à l'égard du *Roman de la Rose*' ('you would look in vain through all these works for expressions which might guarantee a literal dependence with regard to the *Roman de la Rose*'). The importance of the *Rose* for later writers was evident in the way in which wisdom replaced love in their works as the most important human attribute (p.91). See further S. Huot, *The Romance of the Rose and Its Medieval Readers*, (Cambridge, 1993), pp.16-34. For a concise account of the poem and its historical and literary context, see D.F. Hult, 'Jean de Meun's continuation of Le roman de la rose' in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. D. Hollier (Harvard, 1989), 97-103.

still little known. Watriquet was a court poet and minstrel of the Hainault region, and it was the Hainault court which later fostered the literary talent of Froissart.[16]

In his edition of Watriquet de Couvin's work, Auguste Scheler lists thirty-two poems, many of which refer to themselves as 'dis'. Scheler describes his poet as a court minstrel who was preoccupied with 'la moralité, l'initiation des nobles aux devoirs de leur rang, l'enseignement pieux et chevaleresque'.[17] Whilst it may appear to be stating the obvious, it should be stressed that Watriquet's work was written for the high nobility. He himself says that his patrons include Guy de Châtillon and the Conte de Blois, and one extant manuscript was clearly destined for the French royal household; he was writing courtly poems.[18] For the purpose of this thesis, which deals with the *dit amoureux* as one kind of courtly literature, the term 'courtly' will be understood to be referring either to patronage or to content. A courtly poem, therefore, is one which was either written for, or treats of, the social class which viewed itself as high nobility. Its subsequent audience will not be taken into account in the initial definition. Watriquet's *dits* were, by this definition, courtly poems, but courtly poems which were designed to teach as well as to please, to warn against vice as well as to exhort to virtue. Watriquet introduces *Li Mireoirs*

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[16] For a brief description of the cultural importance of the Hainault court in the early fourteenth century, see J. Ribard, *Un Ménestrel du XIVeme siècle, Jean de Conde* (Geneva, 1969), pp.81-85.

[17] *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, p.v of the introduction.

[18] Watriquet names these patrons in 'Des Trois Chanoinesses de Cologne'; see *Dits de Watriquet*, pp.373-79 (p.375). See also Scheler's description of the manuscripts in his introduction pp.xvii-xxiv. By 1373 seven manuscripts had found their way into Charles V's Bibliothèque du Louvre.

vice as well as to exhort to virtue. Watriquet introduces *Li Mireoirs as Dames* by explaining that his work may be of great value if 'li bien' (the good) is taken from it:

> De biaus dis conter et reprendre
> Ne doit on menestrel reprendre,
> Ainçois li est tourné à pris:
> Quant li bien sont de lui repris
> Qu'en a lessiés en nonchaloir,
> Li biel dit pueent moult valoir
> Et profiter à mont de gens;
> C'est .i. deduis nobles et gens
> Aus vaillans princes et gentilz.
> (lines 1-9)[19]

(For telling and re-telling fine 'dis' a minstrel should not be reproved, rather the reverse should happen, so much good is learnt from him which had been left in neglect. Fine 'dits' may be worth much and benefit many people; they are a noble and courtly delight to brave and gentle princes.)

This 'deduis' (delight) for princes and nobles may also be profitable to 'mont de gens' (many people, but an assumption may be made that these people were part of the courtly audience). The opening lines of 'Li Mireoirs as princes' follow a similar theme, claiming that Watriquet's intention is to recount in order to instruct those at court, and that the 'biaus diz' which he will use to this end should inspire kings, dukes and counts to sustain good deeds:

> En cours des rois, des dux, des contes
> Doit on les biaus diz et les contes
> Et les examples raconter
> Pour les bons instruire et donter;
> Et pour ce c'on ne doit laissier
> Biaus fais perdre ne abaissier,
> Se voult Watriqués entremetre
> D'une matiere en rime metre
> (lines 1-8)[20]

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[19] 'Li Mireoirs as Dames' in *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp.1-37 (p.1).

[20] 'Li Mireoirs as princes' in *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, p.199-230 (p.199).

(In the courts of kings, of dukes, of counts, fine 'dits', stories and exempla should be told to teach and foster virtues; and because good deeds should not be abandoned or debased, Watriquet wishes to compose and put in rhyme one such matter.)

Such too had been the preoccupations of his predecessor Rutebeuf. 'Rutebués nos dist et enseigne', he tells us himself in 'Le Testament de l'Ane', and, in his fables, his religious and his political poetry this is exactly what he does.[21] Jacques Ribard also points out that all the *dits* of Jean de Condé (c.1275/80-1345) except for one ('la Nonnette') are moral poems, inspired by questions of general interest of a 'caractère moral, plus souvent de l'époque'.[22] It would seem to have been 'taken as read' by the late-medieval French writers of these *dits* that such works were designed to instruct, and this should be the first criterion established for the *dit* in its thirteenth and early fourteenth-century sense.[23]

I have used the moral Watriquet de Couvin as my principal example of a writer of didactic *dits*, and my argument may have given the impression that his *dits* are reasonably uniform. This is not the case; the subject matter is diverse, they vary greatly in length, and they use a variety of methods in order to pursue their didactic intent. How can 'Li Dis de la Feste du Comte de Flandre', which is an account of the wedding between Louis of France and Marguerite, daughter of Robert of

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[21] 'Le Testament' in *Oeuvres Complètes de Rutebeuf*, ed. Faral and Bastin, II, 298-304 (303, line 165).

[22] J. Ribard, *Un Ménestrel*, p.101. Ribard also provides an interesting exploration of the relationship between the works of Jean de Condé and Watriquet de Couvin; the two poets were writing at the same time in the Hainault region. See pp.406-17.

[23] This is also the conclusion regarding the 'dit' reached by Hans Jauss. See H.R. Jauss, 'La transformation de la forme allégorique entre 1180 et 1240: d'Alain de Lille à Guillaume de Lorris' in *L'humanisme médiévale dans les littératures romanes du XIIe au XIVe siècle*, ed. A. Fourrier (Strasbourg, 1962), pp.108-46.

Flanders, be placed under the same heading as 'Li Dis de l'Iraigne et du Crapot', which is a fable?[24] 'Li Dis du Connestable de France' is an elegy lamenting the constable's death, and the poem thus provides yet more diversity beneath the heading of the *dit*.[25] It can be argued, nonetheless, that all of the above poems seek to teach in one way or another. The 'Connestable' should be seen, therefore, as a didactic poem using the guise of an 'exemplary life'. An 'exemplary life' was, in the later Middle Ages, the model from which lesser mortals took their lead. This life need not be that of a saint.

In Watriquet's case, preoccupied as he was with teaching the nobility how to behave, the constable was an obvious subject for such a poem. The work would teach through the example of the constable's virtuous life, and therefore was a 'dis'. Equally, the wedding celebration of the 'Comte de Flandre' was the perfect model of expected courtly decorum amongst the highest nobility when two of the great houses are brought together to secure peace. Digressing as he does to eulogise about the beauty and splendour of the ladies present, it might be argued that Watriquet is veering off course, but these ladies are depicted as models of nobility, and as such became ideal subjects for future emulation. There still seems to be an immense gulf between this sparkling courtly scene and the world of rustic fable found in 'Li Dis de l'Iraigne et du Crapot'. However, this fable poem takes the form of a dream vision in which the narrator finds himself at 'Bec Oisel', one of the royal castles where King Charles and his knights were amusing themselves. It is against this background that the allegorical figure

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[24] *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp.329-39 for the 'Feste du Comte de Flandre', and pp.65-72 for 'l'Iraigne'.

[25] *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp.43-53.

of Reason is introduced: Reason who explains the connection between the likely fates of a poisoned toad and a badly-advised ruler. Watriquet is single-minded in his will to write works which will instruct as well as entertain his noble patrons.[26]

2.ii. Dreams come true: the dit *and historic referents*

A preliminary definition of a *dit* has been reached which refers to intent rather than content: the term *dit*, as understood in the early part of the fourteenth century often designates a poem which intends to instruct or exemplify. However, there is another aspect to most medieval *dits* which appears to be constant, and that is that they are more often than not firmly grounded in actuality. Watriquet may sometimes use 'dream visions', but they are peopled with dukes, princesses, kings and queens who were known to him, and who are seen to be operating within identifiable locations. Again, it is easy to find a precedent and a parallel in the thirteenth century in the poetry of Rutebeuf: 'Ses poèmes sont nés le plus souvent d'une occasion qui lui a fournie tel ou tel événement. Ils se trouvent ainsi étroitement liés à l'actualité d'un moment'.[27] Of Jean de Condé, Ribard writes that his *dits* 'peuvent prendre occasion d'un fait d'actualité'.[28] As I shall demonstrate, early

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[26] Pierre-Yves Badel remarks that 'Dans le dit, la connaissance de l'univers physique et moral, l'histoire et la fable, sont autant de voies pour accéder à la vérité' ('in the *dit*, knowledge of the physical and moral universe, history and fable, are so many ways to reach the truth'). Badel, *Le Roman de la Rose*, p.85. Badel's acknowledgement of the scope of the *dits*, and of the essentially moral essence of these works, is unusual in recent scholarship.

[27] *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Faral and Bastin, I, 47.

[28] Ribard, *Un Ménestrel*, p.101.

fourteenth-century *dits*, like many of those of Rutebeuf a century before, find their inspiration in historical events, but historical events which are thinly veiled in allegorical allusion to historic referents. It would seem that many of those listening (or reading) would have been adept at deciphering the meanings. In Watriquet's *Li Mireoirs as Dames* the following description appears:

> Li azurs et les fleurs de lis;
> De li veoir iert fins delis,
> De richesse y avoit grand part.
> Et a senestre d'autre part,
> Vi une barre toute seule
> D'argent componnee de gueule
> (lines 1243-1248)[29]

(The blue and the fleurs de lys; it was exquisite pleasure to see them, on the more important side was power and on the left, on the other hand, across all I saw came a single baton in alternating silver and vermilion)

It is easy to deduce that the 'fleurs de lis' will represent the royal French household, but in fact by elaborating on the heraldic imagery the poet gives a clear and specific picture of the arms of Jeanne d'Evreux, the then queen of France.[30] In Watriquet's 'Li Dis des iiii Sieges', four noblemen are identified, again by their heraldic devices. Here are the black lion of the Comte de Hainault, the fleur de lys of Charles de Valois, the eagle of Gauchier de Châtillon and the boar of the Comte de Flandre.[31] 'Li Dis de l'Arbre Royal' is the story of a mighty tree

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[29] *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, p.40.

[30] For an illustration of the arms of the royal French Valois household, which are gold fleurs de lys on a blue background, see E.E. Dorling, *Leopards of England and other Papers on Heraldry* (London, 1913). The old French arms, with many fleurs de lys, are facing p.12. The 'new' arms, three fleurs de lys (from the early fifteenth century) are facing p.16. Scheler describes the arms of Evreux, which are those of France but divided by a silver and vermilion baton, in his note to line 1248, see *Dits de Watriquet*, p.423.

[31] 'Li Dis des iiii Sieges' in *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp.163-85. The early fourteenth-century arms of Flanders, Châtillon and Hainault can all be found described on the seals of the various

destroyed by a great wind. Four offshoots growing from its roots also quickly perish. The reader/listener must guess the noble equivalents of the tree and its unlucky descendants from the description given. To take one example:

> Li quars getons, que ert espars:
> A son lez destre iii lepars
> D'or fin en champoigne vermeille
> (lines 291-93)[32]

(The fourth shoot, which was broken down: on its left side were three leopards of fine gold on a red field)

These are the arms of England, and this fourth 'geton' is the English queen, Isabelle, wife of Edward II and daughter of Philippe le Bel.[33] The poet goes on to gloss his own poem and to explain the real identities of both the royal tree (Philippe) and his four children. A courtly game is being played here: first the poet portrays his characters symbolically, leaving his audience guessing, then he reveals the 'correct' conclusions to be reached from his clues. Most members of the intended audience, of course, would have very quickly recognised the arms of the various households. When Louis of France marries Marguerite, daughter of Robert of Flanders, it is 'la fleur de liz' and the 'lyon' who are brought together, promising peace for the previously

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households. See W. de Gray Birch, *Catalogue of Seals in the Dept of MSS British Museum*, 5 vols. (London, 1898). For the eagle (wyvern) of Châtillon, see V, p.524; the lion of Hainault, V, p.551; the boar of Flanders V, 536.

[32] 'Li Dis de l'Arbre Royal' in *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp.83-100 (p.92).

[33] Watriquet gives details only of the more important half of Isabelle's arms, which were those of the English king: three gold leopards on a red field (the other half of her shield bearing the French fleurs de lys). For a description of Isabelle's arms, see N.H. Nichols, *A Roll of Arms of Peers and Knights in the Reign of Edward II from a Contemporary MS* (London, 1828), p.131. The English arms bore leopards rather than the present-day lions until the end of the fifteenth century. See J.R. Planché, *The Pursuivant of Arms or Heraldry founded upon facts* (London, 1859), p.81.

troubled region.[34] Symbolic representation and historical events are never far apart in the poems of Watriquet de Couvin.

So now it is possible to expand upon what these early fourteenth-century court poets understood to be a *dit*: a *dit* is a short poem which intends to instruct or exemplify, and which draws its inspiration from and alludes to historic people, places and events. The allusion is often made by way of symbolic representation, and heraldic imagery is often employed. Drawing on the work of early fourteenth-century poets, I have posited the following preliminary definition for the *dit*: a poem which intends to instruct and exemplify, but which also, in the majority of cases, draws its inspiration from, and alludes to, historic people, places and events.

3. The dit *in the late fourteenth century: a continuing tradition of instruction and historic referents*

Moving on into the late fourteenth century, is this definition still appropriate? In his introduction to Froissart's *Dits et Débats*, Fourrier tackles the thorny problem of what Froissart meant when he referred to some of his works as *dits*, acknowledging the important point that most writers in the Middle Ages were not as preoccupied with the delineation of genres as are many twentieth-century critics.[35] More than this, he explains that generic terms were often used in such a vague manner as to make it impossible to distinguish what they meant then or

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[34] The lion was the heraldic device used by Flanders throughout the Middle Ages. For illustrations, see for example, de Gray Birth, *Catalogue of Seals*, pp. 536, 541.

[35] *Dits et Débats*, ed. Fourrier, pp.12-22.

could mean now. A genre did and does infer certain rules, which the *dit* as a term does not seem to have. A *dit*, Fourrier tells us, has narrative couplets, but also lyric verse. It uses most often the octosyllabic line, but sometimes the decasyllabic. The length of the work is not a distinguishing feature; the length of Froissart's *dits* varies considerably. No subject is excluded, from the lightest to the most serious, from the political to the moral, from the satiric to the didactic. Fourrier ends up in 'une nebuleuse..... un fourre-tout'. However, he does then attempt to produce a tentative description of this type of poetry. His study of the term 'dit' is based around what the medieval authors themselves understood by the term. He tells us that Rutebeuf used it to refer to his *contes*, whilst Machaut interchanged it with other words such as *livre* or *livret*. Froissart followed suit, but also used *dittie* and *trettie* as alternative options. Fourrier concludes by quoting Froissart's *Joli Buisson de Jonece:*

> Voirs est q'un livret fis jadis
> Qu'on dist *L'amoureus Paradis*
> Et ossi celi del *Orloge*,
> Ou grant part del art d'Amours loge;
> Apries, *L'Espinete amoureuse*,
> Qui n'est pas al oyr ireuse;
> Et puis *L'amoureuse Prison*,
> Qu'en pluiseurs places bien prise on,
> Rondiaus, balades, virelais,
> Grant fuison de dis et de lais.
> (lines 443-452)[36]

(It is true that I have already made a book called 'L'amoureus Paradis' and also the one of the 'Orloge', where a great part of the art of love resides; After this, 'L'Espinete amoureuse', to which it is not boring to listen, and then 'L'amoureuse Prison', where in several places can well be found rondeaux, ballads, virelays, a great abundance of 'dis' and of lays.)

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[36] *Dits et Débats*, ed. Fourrier, p.21. For the *Joli Buisson*, see *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece*, ed. Fourrier.

From this passage, Fourrier deduces that Froissart has listed last his lyric poetry. I conclude that those works listed before, such as *L'espinete amoureuse*, would come under Froissart's headings of *livrets*. Fourrier thus includes within his category of *dits* those shorter works which Froissart did not include as *livrets*, but which do not fall into any of the other categories either. This leaves the reader with a list of seven.[37] Longer works are not *dits*, they are *livres* or *livrets*. I would argue, however, that closer examination reveals that Froissart's light, serious, political and moral works, which appear to be disparate and oppositional to Fourrier, can all be accommodated within Watriquet's notion of subject matter suitable for teaching or example. Froissart was a late fourteenth/early fifteenth century writer, and yet he demonstrates that he still had the same, albeit broad, notion of a *dit* as his thirteenth and early fourteenth century forbears.

What of the thread of actuality? Froissart was less consistent than Watriquet in spelling out the links between the people in his poems and their 'real-life' counterparts. However, in many of his works the countryside is recognisable to the reader/listener, and the characters found there are not masked by an impenetrable layer of allegory. In 'La Plaidorie de la Rose et de la Violette' he displays a close affinity to the working methods of Watriquet:

> De belle et bonne compagnie,
> De Hardement et de Joneche,
> De Sens, d'Onneur et de Largeche,
> De qui vous seres recoellies
> Liement, et bien consillies
> De consel gratieus et bon,

[37] They are: *Le Temple d'Honneur, Le Mois de Mai, La Marguerite, Le bleu Chevalier, Le Debat du Cheval et du Levrier, Le Florin, La Plaidoirie de la Rose et de la Violette.*

Car le roy, Orliens et Bourbon,
Berri, Bourgongne, Eu et la March
N'isteront point hors de la march
(lines 310-318)[38]

(Of the beautiful and worthy company of Boldness and Youth, of Reason, Honour and Generosity, by whom you would be received joyously, and well advised with good and gracious counsel, because the King, Orléans and Bourbon, Berry, Bourgogne, Eu and la Marche will not be at all beyond accord)

The effect of this juxtaposition is to have allegorical characters (e.g. Honneur, Largeche) rubbing shoulders with the likes of the Dukes of Bourgogne and Berry. In the *Prison Amoureuse*, the poet is writing in response to the imprisonment of Wenceslas, Duke of Brabant by the Duke de Juliers.[39] Froissart employs the topos of the 'ubi sunt' for this work, based on Watriquet's earlier 'Dits des iiii Sieges' (mentioned above). The heraldic imagery which Froissart uses represents members of the nobility, but now the black lion ('lupart') and the eagle, once proud and victorious, are absent, leaving Wenceslas alone in his predicament:

Ou sont sengler viste et courant?
Ou sont lupart aigre et taillant?
Ou sont li aigle haut volant?
(lines 3034-3036)[40]

(Where are the boars swift and running? Where are the leopards valiant and eager? Where are the eagles flying high?)

The lines are part of the inset lyrics of the 'Complainte de Moralité, and Froissart is relying on intertextuality as well as heraldic imagery

[38] 'La Plaidoirie' in *'Dits et Débats'*, ed. Fourrier, pp.191-203 (p.202).

[39] See Fourrier's introduction to the poem in *Jean Froissart, La Prison Amoureuse*, ed. A. Fourrier (Paris, 1974), pp.20-28. Two stanzas after the one I have cited, Froissart uses the line 'Et bestelettes d'un couvin' (line 3059, p.137), which produces an exact verbal echo of Watriquet's name.

[40] *La Prison Amoureuse*, ed. Fourrier, p.136. Fourrier assumes that the eagle is that of Charles VI of France, but it could equally well, if Froissart is deliberately invoking Watriquet's earlier poem, be the device of Châtillon.

to bring home the full force of his attempt to shame Wenceslas' neighbours into coming to his aid. Watriquet's earlier representations of the swift boar and high-flying eagle contrast sadly with Froissart's poem which highlights their disappearance. The reader/listener is meant to recognise both the poetic tradition of the *dits amoureux* with its heraldic representations, and the implied identification of the houses of Châtillon (the eagle), Flanders (the boar) and Hainault (the 'lupart' or black lion).

Froissart's 'daisy' poems are far less explicit regarding the identity of the nobility they may intend to depict. His use of the daisy (marguerite) as a symbolic representation is widespread. This has fostered debate as to whether or not the addressee (a lady) had a historic referent, and whether or not Froissart was describing his own amorous relationship with a specific 'daisy'.[41] This argument does not look difficult to resolve if one remembers that Froissart was writing in a recognised tradition, one which based itself on its own social and historical landscape. If one examines this tradition and these models, then the existence of a real-life referent or referents becomes probable. Whether or not the lady in question was actually the object

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[41] The 'marguerite' appears, for example, in Pastourelles XVII and XIX (*Oeuvres de Froissart*, ed. A. Scheler (Brussels, 1871), pp.343-46 and pp.348-50), 'Le Dit de la Marguerite' (*'Dits' et 'Débats'*, ed. Fourrier, pp.147-153), the *Prison Amoureuse* (*Le Prison Amoureuse*, ed. Fourrier, lines 898-903). Fourrier explores possible historic referents for the 'marguerite' in his notes to lines 4179-88 of *L'espinette Amoureuse* (*L'Espinette Amoureuse*, ed. A. Fourrier (Paris, 1963), p.184). Sylvia Huot sees a progression of the 'marguerite' in Froissart's poetry. It begins as a love token, is then closely associated with a lady, and then becomes 'the sign of the poet himself' before its appearance as 'Sainte Marguerite' in the *Joli Buisson* (ed. Fourrier, line 1109, p.85). S. Huot, 'The Daisy and the Laurel: Myths of Desire and Creativity in the Poetry of Jean Froissart' in *Contexts: Style and Values in Medieval Art and Literature*, ed. D. Poirion and N.F. Regalado (Yale, 1991), pp.240-51 (p.247).

of the poet's desire, however, is an unanswerable question; she could just as easily have been the wife, daughter, sister or sweetheart of a patron or even, as will be shown later, an area of France or France itself. To complicate matters even further, the 'lady' might represent, on different occasions, any or all of these. Explicit historical counterparts can, however, be found in Froissart's work, as in the case of the allegorical rose of *La Prison Amoureuse* who turns out to be the Duke of Brabant. To argue, therefore, that Froissart's use of allegory and symbol belongs only to the abstract world of the literary imagination is to wrench the poems out of their historical and literary context.[42]

My analysis hitherto has ranged from early fourteenth-century works which were referred to as *dits* by their authors (but which would be excluded from the genre of *dits amoureux* as understood by recent critics) to works which are unproblematically referred to in late twentieth-century criticism as *dits amoureux*. A strong continuing tradition of historic referents within the subject matter of the *dits* links the earlier and later works. Like Froissart, Machaut has both patrons and places appearing within his poems, cheek by jowl with mythological characters and situations. However, with reference to another of Fourrier's criteria for a *dit*, Machaut's poems stretch the limit of what might be considered to be an appropriate length for such a work. Machaut himself often refers to his longer works as *livres*.[43] As regards teaching, the themes of Machaut's poems fall readily within the

[42] Bernard Ribémont makes just such an assertion in his chapter entitled 'Froissart, le mythe et la marguerite' in the *Revue des Langues Romanes* 94 (1990), 129-36.

[43] Thus we find in the *Voir Dit* Machaut writing 'Je vous envoie mon livre de *Morpheus*, que on appelle la *Fontaine amoureuse*'. See *Voir Dit*, ed. Paris, p.69.

parameters of suitable subject matter established by earlier writers. At the very heart of his long, supposedly autobiographical poem, the *Voir Dit* is the passage referring to 'le Roi qui ne ment', which Paris describes as 'un cours d'éducation royale'.[44] For the late fourteenth century French poet, therefore, the criteria can be maintained which have been established here for the *dit*. It has become obvious, however, that there is a huge gulf between Wimsatt's (and Pauphilet's) definition of a *dit* and any recorded medieval understanding of the word. It is also true that whilst some elements remained constant, changes were taking place regarding other aspects of the *dit*.

4. Continuity and change in the portrayal of the source and object of love

4.i. The god of love

It is often the god of Love who inspires both the narrator to write and the knight to love within the *dit* (the narrator may love too, sometimes). However, it can be argued that the god's traditional affiliation to the heavens weakens as the fourteenth century progresses. Here again is the passage from Machaut's *Prologue* which separated 'dis' from 'amoureux':

> Puisque Nature, Retorique
> Ay presents, Sens et Musique;
> Et li Dieus d'Amours qui mes sires
> Est et des maux amoureux mires,
> Veut que j'aie bonne Esperance,
> Dous penser et douce Plaisance,

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[44] *Voir Dit*, ed. Paris, note 1, p.215.

En faisant son tres dous service,
Bonnement sans penser a vice,
Et leur commande travillier
Pour moy aidier a consillier
A faire dis et chansonnettes
Pleinnes d'onneur et d'amourettes,
Double hoques, et plusieurs lays,
Motes, rondiaus et virelais,
Qu'on claimme chansons baladees,
Complaintes, balades entees,
A l'onneur et a la loange
De toutes Dames sans losange,
Je ne doy mie demoroir
Leur plaisant gracius voloir.
(lines 115-35)

(Because Nature presents me with Rhetoric, Reason and Music; and the God of Love who is my lord and the healer of the ills of love wishes me to have good Hope, sweet thoughts and sweet Pleasure, in doing his very sweet service, simply, without thinking of evil, and commands them to work to help and advise me in making 'dis' and songs full of honour and of small sweet things, double hockets, and several lays, motets, rondeaux and virelays, which are called ballad songs, complaints, ballads with refrains to the honour and the praise of all ladies without lying, I should not hesitate in the least to accomplish their gracious will).

How should 'amoureux' be understood here, attached as it is to the pain of 'maux' (which can be translated as suffering or evil)? The meaning 'generated by love' seems the most likely description to apply to the narrator's 'ills'. Machaut's narrator introduces himself as one who is, first and foremost, in the service of the 'Dieu d'Amours':

Li Dieus d'Amours qui mes sires
Est et des maux amoureux mires
(lines 117-118)

The most obvious meaning of this couplet is 'The god of love who is my lord and the healer ('mires') of amorous ills ('maux'). However, when read aloud a pun appears on both 'maux'/'mots' as ills or words, and 'mires' as healer or, alternatively, as exemplar (from the Old French 'mirer').[45] The second reading gives a god of love who is lord of the

[45] Watriquet de Couvin uses exactly this pun on mire/mirer in his *Li Mireoirs as Dames:* '...Dame, Diex le vous mire,/Mesier avoie de tel

poet and who exemplifies amorous words. It is 'li Dieus d'Amours' to whom the adjectival phrase attaches here, not the writer. Who is this 'Dieus d'Amours'? Machaut states quite clearly that it is his 'sires'. Remembering the way in which court poets in the late Middle Ages frequently included their patrons in their poetry, there must be more than a hint of ambiguity here; this 'Dieu d'Amours' may have a historic referent. Many examples exist which I shall use in the following discussion to convert this hinted possibility into a strong argument. However, in this respect, a development does seem to take place in the *dits amoureux*. The god of love depicted by Watriquet is separate and distinct from his patron. By the time Machaut is writing, the 'god' has become an ambiguous figure open to the dual interpretation of both patron and god of love. This strong ambiguity is exploited further by poets of the early fifteenth century.

Watriquet's poetry is littered with 'Diex', but 'Diex' will always refer to the same deity, the Christian one. 'Princes, aime Dieu de cuer fin' ('Li Dis de l'Ortie', line 229) is a typical exhortation; there is a clear distinction between the earthly prince and the heavenly.[46] However, there is one exception and it is found in 'Li Dis de l'Escharbote', where there is almost certainly a conflation of a noble personage with the god of Love. 'Amour' in this poem attains no higher rank than that of 'sergens'. This is how he is described:

> Li primerains si grant force a
> Que Diex seur tous fors l'enforca,
> Car n'est tant fors cui ne defforce,
> Combien que de sens se renforce,

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mire...' (lines 455-56). See *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp. 1-37 (p.15).

[46] 'l'Ortie' in *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp.137-53 (p.145).

Ne n'est emperiere ne rois
Cui ne maistrie, et les plus rois
Fait touz desouz lui soupploier,
Mercie requerre et simploier:
Amour est par droit non clamez
Qui veult de chascun soit amez
De celui en qui il repaire;
Amour set bel les gens atraire.
Amour atrait humilite,
Charite, douceur, et pite;
Diex fist ce sergent il meismes.
(lines 267-81)[47]

(The first has such great strength that God compelled him to be stronger than all the others, since there is no strength so great that he cannot overwhelm it; although he strengthens himself with counsel, there is no emperor or king who can overcome him, and he made several kings humble themselves beneath him, calling on Mercy and bowing down: Love is called by the right name, who wishes that he may be loved by each of those in whom he lodges; Love knows well how to attract people. Love attracts Humility, Mercy, sweetness and pity; God made this sergeant himself).

With the other 'sergens' ('Maniere' and 'Souffisance'), 'Amours' will lead the way 'Vers paradis a la grant court' (line 354). Although this is a description of 'Amour' which would typically exhort the noble knight to honourable love with regard to a lady, the impression is strongly one of Christian devotion, and as such is typical of Watriquet.[48] The advice given states that 'Charite, douceur, et pite' are the three key elements which will enable the narrator to safely inhabit the castle of Fortune. However, once line 360 is reached, when the narrator is abandoned by his guide, in the 'chastel':

Quant fui enz ou haut mont montez,
Le chastel alai erraument
Assailir, et hastivement
L'alerent prendre et conquester
Mi .iii. sergent; sanz arrester,

[47] 'Escharbote' in *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp. 397-409 (p.405).

[48] Christian notions of love, coupled with vocabulary which was deliberately ambiguous regarding sacred and secular love had long been used by medieval writers of amatory verse. Much has been written on the subject. See, for example, C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford, 1936) or David Burnley's chapter 'Courtliness and Religion' in D. Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature in Medieval England* (Harlow, 1998), pp.176-200.

Y entrerent touz primerains,
Car de moi les fis souverains
Et des .v. sergens du manoir
Tout mon vivant et remanoir.
(lines 364-72)[49]

(When I was where the high mountain rose up, I went quickly to assail the castle, and my three sergeants hastily went to take and conquer it; without stopping they entered there the very first, since I made them and the five sergeants of the manor my rulers for the rest of my life).

The narrator has achieved his goal, 'paradis a la grant court'. As there is no evidence that he has died, it must be assumed that he is not in heaven, but on earth (albeit dreaming). This 'grant court' strongly resembles other marvellous courts in which the narrator has found himself (sometimes in the course of a dream) which later turn out to represent historical referents, e.g. in 'Li Dis des iiii Sieges', 'Li Dis de l'Arbre Royal'. Perhaps the castle of Fortune does represent a noble court; as such its creation would fall well within the normal practices of Watriquet. Perhaps 'Amour' is an actual person, and in this case Watriquet is producing a conflation between the king of an earthly court and the king of the court of love which appears nowhere else in his work. A strong ambiguity remains, however, as 'Li Dis de l'Escharbote' leaves this question open to the imagination, and states simply that the power of 'Amours' derives directly from another, from the one, true, Christian 'Diex'.[50]

Following the now well-worn path into the later part of the fourteenth century, a very different god of love appears. Froissart and Machaut both encounter this deity in person. Machaut, in his *Dit du Vergier,* meets a god who, whilst asserting his all-encompassing power,

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[49] *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, p.408.

[50] 'Amours', who has power over everyone, is the first of the 'sergens' of 'Diex' (who grants him this power). *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, p.405.

insists that his 'prison' of love is 'appellée joieuse' (lines 344-345). Machaut recognises this god; it is 'mes sires/Qui des maulz amoureux est mires' (lines 371-72).[51] These lines, of course, are identical to those found in the *Prologue* quoted at the beginning of this Chapter. In discussing the *Prologue*, Cerquiglini describes a tension in Machaut's work which arises within the poet himself, between the writer clerk and the written lover. She argues that this tension is exemplified in an illustration before the *Prologue* of the manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque National, fr.9221.[52] The illustration is presented as a diptych; on one side Guillaume is pictured in front of a Church receiving the gifts of Nature ('Scens, Rétorique et Musique'), on the other he is in front of a château receiving gifts from Amour. The gifts are 'Dous Penser, Plaisance and Espérance', which are, as Cerquiglini points out, 'les qualités de l'amoureux aristocrate'. This 'double' interpretation of the poet sees him as both the cleric which he is and the figure of the courtly lover he portrays in his writing. There is a 'double' interpretation possible, too, for the figure of 'Amour'.

The analogy between an abstract god of love providing the poet with the necessary inspiration for his poetry and an actual feudal lord, providing the poet with commissions and patronage, is obvious. In the *Dit du Vergier*, however, no explicit conflation is made between the god of love and a noble lord. Indeed, such an argument can be sustained with regard to all of Machaut's poetry. Even in *Le Jugement du Roi de Behaigne*, the king himself cannot represent 'Amours', as the god is separately mentioned. The King of Bohemia appears with a retinue of

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[51] See *Oeuvres*, ed. Tarbé, pp.11-39 (pp.19-20).

[52] *Un Engin si Soutil, Guillaume de Machaut et l'Ecriture au XIVe Siecle*, Jacqueline Cerquiglini (Geneva, 1985), p.111.

allegorical figures; 'Amours' is simply included as one of the kings's followers:

.....Hardiece
Le compagnoit, et sa fille Proece,
Et doucement tint par la main Larguece,
Une dame de moult grant gentillece.
S'y fu Richece,
Amours, Beaute, Loyauté, et Leece,
Desir, Penser, Volenté, et Noblece,
Franchise, Honneur, Courtoisie, et Joinece.
(lines 1476-83)[53]

(..... Boldness accompanied him, and her daughter Prowess, and gently led by the hand Generosity, a lady of very great nobility. There was Wealth, Love, Beauty, Loyalty, Joy, Desire, Thought, Will, Noblesse, Frankness, Honour, Courtesy and Youth).

Machaut, unlike Watriquet, does not make a clear distinction between his noble patron and the god of love, but neither does he overtly portray his patron in superhuman guise. Froissart, however, in his opening to the *Prison Amoureuse,* significantly blurs the boundaries between superhuman and human. His first words are 'Li philozophes', who instruct 'toutes gens' to loyally serve 'son signeur'. He equates this with the first commandment given by God to Moses, i.e. to love God with all his heart and soul. Following this advice, the narrator decides:

Je voel servir de franc voloir
Celi que tant me poet valoir,
A cui j'ai fait de liet corage
Seüreté, foi et hommage:
Amours, mon signeur et mon mestre,
(lines 23-27)[54]

(I wish to serve with free will he who is able to make me worthy, to whom I have made a promise of happy courage, allegiance, faith and homage, Love, my lord and master).

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[53] *Le Jugement du roy de Behaigne*, ed. Wimsatt and Kibler, p.135.

[54] *Prison Amoureuse*, ed. Fourrier, p.37.

Whose advice is he following? Is it that of God to Moses? This would create 'Amours' as the Christian God. Is it that of the philosopher, and does this differ in any way from the advice to Moses? An examination of Fourrier's notes shows that the 'philozophes' to whom the narrator refers is Alard de Cambrai, who, in the lines which Froissart borrows, is encouraging his reader/listener to serve a worthy 'haut homme puissant'.[55] The advice would appear to have nothing to do with either the Christian or the 'courtly' god of Love. Froissart continues his introduction by referring to Alexander the Great, and then to Jean de Luxembourg who died at Crécy.[56] Of the latter he writes 'Pour sa largece fu li rois/Amés' (lines 91-92), and this is followed directly by a repetition of the exhortation to love:

> On est tenu par droite honneur
> D'amer et servir son signeur,
> (lines 111-112)[57]

(One is constrained by just honour to love and to serve one's lord)

The 'signeur' by now is surely more earthly than heavenly, yet Froissart determines himself to serve 'Amours, qui est mon souverain'(line 117). The development of ideas, from the notion of love for a celestial god to the love of an earthly lord, presents a strongly ambiguous figure of 'Amours'. As the poem continues, the narrator, who is languishing in love, receives comfort from 'Amours':

> Mais il m'envoia un oubli
> Ou puis me sui moult deportés

[55] *Prison Amoureuse*, ed. Fourrier, p.177, note to lines 1-8.

[56] The name 'Alexander' may also be ambiguous; 'Alexander' as he appears in *Li Dis des iiii Sieges* is identified in Watriquet's gloss in the final section of the poem as the Conte de Hainault.

[57] *Prison Amoureuse*, ed. Fourrier, p.40.

Et solaciés, car il fu tels
Que grandement me deporta.
Unes lettres on m'aporta
(lines 662-666)

(But he sent me an offering so that I was much amused and comforted, because it was such that it pleased me greatly. A letter was brought to me)

This letter, the consolation which arrives from 'Amours', is, in fact, a letter from 'Rose' and marks the start of a correspondence between 'Rose' and the narrator (who calls himself 'Flos'). This 'Rose', at the point in the poem where the above lines appear, is therefore synonymous with 'Amours'. 'Rose', as Fourrier tells us and as has already been noted (see p.69), represents the Duke of Brabant. Thus Froissart moves us through his courtly poem, never explicitly stating identities but conflating historical referents with the imagined through allegory. Froissart's 'Amours', in the *Prison Amoureuse*, is, in one of his strands of allegory, quite obviously his patron.

If, for the first time, a sortie is made into the early part of the fifteenth century, an example can be found where the god of love can be seen to adopt a specific identity. In the wonderful exchange of ballads between Charles d'Orléans and one of his closest friends, the Chevalier de Garencières (1372-1415), Charles himself assumes the role of the 'Dieu des amoureux'.[58] Charles opens the exchange thus:

Je, qui sui Dieu des amoureux,
Prince de joyeuse plaisance,
A toutes celles et a ceulx
Qui sont de mon obeissance[59]

[58] The poems of Garencières are found in *Le Chevalier Poète Jehan de Garencières (1372-1415), Sa vie et ses poésies complètes dont de nombreuses inédites*, ed. Y.A. Neal (Paris, 1953).

[59] *Charles d'Orléans, Poésies*, ed. P.Champion, 2 vols (Paris, 1971),I, 126.

(I, who am the God of those in love, Prince of joyous pleasure, to all those ladies and gentlemen who are in my service)

Garencières replies:

> Cupido, Dieu des amoureux,
> Prince de joyeuse plaisance,
> Moy, Garencières, tressoingneux
> De vous servir de ma puissance[60]

(Cupid, God of those in love, Prince of joyous pleasure, I, Garencières, most careful to serve you with my might).

It cannot be argued that Charles suddenly takes on the mantle of the 'Dieu des amoureux' in a sudden burst of originality. He simply takes the final step in conflating a seigneurial lord (himself) with the god of Love. As has been shown above, the hazy ambiguity between 'Amours' and a feudal lord had frequently been giving way through the fourteenth century to an almost unmistakeable allusion to historic referents. It can therefore be concluded that, throughout the period under consideration, one frequent strand of the allegory of 'Amours' can be seen to point towards the existence of a historical referent, an actual person. In the *dits amoureux*, firmly rooted as they almost invariably are in historical events and places, this meaning of 'Amours' is significant.

Having established that a close relationship existed in the *dits amoureux* between the characters portrayed, both human and divine, I now wish to introduce an apparent contradiction. I shall argue that whilst a historic referent is often apparent for the knightly lover in the *dit*

[60] *Poésies*, ed. Champion, I, 127. Much has been written on the tradition of Cupid as, or and, the god of Love. See, for example, the chapter entitled 'The Court of Cupid' in Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, pp.101-34; T.Tinkle, *Medieval Venuses and Cupids: Sexuality, Hermeneutics, and English Poetry* (Stanford, 1996), pp.198-210.

of the late fourteenth/early fifteenth centuries, a historic referent for his lady will frequently be absent.

4.ii. The lady

When the god of Love shoots his fiery brand into the narrator's heart, what exactly happens? The narrator becomes 'amoureux', 'in love'. But 'in love' with whom? The object of Watriquet's attentions in his 'Li Dis de Loiauté' is the allegorical figure of 'loyalty' herself.[61] In 'Li Dis de la Fontaine d'Amour' the narrator becomes drunk at the fountain of Venus.[62] The emphasis is on truth, and this truth in context seems to refer to the need for lovers to be truthful:

> Là la faisoit Venus garder
> La deesse et dame d'amours,
> A qui touz amans font clamours
> Que n'i touchassent mesdisans
> Ne hons qu ne fust voir disans.
> (lines 58-62)

(Venus caused it to be guarded there, the goddess and lady of love, to whom all lovers make their plea that they may not be touched by lies, nor by men who do not cause truth to be told)

However, the narrator, having drunk from the 'Fontaine d'Amour', does not encounter a lady. Following instructions and an allegorical route, he arrives at court only for the poem to end. A desire to drink from the fountain which is only available to the truthful leads him to court.

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[61] 'Loiauté' in *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp.131-35. As usual, the allegorical figure is identified, in the final lines of the poem, with a historic referent (see Scheler in the introduction to his notes, p.448). The heraldic description of loyalty ('Dame azurée, fleur de lis', line 88) is that of the royal French household, which means that in this poem Watriquet conflates loyalty with France itself.

[62] 'Fontaine d'Amour' in *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp. 101-11 (p.103).

Taken up as a theme by Machaut, the fountain appears again in his *Fonteinne Amoureuse*. To make sense of the title phrase, 'Amoureuse' must be translated as 'relating to love' rather than 'in love', as the Machaut poem was written on the occasion of the exile of the Duc de Berry.[63] The object of the duke's love would appear here to be rather like Watriquet's lady in 'Li Dis de Loiauté', placing at least the same amount of emphasis on the Duke's love for his country as on his attachment to his beloved. This divided emphasis is true, too, of Froissart's *Prison Amoureuse*, which is also a poem of exile.

Machaut's *Fonteinne Amoureuse* and Froissart's *Prison Amoureuse*, poems which are included within the genre of *dits amoureux*, are designed to provide consolation. Butterfield describes this use of the *dit* form as 'a courtly theft from Boethius'.[64] The *Consolation* was written by Boethius in his prison cell in Pavia; his lost freedom paralleled that of the exiled patrons of Machaut and Froissart. Boethius, however, was a political prisoner awaiting execution; the subject of his poem is not love or a lady, but the potential of philosophy itself to offer consolation. The 'lady' in his poem is philosophy herself, and her depiction is more god-like than life-like.[65]

When a lady appears in the *dits*, her description may not even always provide a physical picture; more often than not it is her

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[63] Machaut, of course, did not use this title. According to the poet, this was his *Livre de Morpheus*.

[64] Butterfield, 'Interpolated Lyric', p.149. See note 7 for reference to the *Consolation*.

[65] For Boethius' description of Lady Philosophy, see *Boethius*, ed. Stewart and Rand, Bk. 1, pr.i, p.130.

virtuous character which is extolled.[66] However, this may create another ambiguity, which is that of the lady/saint. In Froissart's 'Dit de la Marguerite', the Marian imagery becomes so pronounced that a lady is produced whose perfection could surely not be attained by a mere mortal.[67] She provides yet another possible interpretation of the 'lady' in a *dit*. It is therefore possible to argue, from the examples explored above, that the 'lady' as seen in the *dits amoureux* may represent a country, the abstract concepts of either loyalty or truth, or be set upon the pedestal of a saint. The lover who corresponds to this lady must therefore be seen as patriotic, loyal, truthful and religious: a man of whom Rutebeuf, Watriquet de Couvin and Jean de Condé would be proud. The *dit amoureux* emerges from this analysis as a courtly poem relating to patriotism and nobility rather than as a tale of romantic love.

However, it can be convincingly argued that this is a rather one-sided reading. There are many *dits amoureux* in which it is not easy to discount the existence of either a noble lady or of genuine 'love' for that lady. Although an exception in Watriquet's poetry, the narrator in 'Li Dis de l'Escole D'Amours' finds himself hopelessly in love, and no alternate reading is made available by the author for this state of affairs.[68] In the latter part of the fourteenth century romantic love

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[66] As Minnis points out with reference to Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, the descriptions of ladies in courtly poetry invariably 'follow a set pattern, as recommended by the medieval arts of poetry'. In the light of the 'stock attributes' which Minnis describes, it would seem unlikely that any serious attempt was made to depict the physical appearance of someone known to the poet. See A.J. Minnis with V.J. Scattergood and J.J. Smith, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Shorter Poems* (Oxford, 1995), pp.84-5.

[67] *Dits et Débats*, ed. Fourrier, pp.147-53.

[68] *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp.355-58.

has become the central allegory or theme for the majority of the *dits*. Long passages may be taken up in describing the emotional state of the lover and sometimes, as in the case of the work of Christine de Pisan (1363?-1431), the lady may also be represented as a speaker within the poem. In many of the poems of Machaut and Froissart there is, whatever else, a description of a languishing lover and of his lady. Machaut's narrator in the *Voir Dit* seems to be telling an autobiographical tale of love, and Froissart follows suit in his *Espinette Amoureuse*. Yet, at the heart of the *Voir Dit*, Machaut places 'le roi qui ne ment', which begins:

> Rois, tu dois estre véritable,
> Justes, loiaus & charitables,
> Et bien amer tes bons amis,
> Et fort haÿr tes anemis. [69]

(King, you must be truthful, just, loyal and merciful, and love well your friends, and hate well your enemies).

At the crux or centre of this poem is the kernel of the work as a whole: the poet's advice to his king to love well his good friends and to bitterly hate his enemies.[70] The 'love' is not for a lady. It is with some scepticism, therefore, that one should read the *dits amoureux* as mere stories of romantic love. The *dit* is rooted firmly in reality, but in a reality whose perspective refers always to the highest of the French nobility.

The outline which has emerged for the genre of the *dits amoureux* from this study of fourteenth-century French poetry contains elements which have hitherto been largely ignored by twentieth-century criticism.

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[69] *Voir Dit*, ed. Paris, pp.215-32.

[70] If Simpson's arguments regarding the importance of the central point of the poem in the *Confessio Amantis* and the *Anticlaudianus* (cf. chapter 1, pp. 36-40) are applied to this *dit amoureux* of Machaut, then

I introduced this criticism at the beginning of the chapter. Having now provided, with the aid of fourteenth-century *dits*, some basic parameters for the genre, I shall turn again to more recent descriptions of the *dits*. My aim is to compare the genre as described by late-twentieth scholars with that which seems to have been recognised by late-medieval writers. Those criteria suggested by recent critics which find support within the medieval understanding of *dits amoueux* may then be incorporated into the loose generic definition which I am seeking to establish.

5. Discontinuity and change: recent critical perspectives

During the fourteenth century there was a considerable increase in the number of *dits* which embraced both narrative couplets and lyric stanzas, and which therefore would comply with the generic definition for the *dit amoureux* proposed by Pauphilet and Wimsatt. However, other late fourteenth century works, such as Christine de Pisan's *Le Débat de Deux Amans*, did not offer both lyric and narrative, yet clearly belong to that body of works which late-medieval poets described as *dits amoureux*. Christine's poem begins:

> Prince royal, renommé de sagece,
> Hault en valeur, poissant, de grant noblece,
> Duit et apris en honneur et largece,
> Tres agréable
> Duc d'Orliens, seigneur digne et valable,
> Filz de Charles, le bon roy charitable,
> De qui l'ame soit ou ciel permanable,
> Mon redoubté
> Seigneur vaillant, par vostre grant bonté
> Mon petit dit soit de vous escouté,

Ne par desdaing ne soit en sus bouté
Par pou de pris;
(lines 1-12)[71]

(Royal prince, renowned for wisdom, high in valour, powerful, of great nobility, brought up and educated in honour and generosity, most pleasing Duke of Orléans, worthy and valued lord, son of Charles, the good, merciful king, may his soul be in the everlasting sky, my revered, valiant lord, by your great goodness may my little 'dit' be heard by you, and may it not be thrown out by disdain as of little value)

Here Christine emphasises the courtliness of her poem by addressing the 'petit dit' to the Duke of Orleans, someone whom she considers to be a worthy example of the French nobility (someone who would therefore qualify for the adjective 'amoureux'). However, the poem is written entirely in twelve line stanzas complete with complex aaab,bbbc,cccd rhyme scheme as shown above. It is not a narrative work with intercalated lyrics. The poem's form, together with Christine's own description of the poem as a *dit*, presents a clear rejection of the definition proposed by Wimsatt and Pauphilet for the *dit amoureux* (a poem comprising narrative couplets with intercalated lyrics). However, Wimsatt has been a highly influential scholar; his re-invention of the genre of the *dit amoureux*, coupled with French scholarship like that of Pauphilet, means that other twentieth-century critics following in their wake have inherited a confused notion of what a *dit* is or was.

The earliest 'modern' definition, which was that of Pauphilet, has already been set out above. Writing in 1968, Pierre le Gentil saw Machaut as one of the first to develop the *dit*. Le Gentil's view of the *dit* is that it was a piece which excluded musical accompaniment and was

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this advice to the king is the key to the whole poem.

[71] *Le Débat de Deux Amans* is found in *Oeuvres Poétiques de Christine de Pisan* ed. M.Roy, 3 vols. (Paris, 1884),II, 49-109.

usually octosyllabic.[72] The author was often present in the dialogue, either as a witness or as a participant in the train of events. Le Gentil begins his analysis with Machaut and therefore does not refer to earlier writers. By using Machaut as his 'cornerstone', however, and by failing to contextualise the *dit* as an inherited form, he falls into the same trap as Wimsatt and Pauphilet in creating an understanding of the *dit* genre which differs greatly from that of late-medieval writers. Le Gentil has introduced for consideration other ideas: line-length is one. If the whole corpus of *dits* were to be examined, it might be found, perhaps, that most were written in octosyllabic couplets, but care should be taken not to apply this as a rule, as there are many examples of *dits* which do not take this form. The question of musical accompaniment raises other issues. There is music for the lyric stanzas within Machaut's longer works. As le Gentil argues that musical accompaniment was excluded from a *dit*, does this mean that he does not regard the lyric stanzas as part of the *dit*? It is not useful, surely, to create sub-genres within the *dits* themselves.

Wimsatt's *Chaucer and the French Love Poets* was published in the same year as Paul Zumthor's encyclopaedic *Essai de Poétique Médiévale* in which the only claim Zumthor is prepared to make for the *dit* is in line with le Gentil's argument. Zumthor, like le Gentil, ignores the manuscript evidence which proves that sometimes Machaut's work had accompanying music, and concludes that the *dit* is 'un texte uniquement ou principalement 'lyrique', transmis par la voix sans soutien ni accompagnement mélodique'.[73] Ardis Butterfield, in her unpublished PhD.

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[72] P. le Gentil, 'La Persistante Séduction du Lyrisme' in *La Littérature Française du Moyen Age*, P. Le Gentil (Paris, 1968), pp.151-65.

[73] Paul Zumthor, *Essai de Poétique Médiévale* (Paris, 1972), p.406.

thesis, explores the evidence for musical performance of the *dits*. Her study leads Butterfield to conclude that there is an important relationship in the *dits* between the lyric stanzas (for which music was supplied by, for example, Machaut) and the narrative passages (for which there is no evidence of musical accompaniment). Butterfield finds that in Machaut, in particular, the narrative does not exist independently of the lyrics but 'serves to give them meaning'.[74] She also draws attention in the *Voir Dit* to 'a very close interlinking between lyric and narrative, in which themes and phrases from the inset lyrics provoke repetition and amplification in the form of the narrative'.[75] This close relationship between the lyrics and the narrative is well-documented by Butterfield, and her findings lead to the conclusion that a *dit* is a term which includes many forms within its generic boundaries. I shall therefore reject both of the additional criteria which le Gentil might have added to this definition of the *dit* (line length and the exclusion of musical accompaniment).

One year later than le Gentil, Jacques Ribard contributed to the discussion surrounding the subject of the *dit*. Commenting on the work of Jean de Condé, Ribard remarks that the medieval author appears to reserve the term *dit* for 'productions relativement courtes', thus broadly agreeing with one of Fourrier's findings regarding Froissart. Ribard warns against adopting the title of 'dit' which is attached to some of Jean de Condé's long works by later copyists, arguing that one should only accept the evidence for such a title which the author

[74] A. Butterfield, 'Interpolated Lyric', p.88.

[75] Butterfield, 'Interpolated Lyric', p.128.

himself provides.[76] On the whole, Ribard has followed the methodology which I attempt to implement in this chapter, i.e. to draw conclusions from the medieval *dits* themselves.

A similar approach has been adopted in the most comprehensive recent study of the genre of the *dit*, that of Jacqueline Cerquiglini. In her article 'Le clerc et l'écriture: le *voir dit* de Guillaume de Machaut et la définition du *dit*', Cerquiglini ranges across three centuries (from the twelfth to the fourteenth) and many writers.[77] The basis for her article is the *Voir Dit* of Machaut, but she extrapolates from this one work in order to establish 'rules' for the genre of 'dit'. She recognises a development, or change, in what is meant by *dit* over the three centuries which underlines the confusion surrounding this slippery genre.

At the outset of her discussion, Cerquiglini rejects the definition of the *dit* as a genre which is 'lyrico-narratif' as one which is too narrow. The main thrust of her article is to posit two hypotheses which she then develops into 'rules' for the *dit*. The first, 'le dit est un genre qui travaille sur le discontinu', is based on the notion that oral poetry tends to denote continuity, whereas written works stimulate discontinuity. She places emphasis on the way in which the *dits* are assembled and presented, arguing that they contain elements which could exist independently elsewhere. This is eminently true of those *dits* with intercalated lyrics, but seems inappropriate when

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[76] Ribard, *Un Ménestrel*, p.100. For Fourrier on Froissart, see *Dits et Débats*, ed. Fourrier, p.21.

[77] J. Cerquiglini, 'Le clerc et l'écriture: le *voir dit* de Guillaume de Machaut et la définition du dit' in *Literatur in der Gesellschaft des Spätmittelalters* Vol.1, ed. H. U. Gumbrecht (Heidelberg, 1980), pp.151-68.

referring to works which fall outside the description 'lyrico-narratif' which Cerquiglini herself has rejected. Nonetheless, the huge increase in the latter half of the fourteenth century in the number of works which can be seen as collections or compilations lends weight to Cerquiglini's argument. In pursuing her topic of discontinuity, Cerquiglini convincingly evokes the idea of a developing chasm between the shorter *dits* of the thirteenth century and the longer ones of later writers such as Machaut. She quotes Zumthor's assertion that 'oralité et écriture s'opposent comme le continu au discontinu'.[78] She argues that the earlier, shorter *dits* are ideal for oral presentation, whereas the longer *dits*, such as *La Fonteinne Amoureuse*, would obviously pose practical problems in performance. As opposed to the continuity of the *conte*, the *dit* is not based on 'schèmes mémoriels', but on 'schèmes d'écriture'. Convincing though these arguments may be, however, they are based on an acceptance of the assertions of both Fourrier and Ribard that the earlier *dits* are shorter works. As stated in the opening paragraph of this chapter, Rutebeuf makes no such distinction. Nor does Watriquet de Couvin, who sees his *Mireoir as Dames* (one thousand two hundred and ninety lines long) in the same category as 'Li Dis de l'Escole d'Amours' (one hundred and eighteen lines long).[79] Equally, as Dietmar Rieger points out in his article on Froissart's *Bleu Chevalier*, the work of earlier writers will pose problems for Cerquiglini's theories of discontinuity generally, because these theories 'partent toujours d'un groupe particulier de textes, historiquement limité' and therefore other groups of work, both contemporary and otherwise, will be

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[78] Cerquiglini, 'Le clerc et l'écriture', p.159.

[79] *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, 'Li Mireoirs as Dames' pp.1-37, 'Li Dis de l'Escole' pp.355-58.

necessarily excluded.[80] Rieger concludes that he can perceive no identifiable evolution of the *dit* as a recognisable genre.

Cerquiglini's second hypothesis is that 'le dit est un discours dans lequel un 'je' est toujours representé': there is a consistent 'I' in the *dit* which is not found in the *conte* or roman, and which is not the undifferentiated 'I' of courtly lyric verse. Cerquiglini goes on to argue that this 'I' is a clerk. Again, it would seem that this argument is being applied to later, rather than earlier writers, as Watriquet de Couvin will not fit the mould. Nor, however, will Christine de Pisan, whose work is used elsewhere in Cerquiglini's article to illustrate a different point. Cerquiglini is arguing that the writers of late-medieval French *dits* were well-educated and were not members of the high nobility ('most often a clerk' might have been a better description). The 'I' is seen in opposition to the typical knightly lover. Cerquiglini links the clerk to his obvious occupation, that of teaching, and relates *dit* etymologically with this same notion via the Latin 'dictare'. If this notion of an ever-present 'I' is applied to the *dits* studied above, the 'I' narrator which Cerquiglini describes is clearly evident. Cerquiglini's 'type' however, even if only applied to later writers, must be used carefully; Christine de Pisan was no such 'type'. Cerquiglini ends her article with reference to ideas of actuality and truth, referring to the work of Hans Jauss.[81] Jauss illustrated how the word *dit* was used in French from the early twelfth century to separate religious works from secular literature, the emphasis being on truth,

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[80] D. Rieger, 'Eslongié m'an de quanque j'amoie' Chevalier, clerc et vérité historique dans le *Dit du Bleu Chevalier* de Jean Froissart', in *Ecrire pour Dire: Etudes sur le dit médiéval*, ed. B. Ribémont (Paris, 1990), pp.169-92.

[81] H.R. Jauss, 'La transformation', pp.108-46.

and that truth being of a religious nature. Cerquiglini argues that by constantly having to stress, within the *Voir Dit*, the truth which he is telling, Machaut highlights a new and fourteenth-century anxiety about truth or the lack of it. Against this, it may be argued that Rutebeuf, in the opening lines to *Des Regles*, shows that Machaut was experiencing nothing new:

> Puis qu'il covient verité tere,
> De parler n'ai je més que fere.
> Verité ai dite en mains leus:
> Or est li dires pereilleus
> A cels qui n'aiment verité,
> (lines 1-5)[82]

(Since truth must be silenced, I can but celebrate speaking. I have spoken truth in many places: now it is dangerous to tell it to those who do not like the truth).

In the company of the powerful nobility, Rutebeuf warns that speaking the truth is a perilous affair. In the article as a whole, Cerquiglini herself, by using the massive *Voir Dit* as her core text, produces the confusion which is bound to arise if the most important of the differences between the medieval and modern notions of a *dit* are not recognised and addressed.

From this assessment of Cerquiglini's arguments, it is clear that her arguments regarding discontinuity and 'truth' cannot be sustained. However, her argument concerning the presence of a clerkly 'I' is convincing, so that this too must be admitted here as a criterion for the *dit*. A modern definition of a fourteenth-century *dit*, based upon an analysis of the views of the literary critics cited above, might therefore take as its base the following description:

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[82] *Oeuvres*, ed. Faral and Bastin, I, 267.

- a work which intends to instruct or exemplify,
- a work which draws its inspiration from and alludes to historical referents (people, places and events),
- a work in which can be discerned a writerly, educated 'I'.

However, with recourse to an article by Daniel Poirion, this definition can be widened still further. Writing at the same time and in the same publication as Jacqueline Cerquiglini, Poirion accepts Pierre le Gentil's 'lyrico-narratif' (which I have rejected).[83] More importantly, for my present argument, he links the *dit*, through its subject matter, to 'lyrisme amoureux et au roman d'amour', and goes on to say that each poem has a central image which structures the entire work. The image, however, may also introduce a mythological element. Again, if the body of work which falls within the genre of *dit* posited here is considered, it will be found that a further adjustment in the definition is necessary in order to include allegory as a norm (with, as usual, exceptions).

There is a vast number of examples of *dits* which incorporate allegory, and often mythological allegory (as in the figure of Venus) as a central means of communication. Poirion argues that the function of the *dits*, somewhat hidden behind the imagery of love, was to communicate 'une certaine sagesse'. Included within this notion of wisdom and didacticism was a particular form of consolation aimed at members of the nobility who were in distress. In effect, the poet was offering both consolation and instruction as to how to behave in adversity. These members of the nobility were 'malheureux en amour, prétendent-ils, mais

[83] D. Poirion, 'Traditions et fonctions du dit poétique au XIVe et au Xve siècle' in *Literatur in der Gesellschaft des Spätmittelalters* Vol 1, ed. H.U. Gumbrecht (Heidelberg, 1980), pp. 147-50.

en fait victimes de la mauvaise fortune politique et guerrier' ('unhappy in love, they pretend to be, but in fact they are victims of the misfortunes of politics or war'). If Poirion's argument is accepted, then a final review of what should be considered to be a *dit* at the end of the fourteenth century, not as a hard and fast rule, but as a working hypothesis is:

- a work which intends to instruct, perhaps through exemplification
- a work which draws its inspiration from, and alludes to, real people, places and events
- a work in which can be discerned a writerly, educated 'I'
- a work in which the allegory of courtly love more often than not plays a central role

This definition would embrace a wider body of work than that included within the genre of *dits amoureux* by Wimsatt or even Fourrier. There is no question, however, that there is a large difference between the earlier poetry of Rutebeuf and that of later writers such as Froissart. Rutebeuf's 'dits', whilst sometimes clearly intended for a courtly audience, do not concern themselves with 'fin amour'. They are more often than not explicitly part of the author's engagement in debates which were taking place concerning theological disputes or concerns of the Church in France.[84] Is it helpful, therefore, to attempt to sustain a genre for the *dits amoureux* which can be applied to the work of Rutebeuf or Watriquet as well as to the later poetry of Machaut and Froissart? A useful generic distinction is offered by the medieval

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[84] For example, 'Le Dit de Sainte Eglise', 'Le Dit de l'Université de Paris', in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Faral and Bastin, pp.277-85 and pp.371-76.

understanding of 'amoureux' (i.e. courtly), as proposed at the beginning of this chapter. Therefore, works which do not concern themselves in any way with courtly affairs, either occasional or educational, should be excluded from the genre. However, I would therefore argue that the late fourteenth-century *dits amoureux* belong to the same genre of poetry as the early fourteenth-century *dits* of writers such as Watriquet de Couvin. These earlier works may clearly be described as *amoureux*, if this adjective is used to denote ideals of courtliness. Whilst the *dits* of the early and late fourteenth century share a preoccupation with courtly life and behaviour, and frequently have an educated 'I' narrator, it is usual only in the later *dits* to find the allegory of heterosexual passion. It is evident that in order for *dit amoureux* to be used as a generic term to include most of the works which late-medieval authors might have regarded as generically similar, all of the criteria I have listed above will not be met by many of the works of the earlier fourteenth century. I would suggest, therefore, that all criteria need not be met. Such flexibility is in line with the approach to generic definition displayed by medieval writers such as Machaut (who used *dis* in the same sense both with and without *amoureux*).

As a working hypothesis, the definition for *dit amoureux* suggested so far in this chapter attempts to be closer than previous late twentieth-century definitions to what might have been understood by the same term in the later medieval period. In arriving at this hypothesis, I have sought to accommodate much of what has been written about the *dits* over the last thirty years. I have argued that most critics have hitherto overlooked the importance of historic referents in the *dits amoureux*. This neglect was largely the result of a critical approach which did not trace the tradition of the *dit amoureux* into the early

fourteenth-century. I have demonstrated that poems described as *dits* by late-medieval poets usually relied upon historic referents for their very existence . If this point is coupled with that of Poirion, and it is accepted that the 'lover' in the *dits amoureux* may not be 'in love' at all, then the very nature and purpose of the poems must be re-assessed; 'love narrative' will prove to be an inappropriate description for works which used a depiction of a heterosexual relationship in order to voice homosocial concerns.[85]

In the light of the above discussion of the part which the 'lady' plays in the *dits amoureux*, I would wish to modify, if only slightly, the parameters which I have suggested for the genre. Included within this genre should be poems which conform to most or all of the following criteria:

- works which intend to instruct the nobility in chivalry, piety, and loyalty (perhaps through exemplification, perhaps through consolation, with the lady (if there is one) more often than not representing something more than just a female presence)
- works which draw inspiration from, and allude to, specific historical referents (people, places and events)
- works in which can be discerned a writerly, educated 'I'
- works in which allegory plays a central role (later in the fourteenth century this allegory would usually be related to romantic heterosexual passion)

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[85] 'Homosocial' is a description used by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick for 'social bonds between persons of the same sex'. Sedgwick includes under the heading of 'homosocial' both sexual and non-sexual relationships. See E. K. Sedgwick, *English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York, 1985), pp.1-2.

If this categorisation is to work, then arguments which might be used to engage with issues such as the 'development' of the *dit amoureux* must be modified. The genre should rather be seen as shifting and changing, taking account of new political and social circumstances. Wimsatt's narrow definition must be expanded, otherwise it precludes many important early sources for the later *dits*. When the term *dit amoureux* appears in this thesis subsequent to this point in this chapter, it must be understood within the tentative parameters I have put forward here.

One of my aims in attempting to widen the generic boundaries of the *dit amoureux* stems from the argument which I shall pursue regarding Lydgate's direct connection to this French tradition. Most Lydgate criticism hitherto has argued that Lydgate's courtly poetry is linked almost exclusively to an English, Chaucerian tradition. However, I would argue that the neat link which may appear to exist between the *dits amoureux* of Chaucer and the *dits amoureux* of Lydgate can be questioned if other, French *dits* are brought into consideration. There are many instances where Lydgate can be seen to be using elements of the *dits amoureux* tradition in a way which cannot be found in any of Chaucer's extant work. These instances will be explored in more detail in later chapters. A short analysis of some of Chaucer's courtly poems will provide a necessary comparative framework for the present discussion.

6. Chaucer and the French tradition of the dits amoureux

Machaut's influence upon Chaucer, well-documented by Wimsatt and

many others, must be read within the context for the *dits amoureux* set out above. Chaucer's link to the *dit* tradition does appear to be most strongly found in the influence of the poetry of Machaut. This is problematic for tracing the tradition into English poetry, in that Machaut does not follow closely the inherited notions of a *dit*. Machaut's poems, compared to those of Froissart, make far less effort to make any included historical referents explicit. In this way a certain distance is created between his works and those of others in the same genre. Chaucer follows Machaut's example. A review of those Chaucerian poems which might be described as *dits amoureux* will quickly highlight the problems.

The *House of Fame* may have had a lesson to teach, but with the poem in its existing incomplete form it is impossible to discern what that lesson may be (unless perhaps it is to be wary of low-flying eagles). Real-life historical referents are absent.[86] Nicholas Havely, in his recent edition of the poem, finds that whilst the *House of Fame* 'appears to have some affiliations with the French love-visions and *dits*', the connections with Machaut and Froissart 'seem to be mostly of local significance'.[87] This poem, therefore, fails to find a place among the *dits amoureux*. The *Book of the Duchess* poses more of a problem.

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[86] It could, however, be argued that the eagle represents John of Gaunt or one of his household, as the eagle was another emblem used by the Lancastrian household. As Ann Astell points out, *Richard the Redeless* describes the earl of Derby (Bolingbroke) as 'the Eagle'. A. Astell, *Political Allegory in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca, 1999). *Richard the Redeless* in *Mum and Sothsegger*, ed. M. Day and R. Steele, EETS OS 199 (London, 1936), Book II, lines 145-92, pp.11-12. Chaucer's 'house of Rumour' may be an elaborate pun on the name of one of Gaunt's Leicestershire hunting lodges, which was known as the Bird's Nest. For a reference to the hunting lodge, see A. Goodman, *John of Gaunt: The Exercise of Princely Power in Fourteenth-Century Europe* (Harlow, 1992), p.51.

[87] *Chaucer: The House of Fame*, ed. N. Havely (Durham, 1994), p.13.

Helen Phillips places it firmly within the genre of the *dits amoureux*, arguing that all Chaucer's dream poems 'belong with the great medieval French *dits amoureux*'.[88] However, Phillips' definition of a *dit amoureux* owes much, inevitably, to Wimsatt:

> Modern critics often use the term *dit amoureux* ('lay of love') or *love aunter* ('love adventure') for a type of medium-length narrative poem fashionable in French from the thirteenth century, and in English from the fourteenth century, until the late sixteenth century. *Dits amoureux* are ..... framed narratives using a variety of fictional frames.....*Dits* often have at their centre debates, or lovers' *complaintes* (laments).... *Dits*, like the *Rose*, treat love and its sorrows, separations and anxieties, as serious matters, and subjects of over-whelming concern to *gentil* minds. Didactic or quasi-philosophical material is frequently introduced. Sometimes there are allegorical figures, but there is rarely sustained allegorical action, and some *dits* entirely lack allegory.[89]

Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* conforms to Phillips' description. This description, however, whilst broadly accurate in relation to the late fourteenth/early fifteenth century, would be inadequate for the many early French *dits amoureux* which have, for example, either no 'framed narrative' or do not take 'love and its sorrows' as their theme. Bearing in mind the scholarship surrounding the *dit* which has been discussed above, it is clear that Phillips' definition situates itself firmly within 'Anglo-American' criticism. French critics argue that the love portrayed within the *dit*, whilst it may reflect in rare cases an actual love affair, is far more concerned with matters social and political. It is for this reason that the concerns of courtly poetry are 'serious matters'. The description 'Framed narratives' is, of course, generally accurate, but remains inadequate if all of the later *dits* are considered (Phillips makes clear that she is not including

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[88] See *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*, ed. H. Phillips and N. Havely (London, 1997), p.42.

[89] *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*, ed. Phillips and Havely, pp.38-39.

earlier works). If the *Duchess* is read within Phillips' parameters for the *dit*, it is unproblematically included. If it is read within the parameters explored in this chapter, then a more complex picture emerges.

Alastair Minnis, also writing on the *Duchess*, comments: 'That Chaucer was writing to commemorate Blanche of Lancaster there need not be any doubt', and refers his readers to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, which provides the title 'the Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse'.[90] Both Minnis and Phillips allude to the puns in the closing lines of the poem on 'white'/Blanche and 'long castel'/Lancaster as internal evidence of the occasion for which the poem was written. This evidence, taken together with the noble patron for whom it may have been written (John of Gaunt) and its presumed didactic intent (over-extended mourning is not a good thing) would seem to place the poem, as Phillips claims for different reasons, firmly within the loose parameters for the *dits amoureux* outlined above. However, a closer reading reveals that Chaucer is not sustaining a central allegory of courtly love in this poem; courtly love is the theme itself.

The lament of the knight is, indeed, for his dead lady (not for lost lands, comrades or battles) and so Chaucer collapses the allegorical form into 'true' account. The traditional allegorical 'love affair' has been replaced with the commemoration of a 'real' one. As Minnis remarks, 'in the *Book of the Duchess* the love of John of Gaunt and Blanche finds life'.[91] In this respect alone, the *Duchess* is not

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[90] Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, pp.73-160, (p.79).

[91] Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p.159.

typical of a *dit amoureux*; it is an elegy written as a tribute, but this tribute takes the form of the love-narrative of a *dit*. As a prospective *dit amoureux*, however, it lacks the customary emblematic 'clues' which would enable a reader/listener to attach historic referents to the poem. Apart from the 'oak, an huge tree' (which is surely the English royal family) against which the knight is leaning, the use of emblematic devices as a means of identification are either absent or so obscure as to have remained unidentified by Chaucer scholars. Ardis Butterfield highlights a number of further elements which separate the *Duchess* from the *dit amoureux* tradition. She points out that a work in the elegiac tradition would normally name or identify the deceased, but that the *Duchess* seems to owe 'more to a love tradition than to an elegiac tradition'.[92] Chaucer deliberately 'casts names and dates into riddling obscurity'.[93] In relation to the tradition of the *dit*, Butterfield argues that the *Duchess* lacks the 'carefully contrived courtly status' of its French antecedents. These arguments are convincing; I do not believe that the *Duchess* can be slipped unproblematically into the genre of the *dits amoureux*.

There are two of Chaucer's works, however, which will qualify for generic inclusion; they are *The Parliament of Fowls* and the 'Prologue' to the *Legend of Good Women*. That the *Parliament* was intended for a specific occasion, one particular St Valentine's Day, is a highly probable hypothesis; the internal evidence for such a use is convincing. Arguments rage as to the year of composition, and also with regard to possible historic referents, but many critics agree that the poet did

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[92] A. Butterfield, 'Lyric and Elegy in *The Book of the Duchess*', *Medium Aevum* 60 (1991), 33-60 (p.38).

[93] Butterfield, 'Lyric and Elegy', p.41.

have a singular occasion in mind.[94] Whether or not romantic love provides the central allegory must remain a matter for debate, steeped as the poem is in the language of politics and Parliament. An emphasis on teaching and learning in the poem, illustrated by the frequent use of the words 'lerne' and 'lere', has been highlighted by N.R. Havely.[95] The 'moral' of the poem (for a noble audience) might be drawn from the noble birds' behaviour; they are the epitome of courtly lovers. However, another message which quite clearly emerges must surely be that chaos

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[94] For a thorough discussion of differing views, see Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, pp.256-61. Recently, Ann Astell has supported the argument that it refers to the marriage negotiations of Richard II and Anne of Bohemia. Astell, *Political Allegory*, pp.94-95. However, I find Astell's association of Richard with the eagle in the poem surprising, given that she herself refers to the eagle being associated in contemporary literature with the earl of Derby (cf. footnote 86). Richard's favourite device was that of the hart, and it is difficult to understand why Chaucer would not make use of such an obvious and useful image in a poem allegedly concerning matters of the 'heart'. For Richard's adoption of the 'hart' device, see A.C. Fox-Davies, *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* (London, 1925), p.467. For a study of the late-medieval cult of St Valentine, see H.A. Kelly, *Chaucer and the Cult of Saint Valentine* (Leiden, 1986). Kelly argues that Chaucer introduced Valentine's Day as a 'subject into poetry', and that the date of Chaucer's Valentine's Day was May 3rd (pp.45-76 and pp.99-127). Kelly is unconvincing on the May dating of Valentine's Day, his weakest argument being that February is in winter, when no flowers are in bloom (pp.11-44). The old English whitethorn blossoms in February, even in the north of England, and it is certain that birds do not wait until May to begin their mating process. Minnis is in favour of February being the correct month, and remains sceptical that Chaucer could have initiated the cult of St Valentine (pp.258-59). It should be noted that Graunson wrote a number of 'Valentine' poems, and some or all of these may pre-date Chaucer's *Parliament*. See *Oton de Graunson*, ed. Piaget: 'Complainte de Saint Valentin' (pp.183-93), 'Le Souhait de Saint Valentin' (pp.202-204), 'Songe Sainct Valentin' (pp.279-80), 'Complainte Amoureuse de Sainct Valentin (pp.481-86). It is not impossible that the sudden flourishing of Valentine's day came to France (and subsequently England) via Valentina Visconti, grand-daughter of the French king John the Good, sister-in-law to the French king Charles VI and mother of Charles d'Orléans. Her 'name' saint would be St Valentine, and his day would be one which she, at the very least, would celebrate. Amongst those poets who dedicated works to her (although not relating to Valentine's day) were Honoré Bonet and Deschamps (who was, until her death at least, attached directly to her household). See E. McLeod, *Charles of Orleans, Prince and Poet* (London, 1969), pp.16-17, and *Oeuvres Complètes de Eustache Deschamps*, ed. Saint-Hilaire and Raynaud, XI, pp.59-60 and pp.76-77.

[95] *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*, ed. Phillips and Havely, pp.219-221.

ensues when the 'lower' order are all allowed to contribute to the courtly discussion. Courtly matters, after all, were beyond their own knowledge and experience.[96] As Minnis points out, this poem does not have a 'clearly defined moral message', and thus he contrasts it with one of its major sources, Jean de Condé's *Messe des Oiseaux*.[97] In this respect, and also in the wide range of his source material, Chaucer shows that he is not allying himself closely to his French predecessors.[98] Nonetheless, a writerly, educated 'I' is present throughout the poem in the person of the dreaming narrator, thus fulfilling another criterion for the late-medieval *dit amoureux*. Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* is a poem which is clearly influenced by the French *dit amoureux* tradition, although it does not adhere closely to generic expectations.

The 'Prologue' also falls clearly within the genre, albeit with similar reservations. The poem is didactic, in that it provides a vivid description of an exemplary lady whose historical referent is still a matter for debate. This debate itself highlights the lack of any clearly identifiable historic referents within the poem. However, that a historical referent for the lady existed is a theory which has commanded some support.[99] The 'courtly' status of the poem is

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[96] Havely draws attention to the 'Parliamentary' language in *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*, ed. Phillips and Havely, p.227.

[97] Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p.283.

[98] Minnis makes an extensive study of probable sources, moving beyond French poets to include writers as diverse as Cicero and Boccaccio. See *Shorter Poems*, pp.265-90.

[99] There are many discussions of who the lady may have been; most scholars believe her to be Anne of Bohemia, wife of Richard II. See e.g. M.C.E. Shaner and A.S.G. Edwards' notes to the poem in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. L.D. Benson (Oxford, 1987), pp.1060-61; Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, pp.327-29; Astell, *Political Allegory*, pp.95-99. I am

undisputed, and the writerly 'I' is also present, as is a sustained allegory which includes the daisy, the god of Love and his lady. I have only minor reservations, therefore, in describing the 'Prologue' as a *dit amoureux*.[100] The 'legends', however, should not be included simply on the strength of their 'Prologue'.

The stories of the 'good women' have provoked considerable debate as to whether or not the ladies depicted, such as Medea and Cleopatra, were or were not considered by a medieval audience to be genuinely 'good women'. Alongside this argument runs another, which concerns Chaucer's seriousness in attempting to defend these 'good women', and therefore the 'courtly' status of the poem.[101] The depiction of 'unworthy' ladies and the author's 'pretended' defence would both run counter to the pre-occupations of Chaucer's nearest predecessors (the writers of the French *dits amoureux*).[102] Their concerns, as has been argued above, were often

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not convinced by Astell's reading of the poem as one of advice to a wilful king, as the god of Love is depicted as a fearful and invincible figure in the *Prologue*, an image which the legends themselves do not contradict.

[100] For a discussion of Chaucer's possible intention in the poem, see F. Percival, *Chaucer's Legendary Good Women* (Cambridge, 1998), pp.88-94. Much of Percival's argument rests upon whether or not the poem was intended for Anne of Bohemia and Richard II. However, there is no need to assume, as Minnis has pointed out, 'that the poem was addressed to Queen Anne as principal recipient', it may equally well have been intended for someone close to the queen (Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p.328).

[101] These issues are dealt with at length by Minnis, who concludes that Chaucer was, to some extent at least, presenting stories from the woman's viewpoint. See *Shorter Poems*, pp.412-23. Percival takes the view that 'In the end, the *Legend* is dealing with a literary construct of Woman....and is not primarily concerned with the problems that real women faced' (*Chaucer's Legendary Good Women*, p.328).

[102] It could be argued that Machaut's *Jugement du Roi de Navarre* is principally concerned with defending the argument of the lady in his *Jugement du Roi de Behaigne*. The question raised in the *Behaigne* was who suffered most: a knight (whose lady had been unfaithful) or a lady (whose lover had died). In the earlier work, judgement was passed against the lady in favour of the knight. Whilst, however, there is a substantial discussion of female virtue in the *Navarre*, the main concern

centred on matters historic and political, which might be depicted through the use of a romantic allegory. However, if the 'Prologue' is read as a *dit amoureux* in the French tradition, then the legends may be interpreted in relation to their prologue. If 'Alceste' is the ruler's 'lady', then she may also be his country. The entire poem may thus be read as describing the relationship between ruler (the god of Love) and subjects (both the lady and the narrator, although the lady obviously occupies a far more elevated position).[103] Most of the 'good women' of the legends share the experience of having been deceived or betrayed by men, whilst all of them suffer desperate consequences for having loved at all. No absolute claim can be made one way or another for the virtues of these ladies, but they are systematically portrayed as victims of men in positions of power. It appears that keeping close company with those in power may prove dangerous. If this is the central theme of Chaucer's poem, then Chaucer was closely following one of his most obvious sources, the 'Lay de Franchise' of Eustache Deschamps (c.1346-c.1406), where the dangers of life at court are the principal theme.[104]

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of the poem seems to be not with the defence of a woman or women, but rather the 'marking out, in ironic fashion, the limits of the author's creative freedom'. *Guillaume de Machaut: The Judgement of the King of Navarre*, ed. and trans. Palmer, p.xxxiv.

[103] See David Wallace's discussion of the relationship between Chaucer, Anne of Bohemia and Richard II. Wallace reads the depictions of the relationships in the *Prologue* as part of 'an extended exploration of absolutist poetics'. D. Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity* (Stanford, 1997), pp.337-76 (p.337).

[104] The *Lay de Franchise* is found in *Eustache Deschamps, Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire and G. Raynaud, 11 vols., SATF (Paris, 1878-1903)II, 203-14. Minnis highlights the similarities between the *Prologue* and Deschamps' poem; see Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p.350-51.

The opening of both works concerns the honouring of May and devotion to the daisy, together with the narrator's part as a spectator at a discussion of honour and loyalty in love. The narrator of the French poem, having finished his eulogy to the daisy, hides himself in order to watch a courtly gathering. He later leaves his hiding-place, and wanders away until he comes across simple peasants eating and drinking. As he contrasts the two lifestyles, that of the peasants and that of the court, the narrator concludes that life at court contains so many uncertainties and dangers that, if he could, he would lead the life of the simple peasant. The allusion is almost certainly to the court of Charles VI. Chaucer's narrator suffers an unfortunate reversal of this sequence of events: he dreams that he is lying in a meadow when the 'court', out walking, comes across him.[105] He finds himself incurring the wrath of the head of this 'court', the god of Love, and so is immediately thrown into exactly the kind of precarious position which Deschamps' narrator wishes to avoid.[106] The god's anger is deflected by his queen, for whom the narrator is instructed to write legends of 'good women'. However, the god of Love's definition of 'good' is that they were 'trewe of love'. The narrator is both told by the god of Love how to begin his work and included by the god within a 'loving' framework:

> At Cleopatre I wol that thou begynne,
> And so forth, and my love so shal thou wynne,
> For lat see now what man that lover be,
> Wol doon so strong a peyne for love as she
> (lines 566-69)[107]

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[105] *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, lines 208-307 (F *Prologue*), pp.593-96.

[106] See Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, pp.365-70 for a detailed study of the position in which Chaucer's narrator finds himself. Wallace links the narrator's situation to that of any subject of a king who is an 'all-powerful figure' (p.337). Wallace argues that the *Legend* is concerned with 'the dynamics of kingship and despotism' (p.337).

[107] *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, (F *Prologue*), p.603.

The narrator is sandwiched between Cleopatra and any man who might rival the strength of her love, but the love which the narrator may gain will be that of the god of Love himself, not of a lady. The relationship which may or may not be successfully established is between a despotic ruler and one who is (albeit forcibly) included at court. It seems to me, therefore, that Chaucer borrows not only verbal imagery for his 'Prologue' from Deschamps' 'Lay', but also the moral message of the French poem: sustaining relationships with those at court is full of uncertainties.

It is the narrator of the 'Prologue' who appears to be in danger, and who must avert the threat of the anger of the god of Love. However, if 'Prologue' and *Legends* are read together as intended, then the narrator may not be the only one in a precarious position. Chaucer's 'daisy' lady herself will be found alongside such tragic figures as Medea and Cleopatra. She may be an exemplar of steadfast love, but she is associated with a ruler at court, and therefore lives amidst all the potential perils of such a position.[108] The 'Prologue' may surely be described as a *dit amoureux*. Whilst, therefore, I have suggested and I shall argue that Lydgate goes beyond Chaucer in looking for inspiration for his own *dits amoureux*, the 'Prologue' was clearly available to the later poet as one example of a work within what had hitherto been a French tradition.

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[108] Wallace draws attention to exactly this kind of predicament; the danger is seen to arise from the hostility of members of the nobility towards the king and queen. Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, pp.370-71.

Nonetheless, it should be stressed that Chaucer's work, when compared with most of the poems of Watriquet de Couvin and Froissart, can provide only one genuine example of a *dit amoureux*: the 'Prologue' to the *Legends of Good Women*. Whilst Chaucer's poems are aimed at, and centred on, a courtly audience, and some may have a didactic purpose, they lack the strong emphasis on historical referents (which has been shown above to be one of the fundamental criteria for a *dit amoureux*) and may also lack a central allegory. The next chapter will argue that Lydgate, on the other hand, when he came to write his own *dits amoureux*, remained within the mainstream of the French tradition, taking his lead from poets such as Oton de Graunson and Froissart.

My study of the *dits amoureux* tradition has provided guidelines for generic boundaries. The *dits amoureux* emerge from this study as allegorical, didactic poems which both referred to, and were aimed at, noble patrons. This double implication of patronage, both within the subject matter and as intended audience, forms an interpretative unit which must present problems for late-twentieth century readers. How can such works, which are undoubtedly representative of medieval culture, become part of what Patterson has described as a 'living past with claims upon the present'? One approach might be to follow the lead of Strohm and Patterson, and to insist upon historicisation. The *dits amoureux*, which are littered with historic referents, inevitably require a critical approach which is, at least in part, historical. Whilst many allusions and references are difficult, if not impossible, to interpret, many others can reveal possible dates and events to which a poem may be linked. The uncovering of such historicisation reveals an even stronger bond between poet and patron, as the poet's impetus for his work becomes discernible. However, this simple interpretative process which links

poem to historical referents provides only a backdrop against which the *dit amoureux* would be written. When the text itself is analysed still further, it becomes apparent that the protean nature of the genre of the *dits amoureux* leaves the poet remarkable scope for invention within his commission. However, the imaginative process responsible for generating a lover and, perhaps, his lady, also needed to take into account the demands of the genre within which the text would operate. That the *dits amoureux* constitute a genre has been the main theme of this chapter. According to Simon Gaunt, medieval love poetry, dealing as it does with relationships between men and women, must necessarily observe the rules for the construction of gender to which its genre adheres.

7. *Gender and genre in late-medieval courtly verse*

With regard to courtly lyric poetry, Gaunt finds that the 'hero' or lover depicted 'is an incarnation of the values of the genre in which he appears'.[109] The particular model of male masculinity chosen for courtly poetry, therefore, is the 'ideal' courtly lover, a man displaying the finer emotions and elegant eloquence associated with noble birth. However, the 'lady' who appears in the poem must, more often than not, be seen in relation to a homosocial discourse which effectively excludes women's voices.[110] Referring to the courtly *cansos* of the troubadour poets, Gaunt argues that the writers of courtly lyrics are not exclusively interested in depicting or exploring heterosexual relationships, but rather 'use their songs to negotiate their

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[109] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p.287.

[110] Gaunt uses and explores Sedgwick's notion of 'homosocial desire'. See Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp.79-80.

masculinity in as much as they construct and perform a gender system in it, articulate homosocial desire through it, and determine their status in relation to other men by it'.[111] Gaunt's conclusions regarding the depiction of heterosexual relationships within courtly poetry are in line with my own as outlined in this chapter. However, a female voice within a poem does make a difference. As was noted in the previous chapter (with reference to Simpson), a proliferation of narrative viewpoints supports a use of poetics which permits a number of possible political stances. If one of those narrative viewpoints is occupied by a woman, then Gaunt's argument that the depiction of gender in late-medieval poetry is used to mirror power structures immediately become relevant. If Gaunt's theories are integrated with those of Simpson, then the masculine power structures which emerge from poems where feminine characters are given a 'voice' contain tensions which are generally absent in exclusively androcentric works.

The two Lydgatean *dits amoureux* which are the subject of the following chapters differ in exactly this way; one has only male voices, the other has a mixture of male and female. The *Temple of Glas*, once the narrator falls asleep, contains dialogues between the lady and Venus (an all-female exchange), the knight and Venus and the knight and the lady (male/female discourse). No dialogue is presented which excludes the female voice. However, in line with Gaunt's theory that homosocial concerns are uppermost in late-medieval courtly poetry, I will argue that Lydgate includes the female voice in the *Temple* to create an environment which is principally concerned with masculine desire (both

[111] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p.157. Gaunt points out that the women troubadours (the *trobairitz*, who are represented by five per cent of extant material) did provide a 'female' voice. However, he argues that, in their efforts to speak in the 'androcentric space of the *chansonniers*', these women writers felt 'trapped and constrained'.

political and erotic). However, the 'enactive' force of this poem is consensual, exemplifying the need for the male subject to recognise the potential profit to be gained from the support of the reader/listener. The *Complaynt of a Loveres Lyf* is also a poem which appeals for support, but in the absence of the lover's 'lady'. This is a work where male voices dominate; it may be regarded as a masculine 'space'. Gaunt defines another such space in discussing medieval *chansons de geste*. Works within this genre, he argues, produce monologic masculinity; the battlefield is 'the space in which men are united....There are no women there; it is a masculine space'.[112] The *Complaynt* is not a *chanson de geste*, but a poem written in the tradition of the French *dit amoureux*. I shall argue, however, that Lydgate's construction of masculinity within this poem provides a generic dialectic of exactly the kind which interests Gaunt. The poem concerns itself not with a heterosexual relationship of desire, but with masculine socio-political relationships being played out against a background of exile and potential rebellion. It is indeed a 'masculine space', where viewpoints are limited, and the focus is exclusively upon the needs of one male subject.

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[112] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p.26.

CHAPTER THREE

DEVELOPING THE *DIT*: THE INFLUENCE OF PASTORAL ON LYDGATE'S *COMPLAYNT OF A LOVERES LYFE*

The previous chapter has made clear the protean nature of the *dit amoureux* tradition. The genre, if such it can be called, continued to embrace changes as it entered the fifteenth century. Lydgate's first extant *dit amoureux*, the *Complaynt of a Loveres Lyfe*, which will be analysed in detail in this chapter, illustrates many of the developments of the late-medieval *dits*.[1] The most striking of these developments was, perhaps, the introduction of pastoral themes (more usually found in *pastourelles*) into the courtly *dits amoureux*. Pastoral, read as political allegory in the Middle Ages, forms a dynamic link in these poems between ethics and politics. This link is strengthened further by the adoption within the *dits*, in the late fourteenth-century, of the poetic themes of the French *pastourelles*. I shall explore in some depth the way in which pastoral themes, and particularly the theme of exile, were used by the writers of French late-medieval *dits amoureux*. The works of these writers exerted a considerable influence on Lydgate's *Complaynt*.

The *Complaynt* is generally regarded as one of Lydgate's earliest works, and Renoir describes it as Lydgate's 'first important poem.[2] Ebin groups his 'love complaints' together, and dates them '1420 at the latest, and probably from the between the years 1400 and

[1] All references to the *Complaynt* are to the version found in *Poems*, ed. Norton-Smith, pp.47-66.

[2] Renoir, *Poetry*, p.46.

1412'.[3] I shall argue for an even earlier date for the *Complaynt*, linking it to Henry Bolingbroke's accession to the English throne in 1399. This historicisation provides an essential and necessary context for the *Complaynt*, within the understanding of the term *dit amoureux* as outlined in the previous chapter. The literary contextualisation of Lydate's work will obviously be provided by the work of those French writers whose poetry so greatly influenced both Chaucer and Lydgate.

1. French sources for the theme of exile in Lydgate's Complaynt

The *Complaynt* presented itself as such a convincing copy of Chaucer's work that, for more than two centuries, it was believed to have been written by Chaucer, being removed from his canon only in the nineteenth century.[4] It is little wonder, therefore, that twentieth-century scholars should look to Chaucer as Lydgate's model. Walter Schirmer, writing in 1952, and instrumental in fashioning what Lydgate criticism there is to date, describes *The Complaynt* as 'a courtly poem, remote from any contemporary allusion', 'an act of homage to Chaucer'.[5] If Schirmer is right, and the *Complaynt* is truly 'remote from any contemporary allusion', then it fails to meet

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[3] Ebin, *John Lydgate*, p.20. However, Derek Pearsall in his *Bio-bibliography*, argues that it is 'dangerous to assume' the *Complaynt* 'should be assigned to this early period' (p.14), but gives no reason for his scepticism regarding other critics' views apart from the lack of evidence.

[4] Pearsall points out that the *Complaynt* 'was attributed to Chaucer in the sixteenth century and remained popular until its expulsion from the canon in the nineteenth, after being acclaimed as one of the best of Chaucer's shorter poems'. Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.85.

[5] Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, p.31 and p.34.

one of the more important of the criteria outlined in the previous chapter for the loose generic description attempted for the *dit amoureux*. It will be argued below, however, that Lydgate's poem was, in fact, full of contemporary allusion. More generally, regarding Lydgate's courtly poetry, Schirmer warns that it is literature in which 'originality cannot be expected; for Lydgate and the whole generation of poets that followed in Chaucer's wake the merit of their master's work lay in its style. It is from this proper but one-sided evaluation that all Lydgate's courtly love-poetry must be judged, irrespective of the date when it was written'.[6] John Norton-Smith describes the *Complaynt* as being 'something between Chaucer's short poem the 'Complaint unto Pity' and his much longer *Troilus and Criseyde*.[7] Derek Pearsall sees it as a work for which 'it is rarely necessary to go beyond Chaucer for Lydgate's specific borrowings'.[8] Lois Ebin finds a poem whose opening stanzas draw on Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Merchant's Tale* from the *Canterbury Tales* and his translations of the *Romance of the Rose* and Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*.[9] Alain Renoir produces page after page of argument which illustrate how Lydgate borrowed from Chaucer in the *Complaynt*, but then concludes cryptically that Lydgate's 'immediate model was probably not a poem by Chaucer but more likely Jehan Froissart's "Dit du Bleu Chevalier"'.[10] The authors

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[6] Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, pp.34-35.

[7] *Poems*, ed. Norton-Smith, p.163.

[8] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.84. Pearsall is correct in claiming that there are direct borrowings from Chaucer; the problem for the Lydgate scholar is that this viewpoint is not balanced by a search for other influences.

[9] Ebin, *John Lydgate*, p.22.

[10] Renoir, *Poetry*, p.50. The *Dit dou Bleu Chevalier* can be found in *'Dits' et 'Débats'*, ed. Fourrier, pp.155-70.

cited above provide a wealth of material for those seeking links between Chaucer and Lydgate. However, it is Lydgate's connection, not with Chaucer, but with the French tradition, which will be investigated here.

Froissart spent six years at the English court with Philippa of Hainault, wife of Richard II.[11] The French writer presented a collection of his poetry to Richard II. However, Froissart was not the only French poet to spend time in England; Oton de Graunson, count of Savoy, spent almost twenty years as a knight in the service of the English nobility. His residency was in two parts. The earlier period was a voluntary attachment to the English court which ended when his father died and he returned to France as heir to the Graunson estates. The later period was one of exile, when he sought refuge in England after having been accused of murder.[12] The close contacts which Froissart and Graunson enjoyed with the English nobility meant that both of these French authors and their works were almost certainly familiar to contemporary English court poets. Chaucer and Graunson certainly knew each other, and Chaucer translated three of Graunson's *balades*.[13] Over such a long period of

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[11] Froissart was in Philippa's service from 1362-69, but was travelling abroad during 1369, the last year of Philippa's life. For concise details of Froissart's life, see J. Bastin, *Froissart, Chroniquer, Romancier et Poète* (Brussels, 1948), pp.3-7.

[12] See *Oton de Graunson: Sa Vie et ses Poésies*, ed. A. Piaget (Lausanne, 1941), pp.13-17 and pp.20-51. Piaget remarks that Graunson fought alongside English knights on a number of occasions. He was in the service of John of Gaunt and then of Richard II. For another reference to Graunson's association with Gaunt's son, Henry Bolingbroke, see Kirby, *Henry IV*, pp.35, 38, 40.

[13] See Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p.12. There is also a somewhat dated study of the relationship between Chaucer and Graunson in H. Braddy, *Chaucer and the French Poet Graunson* (Port Washington NY, 1968).

time, Graunson's influence upon English court poetry may have been considerable. The poems which Charles d'Orléans wrote whilst in exile in England are often reminiscent of the work of his French predecessor.[14] It can be argued that Lydgate, too, shows many signs of Graunson's influence. However, before turning to the work of Graunson, I shall pursue Renoir's notion that it was Froissart's *Dit dou Bleu Chevalier* which provided the French influence on Lydgate's *Complaynt*.

Froissart uses the experience of a dreaming or 'eavesdropping narrator' to supply the framework for his blue knight's extended complaint in the *Bleu Chevalier*.[15] Douglas Kelly describes the *Bleu Chevalier* as 'one long complainte', and sees it as part of a literary evolution taking place in the late fourteenth century which moves from *dit* to *complainte*.[16] I am unconvinced that such an evolution exists, although the courtly *complainte* is much in evidence as Kelly suggests. Kelly's use and understanding of the term *dit* is vague. He regards the world of the *dit* as being populated with abstractions and mythological figures, divorced from contemporary events, a view which is open to question in the light of my previous chapter. Kelly alludes to the work of Machaut and Froissart with reference to their *dits amoureux*, but finds that Graunson wrote only 'one composition long and complex enough to be called a dit, the

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[14] See Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p.15.

[15] For a study of the tradition of the complaint in medieval literature, see W.A. Davenport, *Chaucer: Complaint and Narrative* (Cambridge, 1988). Davenport argues that medieval writers did not see the complaint as a genre, but as a flexible rhetorical device which could be put to a variety of uses e.g. rhetorical ornament, debate, 'an instrument of moral and emotional exploration' (pp.4-9).

[16] D. Kelly, *Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and the Poetry of Courtly Love* (Wisconsin, 1978),p.182.

Livre messire Ode'.[17] Kelly would therefore exclude shorter poems from the genre of the *dit* (I have argued that some shorter works must be included). As regards the genre of the *dit* and ways in which works within that genre might be approached, Kelly's discussions rest on a rather shaky premise, and no attempt is made to establish possible parameters for the generic term. His conclusion that there is a movement from *dit* to *complainte* is therefore unacceptable.

The trend he describes may also be identified as one of disillusion with the courtly ideal. Late in the fourteenth century, he claims, 'a cleavage becomes apparent between the possibilities of the dream world and the realities in the waking world of age, care and sin'.[18] In the work of Graunson, Christine de Pisan and Charles d'Orléans he finds a 'greater awareness of the realities of love.....never had the topics of change and imperfection enjoyed such prominence'.[19] Although I do not wish to disagree entirely with Kelly on this, it is not difficult to find examples in early fifteenth-century poetry to contradict his argument. Jehan de Garencières, bodyguard, fellow-poet, tutor and friend of Charles d'Orléans insisted upon a code of chivalry and a view of courtly love which mirrored only the most optimistic and idealistic of beliefs.[20] Joel Blanchard, writing of Christine de Pisan, finds not a disillusioned writer, but rather one who rejects a superficial and

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[17] Kelly, *Medieval Imagination*, p.183.

[18] Kelly, *Medieval Imagination*, p.179.

[19] Kelly, *Medieval Imagination*, p.184.

[20] Neal's analysis of the life and works of Garencières reveals a knight devoted to his king and country, but also one who prized greatly both courtly poetry and courtly ideals. See the introduction to Neal, *Jehan de Garencières*.

insincere approach to *fin amour*.[21] That Froissart's *Bleu Chevalier* is part of a pessimistic trend must also be regarded as a contentious statement. As Kelly himself points out, Machaut's earlier *Fonteinne Amoureuse* almost certainly served as a model for the *Bleu Chevalier*, and that model shows no signs of disillusion regarding *fin amour*, nor does the behaviour of the 'blue knight' in any way fall short of the highest of courtly ideals. There are, therefore, many examples of sustained faith in 'courtliness' amongst the poems of the late fourteenth century, and these examples call into serious question Kelly's theory of 'disillusion'. If there are changes being made to the form and tone of the *dit* in the late fourteenth century, they are not the ones which Kelly suggests.

In the *Bleu Chevalier* Froissart employs the same rhyme-scheme throughout: three decasyllabic lines are followed by a half-line of only four syllables. Froissart also takes the trouble to create a framework for his knight's soliloquy; he deliberately does not create the 'one long complainte' to which Kelly refers. Chaucer drew upon both the *Fonteinne* and the *Bleu Chevalier* in writing the *Duchess*; the story of 'Ceys and Alcyone' may come directly from the *Fonteinne*, whilst the extended and dominant complaint of Chaucer's 'black knight' is a development of Froissart's structure in the *Bleu Chevalier*.[22] However, whilst the Chaucerian couplet used

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[21] Joel Blanchard argues that Christine denounces 'une certaine courtoisie de façade en élaborant une représentation idéale de l'amour'. See J. Blanchard, *La Pastorale en France aux XIVe et Xve siècles: Recherches sur les structures de l'imaginaire médiéval* (Paris, 1983), p.116.

[22] Helen Phillips draws attention to a number of Machaut's works, plus Froissart's *Le Paradis d'Amour* and the anonymous *Songe Vert* as other possible French influences on Chaucer's *Duchess*. See *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*, ed. Phillips and Havely, pp.16-19.

predominantly in the *Duchess* was presumably available as a model, Lydgate chose rather to write his *Complaynt* using the rhyme royal stanzas of the ballade. His decasyllabic lines do not echo the *Duchess*, but rather *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Bleu Chevalier*. The most obvious correspondence between these works of Machaut, Froissart, Chaucer and Lydgate is that they all include a complaint (Graunson's *Livre* also falls into this category). Nonetheless, between the various works of these poets, there are also many differences both in structure and content.

It is not the complaint, but the theme of exile, which provides the strongest element which Graunson, Froissart and Machaut have in common in these *dits;* their poems were written either as the result of their own exile or as the result of the exile of a patron. Of these four of Lydgate's possible precedents, only Chaucer was writing a poem which did not have exile as its stimulus and theme. Although many of Lydgate's 'specific borrowings' (turns of phrase, some vocabulary and imagery) may, indeed, have come from Chaucer, it will be argued here that Lydgate's *Complaynt*, like the three French poems, is a work whose main theme is exile. In order to see how a theme of exile becomes the central focus of such a group of poems, a more ancient tradition must be evoked: the tradition of pastoral whose ultimate origins may be found in the poetry of Greece and Rome.

2. Dit and pastoral: a classical tradition of patronage and protection for those who complain in the green shade

Lydgate's narrator, 'As he, alas, that nygh for sorrow deyde', wakes from a sorrowful night into a spring morning and, having encountered the knight with all his sorrows, tells us

> A penne I toke and gan me faste spede
> The woful pleynt of this man to write,
> Worde by worde as he dyd endyte
> (lines 598-600)

The narrator's reaction to sorrow is to compose his poem, a reaction which would have been well understood by writers in one particular tradition of European poetry. This tradition started, as far as can be traced, with the Greek poet Theocritus (3rd century BC), who may be regarded as the great-grandfather of pastoral poetry. Later writers attributed to Theocritus one of the most important traditions of pastoral, that of the lamenting lover. Although his poetry is not believed to have been directly known by poets of the Middle Ages, it was understood that it was from Theocritus that Virgil took his example and inspiration.[23] These are the opening lines of Theocritus' eleventh Idyll, entitled (after his death) 'The Cyclops':

> I have learned that there can be no remedy for love,
> No special herb or ointment to soothe the heart
> Except the Muses. [24]

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[23] Helen Cooper, in her wide-ranging study entitled *Pastoral: Medieval into Renaissance* (Ipswich, 1977), points out that 'Theocritus was known only by reputation throughout the Middle Ages, and his influence made itself felt only slowly in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries'(p.2).

[24] All passages are taken from *Theocritus, The Idylls,* ed. and trans. R. Wells (London, 1989); (p.91).

The green fingers of this tradition reach from the third century BC right into the modern world. Tracing the tradition only as far as the later Middle Ages, certain common factors become immediately evident. Theocritus set his 'bucolic' poetry firmly in the countryside, and in so doing he introduced a scenic description which should, in later poetry within the genre, raise the notion of pastoral poetry in the listener's or reader's mind. The landscape in which we find ourselves, over and again, is away from the city, under the trees, in the shade, as in Theocritus' poem, the 'Goatherd and Shepherd'. Here the goatherd, Comatas, announces:

> I'll stop where I am, among oaks and galingale
> The bees buzz round the hives with friendly warmth.
> Cold water gushes from two springs. Birds chatter
> From the cover of trees. The tall pine sheds its cones.
> The shade's much thicker here than it is with you.
> ('The Goatherd and Shepherd', lines 48-52)[25]

Centuries later, Virgil (70-19 BC) took up this very specific imagery of the shaded spot beneath the trees and used it many times. In 'Eclogue 1' Meliboeus complains:

> We flee our homeland; you, Tityrus, cool in the shade,
> Are teaching woods to echo *Lovely Amaryllis*.
> (line 4)[26]

These 'complaining narrators' are all suffering from the displacement of exile, a condition which was readily recognised by medieval scholars. Annabel Patterson argues that one late-medieval writer in particular 'took upon himself the melancholy persona of Meliboeus the

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[25] *Theocritus*, ed. Wells, p.75.

[26] See *Virgil, The Eclogues*, ed. and trans. G. Lee (London, 1984), p.31. On Virgil's pastoral poems, see A.J. Putnam, *Virgil's Pastoral Art* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1970).

exile'.[27] Known throughout Europe by the late fourteenth century, Francis Petrarch's association with pastoral was indisputable. Lydgate certainly knew of his work; in the prologue to Book 4 of the *Fall of Princes* a list is provided of the Italian writer's writings which includes 'Certeyn Ecloogis' (the *Bucolicum Carmen*).[28] However, as Patterson points out, Petrarch's acquaintance with and understanding of Virgil was somewhat indirect. She argues that medieval reception of Virgil cannot be understood if it is separated from the widely-disseminated commentaries of the fourth-century grammarian Servius. In these commentaries Servius interpreted the speakers in Virgil's *eclogues* as either the author himself or people closely associated with the author. Patterson explains that Servius was largely responsible for the medieval belief that within Virgil's *eclogues* were political or historical allusions which arose from Virgil's own experiences during the civil war, principally the loss and recovery of his estate. Using lines such as the ones quoted above from Virgil, which contrast the plight of those in or out of the shade, Servius describes the shelter or shade as an allegory for protection and patronage. In Virgil's case this was the protection and patronage of Augustus. Petrarch certainly understood 'shade' in these terms, and applied this understanding to his own *eclogues*.[29]

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[27] A. Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry* (Oxford, 1988), p.43.

[28] *Fall of Princes*, ed. Bergen, II, 476, Prologue to Book IV, lines 108-10.

[29] Petrarch's active interest in the use of the pastoral form sprang from his own experience of patronage, or 'green shade'. His second *eclogue*, written whilst he was in France, commemorates the death of Robert of Naples. Robert is referred to in the poem as a cypress tree which is struck down in a storm, thus no longer providing shelter in its shade to 'hundreds of shepherds'. *Petrarch's Bucolicum Carmen*, trans. and ed. T.G. Bergin (London, 1974), pp.16-20 (p.19). Thus Petrarch's *eclogue*, with its contrast between shade and a lack of it, repeats the theme found in the opening lines of

There can be little doubt that other medieval writers shared this understanding.

The 'shade' features heavily in the landscape descriptions of the *Bleu Chevalier* and the *Complaynt*. Froissart's knight (in a similar plight to that later experienced by Charles d'Orléans, in permanent 'house arrest' but with the house constantly changing) is wandering in a wood, settling first beneath one tree, then another before resting under the 'aube épine' to deliver his complaint.[30] His final plea is for a message to be taken to his lady (from whom, obviously, he is separated):

> Com d'aventure avés, et sans cherchier,
> Dedens ce bois trouvé un chevalier
> De bleu vesti
> .....
> Dont vous avés hui maint regret oÿ (lines 426-430)[31]

(as the adventure you have had, and without looking, within this wood you found a knight dressed in blue..... of whom you have heard many complaints).

The knight's description of himself is minimal: he is sorrowful, dressed in blue and to be found in a wood. Place is considered important enough to be included within this bare outline. Lydgate, too, emphasises his knight's physical location; his lover is also in

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Virgil's *Eclogue* I, cited above. Petrarch's exile was self-imposed, in the sense that he had voluntarily retired to Vaucluse in France. Nonetheless, it was against a background of political disturbance that he wrote his *eclogues;* the French and English armies were engaged in fierce conflict (the battle of Crécy took place in 1346). Vaucluse was a safe haven from which Petrarch produced his satiric pastoral poems with specific contemporary characters in mind. Based on his understanding of both Virgil and Servius, these poems of Petrarch were designed, as Helen Cooper points out, 'to be a repository of allegorical meaning beyond any man's power to interpret completely'. See H. Cooper, 'The Goat and the Eclogue', *Philological Quarterly* 53 (1974) 363-379 (p.371).

[30] *'Dits' et 'Débats'*, ed. Fourrier, line 69, p.157.

[31] *'Dits' et Débats'*, ed. Fourrier, pp.167-68.

a wood 'beset with trees yong and olde', lying in an 'erber grene' (lines 122-125). The pastoral image of Virgil's 'green shade' is a thread which runs right through the Lydgate work. Started in the original description of the landscape, it is taken up again in the story of Adonis killed by the boar:

> For trwe Adon was slayn with the bore
> Amyd the forest in the grene shade
> (lines 386-87)

It is then echoed in the knight's complaint, where there are also verbal echoes of the Adonis story:

> And thus I am for my trouth, alas,
> Mordred and slayn with wordis sharp and kene,
> Gilt[e]les, God wote, of al trespas,
> And lye and blede vpon this colde grene
> (lines 512-15)

Both 'trwe' men are 'slayn' in the green shade of the forest; the setting is strongly reminiscent of, if not borrowed directly from, the pastoral poetry of Vergil.[32]

There is another near-constant element of pastoral poetry which has not yet been explored here, and that is the time-scale within

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[32] In fact, most of Virgil's *eclogues* refer at some point to the woods or to the shade of trees. For a few examples, see *Eclogues*, ed. Lee, lines 1-5, p.38, lines 1-3, p.62, lines 22-23, p.86. Richard Jenkyns argues that the repetition of shade (umbra) three times in two lines in Virgil's tenth *eclogue* introduces a 'sinister note', the 'shade' is 'seen as a threat'. R. Jenkyns, *Virgil's Experience, Nature and History: Times, Names and Places* (Oxford, 1998), p.184. If Jenkyns' reading is correct, then in their 'exile' poems, Froissart and Lydgate are using the notion of shade (as something which may be unwanted) in a similar sense. Corinne Saunders points out, in line with this interpretation, that Virgil's 'forests of the *Aeneid* represent a landscape of exile'. See C.J. Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden* (Cambridge, 1993), p.26-28 (p.26).

which the poems take place. From Theocritus to Virgil to Petrarch, the poet begins his song early in the morning and finishes as the sun goes down. Froissart, in his *Bleu Chevalier*, only indirectly mentions time. The bird-song and spring setting at the opening of his poem suggest a morning start. At the end of the work, the knight, drawing his encounter with the narrator to a close, declares 'Il est bien temps que nous partons de ci'(line 471), thus suggesting that the day is ending. Chaucer, in his *Duchess*, has the dawning of a day in May to open the dream in which he will meet his 'black knight'. The conversation between the two ends when the time for hunting has passed. Lydgate follows both models, but is much more specific about his time-scale, creating elaborate descriptions of both the dawn which opens his poem and the dusk which ends it. These beautifully-written verses evoke the 'natural' world of the pastoral as well as classical *eclogues* themselves, which invariably insisted upon just such a day-long setting.

A further link between Latin pastoral and later works is made by Patterson in a more recent article on Renaissance poetry. She draws attention to a passage in the *Eglogue au Roy* of Clément Marot (1496?-1544) which provides a setting in the shade of a wood which echoes with birdsong.[33] Patterson argues that this is a direct allusion to Virgil's first eclogue, from which both of these images

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[33] Marot was a court poet who spent his early career in the south of France. He subsequently was in the service of the 'great royal houses of France'. However, his career was a stormy one; he was imprisoned for pro-Lutheran sympathies and eventually fled to Italy. See P.M. Smith, *Clement Marot: Poet of the French Renaissance* (London, 1970), pp.2-37 (p.2).

are drawn.[34] I would like to suggest, however, that although the 'ringing woods' may have passed directly from classical literature to Marot and Spenser, it is also possible that this image was borrowed by Renaissance writers from the works of medieval poets such as Lydgate and Froissart. A description of woods which are made to vibrate with song can be found in Froissart's *Bleu Chevalier* and in Lydgate's *Complaynt* (where the birds sing so loudly that 'al the wode ronge' line 45).[35]

A close reading of the *Bleu Chevalier* and Lydgate's *Complaynt* reveals the two most striking elements of pastoral poetry: an unhappy exile and a span of time which is precisely morning to evening of the same day. However, at the same time as pastoral themes became evident in these poems, yet another 'genre' was being absorbed into the works of the *dits amoureux* poets. The open countryside, in which pastoral poetry was inevitably set, also provided the backdrop for the popular French fourteenth-century *pastourelles*. Froissart's *pastourelles* were often located in specifically named locations. Lydgate progressively adopts this practice of specific naming, particularly with reference to the characters within his courtly verse.

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[34] A. Patterson, 'Re-opening the Green Cabinet: Clément Marot and Edmund Spenser' in *English Literary Renaissance* 16 (1986),44-70 (p.54).

[35] Froissart, in fact, has the wood ringing with the voice of his singing knight; Fourrier (ed.), *Dits et Débats*, p.155, lines 33-36.

3. *The* Dit, *the* Pastourelle *and historic referents*

Helen Cooper, in her discussion of how pastoral manifests itself in vernacular forms, explains that pastoral is primarily

> 'a mode of thought - a way of re-casting and projecting experience. It is not confined to the eclogue, the shepherd *ecloga*, or 'selected poem' on the Classical model; it may find widespread expression there, but different ages and cultures have found other genres more suitable for conveying their ideas of pastoral, in lyrics, plays, pageants, moral poems, tracts.....'[36]

Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose* 'saw the first explicit connection of French pastoral with Latin', and the *eclogue* and the pastoral are linked a few years later by John of Garland.[37] However, it is the medieval French *pastourelles* which provide the most consistent use of a pastoral setting. When French court poets of the later Middle Ages chose to use a pastoral setting for their vernacular poems, their works could be expected to display more than a passing interest in classical pastoral poetry and its potential to represent specific political and social allusions.

Pastourelles seem to have begun life in the High Middle Ages in the south of France.[38] Troubadour songs, they told the story of a knight's encounter with, and attempted seduction of, a shepherdess. Parallels with classical pastoral may seem rather unlikely, beyond the obvious presence of possibly one or more shepherds, and the

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[36] Cooper, *Pastoral*, p.2.

[37] Cooper, *Pastoral*, p.48. Her discussion of the *Rose* and pastoral themes is on pp.95-99.

[38] For the origins of the *pastourelle* see, for example, M. Delbouille, *Les Origines de la Pastourelle* (Brussels, 1926) or E. Piguet, *L'évolution de la Pastourelle* (Bale, 1927).

conflict between the supposedly civilised knight (representing the court or city) and the young girl (representing all things rural). However, in the late fourteenth-century *pastourelles* of Jean Froissart, this simple reading was often called into question. Froissart's *pastourelles* resemble much more closely the classical pastoral output of Virgil, and even Theocritus. They are short lyric poems in which the narrator (in place of the knight of earlier *pastourelles*) is travelling in the countryside and comes across not one, but a group of shepherds and perhaps shepherdesses. There is no seduction scene, but rather a brief eavesdropping on their conversation. Through their speech the reader/listener is acquainted with such varied topics as the voluntary return to exile in England of the French king Jean le Bon, the entry of Queen Isabella into Paris, details of two marriages which took place in the family of the Duc de Berry, and the return from exile of Duke Wenceslas.[39] There is no doubt, moreover, that some of the simple shepherds are English.

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[39] For a discussion of Froissart's *pastourelles*, see Kristen Mossler Figg, 'Pastourelles: The Art of Multiple Perspectives' in *The Short Lyric Poems of Jean Froissart, Garland Studies in Medieval Literature* 10 (London, 1994),pp.91-143. While highlighting the seriousness of the subject matter concealed in the various 'political' *pastourelles*, Figg is clearly unaware of the high probability that all these poems were written for the entertainment of a courtly audience who were unlikely to be the butt of any humour, however gentle. For example, the *houpellandes* of 'Pastourelle 1' were a gift made in the year 1400 by the king of France to his preferred subjects. The recipients of such a gift could hardly be described as 'those who blindly followed the new style' (p.113), a style of dress which Mossler Figg claims is being satirised by both Froissart and his shepherds. I would argue rather that the two perspectives which we are invited by Mossler Figg to find in the *pastourelles*, those of the aristocracy and the peasant folk, do not exist for Froissart. His perspective is that of an educated court poet, so that while he may sympathise with his shepherds, such sympathy always begins with the interests of the aristocracy as its base. The edition of the *pastourelles* which I am using is *Oeuvres de Froissart*, ed. Scheler, II, 306-52.

Froissart's 'Pastourelle 2' situates itself 'entre Eltem et Wesmoustier' where, in a beautiful field, there are shepherds with many elegant shepherdesses (this in itself is something of an oxymoron, as shepherdesses did not normally qualify for the adjective 'elegant').[40] They are all dancing, and await the passing by of one who wears the *fleur de lys*. One asks the other if he thinks this passer-by is a shepherd. The reply is in the negative; this is no shepherd, but a king, and therefore they must put on new clothes in his honour. This they do, and Froissart paints a charming picture of their clumsy attempts to make themselves presentable, and tells how they were singing 'A l'usage de leurs pays' (in the way they do in their country). Shepherds, of course, did not welcome the French king to England. This was the job of the English aristocracy, an aristocracy whose wealth was based on wool, an aristocracy considered uncultured and primitive by their French counterparts. In theory what is presented in Froissart's *pastourelles* is the rustic verse of shepherds; in practice what is produced is a courtly poem complete with an envoy which is invariably addressed to a prince.

In the light of the criteria for a *dit amoureux* which were outlined in the preceding chapter, it becomes obvious that Froissart's *pastourelles* might qualify for entry into the genre. They are poems which often have clear historic referents and some can be read as didactic. They lack, however, the central allegory (usually, in most late fourteenth-century *dits*, this was the allegory of love) found in the *dits amoureux*. The clerkly first-person narrator is also often absent. It is evident that *dits amoureux*, didactic, allegorical poems tied firmly to actuality, were very much

[40] *Oeuvres de Froissart*, ed. Scheler, II, 308-10.

concerned with many of the same themes as pastoral poetry: primarily political events of one kind or another where fictional figures stand in for their historical referents.[41] Froissart used both *dits* and *pastourelles* to cover very similar topics. His *pastourelles*, however, were very specifically musical; they were songs, often entered in the *puys* which took place annually in various regions of France.[42] As they were to be performed before a mixed audience of, perhaps, eminent townspeople as well as members of the nobility, their appeal had to be to a wider audience than that for which the *dits* were intended. The allusions in the *pastourelles* therefore had to be obvious enough for that audience to grasp. The *dits* were designed for a more limited reception, that of Froissart's courtly patrons, and they almost never included shepherds or shepherdesses.

Oton de Graunson follows Froissart's example when he comes to write his own 'Pastourelle'.[43] One of the most popular of Graunson's poems, it is not an encounter between a knight and a shepherdess, nor between a clerk and a shepherdess. Graunson sets the scene for a debate between a shepherd and a shepherdess. However, the shepherdess is well versed in the lore of courtly love, and the

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[41] Deschamps, contemporary with Froissart, was also writing 'political' pastoral poetry. See J. Blanchard, *La pastorale*, pp.68-74.

[42] Ernest Hoepffner informs us that Froissart was successful in competitions at Valenciennes, Abbeville, Lille and Tournai. E. Hoepffner, *La Chronologie des Pastourelles de Froissart* (Paris, 1913), pp.30-31. For a study of the *puys* in fourteenth-century France, see G. Gros, *Le Poète, La Vierge et le Prince du Puy* (Paris, 1992). The *puy* was 'une société choisie de notables' (a society made up of dignitaries) which existed primarily to help its members in times of distress. The *puy* held a competition once a year in which poets and minstrels would participate. Gros, pp.14-15.

[43] See Piaget, *Oton de Graunson*, pp.269-76.

message of the poem, that the 'livre de joie' is not visible (and therefore not available) to all, is a clear indication of exlusivity. During the fourteenth century the *pastourelles*, which began by including shepherds at least as literal subject matter, evolved to the point where the shepherds and shepherdesses depicted were readily recognisable as members of the aristocracy. Thus the rustic 'voice' of the shepherds in the *pastourelles* was subsumed into the courtly tones of courtly poetry.

4. Dit and pastoral: idylls, war and exile

The pastoral ideals of the Latin *eclogue* certainly had been absorbed into the *pastourelle*, and the *pastourelle* had, in its turn, been an influence upon more exclusive courtly verse. The pastoral 'political' themes of the Latin *eclogue* (as understood by medieval writers) become the pastoral themes of the courtly *dit*. Ardis Butterfield links *dit* directly to pastoral and makes explicit a close relationship between pastoral and the *dits amoureux* of the late fourteenth century. She argues that 'pastoral as a theoretical model has been developed specifically to think through... relations between the literary and the social.'[44] I am in agreement with Butterfield's assertion regarding literary/social role of pastoral themes, but I would prefer to place emphasis on the political nature of a poetics which chooses to employ pastoral elements. Butterfield, drawing on

[44] Butterfield, 'Interpolated lyric', p.4. It could be argued, however, that much of the self-conscious literary output of the later Middle Ages (and not just pastoral) concerns itself with exploring the 'relations between the literary and the social'. See, for example, Lee Patterson's article 'Making identities, cf. Chapter One, of this thesis p.34.

Pierre Bec's analysis of the genre of pastoral, cites three 'constituent elements' of pastoral: *rencontre, débat* and *plainte*. These can, of course, be located within many of the *dits* of Machaut and Froissart, and Butterfield cites the *Book of the Duchess* as a Chaucerian example. However, Cooper's description of pastoral as a 'mode of thought' requires that a less rigid framework be adopted for medieval pastoral poetry than that proposed by Bec and Butterfield.[45] The tension which Butterfield finds in Chaucer's *Duchess* does not derive from political concerns, but from the contrast between 'the bleak landscape of the Black Death' and the 'idyllic rural fantasies woven by pastoral poetry'.[46] In the poetry of Machaut and Chaucer, Butterfield sees the *dit* as beginning to 'reinvent pastoral', and in fact, by promoting 'a return of the real within the artificial mode of pastoral', as creating a kind of 'counter-pastoral'. Contrary to Butterfield, I remain unconvinced that the *Duchess* may be regarded unproblematically as a *dit amoureux*. I would also take issue with Butterfield's assumption that pastoral poetry had somehow, before the later fourteenth century, described an idyllic state.

There is much evidence to suggest that pastoral poetry, and indeed many earlier French *pastourelles*, often were written in response to, and describe, stark or violent historic events. Helen Cooper finds amongst medieval *pastourelles* poems whose allusions to contemporary events are so obvious as to leave no doubt as to their political nature. She concludes that 'The one characteristic that much vernacular allegorical pastoral has in common with the

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[45] Cooper, *Pastoral*, p.2.

[46] A. Butterfield, 'Pastoral and the Politics of Plague in Machaut and Chaucer', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 16 (1994) 3-27 (p.26).

Petrarchan eclogue is a preference for non-idyllic subject matter: war, corruption in public life or the Church, bad government'.[47] I would argue, in agreement with Cooper, that medieval writers were fully aware of the potential of pastoral poetry to comment upon a wide range of current events.

Butterfield's arguments are based upon the questionable notion that pastoral poetry produces 'rural fantasies'. Nonetheless, her conclusion that there is a close connection between pastoral and *dit* at the end of the fourteenth century is convincing. The Black Death forced courtiers into the clean air of the countryside in much the same way that civil war obliged Petrarch to take refuge in rural Vaucluse.[48] However, it was not the plague which provided the common experience which linked Virgil, Petrarch and Graunson. All three writers were temporarily exiled. Machaut and Froissart, on the other hand, depicted in their poetry the plight of their exiled patrons. It was their example which Lydgate followed in writing his own 'pastoral' *Complaynt*.

5. *Lydgate's pastoral* dit amoureux: *An exiled knight in the green shade*

Froissart's knight, as noted above, is found by the narrator wandering in a wood. The narrator observes his plight, listens to his

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[47] Cooper, *Pastoral*, p.81.

[48] Machaut gives a vivid account of his own withdrawal from public life during an outbreak of the plague in his introduction to the *Jugement du Roi de Navarre*, lines 347-458. See *The Judgement of the King of Navarre*, ed. Barton Palmer, pp.16-20.

complaint, and then hastens to his aid. However, the knight is inconsolable; he is separated from his lady and has no hope of rejoining her. The only consolation which the narrator can offer is to take her a message, describing the knight's unhappy state. The knight describes himself in a plight similar to that of Virgil's Meliboeus. Although he is in a wood, where there is shade (which at least some medieval readers would gloss as 'patronage' or protection), it is not where he wants to be; he is away from his home and is not free to return.[49] The pastoral tradition is invoked by Froissart, in both setting and theme.

Anthime Fourrier, in his introduction to the *Bleu Chevalier*, explains that, owing to the lack of distinctive clues, it is impossible to identify specifically the blue knight, but that he is undoubtedly one of the French hostages taken by the English after the Treaty of Bretigny.[50] The principal characteristic of both the knight and his lady is that of loyalty, displayed by the knight in his blue clothing. The device of a blue lady appears in the chronicles of the battle of Poitiers. It is worn by all the French knights on their sleeves in place of their own heraldic devices and depicts France

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[49] The potential negativity of the image of the forest is explored by Corinne Saunders, who sees its appearance in classical literature as frequently 'standing in opposition to the highly civilised cities of Troy, Thebes or Rome'. Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance*, p.26. However, Saunders sees the forest as becoming an ambiguous landscape in literature of the Middle Ages, where it may still represent a hostile environment, but one in which a knight may 'prove himself' (p.42).

[50] *'Dits' et 'Debats'*, ed. Fourrier, pp.52-60. Forty noblemen were sent to England as hostages, with an at least equal number from amongst the important French bourgeois. See P. Timbal, *La Guerre de Cent Ans vue a Travers les Registres du Parlement (1337-1369)* (Paris, 1961), pp.398-432.

herself.[51] Thus, just as the blue knight may be any French exile, so might his lady be any French lady, or, indeed, France herself.[52]

Lydgate adopts a similar method of identification in his *Complaynt*. However, rather than producing, as most critics have hitherto argued, a rather simple imitation of Chaucerian poems, Lydgate shows an awareness of how French writers had been exploiting pastoral traditions. In the beautiful description of dawn in his opening stanzas there are clues to the main theme of the poem. These have been interpreted as evidence of Chaucer's dominant influence on the work, but are susceptible to a different reading. Lydgate's narrator tells us that 'hertys heuy' must wake and face the day with 'Hope also, with Seint Iohn to borowe'(line 12). Walter Skeat's note to this line reads: 'probably suggested by The Compleynt to Mars, which opens in a similar strain' and John Norton-Smith, in his edition, follows suit.[53] The inference is that Lydgate borrowed directly from Chaucer, but in fact 'with Seint Iohn to borowe' was also used by Gower and appears in other Middle English verse.[54] It was usually associated with a parting, and there was usually an

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[51] Fourrier uses the argument that all the knights wore the same device, i.e. they were, in this respect, indistinguishable, to support his argument that the 'bleu chevalier' is a composite, rather than an individual identity. *'Dits' et 'Debats'*, ed. Fourrier, p.59.

[52] In comparing the *Blue Chevalier* and *Book of the Duchess*, Susan Crane explores Froissart's use of the lady as an allegory for France in the *Bleu Chevalier* and in other of his poems. See S. Crane, 'Froissart's *Dit dou Bleu Chevalier* as a Source for Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*', *Medium Aevum* 61 (1992), 59-74.

[53] *Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. W.W. Skeat, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1897), VII, *Chaucerian and other Pieces*, 504, note 12. *Poems*, ed. Norton-Smith, note 12, p.163.

[54] Line 3416 of *John Gower, Confessio Amantis*, ed. R. Peck (Toronto, 1966), Bk. V, p.268. Another example of its use as a parting phrase is found in line 2957 of *The Lay of Havelock the Dane*, ed. Rev. W.W. Skeat (Oxford, 1915), p.100.

implication of some sort of journey. As Skeat also points out, the phrase was designed to invoke security or protection.[55] Contrary to the footnotes of these two critics, therefore, it is more than likely that Lydgate was making use of a saying which was commonplace, and was not simply copying from Chaucer.

The notion evoked by this phrase, one of separation, is developed as the poem continues. The narrator, he with the heavy heart, wanders alone out of doors into a green-walled park to seek consolation by listening to the birds singing.[56] The birdsong is that of the nightingale which sings, traditionally, to lament the absence of her love, and so she provides a vocal image of the narrator's state of mind. However, the picture which then begins to emerge from between the lines, as it were, is very different from that painted for Chaucer's 'black knight' in the *Book of the Duchess* and very similar to that found by Froissart's 'bleu chevalier'. It is a picture of enforced restraint. Inside the park there grow a variety of trees, some of which are mythologised:

> I saw ther Daphene, closed vnder rynde,
> Grene laurer, and the holsom pyne;
> The myrre also, that wepeth euer of kynde;
> The cedres high, vpright as a lyne;
> The philbert eke that lowe doth enclyne
> Her bowes grene to the erthe adovne
> Vnto her knyght, i-called Demophovne
> (lines 64-70)

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[55] *Chaucerian and Other Pieces*, ed, Skeat, p.504.

[56] The 'green-walled park' is, of course, also found in Chaucer's *Parlement of Fowls*, line 122. See *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.387.

The characteristics of the pine and cedar might be said to be ambiguous, either human or tree-like. The other trees, however, present a melancholy gathering. The first mentioned, Daphne, implies an imprisoned state, and again a Chaucerian reference is suggested by Skeat.[57] There is, however, a subtle difference between this ever-trapped Daphne and the maiden in Chaucer's *Troilus* who 'hireselven shette/Under the bark'.[58] Lydgate emphasises the enforced, enclosed nature of Daphne's plight, rather than the choice of action *in extremis* which Chaucer describes. In the *Complaynt*, the trees, of which Daphne is one, surround a well and cast a shadow, 'closyng the wel[le] rounde'(line 83).

The vocabulary in Lydgate's work continues in this vein; the imagery used depicts something beautiful but confined. Lines 79-84 stress both a circular shape and a confined condition:

> The bankys round, the welle environyng,
> And softe as veluet the yonge gras
> That thervpon lustely [cam spryngyng].
> The sute of trees about[e] compassyng

[57] See Skeat's note to line 64 in *Chaucerian and Other Pieces*, p.504. The text of Lydgate's poem, here entitled 'The Complaint of the Black Knight; or, The Complaint of a Loveres Lyfe' is found on pp.245-65, and the notes on pp.504-508. It could also be argued that Phyllis typifies both loss of human life and freedom. Endlessly attached to a tree in mythology (she hangs herself) she is equated in the *Ecloga Theoduli* (a very well-known medieval Latin school text) with the story of Lot's wife. See R.P.H. Green, 'The Genesis of a Medieval Textbook: The models and sources of the *Ecloga Theoduli*', *Viator, Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 13 (1982), 49-106 (p.63). The story of Daphne is found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. According to Ovid, Phoebus Apollo falls in love with Daphne, who flees from him. Daphne prays for help to the river god, Peneus, who turns her into a laurel tree. Apollo continues to love her, adopting the laurel as his personal emblem. See *Ovid, the Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. F.J. Miller, 2 vols. (London, 1921), I, Bk.1, lines 452-567, 34-42.

[58] *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book III lines 725-26 in *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.523. Daphne also appears briefly in the 'Knight's Tale', where she is simply 'yturned til a tree' (line 2062, p.53).

Her shadow cast, closyng the wel[le] rounde
And al th[e] erbes grovyng on the grounde.

The assonance of 'round' echoes through the stanza, and the closed, circular image is complemented by the verbs 'compassyng' and 'closyng'. It is true that the picture is not all bleak, with 'veluet' and 'herbes grovyng', but the tension between the two is strongly reminiscent of the 'shadow' or shade experienced by the narrators of Petrarch or Virgil.

Having set the scene, Lydgate's narrator emphasises his own suffering, thus creating an emotional precedent for the knight who is to follow. Before the knight is introduced, however, the poet-narrator leaves the park. He moves out into the 'holtes hore' (line 119), thus entering a more typical pastoral setting. Unlike Froissart's 'bleu chevalier', who moves about, one moment singing the next lamenting, Lydgate's knight is static and is found in a far more Virgilian environment:

... a delytable place,
That was beset with trees yong and olde,
Whos names her for me shal not be tolde,
Amyde of which stode an erber grene,
That benched was with [clourys] nyw and clene.

This erber was ful of floures [ynde],
Into the whiche, as I beholde gan,
Betwex an hulfere, and a wodebynde,
As I was war, I saw [w]her lay a man
In blake and white, colour pale and wan
(lines 122-31)

This particular passage is reminiscent of passages found in earlier French poetry, particularly that of Watriquet de Couvin and, as was demonstrated in the previous chapter, this kind of descriptive imagery is usually the clue or key to the identity of some member or

members of the nobility.[59] The hulfere (holly) and woodbine are almost certainly used here as other trees were used by earlier courtly writers. Within a *dit* they might be interpreted as heraldic devices which, if they could be correctly identified, would provide a historic referent either for the knight, his location, or other members of the nobility.[60] Different manuscripts mention different trees, as the poem is perhaps 'customised' for later use.[61] Lydgate was inviting his reader/listener to interpret the heraldic emblems in his *dit*. For readers in the twentieth century, such interpretation would aid the historicisation of this particular poem. I shall argue that it provides early evidence of Lydgate's link with, and sympathy for, the Lancastrian cause.

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[59] For example, similar passages are found in Watriquet's *Li Mireoirs as Dames* (lines 36-54) and 'Li Dis de la Fontaine d'Amour' (lines 6-25). *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp.2-3 and pp.101-102. Also in Froissart's *Le Temple d'Honneur* (lines 65-72), *Dits et Debats*, ed. Fourrier, p.93 and in *Le Paradis d'Amour* (lines 39-61), *Le Paradis d'Amour*, ed. Dembowski, p.41.

[60] See pp.63-66 of Chapter Two. In poetry of the first half of the fourteenth century, we can see evidence of people being represented by trees. Watriquet uses this method of identification in 'Li Mireoirs as Dames' (lines 1243-1248) and 'Li Dis des iiii Sieges' (which is a poem riddled with heraldic imagery throughout). See *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, p.40 and pp.163-85. One example from the later fourteenth century is in Froissart's *Prison Amoureuse* (lines 3034-3036). See *La Prison Amoureuse*, ed. Fourrier, p.136.

[61] Norton-Smith remarks that 'The symbolism (if any was intended) of the holly and woodbine is vague. The MSS. vary considerably over the first plant...This would suggest confusion or indecision'. *Poems*, ed. Norton-Smith, p.168, note to line 129. For a full list of variants see *The Minor Poems*, ed. MacCracken, II, 388, note to line 129.

6. A case for the exiled Henry Bolingbroke

When Lydgate's knight begins his 'complaint', he tells of the usual lover's ailments: he is too hot, too cold, and is suffering the effects of the ill-treatment of 'Daunger'. His adversaries are reminiscent of those who oppose the lover in the *Romaunt de la Rose;* his present plight was the result of treachery:

> And Male-Bouche gan first the tale telle,
> To sclaundre Trouthe, of Indignacion;
> And Fals-Report so loude rong the belle,
> That Mysbeleve and Fals-Suspecion,
> Have Trouthe brought to hys dampnacion,
> So that, alas! wrongfully he dyeth,
> And Falsnes now his place occupieth.
>
> And entred ys into Trouthes londe
> And hath therof the ful possessyon.
> O ryghtful God, that first the trouthe fonde,
> How may thou suffre such oppressyon,
> That Falshed shuld have iurysdixion
> In Trouthes ryght, to sle him gilt[e]les?
> In his fraunchise he may not lyve in pes.
>
> Falsly accused, and of his foon for-iuged,
> Without [a]nswer, while he was absent,
> He damned was, and may not ben excused
> (lines 260-276)[62]

These verses clearly depict the predicament in which the black and white knight finds himself. He is represented here by 'Trouthe' itself. He has been slandered so successfully by 'Male-bouche' that he has been 'brought to hys dampnacion'. The result of the slander is that he has been displaced from his 'londe', which is now occupied by 'Falsnes'. A legal process is inferred through words such as 'iurysdixion', 'falsly accused' and 'for-iuged'. The injustice which

[62] The particular passage of the *Rose* which may have provided the initial idea for unsavoury courts of which Lydgate's is just one example has 'Dangiers' accompanied by 'Male-bouche', 'Honte' and 'Peur'. See *Le Roman de la Rose*, I, ed. Lecoy, 87, lines 2811-20.

has resulted took place whilst 'Trouthe' was 'absent'; he was given no opportunity to 'answer' for himself. Thus the knight ('Trouthe') is damned, condemned by the lady he loves. It could be argued that the poem creates a conceit to represent a lover's plight (i.e. he is exiled from his lady because she disdains him), and therefore the main plot of the poem is unhappy romantic love. Indeed, such a conceit is continued more or less successfully right through to the end of the poem.

The use of sustained allegory, as has been argued in Chapter 2, was the norm in most late-medieval *dits amoureux*. Therefore, it is more than likely that Lydgate's knight, in speaking of 'Trouthe', is describing either himself and his own plight, or someone known to him. The knight has been wrongly judged, his lands have been sequestered in his absence, and he lives in little hope of recovering them. His 'lady' has set up an unsavoury court; 'Disdeyne' and 'Mysbeleve' are her chief counsellors:

> ...Disdeyne
> With Mysbeleve she made for to be
> Chefe of counseyle, to this conclusion
> For to exile Routhe and eke Pite
> Out of her court to make Mercie fle,
> (lines 503-509)

The lady and her 'counceyle' have exiled Compassion, Pity and Mercy. Thus exile at this point is made explicit, and it is taken up again by the narrator at the end of the poem in the penultimate line of his envoy as Grace joins the ranks of the banished:

> For Mercie, Routhe, Grace and eke Pite
> Exiled be...
> (lines 680-681)

There is further evidence that exile is an important theme. At the mid-point of the poem we find the following stanza:

> I take recorde of Palamides,
> The tr[e]we man, the noble worthy knyght,
> That euer loved, and neuer [had] relese.
> Notwithstondyng his manhode and myght;
> Love vnto him did ful grete vnright:
> For ay the bette he did in cheualrye,
> The more he was hindred by envye;
> (lines 330-336)

This mention of Palamides is most unusual in a *dit amoureux*. He is not one of the lovers, like Piramus, Achilles and Anthony (mentioned a few lines later), who characteristically feature in the *dits* as ill-starred lovers. Lydgate has many possible sources for his Palamides. One is the Palamides of thirteenth-century French Arthurian legend, a Saracen knight renowned for both his outstanding courtly behaviour and his prowess on the field of battle. He is eventually baptised a Christian at Arthur's court. He is the unsuccessful lover of the beautiful Iseult and is (according to many versions of his life) treacherously killed by Gawain and Agravain. Coming upon his 'brothers in arms' as he rode along nursing his gaping wounds from his previous knightly contest, Palamides might rather have expected support and protection but, the narrator tells us in *Le Roman en Prose de Tristan*, Gawain and Agravain 'haoient plus mortelment Pal. que nul autre'.[63] Gawain's hatred arose from an incident in which Palamides shamed Gawain. On the look-out for revenge, Gawain and his brother easily overcome the wounded knight and Gawain cuts off his head. As a precedent for Lydgate's knight, this Palamides is a good possibility. He, too, favoured the colours

[63] *Le Roman de Tristan, Le Roman de Palamède et la Compilation de Rusticien de Pise*, ed. E. Loseth (New York, 1970), p.398.

black and white, carrying 'l'écu échiqueté de blanc et de noir' by which he was easily recognisable.[64] However, he does look a little out of context in this poem, followed as he is by Hercules, Phebus, Venus and Cupid.

The second possibility is the Palamides found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and, indeed, this Palamides seems to provide many of the details which surround the fictional medieval knight who inherits his name. The Ovidian Palamides incurred the wrath and revenge of Ulysses. Ovid recounts how 'He [Palamides] would be living still, or at least would have died without dishonour, whom that fellow there [Ulysses], all too mindful of the unfortunate exposure of his madness, charged with betraying the Greek cause, and in proof of his false charge showed the gold which he had already hidden there. So then, either by exile or by death he has been drawing off the Grecian strength'.[65]

The third possibility is to be found in Guido delle Colonne's *Historia Destructionis Troiae*, a late thirteenth-century Latin poem which Lydgate translated at the request of Prince Henry, the future Henry V.[66] Whilst I am going to argue for an early date for the

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[64] *Le Roman de Tristan*, ed. Loseth, p.105.

[65] *Ovid, Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. Miller, II, Bk. 13, lines 57-61, 233. Square brackets are mine.

[66] Lydgate's practice of translation was close to that which Rita Copeland describes as producing 'a vernacular substitute' for the original (Latin) text. See R. Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1991), p.179. Late-medieval authors display a willingness to add to, correct and even ignore sections of the texts they are supposedly 'translating'. For a collection of essays on the subject, see *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. R. Ellis (Cambridge, 1989), particularly J.D. Burnley, 'Late Medieval English Translation: Types and Reflections', pp.37-53. Burnley

Complaynt, thus making the *Troy Book* a later work, I see no reason to suppose that Lydgate had never read or worked on Guido's text prior to his commission. Guido's Palamides is the one who is contemporary with Ulysses, although the story differs greatly from that told by Ovid. Guido gives two versions of Palamides' death; one is in battle, which he says is the true one, the other is as the victim of a treacherous plot, at the hands of Ulysses and Diomedes.[67] This latter version, Guido insists, was devised to be told to Palamides' father, in order that he should take revenge on those he believed to be responsible for his son's death. Lydgate faithfully follows Guido's story, but greatly expands the lines which serve to introduce and describe the heroic Greek.[68] He stresses Palamides' ability to speak in noble fashion:

> Full manfully, in open audience,
> Liche a knyght.....
> (Bk. II lines 7892-93)

Guido says he is highly regarded by the Greeks; Lydgate improves on this position, explaining that he is 'Among Grekis to no wight the secounde'. Palamides is reproached by the Greeks for arriving late

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argues that 'in the sphere of secular literature, translation occurs through the identification of correspondence sometimes at the verbal level, sometimes formula for formula or idiom for idiom, sometimes scene for scene' (p.48). Whilst Burnley's argument regarding translation seems accurate, his conclusion that 'an interest in form rather than content was then exceptional' (p.53) is difficult to understand. Cf. Chapter One on Simpson's arguments to the contrary (pp.36-40) and my own arguments below.

[67] The two accounts of Palamides' death given in Lydgate's source can be found in *Historia Destructionis Troiae*, ed. Griffin. The first and, according to Guido, the 'true' version is in Bk. 25, lines 1-49, pp.189-90; the second, 'false' account is in Bk.32, lines 1-74, pp.245-47. Lydgate's translation and adaptation of the first account of Palamides' death is in *Troy Book*, ed. Bergen, Bk.IV lines 1352-77 (pp.603-604); the second in Bk.V lines 697-907 (pp.793-98).

[68] *Troy Book*, ed. Bergen, Bk. II, lines 7876-915 (pp.369-71).

at Troy, but explains he has been ill. Guido makes no mention of the Greeks' response to this; Lydgate makes a point of stressing both their understanding and their full acceptance of his excuse. Guido ends his account of Palamides' arrival at this point, with the Greeks asking him to become one of their council. Lydgate inserts a passage which describes how Palamides always perseveres to the finish with anything that he starts, 'Maugre his foon' (line 7907). Why Lydgate should be at such great pains to extol the virtues of a minor Greek hero may become clearer as my analysis progresses.

A further possible source for the unfortunate knight may be found in the work of one of Lydgate's near-contemporaries, John Gower. Gower mentions 'Palamedes' in his Balade XX, fixing him firmly in antiquity.

> Celle infortune dont Palamedes
> Chaoit, fist tant q'Agamenon chosi
> Fuist a l'empire: auci Diomedes,
> Par ceo qe Troilus estoit guerpi,
> (lines 17-20)[69]

(This misfortune by which Palamides fell, was so great that Agamemnon was chosen as the victor: also Diomedes, by whom Troilus was beaten).

As the unfortunate comrade of Agamemnon his 'infortune' is to be exiled or killed, yet he is juxtaposed with Troilus, who lost his love. This neat conflation of love and the fortunes of war is, of course, frequently at the heart of the allegory of courtly love in later medieval *dits*.[70] Thus Lydgate's Palamides can at one and the same time be a medieval knight and suffer the fate of his classical namesake. Both Gower and Lydgate, however, take pains to mention the

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[69] *John Gower*, ed. Macaulay, I, 354.

[70] Poirion, 'Traditions et fonctions du *dit poétique*', pp.147-50.

deaths of their heroes, and, of course, neither Troilus nor Palamides died as the result of a broken heart. Gower brings both Palamides and Troilus into a *ballade* whose main theme is fortune. That Palamides was, in the late Middle Ages, strongly associated with the vicissitudes of fortune is borne out later in the fifteenth century, when one Regnier Pot adopted the chequered arms of the romance knight as a visual expression of his own misfortunes.[71]

An abrupt mention is made of Palamides by the French poet Oton de Graunson. In his *Livre Messire Ode*, in a dialogue between the heart and the body, which takes place while the narrator is asleep, Graunson ends the body's speech:

> Je suis prest de tout endurer
> Et par souffrir me conforter,
> Comme faisoit Palmidés (lines 1666-68)[72]

(I am ready to endure everything and to comfort myself by suffering, as did Palamides).

The body's speech contains the very characteristic of Palamides which Lydgate adds to his Troy Book. According to Graunson, he always perseveres to the best of his ability with anything he begins:

> Mais nonobstant j'endureray,
> Trestout au mieulx que je pourray,
> La chose qu'avez entreprise
> (lines 1652-54)[73]

(But I will endure opposition, absolutely all as best as I may, [to finish] that which I have undertaken).

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[71] Gerard Brault briefly discusses the adoption of the arms fictional characters by late-medieval gentlemen, citing Pot as one example. G. Brault, *Early Blazon: Heraldic Terminology in the Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries with special reference to Arthurian Literature* (Oxford, 1972), p.54.

[72] *Oton de Graunson*, ed. Piaget, p.447.

[73] *Oton de Graunson*, ed. Piaget, p.446.

There are three possibilities regarding this Graunson/Lydgate link. First, Graunson and Lydgate may have been adopting a similar (as yet untraced) literary tradition regarding Palamides. Second, Lydgate may have been using Graunson's *Livre* as a source. Third, perhaps Lydgate and Graunson associated this particular personality trait, that of persevering in the face of adversity, with a particular historic referent, and thus added it to his literary counterpart. It is possible that this historic referent may have been a political exile of the late fourteenth century: the earl of Derby, Henry Bolingbroke.

A little later in the *Livre*, Palamides appears again as the waking narrator remarks:

> Je ressemble Palamidés
> Qui vouloit, sanz avoir partie,
> Amer tous les temps de sa vie.
> (lines 1743-45)[74]

(I resemble Palamides, who wished, without gaining thereby, to love for the whole of his life).

The two and a half thousand lines of the *Livre*, which is a *dit amoureux* in narrative couplets with intercalated lyrics, tell the story of an unrequited love. The unhappy knight in question sinks further and further into despair as time passes. He describes himself as 'Vestu de noir' (line 417), and this relentless black contrasts with Lydgate's knight 'in blake and white colour' (*Complaynt*, line 131). The central story line of both poems is the same: a knight is separated from his lady and is determined to continue in her service despite her active hostility. Graunson's

[74] *Oton de Graunson*, ed. Piaget, p.450.

poem seems to contain many of the elements which Lydgate used when he subsequently composed his *Complaynt*; further links between the *Livre* and the *Complaynt* will be explored later in this chapter.

Lydgate clearly borrows the black and white imagery for his knight from the 'Romance' Palamides, and with this character and name come the inevitable associations of shaming and treachery. He then adds, as will be explored in detail below, the Ovidian motifs of betrayal and exile. The exemplary character found in the *Troy Book* does not appear to feature greatly in the *Complaynt*, and any link to Gower's *balade* would seem to be incidental. The plight of Lydgate's knight is remarkably similar to that of the knight in Graunson's *Livre*. However, it may be that Lydgate, Gower and Graunson were invoking, by mention of Palamides, a historic referent which is unclear to modern readers. A conjectural case could be put forward that Lydgate's poem, like those of Graunson and Gower, originated in the very late fourteenth century, and that the black and white knight was none other than Henry Bolingbroke, the exiled earl of Derby.[75] Bolingbroke was the eldest son of John of Gaunt and cousin to Richard II.

Henry III, Bolingbroke's ancestor, was definitely associated, in the minds of his own court writers, with Palamides. The name Palamides appears as the title of the French romance adventures of *Guiron le Courtois*, presented by the author to Henry III. The reason for this strange title for a story which is dominated by a noble knight named Guiron, and in which Palamides puts in only a brief

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[75] For the circumstances surrounding Bolingbroke's exile, see N. Saul, *Richard II* (London, 1997), pp.394-402.

appearance, is explained in the Prologue which is found in eight of the numerous extant manuscripts. The narrator announces that his title is chosen in honour of King Henry III:

> 'Quel nom li porrai je donner? Tel comme il plera a mon seigneur le roy Henri. Il vuelt que cestui mien livre, qui de courtoisie doit nestre, soit apelés Palamedes pour ce que si courtois fu toutevoies Palamedes que nus plus courtois chevalier ne fu au temps le roy Artus et tel chevalier et si preu comme l'estoire vraie tesmoigne. Or donc, quant a mon seigneur plest que cest mien livre commence el nom du bon Palamedes, et je le vueil commencier, puis qu'il plest au noble roy Henri mon seigneur.'[76]

(What name may I give to it? One that will please my lord King Henry. He wishes that this book of mine, which must be born of curtesy, be called Palamides, because Palamides was so courteous in all way that there was no more courteous knight in the time of Arthur, and that he was such a knight and so bold, the story bears true witness).

He is writing to please Henry, and Henry is here pleasingly juxtaposed with the great King Arthur and his most worthy knight Palamides. The connection of kingship between Arthur and Henry is obvious; the connection between Palamides and Henry is obscure, but nonetheless obviously existed. Perhaps Henry Bolingbroke appropriated the association for himself. It is more likely than unlikely that a version of *Guiron* was known to Lydgate, and the most probable point of connection would have been the Lancastrian household, home to one branch of Henry III's descendants.[77] John

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[76] R. Lathuillère, *Guiron le Courtois: Étude de la tradition manuscrite et analyse critique* (Geneva, 1966), p.180.

[77] In the thirteenth century, the English king Edward I commissioned a copy and the number of fourteenth and fifteenth-century manuscripts produced across Europe attest to the popularity of *Guiron* in the late Middle Ages. See Lathuillère, *Guiron*, p.13 and pp.35-96. One manuscript, Paris, Bibiothèque Nationale, français no.356-57, which dates either from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, provides evidence of continuing popularity in England. The manuscript has rubric which states that the copy was made for the

Norton-Smith argues that Lydgate was at Oxford in 1398, at the same time as the future Henry V and when, of course, the young Henry's father was exiled in Paris.[78] Bolingbroke, in exile and having suffered the loss of his property (seized in his absence following the death of Bolingbroke's father, John of Gaunt, by Richard II), shares many of the circumstances of Lydgate's knight. Gower, of course, dedicated a number of his works to Henry IV, and received the 'SS' collar of the Lancastrian household from Henry as earl of Derby in 1393.[79] In including Palamides in his balade XX he may have been alluding to Henry.[80]

'tres noble et puissant prince mon seigneur le roy Henry, jadis roy d'Engleterre'. Lathuillère, *Guiron*, pp.66-67.

[78] See Pearsall, *Lydgate*, pp.29-33.

[79] The collar is also featured on Gower's tomb. See Macaulay, *Gower*, vol. 4, p.xvi. Planché argues that Gower's collar, which is one of the earliest extant examples of the Lancastrain SS collar, provides a clue as to the design of the peculiar collar itself. Gower's collar has a swan pendant (the swan being the emblem of the de Bohun family; Planché concludes that it is the S-shape of the swan itself which provides the inspiration for the design of the collar. See Planché, *The Pursuivant of Arms*, p.188. One of the most important works which Gower dedicated to Henry was his *Confessio Amantis*, which had originally been dedicated to Richard. For the chronology of Gower's three recensions of the *Confessio* (1390 dedicated to Richard, 1390-92 and 1393 dedicated to Henry), see *Confessio Amantis: John Gower*, ed. R.A. Peck (London, 1968), p.xxxii. The collar was received from Henry presumably in return for his copy of the *Confessio*. For a recent discussion of the evolution of the SS collar, see D. Fletcher, 'The Lancastrian collar of Esses' in *The Age of Richard II*, ed. J.L. Gillespie (Stroud, 1997), pp.196-97. Fletcher proves that the collar was used as early as 1371, and that it was the emblem of the Lancastrians before Bolingbroke.

[80] Gower's balades are enclosed by a dedication to Henry IV (i.e. Bolingbroke after he became king. See *John Gower*, ed. Macaulay, pp.lxii-lxxiii. That Chaucer also alluded to Bolingbroke in his poetry, using Bolingbroke as the model for king Emetreus in the 'Knight's Tale', has been argued most forcibly by Albert Stanburrough Cook. Cook draws attention to the many parallels between the description of Emetreus and known details from contemporary descriptions of Henry. A.S. Cook, *The Historical Background of Chaucer's Knight* (New York, 1966), pp.7-14.

Graunson, who fought on the English side in the war against France and spent much of his life in England, travelled with Bolingbroke on his expeditions to Prussia and Palestine.[81] The French knight was never able for long to occupy his own lands in Savoy; they were seized by his adversaries on the strength of treacherous allegations, in the same way that Bolingbroke's inheritance would later be seized by Richard. It is just possible, therefore, that the allusions to Palamides in the later part of Graunson's *Livre* are a means of comparing Graunson with his fellow knight-in-arms.[82] In Graunson's *Le Songe Saint Valentin*, the narrator dreams he is amongst an assembly of birds. All of the birds have chosen mates, except for one peregrine falcon. This falcon loves another falcon who 'porte la plus belle plume/Que nul oysel puisse porter' (has the most beautiful plumage [feather] it is possible for a bird to have, lines 211-12).[83] The lover is in a strange country, far from the one he loves. Is this another allusion to Henry Bolingbroke, with whom Graunson spent many years as a comrade-in-arms? Bolingbroke, as Duke of Hereford, took as his preferred badge a single ostrich feather, that which was the preferred emblem of Henry II, Henry III and later of the Black Prince (Bolingbroke's uncle); Bolingbroke clearly identified with the earlier 'Henry Plantagenet' and intended to continue the tradition of the feather himself, as heir apparent to the Plantagenet dynasty.[84]

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[81] See Piaget, *Oton de Graunson*, pp.42-43.

[82] Palamides appears twice in the *Livre*, first in a a speech made by 'corps' in the narrator's dream (line 1668) and then in the narrator's own comments after he has woken up (line 1743).

[83] *Oton de Graunson*, ed. Piaget, pp.309-23 (p.316). Although there are all kinds of birds present, the only colours Graunson refers to are black and white.

[84] Bolingbroke used the emblem of a feather entwined by a scroll which read 'soveregne'. For an illustration of this device on his seal as Duke of Lancaster, see C. Hasler, *The Royal Arms: Its Graphic*

Lydgate may well have come to know Graunson's poem through their shared connections with the Lancastrian nobility.

The circumstantial evidence in favour of Lydgate's knight (and Palamides) being Bolingbroke can be supplemented a little more. The *Complaynt* opens:

> In May, when Flora, the fressh[e] lusty quene,
> The soyle hath clad in grene, rede, and white,
> And Phebus gan to shede his stremes shene
> Amyd the Bole, wyth al the bemes bryght;
> (lines 1-4)

These lines strongly echo Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book II, lines 50-55, which read:

> In May, that moder is of monthes glade,
> That fresshe floures, blew and white and rede,
> Ben quike agayn, that wynter dede made,
> And ful of bawme is fletyng every mede,
> Whan Phebus doth his bryghte bemes sprede
> Right in the white Bole, it so bitidde,
> As I shal synge, on Mayes day the thrydde[85]

Whilst the Lydgate passage clearly borrows some of its imagery from the *Troilus*, this borrowing is selective and specific. Lydgate adds the 'stremes shene' which are 'Amyd the Bole', and these two phrases, treated as puns, could easily summon up the name of Bolingbroke ('Bole' providing the first syllable and stream = brook the second).[86] The same argument could be applied to lines 99-101:

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and Decorative Development (London, 1980), p.81. It seems to me that the 'S' of the SS collar could well have come from the initial letter of Bolingbroke's motto, 'Soveregne', rather than from the swan as Planché suggests (cf. footnote 79).

[85] *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.490.

[86] 'Bole' is being used by Lydgate in this passage in the astronomical sense of the sign of Taurus, the bull. The pun I am

But this welle that I her reherse,
So holsom was that hyt wolde aswage
Bollyn hertis and the venym per[se]

where 'welle' in Middle English represents a source of water which flows out from a spring (and therefore is a stream or brook), and when combined with 'Bollyn' (which means swollen, particularly with emotion) provides again the exiled duke's name.[87] Of course, this is mere guesswork, but punning is common in the French *dits amoureux* and also in heraldic mottoes of the late fourteenth century. The Percies of Northumberland used 'Esperance' as their motto. Richard II made great use of the crowned hart as a royal badge, punning on 'Riche herte' = Richard. Machaut and Froissart made use of anagrams, and Charles D'Orléans' employed an acrostic in one of his *ballades*.[88] As well as this pun, there is other evidence of symbolic representation of a historic referent in the *Complaynt*. The hawthorn, which occupies two full lines in the poem (lines 71-72), might well allude to the house of Lancaster. A crown and hawthorn device is attributed to

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suggesting on stream and brook is supported by the possibility of substituting brook for stream, or vice-versa, which existed from at least the ninth century. See the *Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. J.A. Simpson and E.S. Weiner, 20 vols. (Oxford, 1989), II, 584.

[87] *Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. Simpson and Weiner, XI, p.522. Such a play on words, where the patron is the well or source who will heal suffering hearts, is heavily reminiscent of a similar pun used by Watriquet de Couvin and then Machaut; cf. Chapter 2, p.73.

[88] Machaut has an anagram of his own name in the last line of his *Jugement du Roi de Behaigne*; see *Le Jugement du Roy de Behaigne*, ed. Wimsatt and Kibler, p.165 and p.490, footnote to lines 2055 ff. In his *Fonteinne Amoureuse* there is an anagram revealing the name of the Duc de Berry; see *The Fountain of Love*, ed. Barton Palmer, p.92. Froissart inserts an anagram of his own name and that of 'Marguerite' in lines 3386-89 of his *Espinette Amoureuse*; see *L'espinette amoureuse*, ed. Fourrier, p.147 and p.184, note to lines 4179-88. Steele draws attention to the acrostic of Anne Molins in *The English Poems of Charles of Orleans*, ed. R. Steele and M. Day, 2 vols., EETS 215 and 220 (London, 1941-46), p.xxxv.

Henry VI.[89] The hawthorn was closely associated with Philippa of Hainault (see the many references in Froissart's poetry to the 'aube épine').[90] Philippa was John of Gaunt's mother and Henry IV's grandmother, and the emblem was probably adopted by her Lancastrian descendants.[91] If Bolingbroke may be associated, therefore, with Lydgate's hawthorn, then the *Complaynt* also provides a possible description of his location.

The park in which Lydgate's narrator finds himself is, as mentioned above, 'walled with grene stone' and is reminiscent of just such a wall in Chaucer's *Parlement of Fowls*.[92] Bolingbroke was exiled

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[89] For an illustration of the crown and hawthorn device, see S. Friar, *Heraldry for the Local Historian and Genealogist* (Stroud, 1992), p.224.

[90] For examples of the 'aube épine' in Froissart see line 61 of *Le Paradis d'Amour* in *Le Paradis d'Amour/l'Orloge Amoureus*, ed. P.F. Dembowski (Geneva 1986), line 263 of *Le Joli Mois de Mai* (in *'Dits' et 'Débats'*, ed. Fourrier, pp.129-46), lines 384-86 and line 619 of *L'Espinette Amoureuse* (*L'Espinette Amoureuse*, ed. Fourrier).

[91] A legend also existed which claimed that the crown of England was found under a hawthorn tree after the battle of Bosworth (1485), and that it was for this reason that Henry VII used the crown and hawthorn device. This story was still being repeated as fact in the nineteenth century. See e.g. J. Gairdner, *History of the Life and Reign of Richard the Third* (Cambridge, 1898), p.244. However, Henry Duke draws attention to an entry in the accounts of the clerk of works who was responsible for work carried out in 1447-48 on the castle of Plesaunce, one of the residences of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou. The entry refers to an order for glass which was to be 'efluoshyd with flowers of the King and Queen, viz, with hawthorn budd and margaritis'. As Duke points out, 'This entry explodes the popular connection between hawthorn badge and Bosworth'. See *Hasted's History of Kent Part 1: The Hundred of Blackheath* (London, 1886), ed. H.H. Duke, p.56. I am indebted to Joanna Chamberlayne for drawing this entry to my attention. It seems, therefore, that rather than finding the crown of England under a tree, Henry Tudor appropriated both hawthorn device and crown from Richard III.

[92] See *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*, ed. Phillips and Havely, line 122, p.239. As Havely points out, Chaucer's walled garden complete with a gate whose double inscription both invites and repels the narrator/dreamer, owes much to Dante's *Inferno* (footnote to line 123-40). Lydgate's walled park offers no such obvious duplicity.

to Paris, and was loaned by the Valois royalty the Hôtel Clisson as his residence, on the Ile de la Cité.[93] Paris was, of course, at this time a walled city, but its 'moat' was the river Seine, which was notoriously prone to flooding. Because of this, the city wall could sustain moss and algae; it was a wall of 'grene stone'. Chaucer's *Parlement* has provoked various explanations as to its 'occasion', a frequent common denominator being that the 'occasion' involves negotiation towards the potential marriage between an English noble and a French princess.[94] Such negotiations could well have taken place in Paris. However, short of finding something as concrete as an anagram within Lydgate's poem, there can be no certainty regarding the knight's identity.

With exile as a principal theme, the *Complaynt* demonstrates an obvious affinity to other exile poems such as the *Livre Messire Ode*, the *Bleu Chevalier* and Machaut's *Fonteinne*. Whilst Chaucerian borrowings in the *Complaynt* cannot be denied, there is clear evidence that Lydgate had other sources on which to draw.

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[93] For Bolingbroke's stay at the Hôtel du Clisson, see Saul, *Richard II*, p.405. Chaucer scholars may wish to note another point of circumstantial information. A 'clisse' in medieval French was an open wickerwork framework, fitting very closely the description of the 'house of Rumour' in Chaucer's *House of Fame*. Used as an outer framework for bottles, there was no sense in which a 'clisse' was a very solid object. (Examples of usage from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries can be found in the *Trésor de la Langue Française: Dictionnaire de la langue du XIXe et du XXe siècle*, ed. P. Imbs (Paris, 1971)). Chaucer hints that the house might stand near a river by his remark 'had hyt stonde upon Oyse', but at the same time the river Oise, at least, can be ruled out (*House of Fame*, line 1928, see *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.370). Could it be that his house of Rumour is based on a pun on the Hôtel Clisson in Paris, and that Chaucer thus identifies Rumour with the French aristocracy?

[94] See Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, pp.256-61.

7. *Knights at the Fountain: the influence of Machaut's Fonteinne Amoureuse*

Lydgate's knight is not only described as being pale and dressed in black and white; his noble appearance and his rightful place in the world are also emphasised:

> But first yf I shal make mencyon
> Of his persone and pleynly him discrive,
> He was in soth, without excepcion,
> To speke of manhod, oon the best o[n]-lyve.
> For of his time and of his age also
> He proued was there men shuld haue ado.
>
> For oon the best[e] ther of brede and lengthe
> So wel ymade by good proporcion,
> Yf he had be in his delyuer strengthe
> (lines 155-164)

Chaucer's knight (in the *Duchess)*, 'al in blak', does not match up to Lydgate's excellent example of 'manhod'. The black knight is simply described: 'wonder wel-farynge', 'ryght yong', 'Upon hys berd but lytel her' (lines 452-57).[95] Nor, indeed, does Froissart's *chevalier* provide a sufficiently elevated model for Lydgate's suffering lover. It is to Machaut's *Fonteinne* that Lydgate is indebted for a great man who is, for the moment, not at his best. Never in all his life, the narrator of the *Fonteinne* tells his audience, has he seen 'Maniere qui fust plus jolie'. Physically there are no flaws, the knight is 'Bien façonnés en tous endrois', he is 'Gens, joins, jolis, jeunes,

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[95] *Chaucer's Dream Poetry,* ed. Phillips, and Havely, p.72. I would argue for an obvious and strong resemblance, however, between Chaucer's knight and the black knight of Oton de Graunson's *Livre.* The two poems also share the chess motif.

et cointes'.[96] It is true that he is a little pale ('un po palette') because he has been awake lamenting all night long, if not for this he would have had colour enough ('couleur assez').[97] There is no obvious translation of Machaut by Lydgate, but there does seem to be a direct borrowing of ideas.

The attitude of the knight towards his predicament finds precedents in Graunson's *Livre* and also in Chaucer's 'Complaint to his Lady'.[98] The knights in these poems are all prepared to serve an uncaring lady. However, the bleak hopelessness which is evident in Lydgate and Graunson is avoided by Chaucer, who ends his poem with the knight still seeking a change of heart in his lady:

> And therfor, swete, rewe on my peynes smerte,
> And of your grace graunteth me some drope,
> For elles may me laste no blis ne hope,
> Ne dwelle within my trouble careful herte.
> (lines 124-27)[99]

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[96] The *Fonteinne*, in this passage, is strongly reminiscent of Watriquet de Couvin's 'Du Connestable de France'. Compare these two passages:

Connestable lines 43-46, (*Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, p.44):
> Onques n'issi hors de sa bouche
> Vilains mos; maniere avoit douche,
> Plus que dame ne damoisele.

Fonteinne lines 1101-03 (*Fountain of Love*, ed. Barton Palmer, p.148):
> Mais onques en jour de ma vie
> Maniere que fust plus jolie
> En homme n'en femme ne vi

[97] *The Fountain of Love*, ed. Barton Palmer, lines 1101-117, pp.148-50.

[98] *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, pp. 642-43.

[99] *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.643.

Graunson's black knight can envisage no happy outcome, and is determined to serve his lady faithfully; he will consent to any outcome, including that of his own inevitable death:

> Pour la servir jusqu'a la mort
> Et ad ce faire suis d'accord
> (lines 2406-08)

(to serve her until death and I consent to do this)

Lydgate's black and white knight adopts an almost identical, deeply pessimistic pose; he is resolved to die willingly if that is what his lady wishes:

> Hit sitte me not her doom to disobey
> But at her lust wilfully to dey
> (lines 552-53)

The attitude of these knights to their respective 'ladies' presents what could almost be described as an anti-image of knighthood. Froissart's blue knight complains that he can in no way lead the life for which he feels himself to be destined; he cannot prove himself as a knight from his position of exile. Both Graunson and Lydgate provide portraits of knights who are completely acquiescent to their gloomy fate; these are knights who are displaced and, in the sense that they can neither fight nor command military support, disarmed.

Narratorial response in the *Complaynt* does not seem to follow a Chaucerian pattern. Lydgate's narrator decides that the most fitting course of action is to write down the knight's complaint as it happens, in order, he tells the reader/listener, 'youre hertis to dysporte' (line 602). The scribal nature of this activity is in contrast to the emphasis given to orality by Chaucer's narrator, who

declares that he can remember his knight's complaint verbatim, 'ful wel I kan/Reherse hyt' (lines 473-74), and proceeds forthwith.[100] In Machaut's *Fonteinne* the narrator explains how, close to the knight's window, he could hear well, and so gathered what he needed to write:

> ..... je pris mon escriptoire,
> Qui est entaillié d'ivoire,
> Et tout mes outils pour escrire
> La complainte qu'il voloit dire.
> (lines 229-32)[101]

(I took my writing table, which is detailed in ivory, and all my things for writing the complaint he wished to tell).

Lydgate dedicates no less than five stanzas to the problems he will face in trying to do literary justice to the complaint. This emphasis on the narrator as scribe displays French influence, or at the very least a strong awareness of the conventions of the French *dits amoureux*. When a study is made of the lady who is the cause and instigator of the knight's suffering, it is again the influence of the French *dits* which is found to dominate Lydgate's poem.

8. Lydgate's unladylike lady: French precedents

There is no precedent in Chaucer for Lydgate's unappealing lady. Although she is described as having 'bounte, beaute, shappe, and semeliheed', coupled with 'prudence' and 'wit', she seriously lacks both pity and good judgement. Whilst her lack of pity may be condoned (after all, why should she acquiesce to the advances of an unwanted knight?), she has exiled 'Routhe', 'Pite' and 'Mercie'.

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[100] *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*, ed. Phillips and Havely, p.72.

[101] *Fountain of Love*, ed. Barton Palmer, p.100.

With 'Dysdeyne' as her chamberlain and 'Mistryst', 'Fals-Suspeccion' and 'Mysbeleve' as her advisers she is deliberately pursuing a course which will 'mordre trouth' (lines 497-508). According to the knight, she has been misled by 'tales that men feyne'. Her behaviour, however, goes far beyond ladylike disdain for the knight (who is, it becomes clear as the poem unfolds, 'trouthe' himself):

> And most of al[le], yit I me compleyn,
> That she hath ioy to laughen at my peyn.
>
> And wilfully hath my deeth [y]sworne
> (lines 447-49)

This deliberate drive by the lady towards the knight's destruction finds a precedent in Graunson's gloomy *Livre*. There, too, the knight submits himself and his fate to one who is 'consentant de ma mort' (line 2092). In the long tradition of the *dit amoureux*, stretching from the *Rose* to Chaucer, the lady has every right to refuse amorous advances. Her behaviour, however, has to remain within the bounds of *gentillesse* so that, because of her worthiness to be loved, the reader/listener is able to regard her as a worthy cause for suffering. Lydgate himself provides examples of such a virtuous lady in his 'The Floure of Curtesy', which is also a story of unrequited love. In this poem, the narrator perceives himself as being of lower social status than his lady, and therefore he can never hope to achieve his desires. The lady, however, is truly faultless. In her, 'bountie and beautie are together knytte'.[102] The narrator's anxiety is simply that his description will not do her justice;

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[102] *Minor Poems*, ed. MacCracken, II, 410-18 (line 171).

> And though that I, for very ignoraunce,
> Ne may discryue her vertues by and by
> (lines 225-26)

As in the *Complaynt*, the lover will remain faithfull despite his lack of hope.

The motivations of the two knights in the *Complaynt* and the *Floure* remain rather different; the black and white knight is simply single-minded, the lover of the 'floure' has chosen the very best lady as the object of his affections, and therefore has no wish to seek elsewhere. In the *Complaynt*, as in Graunson's *Livre*, the knight remains faithful to the death, regardless of the lady's bad behaviour, lack of judgement and deliberately cruel response. The reader/listener might question the knight's ability to form sound judgements, and certainly will find it difficult to understand why he should wish to engage in such a one-sided courtly affair. His behaviour may be beyond reproach, but the lady's is such that he should be able to withdraw from his position of loyalty. Machaut's king of Bohemia gives just such a judgement to a similarly suffering knight, explaining that in a situation where the lady is unworthy and where there is no hope for the future (a fickle love could never be trusted), loyalty is misplaced.[103] Lydgate's narrator avoids any comment, except to exhort pity from his audience for anyone who is suffering as the result of another's slander. He attempts neither to condemn nor to defend the lady.[104] She is, of course, not the centre

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[103] *Jugement du roy de Behaigne*, ed Wimsatt and Kibler, lines 1941-85, pp.156-60. The king's judgement is in line with that of Reason. Reason, however, considers earthly love to be folly (see pp.146-48).

[104] He may, however, have known that in the eyes of many members of his audience she was indefensible. William Calin points out that Chartier's lady in *La Belle Dame sans mercy* was regarded as a 'monster' by certain contemporary writers. Her only crime, however,

of attention at all; it is the knight who must remain firmly in the spotlight. Again, here, Lydgate is not following Chaucer's model, but finds his inspiration in French sources. The amount of physical space which Lydgate allows his lady to occupy within the text is indicative of yet another example of the monk's familiarity with the practices of the French *dits amoureux* writers.

In an analysis of the trilogy of the *Bleu Chevalier*, the *Duchess* and the *Complaynt* it becomes apparent that in the poems of Lydgate and Froissart much less space is taken up by the literary lady than in Chaucer's *Duchess*. Chaucer's knight has seen his lady 'Carole and synge', 'Lawghe and pley' and 'goodely speke'.[105] The eulogy which describes her superlative virtues and physical appearance extends over more than two hundred lines. Froissart's *chevalier*, however, provides no physical description of his lady, and refuses when asked to reveal her name. The attribute of the lady which is stressed in the brief description of her virtues is that she is 'loielle'. The un-ladylike lady who troubles Lydgate's black and white knight has other qualities, but again no physical description. Although she has 'so much suffisaunce/Of al vertues' she has assembled around her 'Daunger', 'Dysdeyne', 'Mystryst', 'Fals-Suspecion', 'Mysbeleve' and 'Dispite'; these negative aspects, personified to appear separate from the lady, are the cause of the

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was that she systematically refused the lover's advances. W. Calin, *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England* (Toronto, 1994), p.252.

[105] *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.340 (lines 848-50).

knight's problems.[106] She is, in fact, even more abstract than Froissart's un-named 'dame'.

The lady is, of course, physically absent from these *dits*. Whilst ostensibly the subject of the lover's suffering, she is little more than a character-sketch. The authors intend that the reader/listener's attention should remain focused upon the emotions of the knight himself. This emphasis upon the concerns of the masculine is in line with Simon Gaunt's description of the preoccupations voiced in the courtly poetry of the medieval *cansos*. These poems are concerned with the 'articulation of male desire'.[107] Therefore, whilst it is obvious that the subject of the knight's complaint in the *Livre*, the *Bleu Chevalier* and the *Complaynt* is a 'lady', it is possible to argue that she is simply part of an exclusively masculine discourse. However, by using the allegory of love to depict exile, Graunson, Froissart and Lydgate are producing a sub-text for their works which would be more appropriate for a *chanson de geste*, with its heroes, tales of war and 'chivalric warrior-bonding'.[108] In these courtly *dits amoureux*, where an exiled knight is the central subject ('hero') of the poem, the 'masculine space' of a remembered or potential battlefield is ever-present.[109]

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[106] *Poems*, ed. Norton-Smith, lines 496-511, p.61. These negative aspects, represented in the poem as those who influence the lady, find a parallel in the much-distrusted counsellors of Richard II. Saul quotes a typical contemporary account of Richard's misrule, which says that the king had 'spurned the advice of the dukes and the wiser heads in favour of reliance on younger lords and others who were inexperienced in weighty decisions'. See Saul, *Richard II*, p.435.

[107] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp.134-35 (p.135).

[108] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p.69.

[109] The phrase is that of Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p.26.

Thus the masculine homosocial desire of the *chanson de geste*, which is often explicitly directed towards victory in battle, is coupled with the exclusively male desire of these *dits amoureux*, which is implicitly seen to be directed towards a return to the knights' homelands. Using Gaunt's theories, a case can be argued that this deliberate generic collusion serves to heighten the status of the knights portrayed. Gaunt argues that the troubadours who performed the *cansos* were brandishing their songs at one another in much the same way as a hero in the *chanson de geste* brandished his sword; linguistic prowess was seen as a sign of masculinity.[110] I would suggest that the literary 'heroes' of these *dits amoureux* of exile, therefore, are not merely producing a poetic *tour de force*. Their authors create 'heroes' who are attempting to construct a self-image which reflects their true status and masculinity even in exile. In this cross-generic dialogue, the *dits* poets are ensuring that the character of the masculine courtly lover associated with the *dits amoureux* is enhanced by the masculine heroic associations which may be borrowed from the 'masculine space' of the *chanson de geste*. In the *dits* of Graunson and Lydgate, the female figure who appears in the place of the customary 'virtuous' lady provides a stark constrast to the heroic and suffering knight. The lady displays a lack of 'pite', and such a lack demands a compensatory response from the reader/listener.

The (male) narrator's sympathetic reaction to the sorrowing knight's complaint is exactly that which is absent in the lady. As he describes himself bursting into tears for 'routhe' (pity), the

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[110] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp.149-50.

narrator demonstrates that he has the very virtue missing from the lady in the poem:

> The teres gan[ne] fro myn eyen reyn
> Ful pit[o]usly, for [v]ery inward routhe
> (lines 579-80)

The narrator's emotional state suggests a relationship between himself and the knight based upon 'pite'. Thus a masculine homosocial bond is described between narrator and knight where the heterosexual one (between the knight and his beloved) is missing.[111] However, the narrator's exhortation which directly preceded the complaint was to the audience, not to the lady. The narrator urged his audience to remember their own suffering, and to show 'routhe' as they listen to the complaint:

> And yf that eny now be in this place
> That fele in love brenning or fervence,
> Or hyndred were to his lady grace
> With false tonges that with pestilence
> Sle tr[e]we men that neuer did offence
> In word ne dede, ne in their entent, -
> If eny such be here now present,
>
> Let hym of routhe ley to audyence
> (lines 204-11)

Thus the complaint is framed by an appeal to the audience to identify with the knight, and by the narrator's 'appropriate' response. Those within the audience who are 'hyndred....with false tonges' will empathise, as has the narrator, with the knight. The narrator is seeking to establish a bond between the audience and the knight similar to that which he describes between himself and the knight. This bond is homosocial, one which draws men close to one

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[111] For a definition of 'homosocial' as used in this thesis, cf. Chapter Two, p.97.

another. The narrator seeks to create another bond, between himself and the audience, as he invites the audience to respond as he does to the knight's predicament. Thus the author removes any tension which might arise in the poem from potential conflicts of desire. The narrator, the knight and the audience are all treated by the author as if their desire is univocal. Gaunt describes this authorial strategy of aligning the audience with the narrator as a device frequently used by the *clergie* who wrote medieval saints' lives. Gaunt argues that 'this symbiosis of the implied audience with the narrator is by no means innocent. On the contrary, it is a highly manipulative rhetorical strategy used to create the fiction of a united textual community'.[112] The creation of such a 'textual community' was, in fact, a favourite device of the clerkly Lydgate, and one which, I shall argue in the next chapter, he also uses effectively in his *Temple of Glas*. Within the *Complaynt*, I would suggest that Lydgate is seeking to create a 'community' which will respond in a manner appropriate to the poem itself. Such a community must see itself as part courtly lover/part warrior. Excluded from this masculine 'community' is the lady. Whilst the knight may swear undying loyalty to this cruel figure, both narrator and audience might question his wisdom in continuing to serve her. The 'united' position which the author is attempting to create could well be one which produced criticism of, and opposition to, the knight's 'lady'.

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[112] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p.213.

9. 'Trouthe' vs tyranny: an appeal to Venus and 'alle trew'

The narrator's manipulation of potential audience-response becomes even more potent as the knight suddenly, mid-stanza, addresses his lady directly:

> And thus I am for my trouth, alas,
> Mordred and slayn with wordis sharp and kene,
> Gilt[e]les, God wot, of al trespas,
> And lye and blede vpon this colde grene,
> Now mercie, suete, mercye my lyves quene:
> And to your grace of mercie yet I prey,
> In your seruise that your man may dey
> (lines 512-518)

In this passage, without warning, the knight switches from his soliloquy to plead directly with 'my lyves quene' that he may die in her service. Thus, at this point in the poem, the poet confuses his audience and his lady. The first 'Now mercie' gives no indication to whom it is addressed; it is only as the line finishes that the audience realises that the addressee is the lady, and not itself. For a moment, the knight had identified his listeners completely with his lady. The following pleas become all the more potent. The lover's greatest concern is that, regardless of her subsequent decision, the lady will at least hear him out ('knowe my trouthe' line 546). He is 'vnder her legeaunce' (line 551) and will die without dissent ('Without[e] gruching or rebellion', line 554). The language of fealty employed by Lydgate in this section of the poem in fact smacks heavily of both rebellion and dissent. In the process of describing his total assent to her wishes the knight invokes all the vocabulary of an opposite position: 'her doom to dysobeye' (line 552), 'rebellion' (line 554), 'contradixion'(line 556), and makes a point of stressing 'this nys no demaunde' (line 565), just in case

his listener might have been about to draw the wrong inferences. With his final utterance he once again stresses his position and his adamant self-depiction:

> Haue her my trouth, and thus I make an [e]nde
> (line 574)

Richard Firth Green discusses at length the social and legal importance of the word 'truth' in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, arguing that it was the dominant concern in late fourteenth-century poetry. In contrast to modern notions of truth and truth-telling, Green concludes that, until the mid-fifteenth century, 'truth was a quality that resided not in the tale, but in the teller'.[113] Lydgate's personification of 'trouthe' would thus have had social, as well as literary resonances for his reader/listener. It was also not two decades earlier that 'Trouthe' had been appropriated by some of those involved in the Peasants' Revolt, which took place in 1381. Stephen Justice demonstrates, in his *Writing and Rebellion*, how 'trewthe' was a central concept in the rebel cause.[114] Perhaps such an insistence on 'trouthe' in the *Complaynt*, coupled with the language of insurgence (albeit all in

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[113] In this quotation, Green is referring specifically to the writing of Thomas Usk. However, Green argues that Usk's usage of 'truth' was representative of late-medieval understanding. Green's point regarding truth as a dominant concern in poetry of this period is inherited, as he points out, from earlier critics such as John Burrow. R.F. Green, 'Ricardian "Trouthe": A Legal Perspective' in *Essays on Ricardian Literature in Honour of J.A. Burrow*, ed. A.J. Minnis, C.C. Morse and T. Turville-Petre (Oxford, 1997), pp.179-202 (p.184).

[114] See Stephen Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (London, 1994), particularly pp.182-88. John Ball's letter, quoted by Justice on p.185, exhorts the rebels to 'Stonde manlyche togedyr in trewthe and helpeth trewthe and trewthe shal helpe yowe'. 'Trewthe' represents the contractual justice of the (rebel) countryside in opposition to the 'falsnes and gyle' of the reigning bureaucracy (Justice, p.188).

negatives), might provoke memories of the uprising. I have suggested that in the *Complaynt*, Lydgate's knight and 'trouthe' are one and the same. The 'trouthe' of the peasant rebels of 1381 has become, around 1399, Bolingbroke himself. Lydgate's identification of his patron with 'trouthe' may even have been a deliberate ploy aimed at reflecting Bolingbroke's popularity amongst all sections of society. K. McFarlane claims that in 1399 'the common people.... saw Henry as a saviour', and links this attitude to Richard II's failure since 1381 'to relieve the causes of urban and agrarian distress'.[115] However, whilst Lydgate may have been reminding his reader/listener of the knight's popularity, the poem itself is clearly intended for a courtly and exclusive audience. The prayer delivered by the narrator himself on the knight's behalf is directed to the goddess of courtly love, Venus herself.

Whilst writing up the complaint, the narrator sees 'Esperus' appear in the western sky. He makes an uncomfortable conflation of the evening star with Venus, ('I mene Venus', line 614), before launching into his prayer to Venus; his appeal mirrors the knight's earlier pleading with his lady. However, the pagan element of the poem seems to reach new heights as the narrator is found on his knees before the star/goddess.[116] Once again, Lydgate may have been

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[115] McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings*, p.49. McFarlane also alludes to the way in which Henry had previously been 'fêted by the Londoners' on the way to his exile in France (p.47).

[116] The expected and Christian equivalent can be found in Lydgate's 'A Balade in Commendation of Our Lady', where the narrator declares:

> Right thus I say, knelyng toforn hir face:
>
> O sterne of sternys with thi stremys clere,
> (lines 21-22)

The poem is included in *Poems*, ed. Norton-Smith, pp.25-29.

borrowing an idea from Graunson: this unusual notion is found in Graunson's *Livre*, where the black knight narrator expresses his own willingness to fall to his knees before a star:

> Amours, se peusse tant veiller
> Et qu'en veillant peusse espier
> Une estoille qui voulsist cheoir,
> Tost me verriés agenouiller
> Et envers les dieux supplier
> Qu'ilz me voulsissent, pourveoir.
> (lines 2412-17)

(Love, if I can watch so much, and in watching may be able to catch sight of a star which wishes to fall, you will see me completely abase myself to pray to the gods that they may consent to my seeing it).

As a worshipper, however, Lydgate's narrator has an unfortunate turn of phrase, reminding Venus of unhappier times:

> With Mars thi knyght, wh[e]n Vulcanus [yow] founde,
> And with a cheyne ynvisible yow bounde
> Togedre both tweyne in the same while
> That al the court above celestial
> At youre shame gan[ne] to laughe and smyle
> (lines 622-26)[117]

This passage draws together themes which have been reverberating throughout the poem. It repeats part of the knight's complaint, because he, too, had told the same story, albeit without the embarrassing incident of the 'shame' (see lines 386-92). As has been shown above, shaming was one of the features of most versions of Palamides' life which led to the unfortunate knight's demise. Both knight and narrator refer to Venus' plight as one which is mirrored in the knight's own suffering. This peculiar way of appealing to

[117] This prayer to Venus, in its tone of address and with its immediate mention of her adultery, is in direct contrast to the many prayers Lydgate addressed to female saints, whose chastity he stressed. See *Minor Poems*, ed. MacCracken , I, 120-44 for prayers to numerous saints, many of them female.

Venus is taken by Lydgate from Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale', but with some important changes. Chaucer describes Palamon's entry into Venus' temple thus:

> Unto the blisful Citherea benigne-
> I mene Venus, honourable and digne[118]

Lydgate's strange copy produces the conflation mentioned above:

> Esperus, the goodly bryght[e] sterre,
> So glad, so feire, so persaunt eke of chere:
> I mene Venus with her bemys clere
> (lines 612-614)

Chaucer produces a single entity named as 'Citherea' and 'Venus'. Lydgate also produces a single entity, as 'Esperus' and 'Venus' are one and the same.[119] Here 'Esperus' may also be a thinly disguised version of the motto of the Percy family of Northumberland. 'Persaunt' may carry the punning still further. At the centre of the poem, lines 330-351 contain four proper names in the following order: Palamides, Ercules, Cades and Ynde. If the first letter is taken from each word, and an extra 'r' borrowed from 'Ercules', then PErCY emerges. What part might the Northumberland family have to play in this particular drama, if one accepts the premise that this poem was written for Bolingbroke in exile? Both narrator and knight are asking for support and help; the appearance of 'Esperus' means that, at least within the fiction of the poem, there is hope of a meeting.

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[118] *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, I(A) lines 2215-16, p.55.

[119] See J.D. North, *Chaucer's Universe* (Oxford, 1988), where North quotes Cicero's *De natura deorum*: 'the star of Venus..... is called Lucifer in Latin when it precedes the sun, but Hesperos when it follows' (p.242).

John Bean argues that the swiftness with which Bolingbroke was joined by the Percy family on his arrival in England, and the equal alacrity with which he showered them with rewards, suggests that there may have been some foreknowledge of Henry's plans.[120] Before taking the crown from Richard, Bolingbroke restored to the Duke of Northumberland the wardenship of the West March (a wardenship previously held, but removed by Richard in 1396 and given to Northumberland's rival, Westmorland). This restoration was carried out, Bean points out, 'under the seal of the Duchy of Lancaster', but Henry was clearly 'employing the prerogatives of the English crown'.[121] The *Complaynt*, if the identity of the knight could but be proven, would argue strongly for the Percies' complicity with Henry while he was still in France, and add much to Bean's argument. Then, perhaps, the 'Hert of stele' of line 641, might be accepted as an allusion to Richard himself.[122]

Within the fictional world of the *Complaynt* as well as in the 'real' world of Richard and Bolingbroke, the knight in exile remains in danger. Lydate describes how Palamides, the 'trewe man' (line 331), died as the result of envy and treachery. 'trwe Adon' (line 386) was killed by a boar. 'Trouthe' will suffer a similar fate, if

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[120] If John Harding's chronicle is to be believed, then the Percies protested at Henry's seizure of the crown after he had sworn an oath 'to claim no more than his mother's inheritance, his father's lands, and those of his wife'. See Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, pp.192-93.

[121] J.M.W. Bean, 'Henry IV and the Percies', *History* 44 (1959), 212-27. The quotations are all from p.220. Although Bean's work is now some forty years old, it is still accepted by subsequent criticism as accurate research into the Percy annals. See, for example R.R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owen Glyn Dwr* (Oxford, 1995), where Bean's account is incorporated unquestioningly (p.382).

[122] If this is the case, then the narrator's hope that true lovers may 'her hert breke' (line 662) carries sinister overtones, where the 'hert' (Richard) is that which is to be broken.

his lady has her way. The 'true' motif is part of another device used by the narrator in an attempt to gain the sympathy and empathy of his audience. The single examples of 'true men' are suddenly expanded in the hope the narrator has, as he goes home to bed, that 'alle trew, that be with Daunger shent' may be cured by 'mercie' (lines 646-651):

> Preying thus in al my best entent
> That al[le] trew, that be with Daunger shent,
> With mercie may, in reles of her peyn,
> Recured be er May come eft a[g]e[y]n.
>
> And for that I ne may noo lenger wake
> Farewel ye louers al[le] that be trewe,
> Praying to God, and thus my leve I take
> (lines 648-54)

Lydgate's stanza is strongly reminiscent of the close of Froissart's *Bleu Chevalier*.[123] Froissart's narrator, too, extends the concern he has for his knight to all 'les loyaus servans', praying to the god of love for 'tous les vrais amans':

> Et Bonne Amour qui tamaint coer pourvoit
> Et qui moult bien les loyaus servans voit,
> Reconforter voeille, la ou qu'il soit,
> Le chevalier,
> Et a tous ceuls et celles qui l'ont chier
> Voeille acomplir aussi leur desirier.
> Ensi me parc droit ci de mon dittier,
> Car il est tamps,
> Mes je suppli pour tous les vrais amans
> Au dieu d'Amours qu'il lor soit confortans,
> Ensi qu'il scet que leur besoings est grans
> En pluisours cas.
> (lines 493-504)

(and Good Love, who sees into so many hearts, and who sees very well loyal servants, I wish you to comfort him, there where he may be, the knight, and to all those gentlemen and ladies to whom he is dear, I wish their desire may be accomplished. So I leave my ditty right

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[123] In the penultimate stanza of his 'Complainte Amoureuse de Sainct Valentin', Graunson also uses this device. See Piaget, *Oton de Graunson*, p.486.

here, because it is time, but I pray for all true lovers to the god of Love that he may be comforting to them when he knows that their need is great in many cases).

Froissart's 'dieu d'Amours', to whom the narrator prays, is transposed by Lydgate simply into 'God'. Lydgate's 'alle trewe' parallels Froissart's 'loyaus servans', who in turn can be associated with the loyal blue knight. The prayer of Froissart's narrator, that his 'loyaus servans' may gain comfort and 'leur desirier', is echoed in Lydgate's prayer that 'alle trewe' may find 'reles of her peyn'. In appealing to their respective deities on behalf of all those included within the words 'servans' and 'trewe', the narrators are clearly attempting to engage the empathy of those for whom they intercede. The prayers of the narrators make explicit their own desire, which is that the desire of their respective knights should be fulfilled. By drawing obvious parallels between the plight of the suffering knight and potentially similar problems amongst the audience, the sympathy of the audience is also sought for the exiled knight. Lydgate's narrator hopes

> That eche of yow may haue suche a grace,
> His ovn lady in armes to embrace
> (lines 657-58)

The outcome for his audience thus would parallel, if prayers for both audience and knight are answered, the only happy resolution for the black and white knight. On the surface, these lines would seem to present a self-evident state of affairs; the conceit of suffering lovers is simply depicted and the narrator hopes that those separated may be able to come together. However, the writer clearly does not think this is simple enough, and goes on to explain himself:

I mene thus, that in al honeste,
Withoute more, ye may togedre speke
Whatso y[e] list[e] at good liberte,
That eche may to other her hert breke,
On Ielousye oonly to be wreke,
That hath so longe of malice and envie,
Werred Trouthe with his tiranye
(lines 659-65)

One might read the first of these lines as the monk's hasty retraction of what could be construed as a blessing on physical union in lines 657-658, yet in the context of this poem's conceit this is not applicable, as there is no question of a lack of propriety. If a political allegory is applied, a rather different reading emerges, where 'alle trew' are the supporters of, or those associated with, 'trouthe'. It is they who are not free to speak together 'at good liberte'. The action which the narrator imagines the 'alle trew' to take is one of vengeance against 'Ielousye' and 'his tiranye'. The only 'tyranny' the reader/listener has hitherto encountered in the poem is that of the knight's lady. Now, the tyrannical figure is unmistakeably male, and is a direct substitute for the lady; both she and 'Ielousye' have 'werred trouthe' (the knight). With this mention of 'werred', Gaunt's 'masculine space' of the battlefield is once again invoked and adds a violent dimension to the theme of revenge ('wreke').

Revenge is not suggested in relation to the lady, however, but against the personified vice of 'Ielousye'. Nonetheless, the vice of tyranny shared by Ielousye and the lady bring them together as the opponents of the knight. Given the theme of exile in the poem and its implicit association with the *chansons de geste*, the vice of tyranny thus encompasses the body of the opposition. In this final stanza (envoy excluded) the language employed by Lydgate is

reminiscent of Gower's account of Henry's accession and Richard's deposition.[124] In his 'Cronica Tripertita' Gower explains how Richard's motivation for the exile of Henry was jealousy provoked by Henry's greater popularity and prowess. Both Richard and his reign are described by Gower as 'tyrannice'.[125] Within the *Complaynt*, therefore, as tyranny and lady become one, the tyrannical Richard may be seen to have been placed in the position of the absent and excluded 'lady'.

Lydgate's *Complaynt* thus aims to solicit sympathy and support for 'trouthe', whilst at the same time calling into question the continued support for, and 'seruise' in, an unworthy cause. 'Alle trwe men' will be on the side of 'trouthe'. If this poem may be read as an appeal by Henry Bolingbroke to the Percies of Northumberland, then it must also assumed that the Percies, familiar with the courtly tradition of the *dits amoureux*, would have been able to interpret its message. Such a message is far more difficult for late-twentieth

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[124] The two-stanza envoy may be part of an overall numerical plan which Lydgate applied to the *Complaynt*. The first section of the poem, which lasts until the knight begins to speak, is 31 stanzas long. The knight's complaint consists of 51 stanzas, and the final section is 13 stanzas plus the two stanzas of the envoy. Thus the centre section of 51 stanzas is mirrored on each side, either by 31 reversing to become 13, or by its own numbers reversing to become 15. 13 and 31 are prime numbers. The total number of stanzas is 97, also a prime number. Should the reader have any further doubt about Lydgate's deliberate use of number here, the knight is introduced on line 131, which might be seen to contain all the components of one of the stanza patterns (that using 13 and 31).

[125] See *Gower*, ed. Stockton, for the 'Cronica Tripertita'. For the references to Richard's motive of jealousy, see part 3, lines 85-121 (pp.314-15). Tyranny is a constant motif which Gower associates with Richard in the 'Cronica'. See, for example, part 3, line 282 (p.320) or the gloss to lines 314ff, (p.321). A contemporary fourteenth-century account of Richard's downfall, that of Thomas Walsingham, describes at length how Richard began 'to tyrannise his people'. See Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, pp.70-77. Given-Wilson provides numerous other references to Richard's tyranny from contemporary chronicles.

century reader/listeners, unused to 'reading' heraldic puns and emblems, to discern. Lydgate could, indeed, have been writing under a 'pastoral veil'.[126]

10. A theoretical conclusion: no threat to the established order

This chapter has related Lydgate's *Complaynt* to the French *dit amoureux* tradition, and has shown how that tradition, in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, drew heavily on conventional themes, such as that of the pastoral. Lydgate's 'pastoral' *dit*, the *Complaynt of a Loveres Lyf*, may well be the earliest extant example of Lydgate's courtly verse, but it demonstrates many of the traits which the poet was to continue to develop throughout his literary career. His involvement in current affairs continued to grow as Henry IV, and then Henry V came to the throne of England. Even at the early stage of Lydgate's involvement with the Lancastrians which I have argued the *Complaynt* represents, the impact of his verses may have had nationwide implications. Lydgate's continuing association with the Lancastrian court after Henry's successful usurpation suggests that both poet and patron were aware of the potential of literature to influence events.[127] The

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[126] The phrase is Annabel Patterson's. She draws the connection between the experience of writing 'under hard lords' and the necessity of writing 'under a pastoral veil', where explicit reference or allusion could lead to persecution. This connection could equally well be applied to Bolingbroke's plight and Lydgate's *Complaynt*. Patterson, 'Re-opening the Green Cabinet', p.66.

[127] Although it is clear that Henry took the throne by force, his insistence upon establishing a legitimate claim included setting up 'a commission of academics and other churchmen to devise arguments and procedures for the transferral of royal power'. See Ormrod, *Political Life*, p.80. It would seem that Henry attached great

unified, androcentric interests which are represented in the *Complaynt* suggest a work uncomplicated by the tensions which Lee Patterson found in the later *Siege of Thebes*. The poem may well be a direct reflection of Lydgate's reaction to current situations. The deposition of Richard II could, perhaps, have been welcome to Lydgate; the monk would not have remained unmoved by Richard's recent treatment of Thomas Arundel, the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Archbishop was the brother of one of the so-called 'Appellants' of 1386-88. The Appellants temporarily over-ruled Richard II's authority, accusing some of his closest associates of treason. When Richard took his revenge on the Appellants in 1397, the Archbishop was exiled and his brother executed.[128] It is possible to argue that the structure of the *Complaynt* gives an indication of Lydgate's own political sympathies.

I shall propose a reading of *Complaynt* of the kind discussed in chapter one, and apply the theories of first Simpson, and then Gaunt to Lydgate's poem. Simpson demonstrated that the structure of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* may be representative of Gower's personal support for a politics of consensus. I would suggest that Lydgate's political leanings at the time the *Complaynt* was written seem to endorse a centralist form of government, but one in which the ruler acknowledges to some degree his dependence upon his peers.[129] The

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importance to the authority of the written word, and Ormrod attributes his success in establishing Lancastrian rule to this acknowledgement of the importance of a 'legalistic' settlement.

[128] See N. Saul, *Richard II*, pp.377-78.

[129] My argument is in line with that applied by Rosamund Allen to the *Siege of Thebes*. Allen suggests that 'two of Lydgate's explicit themes in the *Siege* are the maintenance of cordial relations among those in positions of power and the mutual co-operation between monarch and populace, with the initiative borne by the monarch'. R.

object of the poem, in seeking support from the reader/listener for the black and white knight, suggests such a dependence. It could also be argued that the outer narratorial frame of the *Complaynt* is as crucial to the reader/listener's response as is the beautiful complaint of the knight himself. Therefore both parts of the poem work together to achieve the desired outcome. This structure might be seen to provide a reflection of consensual politics, where an inter-dependency is suggested between ruler and ruled. However, it could equally well be argued that the sheer volume of the knight's contribution means that any move from centralist to consensual politics is minimal; the central position remains firmly dominant. No dialogue exists, such as can be found in the *Confessio*, to suggest alternative perspectives. The narrator does not explicitly question the knight's stance; sympathy is offered, not censure or even advice. The structure of the work suggests that, whilst it must be acknowledged that the central figure needs the support of his reader/listener, the importance of that central figure (as represented both in his monologue and in the narrator's undivided attention) is paramount. The structure also works to illustrate a desired outcome in the 'real' world.

The tyrannical lady, as the object of desire, is the central subject of the knight's complaint. However, her fearful position is occupied when the dreamer awakes by tyrannical 'Ielousye'. 'Ielousye' is not, however, a central subject or the object of desire, but exists only in a few lines as the adversary of 'alle trew'. 'Ielousye' has effectively been removed from a powerful,

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Allen, '*The Siege of Thebes:* Lydgate's Canterbury Tale' in *Chaucer and Fifteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. J. Boffey and J. Cowen (London, 1991), pp.122-42.

central position to one on the periphery of the work. It could be argued that this is a literary representation of the outcome which the author is seeking in the 'real' world of late fourteenth-century England. If his reader/listener (the Percies) can be persuaded to identify with the black and white knight (Bolingbroke), then Richard's power and importance will once again be side-lined (as it was in 1386-88). That Richard is represented within the poem as an unladylike lady should, perhaps, come as no surprise.

According to Gaunt, the portrayal of gender in medieval literature will illustrate the political hierarchies pertaining in the society in which a particular work was produced (and therefore those hierarchies supported by the author and/or his patron). If Gaunt's theories are applied to the *Complaynt*, a complex interpretative situation arises, as the poem represents two situations. The *Complaynt* posits one hierarchical framework within the knight's complaint itself; the lady is all-powerful and tyrannical. However, through the knight's ambition to change his circumstances and the narrator's bid to involve the audience in this desire, another situation is imagined (in which the knight and the 'alle trew' attain the object of their desire). In the initial hierarchy, the knight offers no challenge to the lady; he only seeks her mercy. The lady herself never speaks; she exists only in masculine discourse as the object of male desire. The narrator, meanwhile, provides a second, masculine voice which complements that of the knight. A response from the audience is sought which will undermine the all-powerful 'feminine' position. I would suggest that, in using a female figure as the dominant power within the poem,

Lydgate is able to insinuate alternatives to a present political situation (Richard's rule) without threatening the very power structure which Bolingbroke sought, eventually, to take over. The defects of Richard, which must properly be described as belonging to a male subject, are represented as belonging to a lady.[130] The explicit anti-feminist thrust of the poem may then be seen as an implicit attack on Richard II's inappropriate and un-courtly political stance. Within the *Complaynt*, I would suggest that this represents an important strategem; the author is challenging a particular rule, but avoids envisaging any great change in the traditional political hierarchies. The representations of gender within the *Complaynt* therefore contribute in a subtle but forceful way to the appeal for insurrection. The way in which gendered figures are represented in the poem supports a return to a courtly status quo (in which the perfect courtly lady will not be devoid of 'pite'), not a radical departure from convention. However, an element of consensus or support will be necessary from those who can identify with the situation of the black and white knight. The conclusion which may be drawn is complementary to that which Simpson's theory produced: although the author was seeking to stress the need for co-operation and, perhaps, a more constitutionalist approach to government, it was 'compromise, not revolution, which was envisaged'.[131] The intention was not, at the time that the *Complaynt* was written, to depict a situation which called for revolutionary measures. Rather, members of the established order should take it

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[130] This is directly in line with Gaunt's arguments regarding the depiction of gender in the courtly *cansos*, where the 'inadequacies of the masculine are displaced onto women'. See Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p. 138.

[131] Simpson, *Sciences and the Self*, p.229.

upon themselves to address a problem on behalf of one of their members.[132]

The *Complaynt* was almost certainly intended to be heard by a very exclusive group of the nobility. In this work, Lydgate exploited the tradition of the *dits amoureux* and extended its generic scope. In his next *dit amoureux*, the *Temple of Glas*, the monk produced a far more complex poem. This later work, although still commissioned initially by the court nobility (I shall argue the case again for a Lancastrian link), can be demonstrated to have been intended to influence a larger audience than that which was intended for the *Complaynt*. The veiling mantle of pastoral could be allowed to fall once Henry IV was installed upon the throne of England. In its poetic complexity, however, the *Temple* poses a number of problems of interpretation for twentieth-century critics. The next chapter aims to begin the process of illuminating the *Temple of Glas*.

[132] This is very much in line with Douglas Kelly's reading of the *Bleu Chevalier*, where he argues that the poem is an enthymeme (an incomplete syllogism) and that the 'conclusion is left to whoever hears and evaluates the work'. D. Kelly, 'Imitation, Metamorphosis and Froissart's use of the Exemplary *Modus Tractandi*' in D. Maddox and S. Sturm-Maddox, *Froissart Across the Genres* (Gainesville, 1998), pp.101-18 (p.106).

CHAPTER FOUR

REFLECTIONS UPON THE *TEMPLE OF GLAS*: A *DIT AMOUREUX* AND ITS PUBLIC FORUM

Lydgate's *Temple of Glas* provides, in its form and style, an excellent example of an English *dit amoureux* of the early fifteenth century. It demonstrates clearly the fashionable criteria for a late-medieval *dit amoureux:* it has a central allegory of love, it makes use of intercalated lyric, it is clearly intended for a noble audience, it refers to a specific event and it carries a didactic message. Whilst the poetry of Chaucer may, therefore, have been a source from which Lydgate borrowed for the *Temple*, it should not be regarded as an exclusive and all-determining influence. I shall argue that Lydgate found the principal inspiration for this *dit* in the work of late fourteenth century French poets. Indeed, the *Temple* provides an opportunity to explore the way in which Lydgate contributed to a French tradition of *dits amoureux* written to celebrate royal marriages.

The *Temple* is a complex and sophisticated poem. The 'literal' interpretation of the poem was, and is, available to most reader/listeners. Additional interpretations rely upon additional knowledge, so that a smaller number of reader/listeners are able to formulate interpretations for those readings of the poem which are not obvious at the surface, literal level. Sylvia Huot has compared late-medieval audience-response to more complex examples of courtly poetry to the way in which the same audience might respond to a polyphonic motet. The various readings which may be possible for one

poem mirror the several voices found in a motet, each voice having its own distinct tune and lyrics. One or more of the motet voices may be given secular lyrics, but these are secondary in importance to the religious lyric (usually taken by the tenor).[1] Huot maintains that medieval poetry works in the same way, offering multiple interpretative solutions which take the place of the 'voices' in the motet. The educational experience and interpretative skill of the reader/listener would determine how many 'voices' (interpretative levels) might be 'heard' in a poem. As Huot makes clear, she is drawing on Kevin Brownlee's article on Machaut's Motet 15. Brownlee convincingly argues that an opposition which is explicitly stated in the motet, that between Amours and Faux Semblant, turns out to be false. A 'true' opposition is implicit, however, and is that between 'human seeming and the world of divine being'.[2] I shall posit a similar opposition for the *Temple*.

A number of voices can be detected in the *Temple*, the most obvious of which is the surface 'story' of the knight's encounter with his lady. I shall argue that this 'literal' level of the poem is important, as it is responsible for the enthusiastic and sympathetic audience response which Lydgate is seeking to achieve. That the literal interpretation carries this force suggests that a response is being sought from an audience which does not perhaps possess the interpretative skills necessary to uncover other, less obvious, voices. A second voice is provided by the didactic message

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[1] Huot, *The Romance of the Rose*, pp.317-19.

[2] K. Brownlee, 'Machaut's Motet 15 and the *Roman de la Rose*: The Literary Context of *Amours qui a le pouoir/Faus Samblant m'a deceü/vidi dominum*', *Early Music History* 10 (1991), 1-14 (p.14).

(primarily for the patron or addressee) which can be drawn from the poem. This type of poetics is very much in line with Simpson's conclusions regarding the works of Alan of Lille and Gower: these 'medieval fables of the soul' draw the reader/listener into their action 'in such a way as to reproduce problems and/or experiences within the reader'.[3] The 'enactive' nature of works which employ this technique challenges the reader/listener to employ suggested strategies. Huot's 'religious tenor' in the *Temple*, providing yet another voice, is found in the monk's implicit critique of both courtly language and love.[4] The ability to hear this voice depends upon a willingness to adopt a traditionally medieval Christian attitude towards earthly lust (personified by Venus).

As with Lydgate's *Complaynt*, lack of adequate historical and literary contextualisation has hitherto done much to hinder critical interpretation of the *Temple*. Most readings insist that the lady in the poem is married, and that she is therefore either guilty of wishing her husband dead, or in danger of entering an adulterous relationship, or both. However, such negative portrayals of the lady can be successfully challenged by exploring possible historical contexts for the poem. The *Temple* presents considerable challenges to such contextualisation, since it was probably pressed into service on a number of different (and hence variously determining) occasions.

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[3] Simpson, *Sciences and the Self*, p.120. I have discussed Simpson's theories more fully in Chapter One, pp. 36-45.

[4] Kevin Brownlee reached similar conclusions in his analysis of Christine de Pisan's *Livre du Duc des Vrais Amans*. However, Brownlee also highlights Christine's explicit condemnation of courtly love within the same work. See K. Brownlee, 'Rewriting Romance: Courtly Discourse and Auto-Citation in Christine de Pisan' in *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. J. Chance (Florida, 1996), pp.172-94.

As I shall demonstrate in this chapter, the 'customisation' of the poem which seems to occur at every usage, and the impossibility of any certainty in providing accurate dates for the earliest manuscripts, prohibits any simple correlation of poem and event. The most obvious way to begin to unravel the complex web of the poem's imagery is with a study of the lady in the temple, whose dress and motto, as well as the flowers which Venus bestows upon her, undergo significant changes in the various versions.

1. Ladies in the Temple: possible occasions for an occasional poem

John Norton-Smith draws attention to the changes in the lady's dress and motto, pointing out that as the various extant manuscripts vary in content, the *Temple* undergoes an evolution.[5] During this process, several 'versions' of the poem emerge. In the various versions, the lady's motto, the colour of her dress, and the flowers which she is given by Venus, all change. As the colour of dress and motto are the very details which the author would have been using to enshroud his historical referent, I shall argue that it is fair to assume that the referent herself changes. In this case, scribal error may be ruled out, as no amount of mis-copying could produce

[5] J. Norton-Smith, 'Lydgate's Changes in the *Temple of Glas*' in *Medium Aevum* 27 (1958) 166-72. There are seven manuscript authorities for the *Temple*: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 346; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 16; Oxford, Bodleian library, MS Bodley 638; Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS Pepys 2006; Cambridge, University Library MS Gg.4.27; London, British Museum, MS Additional 16165; Longleat, MS 258; London, British Museum, MS Sloane 1212 (fragment).

changes such as the evolution of the lady's motto from 'de mieulx en mieux malgré' to 'humblement malgré'.[6]

Views differ as to which is the earliest version of the poem. Schick and MacCracken argue that Tanner 346 is one of the oldest manuscripts and therefore represents an early copy.[7] Norton-Smith prefers to nominate Cambridge University MS Gg 4.27 (hereafter referred to as G) and British Museum MS Additional 16165 (hereafter, following Schick, referred to as S) as the most likely contenders for examples of the poem in its earliest state.[8] I intend to look for evidence for dating in the various versions of the poem, and to point out the significance of the changes made. I shall suggest that the several ways in which the lady is portrayed reveal several 'ladies', each linked to her own historic referent and her own particular predicament. To make the assumption that all versions of the poem attempt to reflect a similar situation is to inevitably produce a totalizing reading which suffers from a great deal of internal tension. Thus Anna Torti, in a reading of the poem which takes no account of the different extant versions, sees two reasons for the lady's distress: 'the marriage bond that prevents her from loving truly, and the impossibility of her true love's ever being fulfilled'.[9] In the same way, Lois Ebin describes the lady as

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[6] The reference is to line 530; *Temple*, ed. Schick, p.23.

[7] *Temple*, ed. Schick, p.xvii-xviii. MacCracken concurs with Schick in 'Additional Light on the Temple of Glas' in *PMLA* 23, New Series 16 (1908), 128-40. The manuscript is Tanner 346.

[8] *Poems*, ed. Norton-Smith, p.176. For a full description of all the manuscripts, see *Temple*, ed. Schick, pp.xvi-xxx.

[9] A. Torti, 'John Lydgate's *Temple of Glas:* "Atwixen Two so Hang I in Balaunce"' in *Intellectuals and Writers in Fourteenth-Century Europe*, ed. P. Boitani and A. Torti (Cambridge, 1985), pp.226-243 (p.229).

'subject and bound to her husband against her desire'.[10] Derek Pearsall, whilst acknowledging that different versions do exist, nonetheless treats the poem as if there were only one 'correct' version. He therefore dismisses the possibility of the poem having been written for a marriage celebration (an argument put forward by MacCracken) on the grounds that the lady is already married, and therefore an adulterous union is the only possible outcome.[11] The assumption that the lady has a husband stems from lines such as 335-33:

> For I am bounde to thing that I nold;
> Freli to chese there lak I liberte;
> And so I want of that myn hert[e] would;
> The bodi [is] knyt, al thoughe my thought be fre[12]

Nowhere in the poem, however, is it stated that the lady is married, and, as I shall argue below, other explanations are available for her lack of 'liberte'.

In Norton-Smith's 'earliest' versions of the poem, represented by G and S, it is not a simple lack of freedom which is troubling the lady. Rather she is complaining, as Pearsall points out with regard to this version of the work, 'not of the frustration of her true love by a rather vaguely identified and unmalicious husband, but violently

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[10] Ebin, *John Lydgate*, p.33.

[11] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.108. MacCracken claimed that the *Temple* was written for the marriage of William Paston and Agnes Berry. See MacCracken, 'Additional Light', 133-140.

[12] These lines are part of three stanzas missing in G and S; see my argument below.

and bitterly against "Jelusye"'.[13] These manuscripts contain four stanzas which are not found in other versions of the poem.[14] These stanzas, lines 336-360 in G and S, are, in all other manuscripts, replaced by a group of five completely different stanzas. The four stanzas of G and S summon up a register which is simply at odds with the elegant courtly language expected in a *dit amoureux*. The outcome that the lady sees for the 'the snake tortyous' (meaning 'Jelusye', line 342) is that

> Thus is he fryed in his owene gres,
> To-rent and torn with his owene rage,
> (lines 349-50)

Another 'extra' three stanzas appear later in the poem in G and S, in which the lady is again railing against the 'serpent Icalled Ielousye'. The lady exhorts Venus to punish her enemies, and although she claims not to be demanding vengeance but correction, it is clear that she would prefer Venus to be merciless:

> To chastyse hem with torment or they deye
> For here untrouthe and fals suspecyoun,
> That deme the werste, in here opynyoun,
> Withoute deserte, wherfore that ye vouche:
> To ponysshe hem dewely for here male-bouche.
> (lines 506-510)

The lady in G and S does not plead for sympathy (as in the other versions of the work) but action. What she seeks from Venus is retribution. However, she claims to be seeking a quiet life:

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[13] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.107.

[14] These stanzas are in two groups. The first group of four is exclusive to G and S. The second group of three is also found in Fairfax 16 and Bodley 638. See *Temple*, ed. Schick, p.14 and p.21.

Wher as thy hyndre wemen gilteles
Styntethe this werre and lat us leue in pes
(lines 340-341)

The mention of war and peace, coupled with the whole tone of this version of the poem might lead to the conclusion that the *Temple* is very much in the vein of Lydgate's *Complaynt*. Rather than presenting a 'love' dilemma, it introduces its audience to two sides of a situation of masculine desire. Venus, the 'knight' and the 'lady' are unanimous about what should be the outcome: the 'knight' and the 'lady' should be united. Such a resolution might indicate a *dit* such as Lydgate's *Complaynt* or Froissart's *Bleu Chevalier*, where the 'lady' represents a country to which the 'knight' should be permitted to return. The fly in the ointment, preventing such a union, is that 'Ielosye', which might refer to an amorous plight, but would also be capable of toppling kings, or could be instrumental in exiling dukes and earls. Thus the *Temple* might be read almost as a continuation of the *Complaynt*, with its main theme being exile or dispossession. If this version of the poem in G and S were the original, it might seem unlikely that what is presented is, in fact, a knight/lady relationship. However, there are other elements in the poem which would argue in favour of the subject of the work being an amorous or heterosexual relationship.

The way in which the author takes the trouble to describe the lady's dress, motto and chaplet (these are all elements which change in the various versions of the poem) suggests that a particular historic referent is being implied. In G and S, the chaplet which

Venus gives to this lady is the traditional one of red and white roses.[15] The lady is dressed in black and red, and her motto is:

In frens enbroudyt humblement magre (line 310)

It is, above all, the use of a motto here which I find problematic in adopting a reading of the *Temple* which is exclusively androcentric. If Lydgate intended to exclude the possibility of assigning a female historic referent to his lady, it seems unlikely that he would have included such a personal emblem. A personal motto was, in the later Middle Ages, a piece of property which operated in much the same way as a heraldic device: it signified a particular identity.[16] Its inclusion in the *Temple*, therefore, would seem to suggest that a particular person is being represented. In this way, a female presence must surely be signified. Moreover, in the two manuscripts under consideration the lady is given a name by Venus: line 510 reads 'And so as ye ben called Margerete'. There is a possibility, in the light of the 'daisy' poems discussed in Chapter Two, that 'Margarete'

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[15] Évrart de Conty (1330-1405), in his *Le Livre des Eschez Amoureux Moralisés*, provides a full description of Venus and her traditional flowers of red and white roses. *Évrart de Conty: Le Livre des Eschez Amoureux Moralisés*, ed. F. Guichard-Tesson and B. Roy (Montréal, 1993), p.239. Lydgate translated (as *Reson and Sensuallyte*) part of the *Eschez Amoureux*, the poem to which the *Moralisés* is a commentary. For a full study of the mythographic tradition of Venus, see M. Twycross, *The Medieval Anadyomene: A Study in Chaucer's Mythography* (Oxford, 1972). See also M. Camille, *The Gothic Idol* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.81-87 and 240-42. For a study of the birth of Venus, and her associations with lust and lechery, see S. Kay, 'The Birth of Venus in the *Roman de la Rose*', *Exemplaria* 9 (1997), 7-37.

[16] Mottoes were little used in England before the reign of Edward III. They were not hereditary, and therefore exclusivity could not be guaranteed. However, they were widely used on personal objects and were also incorporated into depictions of arms. R. Pinches, *Elvin's Mottoes Revisited* (London, 1971), p.9; J.P. Brooke-Little, *An Heraldic Alphabet* (London, 1973), p.142.

here is an allusion to some kind of 'ideal' noble attribute (punning on the valuable 'pearl'), and therefore not meant to be taken as a literal name.[17] However, the possibility of a noble lady bearing the name cannot be ruled out. The *Temple* then becomes a work which refers to a heterosexual relationship, and the central theme may, indeed, be a marriage. There are precedents among the French *dits amoureux* of poems which celebrate a marriage, so that once again it can be argued that Lydgate was drawing on a French tradition as inspiration for his work.

Norton-Smith sees the theme of marriage running through all versions of the *Temple*.[18] Three stages are postulated in the evolution of the work. In his 'early' versions, represented by G and S, he assumes the lady to be already married to someone other than the wooing knight.[19] The first five stanzas of the lady's appeal to Venus, which appear in all other versions of the poem, are absent in G and S, and in their place are four different stanzas. The lady is dressed in black, red and white (line 299) and her motto, as found in

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[17] There was a French tradition of 'Marguerite' poetry. For Froissart's 'Marguerite' poetry, cf. Chapter Two pp.70-71. Machaut provided precedents for Froissart in his 'Le Dit de la Marguerite' and 'Le Dit de la Fleur de Lis et de la Marguerite'. For 'Le Dit de la Marguerite', see *Les Oeuvres*, ed. Tarbé, pp.123-29. For 'Le Dit de la Fleur de Lis', see the appendix to *'Dits' et 'Débats'*, ed. Fourrier, pp.289-301. Deschamps contributed to the 'Marguerite' tradition with his *Lay de Franchise*, see *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Saint-Hilaire and Raynaud, II, 203-14.

[18] Norton-Smith argues that the metaphor of the chain 'is certainly meant to be distinguished from the ordinary chain of positive law (marriage)' and that Lydgate was echoing Chaucer's '"feyre cheyne of love", which, as a symbol of universal matrimony, binds together the Elements and man and woman in wedlock'. He insists, however, that Venus 'offers the lovers....a resolution which must not contradict the matrimonial bond'. See his article 'Lydgate's Metaphors', in *English Studies* 42 (1961), 90-93.

[19] *Poems*, ed. Norton-Smith, p.176.

lines 310 and 530 is 'humblement magre'.[20] Norton-Smith's 'intermediate' version is represented by Fairfax 16 and Bodley 638. Now, the lady is dressed in green and white and her motto is different at different points in the poem. At line 310 it is 'de mieulx en mieulx', whilst at line 530 it remains 'humblement magre'. The chaplet which Venus gives her consists of white and red roses. The lady who appears in this 'intermediate' version of the *Temple* is treated carefully by the author. With the most 'vindictive' part of her speech removed, she might more easily gain the sympathy of the narrator, Venus and her audience.

The version which Norton-Smith argues was Lydgate's final one is that found in Bodleian Oxford MS Tanner 346. In the same 'group' as Tanner are placed Magdalene College Cambridge MS Pepys 2006 and Longleat MS 258. In this 'final' version the lady is clothed in green and white, has for her motto 'De mieulx en mieulx' and is given by Venus a chaplet of hawthorn, not roses. The hawthorn, of course, with its white flowers and green leaves, is the same colour as the lady's garments.[21] This is the same colouring as that of the daisy (Margarete=marguerite) of Norton-Smith's 'earliest' group (G and S).

Despite the arguments of recent scholars such as Norton-Smith, I tend to favour the opinion of Schick and MacCracken that Tanner 346

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[20] For the changes as found in G and S, see *Temple*, ed. Schick, p.12 and p.23.

[21] For the significance of the hawthorn as an emblem, cf.Chapter Three, p.154-55.

is, in fact, a copy of the earliest version of the poem.[22] If Norton-Smith's ordering of the manuscripts is reversed (with 346 being the earliest and G and S the latest), the same relationship exists between the manuscripts, but the chronology is completely different. It should surely be noted that Caxton's print of 1478 is drawn from a copy which is related to Norton-Smith's Tanner group. Caxton may or may not have been aware that various versions were in circulation; what is certain is that his view of the 'correct' version produces a poem which is closest to MS Longleat 258, which in turn seems to stem from Tanner 346. Using Tanner 346 as a starting point, a genealogy can be suggested which follows the life of the *Temple of Glas* as it may have been used at Lancastrian royal weddings in the early part of the fifteenth century. This genealogy is created using internal evidence from the poem itself. Schick argues for a date for the copy in Tanner 346 very early in the fifteenth century, and such a date would coincide with a Lancastrian marriage which may have provided the impetus for the *Temple*. The astronomical allusions found in the opening lines of the poem, although somewhat confusing, may give a date of either 1400 or 1403 (the next possibility being 1419).[23]

> Whan that Lucina with hir pale light,
> Was Ioyned last with Phebus in aquarie,
> Amyd decembre, when of Ianuarie

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[22] This view is shared by Janet Wilson. See her article 'Poet and Patron in Early Fifteenth-century England: John Lydgate's *Temple of Glas*' in *Parergon - Bulletin of the Australia and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 11 (April 1975), 25-32. However, I find Wilson's argument that Lydgate was writing for an '*arriviste* reading public' untenable. There is no evidence that Lydgate was commissioned to write for such patrons, whilst there is considerable evidence of commissions from the nobility (see Chapter 1 of this thesis, pp.5-24).

[23] Schick explains why these dates are relevant; *Temple*, ed. Schick, pp.cxiii-cxiv.

Ther be kalendes of the new yere
And derk Diane, i-horned, nothing clere,
Had [hid] hir bemys undir a mysty cloude
(lines 4-9)

Johnstone Parr highlights the inconsistencies which these lines produce when an attempt is made to interpret an inferred date from the astonomical allusions. Whilst he defends Lydgate's competence in astronomical dating in other works, he argues that the astronomical indications in the opening lines of the *Temple* are seriously flawed. He points out that 'the sun is never in Aquarius in December', and this leads him to conclude that 'From this passage there is no way of determining the year of composition of the *Temple of Glas*'.[24] The problem of why it should be that a writer who was clearly competent in such matters should make this kind of mistake cannot be resolved. To arrive at a date early in the fifteenth century when 'amyd decembre.... ther be kalendes of the new yere' and a new moon ('i-horned'), the reference to 'Phebus' must be ignored (the sun is in Capricorn in mid-December). However, the structure of the poem itself might be used as an argument in support of one of these early dates; the version of the poem in Tanner is 1403 lines long. In 1403 Henry IV, after a wait of more than two years, finally managed to marry the widowed Duchess of Brittany, Joan of Navarre.[25] Moreover,

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[24] See Johnstone Parr, 'Astronomical dating for some of Lydgate's poems', *PMLA* 67 (1952), 251-58, (pp.252, 253).

[25] One novel solution to Parr's problem might be that the duplicitous imagery in the poem enables Lydgate to span the dates between Joan's leaving Brittany and finally marrying Henry in England. Lydgate mentions the moon twice, as Lucina and Diana; the dates suggested are mid-December and some time between mid-January and mid-February. Joan left Brittany in mid-December, 1402, but, owing to bad weather at sea, did not arrive in England until the 19th January, 1403. The wedding took place on the 7th of February, when Lucina (the moon) and Phebus (the sun) were in conjunction in Aquarius.

the main themes of the poem add support to the thesis that this poem was written for the marriage of Joan and Henry.

Joan was not free to marry. She had to await a papal bull which permitted her to marry the man of her choice.[26] Nor was the Pope the only person to whom Joan had to defer. Charles VI, king of France and Joan's cousin, took an active interest in her affairs. This resulted in her having to remain as a widow in Brittany until the question of the upbringing of the future Duke was resolved. Joan's son at this time was only ten years old. Brittany had always maintained a certain political and social distance from France, making agreement between the Breton barons and the French king difficult. Eventually, as a result of the diplomacy of Philippe le Hardi (the great-uncle of the young prince), the barons consented to Joan's sons being taken to Paris. By now the heir to the Breton throne was thirteen years old and married to Jeanne, daughter of Charles VI. Only then was Joan free to leave Brittany.[27] As John Kirby explains, there was a period of four years (in fact, from the beginning of Henry's reign in 1399, the same year in which Joan's aged husband died) during which Henry was 'in constant correspondence with the duchy'. Joan and Henry knew each other well. Her newly-deceased husband, John, Duke of Brittany, had been brought up by Edward III. The Duke's first wife was Edward's daughter Mary (at this point in time the Duke would be Henry's uncle). The Duke's second wife was Joan, half-sister of Richard II and daughter of Thomas Holland, Earl of Kent. In 1398 the Duke and his third Duchess

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[26] See Kirby, *Henry IV*, pp.137-38.

[27] See Françoise Autrand, *Charles VI: La folie du roi* (Paris, 1986), pp.392-93.

(Joan) visited the English court.[28] Kirby discounts Froissart's 'detailed account' of Henry's visit to the Duke and Duchess of Brittany at Nantes on his journey to England in 1399 on the grounds that Henry simply did not have time for such a detour.[29] However, Kirby's claim that it took Henry three weeks to travel from Paris to England and that a visit to Nantes was thus impossible cannot be firmly substantiated. A great deal of confusion permeates contemporary accounts of Henry's movements at this time.[30] In fact, three weeks would allow time for an excursion into Brittany, and such an excursion can explain how Henry's time was spent after leaving Paris. Once Henry had returned to England, a predicament existed for Joan which paralleled the 'lak of liberte' of the lady in the *Temple*. There were, in fact, two weddings between Joan and Henry. One was a proxy wedding which took place in 1402 (when Henry placed a ring on the finger of Joan's agent, Anthony Rys at Eltham palace) and the other was the 'proper' wedding of 1403 at Winchester.[31]

The literary imagery chosen by the author also suggests that Henry and Joan of Navarre are represented in the poem. The hawthorn chaplet which Venus gives the lady in the Tanner group of manuscripts

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[28] See *Letters of the Queens of England 1100-1547*, ed. A. Crawford (Stroud, 1994), p.113.

[29] See *Froissart, Chronicles*, trans. and ed. G. Brereton (Harmondsworth, 1968), pp.444-45.

[30] Kirby himself points out that various dates for Henry's arrival in England have been given by chroniclers. See Kirby, *Henry IV*, p.54.

[31] For a more detailed account, see Michael Jones, 'Between France and England: Jeanne de Navarre, duchess of Brittany and Queen of England (1368-1437)', forthcoming in *Autour de Marguerite d'Ecosse: Reines, princesses et dames au 15e siècle*, ed. Ph. Contamine et F. Chauvenet (Paris, 1999).

finds echoes in the hawthorn tree of the *Complaynt of a Loverers Lyf*. As was demonstrated in the last chapter, the hawthorn was a device favoured by Henry IV, and therefore hints strongly at a Lancastrian connection. Other imagery in the poem may give clues as to the date when it was written. Herbert Wright argues that Lydgate uses the description of 'the sun eclipsed with clouds.... as a symbol for the overthrow of power or the swallowing up of fame'.[32] Whilst Wright is referring to the *Fall of Princes*, this argument can equally be applied to the *Temple*, where two such expressions are used in the opening lines: the moon is hidden 'under a mysty cloude' before the narrator falls asleep (line 9), and once asleep he ceases to be dazzled by the light in his face when the sun is obscured by 'certein skyes donne' (line 30). If this imagery is to be associated with an overthrow of power, then it can be argued that Henry IV is the most likely candidate for the knight in the *Temple*. In claiming the English throne in 1399, Henry brought about the downfall of the previously all-powerful Richard II.

With regard to the lady in the poem, the chain, which is one of the most persistent images found in the *Temple*, could be interpreted as representing Joan. In lines 126-28 Vulcan binds Mars, when he finds him with Venus, in 'the Cheynes invisible'. Lydgate's source

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[32] H.G. Wright, *Boccaccio in England from Chaucer to Tennyson* (London, 1957), pp.19-20. Wright highlights the many times that Lydgate uses this imagery in the *Fall*, always associated with the end of a reign. It may be that the image of the sun hidden by a cloud was associated specifically with difficulties which Richard experienced in the later period of his reign. The Kirkstall chronicle celebrates Richard's recovery of power in 1397 in these terms: 'Previously the sun was hidden behind a cloud - in other words the royal majesty was obscured by a hostile force - but now..... he has dispersed the clouds with his sun, whose light shines more brightly than ever'. See Given-Wilson, *Chronicles of the Revolution*, p.96.

for the 'invisible chain' is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which the aged Vulcan fastens his beautiful wife (Venus) and her lover (Mars) together with the chains he himself has fashioned for this purpose.[33] Later in the *Temple*, the lady finds her 'will and dede Ilaced in a chaine' (line 355).[34] It is interesting that it is with the lady's chain that Venus binds the man:

> Whom I have bound so lowe vnder youre cheine.
> (line 523)

Joan of Navarre did have such a chain prominently displayed on her arms, which were: quarterly, 1st and 4th France ancient and a gobony argent and gules (Evreux); 2nd and 3rd, Gules, a cross, a saltire and orle of chain linked together (or) Navarre.[35] The chain motif is continued throughout the poem, reappearing as the 'fire cheyne' of the god of Love(line 574) with which the knight is bound. It finally becomes the golden chain of Venus (line 1106) which, Venus herself informs the lovers as she uses it to bind their hearts together, is made 'of stele' (line 1120). This persistent appearance of the 'chain' metaphor in a *dit amoureux* would point to its use in some kind of emblematic way and, as it was a relatively uncommon heraldic

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[33] See *Ovid: Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. Miller, I, Bk. IV, lines 171-89, 190-91. Chaucer, in his *Knight's Tale*, gives a brief account of the story, but uses the word 'las' instead of 'chain' (see *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.57).

[34] Is it possible that the ageing Duke (Vulcan) chose Henry as a prospective husband for his young wife? The duchy of Brittany during this Duke's reign had been consistently pro-English.

[35] *Lines of Succession: Heraldry of the Royal Families of Europe*, tables J. Louda, text M. Maclagan (London, 1981), p.89. See also, for an illustration, table 3, p.19. Planché points out that the arms of Navarre, as represented by the chain are 'canting' (punning). 'Una varra' in Spanish means a chain; if the first 'a' is dropped, 'Navarra' is the result. Planché, *Pursuivant of Arms*, p.130.

device at this time, Joan is one of only a few likely candidates as the owner of such arms. Other symbolic references, such as the colour of the lady's dress and her motto, could be (and were) easily substituted as the poem was customised at a later date. The golden chain of Venus and Navarre, providing a central motif in all versions of the poem, argues strongly for the version represented by Tanner 346 as being a near-copy of Lydgate's original.

A final piece of evidence in favour of this manuscript being close to the original is the lady's motto. In Tanner 346 the motto is consistently 'de mieux en mieulx' (lines 310 and 530). Norton-Smith points out that this is 'a common French literary phrase', and refers to Deschamps' 'Lay Amoureux 206'. I have been unable to find this reference, but the phrase does appear in the poetry of Graunson. Here it occurs, significantly, in the end-line of his 'Balade V'.[36] Ardis Butterfield has pointed out the importance of such repeated end-lines (refrains) in late-medieval poetry, arguing that they often took on an independent existence.[37] A refrain could thus be used in its original work and then subsequently re-appear in different works by different authors. Graunson's poem is addressed to 'Amours' and the refrain is 'De mieulx en mieulx serviray ma maitresse'.[38] The

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[36] Piaget, *Oton de Grandson*, pp.207-208. For another example of an end-line of a *balade* which incorporates a lady's motto, see 'balade 771', *Oeuvres de Deschamps*, ed. Saint-Hilaire and Raynaud, IV, pp.269-70 and Raynaud's note, XI, p.76. The motto, 'a bon droit', is that of Valentina Visconti.

[37] Butterfield, 'Interpolated Lyric', pp.15-18.

[38] It is not impossible that Graunson wrote this *ballade* for Bolingbroke himself, when he was in Bolingbroke's service. A pun may exist on 'maitresse' if it is divided into 'maitre' and 's' or even 'ss', the 'S' being one of Bolingbroke's principal emblems. See footnote 79, chapter 3.

'maitresse' of the lady in the *Temple* is Venus herself, and Lydgate stresses, with each occurrence, that the lady's motto is linked to the service of Venus. When the motto is first seen, embroidered on the lady's dress 'with stones and perre' (line 309), the narrator himself explains its meaning.

> This [is] to sein that she, this benigne,
> From bettir to bettir hir hert[e] doth resigne,
> And al hir wil, to Venus the goddes
> (lines 311-13)

The motto is then heard, spoken by the lady as part of her commitment to Venus.

> .....Ladi that maist restore
> Hertes in Ioy from her aduersite,
> To do youre will de mieulx en mieulx magre
> (lines 528-30)

The motto as used by Lydgate's lady could easily be summarised by Graunson's refrain. Lydgate may have borrowed Graunson's phrase for his lady's motto, producing exactly the kind of independent repetition of a refrain which Butterfield describes. The meaning associated with the motto (that of 'serving a mistress') seems also to have been borrowed from Graunson. It is not known whether or not Graunson was using an existing motto, or even an existing refrain. Lydgate may, therefore, have been borrowing a motto from a refrain, or simply the refrain itself, for his lady. Whether or not the motto was previously associated with a historic referent is yet another question to which there is no answer.[39] However, the existence and

[39] The only known motto of Joan of Navarre was 'A tempérance'. See B. Burke, *The General Armory of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales comprising of Armorial Bearings from the Earliest to the Present Time* (London, 1884), p.lvii.

repeated appearance of part of Graunson's refrain in the *Temple* as it is found in Tanner 346 adds considerable weight to the argument that this version is near to the original.

Apart from this argument for a link between Tanner 346 and the wedding of Henry and Joan, it is difficult to argue convincingly that any of the other versions, in their present state, can be connected to specific marriages. However, the colours associated with the lady, together with her changing motto, do suggest that other versions of the poem were created for, first, the wedding of Humphrey of Gloucester and Jacqueline of Hainault and secondly, the wedding of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou. In 1420 Jacqueline of Hainault fled from her aged husband, the Duc de Brabant, taking refuge at the English court. C.A.J. Armstrong argues that Henry V invited Jacqueline to England to put political pressure on the Duke of Burgundy.[40] Jacqueline attracted the attentions of Humphrey of Gloucester, to the annoyance of his brother the Duke of Bedford, who saw an alliance between Humphrey and Jacqueline as an inevitable threat to the peace with France. As Jacqueline was a married woman, however, the obstacles to their marriage must have appeared insurmountable.

The complaint of the lady in the *Temple*, if it is to be construed as a reflection of Jacqueline's plight, represents the plea of a married woman seeking freedom. In fact the marriage between Jacqueline and Humphrey took place once a papal bull annulling her

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[40] C.A.J. Armstrong, *England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1983), pp.363-66.

first marriage had been obtained (the bull was later rescinded). Despite the obvious affront to courtly ideals, which advocate fidelity for life, many people in England were in no way scandalised by the match. It seems that Jacqueline had gained enormous popularity during her self-imposed exile in England. She was chosen by the king as godmother to the young Henry VI. As Henry Noble MacCracken has pointed out, if the *Temple* is compared to 'On Gloucester's Approaching Marriage', a poem which Lydgate was commissioned to write for the marriage of Jacqueline and Humphrey, many similar uses of imagery can be found.[41] Unfortunately, MacCracken did not then link the two poems to the same patron, but concluded that the *Temple*, being almost contemporary with 'On Gloucester's approaching Marriage', was commissioned by and written for the Paston family.[42] As I am arguing for an early date for composition of this work, and as I have found no evidence for Lydgate having produced work for minor nobility, I do not find MacCracken's argument convincing. The imagery used for the lady in the temple links her directly to royalty. The 'ruby' of line 259, to which the lady is likened, was a stone traditionally used in the *dits amoureux* to denote someone of royal birth. Her angelic and feminine appearance is stressed in both the *Temple* and 'Gloucester's approaching Marriage' in lines which strongly resemble one another:

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[41] MacCracken noticed these similarities, but related them to his argument that the *Temple* was written for the Paston marriage. See MacCracken, 'Additional Light', 135-36.

[42] This argument is dismissed by Pearsall, on the grounds of the tone of the poem (*John Lydgate*, p.108) and by Julia Boffey, on evidence for dating; J. Boffey, *Manuscripts of English Courtly Love Lyrics in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1985), pp.119-20. Boffey concludes that 'the poem probably dates from a period in Lydgate's career rather earlier than 1420, before most of the individuals associated by MacCracken with its inception were of an age to read' (pp.119-20).

So aungellike, so goodli on to se
So femynyn or passing of beaute
Temple of Glas, lines 267-68

So aungellyk and so celestyal
So femynyne, and in especial
'On Gloucester's Approaching Marriage', lines 102-103[43]

Her position amongst the nobility is peerless:

And forto speke of condicioun
She was the best that myghte ben on lyve
Temple of Glas, lines 284-85

And sith she is by discent of blood
The grettest borne oone of hem on lyve
'On Gloucester's Approaching Marriage', lines 113-14

The author's insistence upon superlatives in two poems which are obviously closely related rules out the possibility of two ladies being involved. There can be only one who is 'best' or 'grettest'. There is no way of establishing whether or not the two poems originated at the same time. However, there is other internal evidence of a relationship between the two works. Jacqueline's 'colours' were black, white and red.

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[43] This same imagery and vocabulary are found in Lydgate's description of Helen in his *Troy Book*. He describes Helen as seen through the eyes of Paris:

So aungillyk sche was of hir bewte,
So femynyn, so goodly on to se
(lines 3651-52)

Troy Book, ed. Bergen, p.249. One can either assume that Lydgate trots out these phrases as commonplaces to describe a lady's beauty, or that he uses them as emblems which refer back, complete with Lancastrian associations, to events in the family history. As the *Troy Book* was written for Henry V between 1412 and 1420, the use of this emblematic description of the lady again argues for the early composition of the *Temple*.

In Norton-Smith's 'intermediate' group of manuscripts (MSS Fairfax 16 and Bodley 638) the lady is dressed in green and white, is given red and white roses by Venus, and her motto varies between 'de mieulx en mieulx' and 'humblement magre'. However, if, as Norton-Smith argues, this version is an 'intermediate draft', then it is a somewhat clumsy representation of the even more muddled imagery which appears in G and S.[44] In this latter group, the lady is given a chaplet of white and red roses and is clad 'in blak In red and white', and therefore carries the same colours as those of Jacqueline.[45] The motto remains a mystery. If Humphrey decided to use the poem as a means of gaining support for his bride-to-be, then Norton-Smith's 'intermediate' versions, which exclude the more 'unladylike' stanzas of G and S, seem to be more appropriate to his purpose. As with Henry and Joan, and with the Pope's consent, the marriage went ahead. The 'May' (or 'Venus', Jacqueline) who was bound to 'January' (or 'Vulcan', the Duke of Brabant) does indeed find herself free to be with 'Mars' (or 'Adonis', Humphrey).

The version of the poem represented by G and S contains the extra seven stanzas which place it on the margins of the *dits amoureux* tradition. I agree with Pearsall that, owing to the tone which these stanzas generate, it cannot have been used at any marriage celebration. It is even possible to argue, given the unfortunate register which the lady adopts in manuscripts G and S,

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[44] Norton-Smith, 'Lydgate's Changes' 171.

[45] Rossell Robbins notes Manly and Rickert's speculation that version G, Cambridge University Library MS Gg. 4.27, 'may have been written for Jacqueline of Hainault or (more likely) for the Duke of Gloucester'. See his chapter 'The Middle English Court Love Lyric' in *The Interpretation of Medieval Lyric Poetry*, ed. W.T.H. Jackson (New York, 1980), pp.205-32 (p.208).

that this version of the poem was written satirically. The lady may be none other than the most unpopular Eleanor Cobham, whom Humphrey married after his marriage to Jacqueline was annulled. However, its inclusion of the name 'Margarete' in what seems to have been a poem written for the Lancastrian household hints at it having been drawn, in a most distorted way, from a version of the poem celebrating the marriage of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou.[46] Margaret's colours were green and white, and she used the daisy as her emblem. The hawthorn was a Lancastrian emblem, and one which Henry VI favoured.[47] That these two images were important to the royal couple is well illustrated in the bay window, glazed with daisies and hawthorn buds, which Margaret fitted in her home.[48] Margaret's motto was 'humble et loyal', providing at least a similar theme to the 'humblement magre' which finds its way into other versions (it is not insignificant that metrically 'humble et loyal' could be successfully substituted for 'humblement malgre').[49] Tanner 346 can be seen as both a close copy of the original poem and the basis for a later poem (the original of which influenced the GS group) in celebration of the marriage of Henry and Margaret. This is an unsurprising and direct transmission, from grandfather to grandson.

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[46] Robbins, *The Middle English Court Love Lyric*, p.216. Despite the register of this version of the poem, Robbins assumes Margaret of Anjou as the 'Lancastrian heroine' represented by the lady.

[47] S. Friar, *Heraldry*, p.224. Also see Chapter Three of this thesis, p.155-56.

[48] Cf. Chapter Three, footnote 91.

[49] There is an illustration of the arms and mottoes of Margaret and Henry VI as they appear in a church window at Ockwell, near Maidenhead in Hasler, *The Royal Arms*, p.92.

There is, in fact, no way of accurately dating the earliest versions of the *Temple*. Any of the manuscripts may represent Lydgate's original work in a modified state. Lydgate may not even have been responsible for the changes made. I have attempted to establish a number of possible occasions on which the poem might have been used, but this is a task fraught with difficulties. I have argued for Tanner 346 as a copy of the earliest version of the poem, and will produce further evidence in the course of this chapter to support my argument. Using this argument as a basis, a history of the poem might be constructed. It could be argued that the poem of 1403 would have been commissioned by someone close to Henry IV, if not by the king himself. It was then resurrected regularly to celebrate important and illustrious Lancastrian marriages. Thus it may have been used to win public sympathy for Jacqueline of Hainault at the time of her union with Humphrey of Gloucester. 'On Gloucester's Approaching Marriage' borrowed imagery from the *Temple* to strenthen its appeal for support. Henry V may have used it for his marriage to Catherine of Valois (her 'colours' were green and white, one of his emblems the Lancastrian hawthorn). Henry VI could have followed suit for his own marriage to Margaret of Anjou.

An attempt at historical contextualisation of the *Temple* thus allows for a variety of readings of a poem which exists in a number of versions. The historical context of a *dit amoureux* should never be forgotten, and in the *Temple* such a context disposes of problems such as that raised by Spearing, who makes the assumption that the lady in the poem is married. He is shocked both by the lady's request and by Venus' answer. He concludes that 'what the lady is praying for, and Venus is promising, is in effect that her lawful

husband will be disposed of, presumably by death, so that she can marry someone else'.[50] Joan of Navarre, however, was not willing the death of her husband. The difficulties which she had to overcome in order to marry Henry after she became a widow were of a diplomatic nature, requiring a papal dispensation and the assent of her relatives.

The historical contextualisation also avoids universalising tendencies regarding authorial intent, which are unhelpful when approaching a work which existed in various forms at various times. It also resists critical approaches which foreground Lydgate's imitation of Chaucer as the principal focus for interpretation of the work. As with the *Complaynt*, a broader literary contextualisation is long overdue. To read the *Temple* simply as a Chaucerian imitation inevitably places this early fifteenth century poem into an incongruous late fourteenth-century English Chaucerian context. As was argued for the *Complaynt*, Lydgate drew on French sources for his courtly poetry. There are several French *dits amoureux* which may have provided inspiration for the way in which the theme of marriage is treated in the *Temple*.

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[50] Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, p.176. Chaucer, however, seems to have had some sympathy for young women married to old men, and broaches the subject repeatedly in his *Canterbury Tales*. The perspective a young bride might have of such a husband is hinted at in the *Merchant's Tale*. See *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, pp.154-68, but particularly lines 1821-54, p.161.

Although a number of French *dits* must be taken into consideration in a reading of the *Temple*, it is once again Froissart who provides the most likely primary model. Froissart's *Temple d'Honneur*, according to Fourrier, was written for the marriage of Humphrey X of Bohun (also Count of Hereford, he was the father of Henry Bolingbroke's first wife, and therefore grandfather to Henry V) and Joan of Arundel.[51] However, Froissart's poem is not one which presents a predicament; it is the celebration of a royal marriage, and raises no questions either of 'Ielousye' or of a lack of 'liberte'. Any similarity between this work and the *Temple* is found in the theme of marriage, the title and the advice which 'Honour' gives to his 'biauls fils' (which bears more than a passing resemblance to the wisdom of Lydgate's Venus). Whilst Froissart's poem is supposed to be an account of a wedding, it develops very quickly into a sermon delivered by 'Honour' to the young bride and groom. They are advised of all the courtly qualities they will need in order to approach the throne. By far the greater part of the poem, therefore, is overtly didactic. This is not true of Lydgate's *Temple*, as the dramatisation of the lovers' plight is central to the poem. Nonetheless, Venus' advice to the lovers occupies almost a quarter of the work, allowing her far more direct speech than either of her supplicants. In this sense, the poem is close to Froissart's *Temple d'Honneur*.

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[51] *'Dits et Débats'*, ed. Fourrier, pp.22-37.

Fourrier argues that Froissart establishes 'une sorte de genre littéraire', and refers his readers to Jean Molinet's *le Trosne d'Honneur* and *Temple de Mars* as well as to later works by other French authors.[52] Despite Fourrier's claim for Froissart as the initiator of a 'marriage temple' genre, Lydgate's *Temple*, it has been claimed, owes its existence to Chaucer's *House of Fame*.[53] There is a significant difference, however, between Chaucer's work and those of Froissart and Lydgate, in that Chaucer places his narrator centre stage. Chaucer does not introduce any other central characters (apart from his feathered guide, the eagle); the experience is always the narrator's own. In contrast, Froissart and Lydgate both adopt the position of the observer, describing and relating the words and actions of those they see. Little, if any, consideration is given to the narrator himself.

If, as Fourrier claims, Froissart created a new genre with his *Temple d'Honneur*, then it was surely a category within the tradition of the *dit amoureux*, and Lydgate's *Temple* belongs in this category. There is no extant Chaucerian work which may be regarded as a contribution to Froissart's 'temple' tradition, and therefore as a model for Lydgate's *Temple*. Even if the *Parliament of Fowls* can be considered as a poem which deals with marriage negotiations, it defers the act of marriage itself.[54] Whilst the same argument could be suggested for the *Temple*, there is a marked difference in the

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[52] *'Dits et Débats'*, *ed.* Fourrier, p.42.

[53] *Poems*, ed. Norton-Smith, p.177.

[54] Nick Havely casts doubt upon the theory of the *Parliament* as a 'marriage poem', and suggests that the founding of the 'Order of the *Tiercelet*' (1377-85) might provide a more likely context for the poem. See *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*, ed. Phillips and Havely, p.227.

predicted outcome for the lovers. Whilst Chaucer's Nature simply postpones discussion of the marriage of the 'formel egle' by a year at least, Lydgate's Venus promises the couple that if they wait the time will surely come 'that shal the most delite' (line 1204); the union will take place.[55] Chaucer's influence on the *Temple*, however, is not to be denied, it must simply be put into perspective alongside Lydgate's other sources. Even when such obvious borrowings, such as the 'temple of glas' itself are examined, however, Lydgate's awareness of a non-Chaucerian literary tradition is immediately obvious.

As a *dit amoureux*, the *Temple* as it appears in Tanner 346 could simply be read as a marriage poem. It might serve as a 'mirror' for both ladies and knights who find themselves separated or in an amorous predicament. Such a reading, however, would take little account of the dramatic presentation of the lovers: they both compose complaints which are subsequently answered by Venus. The many shifts in perspective which such a poem involves must surely form part of the author's overall plan for his work. For the greater part of the following analysis, and unless indicated otherwise, the version of the poem referred to is that found in Tanner 346 (used by both Schick and MacCracken for their editions). All references, unless specifically stated otherwise, will be to the more recent edition of Norton-Smith.

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[55] For Nature's pronouncement, see *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.394, lines 659-65.

3. Strategies of composition: narrative perspectives

The question of narrative perspective in the *Temple* is at once simple and complex. It is simple, because as each character starts on his or her speech the narrative perspective immediately becomes his or her own. It is complex, because, as Daniel Chamberlain has pointed out, narrative shifts in point of view, which give prominence first to one character and then to another, whilst giving structure to the text, are 'intimately related to strategies of composition'.[56] It is difficult to understand Spearing's argument that Lydgate 'had given no thought to the status of observer, either in relation to what he observed or in relation to the audience for whom he was describing it'.[57] In a work in which the narrator has well over five hundred lines to himself, Lydgate sets out to fashion his audience's response both to his characters and to his poem. Such fashioning, however, had to accommodate certain restrictions. As many poetic works in the later Middle Ages were commissioned, and as a patron or addressee might expect to find him or herself reflected in some way in the work, the potential for creativity was somewhat limited. If, as was also the case, the work belonged to a genre which engendered clear expectations of character portrayal (that is, in most cases, an idealised picture), then the poet would find himself even more constrained. Within these limitations, however, a poet of Lydgate's abilities was able to find ways to manipulate both his text and his

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[56] D.F. Chamberlain, *Narrative Perspective in Fiction: A Phenomenological Mediation of Reader, Text and World* (Toronto, 1990), p.75. At this point in his argument, Chamberlain is following the theories of Paul Ricoeur.

[57] A.C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream Poetry* (Cambridge, 1986), p.175.

reader/listener. His verbose narrator follows in the French tradition of late fourteenth-century *dits amoureux* and, with Chaucer's eagle-gripped bookworm as a more recent example, makes sure that his own share of the perspective is firmly placed before his audience.[58]

There is a sense in which audience-response to this poem could be deemed irrelevant. The work is addressed to a single lady and, according to the envoy, she is the intended audience. If, however, as I have suggested, the poem was commissioned to celebrate the marriage of Henry IV and Joan of Navarre, it would have to please both the lady and any others who, in her presence, might come to hear it. After this, like rings in a disturbed pool of water, it would ripple out into wider circulation. Such circulation may have been fragmentary, as was common for a *dit*, with lyric stanzas gaining a separate existence. One such stanza has recently been discovered. David Fallows has linked one song in an apparently Neapolitan fifteenth-century collection of songs with the *Temple of Glas*. He highlights the similarities between the song and the lyric stanzas which Lydgate's man addresses to his lady, beginning at line 970 with 'Princes of iouthe'. Although there is not a precise match between the poem and the song in the *chansonnier*, Fallows concludes that 'there would be very little danger in underlaying Lydgate's poem to the music'.[59] This find raises the interesting possibility that

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[58] Chaucer's narrator in the *House of Fame* is the central character in the poem, thus providing the dominant perspective.

[59] D. Fallows, 'Words and Music in Two English songs of the mid-fifteenth century: Charles d'Orléans and John Lydgate', *Early Music*, 5 (1977), 38-44. At my request, Josh Ellicott, a York music scholar, kindly both set the Lydgate stanza to the music from the *chansonnier*

Lydgate's *dit*, at the time of its composition, did have music to accompany at least some of the lyric stanzas. It is not possible to make unqualified claims regarding the notion of at least part of the *Temple* having been widely disseminated. I shall argue, nonetheless, that in writing this poem, Lydgate was indeed setting out to reach a wide audience with the aim of generating support for the Lancastrian cause. The poet was seeking, at the 'literal' level of his poem, to gain public sympathy for a marriage between an English king and a foreign bride. To achieve this, he chose as his principal method within the work the skilful manipulation of narrative voice.

Lydgate's *Temple* has only four main characters: the dreaming narrator, the lady, Venus and the man. In terms of narrative perspective, it is always the current speaker who directs the audience's response. In general terms, the reader/listener first hears the narrator, then the lady, then Venus, then the knight and, finally, the narrator. However, the narrator also interposes himself between the other speakers, in order to introduce or to comment.

4. The narrator's textual affinities

There is, of course, no reason to suspect that the narrator persona in the poem is supposed to be Lydgate himself. In the *Temple*

(as published by Fallows) and sang it. He remarked on how easy it was to accommodate the words to the music. Julia Boffey argues for the likelihood of other intercalated lyrics having been set to music in 'The Lyrics in Chaucer's Longer Poems', *Poetica* 37 (1993), 15-37. For an extended study of the musicality of lyric poetry, see S. Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (New York, 1987).

the narrator depicts himself in a passive role, as he wanders in the temple observing others. However, on closer examination, it becomes obvious that the perspective which the narrator gives to the poem is used to influence the greater part of the audience's response. The many parallels and linguistic echoes which Lydgate weaves into his work also draw his narrator, at certain points in the poem, closer to the characters he is observing. This strategy can be used in a variety of ways to reflect either the narrator's own position onto that of one of his characters, or vice versa. Thus a strong sense of complicity is established which, I shall argue, the audience is also invited to adopt.

The narrator's initial experiences provide an emotional precedent for those of the man. The 'thought, constreint and greuous heuines' of the narrator in the opening line of the poem is echoed by the man who complains 'for heuines and dole' (line 530). 'Rauyssid in spirit' into the temple, the narrator finds himself blinded by its light, so that he can see nothing:

> I wex astonyed: the light so in my fact
> Bigan to smyte, so persing euer in one
> On euere part, where that I gan gone,
> That I ne myght nothing, as I would,
> Abouten me consider and bihold,
> (lines 24-28)

This act of 'persing', which temporarily incapacitates the narrator, is repeated later in the poem when the man in the temple is wounded by the lady's 'persant loke' (line 756). The man finds himself 'dismaied in a traunce' (line 659), and the narrator suffers a similar experience when he wakes 'as in a traunce' (line 1368). In

this way, an apparent affinity of experience is established between the man and the narrator.[60]

This sense of affinity is strengthened by the narrator's own reaction to the visual appearance of the lady. He, like the man, is dazzled by her 'sonnysh here' and angelic appearance as she lights up the temple around her (lines 269-83). The narrator's final condition, on awaking from his dream, is that of desolation as a result of the lady's absence. Again, this repeats an earlier experience, being the plight in which the man finds himself as he wanders alone in the temple prior to his first lament. The knight's response to his condition was to compose a complaint; the narrator, at the end of this poem, will also seek creation as a remedy for his suffering and intends to 'write/A litel tretise' (lines 1379-80). As was argued for the *Complaynt*, the narrator's identification with, and sympathy for, the man in his poem has immediate implications regarding audience-response. The author is using his narrator to create for, and present to, his audience the response which he is hoping they, too, will adopt. Whilst I shall argue that the narrator does not set up similar verbal echoes which might produce empathy or parallels between himself and the lady, this does not indicate that he is in any way hostile to her.

There are few, if any, parallels which can be drawn between the experiences of the lady and the narrator. In the way in which he

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[60] For a more extensive discussion of the imagery and themes which relate the narrator to the man, see Judith Davidoff's article 'The Audience Illuminated, or New Light Shed on the Dream Frame of Lydgate's *Temple of Glas*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 5 (1983), 103-25.

responds to her appearance within the dream, he parallels the responses of the man (although the narrator, of course, does not act upon his feelings). The narrator's response to her absence once he awakes parallels the man's earlier desire to be in her presence. However, there is one significant link between the narrator and the other female figure, Venus. Whilst in all obvious and visual respects the brilliant and all-powerful Venus is far removed from the humble narrator, the two share a similar reaction to the plight of the lovers. This extends beyond the sympathy which the narrator shows towards the man and the lady, a sympathy which is repeated when Venus responds favourably to their prayers. Venus, having heard both lovers' eloquent complaints, repeatedly exhorts the man to approach his lady: 'Go forthe anon' (line 904) and 'go in humble wise' (line 925) are preceded by:

> Go nov to hir, where as she stant aside,
> With humble chere and put the in hir grace,
> (lines 890-91)

The narrator, having dreamed his dream and written it down, adopts the same attitude to his finished work as he tells it (with obvious Chaucerian overtones) to 'go thi wai, thou litel rude boke' (line 1393).[61] The final line of the poem, with its obvious reference to the man's speech quoted above, instructs the work:

> Nou go thi way and put the in hir grace
> (line 1403)

[61] See the envoy to *Troilus and Criseyde* in *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.584, line 1786.

This identification of the narrator with Venus creates an image of the author as matchmaker, and places the work in the same situation as the man. The poem, like the man, can only plead for itself through its own words. The lady outside the dream, meanwhile, as she waits for the text, replicates the situation of the lady within the text, waiting to hear from her lover. Using both textual resonances and his character's mirrored experiences, Lydgate is deliberately conflating his framework with his dream, providing yet more clues for his audience that the lady existed both in the imagination and in 'reality'.

5. The complaining lady: challenging the conventions of the dit amoureux

Most of the late-medieval French *dits amoureux* which deal with supposedly amorous matters foreground the narrator and his reaction to the plight of a knight. Lydgate therefore frustrates the expectations of the reader/listener of his *Temple* by having his narrator introduce the lady first. This is not necessarily, of course, a sign of originality in Lydgate.[62] Although Machaut's *Jugement du roy de Behaigne* is a very different work with very different themes, the narrator's account of the encounter between the

[62] Renoir, comparing Lydgate's lady's suffering to that of Chaucer's Criseyde, concludes that Lydgate is innovative in his portrayal of the lady's predicament. Renoir sees the lady suffering as a result of social conventions which cause her 'to pretend aloofness before her lover while her every emotional impulse urges immediate submission to the flesh'. See Renoir's article 'Attitudes Toward Women in Lydgate's Poetry', *English Studies*, 42 (1961), 1-14.

knight and lady places the complaint of the lady first.[63] However, this is an unusual state of affairs, and the prominence which Lydgate allows his lady is remarkable. It is for this reason that Anna Torti concentrates her analysis of the *Temple* on the plight of the lady. Torti's conclusions are based upon the assumption that the lady is married, and that she remains so. Whilst Torti recognises that, according to the narrator, the lady 'lights the temple with her virtues', she sees her as a divided being, suffering 'the loss of equipoise'.[64] What she most wants in life she cannot have, resulting in the separation of her 'thought' and her 'bodi'. The 'thought' is free, although the body is constrained; she is 'departid euen on tweyn' as, she says, 'Atwixen two so hang I in balaunce' (lines 335-348). Torti argues that the riddle of the lady's precarious position is not easy to resolve; she can only gain happiness 'through the fracture of pain and the rules of society'. It is possible, however, to posit an alternative to this argument, and to maintain that the emphasis on grief and suffering is, perhaps, replaced by a more joyful tone as the poem progresses.

Torti identifies desire as being 'a precise referent that is constantly present' in the work. I would suggest that careful interpretation of this desire may produce a reading of the *Temple* which contradicts Torti's analysis. The lady's desire, Torti points out, begins as an 'imbalance between full spiritual and physical enjoyment of love and the necessary compromise involved in an ideal

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[63] *Le Jugement du roy de Behaigne*, ed. Wimsatt and Kibler, lines 125-205 (pp.67-71).

[64] Torti, 'John Lydgate's *Temple of Glas*', pp.226-43, (p.229).

adultery'.[65] Torti seems to regard the existence of an adulterous situation as implicit, yet within the poem there is no specific mention of a husband, simply of a binding predicament. If this predicament is substituted for the 'ideal adultery', however, the lady still finds herself desiring something she cannot have. Torti herself recognises that, in the course of her dialogue with Venus, the lady comes to accept her situation. Yet Torti does not see that the lady's desire has been in any way fulfilled, and defines this desire as being 'to satisfy her sensual instincts'. I am in agreement with Torti regarding the lady's awareness that she lacks 'space' to be with the man she loves; there is a physical element to her plea. I would argue, however, that the author places equal emphasis on her lack of freedom to choose her partner. Her petition to Venus is in the form of a complaint; as she describes her plight she makes no specific demands on the goddess except to 'take nou goode hede' (line 332) and to 'consider nov and see' (line 367). It is Venus who decides, on the basis of the lady's virtuous character, that she will have her desire if she waits for it. The 'sensual instincts' which Torti argues are causing the lady's suffering, are not reflected in Venus' judgement. The lady is described by Venus in terms of 'innocence', 'devoide of al offence' (lines 378-80). Torti fails to notice Venus' virtuous three-some (Penelope, Griselda and Dorigen, lines 405-11), all of whom were able to achieve happy outcomes through chaste suffering.[66] Contrary to Torti's analysis,

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[65] A. Torti, *The Glass of Form* (Cambridge, 1991), p.85.

[66] These three legendary characters were all regarded, in the Middle Ages, as examples of 'good' women. Chaucer frequently alludes to Penelope, see e.g. the introduction to the 'Man of Law's Tale', line 75, the *Book of the Duchess*, line 1081, *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.88 and p.343. Chaucer tells the story of Griselda in the

therefore, it can be argued that the lady's 'desire' was to be able to be with her lover; this is achieved within the poem. She also pleaded with Venus that he should love her; there is no doubt that this plea is answered.

In her study of the *Temple*, Torti places the lady centre stage. I would suggest this emphasis on the centrality of the lady is misplaced, and runs contrary to the role which the author created for her. Counter to Torti's argument for a central position for the lady is the tradition of the *dits amoureux*, which insists upon the concerns of the masculine subject.[67] Lydgate is aware of this tradition, and adheres to it. Despite the large 'speaking part' assigned to the lady, it is the masculine figures in the *Temple*, the man and the narrator, who dominate the work. The narrator delivers the greatest part of the dialogue. Speaking directly to his reader/listener, he does not meet or address any of the characters within the temple. The lady, by comparison, delivers only one hundred and forty lines in the entire poem (the knight and Venus both have over three hundred and forty). The lady's direct address to the reader/listener is far less than that accorded to the other speakers. Her undisputed prominence in the poem depends upon her being the object of a gaze (the narrator's or the knight's) or the object of someone else's speech (the narrator's, Venus' and the knight's). It is the narrator who introduces both the lady and the knight to the reader/listener, and who thus conditions audience-response to their plight. The introduction to the lady extends over seventy lines, in

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'Clerk's Tale', *Riverside Chaucer*, pp.138-53 and the story of Dorigen in the 'Franklin's Tale', *Riverside Chaucer*, pp.178-89.

[67] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p.135.

which a description is given both of her physical beauty and of her virtuous nature. Whilst the general description of the lady resembles strongly that used for Helen in the *Troy Book*, there is evidence that here again Lydgate had a French precedent. The narrator in the *Temple* describes the lady's hair as being like 'gold were' (line 271), an expression which is, according to Schick, original to the monk.[68] However, Machaut, in his *Jugement du Roy de Behaigne* had already described the hair of the lady brought to him by Fortune in similar terms:

> Car si chevel resembloient fil d'or
> (line 302)[69]

This expression is so unusual that it is fair to claim, until proven otherwise, that Lydgate was acquainted with this work of Machaut. It is impossible to say whether or not the English writer had access to a working copy of the French poem, or whether he had simply heard this unusual phrase and noted it for his own future use. However, coupled with the similarities noted above between the *Temple* and Machaut's *Fonteinne Amoureuse*, this apparent borrowing strengthens considerably the argument that Lydgate was familiar with the earlier French poet's work. It was the lady from Machaut's *Jugement du roy de Behaigne* who provided the inspiration for Chaucer's Duchess, yet

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[68] *Temple*, ed. Schick, note to line 271, pp.88-9. Lydgate also uses almost the same description in his description of Venus' hair in *Reson and Sensuallyte*: 'whos her as eny gold wyre shone' (line 1576). As already noted, *Reson* is a translation of part of the late fourteenth-century poem, *Les Echecs Amoureux*, which states only that her hair 'sambloient estre dores'; *Reson* II, note to lines 1569-1600, p.100. Lydgate thus deliberately used 'wyre' in *Reson* as well as in the *Temple*, whilst abandoning it for his description of Helen in the *Troy Book*.

[69] *Le Jugement*, ed. Wimsatt and Kibler, p.75.

Chaucer remarks only that her hair 'lyk gold hyt was'; the image of the 'strand' or 'wire' is not repeated.[70] Lydgate may or may not have realised that Machaut, in turn, had created his description from vocabulary used by Guido delle Colonne to describe Helen in his *Historia Destructionis Troiae*. However, the mention of 'aurea fila' by Guido refers to gold strands which had been woven into Helen's hair. Unless Machaut and Lydgate both chose the same unlikely and inventive method of interpretation, the evidence would suggest that Lydgate's source was, indeed, Machaut.[71] In his own translation of Guido in the *Troy Book*, Lydgate abandons all mention of gold or wire, preferring to adopt different imagery:

> Hir golden her, lik the schene stremys
> Of fresche Phebus with his bright[e] bemes,[72]

The lady in the *Temple* is presented as the apotheosis of beauty and virtue in the eyes of both her lover and the narrator. However, the descriptions given by these two admirers extend beyond her physical appearance. Both refer to her virtuous nature, which should leave little doubt that they know who she is. Once the narrator has provided his audience with her 'colours' and motto, presumably some of them, too, would be able to provide her with an identity. Inasmuch as the narrator and the man adopt a similar narrative perspective towards the lady, she is presented to the reader/listener through their complementary masculine voices. It is because the lady

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[70] *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, line 858, p.340.

[71] *Guido de Columnis: Historia Destructionis Troiae*, ed. N.E. Griffin (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1936), Bk. 7, lines 170-180, p.71.

[72] *Troy Book*, ed. Bergen, II, 249 (lines 3663-64).

is the subject of the greater part of the long speeches delivered by the narrator and the man that she appears to dominate the poem. Her own speech is not the key factor in the audience's approach to her. Therefore, the perspective which the audience may gain through her own narrative is greatly modified by the perspective the audience gains from the speech of others.

The lady remains the focus of attention only until the knight appears; after this her significance is either seen in terms of his love for her, or as one part of an equation which Venus is seeking to solve. The emphasis on the knight in a *dit amoureux* is usual, and Lydgate does not, in the *Temple*, produce a revolutionary poem in which the lady is the pre-eminent character. The lady's complaint, however, can be seen to be one of Lydgate's innovations. How it may have been received by his audience is a subject which is open to debate. There is no question but that the narrator seeks the sympathy of the reader/listener for both the lovers. However, historical precedents in courtly poetry for ladies 'making the first move' were almost non-existent. This was not true, of course, of late-medieval romances, where women often did take the initiative. John Baldwin argues that 'Romance heroines were rarely reduced to abject passivity'.[73] However, despite the appearance of 'active' heroines in romances, Simon Gaunt is able to conclude that 'Romance ostensibly elevates the feminine whilst underscoring its *courtoisie* with profound misogyny and a pervasive concern with masculinity'. In this respect, Gaunt sees a close relationship emerging between

[73] J.W. Baldwin, *The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200* (Chicago, 1994), p.233.

romance and courtly lyric based upon a fear of female power.[74] With regard to the *Temple*, I would prefer to substitute for the notion of 'fear' one of strong mistrust. Moreover, I shall argue that the misogyny implicit in the *Temple* is there to serve purposes other than an attack on the female sex. If Gaunt's conclusions are taken into consideration, however, then it can perhaps be argued that Lydgate's introduction of a romance-type heroine into his *dit amoureux* was a deliberate invitation to his audience to make her the object of both scrutiny and question. The behaviour of Lydgate's lady is, after all, unlike that of other ladies in the French *dit amoureux* tradition. His lady in the *Temple* might rather be compared to feminine figures who appear in those Lydgate poems which clearly belong to genres other than that of the *dit amoureux*. The most famous example which Lydgate provides of a lady taking the initiative is in a story which fits none of the medieval generic categories contained in Gaunt's study, yet her mythological story inevitably foregrounds issues of gender. In his *Troy Book* Lydgate recounts the legend of Medea.

Medea initiates a love-affair by falling in love with Jason, and is the driving force in the relationship which follows.[75]

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[74] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p.121.

[75] In his study of Lydgate's use of gender in the *Troy Book*, Scott Straker sees Medea's proactive tendencies as masculinising. However, as Simon Gaunt has argued, 'active' heroines are not uncommon in late-medieval romance. Straker concludes that, for Lydgate, 'femininity manifests itself both as the moral weakness that impairs men's decision-making faculty and in the guileful opponents who sabotage men's good decisions'. Straker, 'Ethics', p.195. Whilst I do not altogether disagree with Straker, I feel that the way in which Lydgate 'translates' Guido's misogyny in the *Troy Book*, and particularly in the story of Medea, requires a reading which takes account of intended irony. The attribution to Medea of Jason's traditional characteristic of deceitfulness (see *Troy Book*, ed.

Lydgate describes the initial stages of Medea's plight as fraught with shame and indecision:

> And thus sche stood in a Iupardye
> Of Love and Schame, in maner of a traunce,
> Un-evenly hanged in balaunce;
> .....
> And thus sche henge even atwixe two,
> That sche ne wist what was best to do
> Til that Fortune with hir double face
> Unhappily hath wrought to gete hir grace
> (*Troy Book* I lines 2240-52)[76]

The lady in the *Temple* employs a similar vocabulary: 'Atwixen two so hang I in balaunce' (line 348).[77] The notion that Medea could be considered a good example of faithful love in the Middle Ages is borne out by her inclusion in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*.[78]

Bergen, Bk.1, lines 2072-74, p.73) could not have been lost on Lydgate's reader/listener, particularly if that reader/listener was the highly-educated Henry V..

[76] *Troy Book*, ed. Bergen, p.78.

[77] The man repeats this imagery in line 641, when he describes himself as 'Hanging in balaunce bitwix hope and drede'.

[78] For a full discussion of the reception of Medea in the later Middle Ages see N.F. McDonald, '*Diverse folk diversely they seyde*: a Study of the Figure of Medea in Medieval Literature' (unpublished D.Phil thesis, Oxford, 1994). McDonald supports the view that Medea was seriously given a place amongst 'good women' by authors other than Chaucer. She concludes, however, that many late-medieval readers would also be familiar with Ovid, and therefore would inevitably attach negative connotations to Medea's character, regardless of context. Ruth Morse, in her study, concludes that 'In medieval texts Medea, however pitiably seduced and abandoned, is the author of her own downfall'. The legend of Medea is either treated as 'a male-dominated story' of Jason or as 'Medea's retaliation, her threat to male order'. R. Morse, *The Medieval Medea* (Cambridge, 1996), p.126 and p.241. Deschamps refers frequently to Medea, always as a 'good' woman. She is a lover who suffered (e.g. in *lay* CCCVI), an example of loyalty in love (e.g. in *lay* CCCXIII), or a betrayed woman (e.g. in *balade* CCCCXXXIV). See *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Saint-Hilaire and Raynaud, II, line 147, 198; II, line 22, 336; III, lines 17-21, 242. The story of Medea is abbreviated by Christine de Pisan to produce a blameless figure and an example of a woman faithful in love. See *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. E.J. Richards (London, 1983), pp.189-90.

However, as a 'mirror for ladies', such as Watriquet de Couvin used in his *dits amoureux*, she sets a disastrous example.[79] Her revenge on the unfaithful Jason extends, as Lydgate does not fail to inform his reader/listener, to the murder of her own children.[80] The lady in the *Temple*, therefore, may be compared to Medea, and may present a model of femininity which troubles the conventions of the *dits amoureux*.

Yet the female gender model which Lydgate has created in the *Temple* is not exclusively that of the 'active' romance heroine. In all other respects she conforms, both in description and in behaviour, to a typical *dit amoureux* lady: thus she is 'aungellike' and beautiful, the 'best[e] taught', endowed with 'gentilles', 'lowlynes', 'oneste' and 'godlihed' (lines 264-92). She is, in fact, a perfect example of courtly womanhood:

> An exemplarie, and mirrour eke was she
> Of secrenes, of trouth, of faythfulnes
> (lines 294-95) .

A reader/listener familiar with the traditions of both the romance and the *dits amoureux* would be aware that Lydgate was deliberately genre-bending with the portrayal of his lady. In contrast, the characteristics attributed to the man in the *Temple* are more likely

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[79] Cf.the discussion of exemplary figures in the *dits*, Chapter Two, pp.61-62. Watriquet's 'Feste du Comte de Flandre', for example, which contains idealised descriptions of the ladies present, can be read as presenting models for both dress and behaviour. *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp.329-39.

[80] Lydgate makes a point of telling his reader/listener that Guido tells no more of Medea after Jason abandons her. Despite the fact that he is supposed to be translating Guido, Lydgate fills in the missing details of Medea's vengeance, which he takes from Ovid. See *Troy Book*, ed. Bergen, Bk. I, lines 3695-707, p.121.

to conform to his reader/listener's expectations. The monologic masculinity, which Gaunt argues is a key characteristic of the romance and the courtly lyric, is certainly supported by this contrast in the depiction of the two lovers. Moreover, the central position in the structure of the *Temple* is occupied by the central figure, that of the man, whose role may now be considered in detail.

6. The complaining man: the traditional central subject

At the crucial mid-point of the poem, it is not the lady who is speaking or even being addressed. The knight's complaint to Venus, beginning at line 701, appears to be, structurally, the jewel in the crown of the *Temple*. The mid-point of a *dit amoureux*, as was argued in chapters two and three, is traditionally a key factor in the interpretation of the poem. My argument corresponds to that of Simpson, who finds other examples of medieval literature where the mid-point is of prime importance to interpretation.[81] Simpson argues that the structure of Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus*, with the centre of the poem as the beginning of a 'supercelestial' reading, represents a corresponding absolutist political viewpoint. Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, in which the ending of the poem requires the reader/listener to modify his/her interpretation of the entire work, represents a political stance leaning towards the constitutionalist. I shall argue that Lydgate's poetics also depict his personal political stance, which corresponds exactly to neither that of Alan or that of Gower. However, Lydgate seems to have attached the same

[81] Cf. Chapter One, pp.36-40.

importance to the mid-point of his poem as did these earlier writers. His careful application of the conventions of the *dits* must surely repudiate Schick's accusation that the monk's work suffers from a lack of 'artistic structure'.[82] A reading of the poem which is aware of the *dits amoureux* tradition, and therefore of the importance of the central section of a poem, will give full prominence and pre-eminence to the knight's complaint. This reading, which places the knight centre-stage, is surely far closer to Lydgate's intentions than an interpretation which inappropriately draws the lady into the key position.

As he first appears in the poem, the knight is shown suffering the effects of the lady's initial plea to Venus. It is as a result of the lady's prayer, and Venus' intervention, that he is now afflicted by the pains of love. His speech begins long before the beautiful lyric stanzas of his complaint which opens in line 701. Starting in couplets at line 567, he describes at length what has happened to him, building up to a crescendo of emotion which manifests itself in the *ballade* stanzas of his prayer to Venus. Unlike the lady, therefore, who relies heavily on the narrator's description of her, the man almost single-handedly presents his own case. He may receive less of an introduction from the narrator (sixteen lines compared to seventy for the lady), but the author compensates by allowing him to make his own case at length. In allowing the lady to make her entrance first, the author ensures that the man is placed structurally in the centre of the poem. This is not the only advantage that the man gains from this position. The

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[82] *Temple*, ed. Schick, p.cxxxiv.

lady enters the poem directly after the long description of the 'thousand' other lovers in the temple; it is difficult not to see her as just one of the many, despite the narrator's efforts to stress her uniqueness. In contrast, the man is separated from the crowd through the use of a number of authorial strategies. The first is the narrator's very brief re-introduction of the crowds in the temple after Venus' reply to the lady, which does not allow attention to drift away from the main characters. Secondly, the narrator has moved away from the crowds into the 'Estres' before he comes upon the man 'al solitarie' (lines 549-50), so distancing the lover physically from all the other supplicants.

When the lover and his lady meet, the slight inequality between these two paragons of earthly excellence is demonstrated in the extra four stanzas assigned to the man (he has ten, the lady six and a half). The lady slips even further out of the limelight in Venus' address to the two lovers. Instructions as to how she should behave occupy only five stanzas, and the behaviour which the lady has to adopt relates only to her relationship with the man. Instructions to the man are exactly twice as long as those addressed to the lady, and range across the full gamut of courtly behaviour expected of a lover knight; he is to reverence and protect all women, be 'curteis' and lowly of speech to both rich and poor, avoid 'tristesse', embrace 'al vertues', be secret, and never despair (lines 1145-1213). Convention dictated that the knight's ensuing courtly behaviour should be seen as a result of his love for his lady, but here the effect is to emphasise the wider worldly context in which the knight clearly operates. As Venus finishes her speech to the lovers, the narrator takes hold of the perspective again, and the lady is once more

objectified. It is the man who has moved 'to ioy and al plesaunce' as a result of Venus' intervention (lines 1285-88). The lady is subsumed into the plural 'hir hertes' which are 'bothe set in rest' (line 1294). The retrospective view of the action, represented by the anthem of the other lovers in the temple, also gives pre-eminence to the man. Their final lines in thanking Venus leave no doubt as to where their principal concern and sympathy lie:

> To you we thank, louers that ben here,
> That ye this man - and neuer forto twyn -
> Fortuned haue his ladi forto wynne.
> (lines 1359-61)

In sum, Lydgate has sought to ensure that, for his audience, the lady holds a less important position than the knight. This is in line with the smaller proportion of the poem which she occupies as speaking subject. Her importance in the poem, therefore, is subordinate to that of the man. The construction of male gender in the *Temple*, courtly and dominant, can be seen to conform to that expected of a traditional *dit amoureux*. However, both the man and the lady are subordinate, in terms of narrative voice, to the figure of Venus.

7. *In Venus' Temple: the mythographic tradition*

The narrator, the 'prese', the man and the lady all find themselves in Venus' temple. This building, and the goddess within it, are part of a literary tradition.[83] However, whilst remaining

[83] For a discussion of the literary tradition of the temple with walls covered in pictures, see Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, pp.191-99. See also

within the traditions of the *dit amoureux*, there is no reason why the interpretation of the figure of Venus in the *Temple* should not be as plural as that applied to the man and the lady[84]. I have argued that the way in which the reader/listener apprehends the man and lady in the poem is controlled by narrative perspective. However, I would argue that the *Temple* is an example of what Simpson describes as an 'enactive' work, one which demands an attempt by the 'active' or prudent' reader/listener to resolve problems depicted.[85] I shall suggest that at the surface level of meaning Lydgate uses his artistic skills to support the royal union. A more searching analysis of the feminine figures of Venus and the lady complicates the poet's surface message, raising the very issue of interpretation itself. The figure of Venus presents contradictions for the reader/listener to resolve, involved as she appears to be in the dream of a royal union taking place in her temple.

Lydgate's temple of Venus is introduced in vivid terms, and in a way which directly presents the experience of the narrator. As he falls asleep he dreams he is

> Rauysshid in spirit in a temple of glas
> I nyste how, ful fer in wildirnes-
> That foundid was, as bi liklynesse,

T. Tinkle, *Medieval Venuses*, pp.113-19. With regard to the *Temple*, Tinkle concludes that Venus is depicted 'as a unified carnal and spiritual force, a planetary goddess holding tightly to the fiery chain of eternal love' (p.132). I argue below that 'Venus' and 'eternal love' are not compatible.

[84] For a study of the varied imagery and varying interpretations surrounding the figure of Venus, see Twycross, *The Medieval Anadyomene*.

[85] Cf.Chapter One, pp.44-45?.

Not upon stele, but on a craggy roche,
Like ise ifrore...
(lines 16-20)

The parallel with Chaucer's *Hous of Fame* is obvious. Also giving the narrator's perspective, Chaucer describes his own encounter with Venus' 'temple of glas' thus:

But as I slepte, me mette I was
Withyn a temple ymad of glas
(lines 119-20)

The shining temple of Chaucer, which initially blinds the narrator, is recreated by Lydgate. It is a deliberate and overt borrowing which, at one and the same time, pays homage to Chaucer and brings back to life one of his works.[86] It is, however, simply an allusion. The *Temple of Glas* is not 'an imitation of Chaucer's *House of Fame*', as is posited by Renoir.[87] Lydgate's narrator is dazzled by the reflection of the sun on the brilliant temple. However, whilst Chaucer's 'temple of glas' appears at the beginning of his dream, it is not until the 'house of fame' is reached in Chaucer's Book III that a shining building appears, perched on 'A roche of yse, and not of stel' (line 1130): the 'temple' and the dazzling house appear separately. In a 'Chaucerian' reading of the work, therefore, Lydgate might seem, in his *Temple*, to be conflating Chaucer's temple

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[86] The significance of Chaucer's temple has been extensively studied. See, for example, P. Boitani, *Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame* (Woodbridge, 1984), pp.191-94; Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, pp.191-92.

[87] Renoir, *The Poetry*, p.50. Renoir also suggests that the *Temple* may have been influenced by Italian humanism, via Poggio Bracciolini. This view has not been shared by later critics such as Pearsall and Spearing; Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.15; A.C. Spearing, 'Lydgate's Canterbury Tale: *The Siege of Thebes* and Fifteenth-Century Chaucerianism', *Fifteenth Century Studies: Recent Essays*, ed. R.F. Yeager (Hamden, Connecticut, 1984), pp.333-64, (pp.355-56).

of Venus and house of Fame.[88] Chaucer's narrator has to be transported by the eagle from the temple of Venus (which is a traditional representation, painted with the stories of historical heroes and representing, perhaps, his books) to the house of Fame. Lydgate's narrator finds himself in both at once. It is as if the pictorial or literary history of the past is being brought to life, contemporary with happenings in the present. In fact, the way in which Lydgate dramatises the speech and action of the legendary lovers in the temple's wall-paintings produces exactly this effect.

These lovers differ in a significant way from those found in Chaucer's poem, and give a firm indication that Lydgate's perspective on events will be very different from that of his English predecessor.[89] What Chaucer's narrator sees depicted in his temple is the history of Troy; Lydgate's narrator is faced with a diverse assortment of lovers. The first, as in Chaucer, is Dido, but she is followed by Medea, 'falsed of Iason', and then by some of the most virtuous of women in mythology: Penelope, Alceste and Griselda (Chaucer follows his Dido with Phyllis, Briseida, Oenone, and Hyspipyle before Medea appears). Brian Glover argues that the order

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[88] Christine de Pisan, writing her *Mutacion de Fortune* probably between 1400 and 1402, is clear that the temple on a high icy rock ('Une haulte roche neyve') is that of Fortune. See *Le Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune*, ed. S. Solente, 2 vols. (Paris, 1959). For the icy rock, see I, 59, line 1463.

[89] It is difficult to follow Norton-Smith's logic in suggesting that Lydgate owed the idea of 'wall-painting depicting lovers' to Chaucer's *Parliament*, as there is no obvious verbal borrowing. In the later Middle Ages walls in churches, manor houses, palaces etc. were frequently painted with scenes either biblical, historical or mythological. See E. Tristram, *English Wall-painting in the Fourteenth Century* (London, 1955). For Norton-Smith see his footnote to lines 44ff.; *Poems*, p.81.

in which the paintings in the *Temple* appear is carefully orchestrated by Lydgate to effect 'the movement from a language of erotic complaint to a language of erotic celebration'.[90] There is a progression in the paintings from wronged women (Dido, Medea) to suffering women (Penelope, Alceste, Griselda, Iseult, Thisbe, Phyllis). These images are followed by those of suffering men (Paris, Achilles, Palamon, Phebus). Next comes the story, which Glover describes as one of transformation, of Jove and Europa. The climactic, final point in the depictions comes with the marriage of Mercury and Philology, the singing of Canace and the birth of poetry. As Glover points out, these examples (and their ordering) prefigure 'the sequence of the narrative to follow, for in the narrative we are presented first with the complaint of an unhappy woman, then the lament of a suffering man and finally with a transformation effected by Venus which unites the two lovers'.[91] Whilst there is no doubt that Glover's analysis is revealing, it can be argued that the ladies in the *Temple* also exemplify another kind of progression. The introduction of the unambiguously virtuous trio of Penelope, Alceste and Griselda alters the whole tone of the poem, and paves the way for the lady 'clad in grene and white' who will appear later:

> There saugh I also hov Penalope,
> For she so long hir lord ne myght[e] se,
> Ful oft[e] wex of colour pale and grene.
> And aldernext was the fressh[e] quene,
> I mene Alceste, the noble trw[e] wyfe,
> And for Admete hou sh[e] lost hir life,

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[90] B.W. Glover, 'Tropical Narrative: Studies in a Fifteenth-Century Poetic of Desire and Writing' (unpublished PhD thesis, Liverpool, 1986), p.105. Glover is objecting to the statement referring to the *Temple* made by C.S. Lewis, regarding Lydgate's 'fatal garrulity'. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, p.240.

[91] Glover, 'Tropical Narrative', p.105.

And for hir trouth, if I shal not lie,
Hou she was turnyd to a dai[e]sie.
There wa [also] Grisildis innocence,
And al hir mekenes and hir pacience
(lines 67-75)[92]

The colours green and white dominate the opening section of these lines ('pale and grene' being followed by the green and white 'daiesie'), prefiguring the colour of the lady's dress (line 299) and the hawthorn chaplet given to her by Venus (line 505). Penelope, Alceste and Griselda are preceded by the story of Venus and Adonis (lines 64-66) just as the first mention of the lady herself is preceded by a line containing the 'statue of Venus'(line 249). At the moment the lady is introduced, the author reminds his reader/listener that the statue which presides over the proceedings in the temple is that of Venus herself. The trinity of Penelope, Alceste and Griselda almost reappears during Venus' speech. However, Alceste has been replaced by 'Dorigen, flour of al Britayne' (line 410). The significance of these names, and of the substitution, may be two-fold. The mention of Dorigen may be meant as an indirect compliment to Joan (Duchess of Brittany). Dorigen also provides, in Venus' account, the third in a trio, not simply of virtuous women, but of wives who had to suffer patiently before they eventually found happiness. However, whilst the 'complaining lady' undoubtedly has 'virtuous' associations, the way in which she is repeatedly prefigured by Venus invites the reader/listener to consider her carefully. This lady does not altogether conform to the expectations for a courtly lady within the *dit amoureux* tradition. The figure of

[92] This is a very different scenario from that found in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, in which the green and white Alceste appears before the 'good women'. See *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, lines 213-69, pp.593-95.

Venus demands an even more active response on the part of the audience.

8. Venus: goddess of lechery, or angel of wisdom?

At first sight Lydgate's Venus, in the heart of the temple, is a somewhat abrupt carbon copy of Chaucer's, both as she appears in his *Knight's Tale* and in the *House of Fame*. In the *Knight's Tale*, her statue is described in the following terms:

> The statue of Venus, glorious for to se,
> Was naked, fletynge in the large see,
> And fro the navele doun al covered was
> With wawes grene, and brighte as any glas.
> A citole in hir right hand hadde she,
> And on hir heed, ful semely for to se,
> A rose gerland; fressh and wel smellynge;
> (lines 1955-58)[93]

In the *Hous of Fame* she appears in a painting:

> Naked fletynge in a see,
> And also on hir hed, pardee,
> Hir rose garlond whit and red,
> (lines 133-35)[94]

In the *Temple* the narrator sees her 'So as she sate fleting in the se'(line 53). No further description is given. As Meg Twycross has pointed out, Venus floating on the sea was an image available to

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[93] *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.41.

[94] *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.350.

medieval writers from a variety of sources.[95] Lydgate's 'borrowing' from Chaucer thus looks a little less obvious. However, as Venus is set in a 'Citherian' temple which clearly owes a great deal to Chaucerian inspiration, it can be argued that this 'fleting' allusion does indeed owe a debt to Chaucer.[96] Counter to this argument are the significant differences between the Venuses of Chaucer and Lydgate. As Lydgate carefully constructed his own particular figure of Venus, surely some consideration should be given to those elements of the 'traditional' iconography of Venus, and, indeed, of Chaucer's Venus, which Lydgate chose to exclude. Beside Chaucer's naked goddess, complete with musical instrument and sweet-smelling rose garland, Lydgate's creation, with no instrument or garland, might be regarded as pale and uninteresting. Torti, however, insists upon an interpretation of Lydgate's goddess which includes all those elements which the poet so carefully fails to mention.[97] Thus an image is created of a Venus, complete with mirror, who is central to Torti's argument regarding the *Temple of Glas*. The only references to a mirror in the *Temple* itself, however, are associated with the lady, not with Venus.

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[95] Twycross, *The Medieval Anadyomene*, pp.1-14. However, Venus was not always depicted in the waves. Froissart's narrator in the *Joli Buisson* is met by a radiant, courteous and gentle lady; Fourrier (ed.), *Joli Buisson*, p.77 (lines 873-880). Christine de Pisan, in the *Letter of Othea to Hector*, introduces Venus as a mythological goddess, as a planet and as lechery, but produces no image of her in the sea; *Christine de Pizan's Letter of Othea to Hector*, trans. J. Chance (Cambridge, 1997), p.45 and p.58.

[96] Whilst Schick points out that 'Citheria' for Venus was frequently used by Chaucer, he is clear that such a description was a commonplace, so that Lydgate need not have been making a direct borrowing; *Temple*, ed. Schick, note to line 701, p.104.

[97] Torti, *The Glass of Form*, pp.77-78.

An exemplarie, and mirrour eke was she
Of secrenes, of trouth, of faythfulnes,
(lines 294-95)

And exemplaire to al that wil be stable,
Discrete, prudent, of wisdom suffisaunce,
Mirrour of wit, ground of gouernaunce,
(lines 752-754)

And sothefast myrrour to exemplifie
The right[e] wei of port and womanhed
(lines 974-5)

This 'mirror for ladies' is a convention of the *dits amoureux* which can be traced back into such poems as the anonymous *Miroir des bonnes Femmes* and Watriquet de Couvin's *Li Mireoirs as Dames*.[98] The lady can be looked at by other ladies as a moral example, a true reflection of a virtuous woman. Lydgate's Venus does not have a mirror; it is only his lady who is strongly associated with the 'mirror' image. The monk creates a Venus who is almost, but not quite, a disembodied voice. She does have a visible presence, albeit vague, and later in the poem is seen to move in various ways, which means that Pearsall's description of her as 'simply a mouthpiece for advice and instruction' is too extreme.[99] Venus as a statue who subsequently speaks and moves is not an invention of Lydgate's. Again, there is evidence of French influence on the English poet.

Lydgate's Venus, in fact, bears more than a passing resemblance to the Venus portrayed by Machaut in his *Fonteinne Amoureuse*. Her first appearance in the Machaut poem is as an inanimate figure,

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[98] I am indebted to Helen Solterer's reference to the unedited *Miroir des Bonnes Femmes*; S. Solterer, *The Master and Minerva: Disputing Women in French Medieval Culture* (Berkeley,California, 1995), p.6 and p.219 (note 19). For *Li Mireoirs*, see *Dits de Watriquet*, ed. Scheler, pp.1-37.

[99] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, pp.106-7.

carved onto the marble fountain.[100] At this early stage in the development of her character, Machaut makes sure that his audience is in no doubt of her potential. Venus as a statue is part of Machaut's Paris/Helen story, and is given the title 'maquerelle' (bawd). It could be argued that Lydgate, too, presents his Venus in this role. In the *Fonteinne*, Venus appears in her mythological role before receiving her full title as the 'dame, royne, et maistresse' of lovers.[101] Already introduced as a bawd, her pre-eminence over lovers might raise serious moral questions. Nonetheless, when she appears in a dream to the narrator, he is blinded by her dazzling face, just as Lydgate's narrator would later be blinded by her dazzling temple.[102] In Machaut's re-telling of the Paris story, Paris chooses Venus and rejects 'scens et.. clergie' because he is a king's son, and therefore desires 'l'estat de chevalerie' (line 2131-32).[103] Venus is clear that the sleeping lover of the narrator's dream has never prayed to her, and therefore has not received her help. In a peculiar one-sided courtship, in which a lady addresses the sleeping lover and Venus performs a kind of betrothal ceremony, Machaut provides much of the imagery which reappears in Lydgate's poem. Machaut stresses the pagan nature of his Venus, and of those who worship her, in the incense, candles and gold which, the lady tells

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[100] See *The Fountain of Love*, ed. Barton Palmer, lines 1313-15, p.161.

[101] *Fountain of Love*, ed. Barton Palmer, lines 1383-85 (p.162) tell of Venus and Jupiter embracing and delighting each other. It is interesting that Machaut also claims that Jupiter commissioned the statue, whilst Venus herself had the marble and ivory worked. Lines 1430-31 (p.166) provide the image as queen and mistress of lovers.

[102] Compare the *Fonteinne*, lines 1585-91 (*Fountain of Love*, ed. Barton Palmer, p.172-74) with the *Temple*, lines 24-28.

[103] *Fountain of Love*, ed. Barton Palmer, p.202.

her somnolent beloved, should be offered to the goddess (lines 2401-403).[104] Echoing this theme, Lydgate's narrator describes the offerings of 'blood, encense, and mylk' (line 539) which the throng of lovers are setting before Venus in her temple.[105] Like the lover in the *Fonteinne*, Lydgate's man is distanced from the pagan rites, as no mention is made of him (or his lady) offering anything other than a courtly complaint. Machaut's lady is ordered by Venus to comfort the lover; Lydgate's lady is told it is her duty 'Him to cherissen' (line 1118).[106] Machaut's lady takes the lover's hand and then kisses him; Lydgate's lady follows suit:

> Hir humble seruant toke goodli bi the honde,
> As he toforne here mekeli did knele,
> And kissed him after, fu[l]fillyng eueredele
> Fro point to point in ful thrifti wise,
> As ye toforne haue Venus herd deuyse.
> (lines 1280-84)[107]

The constant exhortations, both by the lady and Venus, that the knight should not be sorrowful (there is a similar emphasis placed on joy in both poems) and that any suffering must be carefully hidden, are also features of both works. The many differences which also exist between the *Fonteinne* and the *Temple*, and the lack of any direct intertextuality, are ample evidence that Lydgate, whilst

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[104] *Fountain of Love*, ed. Barton Palmer, p.216.

[105] In the *Parliament of Fowls*, Chaucer has a single pair of lovers kneeling before Venus as she lies on her golden bed. They are introduced and abandoned in just one and a half lines by Chaucer. See *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, lines 278-79, p.389.

[106] *Fountain of Love*, ed. Barton Palmer, p.150.

[107] The corresponding passages in the *Fonteinne* occur in lines 2194-97 and lines 2496-98 (*Fountain of Love*, ed. Barton Palmer, p.204 and p.220), but Machaut's lady, with more than a hundred kisses, has a zeal which outstrips Lydgate's more restrained counterpart.

obviously familiar with the earlier poem, probably did not have access to a copy.[108] However, the similarities between the Venus of Machaut and the Venus of Lydgate argue strongly for the influence of Machaut's *Fonteinne* on the *Temple*. Lydgate's Venus goes far beyond Chaucer's shaking goddess in the *Knight's Tale*.[109] The monk's creation may be a painting, a statue, a planet or a living, speaking advisor. I would suggest that the many representations of the goddess reflect the complexity of interpretation which the author expects from his audience. Venus cannot be adequately interpreted in any single way, nor can the *Temple* itself. There are many lessons which may be learned from this *dit amoureux*.

Venus' advice to the lovers in their predicament is that they should patiently and in 'honeste' (line 187) wait until the lady becomes free and they are able to be together. This is the first and most obvious lesson which may be drawn from the *Temple*: use patience in the face of adversity. However, Venus' speech, with its

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[108] There is an obvious link between Machaut and Lydgate, however, in the figure of Joan of Navarre. Joan was the daughter of Charles the Bad, the King of Navarre featured in Machaut's *Jugement du Roi de Navarre*. Barton Palmer is mystified by an apparent switch of political loyalties by Machaut. (*The Judgement of the King of Navarre*, ed. Barton Palmer, pp.xiv-xv) The poet was in the service of the pro-Valois King of Bohemia and then, following his death, in the service of Bonne, his daughter until she too died in 1349. Machaut then (although it is not known exactly when) joined the household of the anti-Valois Charles the Bad of Navarre. It seems to me that the most obvious explanation for Machaut's apparent 'defection' is found by tracing royal women, rather than by focussing on male figures. The daughter of Bonne of Bohemia (and her husband John of Valois, future king of France) was Jeanne, who married Charles the Bad. The very fact that Machaut did not leave Bohemia until after Bonne's death provides significant evidence of female patronage; Jeanne may well have continued an already-established employment, taking Machaut with her when she went to Navarre as both chaplain and secretary.

[109] See *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, line 2265, p.55.

insistence on restraint, seems to contradict her essential nature as the goddess of passion and lust. In addition, although she moves little in response to the lover's pleas, some of the movements which the narrator describes seem to suggest Christian imagery. Lines 370-71 describe how she 'did enclyne/Mekeli hir hede', in an almost Marian movement. In line 524 she 'shoke hir hede', just as she shook in response to Palamon's prayer in her pagan environment in *The Knight's Tale*.[110] When the man in the *Temple* finishes his plea to her she casts her eyes towards him 'ful benyg[ne]li (line 849). Finally, in a repetition of the story at the opening of the poem in which Vulcan binds Venus and Mars, the narrator sees Venus herself bind the lovers' hearts together (lines 1103-1108). The speech and behaviour of this pagan goddess complicate her traditional mythographic associations, leading critics to suggest that, within the poem, Venus undergoes a kind of 'Christianisation'.

Torti sees Venus in the *Temple* evolving until she is seen to shed her pagan associations to become 'a substitute for both God and the Establishment'.[111] The surprise of a 'Christian' Venus was not lost upon Schick, who found this creation to be 'The greatest absurdity..... created by our monk..... Venus cites examples of "holy saints", who won heaven through their suffering'.[112] Venus' speeches to the lovers led A.C. Spearing to conclude that 'Venus must be seen

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[110] *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.55, lines 2265-68.

[111] Torti, *The Glass of Form*, p.77.

[112] *Temple*, ed. Schick, p.cxxxvii.

as standing for a love endorsed by heaven'.[113] It is true that by refusing to portray Venus' nakedness, Lydgate weakens her associations with lechery, and thus prepares the way for a Venus who not only clearly has authority over the lady and her man, but also seems to adhere to Christian rather than pagan principles. This 'Christian' interpretation of Venus must be questioned, however, in the light of the poem as a whole. Torti herself argues initially that Venus, once invoked, 'because of her iconographic association with the mirror.... is also a symbol of vanity, instability, transitoriness'. Whilst I take issue with the iconographic imagery which Lydgate does not use, but upon which Torti bases her argument, it seems obvious to me that Venus in the *Temple* is, indeed, introduced 'fleting on the se' and thus as the goddess of lechery. I cannot agree with arguments which assert that such a goddess can then transform herself into the voice of Christian wisdom.[114] Nor do I think Lydgate's reader/listener would have believed such a transformation to be possible. The notion that Venus was a 'Christian' goddess of wisdom is one which does not fit easily with other late-medieval portrayals of the goddess.[115] Recent interpretations of Lydgate's Venus which move away from the truly 'Christian', but which nonetheless present the goddess as a benign and positive force are also problematic.

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[113] Spearing also draws attention to line 327, in which the 'hevenli fire of love that is eterne' is sought from Venus by the lady for her beloved. See Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, p.176.

[114] A. Torti, 'John Lydgate's *Temple of Glas*', p.227.

[115] See Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, pp.192-93 for a discussion of likely sources for Chaucer's Venus in the *House of Fame*. Minnis points out that in, 'reworking... Chaucer's poem', Lydgate takes pains to reproduce a temple of Venus made entirely of glass, resulting in 'not a goddess - or a structure - to rely on' (p.192).

Norton-Smith has argued that Venus, in the *Temple*, acts rationally towards the lovers. She is 'wholly in accord' with the figure of Nature as represented in Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* or in Alain de Lille's *De Planctu Naturae*.[116] I cannot concur with this conclusion: such a Venus is nowhere to be found in Lydgate's other works; nor does she appear in the *Temple of Glas*. I would also argue that Lydgate is not producing in the *Temple* the more virtuous of Boccaccio's 'two Venuses'. Boccaccio distinguishes between a Venus who presides over lawful marriage and therefore 'permitted' love, and one who is the goddess of carnal 'unlawful' lust.[117] Robert Hollander notes how Boccaccio is explicit in describing these two deities, both of whom bear the same name. Hollander's overall argument regarding Boccaccio, however, is very close to my own conclusions regarding Lydgate, i.e. that even the most obscure of his love poems were meant to be read within a Christian framework.[118] I shall argue that Lydgate, in the *Temple*, prefers to reduce both images into one, creating a goddess closely related to Fortune. That such was his intent may have been signalled by his deliberate conflation of Chaucer's temple of Venus and House of Fame in the description of his own 'temple of glas'.

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[116] Norton-Smith, 'Lydgate's Metaphors', p.93. It is interesting that Chaucer, whose *Parliament* may have been influenced by the *Messe des Oiseaux*, uses unambiguous Nature as the presiding figure in his poem, whereas Lydgate harks back to Jean's much more complex Venus.

[117] This is in Boccaccio's *Genealogie Deorum Gentilium*. See *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*. ed. V. Branca, 12 vols. (Milan, 1967) VII, 337-59.

[118] R. Hollander, *Boccacio's Two Venuses* (New York, 1977). For the two Venuses, see p.60. For his views on Boccaccio's intentions, pp.120-21.

In the 'marriage ceremony' which Venus performs for the two lovers in the *Temple*, there are clear indications that this Venus is not Norton-Smith's 'Nature'. The following stanza, which starts promisingly enough, offering an eternally happy outcome, is unable to sustain its optimistic imagery:

> Eternalli, be bonde of assuraunce,
> The cnott is knytt, which mai not ben vnbovnd,
> That al the goddis of this alliaunce,
> Saturne, and Ioue, and Mars, as it is fovnde,
> And eke Cupide, that first you did[e] wounde,
> Shal bere record, and euermore be wreke
> On which of you his trouthe first dothe breke
> (lines 1229-35)

'Al the goddis', as they appear here, are a most unpromising collection. Saturn was described earlier in the poem by Venus herself as 'vnfortuned' and cruel (lines 388-89). Mars is introduced as he was caught with Venus by Vulcan, in Venus' own triangular love affair (lines 126-28). Jove, the narrator recounted, gave up his godly appearance and became a bull 'for loue of the faire Europe' (lines 117-20), but his lack of steadfastness quickly becomes apparent as in the next line he sets out to seduce Alcmena. Together with the blind and wounding Cupid, these are the gods who sit in judgement over the outcome of the battle between Palamon and Arcite in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, a story which could not end 'happily ever after'.[119] If the 'cnott' Venus refers to cannot be 'vnbound', there is no need to threaten Cupid's everlasting wrath on the first one to break it.[120] The stanza begins with 'Eternalli' and ends with

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[119] *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.58, lines 2438-78.

[120] Renoir takes these stanzas at face value. He sees the use of the 'knott' imagery in the *Temple* prompting 'a purely technical kind of appreciation' in the reader/listener. See Renoir's article 'The

'breke', which must be considered an appropriate speech for the traditionally mutable goddess. The pagan goddess retains her expected identity, and although her speech appears to contain much wisdom, on careful inspection it supports only the transient love with which she has always been associated.

9. A 'prudent' interpretation of Venus' wisdom

Lydgate's peculiar presentation of Venus as a mixture of pagan and Christian is not altogether original. Jean de Condé, in his *Messe des Oiseaux*, provides an early fourteenth-century example of the powerful goddess in a somewhat bizarre, but nonetheless Christian, environment. Jean's Venus presides over a mass sung by birds, and hears the complaints of canonesses and nuns. However, these complaints concern themselves with earthly, not heavenly, passion. In the gloss which Jean provides at the end of the poem, Venus is compared, in an allegorical explanation, to 'Saint Espir' (the Holy Spirit); the unquenchable thirst she engenders in lovers may be compared to the desire for God which the Holy Spirit creates in the human soul. However, Jean goes on to condemn the nuns and canonesses, who have been deceived by Venus, a goddess who works against the soul and leads to damnation.[121] Jean points out that his *dit* can be read either literally, by the foolish, or allegorically, by the wise. It was for the audience to discern what had been

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binding knot: Three uses of one image in Lydgate's poetry', *Neophilologus* 41 (1957), 202-204.

[121] *Jean de Condé: La Messe des Oiseaux et Le Dit des Jacobins et des Fremeneurs*, ed. J. Ribard (Paris, 1970). See line 1361 ff. for the initial gloss on Venus; lines 1530-36 for her true nature.

happening in the poem; he only provides a 'correct' explanation at the end. The sermon preached in the 'mass' concerns itself with the four virtues of the true lover: obedience, patience, loyalty and hope. These are, of course, the traditional requirements of courtly love, and are the qualities which Lydgate's ambiguous Venus seeks from the lovers in the *Temple*. Lydgate provides no gloss for his *dit;* the onus is firmly on his audience to form their own opinions of both characters and events.[122] If this audience carries before it a visual image of Venus 'fleting in the se', and listens critically to her speech, they will be wary of a goddess who was more usually depicted in the Middle Ages in an unremittingly bad light.

In many of his other works the monk is himself unambiguous in his condemnation of the goddess of Fortune and earthly passion. The examples are too numerous to allow more than a sampling here. In the *Fall of Princes* she is

> Venus, of loueres emperesse and queene,
> Of vicious lustis lady and maystresse,
> (Book VII lines 1237-38)[123]

In the *Troy Book* she is 'ful of doubilnes',[124] and in the *Life of Saint Alban and Saint Amphibal* are the following condemnatory verses:

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[122] The argument I make here is in almost direct opposition to the view held by Lois Ebin. Ebin argues that, according to Lydgate, his poetry 'represents a truthful vision'. Ebin contrasts Lydgate with Chaucer, arguing that 'the problems which Chaucer considers so anxiously no longer are apparent - the ability of the poet to mislead by means of his art...'. It seems to me that Lydgate was only too aware, not simply of a writer's ability to mislead, but also of an audience's ability to interpret incorrectly. See Ebin's article 'Lydgate's Views on Poetry', *Annuale Medievale* 18 (1977) 76-105 (p.91).

[123] *Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, ed. Bergen, II, 809.

Venus to vertu is contrarious,
Causith in youthe flesshly insolence,
Yeueth gret occasion to folk coraious,
Off hir natur loueth riot and dispence,
Withdraweth in knyhthod marciall diligence;
(lines 463-67)[125]

In the *Temple* Lydgate does not create a 'new' Venus, full of virtues. He simply portrays her at her beautiful, dazzling best, and thus challenges his audience to remember the other, less appealing, side of her nature. As Jean de Condé had pointed out, it is not fitting for a religious to be drawn under Venus' spell, or to be taken in by the elegance of courtly language or courtly life.[126] Like the 'prudent' audience of Jean's *Messe*, Lydgate's audience should recognise Venus as the goddess of earthly love (lust), accompanied by, not Cupid, but the very real threat of damnation.[127]

Even an allegorical reading of the *Temple* which links the poem to its historic referents can be shown to support this view of the dangers attendant on Venus' service. If the poem is read as an allegory of the marriages of either Joan of Navarre or Jacqueline of Hainault, then perhaps Venus herself is also an allegorical representation. If she represents the power able to make the marriage possible, then once again the complication of a 'Christian'

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[124] *Troy Book*, ed. Bergen, II, line 5709, p.308.

[125] *Lydgate's Life of Saint Alban and Saint Amphibal*, ed. J.E. van der Westhuizen (Leiden, 1974).

[126] *La Messe des Oiseaux*, ed. Ribard, lines 1530-36.

[127] In his condemnation of the pagan gods (including Venus) in the *Troy Book*, Lydgate warns that they are, in fact, devils who 'the soule sleth/ Perpetuelly'. *Lydgate's Troy Book*, ed. Bergen, Bk. IV, lines 6948-7031, pp.767-70.

Venus seems to be raised. After all, it was the Pope himself who granted bulls in both instances to solve the ladies' problems.

The idea of Venus (goddess of lechery and fortune) as a representation of the agency of the Pope seems, at first consideration, even more unlikely than Venus as Christian orator. However, at the respective times when Joan and Jacqueline were seeking to marry, there were two popes. The pope to whom they both applied for permission to marry was the one supported by the French monarchy, Benedict XIII of Avignon.[128] The English did not recognise Benedict, and maintained a consistent allegiance with the pope in Rome. It is possible, therefore, that one interpretation of Lydgate's Venus does represent the role of a pope (Benedict), whose status as a Christian leader was in considerable doubt, but who nonetheless granted permission for the sought-after marriages. The attitudes of Henry IV and Humphrey of Gloucester towards Benedict must have been highly ambivalent; as English Christians they did not recognise his authority, yet he was instrumental in allowing them to achieve their respective aims. If one interpretation of Venus does, indeed, represent Benedict, then Lydgate's Venus becomes even more consistent in her inconsistency. Like Benedict, she is able to speak in a way which associates her with the Church but, like Benedict in

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[128] For an account of the 'great schism', during the period of which there were two popes, see G. Barraclough, *The Medieval Papacy* (London, 1968), pp.164-85. England did not recognise the 'French' pope, Benedict XIII (pope from 1394-1423), whose name was Peter de Luna. Whether or not Lydgate's duplicitous astrological references at the beginning of the *Temple* refer to the schism remains a matter for conjecture. However Benedict (Luna) was repeatedly referred to by Deschamps as 'la lune'; *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Saint-Hilaire and Raynaud, X, 207. Lydgate's mention of Lucina and Diana (both meaning the moon) within four lines may, therefore, also be an allusion to the schism.

the eyes of English Christians, she is a false representative. Lydgate's Venus is ambiguous and dangerous. The author is clear in his introduction about her mythical origins. Her subsequent 'wisdom' and Christian overtones are simply an extension of her two-sided nature. This is surely the second 'lesson' which may be learnt from the *Temple*: it is heavenly, not earthly love which should be valued, therefore the reader/listener must see beyond Venus' dazzling appearance and mistrust completely the duplicitous goddess of lechery and fortune. The third lesson, which an analysis of both the dramatic tensions and the dialogue of the *Temple* reveals, is dependent upon the plot of the poem itself, and carries a political message which was highly relevant to Henry IV.

10. The expediency of appearing before the 'prese'

Lydgate may or may not have envisaged a wide dissemination of his work; his initial concerns would certainly have been related to the requirements of his patron. Even if the premise that the *Temple* was a poem written to celebrate the marriage of Henry IV and Joan of Navarre is accepted, the question of the original audience remains difficult to resolve. However, the structure of the work itself, together with the way in which the author manipulates the narrative voice, indicates an audience less exclusive than that intended for the *Complaynt of the Black Knight*. The *Complaynt* features only a knight and the narrator. The setting in which the narrator opens his poem is the readily recognisable, exclusive garden belonging to the literary world of the courtly nobility. The only voices heard

guarantee that attention remains firmly fixed upon the knight. The *Temple*, in contrast, dramatises encounters between the knight, the lady and Venus. The setting is a temple occupied by thousands of lovers. The attention of the audience shifts from one speaker to another. In the *Complaynt*, the identity of the knight is not easy to discern without some knowledge of the significance of heraldic representation. In the *Temple* the author provides colours and a motto which ought to make the lady easily identifiable to a much wider audience.

The exclusivity of the lovers in this *dit* is undermined by the presence of the 'mani a thousand louers' in the temple, which suggests that the experience of the lady and the man is not unique. The continuing presence of this crowd in the poem ensures that the link between the two and the 'mani' is not forgotten. The 'mani a thousand' initially appear between mythological lovers and the lady herself. The complaints of the 'mani' are the result of a wide range of adversities relating to their own potential happiness. Some are plagued by jealousy or envy, others are separated from their lovers because of 'wikkid tongis' (lines 147-53). Some are suffering the cruel disdain of their lovers as a result of unrequited love, others simply do not have the courage to speak of their love. Some complain of fickleness, others of being married young to an old spouse. Yet another group consists of those who have either been placed in holy orders or married off before they had time to choose for themselves. Whilst this catalogue tends to blur the various categories of lovers, the author does not give them all equal attention. Only a few lines cover jealousy, fickleness and unrequited love. Far more space is given to young women married to old men (as had been the case for

both Joan of Navarre and Jacqueline of Hainault), and also to young women forced into holy orders. Pearsall wonders at this last group, here in Venus' temple, and concludes that they provide 'an example of how the urge to be comprehensive leads Lydgate into slightly indecorous irrelevance'.[129] That such a group may be found in Venus' temple had, of course, been previously demonstrated by Jean de Condé in his *Messe des Oiseaux*. Lydgate, like Jean, reflects the realities of life and love in all sections of society, and is, perhaps, casting a sideways allusion to his own presence in the temple of the goddess of love. Just as the young women had not sought to become nuns, nor had he sought to enter the temple; he arrived as a result of being 'Rauysshid in spirit' whilst asleep. Once there, he finds himself in the company not only of courtly lovers, but of 'mani a thousand'.

The throng of lovers in the *Temple* serve, as they do in Chaucer's *Parliament*, to demonstrate the likely hazards encountered by those who enter the temple of Venus. In Lydgate's poem, they also provide a backdrop of fellow-sufferers against which the lady is introduced.[130] The 'prese' continue to appear, however, throughout the poem, as they witness the drama between the man, the lady and Venus unfolding. After Venus ends her first reply to the lady, the crowd are seen making their offerings to her statue (lines 533-44). Venus makes no response to these offerings, thus providing a contrast

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[129] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.104.

[130] In the *Parlement* the temple is well-peopled, inside and out (lines 231-252, *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, p.388). Those within the temple have filled it with sighs (line 247). The dangers of love are further exemplified by the painted legends of lovers, which tell 'in what plyt they dyde' (line 294). This multitude of folk appear no more in the poem, although there is an obvious parallel to the suffering lovers in the courtship of the noble birds.

to her reaction to the lady and man. As the narrator moves 'oute of the prese' (line 547), he comes across the solitary man. However, the knight, too, has to enter the temple in order to resolve his problems, as this is where both Venus and his lady can be found. It is in a public gathering, not in an exclusive setting, that this particular drama reveals its conclusion. As soon as Venus has confirmed the union of the two lovers, the crowd erupts, showering her with 'laude and honoure'. It is at this point in the poem that the traditional courtly exclusivity of the *dit amoureux* is temporarily abandoned as the 'thousands' of lovers of both 'lough and heigh degre/Gan Venus pray...' on behalf of the lovers (lines 1315-16). This prayer moves Venus to solemnly pronounce that she grants their request in full; the lady and man will be together 'perpetuelli' (line 1323). Whilst the 'prese' were, presumably, unsuccessful in pleading their own individual cases, their prayer on behalf of the lady and man is answered, and is instrumental in bringing about the two lovers' desired end. The 'secret' love of the lady has been played out in a public arena; she herself has explained the delicacies of her position. Her appeal to Venus was clearly an appropriate and effective action, as was the subsequent plea of the man. As Venus herself had explained to the man, those who remain 'specheles' will achieve nothing (line 905). It was not in the appeal to Venus, however, but in gaining the sympathy of the 'prese' that an enduring outcome was guaranteed. The third lesson which may be drawn from the *Temple*, therefore, must surely be the importance of explaining oneself directly, both to the appropriate authority and to those of 'lough and heigh degre'.

This lesson, which must acknowledge the earthly supremacy of Venus in matters of erotic love, stands in opposition to a 'prudent' reading of spiritual wisdom which rejects both Venus and earthly passion. In creating his own version of the goddess Venus in the *Temple*, the monk displays an acute awareness of the complexities of political life. He interweaves in the courtly words of his *dit amoureux* the notion that earthly love is transient, painful and 'rekles'. The 'prudent' reader/listener should thus concentrate on the love of heaven, everlasting and pure. However, the author's primary task is to celebrate and gain support for a royal marriage. Such a marriage should be seen by his audience to be both necessary and desirable. The prevailing conditions, outlined in the (confusing) astrological references in the opening lines of the *Temple*, are such that chaste Diana 'Had hid hir bemys vnder a mysty cloude' (line 8). At this particular moment Diana, the goddess who would oppose the very idea of marriage, is absent. Even the 'prudent' amongst Lydgate's audience would realise that the time was right for what Henry believed to be a politically 'prudent' marriage.

The consensus which is achieved at the end of the *Temple* reflects the consensus which Lydgate hopes to achieve in support for Henry's and Joan. Joyous unanimity is brought about as the dream ends. It could be argued that this consensus also reflects wider political concerns which Lydgate is drawing into his work. If the *Temple* is exposed to the kind of analysis which Simpson has applied to Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, a strong drive towards what Simpson describes as 'constitutionalist' politics seems to emerge.[131] The

[131] Cf. Chapter One, pp.39-40.

central figure must recognise the importance of its body politic, and the body politic must support its centre or head (the king). If such a representation of consensus is accepted, however, it should not be read as a threat to the governing *status quo*. As Judith Ferster points out, 'There were no viable alternatives to monarchy during the English Middle Ages..... Even the rebels in the Rising of 1381 were monarchists who looked to the king for reform and redress of their grievances'.[132] The *Temple*, with its apparent agenda of consensus, positions the man and his complaint firmly in the centre of the poem. It could be argued, nonetheless, that this centrality does not produce a work which simply reflects the poetics associated with monologic masculinity. The dream frame must, by its very structure, also emphasise the relationship of the periphery to the centre. The poem ends with an address by the narrator to his 'lady'. The final positioning of the lady as the recipient of the poem underlines the continuing importance of her feminine presence. However, this ending is unlike that of the *Confessio* of Gower, where the end of the work creates a radically different perspective, requiring the reader/listener to reconsider all that has gone before. As discussed in Chapter One, this poetic strategy may reflect an authorial political viewpoint which is deeply critical of the current rule. Lydgate's framework reinforces his dream, no new perspective on the central sections of the poem is gained.[133] No radical re-reading is needed; if there is any implied criticism of absolutist politics, it is mild. The female voices which might have been used to offer alternative perspectives serve rather to enhance the depiction of the

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[132] J. Ferster, *The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Pennsylvania, 1996), p.120.

[133] Cf. Chapter One, pp.36-40.

role of the central male figure. The way in which gender is constructed in the *Temple* seems to support an 'absolutist' view. However, if the clerical narrator is taken into account, such a notion can be questioned.

11. The question of gender: masculine, feminine - and clerical?

The drama enacted in the *Temple* might be construed as one in which gender is itself performative. In his analysis of the *Roman d'Eneas*, Simon Gaunt argues that the hero 'has to conform to a rigid model of acceptable behaviour in order to become a fully formed (masculine) subject'. His desire, moreover, 'must be directed towards a specific object to enhance the communal good'.[134] These conclusions could equally well be applied to Lydgate's *Temple*, if the man is regarded as becoming 'fully formed' and the royal marriage is seen as being for the 'common good'. However, the dramatic action of the *Temple* is far from one-sided. The role of the feminine in this work is significant. Gaunt argues that 'femininity is given enhanced value within romance discourse, and gender is constructed dialogically rather than monologically'.[135] The *Temple* is not a romance, and yet Gaunt's statement remains patently true for this poem, where the gender roles are constructed in great part by the speakers themselves. The dialogic structure of this *dit amoureux* appears to owe much to the tradition of romance. With regard to a romance such as the twelfth-century *Eneas*, Gaunt concludes that 'The

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[134] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp.84-85.

[135] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p.85.

position of women is not at issue, but power within patriarchal structures'. The 'obligatory heterosexuality' evident in the poem belongs within a structure of masculine homosocial desire.[136] The song of the crowd in the *Temple* would appear to support such an androcentric reading. Although both the man and the lady appear before Venus, the crowd thanks the goddess that the man has been 'fortuned his ladi forto wynne' (line 1347). Lydgate uses a courtly *dit amoureux* to create a traditional setting for masculine desire, but then uses a convention of romance to displace the initiative for the relationship onto a female figure. It is only as a result of the lady's plea to Venus and Venus' subsequent action that the man experiences his own desire; he is, initially, innocent of the potential sin of erotic passion. This masculine innocence is mirrored in that of the narrator himself and, at least in theory, by that of the author.

As a monk, Lydgate did not find himself within a permitted framework of heterosexual desire. Indeed, he belonged to a social group (priests) whose gender status has been described by Robert Swanson as 'liminal' in relation to late-medieval notions of masculinity.[137] A priest was 'specifically male', but under constant threat of temptation or damnation from his own 'suppressed masculinity'.[138] The sexual liminality which Swanson describes for priests may also be reflected in the way in which possible

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[136] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p.85.

[137] R.N. Swanson, 'Angels Incarnate: Clergy and Masculinity from Gregorian Reform to Reformation' in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. D.M. Hadley (Harlow, 1999), pp.160-77 (p.170).

[138] Swanson, 'Angels Incarnate', p.184 and p.166.

hierarchies are depicted in the *Temple*. If, as Gaunt suggests, gender constructs in late-medieval poetry may be seen to mirror the hierarchical constructs of masculine power, then the *Temple* seems to offer a 'third way'.

The polarity of the masculine and feminine, in the tradition of the *dits amoureux*, reflects the pre-eminence of male desire. The stress on the feminine in the *Temple* should not be overemphasised, as masculine concerns retain their traditional dominance. However, the very large textual part which the narrator plays in the poem as a whole may foreground the importance of one who occupies a more 'liminal' gendered position. Lydgate's narrator is unambiguously clerkly. He refers repeatedly to his struggle to compose, owing to his lack of 'kunning'.[139] The only visual image of him evoked by the text is found in his complaint that 'Mi penne I fele quaken as I write' (line 947). His final reaction to the drama which he has seen unfolding before him is also specifically clerkly: he will 'to maken and to write/A litil tretise' (lines 1379-80). The important role of this highly-literate narrator both adds to and troubles a reading of the *Temple* which might argue that Lydgate was supporting a constitutionalist political standpoint. The 'liminal' narrator adds a voice to the poem which enhances further the work's 'consensual' structure. However, although the gender of the man and his lady can be argued to be constructed dialogically within the poem, that of the narrator is not.

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[139] See, for example, lines 536-38 and lines 947-51.

An argument which suggests that Lydgate's poetics imply a constitutionalist political model could founder when the narrator is taken into account. The first-person narrator cannot be constructed or commented upon by anyone but himself; his position, gendered or otherwise, is unassailable. I would suggest that Lydgate's poetics in the *Temple* reflect his own gendered liminality. This 'liminal' position, however, is potentially powerful. When Gaunt's theories are applied to the *Temple*, as has been shown above, the gender constructs within the work show that masculine dominance and centrality is not challenged by the feminine voices, as the masculine homosocial ideologies inherent in both romance and courtly lyric are upheld. The pre-emininence which the author grants to his liminally-gendered clerkly narrator, however, might be argued to weaken the masculine ideologies which traditionally adhere to the genres of romance and courtly lyric. The narrator, after all, is not a courtly lover, yet his role in the poem seems to position him at the very heart of its political ideology. From this may be gleaned yet another important lesson for the reader/listener of the *Temple*, but this time the reader/listener can be none other than the author's present and future courtly patron.

12. Ethics and politics: the need for an eloquent voice of persuasion

The author offers the reader/listener of the *Temple* a sophisticated and polished *dit amoureux*. The importance which the author attaches to his own role may, perhaps, also be deduced from within the lines of the poem itself. Those who produce the

celebratory music for the two lovers provide some of the clues. Nothing less than the cream of mythological music-makers is appropriate for Lydgate's poem or his lovers: Caliope and 'al hir sustren', Orpheus and Amphion (lines 1303-12). It is certain, however, that these characters are meant to signify beyond their simple musical contribution. Lydgate glosses both Caliope and Amphion in his *Siege of Thebes*. Caliope and her sisters sing at the wedding of Mercury and Philology (glossed in turn as eloquence and wisdom).[140] The story of Amphion, Lydgate explains, tells that he built Thebes with a magical harp. The harp must be interpreted as the way in which the king, through his own 'styring and exortacioun', successfully encouraged his people to create the city.[141]

For the monk, the important lesson to be drawn from Amphion's story is that an eloquent king can convince his subjects to support his aims. If Henry IV may be represented by the man in the *Temple*, then it is the clerical poet himself who provides both literary lover and 'real' king with this particular public image and voice. The man and his lady are presented in the poem in an idealistic and literary way, typical of such lovers in the French *dits amoureux*. However, they are also associated with historic referents. It may be that Lydgate is impressing upon Henry the need for public speech, but he is also demonstrating the importance of eloquent, noble speech on a public platform. [142] From the end of the fourteenth century onwards,

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[140] See *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes*, ed. Erkwall, I, Part 1, lines 828-42, 36.

[141] See *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes*, ed. Erkwall, I, Part 1, lines 214-43, 11-12.

[142] This is very much in line with Cicero's view of the power of eloquence: 'Nam neque cum eis sentimus qui civilem scientiam

he was commissioned to write works for, amongst others, the Lancastrian royal family. Henry IV, having forcefully deposed Richard II, was in need of someone who might be able to inspire the public support which he deemed to be so necessary to a successful reign.[143] What Paul Strohm described as Lydgate's 'vantage point formally vested with ethical responsibility' could serve Henry's purpose well.[144] The fourth lesson which may be discerned in the temple, therefore, directly concerns the ruler, but also impacts on his subjects: effective rule, which must have the support of subjects of both 'lough and heigh degre', can be brought about through eloquent persuasion. Such eloquence should be provided by one with 'ethical responsibility'. My conclusion here is much in line with that of James Simpson regarding the *Troy Book*, where he argues that 'the narrative cries out for prudential, clerical voices to guide aristocratic behaviour'.[145] That a courtly poet should insert his own 'clerical voice' in such a prominent way into a *dit amoureux* was not unusual. What is remarkable is the social breadth of its intended audience.

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eloquentia non putant indigere' ('For I do not agree with those who think that political science has no need of eloquence'). See *Cicero, de Inventione, de Optimo Genere Oratorum, Topica*, ed. H.M. Hubbell (Harvard, 1949), Bk.1, 6, p.14. Cicero was widely read in the Middle Ages. See C. Baswell, 'Latinitas' in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Literature*, ed. Wallace, pp.122-51 (pp.130-36).

[143] See Kirby, *Henry IV*, p.252.

[144] Cf. Chapter One, p.32. I do not take issue with this statement of Strohm's; the priestly Lydgate clearly did occupy such an ethical position. However, I have argued that the *Temple* is a complex work which requires an interpretational approach which extends far beyond Strohm's conclusion that Lydgate was 'resolutely single-voiced'.

[145] Cf. Chapter One, pp.36-37.

13. Lydgate's innovation: the courtly dit *on the public stage*

Solitary lovers making solitary pleas, or being consoled by sympathetic dreamers, are standard fare in late fourteenth-century *dits amoureux*. The very widest possible context remained that of a refined courtly audience. In Machaut's *Jugement du roy de Behaigne*, the judgement of an audience is sought, but that audience is ultimately headed by the king himself, and the clear boundaries of its courtly setting are obvious. Froissart, in his *Temple d'Honneur*, describes a large gathering of people, but the man who leads him to the wedding is on horseback, and the 'crowd' is comprised of nobles. Perhaps Chaucer, in his *House of Fame*, might have placed a member of the nobility into a context replete with the non-courtly masses, but the extant work is unfinished, ending just as the 'man of gret auctorite' appears.[146] In a very real sense, Lydgate takes up where Chaucer had left off. Into a setting whose description conflates Chaucer's temple of Venus and house of Fame, Lydgate leads his noble lovers. He and they, whether they like it or not, have a role to play on the public stage. The message of the author to his patron/addressee is that an eloquent and audible public voice is an essential part of a ruler's relationship with his subjects, both of 'lough and heigh degre'.

It seems to me that it is not the lady's complaint which is Lydgate's startling innovation in the *Temple*, but his departure from the exclusive, courtly and aristocratically-inscribed norms which dictated who might appear in a late-medieval *dit amoureux*. Such

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[146] See *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, line 2158, p.373.

norms would accommodate the whole of the *Temple*, provided that the 'prese' were removed. Lydgate has been accused by Norton-Smith, Pearsall and others of failing to understand or to take advantage of the advances Chaucer had made in the writing of English poetry.[147] According to Norton-Smith, Chaucer's 'wonderful, encyclopaedic, inquiring' dream of the *Hous of Fame* becomes a victim of Lydgate's 'matter-of-factness' as, in the *Temple*, the monk reverts to 'the downright realism of Graunson'.[148] I have argued that, rather than being ignorant of Chaucer's innovations in both philosophy and style, Lydgate approached them from a different perspective, a perspective derived from the works of other clerical writers of courtly poetry such as Machaut and Froissart. In the *Temple*, Lydgate endeavoured to both meet his patron's requirements and to retain his own ethical integrity. My view is that he succeeded, producing a work whose obvious tensions insist that the reader/listener seek more than one resolution to the problem of interpretation. Hopefully, my own efforts at resolving the tensions I have found in this fascinating *dit amoureux* have helped to shed a little more light on the *Temple of Glas*.

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[147] It is probably fair to say that most modern critics have taken this view. For Norton-Smith see *Poems*, pp.ix-x. For Pearsall, see, for example, 'Lydgate as Innovator', p.11.

[148] *Poems*, ed. Norton-Smith, p.ix.

CODA: TOWARDS NEW HORIZONS

> And when that I hade long gone and sought,
> I fond a wiket, and entrid in as fast
> Into the temple.....
> (*Temple of Glas*, lines 38-40)

Lydgate the monk found himself 'rauysshid' into the glittering temple of Venus and into the world of the court nobility. Once there, he used his literary skills both to fulfil commissions and to offer moral instruction to his patrons. In his *dits amoureux*, the author created an important role for his narrator, producing a literary 'clerkly' figure who is not over-awed by his courtly companions. Robert Swanson points out that in the fifteenth century 'priests, especially those in the beneficed and higher reaches of the Church, were increasingly seen as assimilated to the status of the gentry'.[1] Although no claim can be made for Lydgate's 'gentrification', the ease with which he moved in the circles of the Lancastrian nobility was thus not exceptional. I have argued that Lydgate, whilst offering advice and instruction, set out to create for his patrons an acceptable public image. This role for the poet is very much in line with that of the authors of late-medieval French *dits amoureux*, and may be contrasted with the position of Lydgate's English predecessor, Chaucer. Chaucer's work lacks the emphasis which Lydgate and his French sources place on the importance of both moral and political instruction.

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[1] Swanson, 'Clergy, Masculinity', pp.189-90. Swanson refers to the nine ranks of gentry mentioned in *The Book of St Albans*, the last of which were the 'spiritual gentry'; p.190.

It could be argued, however, that Gower does provide Lydgate with an English 'ancestor' in this respect. The lack of any strong echoes of Gower's poetry in Lydgate's *dits amoureux* is, perhaps, surprising. Gower, too, in later life at least, seems to have regarded the Lancastrian family as an important audience for his work. It might be argued that the concern which the works of Lydgate and Gower have in common, i.e. their interest in moral didacticism, is quite simply the element which has been responsible for the failure of 'Gower Studies' or 'Lydgate Studies' to rival 'Chaucer Studies' in the modern academic curriculum.

The reasons which critics have provided for Lydgate's fall from literary favour and subsequent lack of popularity have ranged from the inadequate provision by readers of a social context for his work (Pearsall) to the dire and dreadful nature of the poetry itself (Schick, Norton-Smith).[2] My own critical apparatus has resulted in a reading of Lydgate's poetry which emphasises the political nature of the monk's courtly verse. I present Lydgate as a figure who mediated and promoted the public image of those in power. The mediatory role was one for which he had been trained early in life; as a priest he was the necessary bridge between Christian people and the ruler of all rulers, the Christian God. I have argued that the skill with which he combined ethics and politics in his own poetic practices was considerable. The relationship between ethics and politics is one which, for the moment at least, is relevant to late twentieth century critical

[2] See Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, pp.1-21; *Temple*, ed. Schick, pp.cxxxiv-cxlii; *Poems*, ed. Norton-Smith, pp.x-xi.

interest. The result of this interest is found in the studies of scholars such as Patterson, Strohm, Straker and Simpson.

According to Simon Gaunt, 'each generation of medievalists must ask new questions' regarding the literature they encounter.[3] If the 'new' questions are not formulated, then no dialogue is possible between the text and its reader. The re-iteration of 'old' questions can only produce the 'old' answers which are, perhaps, more relevant to the concerns of previous generations. I have placed Lydgate's *dits amoureux* firmly within the French *dits amoureux* tradition, thus creating a broader interpretative context for these courtly poems. This contextualisation aims to make some contribution to a critical framework which may assist subsequent scholars in finding a point of contact between their own imaginations and that of the fifteenth-century poet. It must surely be a lack of such contact which has worked to ensure the ongoing neglect of Lydgate's work, and which must therefore be urgently addressed in future Lydgate studies.[4]

This argument regarding a missing point of contact may encompass most previous explanations for both the lack of interest in fifteenth-century poetry generally, and the failure to ascribe value to the work of writers such as Lydgate. Many relevant

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[3] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p.19.

[4] For other suggestions for future Lydgate research, see A.S.G. Edwards, 'Lydgate Scholarship: Progress and Prospects' in *Fifteenth-Century Studies, Recent Essays*, ed. R.F. Yeager (Hamden, Connecticut, 1984), pp.29-47 and 'Lydgate Manuscripts: Some Directions for Future Research' in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. D. Pearsall (Cambridge, 1983), pp.15-26.

explanations have been advanced, but an element of mystery remains. How was it that for centuries Lydgate was regarded as one of the greatest writers in the English language? How was it that his reputation suffered such a reversal? My own analysis stresses the need for a fuller literary, historical and social contextualisation for Lydgate's work. Such a contextualisation will prove inadequate in 're-habilitating' Lydgate, however, unless readers can find in his work the 'living past with claims upon the present' described by Lee Patterson.[5] The predicament in which Lydgate studies has hitherto found itself can best be described with recourse to the theories of Hans Jauss as found in his *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*.[6] I intend to conclude, therefore, by drawing my own literary study directly into Jauss's theoretical framework.

Jauss's model of the aesthetic experience is alluded to, albeit often briefly, by many of the literary critics who have informed this thesis. Susan Crane points her readers in the direction of Jauss for a theoretical work which 'sustains audience-orientated studies', but prefers herself to focus on the text rather than the audience.[7] John Baldwin admits that Jauss's theory 'promises to respond to the historian's needs' in assessing the potential response of a medieval audience, but found neither

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[5] Cf. Chapter One, p.28.

[6] *Ästhetische Erfahrung. Literatur und Hermeneutik 1*, which is available in translation as H.R. Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. M. Shaw (Minneapolis, 1982).

[7] S. Crane, *Gender and Romance in Chaucer's* Canterbury Tales (Princeton, 1994), p.12.

time nor space to apply the theories.[8] Simon Gaunt, however, uses Jauss's theory of aesthetic experience as one of the building-blocks for his own work.[9] Jauss's project is to highlight the need for a re-assessment of the way in which literature (past and present) is apprehended. The emphasis which Crane places on audience orientation is, perhaps, misleading. *Aesthetic Experience* extends its scope far beyond the study of audience reception. Jauss's theory engages with both author and audience, thus providing a model within which authorial intent and audience response can be assessed. Jauss's insistence upon an audience which is active, rather than passive, finds an illuminating counterpart in Simpson's arguments regarding late-medieval 'enactive' texts.[10] An author's task, faced with an audience which neither wished nor expected to remain passive, would be to provide 'enactive' material. However, the learning process which Simpson visualises as a result of a reader/listener's subjective engagement with the problems raised by a text is only one aspect of the aesthetic experience as described by Jauss.

Stressing the communicative nature of medieval art, Jauss condemns the way in which it has been approached by many twentieth-century critics. He argues that in many examples of medieval art, 'the communicative function was still perfectly natural even though today it is often mindlessly suspected of affirming ruling interests, misunderstood as the mere

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[8] Baldwin, *The Language of Sex*, p.235.

[9] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, p.9.

[10] Cf. Chapter One, p.38.

transfiguration of existing conditions, and rigorously rejected'. Jauss's reminder that much medieval art was 'naturally' communicative is particularly apt with regard to literature which was still, at the time at which Lydgate was writing, intended for oral reception. Any study of art which is in performance must take into account not only the inbuilt notion of communication, but also the aims of entertainment. For Jauss, a condition for the aesthetic experience of art is that of aesthetic satisfaction, which he contrasts with 'elementary pleasure' (which has 'no reference to the rest of life').[11] The aesthetic pleasure of the artist is no less important than the pleasure of the recipient. Thus Jauss formulates his definition of the attitude of aesthetic enjoyment, relying upon the communicative nature of that experience and the aesthetic satisfaction which it will generate. The enjoyment is:

> for the producing consciousness, in the production of world as its own work (poiesis); for the receiving consciousness, in the seizing of the possibility of renewing one's inner perception of outer and inner reality (aesthesis), and finally - and here subjective opens up toward intersubjective experience - in the assent to a judgment demanded by the work, or in the identification with sketched and further-to-be-defined norms of action [catharsis][12]

It is obvious that Jauss also includes within his theoretical model the question of the author's desire. At the surface or 'literal' level, within Lydgate's work, this may be only a mirror

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[11] The work to which the above scholars refer is a collection of essays by Hans Jauss, collated and translated by Timothy Bahti. See *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, ed. and trans. T. Bahti (Brighton, 1982). This has been superceded by Jauss's later, modified work, *Aesthetic Experience*, trans. M. Shaw. The quotation is from *Aesthetic Experience*, p.30.

[12] Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience*, p.35. (Square brackets mine.)

of the desire of his patron/addressee. However, the author's 'poiesis', that which will pleasurably fulfil his own desire, is directly concerned with the self-reflective construction of his own world. His desire is for others, perhaps, to see the world 'his way', to inhabit a similar imaginative space. However, Jauss recognises the problem which arises for the author and his 'poiesis', inasmuch as the author cannot 'tie the reception to the intention with which he produced his work'. Whilst, therefore, the work may hold potentially more meanings than the author envisaged, some of the intended communicative agency will be lost with the passage of time. After all, 'human sensory perception is not an anthropological constant but subject to change over time'. It is in the reader's identification with the ideas presented in a work, and in his or her experience (or lack) of 'catharsis' that time presents its most insurmountable obstacles for Jauss's triangular model.

Jauss's theory maintains that 'liberating catharsis is purchased through the mediation of the imaginary'.[13] As I have argued above, if there is no point of contact between the imagination of the author and that of the audience, then this 'mediation of the imaginary' becomes impossible. Jauss builds upon, and cites, the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, who argued that self-knowledge may be gained through the discovery of unsuspected preformed ideas and judgements (these are what Jauss describes as

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[13] Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience*, p.96.

a 'horizon of expectation').[14] Gadamer's argument maintains that the reader already has a full awareness of the tradition which has given rise to the existence of the work when s/he approaches a piece of non-contemporary literature. The reader is equipped with a pre-formed notion of what it is to read Renaissance or Romantic literature. However, there must be very few late twentieth century readers who have any clear idea of what it is to read fifteenth-century poetry. Working from a fourteenth-century, Chaucerian base, the creation of a positive notion of fifteenth-century literature has been highly problematic. If Lydgate's fifteenth-century works (some of which were written forty years after Chaucer's death) are approached by readers whose own reading consciousness is firmly embedded in the traditions of fourteenth-century literature, then those readers possess 'preformed ideas and judgments' which are inappropriate. Within Jauss's all-encompassing theory, therefore, there is room and encouragement for all those critics who have turned their attention to Lydgate's works. Until a set of 'preformed ideas and judgments' exists for fifteenth-century literature, it will remain the 'black hole' of English studies.

The work of Schick, Pearsall, Renoir, Ebin, Simpson *et al.* has obviously begun the process of providing an interpretative framework for Lydgate's poetry. My own contribution to this framework has included an exploration of the generic implications which arise when Lydgate's *dits* are read within the context of

[14] The text to which Jauss was responding was H. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Munich, 1960), which is available translated into English as *Truth and Method*, ed. and trans. G. Barden and J. Cumming (London, 1975).

the French *dits amoureux* tradition. Jauss's theory emphasises the importance of the reader's recognition of the tradition to which a work belongs. In the case of medieval literature, this tradition falls into the category of 'other' when compared to the traditions which give rise to contemporary literature. The recognition of 'otherness' may produce a positive result. Jauss argues that the aesthetic experience can alter a reader's 'horizon of expectation', and that this can have a liberating effect, both for the reader and for the literature itself. The reader, having been faced with a text which was originally beyond his/her 'horizon of expectation', and having adjusted his/her 'horizon' in order to accept the work, is liberated from personal views of which s/he was unaware. The text, meanwhile, is permitted 'to recover its initial impact'. However, in order for 'horizons' to be shifted, 'each generation of readers must rewrite history'.[15] I would suggest that such a re-writing, involving as it does the recovery of the 'initial impact' of the text, provides the conditions necessary for Patterson's 'living past' to make its 'claims upon the present'.

My own attempt at 'rewriting history' may thus be defended. In my analysis of Lydgate's *dits amoureux* I have taken pains to avoid an inappropriate, one-sided 'Chaucerian' reading. The literary and historical contextualisation which resulted has enabled a re-interpretation of these poems. At the same time, the 'historical' Lydgate has, I hope, recovered some of his 'initial impact', and his 'claims upon the present' appear to cluster

[15] For these concluding remarks, I have drawn on Wlad Godzich's concise and helpful introduction to Jauss; *Aesthetic Experience*, pp.vii-xxiv (p.xii).

around his self-conscious ability to manipulate audience-response. I have no doubt that, in writing the *Temple of Glas*, it was Lydgate's intention to influence an audience which extended beyond that traditionally associated with courtly *dits amoureux*. This was Lydgate's innovation, and one of his many gifts to English literature. In including a wider audience within his intended scope, he brought together courtly language and those towards whom such language had rarely before been directed. However, the monk's political ethics remained inevitably and firmly situated within the moral boundaries of his religious ethics. If there are those who might wish to 'correct' my conclusions, I hope I have at least gained their willingness to engage with the work of the greatest English poet of the fifteenth century, to shift their own horizons, and to ask the new questions which will provide the necessary seeds for future Lydgate studies.

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